Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, I have received communications from the hon. Prakash Ramadhar, the Member of Parliament for St. Augustine, who is currently out of the country and has asked to be excused from sittings of the House during the period September 20th to 28th, 2014. The leave which the Member seeks is granted.

APPROPRIATION (FINANCIAL YEAR 2015) BILL, 2014

[Seventh Day]

Sen. The Hon. L. Howai: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that this House resolve into Standing Finance Committee to continue its consideration of the Bill and the Estimates.

Question put and agreed to.

House resolved itself into Standing Finance Committee.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, before we start, just a few housekeeping announcements. First of all, in keeping with what was agreed when we last met, it is essential that we get through a minimum of 10 Heads of Expenditure per day, failing that we will have to sit late into the evening. I therefore urge Members to work smartly and efficiently if we are able or if we are to get through our work well within the time allotted.

Additionally, as Members are aware, we have invited accounting officers and technocrats. They would be arriving at specific times during the day, so we have to try to stick to the schedule.

With respect to the speaking time, remember that you are limited to five minutes at a time; this is to ensure that no one Member dominates the conversation during this important committee meeting. As we begin our examination of the Bill and the Estimates, each Head of Expenditure, first of all, the Head and sum proposed will be announced by the Chairman, the Minister in question will then be invited to make a brief opening statement.
I will then propose the question that the sum proposed stand part of the Schedule. We shall then examine the Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure for each Head of Expenditure. I will call the Sub-Head followed by the Item. I will not call the Sub-Items. I want to repeat, I will not call the Sub-Items. Discussions can ensue on the Item called and clarification sought. I will repeat the procedure for the Development Programme. Once this is concluded, I will then put the question that the sum proposed stand part of the Schedule and the procedure will be repeated for each Head of Expenditure.

Hon. Members, the first—[Interruption]

**Dr. Rowley:** I would like at some stage, with respect to the Ministry of Finance and the Economy that we pay some attention to the revenue document; the Draft Estimates of Revenue, because I do have a couple of questions there.

**Hon. Member:** I am not hearing.

**Mr. Chairman:** What the Member is saying, that at some stage of the examination of the Ministry of Finance and the Economy, he would like to make reference to the document on Revenues which is a document that has been laid in the House and has been referred to this committee.

**Dr. Rowley:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

**Mr. Chairman:** So, we are going to Head 18 in accordance with the list submitted by the hon. Leader of the Opposition. Head 18, as you know, is the Ministry of Finance and the Economy.

Now, Head 18, the Ministry of Finance and the Economy is $9,428,577,750. I will now invite the Minister of Finance and the Economy to make a brief opening statement for a maximum of five minutes at this time. The hon. Minister of Finance and the Economy.

**Hon. Howai:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do not need to make any additional statements. The numbers are there, and we are ready to answer all the questions.

**Head 18.**

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

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Members, the sum of $9,428,577,750 for Head 18, the Ministry of Finance and the Economy 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 Draft Estimates of Development Programme.
Dr. Rowley: Mr. Chairman—

Mr. Chairman: Yes.

Dr. Rowley: Before we go into the Sub-Heads, in the Draft Estimates the figure we are looking at for 2015, $9.695 billion. Could someone explain that differential before we go to the Sub-Heads?

Mr. Chairman: The hon. Minister of Finance and the Economy.

Hon. Howai: Yeah, Chairman, the difference represents the direct charges. Normally, what we do is, everything comes from the Consolidated Fund. A part of it goes to the Appropriation Bill, and then the remainder which represents certain expenses like, for example, pensions which is a direct charge against the Consolidated Fund, those direct charges are not included in the number that is incurred.

Dr. Rowley: But they are included as part of the package for the Ministry of Finance and the Economy.

Hon. Howai: That is right.

Dr. Rowley: That is what I want to get clear.

Hon. Howai: That is right.

Dr. Rowley: And I make that point because I will come back to it, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure. Item 001, General Administration.

Dr. Rowley: Mr. Speaker, under General Administration in the Ministry of Finance and the Economy, I would like to make an observation and to ask the Ministry of Finance and the Economy whether this Ministry has been impacted by the developments of 2009, where we in fact experienced recessionary conditions and since then we have been in deficit financing.

So, the Minister of Finance and the Economy’s budget for the last five years had been a budget with a significant deficit, and against that background I would like to ask the Minister of Finance and the Economy and his accounting officers, whether, in fact, the allocations, whether it be growth or reduction, whether they had been conscientiously influenced by any recognition of the fact that the country is budgeting in a deficit condition.
10.15 a.m.

Mr. Chairman: The Minister of Finance and the Economy.

Hon. Howai: Well, certainly, the overall revenue numbers are taken into account in determining what can or cannot do—we identify what the deficit is that we are prepared to work with, and within that context we do then determine how best we can meet the overall objective of ensuring that we achieve that deficit number. So to that extent, all of the numbers that we have, not just here but overall for the budget as a whole, do take into account the fact that we are running a deficit and, therefore, we need to keep that under control and the overall level of expenditure has to be in line, in such a position that it allows us to achieve our objective of reducing the deficit in the way that we want to do so.

Dr. Rowley: And is it that the Ministry of Finance and the Economy is saying that you made a conscious effort to bring about reductions in areas so as to reduce the deficit? If that is so, how come the overall budget is larger than the previous budgets?

Mr. Chairman: The Minister of Finance and the Economy.

Hon. Howai: Yeah. Mr. Chairman, you will see that there are specific areas—goods and services—in specific Ministries...
where the numbers are lower than the numbers that would have prevailed last year.

**Dr. Rowley:** And if that is so, how then does the final product end up being larger if there are reductions within the overall budget? How you end up with a bigger budget if you set out to reduce—and you did, in fact, reduce in some Ministries?

**Hon. Howai:** Mr. Chairman—

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

**Hon. Howai:** Yeah. Mr. Chairman, what we did is that we—there were some increases in expenditure that will occur because of things like salary increases, for example, that we have to bring to book, and therefore we need to do that. We also did increase the allocation which we made for the PSIP—the Public Sector Investment Programme—this year. And, again, something like that, we see as being investments. We see that as an investment in the long-term development of the country, and therefore, those are things that we will consider as part of the overall programme of expenditure for the year.

**Dr. Rowley:** So what guided the budget discussion was that you had increases in essential areas.

**Hon. Howai:** Yeah.

**Dr. Rowley:** So those increases in essential areas offset the reductions that you made, so you ended up with a budget that was bigger than the period.

**Hon. Howai:** That is right, yes.

**Dr. Rowley:** So we can view the increases as essential expenditure.

**Hon. Howai:** As essential expenditure and things that we have already committed to previously.

**Dr. Rowley:** Thank you very much.

**Mr. Chairman:** All right. So we go Item 1: General Administration.

**Dr. Rowley:** If we are still there, Mr. Speaker, I just wanted to make one observation there. I observe that with respect to vacant posts, we make an allocation of, in gross, $9 million, General Administration for what is called critical posts. But there were no allocations made for those in previous years. If
they were so critical, how come they remained unfilled, and if you did not expend on them last time, why is it that you are now making this $9 million allocation for these critical posts that remain unfilled for two budgetary periods?

Hon. Howai: Could you just refer me to the page, please?

Dr. Rowley: Under “General Administration/”, if you peruse “General Administration” and add them all up—

Hon. Howai: Oh, if you add them all up.

Dr. Rowley:—you will come to a provision of $9.1 million for vacant posts for which there was no service last year. And I am simply asking that if these posts were so critical, why is it that they remained unfilled and unbudgeted for last time and they are now being budgeted for in this way?

Mr. Chairman: The Minister of Finance and the Economy.

Hon. Howai: Yeah. Some of it, of course, represented some of the important things like, for example, Customs, Mr. Chairman, where we thought we needed to strengthen that particular area and, therefore, we have made a decision to bring on persons in that specific area and increase the head count. So that is something that we have made some provision for this year. But the thing is that, normally, if that is not spent, it normally goes—you know, it just remains unspent during the course of the year, or if we need to increase it, I think you would take from salaries. Is that how you would deal with it?

Technocrat: It goes to salaries.

Hon. Howai: It goes to salaries during the course of the year. But what we did is, we had identified there were a few areas that we thought that we needed to fill in this year and that is why we put the provision in.

Dr. Rowley: Well, under 01, Mr. Chairman—under 01, sub 07, we know—and we have been told by the Minister of Finance and the Economy in opening the debate—that we have been increasing our debt load. Could the Minister give us an explanation for the reduction in the debt servicing charges which are down from $1.8 billion to—

Mr. Chairman: No, no, no. Let us deal with General Administration. There is an item that deals with debt as we go along. We “doh” want to jump.

Dr. Rowley: My mistake, Mr. Chairman. I am on the wrong page, sorry.

Mr. Chairman: Okay.
Dr. Rowley: I am on page 64. I thought it was page 65. We are on page 65, right?

Hon. Howai: Yes, 65.

Dr. Rowley: Thank you very much.

Mr. Chairman: Right. So we go now to Item 2: Budget Division. Item 3— [Interruption] I am not waiting, eh, I am moving, so follow me very carefully. So we have moved from Item 1, General Administration; we are now going to Item 2: Budget Division. We are going to Item 3: Customs and Excise.

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Chairman—

Dr. Rowley: Mr. Chairman—

Mr. Chairman: All right, I recognize—

Dr. Rowley: You are on budget?

Mr. Imbert: No, I am on 3.

Dr. Rowley: I am on 3, Mr. Chairman—

Mr. Imbert: Let the Leader go first.

Dr. Rowley: I am on 03. But, Mr. Chairman, I know you want to rustle down, right, but you must bear in mind that this is the first time we are doing this, so there is a certain learning curve we have to go over, and also, we need to pace ourselves so as to get the best out of the exercise. So I would assist you to push things along, but not so fast that we cannot cope with what you put your pace. I know you have long strides, but we will try and keep up.

003, overtime for monthly-paid officers in the Customs division, I notice that in 2013 the provision for overtime was $27 million; for 2014 it was $28.5 million. Why is the Ministry of Finance and the Economy budgeting for $82 million for Customs overtime for 2015, an increase from $28.5 million to $82 million? What justifies that?

Mr. Chairman: The Minister of Finance and the Economy.

Hon. Howai: Yeah. It relates to actually an arrears of overtime for the period 2007 to 2014. So the order was recently signed and, therefore, what we have done is made provision for it in this year.

Dr. Rowley: Am I to understand that there is an impact in the Customs of $30 million in overtime?
Hon. Howai: Over—

Dr. Rowley: Over whatever period of time?

Hon. Howai: Over seven years. It is the arrears that we are paying over the seven years, which had not been paid.

Dr. Rowley: So you now have a liability of $30 million in overtime to the customs officers.

Hon. Howai: Yeah, that we need to settle and, therefore, we have put it in, in here.

Dr. Moonilal: Part of the debt we inherited. We inherited that.

Miss Mc Donald: All yuh inherited everything—[Crosstalk]

Dr. Rowley: Mr. Chairman, I am not going to be distracted by the inheritance story, because the only thing I inherited is what Joe Rowley left for me in Mason Hall. This is not inheritance; this is administration of the country, and I am asking the Minister of Finance and the Economy what transpired between these $28.5 million and $82 million? You are now telling me it is overtime. The question is: why was that not being paid when it was incurred? Why were those charges not paid at the time when they were being incurred? Because my understanding is, overtime is paid as part of your periodic emolument. If you are a daily-paid worker, you get your overtime computed based on your daily income and it comes to your fortnightly package. If you are a monthly-paid worker; you work overtime, it is computed to come on your monthly-paid allocation and disbursement. What happened in the Ministry of Finance and the Economy in the Customs Division to allow $30 million of overtime to remain in arrears for so long?

Mr. Chairman: The Minister of Finance and the Economy.

Hon. Howai: Yeah. There was a delay in finalizing the collective agreement and the legal notice was only recently done. So, as a result, actually, the arrears for 2007 and 2008 will be completed this year, and the remainder will have to be picked up next year in 2015.

Dr. Rowley: Am I to understand, Mr. Chairman, that the Minister of Finance and the Economy is telling us that this $30 million is but a part of the overtime paid in Customs? Because if it is related to a collective agreement, the collective agreement would only have changed the status quo by a percentage, and a payment of the existing arrangements would have been made. Am I to understand
that this $30 million is only in relation to the marginal increase that followed from the collective agreement? In which case, give us an approximation of the general total of overtime in Customs.

**Mr. Chairman:** Could you supply that now, or you want to—

**Hon. Howai:** I do not have the exact number for the overtime by year, but I will ask the Budget Director to get it for me.

**Mr. Chairman:** In the meantime I will go to the Member for Diego Martin North/East.

**Mr. Imbert:** Yes, Mr. Chairman. I am seeing an increase of $53 million. So where is this figure of $30 million coming from?

**Dr. Rowley:** Because you move from $28.5 million to $82 million.

**Mr. Imbert:** Where did the figure of $30 million come from?

**Hon. Howai:** Well, the figure $30 million was quoted by the hon. MP.

**Mr. Imbert:** No, but obviously based on something you said. The increase is $53 million.

**Dr. Rowley:** You are correct, it is $50 million.

**Hon. Howai:** Yeah, yeah. That is the figure I have but I thought that was the figure that was mentioned just now.

**Mr. Imbert:** And you are saying that that is an accumulation of—

**Hon. Howai:** Of several years.

**Mr. Imbert:**—overtime owed from 2007 to—

**Hon. Howai:** That is right.

**Mr. Imbert:** And you are saying you cannot give us a breakdown year by year?

**Hon. Howai:** I am saying I can give you but I do not have it here right now, so I will get it. I have asked the Budget Director to get it for me.

**Mr. Imbert:** When will we get it?

**Hon. Howai:** Well, there is an arrangement, I think, Mr. Chairman, to provide this information—if we cannot do it now—within some agreed time frame.

**Mr. Imbert:** What is that?
Hon. Howai: I think there is a standing arrangement in the committee, as I understand it.

Mr. Imbert: Could I just ask when we will get it, please?

Dr. Moonilal: Whenever “yuh” get it—

Mr. Imbert: No, no, no, not whenever. Mr. Chairman, when will we get this information?

Dr. Rowley: Mr. Chairman—

Mr. Chairman: Just now. How early would you be in a position to provide the information?

Hon. Howai: Before the work of this committee is finished, we will be able to provide it.

Dr. Rowley: Thank you very much. Mr. Chairman, this committee is a very important outcome of the parliamentary modernization and I take objection to the Member for Oropouche East telling Members on this side, “You will get it whenever you get it”. I consider that to be quite out of order.

Hon. Member: Arrogant.

Dr. Rowley: And if that is the case, Mr. Chairman, we might well not be here. I take objection to that from the Leader of Government Business, to tell us we will get it whenever we get it. And to come back to this issue, Mr. Chairman, I want to ask the Minister of Finance and the Economy again—because this matter is being recorded—is the Minister of Finance and the Economy telling the country that in the Customs Division for that period of four years, 2007 to now, that the Customs Division has incurred, as part of their overtime, $50 million in overtime payments, which is related—and that $53 million is related only to the increase as per the industrial agreement? Then we would want to know what is the total amount of overtime paid in the Customs Division for that period. And the Minister has kindly promised to give us that figure before the end of the committee proceedings on day five. We could move on, Mr. Chairman.

10.30 a.m.

Mr. Chairman: Member for Diego Martin North/East.

Mr. Imbert: I just want to clarify the information that I require. The Minister said, this $53 million increase is built up over a period of years, 2007 to 2013. I would like a breakdown, year by year, what are the arrears of overtime due to the Customs Division, from 2007 to 2013?
Mr. Chairman: Yes, the Member for Oropouche East.

Dr. Moonilal: Chairman, thank you very much. I just want to make myself clear on this matter since it is early in the proceedings and I think the ground rules should be understood by all. There will be occasions as arise now, but I am sure will arise later as we proceed where Ministers and their respective delegations will not be in a position to martial data immediately when the questions are asked.

I just want to repeat for the record that while the Leader of the Opposition in this parliamentary reform process serves notice in terms of the headings, the priority of the headings, there is no requirement for the Leader of the Opposition or any Member to serve notice on their questions. So that, Members will rightly ask questions for which the relevant Ministers and their delegation may or may not have readily available answers.

We will, Mr. Chairman, give an assurance to Members that as soon as the data can be collated—in some cases it may happen quickly, in some cases it may take some time—it would be made available to the Parliament, and the Parliament would make this data available to the Members asking the question. That, Mr. Chairman, obtained before. Not only in this administration, former administrations as well, but I think it is unfair—and I would like to raise this issue very early—and I am hoping that Members would not badger and “hound down” Ministers when they appear here, to get information.

Because, Mr. Chairman, I want to make the point that it is not in the interest of this process for anyone to be “extempoing” answers as we go along. There is only one “extempo” artiste in this hall and he is sitting in Mayaro’s seat. We will not be forced to just “extempo” answers where there are critical questions. So that, we will give an assurance, but it is not every piece of information you can just get in 20 minutes. There are times when we will have to martial the data and provide it to the Parliament, and I think we should work within that spirit. That is all I have to say.

Mr. Chairman: All right, before we go to and fro, we will be wasting time. The decision has been that before the end of these sittings or meetings of our committee, the Minister of Finance and the Economy has given an undertaking that it will be provided. I do not want us get involved in these crosstalk because we are going to lose time, and when I begin to mash my gas, because I have a deadline of five days to satisfy 50 Heads, and I want Members to understand, we have to work efficiently and smartly. I recognize the Member for Chaguanas West.
Mr. Warner: I withdraw, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: Okay. Could we then proceed to—I am moving to Item 004, Inland Revenue Division. Item 004.

Dr. Rowley: Mr. Chairman, before you go to Item 004, I had a couple more questions on Item 003.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, continue.

Dr. Rowley: And it had to do with Sub-Item 01, Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance on Page 67, and there is a decrease in the allocation under this head from $64.1 million to $58 million. How is it that there is a major reduction under this head, yet a hike in the allocation for overtime payment?

Mr. Chairman: Did you refer to page 66 or 67, you said?

Hon. Member: Page 66.

Mr. Chairman: Page 66, right?

Hon. Member: Yes.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, page 66.

Dr. Rowley: I am just asking. I am seeing a mismatch between salaries and overtime, and a simple question, is it that we are catering for overtime as against having the departments properly staffed and functioning within normal time? That is the question I am asking.

Hon. Howai: In fact, the overtime numbers relate to persons who were in the positions since 2007, some are no longer in those positions, some would have moved on for various reasons. Nevertheless, the overtime still needs to be paid where they were incurred. In the case of Salaries and Cost of Living Allowances, those relate in respect of the current positions as they exist now. I do not know if that answers the question properly.

Mr. Chairman, one point. When I made the commitment that we would provide the information, just now, before the committee ends, I am assuming the committee would take five days, and if the committee ends this evening I may not be in a position to—

Mr. Chairman: That is understandable and we will arrange that.

Dr. Rowley: This exercise is a request for money, and we on this side are making the assumption that there is something underpinning the request. So, for
example with respect to this $50 million overtime for Customs, as we are told, I am making the assumption that somewhere in the Ministry of Finance and the Economy the work has been done, the knowledge is available, and it is that which caused them to ask the Parliament for $53 million.

So, all we are saying, share that information with us. We are not asking for magical numbers in 20 minutes or 30 minutes, and the Minister of Finance and the Economy has agreed that within a matter of days, what we anticipate exists in the context of the request for specific sums, that be made to the committee, and that is reasonable. We do not expect magical answers and we do not want fabricated answers. So, we will accept within the context of the exercise that the questions raised would be satisfied if they are not available immediately. Otherwise, I would ask the question, what is the basis for this request from the Parliament, if you do not know what it is?

Mr. Chairman: Can we now go on? Are there any other concerns under Item 003? Member for St. Joseph.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Sorry, I just have a question under Inland Revenue Division.

Mr. Chairman: No, well, we have not reached there yet.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Okay, sorry.

Mr. Chairman: Item 004, Inland Revenue Division. Member for St. Joseph.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Thank you. Under Inland Revenue Division for vacant posts, salaries, could the Minister state what are these vacant posts, their job description or their range? Because the issue of vacant posts—[Interruption]

Mr. Chairman: Please! Please! Please!

Mr. Deyalsingh:—comes up throughout the document. So, just the range and quantity, the number of vacant posts.

Mr. Chairman: The Minister of Finance and the Economy.

Hon. Howai: I do not want to just give a rough number, perhaps if I can get the number from—[Crosstalk]

Mr. Chairman: Just hold a second. Members, we cannot have crosstalk. This is a matter going live, so let us not engage in crosstalk and disturb the proceedings. Let us be silent, and those who cannot be silent, you can retire to the Members' lounge. But I would like the hon. Minister of Finance and the Economy to make his contribution in silence. Continue hon. Minister.
Hon. Howai: Mr. Chairman, I do not have the exact number. I do not want to just give a rough number that may be incorrect. So, again, I would undertake to provide this information before the end of the committee stage.

Mr. Deyalsingh: I would just like to clarify the importance of the information, because the Inland Revenue Division is one of our major revenue streams, tax collection agencies, so I think, if you could provide it at the end of the finance committee, it would be good. Thank you very much.

Mr. Chairman: We go on to—

Miss Mc Donald: I have a question.

Mr. Chairman: Yes, Member for Port of Spain South.

Miss Mc Donald: Yes, under Inland Revenue Division. It keeps popping over the Heads we have just dealt with. There is, for wages, overtime to monthly-paid officers, that has gone up by $200,000. For 2014, the revised is $50,000, but at the same time I am having a little problem in trying to understand, you are paying this amount as overtime, but yet we have, as the Member for St. Joseph said, these vacant positions. What are these vacant posts? I need to see what is the nexus between having to pay this amount, and yet you have vacant posts, why do you not strengthen your monthly-paid officers to avoid that increase in overtime? What is happening in there?

Mr. Chairman: I think the Minister said he would provide that information in due course. Let us go on now.

Miss Mc Donald: That is different. That was a different question.

Mr. Chairman: No, it is related. Let us go on now to Item 005, please. Item 005, Treasury Division. Item 008, Investments Division. Item 009, Central Tenders Board.

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: Are you on Item 008?

Mr. Imbert: Item 009.

Mr. Chairman: Item 009, the Member for Diego Martin North/East.

Mr. Imbert: In the context of the Government's stated commitment or alleged commitment to enact the procurement legislation in early 2015—

Dr. Gopeesingh: Do not anticipate.
Mr. Imbert: Mr. Chairman, I am being interrupted and disturbed by the Member for Caroni East.

Mr. Chairman: Please!

Mr. Imbert: Could you ask him to stop? Mr. Chairman, I would like to complete my sentence. The Prime Minister has made a statement that the procurement legislation would be laid in this Parliament and enacted early in this parliamentary cycle. In the context of that stated commitment on the part of the Government to enact procurement legislation, which would involve the repeal of the Central Tenders Board Ordinance, why is the allocation for the Central Tenders Board the same? In fact, it has increased from $7.1 million to $7.2 million in the estimates? If you are going to abolish the Central Tenders Board, which is the clear intent of the Procurement Bill, why do you have an allocation for the CTB in this estimate? [Interruption] I am not asking you.

Mr. Chairman: Please!

Hon. Howai: Yes. Mr. Chairman, there will be a period of time before we actually can move from the Central Tenders Board to the Procurement Regulator. We have actually employed consultants who have started the work to help transition and to make the transition. It is a very complex transition. It is likely to take more than 12 months in order to get to where we want to be, and in the circumstances and given the arrangements that we expect will have to be put in place, we expect that we will need to carry the Central Tenders Board for at least 12 more months.

Mr. Imbert: So, what the Minister is saying now, is that the existing procurement regime is going to continue for at least one more year? That is what you are saying? Because that is what you just said, eh.

Hon. Howai: I expect that the actual implementation would take about a year as the—

Mr. Imbert: All right, so the new procurement regulations and so on will not come into effect for one year and this is why you have put the same allocation for the CTB?

Hon. Howai: That is in terms of our projections, and therefore, we have taken the conservative view, and we have taken the more careful view of ensuring that we have everything in place in the event that it goes for a longer period of time.

Mr. Imbert: No problem. I understand, you do not want to enact procurement legislation. You do not want to implement it.
Mr. Chairman: Item 010, Valuation. Item 011, National Insurance Appeal Board Tribunal; Item 014, Financial Intelligence Unit. The Member for Diego Martin West, Leader of the Opposition, then Member for Diego Martin North/East, and then Member.

Dr. Rowley: Mr. Chairman, with respect to the Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance for the Financial Intelligence Unit, it is my understanding that there are a growing number of instances being discovered of money laundering. In fact, it is general sentiment in this country that one of the biggest threats to the economy and the country, as a whole, is this whole question of money laundering, and our protection from that nefarious activity should come from the surveillance and reporting by staff of the Financial Intelligence Unit. I did not find it very strange that in provisioning for the 2015 estimates, if one looks historically at how that unit has grown—in 2013, for staff, their Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance, it was $520,000; by 2014, the actual revised figure was $2.028 million. What is the basis on which the Minister of Finance and the Economy is reducing the allocation to the Financial Intelligence Unit to $1.6 million?

What justifies a reduction which I may interpret as a reduction in staffing when, in fact, the unit should be ramping up its role in treating with money laundering in a growing economy?

10.45 a.m.

Mr. Chairman: The Minister of Finance and the Economy.

Hon. Howai: One minute, Mr. Chairman, I just want to check with the budget director. One of the things—

Dr. Rowley: And while the Minister is talking to his staff, the reduction is not marginal, eh, it is about a 20 per cent reduction on the known expense of 2014, so it must be something significant to have brought about a 20 per reduction in provisioning for the Financial Intelligence Unit, unless of course, somebody wants the unit to remain ineffectual.

Mr. Chairman: Whilst we are waiting on an answer, I want to go to the Member for Diego Martin North/East.

Mr. Imbert: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, it is related. The Minister told us in this Parliament on Friday that the number of listed businesses that are under the purview of the Financial Intelligence Unit has grown to 1,800. Currently, based on the information in the CFATF report of 2014, the Unit monitors maybe 300 out
of these 1,800. So Minister, if the number of listed businesses is now 1,800 and with the current staff, they could only monitor 300, why have a lower allocation for them in 2015?

Hon. Howai: I have just asked, Mr. Chairman, just to get some clarification on the numbers, but I just want to add a further point to just expand on what, perhaps, in a general sense, responds to what the MP for Diego Martin North/East raised and that is that part of what we did in that Bill—and the Member would recall—is that we made certain changes in the operations of the FIU. So, for example, the compliance programmes, what we did is we had that being approved by the senior management of the companies as opposed to coming to the FIU to be approved. The reason why we did that is we said that it was not—having a programme is not as important as ensuring adherence to the requirements of the legislation. You could have a nice programme, it is all well-approved and so on, but there is no real adherence to it. So, we made some changes that do not require the FIU now to actually approve those programmes. Those programmes will be approved by the senior management.

The second change we made was that what we did, we said that we will now enlist the support of institutions such as the SEC and the Central Bank to ensure that there is compliance with the programme. These institutions understand the businesses of these organizations, perhaps, a lot better than the FIU does, certainly the Central Bank understands the operations of the insurance companies and the banks a lot better than the FIU does. And therefore, they, as part of their compliance and their auditing programme, inspections, will ensure that they do, in fact, check on these programmes and audit the processes within the company.

So therefore, we have made changes to the system that will increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the overall programme and what is actually being done. So that does not answer the question of the number of reduction, the number. What it does though is it means that we do not need as many people as would have been required had we remained with the old system. But in respect of the specific question on the numbers, I have just asked the staff just to check for me and as soon as they give the responses, I will provide an answer.

Mr. Imbert: And could the Minister state, since the number of listed businesses—I am not talking about banks, financial institutions, insurance companies and all those other entities that are supervised by the Central Bank, et cetera, Securities and Exchange Commission, I am not talking about that. I am talking about listed businesses which are under the direct purview of the FIU. Surely with the exponential increase in the number of listed businesses and the
inability of the FIU to monitor this very large number, almost 2,000, is there a plan to increase the staff of the FIU, and if there is, why the reduction in the allocation for salaries? That is the kind of answer I would like out of you. If you need time, no problem.

**Dr. Rowley:** Because the Minister is answering, Mr. Chairman, I would like to piggyback a question on that so he can answer together, because what the Minister has just said has me very worried. The Minister has just said that the FIU, which as far as I am aware, when the Parliament created the FIU to do this monitoring of the economy in that way, I am not aware of any aspect of that legislation which makes the FIU an appendage of anybody else.

My understanding of it was that the FIU would have had within it the competence, the total competence, to monitor financial transactions in the country. What the Minister has just said there is very troublesome because he is saying subsequent to the legislation, administratively somebody or bodies have taken the decision that the FIU would rely on the SEC and the Central Bank, and other third parties, to get its responsibility discharged. And against that thought process and that background, I am seeing here a 20 per cent reduction in the staffing by way of the finances for the FIU and that is worrisome. Who took this decision to reduce the FIU’s expenditure by 20 per cent?

And now I am asking the Minister of Finance and the Economy where did this story come from that the FIU must not be able to have within its own borders the full competence to exercise its responsibility and would rely on Central Bank and SEC and Miss Mary Jane and whoever else? This could not be serious, this is very worrisome.

**Mr. Chairman:** Just take a note of that. Member for St Joseph and then the Member for Arouca/Maloney.

**Mr. Deyalsingh:** Chair, the speed with which you went to the FIU, I missed my opportunity to ask a question under the National Insurance Appeal Board Tribunal. Would you entertain that?

**Mr. Chairman:** Yeah, well, you missed, the boat gone. Let go.

**Mr. Deyalsingh:** Thank you.

**Miss Hospedales:** Mr. Chairman, my concern that I would have registered would have been similar to the concern raised by the Member for Diego Martin North/East with reference to the number of staff available at the FIU, and the fact
that the salary would have been significantly reduced, and I think that the Minister of Finance and the Economy really needs to reconsider that particular item.

Hon. Howai: Yes, okay. With respect to FIU, actually the figures—for the figure, the revised estimate of $2,028,000 on page 70 included the arrears of back pay for certain personnel within the FIU and therefore, that is not a recurrent expenditure. The actual recurrent number is the $1.5 and the $1.5 is really the number that was increased to $1.6 this year.

Mr. Imbert: So is that one more staff member coming up $100,000.

Hon. Howai: No, and I take the question, Mr. Chairman, and I would say that actually on page 80 under Goods and Services, actually there are—

Mr. Chairman: No, we are coming to that.

Mr. Imbert: Yeah, we coming—I have a question on that too, “doh worry”. When we reach 80, I will deal with that.

Hon. Howai: So what I was going to say is that there are a number of contract employees in the FIU and that number is being increased and that number is not here in this Head, it is in that particular Head that I was referring to.

Mr. Chairman: All right. Let us go to Item 17, Office of the Supervisor of Solvency.

Dr. Rowley: Question, Mr. Chairman. We have a provision overall of $4 million for this new office. How urgent is that office and is the Government in a position now to make full use of that office in terms of the $4 million allocation? What would be hurt if that office is not operationalized now?

Hon. Howai: Well, Mr. Chairman, I think it is important that we build the capacity from now. In fact, just as soon as the office was established, we had one particular insolvency that was immediately referred to it that required a certain expenditure of resources, and since then, there has been a second one that has been referred. Now, we do not expect that there would be large numbers of insolvencies occurring as may have happened in the late 80s and so on, but nevertheless, we need to build the capacity of the institution, we need to appoint the person, we need to invest in the training and development of the unit. And very importantly now, we will no longer be going to receivers of companies. We will, in fact, anything that comes up, we expect that a number of them will be referred to the supervisor of insolvency.
Appropriation Bill, 2014  
Monday, September 22, 2014  

[Hon. Howai]

And one of the things too is that you are likely to find that is happening where in order to prevent companies getting to the point where you actually have to liquidate or appoint a liquidator. So I expect that you will continue to have a need for the persons in there and I think we should move to put the office in place.

**Dr. Rowley:** Where would this office be located in terms of reporting and administration? The Ministry of Finance and the Economy?

**Hon. Howai:** Yes, the office is in the Ministry of Finance and the Economy.

**Dr. Rowley:** How will the staff be hired and what sort of process and procedure would be followed to hire staff for this office?

**Hon. Howai:** The office will be in the Ministry of Finance and the Economy but we are going through the Government Human Resources Company in order to hire the person.

**Dr. Rowley:** Will there be advertisements with respect to the vacancies that this department now create?

**Hon. Howai:** Yes.

**Dr. Rowley:** The reason why I asked this question, Mr. Chairman, and I raised it for the Minister of Finance and the Economy’s information, there are a number of situations where positions are being filled within Ministries without recourse to advertisements. I just put the Minister on notice that that is taking place.

**Hon. Howai:** Okay.

**Mr. Chairman:** Member for St. Joseph.

**Mr. Deyalsingh:** Thank you, Chair. I have two questions under the Office of the Supervisor of Insolvency. First question has to do with Rent/Lease - Office Accommodation and Storage—

**Mr. Chairman:** That is under Goods and Services so you are on the wrong Head. Next one.

**Mr. Deyalsingh:** Sorry?

**Mr. Chairman:** No, that is under Goods and Services, we have not reached there yet.

**Mr. Deyalsingh:** I will take it there then, sorry.

**Mr. Chairman:** So you want us to go to Goods and Services one time?
Mr. Deyalsingh: If you wish.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, let us go to Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, Item 001, General Administration.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Thank you. Under Rent/Lease - Office Accommodation and Storage, the figure varies between $14 million to $15 million. Could the Minister of Finance and the Economy state—

Mr. Chairman: Which page?

Mr. Deyalsingh: On page 71, Sir. Could the Minister of Finance and the Economy say, this $14 million to $15 million, what is the Government’s policy on renting versus ownership of properties to put Government offices in? So that is one. Where are these offices that we are renting located? If he could let us know. Under Contract Employment—could I ask the question under Contract Employment at the same time?

Mr. Chairman: Let the Minister answer the first question.

Hon. Howai: The figure here is the rent that we pay to the Central Bank for our building and the car park.

Mr. Chairman: Are you following?

Mr. Deyalsingh: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: That is it?

Hon. Howai: Yeah.

Mr. Chairman: I think the Member for Diego Martin North/East wants to raise a question.

Mr. Imbert: Yes, Mr. Chairman, the same 001 but I am on Sub-Head 28, so I do not know if you would like to hit Sub-Head 16 first before, which the Member for St. Joseph asked about. 001, General Administration, I am on 28 at the bottom of page 71 but the Member for St. Joseph had asked about 16 which is on the same item Head, 001. I do not know if you want to deal with that first and then deal with me.

Mr. Chairman: Yeah.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Thank you and thank you, Chair. The figure for Contract Employment seems to be increasing by roughly $4 million, could the Minister state the number of persons being employed by Contract Employment, what are their positions and in fact, do they have signed contracts? That is it.
Hon. Howai: Chairman, I need to get the numbers. Yes, we do have signed contracts but I will need to get the numbers on that.

Mr. Chairman: The Member for Diego Martin North/East.

Miss Hospedales: Chair, under Sub-Item 16—

Mr. Chairman: No, I said Member for Diego Martin North/East. I recognized the Member for Diego Martin North/East. Go ahead.

Mr. Imbert: Yes, Mr. Chairman, on 001, 28, bottom of page 71.

Mr. Chairman: Or, you are on 28. You are on 16?

Miss Hospedales: Yes.

Mr. Chairman: All right, sorry. You go ahead. Sorry, Member for Diego Martin North/East.

11.00 a.m.

Miss Hospedales: Mr. Chair, under Sub-Item 16, I would like to find out whether or not any new contract positions were created during the period 2010 to present?

Hon. Howai: 2010 to present.

Mr. Chairman: No, no we cannot deal with 2010. You could deal with 2014 to 2015, not with 2010.

Miss Hospedales: 2014 to 2015, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: Right, so the Minister could probably give you that.

Hon. Howai: I will get that information at the same time.

Mr. Chairman: Member for Port of Spain South.

Miss Mc Donald: I am on Item 023, Fees. I would like an explanation for that, please? And we are moving up by just over $1 million, what is that payment for, fees?

Hon. Howai: That would be for the annual rating.

Miss Mc Donald: So we pay for that?

Hon. Howai: Yes, we paid for that annual rating, that is a normal thing.

Miss Mc Donald: All right, Standard & Poor’s? [Crosstalk]
Mr. Chairman: All right, no—

Miss McDonald: Standard & Poor’s?

Mr. Chairman: Which number are you on?

Mr. Deyalsingh: Chair, the constant drone coming from across the aisle, is disturbing. We are taking this thing seriously—

Miss McDonald: Exactly.

Mr. Deyalsingh:—but Members opposite are in a constant barrage of crosstalk and droning, especially the Members for Couva South and Caroni East. Could you ask them to take this thing seriously, please? [Crosstalk]

Mr. Chairman: All right, please, please Members, please! Members, Members, please! I want to appeal to Members again to allow Members to speak in silence and do not disturb the proceedings, please. Member for Diego Martin North/East.

Mr. Imbert: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. When I look 001, 28, Sub-Head 28, I go over on the—[Interruption]

Mr. Deyalsingh: Mr. Chairman, could you ask the Member for Caroni East to stop badgering me, please? [Crosstalk]

Mr. Chairman: All right. Members, please, please! Member for Caroni East, apparently, this is live and let us not—may I appeal to Members to conduct themselves in a dignified way.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Mr. Chairman—

Mr. Chairman: No, no, no, I am on the floor. I am saying, could we conduct ourselves in a dignified way. These proceedings are going live, judgments are being formed. Let us conduct ourselves properly, and if for some reason Members are not happy with the proceedings, just maintain your calm. Let other Members speak, but do not disturb the proceedings, please. I appeal to Members. Yes, the Member for Diego Martin North/East.

Mr. Imbert: Yeah, I will try now for the fifth time to ask the question. [Laughter] On page 71, under Item 001, General Administration, Sub-Head 28, Other Contracted Services. When I go over to the column with the heading, Explanation, I see that this Item 028, includes a provision of $150 million for—[Interruption] Mr. Chairman, I am being disturbed by all sides—[Laughter]—$150 million for legal counsel and advisory services. Now, what I have observed
is that the expenditure and/or allocation for this item has almost doubled in the last two years or so, but I am particularly interested in the estimates for 2015. Could the Minister tell us who on earth are you paying $150 million for legal services? Which lawyer is so lucky to get $150 million from the Ministry of Finance and the Economy? Could we get details of what this legal counsel is all about? Who are the attorneys? How much are you paying them? Why are you paying them? What is this for, et cetera, et cetera—better and further particulars, $150 million for lawyers. Could we get a breakdown, please?

**Miss Mc Donald:** And I understand that is in addition to the annual retainer, so we want to know.

**Hon. Howai:** These expenses are being incurred, Mr. Chairman, for the Clico/HCU matters, Sural—[Interrupt]

**Hon. Member:** $150 million?

**Mr. Chairman:** Please! Please!

**Hon. Howai:**—and a number of other areas such as this, particularly also, because it also includes the payments to the accountants, for some of the restructuring programmes and so on, that are being put in place.

**Mr. Imbert:** It is not a problem, I just want the details please, names, amounts, purpose?

**Hon. Howai:** Okay, well, we need to get that.

**Mr. Imbert:** No, problem, I could give him by the end of the week, that is fine.

**Mr. Chairman:** We could go to Item 002, now?

**Miss Hospedales:** Mr. Chair—

**Dr. Rowley:** Mr. Chairman, just in the heat of the last interjections, I wanted to ask one question on the contract officers of my colleague the Minister of Finance and the Economy. These contract posts that are not inconsequential, there are about $20-odd million over a two-year period or thereabouts. Are these positions advertised and who makes the decision as to who is hired? And who sets the emolument levels for the contract officers?

**Hon. Howai:** [Hon. Howai confers with his advisors] I am given the assurance that the positions are all advertised, they are determined by PMCD before we actually proceed, and the salaries would be determined by the CPO.
Dr. Rowley: Now, Mr. Chairman, I am just putting the Minister on notice, that throughout this document virtually every Ministry has an ample provision for contract officers, and there are very few people who read the papers more than I do. I wake up in the morning and I read every newspaper from cover to cover, and I am not familiar with any constant request which is by way of advertisement for vacant positions in this country, but I am seeing the Minister of Finance and the Economy and other Ministries asking the Parliament for tens or if not hundreds of millions of dollars for contract officers, and I am being told on record now that they are all advertised, and that they are determined by the PMCD, and that the positions are being—the emoluments are determined by the CPO. I want to ask the Minister whether he can confirm that or whether it is a statement of expectation.

Hon. Howai: No this is—I have been advised that that is exactly what happens. Some of the positions actually are not—where you have contract positions, they are not new contract hires, they are actually people who are on contract for something like three years and, therefore, not all of them would be positions that are being advertised in any single year.

Dr. Rowley: I understand that, but I mean, there is a substantial amount each year. And also while I am on the subject, what is the normal term of one of these contacts? Is it one year, two years, three years, four years, five years, six years 10 years? What is the normal acceptable term for contracts within these provisions?

Hon. Howai: They would vary, depending on the position, but by and large, the contracts that I have seen have been in general for three years.

Dr. Rowley: Is the Minister aware of any contract being put out there by Ministries for five years, and six years and 10 years?

Mr. Chairman: In his Ministry?

Dr. Rowley: Well, he is the Minister of Finance and the Economy, he is funding the whole Government.

Mr. Chairman: In his Ministry?

Dr. Rowley: In your Ministry that we are examining now, for any period beyond three years.

Hon. Howai: [Hon. Howai confers with his advisors] I have not seen any, and the PS is confirming he is not aware of that.

Mr. Chairman: The Member for St. Joseph, Member for Arouca/Maloney.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Under heading 28, Other Contracted Services, extreme right margin, (ii), other costs for fitness centre,
$253,000. Could the Minister say where this fitness centre is located? Who is the contracted party? And who attends this fitness centre?

(v), $7 million for Other Contracted Services, could the hon. Minister say what are these Other Contracted Services for $7 million? [Constant crosstalk]

And (vii), $263,000 for Monitoring of Radio and TV Stations, could the hon. Minister tell us one, the purpose that the Ministry of Finance and the Economy is monitoring TV and radio stations? Two, to whom is this $263,000 to be paid, all the entities receiving this $263,000? Thank you.

Miss Hospedales: Mr. Chair, (iv) that speaks to consultants to the Ministry of Finance and the Economy, who are these consultants? What consultancy service do they provide? And how much is each paid?

Mr. Chairman: Did you get that one, fees for consultants?

Hon. Howai: Fees for consultants, which number is that?

Mr. Chairman: Which number again are you referring to?

Miss Hospedales: Sir, (iv).

Mr. Chairman: Fees, names, purpose.

Hon. Howai: Okay, with respect of the $253,000, the fitness centre is actually the fitness centre downstairs in the Ministry of Finance and the Economy building. I must say it is extremely well used. Whenever I pass there either morning, lunch or evening, people from the building are actually using it. So it is actually in use.

Miss Mc Donald: What am I doing in that? [Laughter]

Hon. Howai: The monitoring of the radio stations—[ Interruption]

Mr. Deyalsingh: No, no, sorry, who is the contracted party to maintain it?

Hon. Howai: [Hon. Howai confers with his advisors] In the Ministry of Finance and the Economy there is a gym committee that maintains it, and they hire the trainers and so on. Okay? And the Other Contracted Services—[ Interruption]

Mr. Deyalsingh: Mr. Chairman, could you ask colleagues opposite again? [Crosstalk]

Mr. Chairman: Please, Members, please. Each Member who is anxious, your turn is coming. So let us just—please. I know Members are anxious to come
where the Minister of Finance and the Economy is located, your turn is coming very soon, continue.

**Hon. Howai**: [Hon. Howai confers with his advisors] With respect to the $7 million, a substantial part of that represents about close to—$5 million of it represents the consulting services for the implementation, the development—[Constant crosstalk]—for the gaming and the gambling legislation, as well as the regulations, as well as the procedures, as well as for putting all the other arrangements in place that will be required over the next 12 months, assuming that that legislation comes into play.

**Mr. Deyalsingh**: So, is that a recurring expenditure or should it come under the development fund?

**Hon. Howai**: No, no, no this will not be a recurrent expenditure in respect of this particular exercise. It will only be a—

**Hon. Member**: A one-off?

**Hon. Howai**: Once it is completed it is done, it will—there may be some additional services required subsequently, which in subsequent years, but it would not be anywhere near the numbers that you are looking at here.

With respect to the monitoring of radio and TV stations, what this is, is the dissemination of the news bulletins. What is done here is that the news bulletins are disseminated to the senior members within the Ministry of Finance and the Economy, the Minister of Finance and the Economy as well as all of the personnel within the Ministry of Finance and the Economy. I understand this a process that had been going on—certainly when I got to the Ministry it was there, and it was a process that had been in place previously. The company that deals with this, is a company called Willow Works. So I am told that is the company that deals with that particular area.

With respect to the consultants to the Ministry of Finance and the Economy, that relates to the various consultants which are used by the Ministry of—by the strategic management office to deal with a number of projects that are being handled there, such as, for example, the Pension Plan System and a number of other similar types of projects.

**Mr. Deyalsingh**: Minister, you used the words “dissemination of information”, under Sub-Head 07, but Sub-Head 07 says, “monitoring”, dissemination means sending out information, but monitoring means looking and listening to news broadcasts. Are you disseminating information or are you monitoring what is happening in other words?
Hon. Howai: Yeah, what they do is they go through the various newscasts and then they summarize it and then they disseminate it. So that is what the process is.

Mr. Chairman: All right, we have to move on. We are still under Item—we are going to Item 002, Budget Division. We go to Item 003, Customs and Excise.

Dr. Rowley: Under 62, Promotions, Publicity and Printing, where in the last three years this Ministry has spent or have or is anticipating to spend $12 million. What is the justification for this level of expenditure on Promotions, Publicity and Printing? And could the Minister indicate how much of this covers political broadcasts or persons making political statements with respect to the Government’s performance: Your Government is Working for You?

11.15 a.m.

Hon. Howai: I do not know how to answer the last part, but basically the expenses here would relate to printing of the budget documents, the expenses incurred by the communications unit, the printing of the newsletters, the printing of various pieces of information that come out from the Ministry from time to time. So it does include and it would include various ads that we will have to put out from time to time.

Dr. Rowley: But the Minister would be aware that a similar Head exists in virtually every Ministry and is well provisioned.

Hon. Howai: Yeah, but this is ours in terms of what we would spend our expenditure on.

Dr. Rowley: Well, we will look at the others as we go along.

Hon. Howai: Yes.

Mr. Chairman: The Member for Chaguanas West.

Mr. Warner: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Can the Minister tell us, under “Security Services”, which are the firms that you use?

Hon. Howai: I am told only MTS.

Mr. Warner: Thank you.

Mr. Chairman: So we go on now to Item 02: Budget Division; Item 03: Customs and Excise.

Dr. Rowley: Mr. Chairman, under 03.
Mr. Chairman: Mr. Jeffrey, Member for La Brea, rather.

Mr. Jeffrey: I will pass to Dr. Rowley first.

Mr. Chairman: Member for Diego Martin West.

Dr. Rowley: Mr. Chairman, under Sub-Head 13: Maintenance of Vehicles—

Mr. Chairman: Which page are you on?

Dr. Rowley: I am on 73, under 003, Sub-Head 13: Maintenance of Vehicles. Historically, we are seeing a substantial amount of money allocated for maintenance and, in 2015, we are seeing a significant reduction in that allocation. Could the Minister explain that, please? Is it that there will be no need for that maintenance or there is something happening which would result in the maintenance budget being so significantly reduced?

Hon. Howai: No, it is an actual increase, Member. It is from 2.4 to 3.

Mr. Chairman: Are you on Customs and Excise Division, Item 003?

Dr. Rowley: Sorry, the question I meant to ask on that line is: Why are we spending $3 million to maintain vehicles in one division of the Ministry, Customs and Excise Division?

Hon. Howai: It is the number of vehicles they have.

Dr. Rowley: The 71 vehicles?

Hon. Howai: Yes.

Dr. Rowley: Do we own all those vehicles or do we lease vehicles? Has the Minister considered whether it would be cheaper to lease vehicles than to own vehicles and run this maintenance charge? It is established that if you have to have a fleet of vehicles to be used in that way, it is better to lease them in a competitive environment than to own them and be stuck with all that goes with ownership. Has the Ministry of Finance and the Economy considered that?

Hon. Howai: We have done a cost benefit on it? He says he has not done any recently. We could undertake to do that.

Dr. Rowley: Is that something the Ministry of Finance and the Economy would want to consider because, in terms of outlay, you would get the use of the vehicles, your outlay is smaller and if you are leasing vehicles for a two-year period, or even a three-year period, you always have new vehicles available to you and then you would not have the problems of vehicles going offline for a long-term maintenance.
Hon. Howai: We will check that out.

Mr. Chairman: Chaguanas West after.

Mr. Warner: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Can I get some light on 28.5? This technical assistance US Customs and Border Protection. You pay the US money for protection?

Hon. Howai: 28.5: Yeah, we do have a contract with the US Customs who come in and provide us with training as well as technical assistance advice and so on and we do pay for that service.

Mr. Warner: $4 million and $5 million a month?

Hon. Howai: Yes, to receive that service.

Mr. Chairman: Item 04. We are going to Item 04. Which one you want to go on, Member for La Brea?

Mr. Jeffrey: No. 23, page 73, Fees.

Mr. Chairman: Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: I am seeking some clarification on the time for any Member to be asking questions. Is it five minutes by any individual, for the entire heading?

Mr. Chairman: No. If you look at the Standing Orders, it says five minutes per intervention. So, a Member can come back five minutes after and raise a question. It is the Chairman who has to regulate and manage this event; but members can come in beyond their normal five minutes and make their intervention.

Dr. Gopeesingh: On different areas of the—

Mr. Chairman: It could be the same area. It could be different areas, but the management of the process is in the hands of the Chairman.

I think we need to move on. It is now 11.20 a.m. and we are still on Item 02, Sub-Head 02, and we have not even gone past Item 03, which is Customs and Excise. So I am recognizing the Leader of the Opposition and then Mr. Jeffrey and then we are moving on.

Dr. Rowley: In an examination of these documents, I notice that telephone charges in departments appear to be on the high side. For example, in this division, Customs, we are budgeting $4 million for telephone charges. I want to ask the Minister of Finance and the Economy if there are any controls in place to
ensure that there is not abuse of these charges which seem to be across Ministries. I just raise it—I flag it as an area which may need some attention.

I move on to Other Contracted Services on 28. We have in that charge, a provision of $25 million for Other Contracted Services, the main being operational cost of the Container Examination Station. Question. Who gets this money? What is the arrangement in place for the payment of this money for examination of containers and what procedures are used with respect to ensuring that we get value for money here?

One other question: I see maintenance of X-ray scanners, half a million dollars. Could the Ministry of Finance and the Economy tell me if this is the new scanner we just bought and whether, in fact, those new scanners came with warranties for a particular period? If that is so, this major expense on the port, if it came with a warranty, why are we budgeting half a million dollars for its maintenance?

Hon. Howai: The figure includes the rent which we pay to both the Port Authority of Trinidad and Tobago and Point Lisas for the use of the spaces. We also have some overheads that go with it in terms of consumables that would be required. Now, these are sophisticated and they do include some things I suppose are radioactive, you can say, so there are certain types of protective gear and equipment and so on that need to be purchased to go along with it.

We actually will be getting four new ones this year, which will be four portable ones, which we are getting from the United States, which we expect should come in within the next two to three months and that will increase the cost initially and then there is a management fee. I am told also there is a port service company that we pay a management fee to. The four scanners coming in will be four mobile scanners.

Dr. Rowley: But they are coming in, are they new items?

Hon. Howai: Yes, they will be new.

Dr. Rowley: Will they come with a warranty?

Hon. Howai: Yes, they will come with a warranty.

Mr. Jeffrey: Item 23, Fees. Under 2014, we have a paltry $36,000; but 2015, we are seeing $650,000.

Mr. Chairman: Which page?

Mr. Jeffrey: Item 23, page 73.
Mr. Chairman: Okay, right.

Hon. Howai: That is the new Orifice software that we have put in and the licence fees for that new piece of software that we just put in to help manage the affairs, the operations of the customs and, therefore, it is a new piece of software that we need to pay for.

Mr. Chairman: Item 04, Inland Revenue Division. Item 05. Item 04, the Member for Diego Martin North/East, the Leader of the Opposition, Arouca/Maloney.

Mr. Imbert: I will defer to the Leader of the Opposition.

Dr. Rowley: Mr. Chairman, under Item 04, I want again, very quickly, to draw to the Minister of Finance and the Economy’s attention the provision made for telephones and I want to understand what is the thought process here, where the actual expenditure for 2014 was $4 million as against the budgeted $5.5 million. Yet someone sees it fit to provision a 50 per cent increase on the actual expenses for telephones in that division alone. So we are budgeting $6 million for telephones in the Inland Revenue Division and I am wondering whether this is not an area where there is need for tightening—and it is throughout the provisioning for telephones.

Then I go on, without detracting anything from the Minister there, under Item 15, Repairs and Maintenance of Equipment, if I go back to 2013, I will ask the Minister of Finance and Economy: what is being repaired in the Inland Revenue Division, under Sub-item 15, where we budgeted $7.8 million in 2013? We spent $15 million in 2014, and we are budgeting $13 million in 2015. What is being repaired at this cost?

Mr. Chairman: You want to take those questions and I go on the Member for Diego Martin North/East or do you want to answer it.

Hon. Howai: I take the point on the phones we will look at. With respect to repairs and maintenance of equipment, I am told that perhaps some of those expenses actually went to No. 23, Fees. Let me see. No, no, no. The question he is asking is that it went up from $7 million to $15 million. One minute, Mr. Chairman. I would need to get back to you with the responses to that.

Dr. Rowley: The main question is: what is it being spent on? What are we maintaining in the Ministry of Finance and the Economy to warrant that expense?
Mr. Imbert: Mr. Speaker, I am not seeing any explanation for the increase in Fees 004, 23, from $100,000 to $4 million. What is that for?

Mr. Chairman: That is under which sub-item, Member?

Mr. Imbert: Page 75, 02. 004; Inland Revenue Division, Fees, the estimates for 2014 revised, $100,000 spent, for 2015, $4 million, an increase from $100,000 to $4 million in this fiscal, for something called Fees, with no explanation. Could I get an explanation, please?

Hon. Howai: That particular number is really for support licences which were formerly catered for under Head 15, so it is part of a transfer coming over, but it is basically in respect of fees for support licences.

Mr. Imbert: Could you tell which Head 15 you are talking about?

Hon. Howai: If you look at 15, Repairs and Maintenance, Equipment—

Mr. Imbert: Which page?

Hon. Howai: Page 74. They are saying that that number is coming from that number into this particular Head here.

Mr. Imbert: But I only see a reduction there of $1.2 million and I see an increase of $4 million, so what is going on? That is not a complete explanation. Let us just get a breakdown of this formula, please.

Hon. Howai: Let me check with Inland Revenue on it.

Mr. Chairman: All right, we are going on to Item 005, Treasury Division.

Dr. Rowley: Before we go on, I draw to the Minister’s attention again that provision for Promotion, Publicity and Printing which is a recurring decimal throughout this Budget, well-funded. I just draw it to the attention of the Minister and I am taking the Minister at his word that none of this money is being used to fund the political campaign of the Government with respect to what we are seeing on the cable channels, on the billboards and, Minister, we will come back to that at another time.

11.30 a.m.

Hon. Howai: No, no. This would not be that. I give you that assurance. This is really for Inland Revenue expenditures, so it will be all the—[Interruption]

Dr. Rowley: It occurs throughout the budget.

Hon. Howai: Okay, all right. But, for this instance.
Mr. Chairman: All right. Item 005, Treasury Division; Item 008, Investments Division.

Dr. Rowley: Mr. Chairman, you ran a little—carry on, I would not disturb you on this, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Chairman: Item 008 Investments; item 009—[ Interruption]

Miss Hospedales: Mr. Chairman, item 008, please.

Mr. Chairman: Item 008, yes, Member for Arouca/Maloney.

Miss Hospedales: I will give way to the Member for Diego Martin West and then I would ask my question.

Dr. Rowley: Mr. Chairman, before we go on to investments, given the number of initiatives that the Government hinted at and that the country expects, we expect that we would be doubling or redoubling our efforts in the investments sphere. I do want to ask the Minister of Finance and the Economy: is it that we have exhausted our ability to be creative and expansive in investments? I would have expected to have seen an allocation for investment indicating that more activities to come with respect to our thrust in investments in general, but I see what we have here is fairly miniscule and standard like “one man and his dog”.
Could the Minister explain why the Ministry of Finance and the Economy is not being called upon to fund an Investments Division that has more meat?

Mr. Chairman: The Minister of Finance and the Economy.

Hon. Howai: I think in terms of the investments, if you are talking diversification and the other things that would be in the Ministry of Trade. Now, there are some other areas where, perhaps, it may come in the specific Ministry. In this case, this here really relates to the State Enterprises Division and the monitoring that takes place of the state enterprises. So investment division is not really making investments, this is where they are monitoring what is happening in the state enterprises.

Mr. Chairman: The Member for Diego Martin Central.

Dr. Browne: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Under Investments Division, I take it from the line “Expenses of Cabinet Appointed Bodies”, there was a decrease of $1.2 million. Which Cabinet-appointed bodies may have come to an end during this period to account for this decrease in allocation?

Mr. Chairman: I would need to get back to you on that. I do not have it off the top of my head. We will get that additional information.
Mr. Chairman: Member for Arouca/Maloney.

Miss Hospedales: Mr. Chairman, thank you. I do not know if I am invisible at times [Laughter] but I almost seem to be forgotten. Mr. Chairman, I notice that there has been a significant increase in “Other Contracted Services” from $279,600 in 2014 to $4 million in this current fiscal. Mr. Chairman, I would like to find out if the Minister of Finance and the Economy could provide us with a detailed breakdown of those services that are contracted.

Hon. Howai: I can provide that. It is mainly the CariCRIS expenses relating to the credit ratings for the four state enterprises that we have identified: VMCOTT, National Helicopters, National Flour Mills and Plipdeco.

Mr. Chairman: Item 009 Central Tenders Board; Item 010, Valuation Division; Item 011, National Insurance Appeal Board Tribunal.

Dr. Browne: Mr. Chairman, hold on. On the National Insurance Appeal Board Tribunal.

Mr. Chairman: Yes.

Dr. Browne: Might I ask: where they are now located?

Hon. Howai: In the Ministry of Finance and the Economy building.

Dr. Browne: I am seeing some changes with respect to the office accommodation, storage, janitorial, security, et cetera. When did that move occur?

Hon. Howai: We moved them into the Ministry of Finance and the Economy building, and I think it is the second floor. That would have occurred about four months ago.

Mr. Chairman: Item 014, Financial Intelligence Unit.

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: Yes, Member for Diego Martin North/East.

Mr. Imbert: Could we get some information on this contract employment the FIU intends to undertake in fiscal 2015? In addition, I see fees of $1.7 million, could we get some information on that too please? What is all this about? Details? Purpose?

Hon. Howai: The contract employees, most of the staff are really contract, and that is the point I was making just now about the increase or the difference in the numbers. There was a question about the $2 million figure a short while ago which was 1.6 really the next year, and it looked as if it was a decline which the
Member for Diego Martin West had asked, but that is related just to a few. The bulk of the staff really are here, which is in the contract employment and we intend to increase that as we continue the process of strengthening our enforcement.

As far as the fees go, the fees relate, again, to the legal support services that would be required we expect, and we are projecting, for the FIU to assist in enforcing the changes which we are making to the legislation.

Mr. Imbert: All I am seeing here is an increase of $644,000. That is not very many people, unless they are working for the minimum wage.

Hon. Howai: Well, they probably would be phased in over a period of time. It would not be for 12 months.

Mr. Imbert: All right. Could I just get some understanding of how many contract employees you have and what positions are there?

Hon. Howai: Okay, we need to get that.

Mr. Imbert: And also, your provision for legal expenses really, what do you mean? Do you expect challenges to come out or is this for advisory, legal advice.

Hon. Howai: It is mainly advisory-type services, but there could be challenges.

Mr. Imbert: Okay, then. So, you will give me the breakdown on “16”.

Mr. Chairman: All right. Item 017, Office of the Supervisor of Solvency. Yes, Member for St. Joseph.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Thank you Chairman. This seems to be a new item because we only have figures for 2015 as stated here. Under “Travelling and Subsistence” for this new entity, $103,000. Is there any stated policy as to what this $103,000 will be spent on? That is one. If you go down to line item No. 62 “Promotions Publicity and Printing”, again, a recurring decimal, $287,500. Could the Minister state the name of the agency being contracted to provide these services?

Mr. Chairman: Minister of Finance and the Economy.

Hon. Howai: We have not contracted anyone for that. It is just a provision which we have made. With respect to travelling and subsistence, yes we do have the ministerial guidelines as far as the incurring of travelling and subsistence expenses are concerned. Again, these are all rough, but estimates based on the fact that this is a new office that just started a few months ago.
Mr. Chairman: Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, Item 001, General Administration.

Dr. Rowley: We will move on from there down to 003 Customs.

Mr. Chairman: We are going to Item 002, Budget Division; Item 003, Customs and Excise Division.

Dr. Rowley: Mr. Chairman, this seems to be the year of the minor equipment because minor equipment—if I could jump ahead a lil bit—in all these sub-heads seems to have been very well treated, but everything is relative. It appears as though in the Ministry of Finance and the Economy, they handle so much money that $23 million is a minor thing. So in the Customs and Excise Division, under Sub-Head 04—that is 003, 04—there is a provision for $30 million for minor equipment, but if one looks backward as to where this came from, in 2013 that provision was $1.1 million; in 2014 it was $7 million. What is the justification for us jumping from $7 million to $30 million? While we are at it, Mr. Chairman, if I crave your indulgence for an explanation, if we look ahead, for similar minor equipment purchases down to 008, because they seem to have been very well treated.

There is a specific description upfront in the budgetary documents as to what is classified as “minor equipment”, and I see a real generous hand of the Minister and our colleague, and I hope that he is that generous to the Office of the Opposition when we get there.

Hon. Howai: We are moving Customs into the new building, and we are bringing them from the front spaces and putting them into this new accommodation which we expect that we should do by next month—by the end of next month. A lot of the equipment relates to putting new security arrangements in place—all the camera systems, some of the new computers and some of the new other related equipment, safes and so on that we will be bringing into the new building. They will be treated as Other Minor Equipment, given there is no other heading to put it under, but it relates to that move and to the fact that we have to equip this new building.

Mr. Chairman: We go on to Item 004, Inland Revenue Division; Item 005, Treasury Division; Item 008, Investments Division; Item 009, Central Tenders Board; Item 010, Valuation Division; Item 011, National Insurance Appeal Board Tribunal; Item 14, Financial Intelligence Unit; Item 17, Office of the Supervisor of Insolvency.

Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies. Which one are you going back to?
Dr. Rowley: I am going to 04 001, under sub 13 Organization of Eastern Caribbean States to ask a question of the Minister. In 2014, we made a payment to the OECS of $258 million.

Mr. Chairman: Where are we going now?

Dr. Rowley: I am under “Current Transfers and Subsidies”.

Mr. Chairman: All right, but are you dealing with Item 001?

Dr. Rowley: 001, Sub 13.

Mr. Chairman: Right. Okay. Yes.

Dr. Rowley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I am just asking, Mr. Chairman, of the Minister of Finance and the Economy, what was that payment for and what were the terms and conditions associated?

Hon. Howai: Mr. Chairman, this related to the support that we gave to the Eastern Caribbean States for managing the Clico fallout, and for meeting some of the expenses that had to be incurred as well as the cost that had to be met by these Governments in relation to that. It is not a payment that has to be repaid, so there were no terms and conditions associated with it. It was simply support that was given to the OECS in order to meet—[ Interruption]

Dr. Rowley: So, it was a grant then.

Hon. Howai: It would be a grant.

Dr. Rowley: How was that determined? How was the quantum determined? Did we pick up the whole charge or what was the overall liability and what was picked up by the various territories in those boards as Clico operated?

Mr. Chairman: It was not the entire amount, but I do not have the exact figure for how much each state would have picked up on their own, so I could undertake to get that information, but it would not have been the entire amount. It has not yet been paid. Provision has been made for it, and we are still in discussion with respect to disbursements which could happen before the end of this year.

Dr. Rowley: The Minister may recall that the Government at one time had taken the position that those who had come upon hard times with respect to Clico, it was their own fault and it was their own greed as they chased after high interest at Clico, and if the market collapsed that is what the risk is all about, and for two years the Government spoke by way of ministerial statements about the absence
of a liability by the State—the taxpayers of Trinidad and Tobago—with respect to investors in Clico. As a matter of fact, this had a sequel in the court. How does that mesh with the Government taking up a liability outside of Trinidad and Tobago for Clico’s business arrangement that went bad? What was the thought process behind that?

11.45 a.m.

Hon. Howai: I think what happened in the end is that the Government did take up the liability and we did make good the liability for most of the investors in Clico, I mean by way of honouring the EFPA which has cost us quite a considerable sum. So, notwithstanding the initial position, the Government’s eventual policy position is that they will make good this particular liability and, similarly, in the same vein, of course, the Caricom countries are important export destinations to some of our manufacturers, and we thought that it was important given the failure of regulation here, as well as in the OECS states. Well, certainly, what happened here, to provide whatever assistance we could in the circumstances, to deal with that particular liability, and that is how it arose.

Dr. Rowley: But having assumed that the liability is on that basis, were there any assets associated with Clico’s operations in those territories in which we had an interest? And were any of those assets disposed of in any way, with or without our consent, agreement or negotiations?

Hon. Howai: Thank you. Well, first of all let me say it is both Clico and BAICO, so it would have dealt with both issues. In the case of BAICO there were very little assets left to honour or to provide any kind of support and, therefore, you know, not much would have come from that particular source, but with respect to the others, as far as was possible, there were attempts made to realize on some of those assets, but very few of those assets would have been domiciled in those islands so that the net effect of what they could have realized would have been very, very marginal.

Dr. Rowley: What I am getting at is—I have no problem with what we have done, I understand the justification that you have given, but what I want to know, on behalf of the taxpayers here, is that we did not pick up the kitty while somebody quietly walked off with whatever assets might have been there. So I want to know that Trinidad and Tobago as we intervene, to keep our market whole, or as whole as we could make it, that we also had a look-in to the proper disposal of any assets which could have contributed to the treatment with respect to the liabilities overall, and I want to know whether we were involved in any discussions about disposals.
Hon. Howai: The overall position is that they would not recoup fully, and therefore we did not ask for any additional assets to be assigned to Trinidad and Tobago as a result, but what we did ask is that where there has been in the past some constraints on Trinidad and Tobago banks owning or acquiring banks in the OECS, and we asked two things in respect of this; one, that as a condition of the disbursement, they put appropriate arrangements in place to strengthen their regulatory environment to ensure that this does not happen again in the future, which they are in the process of doing now; and the second thing we did was that we indicated to them that we would like the restriction on banks from Trinidad and Tobago investing in the OECS be removed, and that also was agreed to and we have received correspondence from them in writing, as far as that is concerned.

Dr. Rowley: Are you aware of any asset disposal of any Clico business or a related business outside of Trinidad and Tobago? And are you satisfied that that disposal has been done to your satisfaction?

Hon. Howai: There are assets outside but most of them are encumbered to the Trinidad companies, for example, in Saint Lucia there is a large tourism development but again that is encumbered to CIB here in Trinidad and Tobago and, therefore, there are no assets which will fall to any of the islands as far as that is concerned. There are, however, with respect to BAICO, the liquidators of BAICO have been attempting to recover as far as possible as they can from the assets that exist, but, again, there is insufficient to allow even their share of the loss to be fully met by the Governments of the region.

Mr. Chairman: The Member for St. Joseph.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Thank you, Chair. Under Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies to Regional Bodies, I am not seeing it here. Could the Minister advise me where are our loan commitments to the Caribbean Court of Justice to which we do not have access? Where are our loan commitments to be found in these reports? Because we do pay.

Hon. Howai: I think it was funded by way of an initial US $100 million bond.

Mr. Deyalsingh: So it is not—

Hon. Howai: I do not think it is an annual thing, and the interest from that—[Interrupt] Yeah, the Trust Fund, you are quite right.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Okay, thank you.

Mr. Chairman: All right, we go on—yes, Member for Point Fortin?
Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Sub-Head 07, Caribbean Regional Technical Assistance Centre, there is a more than 50 per cent expenditure for 2014 over and above the budgeted figure, could you give the reason and the details?

Hon. Howai: Increased fees to the IMF for CARTAC. IMF apparently increased the fees for all members of CARTAC.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Why it is the fees were increased by—

Hon. Howai: Well, it should happen in the subsequent year.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: But it should have happened in the subsequent year, it is not there.

Hon. Howai: I mean I am told it is arrears, but I am just trying to find out how much arrears.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Arrears? Sorry?

Hon. Howai: Yeah, I am told that the 2014 figure represented some arrears but I just need to find out how much. I am just trying to get a sense of how much.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Okay.

Mr. Chairman: All right. We are going to item 2, Commonwealth Bodies; Item 3, United Nations Organizations; Item 4, International Bodies—

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: International Bodies—sorry, I defer to the Member for Diego Martin West.

Mr. Chairman: Yes, Member for Diego Martin West, Leader of the Opposition.

Dr. Rowley: I see a payment of $727 million made only in 2014, and a provision of $39 million for 2015—

Mr. Chairman: That is International Bodies, right?

Dr. Rowley: What is that about?

Hon. Howai: This was for the Andean Bank, the country’s shareholding in the Andean Development Bank.

Dr. Rowley: So that $727 million was US $100 million?

Hon. Howai: A little over US $100 million, yeah.

Dr. Rowley: So we are now in a position that we are borrowing from the Andean Bank?
Hon. Howai: We have not borrowed but we are in a position to borrow if we wished.

Dr. Rowley: We are in a position?

Hon. Howai: Yes.

Dr. Rowley: How soon can we be in a borrowing position?

Hon. Howai: I think once you make the additional 37. I think there is an additional payment to make this year and once we do that we should be in a position, if we wished, to borrow.

Mr. Chairman: Member for Point Fortin?

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Thank you, it was covered by the Member.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, we go to Item 005—

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Chairman, that same item—

Mr. Chairman: Okay, Member for Diego Martin North/East.

Mr. Imbert: Yeah, I was going to ask a question which is made even more confusing now by the answer from the Minister. So we have spent $1 billion to join, or will spend $1 billion to join the Andean Bank? Is that so?

Hon. Howai: Yeah, that will be our shareholding in the—

Mr. Imbert: TT $1 billion?

Hon. Howai: Yeah.

Mr. Imbert: And how are we going to recover that $1 billion?

Hon. Howai: From what I understand it would come from—well, certainly, the lower rates of interest that would apply to borrowings from the Andean Development Bank would ensure that over time you would get a lower rate of interest, in a sense.

Mr. Imbert: I heard your predecessor say this but, I mean, has anybody done a value analysis? A cost benefit analysis? Are we really going to save $1 billion in fees and interest?

Hon. Howai: Yeah, I will check the records on what was done.

Mr. Imbert: Are they lower than the IDB?

Hon. Howai: Yeah, I will check the records on what was done.
Mr. Imbert: No, not just that, could you tell me what the interest rates for this bank are? What are the IDB rates? And which loans we would take from them as opposed to the IDB? Because they are in the Americas. What are we spending this $1 billion for?

Hon. Howai: Yeah, CAF I am told is for infrastructure borrowing alone as opposed to IDB, but I will get the information and we will provide it subsequently.

Mr. Imbert: I would like to see how we are going to recover that $1 billion.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, Item 005, Non-profit Institutions; Item 007, Households—

Dr. Browne: Hold, Chairman—

Miss Hospedales: Mr. Chair?

Mr. Chairman: You are dealing with—

Dr. Rowley: On Non-profit Institutions?

Mr. Chairman: Yes, Non-profit Institutions.

Dr. Rowley: I will defer to that person.

Mr. Chairman: No, you are.

Dr. Rowley: No, I am on Households. Someone made mention on—

Mr. Chairman: Okay, anybody? Anybody?

Dr. Browne: Chairman, grant of loans and expenses in connection with cultural events to cultural and social bodies; could the Minister just explain what role the Ministry of Finance and the Economy had in this particular line and which events, cultural and social bodies benefited?

Hon. Howai: This would have been paid on behalf of the Ministry of Arts and Multiculturalism, so it is not something that the Ministry of Finance and the Economy would do, but it is a contribution to an international organization on behalf of the Ministry of Arts and Multiculturalism.

Dr. Browne: Do you know which organization benefited from this largesse?

Hon. Howai: Okay, I would have to get that for you.

Mr. Chairman: Yes, Member for Diego Martin West.

Dr. Rowley: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.
Mr. Chairman: You want to deal with Households or you want to deal with Non-profit?

Dr. Rowley: I am on Households.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, Item 007, Households, the Member for Diego Martin West.

Dr. Rowley: Yes, Mr. Chairman, 007, 06, Food Price Support Programme; what exactly is that? I would like an explanation, Mr. Chairman, of what—[Interruption] I just want to root it in the numbers: 2013, $.224 billion; 2014 $.242 billion, and—[Interruption] Mr. Chairman, tell my friend from Mayaro—Lopinot/Bon Air.

Mr. Peters: No, no, please. Mr. Chairman, correct that—

Dr. Rowley: I apologize, it is the man behind you. I did not see the hat, but I thank him for his help but he is misleading me. I am correct, .224 billion in 2013—[Interruption]

Mr. Chairman: Please. Please. Please. Please. Please.

Dr. Rowley: Mr. Speaker, could you talk to the white hat man?

Mr. Chairman: Yes, please.

Mr. Douglas: Mr. Chairman, why does he want to craft a statement as billions as opposed to millions? [Crosstalk] Yeah, but why? Why? I am just asking him why he wants to make—

Miss Mc Donald: Because he chooses to do that. What is wrong with you? He chooses to do that.

Mr. Chairman: Yeah, Member for Lopinot/Bon Air, the Member for Diego Martin West is on the floor, please.

Dr. Rowley: Mr. Chairman, since my colleague from Lopinot/Bon Air is having difficulty with the numeracy, let me—[Interruption]

Mr. Douglas: Mr. Speaker, I am very clear on what I am saying.

Dr. Rowley: Mr. Chairman, please.

Mr. Chairman: Yeah, but it is not your turn to speak, and if you have to speak you have to speak through the Chair. I did not give you permission to speak—
Mr. Douglas: I apologize.

Mr. Chairman:—so you cannot be interrupting the proceedings. Continue, hon. Member.

Dr. Rowley: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am grateful for not having to have his permission to speak, and since he is having difficulty I will go back to what he can understand: 2013, $224 million, that is $.224 billion; 2014, $242 million, that is $.242 billion, and a provision is being made for $264 million, $.264 billion, for Food Price Support Programme. I would like to ask the Minister of Finance and the Economy what is the policy that underpins this expenditure, how is it determined, who gets this money, and what effect is this money having on the intended cohort of the population that is meant to it?

Hon. Howai: This, Mr. Chairman, relates to the Conditional Cash Transfer Programme, and the policy position generally is well articulated there and, of course, will also be addressed by the Ministry of the People and Social Development when they address this particular area.

Dr. Rowley: Hold on, I cannot hear you and I am not understanding what you are saying.

Hon. Howai: Let me start over, Mr. Chairman. This represents the conditional Cash Transfer Programme—

Dr. Rowley: Cash transfer from where to where?

Hon. Howai: Perhaps what might be popularly referred to as the Food Card Programme, right. So this is the programme which is really run from the Ministry of the People and Social Development, but what we do—

Dr. Rowley: And why is it the Ministry of Finance and the Economy here?

Hon. Howai: This is an arrangement which had been in place for several years and we simply continued it—[Interruption] We simply allow—the process has continued as it has in the past where the funds are disbursed to the bank account and then the bank then issues the cards which are then used for the payments.

This really relates to that particular programme, and it is here simply because we transfer the funds to the bank.

12.00 noon

Dr. Rowley: Mr. Chairman, this is very curious. Every single Ministry gets its money from the Ministry of Finance and the Economy; it is the source well. If an
expenditure is to be disbursed to the end user, it is normal to record that through the Ministry which is handling that.

This food card programme is an operation of the Ministry of the People and Social Development, and it is my view that this is a way of hiding the growth of the expense in the Ministry of the People and Social Development, because the food cards is a well-known business of the Ministry of the People and Social Development. So why is the Minister of Finance and the Economy telling us now that a quarter billion dollars of the Ministry of the People and Social Development for budgetary purposes is located in the Ministry of Finance and the Economy, as though it is a Ministry of Finance and the Economy operation, when, in fact, it is the premier well-known operation of the Ministry of the People and Social Development?

Mr. Chairman, I have been around long enough to know that this is an attempt not to have us understand exactly how the Ministry of the People and Social Development has grown in handling moneys allocated to that Ministry. To tell us now it was there before does not explain why it is now in the Ministry of Finance and the Economy. Why is the Ministry of Finance and the Economy having this on its books?

Hon. Howai: It is not now in the Ministry of Finance and the Economy, Mr. Chairman. [Interruption]

Mr. Chairman: Please allow the Minister to speak.

Hon. Howai: It has been there since the inception of the food card programme, of the Conditional Cash Transfer Programme. It has been there from inception.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, I am hearing you.

Hon. Howai: We took it as a procedure—I took it as a procedure that had existed from before, and that I would simply maintain the arrangements, simply because it had been something that had been existing for several years and was an accepted arrangement for dealing with this particular disbursement.

Dr. Rowley: Does the Minister agree that this is more properly located in the Ministry that is carrying out this operation?

Hon. Howai: My own judgment on it is I have no difficulty if it were to be placed in the Ministry of the People and Social Development. When I did ask the
question, I was told that because it involves transfer of moneys to the bank that it is normally dealt with from the Ministry of Finance and the Economy. So I accepted the explanation.

Dr. Rowley: Are there other arrangements of transfer of moneys to the bank where that transfer is recorded in the Ministry of Finance and the Economy in this way?

Hon. Howai: The pensions are in the Ministry of Finance and the Economy.

Dr. Rowley: So there is no other situation where the Ministry of Finance and the Economy transfers cash as one Ministry?

Hon. Howai: No, we do not do any other—as far as I am advised. But this is an arrangement that existed.

Dr. Rowley: But you understand my concern?

Hon. Howai: Yes.

Dr. Rowley: By you locating it here in this way, if we examine during the year what is happening with the Ministry of the People and Social Development, we can lose sight of this quarter billion dollars as a ministerial operation?

Mr. Chairman: Understood.

Dr. Rowley: Thank you very much.

Mr. Chairman: We go to Item 009, Other Transfers—Item 11, other transfers.

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Chairman, I see a very astonishing figure here on page 88 under 009/28, FCB Indemnity Calls, $164 million, an increase of $114 million, with no explanation.

Dr. Rowley: Mr. Chairman, I crave your indulgence and the indulgence of my colleagues to ask you to hold the question of the Member for Diego Martin North/East, while I place a question with respect to 007/15, which is the Children’s Life Fund.

The Ministry of Finance and the Economy is provisioning $30 million for this fund. I would like to ask the Minister two questions: One, that $30 million that is coming from the Consolidated Fund has nothing to do with anything else that goes into that fund, so the taxpayers are making an input of $30 million? How is the quantum determined and, secondly, what are the arrangements for accessing
that fund? With respect to recent exposés of abuse in that fund, what is the
Ministry of Finance and the Economy doing to recover any moneys lost from that
fund?

Hon. Howai: This is an allocation made based on the request from the
Ministry of Health, depending on the number of requests that they have for
assistance for children in the fund. Based on those requests, as well as the funding
that is available, the Ministry of Health would give an estimate of what they think
would be required and we make an allocation, as we make other allocations for
the Ministry of Health. We make the allocation here through the Ministry of
Finance and the Economy, which is then transferred to the Ministry of Health to
meet those payments.

Dr. Rowley: Who manages this fund? Who has direct control over this cash?

Hon. Howai: It is done by way of an authority. It is done by way of an
authority.

Dr. Rowley: What is the name of the authority?


Dr. Rowley: Who appoints that authority?

Hon. Howai: It is appointed by Cabinet.

Dr. Rowley: By Cabinet?

Hon. Howai: Yes.

Dr. Rowley: Is the Minister satisfied that this money is properly supervised?

Hon. Howai: From the information that we have, we have no reason to
believe that it is not properly supervised. [Interruption] From the information we
have there is nothing to suggest that it is not properly supervised, in terms of the
monitoring process by the Ministry of Health to ensure that each one of the
children who require this help is provided with the funding that is required.

Dr. Rowley: So that means that you have disregarded any information in the
public domain about moneys being paid to parents with sick children, who claim
that they have not received such moneys and so on and so on, and transfers of US
dollars for sick children, when those transfers have not actually been effected in
the names of persons who ought to have received them? You have disregarded
that?
Hon. Howai: The information we have from the Ministry of Health did not substantiate some of those allegations.

Dr. Rowley: Is it that someone conducted an investigation into that particular matter?

Hon. Howai: I cannot answer that, but I think the Minister of Health might be in a better position to answer that.

Dr. Rowley: The Minister of Health is here, could you ask the Minister of Health whether, in fact, an investigation was done into that kind of operation in the fund?

Dr. Khan: Could you repeat the question please?

Dr. Rowley: Is the Minister aware that there has been put in the public domain allegations that moneys were paid to persons under the guise of supporting sick children and their parents to travel abroad, and those moneys were extracted from this fund, and the parents were saying publicly that they received no such money? I am asking whether an investigation was done to determine the veracity of that, because the Minister of Finance and the Economy is saying that he is satisfied that the fund is properly managed, based on your say so.

Dr. Khan: The fund is properly managed. Allegations are what they are—allegations, and I think you understand that. We have had some information of certain allegations. The board of the Children’s Life Fund is looking at these allegations, but so far they have not come up with anything substantial.

Dr. Rowley: But has an investigation been done or is one to be done?

Dr. Khan: It is being done as we speak.

Dr. Rowley: So we do not know then? It is being done?

Dr. Khan: It is being done, but the information that is coming out, partial information, does not substantiate the allegations.

Dr. Browne: Thank you, Chairman. I am very interested in the last discourse that has occurred. I just want clarity from the Minister of Finance and the Economy as to who overall is responsible, as well as the Minister of Health, with respect to reports that a staff member of the Children’s Life Fund was dismissed based on allegations of fraud. I am hearing a narrative that suggests that we are heading in a direction where there is nothing to substantiate allegations that were made. Information that has come to me indicates that a staff member was recently dismissed under the rubric of fraud. I just want clarity, either from the Minister of
Finance and the Economy or the Minister of Health, whether that is so or not, because that in itself should trigger further alarm and further scrutiny by a body such as this one.

**Mr. Chairman:** Member for Arouca/Maloney, do you have any questions to ask?

**Miss Hospedales:** Yes, Mr. Chair. I will like to find out the number of beneficiaries of the programme; the amount of money that was paid or that was disbursed to each recipient and whether or not there is an extensive waiting list and the process time for approval.

**Mr. Chairman:** Maybe I could defer to the Minister of Health, because I do not have that information.

**Dr. Khan:** Mr. Chairman, number one, I will have to get that information for you. Would you like to know how much was the contribution of those who did the contributions also, and the value of the contributions from the people who contributed?

**Miss Hospedales:** As much information as we can get will be appreciated.

**Dr. Khan:** Definitely, you will get that.

The other thing too, the part of it—the investigation is ongoing. A staff member was sent home, however, her contract came to an end, and so far the investigations are ongoing. So I do not want to say much more about that. But as far as has happened so far, nothing substantial has been said.

**Mr. Chairman:** We want to move on, so I will ask you to come with one more and we go to Other Transfers. Continue, please.

**Dr. Browne:** Mr. Chairman, I know we want to move on, but we are getting some very important information here. I would like to ask the Minister of Health: who is conducting these investigations at this time? What is the body that is conducting the investigation and who is heading that investigation?

**Dr. Khan:** There is a body called the Children Life Fund and it has a board of directors. The board of directors are the ones conducting the investigations. [Interruption]

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

**Mr. Warner:** Are you under Other Transfers?

**Mr. Chairman:** I am now going to Other Transfers.
Dr. Browne: Chairman, I have a follow-up question on the matter.

Mr. Chairman: All right; you are going to be the final question on that matter, then we go on to Other Transfers; continue, please; final question on Life Fund.

Dr. Browne: Mr. Chairman, I may have missed something.

Mr. Chairman: No, I am suggesting that you will be the final speaker on the Life Fund. After that we go to Item 009, Other Transfers.

Miss Mc Donald: Mr Chairman, I did not ask a question yet on Life Fund. I only have one question.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, you will ask a question as well.

Dr. Browne: Thank you, Chairman. The Minister of Health is indicating that the board of the authority itself is conducting an investigation into an allegation against the operations of the very Life Fund itself. As a Member of this committee, frankly I do not find that satisfactory. That is number one.

Secondly, I want to ask the Minister why this matter and the allegations that have resulted in that staff member being discontinued or not continuing, have not been referred to the Police Service of Trinidad and Tobago, the Director of Public Prosecutions or the Fraud Squad? Why has it remained within the Ministry of Health, given the nature of these allegations?

Dr. Khan: The Member for Diego Martin Central must understand procedure. If there are allegations against a staff member, it has to go to the board of directors. It does not go directly to the police or the DPP, et cetera. In normal circumstances, it goes to a board of directors, those who are responsible for the running of the authority. [Interruption]

You could shake your head as much as you want. If they find something that is untoward, it will then go to the Ministry of Health, the Permanent Secretary, et cetera, and then after that if it is substantial it will go to the police, et cetera. That is the procedure. You do not go directly from a member where there is an allegation. Maybe that is the way you all do things, but we do not do it like that.

Dr. Browne: Is it a subcommittee of the board or is the entire board the investigating panel? Who is heading this investigation specifically?

Dr. Khan: The person who is heading who is the Chairman of the board right now, is the Chief Medical Officer.

Dr. Browne: When was this investigation initiated?
12.15 p. m.

Miss Mc Donald: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Chair. I would like to find out from the Minister, what is the sum involved? What is the sum of money involved here?

Mr. Chairman: What is the sum of money involved, hon. Minister?

Dr. Khan: I really cannot give you an answer on that. I will have to get you an answer. [Crosstalk] No, not that much.

Dr. Rowley: About $10 million?

Dr. Khan: No. No, it is not as much as you—oh, I am sorry.

Mr. Chairman: All right. We go on to Other Transfers. I think I recognize the Member for Diego Martin North/East.

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Chairman, I had asked this question a long time ago, you know. 009/28 on page 88, indemnity calls for FCB have gone from $49 million to $164 million. Could I get an explanation, please? There is none in the document.

Mr. Chairman: All right. Minister of Finance and the Economy.

Hon. Howai: Yeah. The indemnity calls arise from the acquisition of CMMB, where there were a number of assets which were probably not realizable or not fully realizable, one could say, and in fact they were bad loans, bad investments which had been made. At the time of the transfer of the asset to First Citizens Bank, it was agreed that where some of these—the losses crystallized on some to these particular assets, that the Government would make good and they did provide an indemnity to the bank to allow the transfer to take place. So the numbers that are reflected here, reflect the amount which has actually gone bad, and which therefore, the Government is required to meet in accordance with the original terms of the agreement which was signed at the time when the asset was acquired, when the bank acquired CMMB. So this reflects those particular assets.

Mr. Imbert: But, Mr. Chairman, in 2014 the estimate was $198 million and the revised estimate for $49 million. So what happened in 2014?

Hon. Howai: Mr. Chairman, the actual figure, we deferred the amount which should have been paid, that $164 million.

Mr. Imbert: You carried it over?

Hon. Howai: We paid it—we told them we would prefer that this particular liability be settled next fiscal year—
Mr. Imbert: So, you do not want it on your books.

Hon. Howai:—and we just picked up the $49 million this year.

Mr. Chairman: The Member for Chaguanas West.

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Chairman, just a minute. I am sorry, all apologies.

Mr. Chairman: Okay.

Mr. Imbert: I have a whole set of questions on 009. So are we going in sequence, like 22, 28, 30, 32, 34 or we just going from MP to MP?

Mr. Chairman: No. Well, I recognize the Member for Chaguanas West.

Mr. Warner: I am on 35. So, he can go ahead if it is before 35. I am on 35.


Mr. Chairman: Go ahead. Member for Point Fortin.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: I recognized that there is a singular expenditure attached to the National Waste Water Revolving Fund which seems to be confined to 2014, and is discontinued thereafter. When was this fund set up? For what reason? And just give me the details on that fund? The basis for it.

Hon. Howai: This is the waste water fund. Cabinet had agreed in 2012 that this revolving fund be established within WASA for depositing the grant resources for the financing of the refurbishment of the pumps and the required connections, as well as other possible waste water projects under this particular arrangement. The fund was established, and there was an initial contribution and no further contributions are required. So, I am told it is just a one-off contribution.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: So there is an existing fund still?

Hon. Howai: Yes. There is an existing fund.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: But under the Ministry of Finance and the Economy, but no further contributions would have been made for 2015. Is it necessary to remain as a line item? Does it remain?

Hon. Howai: Well, we will leave it until it—because we normally would bring forward years. So once the year is no longer applicable, it will fall off.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Okay.

Mr. Chairman: Member for Chaguanas West.
Mr. Warner: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Could the Minister tell me how soon the mechanism shall be put in place for the constituency development fund to be disbursed?

Hon. Howai: That is for the Office of the Attorney General now. I know that a draft for the legislation has been prepared, but I could not give the exact date as to when it would actually be ready.

Mr. Chairman: Member for Diego Martin West.

Dr. Rowley: Mr. Chairman, I would crave your indulgence to back up a bit from 35 to 32. I see, with respect to the G-pan patent, where every year we are making a payment, it was $1.5 million in 2013, $4.6 million in 2014 and they are making a provision of $4.7 million—what is this? Is it that every year we have to pay to have a patent on the G-pan, and who is this payment being made to, and what are the benefits of this continuous payment?

Hon. Howai: Yeah. This is being done in different countries throughout the world. [Confers with Advisor] Does it have to be renewed? No, but the patent itself has to be—

Dr. Rowley: So the G-pan is costing us more than—the G-pan is a continuous charge on the Treasury of approximately $5 million a year?

Hon. Howai: This would be to maintain the patents on an annual basis.

Dr. Rowley: How do we expect to recover that? Because, Mr. Chairman, my understanding is, a patent does not last forever, it has a period of time and after that period of time other people can use the technology. If we pay this money, $5 million a year for how many years, what is the arrangement in place for us to recover this money before the patent expires? Is it that the candle is costing more than the funeral here?

Hon. Howai: Yeah. I need to get that, the details of that, because I am not very familiar with the details, but I will say that the payment should come from—well I suppose you know theoretically where it is coming from. I do not need to go into that—

Dr. Rowley: The taxpayer.

Hon. Howai: No. No. I am saying, the repayment. The inflow.

Dr. Rowley: Oh, the return.

Hon. Howai: But, let me get the additional information on this. I am told that it is in respect of legal fees and other costs related to filing this in different
jurisdictions where it has not already been filed, and also for the maintenance of the patents. In terms of the actual repayment or pay back, I would need to get that information.

**Dr. Rowley:** But as we embark upon this, has anybody appreciated quantifying what is involved? Because if we are making these kinds of payments annually, this almost $5 million each year, and if it involves legal fees and ongoing payments, has anybody determined what would be our final outlay on this adventure, and what we will be likely to get before the patent runs out?

**Hon. Howai:** Yeah. The information would be in the Ministry of Finance and the Economy, but let me just get it and provide it.

**Dr. Rowley:** And one final question on it. Since we have gotten this patent, has any user come forward to buy a franchise from this patent? Have we gotten any income from the patent?

**Hon. Howai:** No. No.

**Dr. Rowley:** We move on, Mr. Chairman. To Sub-Head 34, which is the B-A-I-C-O, BAICO payment of $32.3 million. I would like to ask the Minister of Finance and the Economy whether that one-off payment that we are seeing there has to do with the Government’s purchase of BAICO’s assets?

**Hon. Howai:** It has to do with—what had happened is that the liquidator in the Bahamas had received judgment, and they could come here to enforce the judgment in the Trinidad and Tobago jurisdiction, and if they sought to do that they could have because there was a guarantee from CL Financial to BAICO. It meant therefore, that they could have enforced the judgment against CL Financial. And if they did that, it would have then created a number of difficulties—

**Dr. Rowley:** Against CL Financial—the whole conglomerate?

**Hon. Howai:** Yeah. The whole conglomerate. Because the CL Financial, remember, who holds the shares in the subsidiary companies, and therefore, they would have gotten—they would have been able to intervene in the process by which the Government was restructuring and managing the ownership and the flow of dividends from the subsidiary companies to CL Financial to allow them to repay debts which were owed to the local banking system. In the circumstances there was a negotiated agreement where this payment would be made in order to stave off the liquidators of BAICO. And they agreed to do that, to hold their hands on the basis of the payment that was made, and as a result, we were able to keep things relatively stable in the course of that.
Dr. Rowley: In all of that, was an evaluation done of BAICO’s assets?

Mr. Chairman: BAICO has no assets. This is really—because of the guarantee from CL—intended to protect the CL Financial assets, not really the BAICO assets.

Dr. Rowley: So when we make the payment at the BAICO end, we knew that we were paying for nothing, but it was really a debt to protect something else.

Hon. Howai: To protect CL Financial’s assets. That is what we were doing.

Mr. Chairman: All right, let us move on.

Dr. Rowley: Mr. Chairman—

Mr. Chairman: Yes.

Dr. Rowley:—seriously, was this the best way to deal with this?

Hon. Howai: It was the only way.

Dr. Rowley: The only way?

Hon. Howai: The only way.

Dr. Rowley: There is never an only way.

Hon. Howai: Well, you could not have done anything, in which case they would come here and enforced judgment in the local courts. We preferred not to—

Dr. Rowley: How much was the judgment?

Hon. Howai: The judgment would have been in the region of about $80 million, part of it we paid, and part of it was met by CL, but not of the full amount. The amount met would have been about $50 million.

Dr. Rowley: So there is still more money that we are exposed to if —

Hon. Howai: There is an exposure, but there is an agreement for them to hold their hands.

Dr. Rowley: A gentleman’s agreement.

Hon. Howai: No. No. No, a written agreement. We would not have a gentleman’s agreement.

Mr. Chairman: All right. We have to move on, Member for Diego Martin West. I go back to the Member for Diego Martin North/East.
Mr. Imbert: Mr. Chairman, I am looking at 011 under “Treasury Division” on this same page, and I am seeing that the entire Infrastructure Development Fund is under that.

Hon. Howai: “Uh-hmm.”

Mr. Imbert: Infrastructure Development Fund takes up 78 pages in this document, are we now going to do all 78 pages, so we could look into that $4.3 billion expenditure? How are we doing this, Mr. Chairman?

Mr. Chairman: We do it by head.

Mr. Imbert: No. But this is a head here. This is the Ministry of Finance and the Economy Head, and it has the Infrastructure Development Fund.

Mr. Chairman: You see, the idea for it is it is allocated in different Heads, as you are well aware. So, we will just deal with what is allocated. The Ministry of Finance and the Economy administers the IDF, not so?

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Chairman, it is not allocated anywhere else here, you know. The only place the IDF is allocated is here. It is not allocated in each Ministry.

Hon. Howai: Yeah. This is the total allocation. Now, there are two different things.

Mr. Imbert: Take it anywhere else.

Hon. Howai: One is how it is spent, and the amount that is spent is on different Heads, and then this is just an allocation from which the expenditure was taken. So, this is just the heading—

Mr. Imbert: This is not taken from any other Head. It is taken from here. You have an allocation of $4,316,650,000 in your allocation.

Hon. Howai: No. That is right. What I am saying, therefore, is that we have made an allocation to the IDF.

Mr. Chairman: The expenditure, from what I understand, is under different Heads.

Mr. Imbert: No, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: Yes. Yes, and therefore, we will seek explanations under the relevant Heads.

Mr. Imbert: No, Mr. Chairman—

Mr. Chairman: Yes. Yes. You need to read your book.
Mr. Imbert:—estimates of the development programme.

Mr. Chairman: Strictly speaking, you are correct. I mean, nobody is arguing with what you are saying, but the expenditure is dealt with under various, and we will seek explanations under those various Heads.

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Chairman, I will take your word for it.

Mr. Chairman: Yes. That is how we will want to approach it.

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Chairman, if it is a little different from what you have told me, we will go back to it.

Mr. Chairman: We shall revisit.

Mr. Imbert: Thank you.

Mr. Chairman: Member for Diego Martin Central.

Dr. Browne: Mr. Chairman, under Treasury Division, Government Assistance for Tuition Expenses Fund.

Mr. Chairman: Yes.

Dr. Browne: Yes, I have a few questions on this line item, particularly as I see the expenditure and allocation are matched and have not changed in the recent past, $650 million. And I ranked this against the Government’s claims of increased uptake at the tertiary education level. There were many claims along those lines. So, I am wondering how we can be having more students at the tertiary level, while maintaining this same $650 million under GATE. And at the same time, I know there has been talk about improving efficiency in managing or administering the GATE Programme, but even with all of those variables or those claims, I find it a bit atypical that we would have identical allocation and expenditure right up to—

Mr. Chairman: Okay. I think we understand you. You want to respond to that question?

Hon. Howai: Yeah. Mr. Chairman, this is just the transfer which is made from here to the different Heads to allow for the disbursements to take place. The real sort of explanation and expenditure takes place under Ministry of Tertiary Education and Skills Training

12.30 p.m.

In terms of the specific issue of—while there has been an expansion of the programme in terms of the number of programmes and the number of people
participating, there has been a tightening of a number of procedures within GATE itself to ensure that we eliminate some of the duplication, some of the waste and so on, and we have been able to even with the lower allocation—not lower, with the same allocation—meet the expenditures which have been incurred, and my understanding is that we are fairly up-to-date. We are up-to-date—right?—with the payments due to the different institutions.

**Dr. Browne:** To be clear on what the Minister of Finance and the Economy is saying, is it that the estimation is so perfect from the line Ministry, that every cent that has been identified for GATE has been expended? [Interruption] Well, I want to hear him say it.

**Hon. Howai:** Has it all been spent? I do not know—

**Mr. Chairman:** You want to repeat your question? I do not think he understood exactly what you asked.

**Dr. Browne:** Maybe he was not listening at the time.

**Mr. Chairman:** Yes, well could you repeat it.

**Dr. Browne:** Minister I am asking, are you asking us to believe or cognate that every single cent that has been allocated to the Ministry of Tertiary Education and Skills Training, to expend on this GATE Programme, has been expended and the accounting is so accurate that that is the way in which it is reflected here with respect to allocation, revised estimate and no change; no increase, no decrease within the last two years.

**Hon. Howai:** Yes, this is just the allocation.

**Dr. Browne:** To the cent?

**Hon. Howai:** Yes. Mr. Chairman, I am just trying to determine how best to explain it. This is not the expense. This is the transfer. So, the fund itself has about $681 million, of which in the last year about $587 million was spent. So, it is not what was disbursed. So, what we are transferring here is not the exact—they are not going to spend $650 million for the year. What we are doing is increasing the fund again, and during the course of the year they may spend 625, they may spend 600, they may spend more than $650, they may spend 675, because there are some funds still available in the fund itself. But this is really the allocation that we make on an annual basis on the basis of what we determine the actual spend is likely to be, and we just make sure that they have enough in there.
And even if there is a slight amount transfer that is more than they require, that simply stays in the fund and goes into next year's expenditure and cost for the fund, which will meet next year's expenses.

**Dr. Browne:** Okay. Who manages this fund within that Ministry? Is there a specific entity that manages the fund and can you say whether the fund has been growing or decreasing?

**Hon. Howai:** Yes, the fund will have a small—right now I expect the fund would have about $50 million odd in it, approximate, and that is really managed by the Ministry of Finance and the Economy, so that we top it up and then we monitor the disbursements that take place.

**Mrs. Mc Intosh:** Chairman, I am on the same Sub-Item, Government Assistance for Tuition Expenses Fund: could the Minister kindly explain how this allocation relates to the moneys allocated to the Ministry of Tertiary Education and Skills Training for tertiary level institutions? I see allocations have been made to COSTAATT and UWI and other tertiary level institutions, and I would like to know how this relates to that funding. How it reconciles with that funding?

**Hon. Howai:** Oh-ho, what you are asking is whether students who attend COSTAATT would get funding from here?

**Mrs. Mc Intosh:** Yes, because I see moneys allocated. When I looked at the Ministry of Tertiary Education and Skills Training, I see moneys allocated for COSTAATT and UWI and various areas, and I see here we have GATE. I am just wondering—it might not be—if there is any duplication, or how it relates? What is the relationship?

**Hon. Howai:** No, what happens here is that, the allocation to COSTAATT and so on would be to assist in defraying the overall cost of the operations of the different institutions, UWI and so on. This here would be used to meet the cost of the students who would qualify for those participating in them.

**Mrs. Mc Intosh:** Okay.

**Mr. Chairman:** All right, I think I recognize the Member for Point Fortin as the last one and then we are moving on.

**Mrs. Gopee-Scoon:** This is Item No. 019?

**Mr. Chairman:** Yes,

**Mrs. Gopee-Scoon:** May I ask through you, Chairman, what is your policy towards the allocation of funds to the Caricom Petroleum Fund? Is it a
straightforward allocation? Is it tied to energy intake or so? What is the basis for the distribution? What is the quantum of the fund as it stands now?

**Hon. Howai:** Oh yes, Caricom Petroleum Fund, yes, it is just a straightforward allocation that we do on an annual basis.

**Mrs. Gopee-Scoon:** So, it is not tied to any intake or so? What is the basis for distribution? What is the quantum of funds in that fund as it is?

**Hon. Howai:** I know there is a consultative process with the Caricom Secretariat as far as that is concerned. The actual balance to the fund right now is $188.9 million. So, we are simply topping it up on the basis of what we expect may be some of the issues that may come up during the course of the year. But, I think the arrangements would have been previously agreed and we continue to follow whatever those arrangements were.

**Mr. Chairman:** Member for Diego Martin Central, you are on this same point, on GATE?

**Dr. Browne:** No, this is line 20, Accident Victims Compensation Fund.

**Mr. Chairman:** Okay, and Member for Chaguanas West.

**Mr. Warner:** I just want to join with the question from the last speaker and ask about the Caricom Petroleum Fund. I do not know how this is disbursed, but I know that seven Caricom countries owe the Government $66 million as of last year. They have not paid a cent according to the Auditor General’s report. Do you still give them from that fund? What do we do?

**Hon. Howai:** The fund, we would disburse the fund on the basis of the arrangements that are in place and as agreed with the Caricom Secretariat. So, I think that arrangement for doing it through the Caricom Secretariat had been agreed and has been something that has been in place for some time, and that arrangement—[Interruption]

**Mr. Warner:** All I am asking, some people owe you as far as 2009.

**Hon. Howai:** If they owe you, whether you still give them, right?

**Mr. Warner:** That is what I am asking, 2009, ’10, ’11, ’12.

**Hon. Howai:** No, what he is saying, they may owe us for other things and we do not net it off. No, we do not net off any payments and so on, that is due to them. We treat the two as two separate streams, but if there is assistance that is required for a specific arrangement that is approved by the Secretariat we would make that payment and we will continue to follow up on the collection separately.
Mr. Warner: Okay. Okay.

Mr. Chairman: All right, the Member for Diego Martin Central raised the question about Accident Victims Compensation Fund.

Hon. Howai: What is the question? I did not hear the question.

Dr. Browne: Can you give us a bit of detail on this Accident Victims Compensation Fund, how is it accessed? What is its purpose? How is it managed? And has it been evaluated as of this point?

Hon. Howai: Yes, we have done an evaluation and a note is being prepared now to go to Cabinet with respect to how we should treat with the fund going forward. We are looking to establish a particular kind of legislative arrangement that would assist with that, but that has not been done just yet. It is in process, so this is almost like a suspense account for the time being.

Dr. Browne: Can you say what is the purpose? Give a little detail for a citizen listening.

Hon. Howai: This is to compensate victims of persons who were injured by uninsured drivers.

Mr. Chairman: All right, we go on to Item 011, Transfers to State Enterprises.

Mr. Imbert: I have been trying to attract your attention on 009 for more than five minutes.

Mr. Chairman: 00—

Mr. Imbert: The same one, 009. I have been trying to attract your attention for more than five minutes now. I have questions on 019, 020, 013, 017, all the Items Members have been asking about. May I ask my questions please? I got my hand up.

Mr. Chairman: Yes, but you are going to ask the same questions?

Mr. Imbert: No, no, no, different questions.

Mr. Chairman: All right, could you put all together so we can deal with those.

Mr. Imbert: Three of them are similar, one is different.

Mr. Chairman: Okay.

Mr. Imbert: So, I will deal with the three similar ones first.
Mr. Chairman: All right.

Mr. Imbert: I am seeing here on Item 020, Item 019, Item 017, that the amount in the revised estimates and the amount in the 2015 estimates is the same down to the last dollar. How is that possible? The actual estimated revised 2014 and estimate for 2015, is the same figure down to the last dollar, no variation at all. How is that possible?

Hon. Howai: Well, in each of these we determine how much we are transferring, and we make the judgment on the basis of our own fiscal position as well as the requirements of the fund. In the case of GATE there was no need for us to increase because the actual expenditure during the course of this year would have been less.

Mr. Imbert: So that fund has a surplus then? Is that what you are saying?

Hon. Howai: It has some funds in it, yes.

Mr. Imbert: And the other funds may have surpluses as well, is that what you are saying?

Hon. Howai: Caricom has surplus of about—I would not say surplus, they have a balance of $189 million, and we simply would to be transferring—

Mr. Imbert: Okay, that answers that. So you are just transferring funds?

Hon. Howai: Yes, you just transfer to top up the balance as existed there.

Mr. Imbert: Okay, that answers that. With respect to 009/13, I see zero.

Hon. Howai: Yes, that is determined after we do the computations during the course of the year. So, we would not determine it up front and, as I understand it, that is the traditional approach to dealing with that particular account.

Mr. Imbert: But, is it not done on a quarterly basis?

Hon. Howai: We transfer on a quarterly basis.

Mr. Imbert: So, you are saying the first three quarters no transfers?

Hon. Howai: No. In this year? In the next year?

Mr. Imbert: This fiscal, you have zero.

Hon. Howai: Yes, this year we have not transferred, some of the payments actually—because they compute it at the end of each quarter and what they are seeking—so, up to the end of the last quarter, the petroleum revenues did not exceed the budget.
Mr. Imbert: So, for the first quarter, second quarter, third quarter—

Hon. Howai: Cumulatively to the third quarter.

Mr. Imbert:—2014, the actual revenues did not exceed the petroleum revenues collected, were less than the estimates? Are you saying that?

Hon. Howai: Yes.

Mr. Imbert: But the royalties have gone up by 43 per cent?

Hon. Howai: But, the actual collections were less than budgeted.

Mr. Imbert: No, but, I saw royalties going up by 43 per cent?

Hon. Howai: No, I am not saying it did not go up, I am just saying the total budget versus the total collections, if you compare it, collections were less than budget.

Mr. Imbert: But, Minister of Finance and the Economy, I am talking about your actual revised estimate for royalties. It has gone up by 43 per cent. That is what you actually planned to collect, royalties I am talking about, so how could royalties—

Hon. Howai: You are talking about in current year, 2014?

Mr. Imbert: Yes. How could royalties have gone up by 43 per cent over your estimates, so how could royalties on petroleum go up by 43 per cent, but the overall revenue collected is not in excess of the estimates, how is that possible? That is the question I am posing to you. So, taxes gone down?

Hon. Howai: What has happened is that, we have received late payment from one particular company.

Mr. Imbert: Is that Petrotrin?

Hon. Howai: State-owned company.

Mr. Imbert: Is it Petrotrin?

Hon. Howai: Yes, Petrotrin.

Mr. Imbert: Why have you allowed Petrotrin not to pay its taxes?

Hon. Howai: So, the payment has come in late, but we expect to be able to sort that out—

Mr. Imbert: Thank you Minister, you are answering all my questions. Could you answer my last one?
Hon. Howai: Yes, okay.

Mr. Imbert: Why have you allowed Petrotrin not to pay its taxes for 2012?

Hon. Howai: No, they have been paying. They have been paying late.

Mr. Imbert: Why you allow them to pay late?

Mr. Chairman: Please, allow him to answer.

Hon. Howai: I am expecting that they should meet the commitment before the end of this month, so I think we should be able to bring it in balance before September 30, and that is good.

Mr. Chairman: All right, I think that we have exhausted that one, let us go on, please. The next one is Item 011, Transfers to State Enterprises. We have the Leader of the Opposition, Member for Chaguanas West and then Member for Laventille West.

Dr. Rowley: Mr. Chairman, I have a few questions and I would like to go in sequence, so I will take them one by one. I would like to go to 011, sub 40, Sugar Manufacturing Company, where we are still paying approximately $5 million to $6 million a year on what I thought was a company that we had closed down. Could the Minister of Finance and the Economy explain this expenditure of $5 million to $6 million a year for the Sugar Manufacturing Company which I thought had demised? Is that company operating?

Hon. Howai: It is in the process of being liquidated, but the cost is really the debt repayments which are being still paid on the basis of the term of the facilities that existed at the time.

Dr. Rowley: But, interestingly, you said that company is still operating and it is being liquidated.

Hon. Howai: When I say it is still operating, it is not producing sugar. Is it?

Dr. Rowley: Does it have staff?

Hon. Howai: No, it does not have staff. Basically, it has some debts that need to be liquidated over time and that is—

Dr. Rowley: What happened to the assets of that company?

Hon. Howai: The assets would have been disposed of sometime ago. [Interruption]

Mr. Chairman: Please! Please, Members!
Dr. Rowley: Mr. Chairman, I want to ignore the sounds over so.

Mr. Chairman: Yes, just ignore it and just focus on me.

Dr. Rowley: It is difficult to ignore that sound.

Mr. Chairman: Yes.

12.45 p.m.

Dr. Rowley: Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the Minister of Finance and the Economy if he is not clear, to tell us later on in the week’s proceedings, what has happened to the assets of the Sugar Manufacturing Company, because I do not think you are correct when you say the assets have been disposed of, because that will invite further questions. So, could you just take the question and reply later on.

Mr. Chairman: Any other questions on that particular matter? [Crosstalk] No, no, I am dealing with the Sub-Item 40. Any other questions on that?

Dr. Rowley: Could we conclude, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: Yes, because I want to conclude.

Dr. Rowley: I am asking the Minister, rather than give us an answer which I am getting the impression that he is unsure of, whether he can delay the answer to a little later on and tell us by the end of the sessions what has happened to the assets of the Sugar Manufacturing Company. And I go, Mr. Chairman, with your permission—[Interruption]

Mr. Chairman: No, I just wanted to know if any other Member has any questions on this matter. If not, the Member for Diego Martin West.

Dr. Rowley: Mr. Chairman, I go to Sub-Head 50, sub, sub 50, East Port of Spain Development Company. I seem to recall, Mr. Chairman, that the Government by way of ministerial statements and prime ministerial commitments made public here that this company was a vehicle for bringing about identified growth pole development in East Port of Spain. That being so, in 2015 we have made no provision to fund this company.

This company had been receiving in 2013, $9 million; 2014, $4.6 million and for 2015, the company which the Government says will be the vehicle of movement in East Port of Spain, the Ministry of Finance and the Economy has budgeted absolutely, big fat zero. Is it that the Government intends to close this
company down, and if not, how is the Government’s stated provisions to be funded, if the Ministry of Finance and the Economy has made no provision whatsoever for that company?

Hon. Howai: I have asked my staff to just check the numbers for me and we will respond as soon as I get it.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, any—[Interruption]

Dr. Rowley: We move on, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: No further questions on this one? We move on.

Dr. Rowley: Mr. Chairman, again, my understanding was that the Government had shut down Alutrint, but I saw where in 2013 there was no provision for Alutrint. I presume there was no expenditure on Alutrint, and the public is of the view that Alutrint has been closed down. In 2014 a payment appears of $4.6 million under Alutrint as Equity Investment, and, of course, we do not see a payment in 2015. What does that $4.6 million represent in terms of equity in a company that is supposed to have been closed down?

Hon. Howai: I will need to get back to the Leader of the Opposition on that.

Dr. Rowley: Mr. Chairman, I move on to Sub-Head 57, Caribbean Airlines. Mr. Chairman, I looked at these numbers against the background of the public treatment of Caribbean Airlines called on the Treasury in the not-too-distant past. And at the time, the Minister of Finance and the Economy spoke at length on this problem, and he spoke in the context of a $200 million support system. We were under the impression that the support to Caribbean Airlines was in the order of $200 million and questions were raised about where that money was going, whether it was CAL Trinidad, Air Jamaica, so on and so on. This document shows that in 2013—Mr. Chairman, that mumbling down there is disturbing me.

Mr. Chairman: Mumbling?

Dr. Rowley: Down at that end of the hall.

Mr. Chairman: All right, well I was not picking it up. No, I do not think they are mumbling, maybe they are talking, but I will ask them to be silent, okay. Members, I think you need to start revising your—your turn is coming next, so just start revising, please. [Crosstalk] Please, please, Members, let us have some order here. If Members are hungry let me know. I can retire you. Please! Let us have some order. Continue, hon. Member.
Dr. Rowley: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, could you talk to the Member for Mayaro please, he is disturbing me and disturbing my trend of thought.

Mr. Chairman: All right, Member for Mayaro could you maintain silence, please. Continue.

Dr. Rowley: Yes, Mr. Chairman. In 2013, the Ministry of Finance and the Economy provided $477 million in support to Caribbean Airlines. The following year, in 2014, we budgeted $400 million for support, I presume, based on what happened in previous year.

However, when you look at the Revised Estimates for 2014, we see recorded, $252 million, and therefore we are led to believe that the support for Caribbean Airlines which was budgeted at $400 million, the out-turn was really $252 million. One can draw that conclusion very reasonably. And, of course, in provisioning for 2015, we see a provision of $718 million. When we put that together, Mr. Chairman, between 2013 and 2015 we are talking here about $1.8 billion support for Caribbean Airlines.

However, I want to crave your indulgence, Mr. Chairman. When I looked at the Revised Estimates for 2014 at 252, and I am led to believe that that was an improvement on the previous year, I will ask the Minister of Finance and the Economy, if that is so, and there is improvement, what then is the basis for making a provision of $.7 billion, which is $700 million for Caribbean Airlines?

And, Mr. Chairman, I crave your indulgence to just change very slightly from how we have been going to treat with the $252 million, because when I turn the page, and I am just going ahead of you for the purpose of the argument that I am making, when I turn the page to Sub-Head 78, Caribbean Airlines, Equity Injection, I see in the year 2014, when I was led to believe that the out-turn was better with that airline, and the support from the Treasury was only $252 million I see an equity injection of $318 million in that year, which means that the Treasury provided over $500 million to Caribbean Airlines which the Ministry of Finance and the Economy broke into two parts, put one part under the out-turn of the budget and the other part as an equity injection. And as a taxpayer in this country, I did not know that I owned any additional shares in the Caribbean Airlines as a result of this equity injection which is now news to me.

When did that equity injection take place and why it was not announced to the public? And what provision does the Minister of Finance and the Economy have
to treat with this $2.118 billion which Caribbean Airlines had been having from
the Treasury and will have until 2015, as support for the operations of the
Caribbean Airlines.

**Hon. Howai:** Mr. Chairman, we have put in place a restructuring plan for
Caribbean Airlines which will see us gradually reduce these numbers but it will
take another three years. I do expect that we will get to a position where in a sense
we could bring the airline to some level of sustainability for another three years.
Prior to us actually intervening, of course, Caribbean Airlines had a fuel subsidy
which amounted to, in the region of about US $50 million, slightly less than US
$50 million.

In addition, the Tobago subsidy which we have to put out on an annual basis
is about US $26 million. Now, what happens with that, of course, the tickets to
Tobago are priced at a price that is lower than the actual cost of going, so
therefore the cost of that is about US $25 million. There was also a loss which was
incurred on the Venezuela route, and this resulted from the devaluation of the
Venezuelan bolivar, and it also was impacted by the fact that from Venezuela you
cannot get funds out of Venezuela at this point in time. So there are moneys to be
paid for that particular Venezuelan route which have been tied up and which has
further tightened the cash flows of Caribbean Airlines. That figure is
approximately US $45 million, I am advised.

But on an ongoing basis between the subsidy for the Tobago route and the fuel
subsidy, the total is about US $78 million or close to, about, a little over TT $400
million. So that a big part of it is trying to deal with two issues which are, in a
sense endemic within the airline itself, which is that fuel subsidy and the cost of
the Tobago route.

In addition, there have been some losses which have been incurred which deal
with the integration of Jamaica and some of the restructuring that took place, and
there are a number of other related costs which have come up and which we have
had to deal with. Recognizing that and recognizing the fact that we would not be
in a position to bring the airline to immediate profitability, we expect that over the
next three years we will be able to bring it down to a position that is manageable
and the management of the company has indicated to me that they expect that the
company should be in a break-even position within three years.

So, I expect that we will have to, in answer to the question from the Leader of
the Opposition, it would not just be 2015, but we will have to put some funding
in, in 2016 as well as 2017 to a lesser extent on a declining basis in order to deal
with the problem that we have with Caribbean Airlines at the moment.
Dr. Rowley: I thank the Minister, Mr. Chairman, for the extensive discourse. But I want to ask the Minister whether he can provide for us, before we complete the examination of the budget documents, a proper breakdown of this $718 million. I presume that the Ministry of Finance and the Economy has that information by segment and we would like to see all of it. Because you see, throwing in the Tobago cost, Tobago is an essential service, and throwing Tobago in with the general operations and losses of the company could confuse the situation, because I may ask the Minister, since we are talking about the loss on the Tobago route, is he prepared to tell us the loss on the London route? Because I am pretty sure that is not profitable.

So, if we are talking about the essential service support for Tobago communication, then we will want to know all the details of the other routes. But more importantly, what was the thinking behind taking equity in 2014 to the tune of $352 million? What was this equity story about and are we to expect that of this $718 million for 2015, that a decision like that could repeat itself again where we can see that money or half of it being treated as equity in the airline which is requiring this level of support on an ongoing basis?

And my final question is, what is the basis on which the Minister is accepting from the board that we will be in a position to break even in three years’ time when the trend so far has been, 2013, $400 million; 2014, $550 million; 2015, $700 million? What is the basis on which we can say that it is going to break-even sometime, especially against the background that the Minister, when he appointed the last board, told us that that board was mandated to do a report and a business plan which he will have within weeks, and make available to us in the Parliament and whoever else in the public domain? Because there would be a business plan to come into the place that he has just mentioned. We have heard nothing about that since the weeks have passed. It is now months, almost a year. Has that plan been done?

1.00 p.m.

Mr. Chairman: I recognize the Member for Chaguanas West. You could take notes so that when you are responding, you could respond.

Mr. Warner: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, I am referring to under 011, No. 23, the ADB.

Mr. Chairman: No, we do not want to go there. Let us deal with that particular matter involving the Member for—there are other questions. I will come back to you, Member for Chaguanas West.
Dr. Rowley: I had a number of questions for the Minister. Could we get those answers first before he puts his?

Mr. Imbert: No, well, I want to ask a question on 57—

Mr. Chairman: No, he has some questions dealing—

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Chairman, could you just clarify? You are allowing the Leader of the Opposition to go through his list, but if another Member has a question on a particular Sub-Item, you will allow the other Members to talk on that?

Mr. Chairman: Yes.

Mr. Imbert: Before you go on to the other one?

Mr. Chairman: Yes.

Mr. Imbert: Right. And to other Members as well?

Mr. Chairman: Yes.

Mr. Imbert: I have some questions on 57—same one, Caribbean Airlines.

Mr. Chairman: Yes, yes, of course.

Mr. Imbert: I can ask them now?

Mr. Chairman: Yes.

Mr. Imbert: Right. From what I am hearing the Minister say, Caribbean Airlines has told you that they will lose about $320 million in 2015 outside of the fuel subsidy and the Tobago route. Could you just confirm that my understanding is correct?

Hon. Howai: It would be approximately that number.

Mr. Imbert: Somewhere in the vicinity.

Hon. Howai: Yeah.

Mr. Imbert: If you put aside the fuel subsidy and you put aside the subsidy on the Tobago route, Caribbean Airlines will lose approximately $300 million—$320 million.

Hon. Howai: No, it would be—just now.

Mr. Imbert: Take your time.

Hon. Howai: They are projecting this at about $30 million. So it would be closer to about $200 million.
Mr. Imbert: Okay, but from what you told us, the losses on the Tobago route, added to the fuel subsidy, is $400 million. I am seeing a figure here of $718 million.

Hon. Howai: Yeah. What happened is that there are some payments which would have gone through this year, which we will probably put into the next fiscal, the $718 million, rather than allowing it this year. So there is a question of timing of cash flow payments.

Mr. Imbert: All right. So the losses for 2014 might be higher then, than what you are showing here.

Hon. Howai: In 2014, we may pick up some of it going into—yeah, into 2015.

Mr. Imbert: From what you are saying, at least $100 million.

Hon. Howai: But some of it would have, again, come forward from the prior year too.

Mr. Imbert: That is okay. But from what you are saying, you are carrying forward some losses in the vicinity of $100 million from 2014 to 2015.

Hon. Howai: Yeah.

Mr. Imbert: And you expect, on operations, to lose another $200-odd million, putting aside fuel subsidy and Tobago. Am I correct?

Hon. Howai: Yeah, in that region, yeah.

Mr. Imbert: Could I get a breakdown of where they are losing this $200 million, what routes, what items?

Hon. Howai: Yeah, okay.

Mr. Imbert: Is it staff? Is it a particular route, like the London route? How are they projecting these losses of $200 million? Could I get a breakdown, please?

Hon. Howai: Yeah, we can arrange that. Yes, we would arrange to get that.

Mr. Imbert: Secondly, is it the plan of the Ministry of Finance and the Economy to provide additional airlift on the Tobago route in 2015, over and above what you had intended to do in 2014?

Hon. Howai: If it does come it would come from the re-allocation of the jets as opposed to acquisition of new aircraft.
Mr. Imbert: All right. In the past, at peak times in the vacation period in the summer and at Christmas time, these are all the times that Trinidadians go to Tobago—for New Years and Great Race and so on. There are certain well-known times that Trinidadians swarm to Tobago. In the past, the Ministry of Transport or the Ministry of Works and Transport, whichever Ministry had the responsibility for the air-bridge, would provide additional airlift by chartering a plane and so on. I have observed this has not happened in 2014. Is it that you will have a repeat of this in 2015 where you will not be putting additional equipment onto the route?

Hon. Howai: I cannot answer that now but, certainly, we have no plans immediately to put additional—

Mr. Imbert: So in your allocation you have not planned to charter additional aircraft to deal with peak times on the Tobago route in 2015.

Hon. Howai: No, because we may be able to re-allocate one of the jets. So rather than using an ATR or getting another ATR, we could use a jet.

Mr. Imbert: I just want an answer to that question. So you have no plans to charter additional turbo-prop aircraft on the air-bridge in 2015 to deal with peak demand.

Hon. Howai: At this stage, I cannot—there is no such—

Mr. Imbert: So you are going to punish Tobago in 2015 as well.

Hon. Howai: I would not say we will punish Tobago. We will find an alternative arrangement to deal with the issue.

Mr. Imbert: All right, no problem.

Dr. Rowley: Mr. Chairman, the Minister is trying to answer my—at least part of my question. I would like to hear the answer, please.

Mr. Chairman: No, well, before he gets there, I think, Member for St. Joseph, you are on the same—

Mr. Deyalsingh: The same Caribbean Airlines.

Mr. Chairman: All right, continue.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Thank you. Minister, the increase of $.4 billion under the “Transfers”, just like the Member for Diego Martin West when he looked at the equity injection later on, there is also a $7 million debt servicing provision for Caribbean Airlines later on. How does the $1 billion debt incurred by Caribbean Airlines over the period 2013/2014—how has that $1 billion loss been accounted
for in these different headings? Is it under debt servicing? Is that $7 million to be paid to help finance some of that $1 billion loss that the previous board would have incurred? How are you treating with that $1 billion loss?

Hon. Howai: Well, the funding that is coming in here is intended to deal with those losses and to deal with the equity issues that arise as a result of the losses that had been incurred. So this money here is to deal with the brought-forward losses that arose from the acquisition of the additional jets and so on, and the operations, including the integration of the Jamaican operations and so on.

The $7 million was some additional funding that was provided to assist Caribbean Airlines in meeting one of their loan repayments which we thought it was important for us to show in a separate line, so it is clear, and it is clearly identified and delineated and reported so that there is no question of us having, in a sense, doing something that is not actually properly reported.

With respect to—if I may come back to the questions from the Leader of the Opposition, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: Yes.

Hon. Howai: We can share some of the information from the plan with the Leader of the Opposition. The Leader of the Opposition has asked if we can—we can share that, right? [Hon. Howai to technocrat: We will have the information based on the latest available review.] So we can provide some of that information as you had requested.

With respect to the funding, you raised a point which I think is important for me to make, in that there may be the need for us to break some of this funding out between some kind of an equity injection, apart from the transfers to CAL, but that is really a reporting issue. I would want to show it—“show it” is not probably the right term. I would probably want to have it classified that way, and the reason for that is that the brought-forward losses could significantly reduce the capital of the company and the equity of the company and I would probably want to ensure that without increasing the allocation that is given to them, that we manage the allocation in such a way that it deals with the issue of a potential capital deficit, if it could potentially arise. Because I would want to ensure that they maintain an acceptable debt to equity ratio. So I may want to reclassify this.

So you did raise the question, look, here it is, you are not expecting to see this show up again as equity or some other figure in the equity column during the course of next year, and I just want to make the point that from a financing point
of view, without changing the total, it may make sense for us to change the allocation a bit and I may need to discuss with the PS how exactly we treat with that so that we do not do anything that is outside of the bounds of what Parliament would have approved.

**Mr. Chairman:** Before the Member for Diego Martin West—I would like to ask Members how long would we want to continue before we take lunch, because I want to let you know, I must complete the Ministry of Finance and the Economy before we take lunch, and I want to serve notice now that we are heading towards 10.00 tonight, the rate that we are going—or even midnight. So let us get ourselves prepared for a very long period because, as Chairman, I am committed to completing a minimum of 10 Heads every evening before we leave here. The Leader of the Opposition has said 4.00/4.30. That is an impossible dream, from what I am seeing—impossible. So if Members can guide me as to how long again they will take with the Ministry of Finance and the Economy before we break for lunch, I would be very grateful. Leader of the Opposition, could you tell me how soon you believe we will—

**Dr. Rowley:** I say 10 minutes.

**Mr. Chairman:** Okay. All right. Member for Chaguanas, you have a couple questions?

**Dr. Rowley:** Before you go on—

**Mr. Warner:** Mr. Minister, the Agricultural Development Bank’s last published audited statement was in 2011; 2012, 2013, no audited statement published. On what basis you gave them $75 million?

**Hon. Howai:** The $75 million is really—and we have seen the accounts up to 2013, I should say. It has not been published but I have seen it. The $75 million, really, is to facilitate the 2 per cent loan which we do for the farmers, and it is intended to provide additional funding for them to make up the losses that they incur because their cost of funds will be 5 per cent, 6 per cent, but they are lending at 2 per cent and the Government has asked that they do that in order to facilitate the agricultural sector. So what we have decided to do is to give them a further equity injection in order for them to meet this—

**Mr. Warner:** Then how come this concern was not shared last year? Because last year they got no money at all.

**Hon. Howai:** No. And that is why they have an erosion of equity this year and that is something that we need to fix, otherwise, pretty soon you will have a
company that will have some difficulties because of the fact that they are lending money at a lower rate than they are paying for it.

Mr. Warner: Thank you.

Mr. Chairman: All right. Any other matters under Transfers to State Enterprises?

Dr. Rowley: Sixty-eight, Mr. Chairman—

Mr. Imbert: I defer. I defer. I defer.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: I just wanted to go to 66 and 67, but I can do it after.

Mr. Chairman: I think, hon. Leader, you want to deal with 66, 67 as well?

Dr. Rowley: No, no.

Mr. Chairman: All right. Well, let us deal with you quickly.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Very quickly, I notice that there is a transfer that is being made with regard to Petrotrin, but it was not done in 2013. What is this new transfer about? And, further, why is there a transfer to Trintoc in line 67? I thought Trintoc was a defunct company. Why are we now transferring moneys to them?

Mr. Chairman: Minister of Finance and the Economy.

Hon. Howai: Yeah. There are some costs which we—we are winding up the company now.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Trintoc, now winding up?

Hon. Howai: Yeah. It has been hanging on for a little while and I have asked that they bring this to a conclusion. There are some legal costs and some other incidental costs that would be incurred to just bring it to a close. Trinidad and Tobago Petroleum is Trintopec—so both companies, it is just an allocation to facilitate the winding up of the companies.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Okay, fine. Thank you.

Mr. Chairman: Member for Arouca/Maloney and the Member for St. Ann’s East.

Mrs. Thomas: Mr. Chairman, I was just looking at Item No. 75. I see there is a reduction of $25 million for the Tourism Development Company. Can the Minister state what is taking place in 2014 that will not be taking place in 2015 that caused that reduction of $25 million?
Hon. Howai: I will have to come back to you on that. I do not have the answer right away.

Mr. Chairman: He will have to come back. Member for Arouca/Maloney.

Miss Hospedales: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, my focus is on Sub-Item No. 70, Alutrint operating expenses. In 2013 and 2014 there was no transfer. I would like to know exactly what accounts for the $1.2 million transfer in 2015 for operating expenses.

Hon. Howai: Okay. I am told that those expenses are related, again, to winding up this particular company and paying the additional legal expenses and so on that had not been settled, as well as other expenses.

Mr. Chairman: Sixty-eight, Member for Diego Martin West.

Dr. Rowley: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, the provisions for the Trinidad and Tobago International Financial Centre seem to be quite substantial. Question to the Minister: Are we operating an International Financial Centre, and if so, who is operating it?

1.15 p.m.

What are these payments for: $23 million in 2013, $30 million in 2014 and a provision of $31 million in 2015? Who is managing this money, who is getting this money and what is it for?

Hon. Howai: Mr. Chairman, this is for the—well, as I said, in the International Financial Centre. The centre has been involved in and had played a very important role in bringing some of the back office processing and putting the arrangements in place for both Royal and Scotia Bank setting up their back office centres here. They are in the process of developing a new initiative which is to make Trinidad and Tobago a centre for dispute resolution as far as financial services are concerned. And they are also looking at developing the capital markets further.

There is a board and a general manager with staff and so on and right now, they are not earning any money independently even though they do set up—get some of these initiatives going, the revenue does not accrue to them, and therefore, they would need these allocations in order to ensure that the operations of the company continue and that the initiatives that they have in place, they can continue to develop on those and to carry those initiatives forward.

Dr. Rowley: How much staff does this centre have?
Hon. Howai: I could not answer that, I would need to get some more details.

Dr. Rowley: Could I ask you to assist us by telling us how this money is spent, this $30 million? Give us a breakdown, please, of how it is spent, whether it is staff, travel, office arrangements and so on? Could we just see the breakdown, please?

Hon. Howai: Sure.

Dr. Rowley: Thank you.

Mr. Imbert: Chairman, I had that—he has asked the same question but I have other questions under this Head.

Mr. Chairman: Go ahead.

Mr. Imbert: Okay, thank you. I notice 59, Equity Injection to EXIMBANK of $60 million when previously there was none. What is going on?

Hon. Howai: Yes, what we have asked the EXIMBANK to do is to help our exporters—to finance exporters who are exporting outside of the region at a lower cost, and we have also established a fairly low benchmark of about 2 per cent. The purpose of this is really to help our exporters break into international markets or markets outside of the Caricom region. So, to the extent that you are able to export outside of the region, we will help you with funding the cost of doing that.

Dr. Rowley: Understood.

Mr. Imbert: I notice that the Trinidad and Tobago Hotel Facilitation Company Limited seems to have died an unnatural death with a zero allocation. Item 77.

Hon. Howai: I was told that the company is dissolved. There is another arrangement which is being put in place to deal with—we have now the Trinidad and Tobago Tourism Development Company.

Miss McDonald: Mr. Chairman, I just have one question.

Mr. Imbert: Could I get some details of that? Could we find out what was this company doing and who will be taking over its responsibilities and how? And now for my final—so I assume you will provide us with those details—Hon. Howai: Yeah.

Mr. Imbert: My final question now: what has happened Atrius?

Hon. Howai: Atrius, the company—we are no longer pursuing the company taking over the assets and liabilities of Clico. We expect that we will be disposing
of the portfolio by way of a portfolio sale and therefore, there is no need for us to budget further on this item.

**Mr. Imbert**: So you are winding up Clico?

**Hon. Howai**: The intention, yes, would be to sell the portfolios and it depends on whether we get the price that we are looking for. If not, then it will have to continue to operate under section 44.

**Mr. Imbert**: All right. But my point is, you have here 2014 estimate for Atrius, $46 million; 2014, again, this strange accounting method where down to the last dollar, your revised estimate and your estimate is the same, $15 million spent in 2013; $0 in 2015. What is going to happen to the staff, the buildings, the income? What is going on?

**Hon. Howai**: No, no, there is no staff.

**Mr. Imbert**: So you send—you are retrenching everybody?

**Hon. Howai**: No, no, nothing was transferred. We had simply capitalized the company—which moneys the company will now return to us but no assets and people and so on were transferred.

**Mr. Imbert**: So the $15 million in 2013, the $46 million in 2014, it is just sitting there somewhere?

**Hon. Howai**: Yes, that was given to them as their allocation for capital and we will now take it back in this year.

**Mr. Imbert**: So you have decided to abandon Atrius. Could you say why?

**Hon. Howai**: Because at the end of day, we would have to invest something like one and a half billion more to purchase the assets of Clico and to capitalize the company under the new insurance regime.

**Mr. Imbert**: All right. So you are going to sell Clico—no problem, I understand. So you are going to sell Colonial Life, what methodology are you going to use?

**Hon. Howai**: We are currently in the process of getting the valuations done and we are also currently in the process of hiring an investment bank to provide us with advice and guidance on how we should proceed once the valuation comes in.

**Mr. Imbert**: So you have decided to sell it but you do not know what method you are going to use to sell it yet.
Hon. Howai: Yeah, we have decided that it makes sense to explore the possibility of the sale. The thing is that if we do not get the prices that we are looking for, as I said, the option always remains with us to continue to operate the company under section 44.

Mr. Chairman: I think the Member for Port of Spain South, last area and then we move on.

Miss Mc Donald: East Port of Spain, I know the Minister answered and he said that no allocation has been made for East Port of Spain. I want to know why.

Hon. Howai: No, I have to give you the answers to that. I asked to—

Miss Mc Donald: Because I want to know why and what is happening with this entity.

Mr. Chairman: He said he will provide it.

Hon. Howai: I will provide that answer.

Mr. Chairman: We are going on to Item 013, Loans to State Enterprises; Item 014, Loans to Other Governments.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Mr. Chairman, to the Minister of Finance and the Economy, with regard to the $97 million to the Government of St. Lucia, are there proper loan arrangements in place and are these being adhered to or is this a grant? And on the same note, the loan to the Government of Grenada, are those loans arrangements being met?

Hon. Howai: We did give a moratorium initially so no payments were due in the first—

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: A moratorium to which?

Hon. Howai: To both.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: To both? A moratorium of how long?

Hon. Howai: Three years. So no payments are due just yet but I think in the case of St. Lucia, I think it is 15 years, 6 per cent and similarly for Grenada. But Grenada’s rate was lower at the time because of where interest rates were at the time when their facility was granted.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Just a little supplemental to that. When requests are being made by the islands, are you looking at all the various avenues that are available, I mean the petroleum fund, et cetera, as well, or before we just stick
something in under one allocation and then it stays there and whereas we have a fund with 180 something million dollars in it, that is on the side, are we looking at everything when these arrangements are made?

Hon. Howai: We did look at the $188 million. We were concerned in terms of the extent to which the loans to these islands would have depleted the fund, and therefore not made funding available in the event there was an emergency that needed to be met. And therefore, we thought it was a better arrangement to leave the fund where it was and to put these under different arrangements. In any event, whether it would have met the agreements under the Caricom Petroleum Fund arranged with the Caricom Secretariat, we were not quite ensure, so we decided, okay, we will treat with it on a separate basis.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Okay.

Mr. Chairman: We go to Sub-Head 06: Current Transfers to Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies, Item 004, Statutory Bodies.

Mr. Warner: Mr. Chairman?

Mr. Chairman: Sorry, Member for Chaguanas West.

Mr. Warner: My apologies, Sir. I was asking about the loans.

Mr. Chairman: Okay.

Mr. Warner: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Minister, the Auditor General’s Report of the fiscal year 2012/2013, under 613, mentioned a number of loans that amounting to $1.7 billion. In those loans, they showed Grenada having paid only $5 million up to 2011. Has any money been paid since? Also, that audit has loans to Dominica, two to Antigua/Barbuda, St. Vincent and the Grenadines and so on, but I do not see it here. How come? Have they paid up?

Hon. Howai: No, well, we would not have budgeted any further advances to them in these accounts. So what you will see here would be any further advances that were taking place.

Mr. Warner: So you have not given them anymore?

Hon. Howai:—and we did not do any and we do not propose to do any here in this year.

Mr. Warner: Thank you.

Mr. Chairman: Sub-Head 06: Current Transfers to Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies, Item 004, Statutory Bodies. Head 07: Debt Servicing, Item 001,
Appropriation Bill, 2014

[MR. CHAIRMAN]

Interest - Local Loans. I recognize the Member for Diego Martin North/East and the Member for St. Joseph.

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Chairman, Sub-Item 18, the estimate for 2015, $197 million, an increase of $174 million. Could you please explain, Minister of Finance and the Economy, this massive increase?

Hon. Howai: Yeah, there are some arrears which we agree that we should now liquidate. I think we have not paid for about five years from 2009 and we thought that we should bring those up to date and meet those commitments which is on the basis of the pro-note that had been signed prior to that.

Mr. Imbert: Arrears? Of what?

Hon. Howai: Yeah, arrears of interest.

Mr. Imbert: You have not been paying FCB?

Hon. Howai: No, we have not been paying the interest. The interest has been in arrears.

Mr. Imbert: So FCB has not been paid for four years?

Hon. Howai: Five years.

Mr. Chairman: Item 009, Interest on Overdraft.

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Chairman, no, no, I am still on 07.

Mr. Chairman: Or, you are still on the same one.

Mr. Imbert: I think I am just getting explanations here. On item 23, Caribbean Airlines, $11 million. Is that to be added to Caribbean Airlines’ losses?

Hon. Howai: Yes, it would because this is some assistance we provided them for some debt repayment which is what I had referred to earlier when I was speaking.

Mr. Imbert: So Caribbean Airlines is really getting $730 million for this fiscal?

Hon. Howai: Yeah, this year.

Mr. Imbert: And this came from where? This was debt incurred—

Mr. Chairman: Previously, yeah.

Mr. Imbert: —in 2014?

Hon. Howai: No.
Mr. Imbert: Before that?

Hon. Howai: Prior to that.

Mr. Chairman: Member for St. Joseph.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Yes, on the same Sub-Item 23, the interest payments increase of $7 million, could the Minister quantify the debt that the 2015 estimate is $11,300,000? And also, does Caribbean Airlines have any audited accounts that we can look at?

Hon. Howai: Yeah, they have audited accounts up to 2011 and—

Mr. Deyalsingh: 2011?

Hon. Howai: Yeah, it was quite in arrears and we were bringing it up-to-date over the past year and I expect 2012 and 2013 to be finished within the next few—certainly before the end of this calendar year, I expect to bring it totally up-to-date. It has taken some time to bring it up-to-date. The total value of the debt this is paying is US $64.2 million. This is TT dollars here but TT equivalent of— but the debt is US.

Mr. Deyalsingh: US $62.4 million?

Hon. Howai: Yeah, US.

Mr. Chairman: Item 009: Interest on Overdraft; Item 011: Principal Repayment - Local Loans. Hon. Members, we are going on to Draft Estimates.

Mr. Imbert: No, Mr. Chairman, I have my hand up on 011.

Mr. Chairman: Yes. Member for Diego Martin North/East.

Mr. Imbert: I will make noise next time. Sub-Item 18, could we get an explanation for this increase of $69 million: Restructuring of First Citizens?

Hon. Howai: This is the principal piece of the interest that we spoke of just now.

Mr. Imbert: All right. So we really have to add the 197 to the 92—$208 million was not paid to FCB?

Hon. Howai: Yeah.

Mr. Chairman: We go now to the Draft Estimates of Development Programme, Sub-Head 09: Development Programme, Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services. That is on page 56.
Hon. Members, you did give some undertakings to provide this committee. We have it recorded on *Hansard*, we will make it available to you in writing so that you will know systematically those areas that you have committed to supply to the Standing Finance Committee before the end of the proceedings; that is the five days. Right?

**Hon. Howai:** Yeah.

**Mr. Chairman:** Otherwise you will be held accountable. Okay? Hon. Members, the question is that the sum of $9,428,577,750 for Head 18: the Ministry of Finance and the Economy stand part of the Schedule.

*Question put and agreed to.*

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

1.30 p.m.

**Mr. Chairman:** Now, Members may I suggest that having regard to, you know, we are experimenting, as the hon. Member for Diego Martin West said, we are going through new territory and, therefore, we would have some slippages and we want all Members to bear with us. We are taking us together on this new journey, so we must bear with each other. It is a new experience that we are going through. Please exercise patience and care and do not become too overly impatient, I appeal to all Members.

In those circumstances, because we may be here until midnight, I want to propose that we take a 45-minute break for lunch and, therefore, the proceedings of this Standing Finance Committee is suspended until quarter past two, 2.15 p.m.

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

2.15 p.m.: *Standing Finance Committee resumed.*

**Mr. Chairman:** The Standing Finance Committee will resume.

*Head 13:*

Office of the Prime Minister, $638,708,600. I will now invite the hon. Prime Minister to make a brief opening statement for a maximum of five minutes if he desires to do so at this time.

**Hon. Mc Leod:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I need only say that the Prime Minister made quite fundamental statements in her contribution to the
budget debate, and I look forward to our being guided by those statements as we examine the matters under the particular Head that is before us now. Thank you very much.

*Question proposed:* That Head 13 stand part of the Schedule.

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Members, the sum of $638,708,600 for Head 13: 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 Development Programme. Sub-Head 01: Personnel Expenditure, Item 001: General Administration.

**Dr. Browne:** If there are no other contributions. Chairman, I just have an enquiry on Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance decreasing over the period, inclusive of the 2015 estimate, but the NIS contributions remaining the same. How can we account for that?

I also want to ask about this Cabinet-appointed committee, which committee are we referring to, with respect to this remuneration?

I also want to ask about the vacant posts that are indicated here. The sum of $6 million was projected in 2014 and $3 million for 2015, and not a cent has been expended thus far. What is the explanation for this?

**Hon. Mc Leod:** The accounting officer, Mr. Reynold Cooper, will assist with these questions. He is more familiar than all of us, I am sure.

**Mr. Chairman:** Would you like the Permanent Secretary to speak?

**Dr. Moonilal:** The Prime Minister will relay the information.

**Mr. Chairman:** Okay. All right. Okay.

**Hon. Mc Leod:** Insofar as the increased salaries and cost of living allowance bill is concerned, Members would be aware, Chair, that the Salaries Review Commission had made certain adjustments and these numbers are carried in 2014 estimates.

**Dr. Browne:** No, but it does not—I am sorry, Mr. Chairman, but just to help speed the process, that does not respond—I appreciate the response—to my question though. Salaries have decreased by $2 million, salaries and COLA, but the NIS contributions remain the same. I just wanted to know if the Acting Prime Minister can explain that observation, in addition to the other questions.

**Hon. Mc Leod:** Salaries in 2013, you are looking at $14 million.
Dr. Browne: Acting Prime Minister, if look at the right-hand column, that indicates the net increase or decrease in brackets.

Hon. McLeod: Yes.

Dr. Browne: And there is $1,970,600 in brackets, which means there is a decrease.

Hon. McLeod: I am advised, Chair, that, well, of course, we accept that NIS would not have changed. But this number, $16,650,000 includes retroactive payment, which would have been earned earlier. So in 2015, we would have gone back to a number that is without such retroactivity.

Mr. Chairman: What about remuneration?

Hon. McLeod: That committee is—that is the Clico and HCU commissioners. They would have been remunerated in the sums indicated here.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Chair, just for clarification.

Mr. Chairman: Wait, wait, before you go on to clarification, I think the Member for Diego Martin Central is still on the floor.

Dr. Browne: No, but he is on this point with the committee.

Mr. Deyalsingh: I am on the same point.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, you we are dealing with Item—[Interruption]

Mr. Deyalsingh: Item 01: Cabinet-appointed committee.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, which sub-item again?

Mr. Deyalsingh: Well, 01, the third line. There is no corresponding number to it.

Clerk: Which page?

Mr. Deyalsingh: Remuneration to Members—[Interruption]

Mr. Chairman: That is on what page?

Mr. Deyalsingh: On page 51, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: Page 51? We are not on page 51, we are on page 52. We are dealing with personnel administration.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Okay, same thing under Cabinet-appointed committee.

Mr. Chairman: Number, number?
Mr. Deyalsingh: Sorry, 14. The Acting Prime Minister just said this was to pay commissioners into the HCU and Clico—[Interruption]

Hon. Mc Leod: I wish to correct that.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Thank you.

Hon. Mc Leod: I wish to correct that. It would have been the National Awards Committee and Sport and Culture Fund Board.

2.25 p.m.

Mr. Chairman: Member for Diego Martin Central.

Dr. Browne: Yes, the Vacant Posts.

Mr. Chairman: Vacant Posts.

Hon. Mc Leod: Vacant Posts, 08—[The Acting Prime Minister confers with his advisor] Could you repeat your question, please?

Mr. Chairman: Member, could you repeat?

Dr. Browne: No, I am looking in the summary of expenditure on this issue, and there was $6 million estimated for 2014, under OPM, none was expended, and there is $3 million estimated for this year, am I seeing correctly? And I was seeking an explanation from the Prime Minister.

Hon. Mc Leod: [The Acting Prime Minister confers with his advisor] I take offence to that. I take very serious offence to that, and I wish that you will have some respect.

Dr. Rowley: Mr. Chair, am I missing something?

Miss Cox: Clearly.

Dr. Browne: Chairman—[Interruption]

Dr. Rowley: Mr. Chairman, please. I am not sure where we are at, because I am a little bit lost. Could you just guide me back to where we are, Mr. Chairman?

Mr. Chairman: We are at Sub-Head 01, Personal Expenditure, Item 001, General Administration.

Dr. Rowley: And what are we pursuing?

Mr. Chairman: Sub-Item 08, Vacant Posts, Salaries and COLA.

[The Acting Prime Minister confers with his advisor]
Hon. Mc Leod: I am advised that we did not use the sum of $1,300,000 there, all right, [The Acting Prime Minister confers with his advisor] $5 million, and for 2015, we are providing a sum of $3 million, yes, but we did not use that which was estimated, $5 million in 2014. We have not used it.

Miss Cox: Mr. Chair, what would trigger providing for $3 million for 2015 if, you know, you had no usage for the $5 million in 2014? What will inform that figure, please?

Hon. Mc Leod: [The Acting Prime Minister confers with his advisor] I am advised, Sir, that if the service commission were to hire persons in those vacant posts, we have provided for such hiring.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, we go to Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, Item 001, General Administration. Member for Diego Martin West, Member for Arouca/Maloney and then the Member for La Brea. Member for Diego Martin West.

Dr. Rowley: Mr. Chairman, I will have my first comment at Sub-Head 16. So if there are other contributions, I will wait.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, the Member for Arouca/Maloney.

Miss Hospedales: Yes, I have several questions coming under this particular Sub-Head. With reference to Contract Employment, there has been an observation of a gradual increase in the allocation. I would like to know how many contract positions exist? Exactly whether or not all vacancies are filled, and whether new positions were created during the period 2014—2015? Under Fees, that is——

Mr. Chairman: One at a time. Let us take one at a time.

Hon. Mc Leod: Contract positions, No. 148, new positions, Communications Unit, how many positions are in there, 15?

Mr. Chairman: Yes—[Interruption]

Miss Hospedales: Mr. Chair, he did not respond to how many, sorry, yes, the new positions. Sorry, Mr. Chair. I just want to go on to, Fees. If they can provide us with a breakdown of the fees that are actually expected to be paid under the allocation. We see here $10 million has been allocated, Mr. Chairman. Even though there is a decrease of $4 million, we would like to find out about the decrease—find out about the breakdown with reference to the fees that have to be paid.
Hon. Mc Leod: We will return with such information.

Dr. Rowley: As I said, I would like to come in at No. 16, Contract Employment, Sub-Head 16, Contract Employment. I have observed that we are making a provision of $13 million for Contract Employment in this Ministry, which is larger than the allocation for the establishment, because if we look at 001/01, under General Administration, we see that the provision for the establishment of the Prime Minister’s Office is $12.68 million, but we see a provision of $13 million for contract officers, and there has been a consistent growth in contract employment in this Ministry from $9 million in 2013 to $10 million in 2014 and we are making a provision of $13 million for 2015.

I would like to ask the Acting Prime Minister what is the cause of this growth of contract employment in the Prime Minister’s Office, where it has now superseded the establishment? And what is the procedure used to select persons for these positions, and who determines their emoluments be paid, the level of emoluments and so on? Who determines that? Who establishes what these people will be paid? And also we will like to get a complete list of all the persons hired in the Prime Minister’s Office with respect to these contract positions and their terms of engagement? And, Mr. Chairman, I would like us to conclude the Sub-Head of 16 as we did this morning—we finish one item before we go on to the other one, otherwise we get confused. So I await my answers on 16 before I proceed.

Hon. Mc Leod: Yes, the CPO sets the terms and conditions of employment. Right? Any listing of the persons contracted would come later, Chair. We are going to provide that information.

Dr. Rowley: Can we expect that before we finish the examination of the budget on day five? Thank you. What about the procedure for—before I do that, is the Acting Prime Minister telling us that all the persons employed by the Prime Minister’s Office and who are being paid there now, that their terms have been set by the CPO? That is what I heard.

Hon. Mc Leod: Well—[ Interruption ]

Dr. Rowley: He said the terms are set by the CPO. I am asking, is that a definitive statement?

Hon. Mc Leod: Well, contract positions will carry terms and conditions which are determined by the CPO, and accepted by the particular Minister.
Dr. Rowley: Is there any person in the Prime Minister’s Office who is now being paid by the Prime Minister’s Office, whose terms have not been set by the CPO?

Hon. Mc Leod: I could not answer that at this point.

Dr. Rowley: Would you undertake to check that for us, please?

Hon. Mc Leod: Yeah.

Dr. Rowley: Thank you. And with respect to how persons are selected, could you give us an idea as to how these persons are selected to fill these contract positions?

Hon. Mc Leod: We would normally advertise and we would examine such applicants as fit the bill that we are seeking to fill.

Dr. Rowley: Mr. Chairman, I would like to proceed to Sub-Head 19, Official Entertainment, and to be able to do that, Mr. Chairman, I happen to know that the approximate expenditure on official entertainment at the Prime Minister’s Office in the not too distant past was in the order of $5 million, $5—$5½ million. In fact, in 2010 that figure was $5½ million. I see a substantial provision being made now for official entertainment. It has grown from $5 million to $7.6 million in 2013, $9 million in 2014, and we are making another provision for $9 million. This is, Mr. Chairman, almost a 100 per cent increase, I would say approximately 4—you know, it is a significant increase, almost a doubling of the cost in a time when we are supposed to be in some modicum of austerity.

And as I asked the Ministry of Finance and the Economy this morning, is there any inclination of an intention anywhere in the Government to curb expenditure or is it just general increases across the board? Because official entertainment has grown in the Prime Minister’s Office from $5½ million to $9 million levelling out on a repeat of that. So I would like to hear from the Prime Minister what exactly is driving this high entertainment cost at the Prime Minister’s Office?

Hon. Mc Leod: I am sure that we can investigate this and bring the details, but I am also very certain that we have been celebrating all of our national festivals and important occasions contrary to what would have pertained before 2010.

Dr. Rowley: Mr. Chairman, so we will get a breakdown of the expenditure for 2014 and the proposals for 2015 to justify the request for $9 million.
Hon. Mc Leod: Yes.

Dr. Rowley: And we move on to 22, Short Term Employment. So we have a provision for Contract Employment of $13 million, but over and above that, under Sub-Head 22, we have another provision of $4 million for short-term employment. What exactly does short-term employment mean in this situation? And who is to be hired under that short term employment requiring that $4 million? And how do you proceed to obtain those persons to be placed in those positions?

Hon. Mc Leod: There is a note here which says, short term or evolving employment in specific government departments and agencies, where each employee’s term does not exceed six months.

Dr. Rowley: I know that, but the question I am asking—[Interruption]

Hon. Mc Leod:—and before contracts are approved, some persons are taken on short term before contracts are approved.

Dr. Rowley: What I am asking is specific to the Prime Minister’s Office, who are these people that you are hiring on short term where you require $4 million to hire them? What do they do? Who are these people?

Hon. Mc Leod: Mr. Cooper. [Laughter] [The Acting Prime Minister confers with his advisor]

Dr. Rowley: And while I am on that, Mr. Chairman, with respect to the contracted officers from the $13 million, how many for those persons are working for the Voice newspaper, part-time or full-time?

Hon. Mc Leod: I do not know that any one of us could answer that question.

Dr. Rowley: Well, maybe you should, because—I am just—we are on the record here, Mr. Chairman, I am asking, is there anybody in the Prime Minister’s Office, who is on the State’s payroll, who has any involvement in the production of the Voice newspaper.

2.40 p.m.

Mr. Mc Leod: As far as I am aware, no.

Mr. Chairman: I think the Member for Diego Martin Central wanted to raise a point and then Member for—

Miss Mc Donald: Port of Spain South.

Mr. Chairman: You wanted to raise a point? Yes. You can now speak and then Member for Port of Spain South.
**Dr. Browne:** Just a clarification. It is a sub-item that is coming up time and time again. I just want to know what house rates are. Maybe you can just clarify. You are seeing it under Finance as well.

**Mr. Chairman:** That is 07. You just identify the—

**Mr. Mc Leod:** House rates. There is a note that says:

All House Rates due on Government properties and payable to City and Borough Corporations.

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Member, these things are all detailed in the front, so if you go front of the document, you will see what these things mean, rather than—there are many other matters that we can deal with that are more pressing than matters that are already published in the document.

**Dr. Browne:** I appreciate the explanation. Thank you.

**Miss Mc Donald:** Yes. Item 23, Fees; that $10 million. There is no explanation for it. Could the hon. Acting Prime Minister give me an explanation as to that $10 million? Exactly what is it about?

**Dr. Rowley:** Mr. Chairman, while the Acting Prime Minister is considering that answer, I would like to join that question with respect to the root of this expenditure and I observed that in 2013, the Prime Minister’s Office expended $30 million in fees; then a further $14 million in 2014, and now a provision is being made of $10 million. If we go to page xiii, under the explanation for what fees are—are you with me?—xiii, at the front of the document, Item 23, fees, and my understanding as here fees are:

“Sequestering of Jurors, Prison Chaplain, Jury Fees, slaughtering fees, funeral expenses for unclaimed bodies, examination fees, audit fees, legal fees, brokerage fees, licences and anti-virus agreements.”

Now, those are the categories of activities or similar kinds of things that cover fees. I would like the Acting Prime Minister to tell us: what did the Prime Minister’s Office spend $30 million on in 2013 coming forward and a further $24 million later, including a $10 million for 2015? What exactly did you pay for here?

**Mr. Mc Leod:** I am advised that they involve legal fees for the commissions of enquiry into Clico, HCU and the 1990 coup attempt.

**Dr. Rowley:** Again, is the Acting Prime Minister aware that we have been told, from another department in the Government, that those fees that were
payable were from that department, namely the Attorney General’s Office, where significant increases, which we will come to later on. We have appropriated over $100 million to the Attorney General’s Office to cover fees. There are two categories of fees in that Ministry and we were led to believe that those, as mentioned by the Acting Prime Minister a moment ago, came in for commissions of enquiries and legal arrangements, and were being paid for under those allocations.

When we challenged the AG’s Office with respect to the growth in the expenditure, we were told that the main driving component was commissions of enquiry. Are we now hearing that there were two sources of payment to lawyers for the commissions of enquiry, whichever they were and, namely, the Clico enquiry? Then, I will ask: why are fees being paid for the Clico enquiry out of the Prime Minister’s Office and not the AG’s Office? I would like to ask that of the Ministry of Finance and the Economy, but we are talking to the Prime Minister’s Office now.

**Mr. Mc Leod:** Commissions of enquiry, Chair, would normally come under the Office of the Prime Minister.

**Dr. Rowley:** In which case, I will then ask another question: why, then, were we being told that the increase in the Office of the Attorney General—but we will come to that later on.

But, of course, we would like to ask two things: a list of what we spent in 2014; who got those moneys? What were they paid for? What we received for those payments? And what we anticipate to be expended in 2015 and on what?

**Mr. Chairman:** Member for La Brea.

**Mr. Jeffrey:** Item 31, Expenses of Prime Minister’s establishment. Can we get a breakdown?

**Mr. Chairman:** All right. Just hold on. We are coming back to that. We have not reached that one yet.

**Dr. Rowley:** We have some issues on Item 27, Official Overseas Travel. Mr. Chairman, again I want to draw to the attention of the Ministry of Finance and the Economy, by way of the Prime Minister’s Office. Now, we are operating a budget that has a multibillion dollar deficit and we are not seeing any attempt to curb expenses which ought to and can be curbed.

Mr. Chairman, I make this against the background where overseas travel in 2008 was $2.2 million; 2010, $3.5 million; 2013, $2.4 million, in the Prime
Minister’s Office—and this is just the Prime Minister’s Office overseas travel, eh—2013, $2.4 million; 2014, $5.8 million. They budgeted $6.5 million, but could not manage to get the planes in time, so the spending was $5.8 million. So the Ministry of Finance and the Economy budgeted $6 million in 2015.

So even though $6.5 million was budgeted in 2014 and they could not manage to get more than $5.8 spent in a period of required austerity, they are budgeting $6 million for overseas travel in the Prime Minister’s Office. I think this represents an attitude where nobody is paying attention to the fact, at the Ministry of Finance and the Economy, that we are spending more than we are earning and there are areas that require curbing and these kinds of expenses can be curbed without damaging the people’s interest. So I am asking the Prime Minister’s Office whether the Office of the Prime Minister is prepared to curb this expenditure in this budget.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Chairman, I just want to be very clear, from you, that this process we are engaged in is a process of posing questions based on the Estimates before us, or is it a process where Members are allowed to make observations, inferences and political statements? If the latter holds, Members on this side of the House are quite prepared to enter into this conversation. I was of the impression, and those of us on this side, that this process is used to ask pointed questions on the Estimates and subheadings before us. If Members are going to make political commentary, the Government is prepared to participate in that as well.

**Dr. Rowley:** Mr. Chairman, I specifically asked the Acting Prime Minister whether his Ministry is prepared to curb this expense against the background of what I demonstrated is the growth of the expenditure over a period of time and all my references are from the documents in front of me, the budget documents.

So, with all due respect to my colleagues, I have not strayed from the budget documents. The budgetary process, as I understand it, is a request for more money and the Office of the Prime Minister is asking for $6 million for overseas travel for that office, and I am asking the Acting Prime Minister whether, in the context of what it has been before, and where it has gone, we cannot restrain that expenditure a bit in 2015.

**Mr. Mc Leod:** Chair, I wish to assure this honourable House that this Government is committed to running the business of Government as cost effectively as possible.

**Mr. Chairman:** All right. We are going on to sub—No, I think that the Member for La Brea has a point that he would like to raise.
Mr. Jeffrey: Item 31, Expenses of Prime Minister’s Establishment, $24 million in 2010. Can we get a breakdown of that figure?

Mr. Chairman: Twenty when?

Mr. Jeffrey: $24 million in—

Mr. Deyalsingh: 2015.

Mr. Jeffrey: No, 2013; no 2014.

Mr. Deyalsingh: The 2014 estimate and 2015—

Mr. Jeffrey: 2015, yeah.

Mr. Chairman: No, it is 2014 you are asking. What are you asking?

Mr. Jeffrey: For a breakdown of the $24 million for the estimate in 2015.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Acting Prime Minister, a breakdown of the estimates for 2015, for the establishment—2014/2015, “nuh”.

Mr. McLeod: We have taken note of the question and we will investigate it and provide as much information as we can.

Mr. Chairman: Okay. Yes.

Dr. Rowley: Before we move on from 31, the documents in front of us indicate that the Expenses of Acting Prime Minister’s Establishment are levelling out at $24 million a year. Could the Acting Prime Minister tell us exactly what is covered by that $24 million under Household and if any of that expenditure relates to the Prime Minister’s activities outside of the Prime Minister’s household at St. Ann’s?

Are we going to get—

Mr. Chairman: No, well, I am waiting on the acting Prime Minister.

Mr. McLeod: The number that we have there does not include anything outside of the Prime Minister’s household.

Dr. Rowley: Mr. Chairman—

Mr. Chairman: Well, you have asked that we give you a breakdown.

Dr. Rowley: The question I was asking is whether any of this expenditure relates to the Prime Minister’s occupancy of anything outside of St. Ann’s.

Mr. Chairman: And he said no. That is what the acting Prime Minister said. No.
Dr. Rowley: It is listed—I have to be very clear what question I ask and what answer I get. We are talking about the Prime Minister’s establishment and he said it does not involve anything outside the Prime Minister’s household. I am asking: household geographically, outside of St. Ann’s. I did not get an answer to that.

Mr. Mc Leod: It does not involve anything outside of the Prime Minister’s establishment, which I understand to be the household at St. Ann’s.

Dr. Rowley: Mr. Speaker, under 65, Expenses of Cabinet appointed Bodies, sub 65, specific sub-head 65, I was a little surprised a moment ago when I raised the issue of fees and the Government, in attempting to explain the allocation for fees in the Prime Minister’s Office, told us that fees under sub-sub 23 is for payment of the Clico commission of enquiry when in fact we have a specific sub-head of 65, specific to commissions of enquiry. Are we double counting or were we misled under 23? Could the Government review this now and tell us whether that answer to 23 was a correct answer?

Mr. Mc Leod: I am advised, Chair, that this number deals with staff.

Dr. Rowley: Which number?

Mr. Mc Leod: 65, and 23 is fees essentially for counsel and so on.

2.55 p.m.

Dr. Rowley: Mr. Chairman, I think I understand the English language very clearly. Under Sub-head 65 it says “Expenses of Cabinet Appointed Bodies”, and if you go to the explanation section you will see “65(iii)” and it says. “Expenses of Commissions of Enquiry” $5 million.

Hon. Mc Leod: Yes.

Dr. Rowley: What are we being told now about staff in this matter? It is either that money is expended in the context of payment to a commission of enquiry. That is how I understand that. But we were told earlier on, under 23, that the $10 million had to do with payment for the Clico enquiry. I do not know, maybe I should ask: did the Prime Minister’s Office take on staff in the context of the Clico enquiry? Because if the answer is no, then what we are being told here cannot be correct.

Hon. Mc Leod: If we read further Chair, you will see that expenses of cabinet appointed bodies involve all expenses other than remuneration of committees, secretariats and other such bodies appointed by Cabinet for specific purposes.
Dr. Rowley: So what does that mean? The question remains unanswered, because we are being told that two heads, 23 and 65—one with $10 million; one with $100 million—and they both relate to payments for commissions of enquiry. Could someone clarify that? Could the Acting Prime Minister clarify that for us because that to me, Mr. Chairman, requires clarification?

Hon. Mc Leod: But even so Chair, at 23, we have what?—$10 million?—and the explanation at 65 talks to $5 million for commissions of enquiry.

Dr. Rowley: So we have 10 on one hand and five on the other hand, and what I am asking is: why is the Ministry of Finance and the Economy providing two sets of moneys in the same Sub-head for same purpose?—if we are to believe what they are telling us.

Mr. Chairman, it is my view and I would like to hold it out to the Government that there might have been an error with respect to the answer of 23. It cannot be, in the budgeting process, that the Ministry of Finance and the Economy will make $10 million available in line 23 and then make $5 million available in line 65 for the same purpose. I would rather think that there was an error in the answer under 23.

Mr. Mc Leod: And Chair, if you check on line 09, you will see Remuneration to Chairman and Members of Commissions of Enquiry under Personnel Expenditure. [Crosstalk]

Dr. Rowley: I draw your attention to page 52 under 01—09, so this just further complicates the issue. That means that there are three places in the Prime Minister’s Office with money for commissions of enquiry. So no wonder we have this money submitted for enquiries now. [Laughter]

Miss Mc Donald: Mr. Chairman, could I ask a question? Under the new Standing Orders, can you request that the PS answer a question if the PS is required?

Mr. Chairman: If the Minister allows him.

Miss Mc Donald: If the Minister allows him.

Mr. Chairman: Yes.

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Chairman, could I just ask a question on this?

Mr. Chairman: Yes.
Mr. Imbert: I gather from what is being said that under personnel 09, you pay the commissioners; under Goods and Services, whichever one it was, the one with the $10 million, that is 23, you pay the lawyers; and under 65 you pay for the building with the staff—the palantypists, the secretary—so you have the expenses for these things built up in three different places. Is that what is going on, Mr. Acting Prime Minister? Commissioners one way, lawyers the next way and secretarial and support staff the third way? “Da is wah going on?"

Mr. Mc Leod: In dealing with what is before us.

Mr. Imbert: The answer is yes. I am not hearing you, Mr. Acting Prime Minister. The PS is saying yes, but I am not hearing you. [Laughter]

Mr. Chairman: Could we proceed? I think that you have clarified the issue.

Mr. Imbert: I am taking “yes” from the Permanent Secretary then. No problem. I would take the yes from the Permanent Secretary.

Mr. Chairman: Yes, any further clarification on—?

Dr. Rowley: I am still on 65, Sub-head 65, which contains under (i) the explanations that $93 million of that $100 million is for the National Security Council. Again, Mr. Chairman, I have to express my concern about the growth of the public expenditure in this way, because in 2010 that National Security Council was really using up $55 million.

In 2014, we budgeted $116 million for the National Security Council—from $55 million to $116 million. We now revised the 2014 estimates and we revised it downwards to $80 million. What then is the justification for budgeting $100 million or $90 million in 2015? Are we guided by the actual numbers of 2014? What is happening in the National Security Council, which is an administrative body as far as I am aware—what is happening to cause the budget to have grown in that way in this period of difficulty?

Mr. Chairman: Acting Prime Minister.

Hon. Mc Leod: Chair, the National Security Council is not as slight as is being made out. It is a most important security council, and we would have included administrative expenses. Yeah? We would have certain intelligence issues and so on. It involves the acquisition of important equipment and specialist training of persons and so on. Chair, I do not know, and I stand to be corrected. [Laughter]

Mr. Chairman: Listen, listen, please.
Hon. Mc Leod: I stand to be corrected. I do not know that national security issues are issues that should be so glibly discussed and so on, only perhaps to score political points. I am not going to be drawn into that at all.

Mr. Chairman: I would say operational matters ought not to be discussed here. Operational matters—that is not our business. There is a national security committee and even when you are coming to these matters, the committee could decide if they want to hear these things in camera. We are not here dealing with operational matters. So I think that must be made abundantly clear. But I think what the Member for Diego Martin West is asking, he is asking, for instance—

[Interruption]

Dr. Rowley: Mr. Chairman, may I?

Mr. Chairman: Yes.

Dr. Rowley: I am not aware that I made any request here for any operational details. I am not aware that the National Security Council is anything other than an administrative body. And in 2010, whatever the National Security Council’s terms of reference were in 2010, it is my view, it remains the same now—the National Security Council—which is a coordinating body of our operational arms chaired by the Prime Minister. Whatever they were doing in 2010 it costs this country $55 million. That is a fact.

Then, whatever they did or intended to do, I never asked for any details about it. So to make reference to glib statements, I understand the jibe to mean something else besides other than my colleague’s interpretation. They intended to do something or things in 2014, and they budgeted $116 million. They have now revised that budget downwards to $80 million. I am saying I would be guided by that going forward, and it is now $90 million for 2015. What I expected was an explanation as to what is driving this growth rather than talking about scoring political points, because we are here examining a budget and if it is not to be examined here, then do not put it here and do not bring it here.

Mr. Chairman: Yes, Acting Prime Minister.

Mr. Mc Leod: I have taken note of what the hon. Member has suggested, Chair.

Dr. Rowley: And having taken note, Mr. Chairman, without exposing the State’s national security apparatus and endangering the State: would the Office of the Prime Minister explain to us this growth in the National Security Council which as far as we are concerned is an administrative coordinating body? Is it an
increase in staff; increase in equipment; payment to foreign agencies? That is not going to breach national security. It would simply tell us where the growth is taking place. Is that too much for the Parliament to ask?

Hon. McLeod: Chair, we have had to deal with the prisons grabbers and jammers; baggage screening equipment; we have to deal with the defence force strategic services agencies. Right now there is a campaign dealing with criminal gangs and so on, and these matters, I am advised, are essentially responsible for the kind of numbers that you see us putting forward.

Mr. Chairman: Okay. We cannot spend all day on one matter.

Mr. Imbert: I only have a few things in the Prime Minister’s whole head to ask, and this was one of them. Are you saying that the Prime Minister’s Office through the National Security Council is handling some law enforcement issues? Is that what you are saying, or some expenses that would naturally be attributed to law enforcement?

Hon. McLeod: The Minister of National Security would assist with that.

Hon. Griffith: Mr. Chairman, the National Security Council is, indeed, and quite rightly so, it is an administrative body, but they are also used as a conduit towards the acquisition of very technical and highly sophisticated equipment for the Ministry of National Security, and I would give you a simple example.

The veering system, in May 2010, four days before the election, the veering system was actually approved by the National Security Council at a cost of $100 million. So the National Security Council is, indeed, used as a conduit towards the acquisition of specific national security assets. What we can do, Acting Prime Minister, is that you can get a comprehensive breakdown of the administrative cost and the operational cost and the operational cost may well include things such as the jammers and grabbers and intelligence aspects, but we cannot—for obvious national security reasons—divulge the specifics of the equipment. I do not know if that would suffice.

Dr. Rowley: Well, that is all we were asking. That is what we were asking for. We are not asking for details of national security elements. We are not that irresponsible. This exercise is not for that. So if you will provide us with that, we will be very grateful.

Mr. Chairman: All right. So we are going on to minor equipment.
3.10 p.m.

**Dr. Browne**: Chairman, I have a question on this Sub-Head.

**Mr. Chairman**: Which Sub-Head is that?

**Dr. Browne**: Goods and Services.

**Mr. Chairman**: Which Item? Which Sub-Item?

**Dr. Browne**: The question is with respect to Security Services, 43, and the Acting Prime Minister indicated earlier in response to a question that none of the expenditure here, or the allocations here, reflects costs associated with any location apart from St. Ann’s or the physical Office of the Prime Minister. I just want to be clear that with respect to this increase in expenditure on security services for the OPM that none of that is associated with any location in south Trinidad or elsewhere. [Interrupt] Well, I am asking now. Can you just be clear with the committee on that, please?

**Hon. Mc Leod**: My response is no.

**Mr. Chairman**: All right, let us go on to Sub—

**Mr. Hypolite**: Mr. Chairman, I just have one and that deals with Sub-Head 37, Janitorial Services, whereby in 2013 we are looking at $281,000, in 2014, $200,000, but in 2015 we are looking at $1.2 million, an increase of $1 million. Can the Prime Minister indicate exactly what would cause that $1 million increase in janitorial services? And, also, if he can indicate which janitorial company is being used for that?

**Hon. Mc Leod**: Yeah, Chair, I am advised that that contract came to an end at $200,000 and they were on a month to month, under line 28, Other Contracted Services. So a new contract is budgeted for at $1,282,000.

**Mr. Chairman**: All right, let us go on to Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, Item 001, General Administration; 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies; Item 005, Non-Profit Institutions—

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

**Mr. Chairman**: Where are you? You are where?

**Mr. Imbert**: 04.

**Mr. Chairman**: Yeah. So we are dealing with Current Transfers and Subsidies, Item 005, Non-Profit Institutions. The Member for Diego Martin North/East.
Mr. Imbert: I see a new item, Religious Organizations, $50 million; could we get an explanation for that, please?

Hon. Mc Leod: That is representing the payment of grants to religious organizations.

Mr. Imbert: So was it somewhere else before because there was no allocation for it before?

Hon Mc Leod: Well, I understand that it used to come under the Minister of Ecclesiastical Services.

Mr. Imbert: No, they had no such Ministry. They had no Ministry of Ecclesiastical—anything. No, Sir, that is not possible.

Hon. Mc Leod: This is a new item?

Mr. Imbert: Yes, it is a brand new item—brand new. What is it for? And since you cannot tell us now, could you give us a breakdown of how this estimate of $50 million was built up so we could see, you know, how you arrived at $50 million. Ten million for the Maha Sabha?

Mr. Chairman: Member for St. Joseph.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Thank you, Chair.

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Chairman, is the Prime Minister giving me an undertaking?

Mr. Chairman: Yeah, he is taking note of it and then he will respond, so we are going to St. Joseph.

Mr. Imbert: Right, okay.

Mr. Deyalsingh: So, Chair, we will get a breakdown of the $50 million. My follow-up question is, based on what the Acting Prime Minister said, that these are grants, does any other office of any other Ministry, in addition to this $50 million grant, give religious bodies any further grants?

Hon. Mc Leod: I could not answer that because that is not in the body of information that I have.

Mr. Chairman: I recognize the Member for Laventille East/Morvant.

Miss Cox: Mr. Acting Prime Minister, through you, Mr. Chairman, I would like to know if this was advertised.

Mr. Chairman: What?
Miss Cox: Concerning the grants to religious bodies, how is it distributed and was there some advertisement?

Hon. Mc Leod: No, this is an estimate for a new item for 2015.

Miss Cox: No, it is not.

Hon. Mc Leod: Yeah.

Miss Cox: How will it be disbursed?

Hon. Mc Leod: I suspect that when religious bodies make requests and so on, they would be provided with—

Miss Cox: I understand that grants—there are some churches that have been receiving grants, so where was this coming from if this is a new item?

Hon. Mc Leod: This is the first time that we are budgeting for this issue, right. I am aware that a number of religious bodies, you know, for their particular festivity and so on, have been in receipt of contributions from the Government. Now, this is an attempt to formalize that whole thing going forward.

Mr. Chairman: Member for St. Joseph.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Thank you Acting Prime Minister for that explanation. Based on your explanation what is the policy position now? What policy position have you adopted so that when a religious body comes for part of this grant they are told how to apply, what are the criteria? So when you are giving us a list of the breakdown, could you also tell us the policy decision driving this new initiative?

Hon. Mc Leod: Yes, certainly.

Mr. Chairman: All right, we are going to Item 009, Other Transfers. I recognize Diego Martin Central, Arouca/Maloney, Chaguanas West, Point Fortin.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: No, but on the previous one I had asked a question, you would recognize.

Mr. Chairman: Which one you had asked for?

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Under Current Transfers, we were on Religious Organizations and I just wanted a clarification so that the amounts that were given to constituencies, when asked, to religious bodies of $5,000 per church and at Christmas, and then at Divali and so on, under what Head were those done? For 2014?

Mr. Chairman: I do not think that would be followed you know.
Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: For 2014? Sir, it is a valid—
Mr. Chairman: Yeah, but that is not under OPM, that is not before us.
Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: It is under OPM that I have gotten those funds.
Mr. Chairman: You got it from OPM?
Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: That is what I am saying—yes, for 2014 and 2013.
Mr. Chairman: Are you sure that is under OPM?
Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: I am telling you, I have picked it up myself under OPM.
Mr. Chairman: Okay.
Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: I am not crying but I am just asking you, both for 2013 and 2014, under what Head have these sums been extracted?
Mr. Chairman: Please. Could you take note of that particular and respond.
Hon. Mc Leod: Certainly.
Mr. Chairman: The Member for Diego Martin Central, Arouca/Maloney and Chaguanas West. [Crosstalk] The Member for Diego Martin Central.
Dr. Browne: Yes, Chairman, with respect to the Divine Echoes Orchestra, 08, there was no expenditure—[Interruption]
Mr. Chairman: Please, please, Members.
Dr. Browne: There was no expenditure in 2014 after that group was disbanded previously and I am seeing an estimate of $60,000 for 2015, I would like some detail on that, an explanation.

Secondly, with respect to the National Association of Administrative Professionals, there was a projection of $1 million in 2014 which was not expended and I am seeing it back here again as a request for $1 million. With respect to that NGO, I am informed that there is an NGO unit within the Government service, so why is the Office of the Prime Minister seeking this allocation of $1 million for 2015?

Hon. Mc Leod: With regard to the $60,000, it is an ex gratia payment to a former member of the band, Divine Echoes, and this is now being budgeted for. Yeah? And with regard to the National Association of Administrative Professionals, this is a commitment, I think—yes, a grant towards the building of their headquarters.
Dr. Rowley: Mr. Chairman—

Mr. Chairman: Before you go on, I recognize Arouca/Maloney and then Chaguanas West.

Miss Hospedales: Mr. Chair, I would like to give way to the Opposition Leader, please.

Mr. Chairman: Yeah, well I will go to Chaguanas West, please.

Mr. Warner: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Could you give me some elaboration on how the figure was arrived at for the National Operations Center, $355 million? How was it arrived at?

Mr. Chairman: Where are we?

Mr. Warner: Page 57, 009, line Item 10.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, under Other Transfers? Yes, the Minister of National Security.

Hon. Griffith: Sorry, Chairman, what was the question again?

Mr. Warner: I was asking, can you advise me how the figure of $355 million was arrived at.

Hon. Griffith: Chairman, the National Operations Center is a communicational backbone, so the system for the National Operations Center involves a heavy IT system. It involves looking at technical ability and the capacity where real-time video footage, information, intelligence gathering, would all be fed into one specific area. A team was actually appointed to look at the requirements for Trinidad and Tobago for such a centre and it varied. In the United States, for example, their system for a National Operations Center dealt specifically with operations.

Dr. Rowley: It is a continent.

Hon. Griffith: Yes, and that is incorrect, Trinidad and Tobago did not require that because that was based on operations. That is why, if you call, initially, it was a National Security Operations Center, and based on the understanding we have seen from international best practice and similar to the United Kingdom where they have the Cabinet officers briefing room, the National Operations Center is a system that is used for joint collaboration and communication between the different arms of the law enforcement agencies, hence the reason why it was placed under the National Security Council, which happens to be under the Office of the Prime Minister.
So the cost for a system like this—it is really, as I said, it is a communicational backbone where it would involve a lot of technical aspects, IT. So it is not just a system of security cameras and televisions, it involves collaboration and information being fed and it will include cameras from the law enforcement officers being fed immediately, the cameras from the coast guard vessels, the radar, the UAVs; everything being fed to one agency, into one system, and the cost for this will vary between—we have seen different costs, vary between $500 million to $700 million, to $800 million, so hence the reason for this. This will actually be over a two-year period but this year will be the initial costs to actually get the whole system up and running, and then after there it will improve further probably in 2015/2016.

Mr. Warner: Is this center housed in its own building?

Hon. Griffith: It is situated at the Knowsley Building.

Mr. Chairman: Right. We are moving on.

Dr. Rowley: Mr. Chairman, before we move on I just want to make a comment to the Acting Prime Minister who spoke about this ex gratia payment for the member of the band. I seem to recall that Divine Echoes was a band, a group of persons, how did the Prime Minister determine that one member of the band deserves an ex gratia payment? And was there any consideration for the rest of the band? Why is this member getting an ex gratia payment? What are the circumstances?

Hon. Mc Leod: I am advised, Sir, that the other members, because of the conditions of their employment, they received gratuity. This particular one, again, because of the conditions of his employment did not get gratuity so an ex gratia payment was advanced there.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, we are now going on to Sub-Head 09, Development Programme, Item 003, Economic Infrastructure. The Member for Diego Martin North/East. Infrastructure Development Fund, you can raise that here.

Mr. Imbert: I can raise it now?

Mr. Chairman: Yes, of course.

Mr. Imbert: Okay, on page 238, 13, 06, F., Public Buildings, I see that no funds have been allocated for the restoration of Stollmeyer’s Castle or Whitehall, and grass is growing out of Whitehall as we speak, so why is there no money for the restoration of Whitehall and Stollmeyer’s Castle when there is a big sign up outside Whitehall saying, “Restoration Work in Progress”?
3.25 p.m.

**Hon. Mc Leod:** I am advised we have nothing in that regard.

**Mr. Imbert:** So you are not refurbishing Whitehall and Stollmeyer’s Castle in 2015? You are leaving the grass to grow out of the window?

**Hon. Mc Leod:** No I think that that will come under another Ministry.

**Mr. Chairman:** I see the Minister of Social Integration and National Diversity waving his hands, so I got the impression that it is now under your Ministry. So when it comes to his Ministry you will be able to respond. [Crosstalk]

**Mr. Chairman:** Let us go on to Item 005, Multi-sectoral and Other Services.

**Mr. Imbert:** Is the Acting Prime Minister saying that it should be dealt with elsewhere or should have been dealt with somewhere in the Estimates? Is that what he is saying?

**Hon. Mc Leod:** Yes.

**Mr. Imbert:** Okay.

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Members, the question is that the sum of $638,708,600 for Head 13, the Office of the Prime Minister, now stand part of the Schedule.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Head 13 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.*

**Mr. Chairman:** May I say that all the undertakings that the Acting Prime Minister and his accounting officer have given, have been duly noted. You will be communicated and you are expected to supply those responses before the end of the five-day period when we are supposed to end our exercise.

Thank you very much.

We now proceed to Head 48 Ministry of Trade, Industry, Investment and Communications. [Interruption and crosstalk]

Are you able to conduct your affairs without your accounting officers?

**Hon. Bharath:** They are being brought downstairs apparently from the holding bay.

**Mr. Chairman:** I find they are taking very long to reach here. [Laughter] [Interruption] Accounting officer and all the technical officers, there are chairs
here. Who needs to sit can sit here, and the rest can sit in the back. There are chairs in the back.

Head 48.

Question proposed: That Head 48 stand part of the Schedule.

Mr. Chairman: Head 48, Ministry of Trade, Industry, Investment and Communications, $306,629,900. I will now invite the hon. Minister of Trade, Industry, Investment and Communications, if he so desires, to make a brief opening statement for no more than five minutes. Hon. Minister, would you like to make an opening statement? You can do so now.

Hon. Bharath: Thank you for the opportunity, Chairman. Everything that we have to account for as far as the Ministry of Trade, Industry, Investment and Communications is concerned, will be done in the budget debate to be held in the Upper House next week, as a result I have no further statement—any statements.

[Interruption]

Mr. Chairman: No, no; please, please.

No, I think you misunderstood me. You are entitled, as a Minister, if you want to give this Standing Finance Committee an overview of your priority areas as a Ministry. You are afforded the opportunity to do so within a five-minute time frame. If you choose not to, we will go immediately into the next step.

Hon. Bharath: Thank you, Chairman, and I am respectfully declining that opportunity.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, thank you very much.

Hon. Members, the sum of $306,629,900 for Head 48, the Ministry of Trade, Industry, Investment 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 and the Draft Estimates of Development Programme.

Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure, Item 001, General Administration. Item 002, Weights and Measures—[Interruption]

Mrs. Thomas: Mr. Chairman—

Mr. Chairman: Which one are you under?

Mrs. Thomas: Item 01, Personnel Expenditure.
Mr. Chairman: Okay, Personnel Expenditure.

Mrs. Thomas: Under Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance, under the explanation for Item 001, it says:

“Includes provision for vacant posts with incumbents.”

An increase of $702,700. Mr. Chairman, I just want to know under what Heads currently are these incumbents paid. And then Item 08; Vacant Posts—Salaries and COLA without incumbents. There was an allocation of $300,000 in 2014, and it was removed and is now allocated to 2015. If the Minister could identify when these positions will be filled, and if I can get a listing of the positions to be filled.

Hon. Bharath: If I may answer the second question first, Chairman. With regard to the Vacant Posts, Salaries and COLA, $300,000 without incumbents. Essentially, we have several posts that have not been filled simply because we have been awaiting, in many instances, review from the CPO with regard to these particular posts. That is the reason why in 2014 you would have seen that there was no actual expenditure in this area, but they have been brought forward again.

Many of these posts are technical posts that, in many instances, will require to be filled over a period of time, but we are awaiting Service Commission to be able to do that.

With regard to the first question you asked, which was provision for vacant posts with incumbents, I want to just refer to my—[ Interruption ] Member, just clarification, would you mind repeating the initial question, please?

Mrs. Thomas: What I am asking is, I see an increase of $702,700 and the note says “Includes provision for vacant posts with incumbents”. These incumbents, under what Head are they being paid right now?

Hon. Bharath: Clearly they are acting, as you would appreciate, and they are being paid out of this Head.

Mrs. Thomas: So the increase represents what? [ Interruption ]

Mr. Chairman: I think you all would come back to that one because we cannot waste time on matters like these.

Member for St. Ann’s East, they will respond to you later on.

Let us go on to Item 002, Weights and Measures Inspectorate; Item 003, Consumer Affairs Division; Item 004, Research and Planning; Item 005, Consumer Outreach and Protection Unit; Item 006, Communications.
Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Chairman, I note that the actual Communications Division had been integrated, I think—or it was announced to be integrated into the Ministry sometime in 2013, but I noticed that there has been no expenditure under 2013/2014. Could you let me know, has this unit been set up? I want to know whether GISL is, at this time, still operating and whether it is actually doing the functions of this communications unit as well in the meantime. When was GISL established and assumed the functions of this division? Did you get me?

Hon. Bharath: Yes, I did. Essentially, the Communications Ministry was subsumed in the Ministry of Trade, Industry, Investment and Communications for budgetary purposes in the new financial year 2015. Prior to that, the expenditure for the communications unit was actually paid out of the Ministry of Public Administration, Head 70, and they shared certain functions with the Ministry of Public Administration.

So for budgetary purposes, the answer is it is now a part of the Ministry of Trade, Industry, Investment and Communications from 2015 onwards, with regard to expenditure and revenue.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: May I just ask then: Is the same GISL staff being retained?

Hon. Bharath: So that is your second question?

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Yes.

Hon. Bharath: As you may know, under the previous regime, GISL and CNMG were set up, essentially bypassing the Information Services Division in the Ministry of Information at the time. That unit has remained; their work has been refocused and redirected. GISL’s mandate is slightly different, although I have to admit that there is some duplication that we are looking at right now.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: My concern is for the duplication of work by GISL and the communications unit.

Hon. Bharath: It is not as much as it would have been maybe two years ago. What we are doing clearly is dealing with public servants in the Information Division.

Miss Hospedales: Mr. Chair, just for clarity, could the Minister indicate the actual location of the communications unit, please?

Hon. Bharath: The actual physical location? The fifth floor of Nicholas Towers.
Mr. Chairman: We are going on to Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, Item 001 General Administration—yes.

Miss Hospedales: Mr. Chair, Sub-Item 16. In Sub-Item 16 under contract employment, we saw that there has been a significant increase in the allocation for contract employment. More specifically, $12 million has been allocated for this fiscal. Mr. Chair, we would like to know if the Minister could give us a breakdown in terms of the number of contract positions and if he can tell us the projected number of positions to be filled.

3.40 p.m.

Hon. Bharath: Okay. In the Ministry of Communications there are 68 positions that are not filled currently out of—[Minister confers with advisor] how many in total? [Crosstalk] Where is the total? Yeah. Yeah. Out of a total number of positions at the Ministry of Communications of 143, there are 68 unfilled positions. And the reason that they have not been filled is because they require a certain level of technical ability, technical producers, and technical directors and so on, and so those positions have not been filled. However, there are also some positions in the Ministry of Trade, for example, that require a special degree of speciality, the “single electronic window”, for example, is a good one, whereby we have had to go out and get contract workers. But I cannot tell you off the top of my head which are the contract positions, but we can provide you with a listing of those positions in due course.

Mr. Chairman: Okay. We go to item Weights and Measures Inspectorate—[Crosstalk] Yes. Yes. All right.

Dr. Rowley: Before we move on from Sub 16—

Mr. Chairman: Right.

Dr. Rowley:—these significant expenditure on contract employment which would have moved from $8 million in 2013 to $10 million in 2014, and is now to move to $12 million in 2015, how are these people hired? What procedure is used to fill these positions? And what have we been getting for the expenditure, for example of 2014? What has been the output of this department?

Hon. Bharath: Thank you, hon. Leader of the Opposition. The procedure and process is no different to what it has always been. We have essentially maintained the existing procedures which is a Cabinet Note, followed by an advertisement, a full advertisement of the job with the required qualifications, experience and expertise that would be necessary to do that job. An interview is then held, a
marking system of course, is in place, and we would have referees or interviewers, cross Ministry, Ministry of Public Administration, the Ministry itself, GISL sometimes, but would represent wide stakeholders, and then they do a marking which subsequently will provide the person who is best suited for those jobs.

**Dr. Rowley:** Does this apply to all the contract officers or just some contract officers?

**Hon. Bharath:** Let me confirm, but I believe it should be all. Yes. I am told it is all.

**Mrs. Gopee-Scoon:** Chair—

**Mr. Chairman:** Just now.

**Dr. Rowley:** That being so, so you are telling this Parliament that no person has been hired in the communications department who was not the subject of a public advertisement?

**Hon. Bharath:** Not to my knowledge.

**Dr. Rowley:** But if that does come to your knowledge, what would be your reaction?

**Hon. Bharath:** To enquire as to why the process was bypassed.

**Mr. Chairman:** Member for Port of Spain South.

**Miss Mc Donald:** No. I do not want to say anything.

**Mr. Chairman:** Who wanted to ask? [Crosstalk] Oh, Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann’s West.

**Hon. Bharath:** Mr. Chairman, just to clarify something. You may know that there is a practice whereby the Permanent Secretary has the authority to hire on short-term employment for a period of three months, and there may be a few of those in, I suspect, all Ministries across Trinidad and Tobago.

**Hon. Member:** Exactly what Ministries?

**Hon. Bharath:** I suspect that that is a practice that would have been started many years ago and would have continued.

**Dr. Rowley:** Is the Permanent Secretary here with you now?

**Hon. Bharath:** Yes. Could you find out from the Permanent Secretary whether that has been occurring?
Hon. Bharath: [Minister confers with advisor] Do we have any short term? Okay. Yes. I am told that we do have a few contract—sorry—short-term contract employees.

Dr. Rowley: How many persons and specifically what are they doing there?

Hon. Bharath: Okay. We can get that information for you. He does not have it at hand.

Mr. Chairman: Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann’s West.

Dr. Rowley: Mr. Chairman, before you run off. Before you run off. We would like, before the completion of the exercise, that we get a listing of all the persons in the communications department—this is to this Sub-Head—

Hon. Bharath: Yes.

Dr. Rowley:—who are on the payroll as contract officers, short term or longer term contract officers, their terms of reference, the date relating to their hiring.

Hon. Bharath: Sure.

Dr. Rowley:—and what exactly—

Mr. Chairman: We are dealing with General Administration. Communications is Item 006, if you look on your listing here. So let us not confuse—

Dr. Rowley: Contract employment.

Mr. Chairman: Yeah. But I am saying, in terms of what you are making reference to, we have not reached that as yet.

Dr. Rowley: Well, help me, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: Which page are you on?

Dr. Rowley: I am on 006 Sub-Head sub 02/16, on page 259. [Crosstalk]

Mr. Chairman: We are dealing with General Administration. I think you should hold your fire on that for later.

Dr. Rowley: It is not fire.

Mr. Chairman: Well hold your point. [Laughter] I want to recognize the Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann’s West.

Mrs. Mc Intosh: Chair, short-term contracts apart, could the Minister state what is the average length of these contracts?
Hon. Bharath: Two years.

Mrs. Mc Intosh: Two years.

Hon. Bharath: Yes.

Mr. Chairman: All right. Could we proceed to Item 002, Weights and Measures.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: Yes, madam.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Item 44/27 Official Overseas Travel—

Mr. Chairman: Official Overseas Travel.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon:—there has been an exponential increase for 2015, more than a hundred per cent.

Mr. Chairman: Overseas Travel.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Could you detail what these visits are about? It is an increase of more than a hundred per cent.

Hon. Bharath: I am just trying to get the—[Crosstalk]

Hon. Moonilal: What number is it?

Hon. Bharath: Yes. You wanted to get and—

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Yes. There has been an exponential increase—

Hon. Bharath: As you would appreciate, what has happened is that, I have had the opportunity, and the Ministry would have had the opportunity on many occasions to talk about our diversification programme. Part of that diversification programme is to allow our exporters to get new markets, to increase their economies of scale. As a result, during the course of the last two years, the Government has signed several bilateral trade agreements with countries like El Salvador, Guatemala, Panama, Dominican Republic, and that essentially would be to continue that work, for officers of the Ministry to continue to travel to do that work.

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Chairman, that does not answer the question. In 2014, the expenditure was about $2 million.

Hon. Bharath: Yes.

Mr. Imbert: It is budgeted at $5 million for 2015.
Hon. Bharath: Yes.

Mr. Imbert: You are not continuing anything. You are more than doubling your overseas travel.

Hon. Bharath: We are continuing that and intensifying the work that we have been doing.

Mr. Imbert: Does this include the Minister’s travel?

Hon. Bharath: Does this include the Minister’s travel? Of course, it does. Yes.

Mr. Imbert: You are going to be travelling as well?

Hon. Bharath: Well, the Ministry you find, if I am mandated by the Ministry to attend mandatory, I will, of course. [Crosstalk]. If it is necessary and required.

Mr. Imbert: You are not serious.

Dr. Moonilal: You want to go?

Mr. Chairman: Well, okay. Let us move on. Item 002, Weights and Measures.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: Where are you? On Weights and Measures?

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: No, but I am not finished with Goods and Services. You are moving very quickly. And I am on 66.

Mr. Chairman: Yes.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Hosting of Conferences, Seminars and Other Functions. Would you please provide—I do not believe that you will be able to give to us now—a detailed breakdown of conferences, seminars and functions, and what is the purpose of these, each of these, and the cost as well for each of these, and what are the expected benefits from these conferences?

Hon. Bharath: I do not have the breakdown with me, but clearly the purpose of it would be to promote Trinidad and Tobago companies and its products, that would be the primary purpose for this, and it would include in many instances, the worked of investTT and exporTT on foreign markets.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Could I have a breakdown, please.

Hon. Bharath: Yes, of course.
Mr. Chairman: Okay. Item 002, Weights and Measures Inspectorate. Item 003 Consumer Affairs Division. Where are you, Member for Chaguanas West?

Mr. Warner: Item 003.

Mr. Chairman: Item 003. Yes. Member for Chaguanas West.

Mr. Warner: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Can you tell me how 03/66, differs from 02/66, I mean, in terms of the label? I know the amount is different, but I see you have the same—

Hon. Bharath: Essentially, Member, it is a separate division—we have compartmentalized it to highlight the varying sectors of the Ministry that would be utilizing hosting of conferences. So for example here, it is a division called Weights and Measures Inspectorate, and that is their—sorry—Consumer Affairs Division, and that is their allocation for hosting of conferences. Similarly, the one previously would have related to Communications which would have been the one the previous Member was speaking about which was the $4.2 million. And you will see that fair trading would have a similar breakdown of its expenditure and so on.

Mr. Chairman: Okay. We are going to Item 004, Research and Planning. Item 005, Consumer Affairs Outreach and Protection Unit. Item 006 Communications. Member of Parliament, Member for Diego Martin West.

Dr. Rowley: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I was trying to draw you along, caught up in—02/006 of Sub-Head 16, Contract Employment $3.9 million. There was no provision under this head—

Mr. Chairman: Which page?

Hon. Bharath: Where are we?

Dr. Rowley: I am on 02/16.

Mr. Chairman: Good. Thanks. [Crosstalk]

Dr. Rowley: Sub-Head 006, sub 16.

Hon. Bharath: Right.

Dr. Rowley: Yes. I was saying that, prior to this allocation for 2015, we did not have a provision for contract employment. What explains this $3.9 million for 2015?

Hon. Bharath: Well remember, hon. Member, that the Ministry of Communications was brought across to the Ministry of Trade, Investment and
Development for budgetary purpose in 2015, so that would have fallen under another head, Head 70 previously.

**Dr. Rowley:** And what is that figure?

**Hon. Bharath:** Previously?

**Dr. Rowley:** Has it been increased? Has it remained the same?

**Hon. Bharath:** I will see if I can dig it for you.

**Dr. Rowley:** Whilst you are looking, I have the floor with your permission?

**Mr. Chairman:** Yes.

**Dr. Rowley:** Permit me, Mr. Chairman, to jump ahead, since I have the floor—

**Mr. Chairman:** Right.

**Dr. Rowley:**—to make things flow a bit faster. I have another comment on Sub-Head 62, Promotions, Publicity, and Printing. And I want to ask the Minister, whether this $6.1 million, that is provision for 2015, a similar question, how does it relate to what was there before in the previous year? And secondly, I want to ask, who controls this budget for the promotion? Who decides what is promoted, and who get these contracts and how are these contracts issued?

**Mr. Chairman:** Minister of Communications.

**Dr. Rowley:** I am at 62, Promotions, Publicity and Printing.

**Hon. Bharath:** Yes. Yes.

**Mr. Chairman:** You are with Promotions, Publicity and Printing?

**Hon. Bharath:** Okay. The answer to your previous question with regard to contract employment, the figure previously was $4 million, $3,972,000; and was brought forward.

**Dr. Rowley:** Hold one second. So approximately $4 million.

**Hon. Bharath:** Yes. And it is now $3.9 million. So it has not been increased.

**Dr. Rowley:** Yeah. But there are bodies in these positions, right?

**Hon. Bharath:** These are provisions.

**Dr. Rowley:** There are bodies in these positions?

**Hon. Bharath:** In some of them, yes.
Dr. Rowley: Well I was asking earlier on, before I jumped ahead of the Chair—

Hon. Bharath: Yes.

Dr. Rowley:—I was asking for a breakdown of the positions that are available—

Hon. Bharath: Yes.

Dr. Rowley:—these contract officers, their terms of engagement—

Hon. Bharath: Sure.

Dr. Rowley:—when they were engaged, and—

Hon. Bharath: And we can provide it.

Dr. Rowley:—yes. Of course, we would also want to know who set the terms for these people, both this group and the short-term?

Hon. Bharath: Sure.

Dr. Rowley: So we could move to 62, Promotions, Publicity and Printing. And I am asking, who controls this budget, and who makes the decision as to where the promotion money goes and the publicity money, and how are contracts awarded in this Sub-Head?

Hon. Bharath: Well clearly at the end of the day, it would be the Permanent Secretary who would be responsible for making ultimate decisions as far as the Ministry is concerned. Proposals would be determined based on the strategic plan of the Ministry which would determine what types of Promotions, Publicity and Printing the Ministry engages itself in. What would normally happen, as has been in the case, it would then go out for tender, and those tenders would come in and they would be assessed.

3.55 p.m.

Dr. Rowley: There is a programme that is force feeding the country at the moment called, “Your Government working for you”, is any of that programme funded from this head or any similar head in your Ministry?

Hon. Bharath: Which particular programme are you speaking of?

Dr. Rowley: The one where, wherever you turn your face there is somebody telling you the Government is working for you, whether on cable, or on the
billboard, or on the newspaper, or wherever, “Your Government is working for you”, there is a programme.

Hon. Bharath: Yes, it is called, “Voices”.

Dr. Rowley: Voices?

Hon. Bharath: Voices.

Dr. Rowley: Is that a state-funded programme?

Hon. Bharath: Yes, it is.

Dr. Rowley: Where is that funded from?

Hon. Bharath: The Ministry of Communications.

Dr. Rowley: And the accounting officer there is the Permanent Secretary, I presume?

Hon. Bharath: Quite correct.

Dr. Rowley: Are you telling us that the Permanent Secretary is in charge of a programme of political force feeding?

Hon. Bharath: Well, we do not believe it is political force feeding. This is telling the population what the Government of Trinidad and Tobago is doing for them. That is the Ministry's mandate to inform the population of the goods and services provided by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, regardless of who the Government is.

Dr. Rowley: So, I presume that, had taxpayers’ millions not been spent on telling the people who go to the hospital, who was doing it, and telling the farmer who paid his flood cheque and similar things, had we not as taxpayers paid money to tell them that it was their Government doing it, they might have assumed it was the Government of Grenada.

Hon. Bharath: No, the fact is, every organization engages in advertising its goods and services.

Dr. Rowley: Mr. Chairman, I object to the Member for Chaguanas East referring to me as stupid in this House. [Interuption] Excuse me? Mr. Chairman, I am not laughing. I object to the Member for Chaguanas East in his last few days in this House referring to my intervention as stupid.

Mr. Chairman: I do not know if these are his last few days.

Dr. Rowley: I know that.
Mr. Chairman: You may know that, I do not know that, but—[ Interruption] I need no help. [Laughter] Member for Chaguanas East, if you did make that remark, I ask you to withdraw it.

Mr. Cadiz: Withdrawn.

Mr. Chairman: Good. Let us continue, please. And no further comment, Member. You should direct all your comments to me now.

Dr. Rowley: You want me to tell you what I was going to tell him?

Mr. Chairman: Do not say anything except—go to your book and “leh we deal with your things there.” Nothing else. [Laughter]

Dr. Rowley: Thank you for your guidance, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: Yes, definitely.

Dr. Rowley: I appreciate your—

Mr. Chairman: We have to cool the temperature here.

Dr. Rowley: I appreciate your expert guidance.

Mr. Chairman: Let us go.

Dr. Rowley: Let me get back to my friend, the Minister of Trade, Industry, Investment and Communications. So, we were talking about Promotions, Publicity and Printing and I was getting clear from you that that Voices Programme is directed by the Permanent Secretary in your Ministry.

Hon. Bharath: It is directed out of the strategic plan of the Ministry, the accounting officer clearly would be responsible for that.

Dr. Rowley: But the question I did ask is who is responsible for the budget, and I am told it is the Permanent Secretary.

Hon. Bharath: The Permanent Secretary is responsible for the budget in every Ministry I assume.

Dr. Rowley: Yes, I understand. We can move on.

Mr. Chairman: All right, so we are going on now to Item 007, Freedom of Information.

Miss Hospedales: Mr. Chair, Sub-Item 28, I would like the Minister to provide a detailed breakdown of the services to be provided under this particular
Item, Other Contracted Services and, if he could indicate to us the list of service providers and the selection process?

**Mr. Chairman:** Did you hear that, hon. Minister?

**Hon. Bharath:** I did, Chairman.

**Mr. Chairman:** Could you respond to that?

**Hon. Bharath:** Not at this point in time. Chairman, I came prepared to answer questions relating to large amounts of money. I would assume those would have been the more important ones. This relates to an expenditure of $300,000, am I correct?

**Miss Hospedales:** No.

**Hon. Bharath:** I will give you my assurance—

**Miss Hospedales:** On page 263, I am referring to, Sub-Item 28.

**Mr. Chairman:** $1.265 million. That is under Other Contracted Services, not so?

**Miss Hospedales:** Yes, $1,265,000.

**Hon. Bharath:** I thought we had moved on to Freedom of Information, Chairman.

**Mr. Chairman:** No.

**Hon. Bharath:** We are still on Communications, are we?

**Mr. Chairman:** No, we are moving on after that particular intervention to Freedom of Information.

**Hon. Bharath:** But we are happy to provide you with the information, Member.

**Miss Hospedales:** Sure, thank you.

**Mr. Chairman:** All right, Item 007, Freedom of Information Unit, any clarification? Member for La Brea, are you under Item 007?

**Mr. Jeffrey:** Item 007.

**Mr. Chairman:** Yes.

**Mr. Jeffrey:** Rent/Lease, 08, $4 million. I find that seems to be quite a tidy sum. I would like to find out whether or not the Ministry has explored the
Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister.

Hon. Bharath: I am aware, Chairman, that the rental of Government premises falls under the portfolio and purview of the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development, and I know that the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development currently, and the Minister, of course, sitting next to me would be better placed to answer this question, but I know that they have engaged on an entire plan of rationalizing the buildings that Government rents. Because we are very aware that a lot of those buildings belong to people who may sometimes utilize those funds to fight against the Government of the day, regardless of who that might be. [Interruption] So, we want to ensure, Mr. Chairman—all joke aside—that the taxpayers of this country get value for money and so, therefore, I know that the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development is engaged in a rationalization exercise.

Mr. Chairman: We are going on to Sub-Head 03: Minor Equipment Purchases, Item 001, General Administration, Item 003, Consumer Affairs Division, Item 006, Communications, Item 007, Freedom of Information. We go on now to Sub-Head—

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: I had my hand up. Are we allowed to raise discrepancies which were detailed in the report of the Auditor General here?

Mr. Chairman: No.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: We are not?

Mr. Chairman: No. Only if it is related to a particular item. You just cannot deal with the Auditor General’s discrepancy, you know?

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: No, not carte blanche, but in particular related to an item under General Administration. For instance 02: Office Equipment, and in the Auditor General’s report there was a reported theft of computers and so on, so I wish to ask about that. Is this the place for it?

Mr. Chairman: I cannot speak for the Minister, but you raise your question and he will indicate whether he can answer.

Dr. Rowley: Chairman, procedure, again, because we are establishing groundwork here. I think the answer to that question has to be clarified. If we are budgeting and departments are asking for moneys to go forward, it has to be that
how the moneys are spent become part of the discourse, and who reports on how the moneys have been spent for the Auditor General. So, if a Member of this House can cross-correlate statements or facts from the Auditor General’s office about expenditure in a Ministry, it cannot be excluded from a request.

Mr. Chairman: Yes, but I am not saying no, but it has to be specific, and just remember, hon. Member—

Dr. Rowley: We are dealing with the Auditor General’s report.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, we are dealing with all those documents that have been referred by the Minister of Finance and the Economy to the Standing Finance Committee. The Auditor General’s Report is not one of those documents. However, I am saying to my colleague, the Member for Point Fortin, that if she has a question that is specific to the Auditor General’s Report that could be related to what we are dealing with, she is entitled to raise that issue.

Dr. Rowley: And that is what I am saying, Mr. Chairman, we need to clarify that and let that be the ground rule—

Mr. Chairman: Yes, I have clarified it.

Dr. Rowley:—and let there be no confusion over that. We are not debating the Auditor General’s report.

Mr. Chairman: We are not doing that.

Dr. Rowley: Insofar as there is information, whether in the public domain or in those reports that have a bearing, a relevance to the numbers that we are dealing with, it should be allowed.

Dr. Moonilal: Mr Chairman, I also wanted to be very clear that the Members of the committee can ask their pointed questions on every single line item before us in the estimates, whether they touch on concern or not, the Auditor General’s report, but I am very curious as to referencing that report and then having some type of debate on the report which is not before us. But every single item you want to touch may be in an estimate, in a line, that you are free to ask questions on.

Mrs. Gopiee-Scoon: I was just asking, there was a report of theft of computers—

Dr. Moonilal: Which item?

Mr. Chairman: Which item is that, please?
Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: I am dealing with 02—I can put it under there—Minor Equipment Purchases, so I am asking why it had not been reported to the Comptroller of Accounts? Whether these items are now being replaced? Who is responsible for monitoring the inventory? And whether these items are now labelled, as required, with the Government mark, so that there is no reoccurrence of these thefts of large computer items?

Mr. Chairman: Minister.

Hon. Bharath: Thank you, Chairman. There were some reported incidents of some laptops, I think, that were stolen from the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Investment. Due to an oversight it was not reported to the Comptroller of Accounts and to the Auditor General, but was reported to the police. We have since corrected that, and in future in the unfortunate circumstances that there may be a theft, it will now be reported based on the procedure we have in place, to the Comptroller of Accounts, the Auditor General and the police, and the corporate services division of the Ministry has now taken direct responsibility with regard to monitoring and logging all assets of the Ministry.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Monitoring and logging.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, we are dealing with Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies; Item 001: Regional Bodies. We are dealing with Item 002: Commonwealth Bodies; Item 003: United Nations Organizations; Item 004: International Bodies; Item 007: Households; Item 008: Subsidies; Item 009: Other Transfers.

Miss Hospedales: Mr. Chair.

Mr. Chairman: Under Other Transfers, Member for Diego Martin West.

Hon. Member: Member for Diego Martin West?

Mr. Chairman: Yes, Member for Diego Martin West first, you will go after. Yes, hon. Member.

Dr. Rowley: Mr. Chairman, I am at sub 19. The Single Electronic Window for Trade and Business Facilitation with a provision of $3.7 million, what exactly is that for, personnel equipment, what is it?

Mr. Chairman: Minister of Trade, Industry and Investment.

Hon. Bharath: Yes, Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: Your following-up is on page 268.
Hon. Bharath: I am informed, hon. Member, that relates to staffing levels, it relates to training, it relates to equipment that the single electronic window unit would require.

Dr. Rowley: Where is this unit located?

Hon. Bharath: In the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Investment, on level 09.

Dr. Rowley: How have these positions been filled?

Hon. Bharath: In the same way that I mentioned before. They are advertised with the required expertise and qualifications.

Dr. Rowley: Is the window fully staffed now?

Hon. Bharath: No. Is it fully staffed? [Interruption] Oh, apparently we are. It is completely staffed.

Dr. Rowley: On sub 20, Mr. Chairman—while I have your permission to have the floor—the Solar Energy Initiative came to us with great fanfare at earlier times and we did provide eleven point something million dollars, but I see there is no further—maybe thankfully—provision. What has happened with the provisions we made before and why is there no reference to them in the 2015 estimates?

Hon. Bharath: Okay, the studies have been completed, hon. Leader of the Opposition, we are currently in the process of engaging potential suppliers who would be in a position to actually get this business model up and running. There is a note before Cabinet and a presentation to be made to F&GP very shortly.

Mr. Chairman: I recognize the Member for St. Joseph.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Thank you, Chair. Hon. Minister, our financial assistance to exporTT from 2013—

Mr. Chairman: What head?

Mr. Deyalsingh: Oh, sorry. 009 sub 01.

Mr. Chairman: Right.

Mr. Deyalsingh: From 2013 to 2015, exporTT would have drawn down approximately $46 million. If you had to rate their performance, rate their success, how would you rate exporTT as far as fulfilling its mandate in drawing down $46 million?
Dr. Moonilal: Mr Chairman, the Member is asking the Minister to give an assessment of some rating performance and so on. Is that a specific question on the estimate?

Mr. Deyalsingh: All right, sorry. On the Estimates then, hon. Minister, there is in the public domain that a Mr. Lewis was paid $23,375 bonus to which he is not entitled, has that come from the financial assistance under this heading?

Hon. Bharath: Well, first of all let me say that Mr. Lewis was entitled to the bonus of up to two months’ salary based on his contract with exporTT, so it is not true to say that he was not entitled.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Okay.

Hon. Bharath: I do want to answer the previous question with regard to—if I could just shed some light on their performance. Very recently, a benchmarking study at the request of exporTT was conducted by the ITC, the International Trade Centre, which is an organization—it is a joint agency between the World Trade Centre and the United Nations, and that benchmarking exercise was conducted purely so that exporTT could determine where they sat as a facilitating agency and, of course, they scored 44.2, which meant that they were operating at a satisfactory level.

4.10 p.m.

I want to say that, although they are operating at a satisfactory level, they also obtained the highest score for a facilitating agency in this part of the world. So they are not doing too badly, but at least they understood where—they used the benchmarking exercise to understand where they could actually increase their services to the population.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Thank you, but you open another can of worms. Are you saying that a rating of below 50 per cent is satisfactory?

Hon. Bharath: According to the ITC, yes.

Mr. Deyalsingh: According to the ITC, okay, great. The sum of $120,000 paid to one—[Interruption]

Mr. Chairman: I think you are going over five minutes. You only have one chance. You cannot be going on, but I will allow you to conclude—

Mr. Deyalsingh: Thank you.

Mr. Chairman: And then the Member for Chaguanas West, then I am going to the Member for Arouca/Maloney and then my friend.
Mr. Deyalsingh: The sum of $120,000 paid to groom Mr. Lewis, paid to Karen Ferreira, can you explain that, and could you also explain whether Mr. Lewis has refunded to the Government of Trinidad and Tobago moneys which he used to charge his hotel bill when in fact he was paid an allowance?

Hon. Bharath: Again, the second question first. Mr. Lewis used his credit card to pay for hotel bills. In fact, he had not received his allowance. His allowance did not come through. He paid for it by credit card and he subsequently reimbursed the Government of Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Chairman: The hon. Member for Chaguanas West.

Mr. Deyalsingh: He has not finished answering the question on the Government.

Mr. Chairman: Okay.

Hon. Bharath: The contract for $120,000 was paid to the lady that you mentioned. It is in keeping with what many organizations do with regard to training employees, further education and so on, and it was felt that Mr. Lewis could benefit from that training.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Would Mr. Lewis be returning any moneys now that he is no longer there and we have not gotten the benefit—[Interruption]

Hon. Bharath: What do you mean he is no longer there?

Mr. Deyalsingh: Is he still employed there?

Hon. Bharath: Of course.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Okay, great, thank you.

Mr. Warner: Mr. Chairman, I have two questions. Very briefly, very quickly. In 2014 and again 2015, I think there is no allocation for e TecK. What does that have to say about your plan for business development? Why there is no location for it?

Hon. Bharath: What line item is that, I am sorry?

Mr. Warner: I am talking about 009/15.

Hon. Bharath: Oh, you will find that the allocations for e TecK would be in the Development Programme.

Mr. Warner: Okay.
Mr. Chairman: Okay, we will come to that. So you may hold your point for the Development Programme—[Interruption]

Mr. Warner: Next question.

Mr. Chairman: Go ahead, continue.

Mr. Warner: Next question is under 18, what are you paying the Chamber of Commerce $500,000 for? You are paying $250,000 in 2013 and 2014 you are paying $500,000.

Hon. Bharath: Hon. Member, it was a budget measure that the Minister of Finance and the Economy in 2014 had announced for both the TTMA and the Chamber of Commerce, to further encourage them to embark on expanding business opportunities in foreign markets. It is basically support, technical support.

Mr. Chairman: The Member for Arouca/Maloney.

Miss Hospedales: Mr. Chair, I am referring to Sub-Item 03, Betting Levy Board. Mr. Chair, over $21 million has been allocated for 2015, and I would like to ask the Minister why is there need for such a transfer considering the fact that the Betting Levy Board Act indicates that this particular board has to pay half of its money collected to the Consolidated Fund as well as the remaining half with respect to the operating expenses of their racing authority?

What oversight mechanisms are in place to ensure that the stipulating measures in the Act actually followed, and could you give us an update in terms of the status of the audited financial statements for this particular board?

Hon. Bharath: Thank you, Chairman. Essentially, the Betting Levy Board operates on the basis that it is supposed to give to the Government of Trinidad and Tobago 50 per cent of its take. However, for very many years now what has happened is that because the Betting Levy Board has not been collecting the taxes that they ought to be—the quantity that they have been collecting—they essentially hand the Government a cheque for 50 per cent and then Government hands them back the 50 per cent to keep them alive, essentially. And that is what that represents, the fact that the Government actually owes them money because they are due to come up with a strategic plan for the entire racing industry for which they are responsible, and we have actually withheld funds from them over the last two years and that is what that actually represents.

With regard to monitoring the take from the Betting Levy Board, the Minister of Finance and the Economy has announced in this last budget, and certainly 2014
as well, that the gaming industry in its entirety is being looked at with regard to putting in place some sort of gaming authority that would monitor the horse racing industry as well as gambling and casino industries.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, we have to move on, okay? I will just entertain one more question on that one, and I recognize the Member for Laventille West.

Mr. Hypolite: Yes, Chair, Item 023. In 2013, there is a figure of $5.9 million and in 2015 it jumped to $11 million. Can the Minister indicate what would be the reason for that?

Hon. Bharath: I certainly can, hon. Member. One of the areas for diversification of the economy is the creative industries sector which includes film, fashion and music. And over the last two years in particular, we have—against much resistance, I must say—we have put together a creative TT Board which encapsulates that entire segment.

Prior to that, what would have happened for many, many years is that the Government kept giving handouts to the sector, and those in the sector obviously received it with great pleasure, and of course, they were in a state of inertia and status quo whereby they did not want the creative industry sector to become commercialized.

I am of the belief and the Ministry is of the belief and this Government is of the belief that the only way we can actually ensure that we have success in those sectors—which is film, fashion and music—is to commercialize it so that at some point in time although Government will initially put in the seed money and create the enabling environment, that at some point in time those industries will become commercially viable and attractive to the private sector so that you have private sector investment. And that is the reason why we put this much money into it.

Many of our artistes who perform on the world stage—people like Machel Mantano, and we have some fantastic designers who are, like Meiling and others who are out there, on the international stage—they have succeeded despite Governments, they have succeeded through their own sweat and blood. And so, therefore, the Government is putting the resources behind, encouraging, particularly young people, to encourage them in these areas.

Mr. Chairman: All right, Members we have to move on. Everybody has one more. But we have to move on. We have seven more entities after this one and we do not want to be here 12 o’clock in the night because those members of the Hansard staff, it is very difficult for them to be concentrating that long. And we
have to complete 10. So I am asking Members to be very succinct in their contribution, be very pointed in their comments, and we cannot go over and over and over.

So, I would just—this is the last time we are going to allow so many interventions. It is not that there will not be, I will allow everyone to speak, but I ask Members to be very tight in their contribution. Member for Port of Spain South, Member for Point Fortin.

Miss Mc Donald: Yes, on page 269 under 011, I am looking at 01 and 03.

Clerk: We have not reached—[Interruption]

Mr. Chairman: Where are you?

Miss Mc Donald: On page 269.

Mr. Chairman: We are still on Other Transfers, you know? We are on Item 009.

Miss Mc Donald: “Ohh”, all right.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Very briefly, Item 16, the Fair Trading Commission. I mean, this has been—it has not been implemented I think for five years, what is the reason for this?

Hon. Bharath: Mr. Chairman, in fact it is more than five years. It was from the previous administration—[Interruption]

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Speak to your five.

Hon. Bharath: I am just saying, [Laughter] from the previous administration. In fact, we have now taken it and we have now proclaimed several parts of the Act. Indeed we have appointed the Commissioners and very recently in the last two or three weeks they have advertised the post for CEO and other management position within the organization to be able to get the fair trade commission up and running.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, we go to Item 010, Other Transfers Abroad, Item 011, Transfer to State Enterprises. Member for Port of Spain South.

Miss Mc Donald: I have a request, Mr. Chairman, for both 01 as well as 03—[Interruption]

Hon. Bharath: You mean 02 and 03.
Miss Mc Donald:—02 and 03. I will like to get a list of all the management personnel, their remuneration, the terms of engagement—[Interruption]

Hon. Member: Pictures.

Miss Mc Donald: Yes, their pictures too if necessary and the list of all officers on the payroll of those two entities.

Hon. Bharath: All officers? You mean all employees?

Miss Mc Donald: All employees of those two entities, CNMG and GISL.

Hon. Bharath: Sure.

Miss Mc Donald: Thank you.

Mr. Chairman: Member for Diego Martin North/East.

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Chairman, at a Public Accounts Committee meeting about three years ago, the new management on board of CNMG said they were going to break even and make a profit. I am seeing a loss of $12 million. Could the Minister explain what is going on? Are you projecting another loss for CNMG in this year of $11,750,000? And if so, when do you expect this company to break even, if ever?

Hon. Bharath: Well first of all, the fact that there is a transfer of $11,750,000 does not necessarily mean that there is a loss in the organization of $11,750,000.

Mr. Imbert: Come on, what is this money for then? If it is not that, what is it for?

Mr. Chairman: Well, allow him to answer, he is answering.

Mr. Imbert: He is rambling.

Mr. Chairman: No, you cannot say rambling. The answer may not satisfy your concerns, but he is answering.

Hon. Bharath: It does not necessarily mean it is a lost. At the end of the day these—I do not know the complete breakdown, but we can get the breakdown for you, but these are to fund many of the projects that CNMG is involved in at this point in time.

Mr. Imbert: No, but if they are funding projects, it is a commercial company, it is supposed to make money.

Hon. Bharath: It is supposed to make money, you are quite right.
Mr. Imbert: What is this money for?

Hon. Bharath: You are quite right, it is an organization that should at least break even if it does not make money. We have been struggling with a lot of debts that we have inherited, and we will continue—[Crosstalk] we will continue, based on CNMG’s strategic plan—[Interruption]

Mr. Imbert: I am asking about Sub-Head 011, 02 an allocation of $11.75 million. What is that for?

Hon. Bharath: It is for funding CNMG. I can give you a listing if you wish at some point in time—[Interruption]

Mr. Imbert: So you have come here with no information. Okay, no problem, 011, 03 what is that $18 million for?

Hon. Bharath: It is, again, for funding GISL.

Mr. Imbert: So you have no information to give us?

Hon. Bharath: Not at this point in time.

Mr. Imbert: Could I get a breakdown?

Hon. Bharath: Absolutely.

Mr. Imbert: “Is best yuh din come.”

Mr. Chairman: No, you cannot say so. Be a little more respectful please. Please, no, no, not because you cannot get—[Interruption]

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Chairman—[Interruption]

Mr. Chairman: Yeah, I know—[Interruption]

Mr. Imbert: He is not giving us information.

Mr. Chairman: All right—[Interruption]

Hon. Bharath: The Standing Orders allow for the Ministry to be able to provide the information.

Mr. Imbert: I could read here, you do not have to come.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, let us go on. We go on to Sub-Head 06, we are going into the Development Programme now. Development Programme, Item 3, Economic Infrastructure.

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Chairman, I hope I get a better answer this time. Page 271, Head 48—[Interruption]
Hon. Bharath: Page 271?

Mr. Chairman: Development Programme—

Mr. Imbert: Page 271, Head 48.

Mr. Chairman: Page 271, Head 48—

Mr. Imbert:—03, Q. 276.

Mr. Chairman:—03 of the Development Programme.

Mr. Imbert: Can the Minister explain why, in the time when we are supposed to be diversifying the economy, expanding the economy, that you have reduced the allocation for development work and industrial estates by $44 million.

Hon. Bharath: The reason is, Chairman, that the Ministry is accessing a loan facility through the Chinese Government, through the EXIMBANK of China for the development of these parks.

4.25 p.m.

Mr. Imbert: What? So where is that in the Estimates?

Hon. Bharath: It is—in 2014 there was a significant amount of development work that was to be engaged in. Those works did not take place, clearly, and so therefore we had to revise the estimates down in terms of the works that we are going to be conducting during the course of this year.

Mr. Imbert: That is not correct. The original 2014 estimate was $1 million; the revised was $99 million. It went up, and now it is going back down to $55 million. Are you reading the same thing as me? How could you say these things? Ninety-nine is more than one, not less.

Hon. Bharath: The $99 million was an allocation at midterm, essentially to pay 15 per cent of the amount that is required against the EXIMBANK loan for the development of these parks.

Mr. Imbert: What? So we got nothing for this $99 million? There is no physical work that occurred because of that—

Hon. Bharath: The funding has not been disbursed.

Mr. Imbert: So no physical work took place with that $99 million.

Hon. Bharath: The preliminary designs have been done.

Mr. Imbert: $100 million?
Mr. Chairman: Okay. We go on to the Infrastructure Development Fund, under Development Programme. Member for Diego Martin Central.

Dr. Browne: I am back on the Consolidated Fund.

Mr. Imbert: What a disaster.

Mr. Chairman: You are back where?

Dr. Browne: I am on the Consolidated Fund, the DP.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, yes, yes. Continue.

Dr. Browne: Page 137 for the—

Mr. Indarsingh: Member for Diego Martin Central, you are getting agitated.

Dr. Browne: What is going on across there?

Mr. Chairman: No, no.

Dr. Browne: Page 137 under DP, 011, Support to—well, there is a typo. Support to Enable Competitive Business in Trinidad and Tobago. I see an estimate of $5 million for this budget, downward from the previous year. What is that allocation for?

Mr. Chairman: Yes, Minister?

Hon. Bharath: That is a fund from the European Union that allows us to create an enabling environment to allow business to take place more freely and reduce the amount of bureaucracy that would have taken place previously.

Dr. Browne: Is there a contribution to that fund from the EU, and what quantum is contributed for 20—

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister?

Hon. Bharath: It goes directly from the European Union to the Consolidated Fund as budget support.

Mr. Chairman: All right. I recognize the Member for Point Fortin and then the Member for Arouca/Maloney, and that would be the last contribution before we close off.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: On the particular point—

Hon. Member: Mr. Chairman, my hand—

Mr. Chairman: Yes, I know, I saw your hand.
Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: On the particular point of 011, is it that we request these funds of the European Union, or they have given us the reduced amount? I ask that in view of the fact that in terms of business sophistication, we are so low in terms of the competitive index. So I am wondering whether it is those are funds directed to us or whether you have requested a reduced amount.

Mr. Chairman: The hon. Minister.

Hon. Bharath: I have been informed that these funds have been allocated on the basis of tranches. Every year the tranche is different. So this is this year’s tranche.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: So it is given to you.

Hon. Bharath: Yes.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Okay.

Mr. Chairman: Member for Arouca/Maloney, please.

Miss Hospedales: Thank you, Mr. Chair. To the Minister, there is a $1 million allocation for the support of the agri-business industry. Could you tell me what is the justification?

Mr. Chairman: What Sub-Item is that?

Miss Hospedales: It is Sub-Item 002. Could you let us know the justification for providing that kind of support, seeing that there is the Ministry of Food Production?

Hon. Bharath: One of the areas for diversification is agro-processing and, in fact, exporTT, a company we were talking about earlier on, is charged with a significant part of that responsibility of developing agro processing, particularly on the export markets. In fact, very recently, exporTT, together with the Ministry, hosted 14 companies out of Trinidad and Tobago at the Food Fair in New York, out of which many of those businesses got new markets in faraway places, like Poland, Russia, Australia and so on. Carib is now supplying products as a result of that, into Southeast Asia. Therefore, this is what the $1 million is for, to be able to support the agro-processing part of the diversification process.

Hon. Bharath: Okay. Hon. Members, the question is that the sum of $306,629,900 for Head—

Miss Hospedales: There were other areas—
Mr. Chairman: No, I am moving on. I have a deadline. [Crosstalk] No, no, no, no, no. [Crosstalk] No, no, no. I said that we have a deadline to meet. I am taking charge. Okay.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 48 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister of Trade, Industry, Investment and Communications, on behalf of the Standing Finance Committee, seeing that you are coming from the Senate, we would like to thank you and your staff. Thank you very much.

We now go to the Ministry of Tourism. Minister of Tourism, please come forward. [Short pause and crosstalk]

Head 35:

Okay, hon. Members, we go to Head 35, Ministry of Tourism, $224,579,207. I would now invite the hon. Minister of Tourism, if he so desires, to make a brief opening statement for no more than five minutes. Hon. Minister, you can make a statement at this time, giving a kind of priority outline of your Ministry.

Hon. Hadeed: Thank you very much. I am prepared to take questions from the Members opposite.

Question proposed: That Head 35 stand part of the Schedule.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, the sum of $224,579,207 for Head 35, the 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 Development Programme—Sub-Head 01: Personnel Expenditure; Item 001: General Administration.

Miss Mc Donald: Yes, Mr. Chairman—

Mr. Chairman: Yes, the hon. Member for Port of Spain South.

Miss Mc Donald: I am looking at 08, Vacant Posts. I would like an explanation for why that figure jumped from $200,000 to $1 million—$800,000 increase.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister of Tourism, please.

Hon. Hadeed: Well, simply because we need to fill a number of posts during the course of the year, that figure was put in. So we have $800,000 additional
from last year in the event that we have to create the employment to raise the levels of efficiency. And we are trying to fill the positions on a permanent basis.

Mr. Chairman: I recognize the Member for Arouca/Maloney.

Miss Hospedales: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I am looking at Sub-Item 62, Promotions, Publicity and Printing.

Mr. Chairman: What page are you on?

Miss Hospedales: Okay, Mr. Chair, I will wait for that one.

Mr. Chairman: Yes. You are moving very fast.

We go to Item 002: Lifeguard Services. I look at the Member for La Brea. You would like to raise a matter?

Mr. Jeffrey: Yes. Sub-Item 29, Overtime: daily-rated workers. Is there a policy with respect to overtime for Daily-Rated Workers? For the simple reason that we see that in 2013 it was $3.4 million and it rose to $5.8 million in 2014 in the Revised Estimates. I would like to find out who determines who will work overtime, the duration and, for example, for what time frame? Is there not a real need to increase the daily-rated workers complement so as to cut cost? Those are two questions I am asking you.

Mr. Chairman: The hon. Minister.

Hon. Hadeed: Yes. As you know, we use the daily-rated agreement to manage all the workers, and you are quite right, we need to fill quite a bit more positions, hence the reason there is the need for overtime, especially when it comes to public holidays and weekends.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, we go to Sub-Head 02.

Mrs. Thomas: Mr. Chairman—

Mr. Chairman: Yes, Member for St. Ann’s East.

Mrs. Thomas: Under the same salaries and cost of living for lifeguards, under the explanation they said: “Includes provision for vacant posts”, but yet the allocation has decreased from 2013. Could the Minister identify the reason for the decrease and the number of vacancies?

Hon. Hadeed: Could you tell me what Item you are talking about?

Mr. Chairman: What Item are you referring to?
Mrs. Thomas: Lifeguard, 002/01. For the explanation, it said there is inclusion for vacant posts, but yet the allocation was reduced from the actual 2013—

Mr. Chairman: Where did you see a decrease?

Hon. Hadeed: That is 2013 to 2015.

Mrs. Thomas: Right.

Hon. Hadeed: There is a decrease of—

Mrs. Thomas: To $700,000 where you maintain the same—

Hon. Hadeed: No, well, we maintained the same—

Mrs. Thomas: Yes, so if there are vacant positions.

Hon. Hadeed: Again, in this case, we were not able to fill positions. “Yuh know?”

Mrs. Thomas: I “doh” understand.

Mr. Chairman: Okay. Let us go on to Sub-Head 02: Goods and Services; Item 001, General Administration. I recognize the Members for La Brea, Arouca/Maloney and Port of Spain South. The Member for La Brea.

Mr. Jeffrey: Promotions, Publicity and Printing from $66.6 million in 2013, and on the Revised Estimates for 2014, $77 million. Can we get a detailed breakdown of that $77 million, including for example, the firms that were contracted; the amount that was paid to each? Those are two important sub-questions I would like to get answers for.

Mr. Chairman: Minister?

Hon. Hadeed: I am sorry I cannot give you detailed breakdown but I will be in a position to let you have that at a very early opportunity, before the committee—

Mr. Chairman: The Member for Arouca/Maloney.

Miss Hospedales: Mr. Chair, my focus is slightly different. I want to find out from the Minister what has accounted for the $5 million decrease in the allocation for the same item, Promotions, Publicity and Printing. The reason I am asking that, if you look at our neighbours in Jamaica, they invest a lot of money,
especially when it comes to publicity and promotion of their island, and I am wondering, what is the rationale behind the decrease when, you know—I would have liked to see an increase in this particular area.

**Mr. Chairman:** Your point is taken. Minister, respond to that, please.

**Hon. Hadeed:** As you know, all the Ministries try to get as much as possible from the Ministry of Finance and the Economy and, unfortunately, all of us cannot get everything that we want. So in this case, we did not get the required allocation that we requested, so that is where we are.

**4.40 p.m.**

**Miss McDonald:** Yes, Sir. Item 19, Official Entertainment, could you tell me what accounts for a 50 per cent increase there?

**Dr. Moonilal:** One hundred thousand dollars.

**Miss McDonald:** I could ask.

**You just said, “You could ask whatever you want”**.

**Mr. Chairman:** Please, please.

**Dr. Moonilal:** The budget is $65 billion, you know.

**Hon. Hadeed:** Honestly, that $100,000 entertainment one, I would hope that it is not used and that we can use it somewhere else.

**Mr. Chairman:** Okay. We go to Sub-Head 03: Minor Equipment Purchases; Item 001, General Administration Item 002, Lifeguard Services. I go to Item 04, Current Transfers —-[Interruption] Which one is that? 04, right. Just let me read, 04 Current Transfers and Subsidies. The first item, Regional Bodies. Is that the one you want to do? Okay, Member for Port of Spain North, St. Ann’s West.

**Mrs. McIntosh:** Hon. Minister, I see that there is quite a sizeable increase to regional bodies of $4.4 million but when I look further down, I am seeing—

**Mr. Chairman:** Could you identify the page and the Item?

**Mrs. McIntosh:** Yes, page 228, Item 04, Sub-Item 001.

**Miss Cox:** Mr. Chairman?

**Mr. Chairman:** Right, Sub-Item, 001. Yes, go ahead.

**Mrs. McIntosh:** Hon. Minister, I am seeing an increase of $4.4-odd million and I am looking down to see—[Crosstalk] Is it not that what I am seeing, 4.437? Yes, and I am looking down, hon. Minister, to see what regional bodies we are
talking about. I am seeing Caribbean Tourism Organization but I am not seeing anything else. Could you please elucidate or identify the regional bodies to which these moneys, which is $49 million, would have been allocated?

Hon. Hadeed: The only regional body we subscribe money to is the Caribbean Tourism Organization. They had an increase of 440—that area had an increase of $447,000. We do get quite a lot of research material from that organization to assist us in planning.

Mrs. Mc Intosh: I am seeing it, Sir, sorry, this is for all.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, we go to Item 007, Households.

Miss Cox: Mr. Chairman, I would just like to say something, please.

Mr. Chairman: On Households?

Miss Cox: No, I had my hand up a long time before you reached this one.

Mr. Chairman: No, but which one do you want to speak on?

Miss Cox: Lifeguard Services.

Mr. Chairman: So you want us to go back?

Miss Cox: Mr. Chairman, my hand was up. Am I to make a noise or something to actually be recognised?

Hon. Hadeed: Actually, I recognized her hand up, Mr. Chairman.

Miss Cox: It was up a long time ago.

Mr. Chairman: Okay.

Miss Cox: I just want to ask about the Security Services. What accounts for this increase of $1.2 million, Item 43?

Hon. Hadeed: Well, the increase is for new facilities at Quinam and Los Iros. That is what the increase is for.

Mr. Chairman: All right, so we go to Item 007, Households; we go item 009, Other Transfers; we go to Item 011—or, Member for Chaguanaus West, which item?

Mr. Warner: Other Transfers, Item 01. I read where NAPA had to undergo some serious repairs. Is that sum in this amount here?

Hon. Hadeed: NAPA you are talking about?
Mr. Warner: To repair NAPA. We saw where NAPA was falling to pieces.

Hon. Hadeed: We have $3 million for the area that I am responsible for, Sir, that is the hotel.

Mr. Warner: So not NAPA itself?

Hon. Hadeed: It is for the hotel and restaurant.

Mr. Chairman: The Member for Laventille West.

Mr. Hypolite: [Inaudible]

Mr. Chairman: Okay. Member for Port of Spain South.

Miss Mc Donald: Minister, could you tell us whether the hotel is operating?

Hon. Hadeed: It is operating. We are now presently doing a little more upgrade on it and we intend to put it out for an RFP and have an operator pretty soon.

Miss Mc Donald: So you have guests and whatnot? You do not have guests as yet?

Hon. Hadeed: No, not yet. Well, we normally—

Miss Mc Donald: Legal guests?

Mr. Chairman: Yes, yes, legal guests, we have no legal guests right now. [Laughter] Item 011, Transfers to State Enterprises. Sub-Head 06: Current Transfers to Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies; Item 004, Statutory Bodies. I recognize the Member for St. Ann’s East.

Mrs. Thomas: Mr. Chairman, Item 11, the Zoological Society, could the Minister explain the increase of $5.5 million?

Hon. Hadeed: The zoo has a number of new facilities and these are the operational costs for it. I am pleased to say that the increase in patrons have gone up substantively over the last year. It is now over 300,000 patrons visiting.

Mr. Chairman: We will deal with Sub-Head 09: Development Programme; Item 003, Economic Infrastructure. I recognize the Member for Diego Martin Central and the Member for Arouca/Maloney.

Dr. Browne: Three questions on three items. First, is the Cruise Tourism Initiative, 021, I see an allocation of $1 million, what is this Cruise Tourism Initiative? It seems to have been cut by 50 per cent. Can the Minister give some information on it? That is question number one.
Hon. Hadeed: Well, as we all know that in Trinidad and Tobago, we are trying to establish and get to be the home port for the Southern Caribbean Cruise Initiative which you all know is comprising of five islands for destinations, and we will be going to many conferences to try and encourage more visitors by the cruise ship lines. Basically, we do hope to be able to attract many more visitors to Trinidad and Tobago.

Dr. Browne: Why has it been cut by 50 per cent, Minister? Just this specific question: why has it been cut by 50 per cent, given what you have just said?

Hon. Hadeed: Again, we requested more money and for the same reason, many other Ministries are bidding to have money so we can only do what we can with what we have but we will make sure it is spent properly.

Mr. Chairman: I recognize—

Dr. Browne: No, I said I have two others. On Item 023, Restoration and Re-design of Maracas Beach Facility. Is it that there is no allocation for 2015?

Hon. Hadeed: It is in the idea.

Mr. Chairman: So we will deal with that under Development Programme. Okay?

Dr. Browne: Okay. And then 027, Tourism Baseline Survey, what is the executing agency for this survey and what was the procurement method?

Hon. Hadeed: I am told that we have not yet engaged one. However, an RFP would be going out for that.

Mr. Chairman: Was it the Member for Arouca/Maloney? Okay.

Miss Hospedales: Mr. Chairman, Sub-Item 019, Tourism Sites and Attractions Upgrade, I would like to find out from the Minister what has accounted for such a significant decrease in the allocation? Previously, it was estimated that an allocation of $14 million was made and it is actually now $2 million for this fiscal. So could you tell us exactly—

Hon. Hadeed: The majority of this money is really for the upgrade of community sites. Basically, we have identified a number of these sites that we have allocated and budgeted for and this is the money that we wanted for it.

Miss Hospedales: Is the sum allocated sufficient?

Hon. Hadeed: And I also would like to advise that the TDC would be implementing some of this.
Mr. Chairman: The Member for Chaguanas West.

Miss Hospedales: Mr. Chairman, I was not finished.

Mr. Chairman: Or okay, hold a second, please.

Miss Hospedales: Mr. Chairman, Sub-Item 026, Development of Beach Master Plan, I would like to find out from the Minister if this is the estimated final cost of the plan, and if it is not, exactly how much would that plan cost?

Hon. Hadeed: They have to determine a strategy on how we are going to build out the beaches, the common standards for health, safety, security and possibly the sequencing of the work.

Miss Hospedales: Okay. Is that the estimated cost, the actual plan or is there going to be an additional cost to it and if so, could you provide us with a detailed—

Hon. Hadeed: We believe that the figure that we have is sufficient for us do what we need to do with this.

Mr. Chairman: I recognize the Member for Chaguanas West.

Mr. Warner: My apologies, Sir, you have not reached that section as yet.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, well, we are now going to Item 05, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services and Infrastructure Development Fund.

Mr. Warner: I am asking, Sir, on that section under 45, what is the Toco Lighthouse project? I was there a week ago and I saw it falling into the sea.

Hon. Hadeed: No, no, I beg to differ.

Mr. Warner: What is it?

Hon. Hadeed: It is not falling into the sea, I beg to differ. We are actually working within the area, and we are getting private sector participation to work with us in the development of the Toco Lighthouse area. In the last four months, we painted the lighthouse and we put up the Keshorn Walcott signs and whatever it is we had to do. We are working to ensure that that area is kept pristine because we are working with private sector companies to assist us.

Mr. Warner: Do you have security for the area?

Hon. Hadeed: Yes, we do.

Mr. Warner: Okay, all right.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, all right. Yes, I recognize the Member for Arouca/Maloney.
Miss Hospedales: Mr. Chairman, I just want to look at Sub-Item 011 and I would like to ask the Minister if he could indicate to us how many hotels and guest houses will benefit from the incentive upgrade of hotel and guest room stock of Trinidad; a $3 million allocation was made.

Hon. Hadeed: We can let you know that there are 7,500 rooms but we do not have the figures at hand of how many people would apply for the upgrades at the present time.

Mr. Chairman: Okay? All right. Hon. Members, the question is that the sum of 220—

Mr. Deyalsingh: Chair, Sub-Head 06: General Public Services under tourism.

Mr. Chairman: That is the Infrastructure Development Fund?

Mr. Deyalsingh: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, continue.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Under 002, Strengthening of the Masquerade Industry which is a new item of $3 million, could the hon. Minister tells what exactly is the masquerade industry; how are they to benefit from this $3 million injection and which is the implementation agency responsibility?

Hon. Hadeed: This has just been transferred to the Ministry as a new Sub-Head and this basically is an area where we send our representatives out to the world Carnival forums, and from there, we encourage them and we encourage our bands to partner with those countries, and in so doing, we would be able to link internationally to encourage a lot of visitors to our shore. Recently, the first trip was to Switzerland and France, and I am told that the reception was extremely good and we do expect to get an influx of tourists from both those countries for our coming Carnival.

Mr. Chairman: Okay. Hon. Members, the sum of $224,579,207 for Head 35: the Ministry of Tourism stand part of the Schedule.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 35 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, we know you are from the other place, on behalf of the Standing Finance Committee, we would like to thank you for being here with us and to also thank your staff for being here with us.
Hon. Hadeed: And I thank everybody for all the questions posed to me and I am assuring this country that the Ministry of Tourism is in good hands at this time. Thank you.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much.

4.55 p.m.

Mr. Chairman: So the next Head is the Integrity Commission, Head 37. The Minister of Finance and the Economy is here and we will deal with that.

Mr. Imbert: May I ask a housekeeping question?

Mr. Chairman: Yes.

Mr. Imbert: Are we breaking for tea at all?

Mr. Chairman: Yes, as soon as we are finished with the Integrity Commission and the Environmental Commission. We have to deal with two of them because the Minister of Finance and the Economy will be speaking. He is the Minister who will be taking responsibility for those two and after that we will take a 15-minute break.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Fifteen?

Mr. Chairman: Yes. We have to complete our work, otherwise we continue and we ask Members to stream out and get whatever they want to drink and come back. The Chairman will be in charge here and I am not hungry. I will be around. [Desk thumping] Okay?

Head 37: Integrity Commission, $25,610,100.

Question proposed: That Head 37 stand part of the Schedule.

I will now invite the hon. Minister of Finance and the Economy. Hon. Minister of Finance and the Economy, would you like to say a few words?

Hon. Howai: No, I am just ready to go.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, fine. Hon. Members, the sum of $25,610,100 for Head 37 the Integrity 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

Item 001: General Administration
Miss Hospedales: Mr. Chair, based on the information we have here Sub-Item 23: Fees, there has been a $3,800,000 allocation and I would like to know, in 2014 there was a $3,600,000 allocation, was all this money spent? And for 2015—[Interruption]

Mr. Chairman: Member, which page are you on?

Miss Hospedales: Page 232, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Chairman: Page 232? And you are dealing with Goods and Services?

Miss Hospedales: Yes, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Chairman: We have gone past you, you know.

Miss Hospedales: Sir.

Mr. Chairman: I am now dealing with Minor Equipment Purchases but I will facilitate you.

Miss Hospedales: Okay, thank you Sir. You are going too fast, really.

Mr. Chairman: Yes, I have gone past you.

Miss Hospedales: And we are getting tired, you know.

Mr. Chairman: But pose your question and then we will go to the Member for Port of Spain South.

Miss Hospedales: Okay, Mr. Chair. Sub-Item 23, under Fees, in 2014 there was a $4,800,000 allocation, which was then revised to $3,600,000. I want to know whether or not all that money was spent and if they can provide a breakdown of the $3,800,000 received for 2015.

Mr. Chairman: That is an estimate, you know, Member for Arouca/Maloney, for 2015. It is an estimate.

Miss Hospedales: Well a breakdown of the money allocated for 2014.

Mr. Chairman: Okay.
Hon. Howai: Mr. Chair, well not all of the funding was actually spent in 2014. Actually some of the work is ongoing. This is mainly legal expenses which have been incurred by the Commission. Some of that legal work will continue. Some of it involves engaging overseas attorneys and, therefore, this number reflects the estimate of what we think will be incurred during 2015. But out of 2014, I do not have the exact number but I think there is still about a million that is unspent.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much. Let me go to the Member for Port of Spain South.

Miss Mc Donald: Certainly. Mr. Chairman, I am looking at this $3.8 million and my question to the Minister is: I looked at the fees for the AG under the same Sub-Item 23. The legal fees for the AG is $130 million, to the Prime Minister’s Office it is $10 million, and to the Integrity Commission it is $3.8 million. I am asking the question: is this Commission properly financed or resourced to undertake their numerous investigations? I just heard legal fees, I just heard retainer for overseas briefs, et cetera. So I am asking, given the fact that the Attorney General has a $130 million—[Interruption]

Mr. Chairman: Yes, you have said that already. We heard that.

Miss Mc Donald: Office of the Prime Minister has $10 million, what is happening with this?

Mr. Chairman: We heard that. Let us go. Could you answer that question?

Hon. Howai: The short answer is yes, they are adequately resourced.

Mr. Chairman: Okay. All right. Member for Port of Spain South, then Member for Laventille West.

Mr. Hypolite: I am looking at—[Interruption]

Mr. Chairman: No, no I recognize the Member for Port of Spain South. She has another question.

Miss Mc Donald: Yes, one more question. I would like to ask the Minister of Finance and the Economy, of the total allocation of some $25 million to the Integrity Commission, what was their initial request from the Integrity Commission and they ended up getting whatever.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, whilst he is going to respond to you—[Interruption]

Hon. Howai: I need to check it.
Mr. Chairman:—I recognize the Member for Laventille West.

Mr. Hypolite: Yes, Chair. Sub-Items 37 and 43. Under Sub-Item 37 we are seeing, in 2014, $30,000 for Janitorial Services and in 2015, $300,000 and likewise also in Sub-Item 43, Security Services, $6,100 in 2014 jumping to $450,000 in 2015. Can you give a reasoning behind that?

Mr. Chairman: Yes, hon. Minister of Finance and the Economy.

Mr. Hypolite: Because this is rubbish.

Mr. Chairman: No, no, no.

Hon. Howai: Okay, yeah. This is actually—the Commission is moving to new premises, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: I am very well aware of that.

Hon. Howai: Yeah, and in the old premises it was picked up as part of the rental cost, and so on—[Interruption]

Mr. Chairman: Yes.

Hon. Howai:—in terms of disposal. Now they will have to pay for it themselves.

Mr. Chairman: Right.

Hon. Howai: This is in respect of that, yeah.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, we move on to Sub-Head 03: Minor Equipment Purchases; Item 001: General Administration, then we go to 09: Development Programme; Item 003: Economic Infrastructure; Item 05: Multi-Sectoral and Other Services.

*a question is put and agreed to*

*Head 37 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.*

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, we would like you to remain because we are going straight to the Environmental Commission. As he is here let him deal with the Environmental Commission one time.

Dr. Rambachan: Mr. Chairman?

Mr. Chairman: Yes.

Dr. Rambachan: Are you going to be stopping at No. 10 on the list chosen by the Opposition?
Mr. Chairman: Yes. If we have time and we can go beyond that, fine, but we are certainly going to complete 10 at a minimum.

Dr. Rambachan: I am just asking, Mr. Chairman, because I have my people on hold and I am just trying to make sure that we are clear where we are going.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, yours is a big one. I would like to suggest that we keep you for tomorrow.

Dr. Rambachan: Thank you.

Mr. Chairman: So you can tell your people to proceed to leave.

Dr. Rambachan: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: All right, whilst we are waiting on the members of the Environmental Commission, may I just indicate to hon. Members.

Head 38:

Question proposed: That Head 38 stand part of the Schedule.

The Environmental Commission, $15,044,300, 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. Sub-Head 01: Personnel Expenditure; Item 001: General Administration.

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: Yes, the hon. Member for Diego Martin North/East.

Mr. Imbert: Does the Minister know how many people are employed at this Commission?

Mr. Chairman: Could the Minister indicate how many persons are employed at the Environmental Commission?

Hon. Howai: Approximately 30 persons.

Mr. Imbert: But they are not paid under this Head though?

Hon. Howai: No.

Mr. Imbert: So how many people are paid under this Head?

Hon. Howai: Chair, we are just trying to pull the figures.
Mr. Imbert: Before we go, on the same Sub-Item 23, 24 and 25: Salaries, Allowances and Remuneration all showing significant decreases. What is the reason for that?

Mr. Chairman: Salaries and Allowances showing significant decreases.

Mr. Imbert: Sub-Items 24 and 25 are showing significant decreases, 30 per cent, 50 per cent, that kind of thing. What is causing that?


Mr. Imbert: Okay.

Mr. Chairman: Is that okay?

Mr. Imbert: Well if he say so.

Mr. Chairman: All right, we go to 02 Goods and Services.

Mr. Imbert: So Mr. Chairman—[Interruption]

Mr. Chairman: I recognize the Members for—we are under goods and services now—Diego Martin North/East, Point Fortin and who is down there? St. Ann’s East.

Mr. Imbert: Yes, Mr. Chairman, I am seeing—let me start at eight and come backwards—001/08. The rental cost is going from $1 million to $2 million. Could the Minister explain that?

Hon. Howai: Yeah, they are in the process of relocating, so they would be going to a new building, yeah.

Mr. Imbert: And is that why you have an increased allocation for Electricity?

Hon. Howai: Yeah.

Mr. Imbert: Okay, but that would not explain an increased allocation for Travelling.

Hon. Howai: For Travelling and Subsistence.

Mr. Imbert: They ARE moving to Point Fortin or what?

Mr. Chairman: Yes, Member for Point Fortin.

Mr. Imbert: No, I am just asking, moving to Point Fortin, that is why that is for travelling.

Mr. Chairman: Or, I see.
Hon. Howai: Yeah, for persons who are paid under the SRC allocations, those expenses are picked up there and, therefore, the amount allocated to them had been increased.

Mr. Imbert: Not by so much, not with the last SRC report. This is 100 per cent increase. There are more people being paid under this Head now, than had been paid previously because they now have two registrars and a couple of other people who are being included.

Mr. Imbert: New people are coming on but not reflected under salaries and wages?

Hon. Howai: No, it is being—apparently the expense picked up here is in respect of, would it be a reclassification or is it absolutely new? [Hon. Howai confers with his Advisor] You have someone who is on suspension, so one is new, one is extra and one is on suspension.

5.10 p.m.

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Chairman, I have a general question, but perhaps I will ask it at the end. I just have a general question on this whole allocation, should I ask it now or at the end?

Mr. Chairman: No, hold your fire. Let us deal with the Member for Point Fortin.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Thank you. There are several concerns which I have under Goods and Services, but I could probably just raise a few with you now. Under Fees, Item 23, what particularly are these fees? Under Other Contracted Services, what are those services that you contracted out? They seem to be increasing as well. Under 58, what Medical Expenses and to whom? And for whom are these expenses being met? Also—[ Interruption]

Hon. Howai: Medical expenses. What did you say? Which one was the last one you mentioned, sorry?

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Medical expenses, for whom are these being paid? I note an increase as well, yes. And I also—there is more than 150 per cent increase in Promotions, Publicity and Printing. Could we have some details on that? It is more than 150 per cent increase, and also some details again, another increase of 150 per cent under 66, Hosting of Conferences, Seminars and Other Functions. Could we have the details? [Crosstalk]

[Hon. Howai confers with his advisor]
Hon. Howai: Okay. Fees, the issue with Fees is that there are two things, one is that there was an increase in the—what they call the LexisNexis search engine which they use for their legal research. So that increase which is in pounds is included there, as well as some legal fees.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: $360,000 per annum.

Hon. Howai: No, and plus legal fees that they had included in there in respect of a specific matter they have ongoing at the moment. Right. So that is what they included in here which accounted for the increase. With respect to Other Contracted Services—[Interruption]

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: You see, I would have been concerned about using other legal resources, because to my mind you have your own in-house legal resources. This is, in fact, like a tribunal. It is like a court as far as I am concerned.

Mr. Chairman: Okay.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: No, no, it is a court.

Hon. Howai: Because it involves service commissions, they are telling me they would prefer to not use internal, they are using external persons to deal with it.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: I see. I see.

Hon. Howai: It is an internal—it is an HR matter.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: It is an HR matter, and this is why, okay. And with regard to the Contracted Services, what services do you contract out?

[Hon. Howai confers with his advisor]

Hon. Howai: Well, they had put in an allocation to help with the moving and so on. Some of the contracted services that they need help with; all of the relocation costs and so on. So they simply put it inside of there. [Hon. Howai confers with his advisor]

Mr. Chairman: All right.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: He is still responding

Hon. Howai: Yeah, I am just dealing with the medical expenses which deals with the SRC expenses, right, relating to the—[Hon. Howai confers with his advisor] Okay, there is an increase from four to six members for whom they are picking up the medical contributions.
Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: I only asked this question because it is quite unusual to see medical expenses for professional staff listed separately.

Hon. Howai: This would be the insurance. [Hon. Howai confers with his advisor]

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: But long story short, could we just get a list and detail of all the Promotions, Publicity and Printing, seeing that it is such a large increase of $500,000. Could we get a list of the printing, promotions—[Interruption] and also a list of the conferences and seminars, because this also has increased by 150 per cent, conferences, seminars and functions.

Mr. Chairman: Item 03, Minor Equipment Purchases; Item 001, General Administration.

Mrs. Thomas: Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: Yes.

Mrs. Thomas: I think you had recognized me just now, under Goods and Services?

Mr. Chairman: Okay, I recognize you.

Mrs. Thomas: Yes. Mr. Chairman, Item 16, Contract Employment, if the Minister and they could just provide us with a list of the positions, because [Crosstalk] I understand they have just a complement of 30 staff members. So what are the positions planned for this contractual amount budgeted for 2015?

Hon. Howai: Okay, Contract Employment?

Mrs. Thomas: Yes, No. 16.

Hon. Howai: Okay, we will get that for you.

Mrs. Thomas: And then Item 43, under Security Services, I see an increase of $289,000. If you could provide—who are the vendors right now, and you know, why is there an increase planned for the security services?

Hon. Howai: It is part of the cost in the new building, but I just want to get a clarification. [Hon. Howai confers with his advisor] What is happening is they are moving from premises where they have two floors, they are moving into four floors, they want to have security on the different floors—[Interruption]

Mr. Imbert: Could you just tell us where that is, please?

Hon. Howai:—and the additional cost they will actually tender out. Sorry?
Mr. Imbert: Where is the new building?

Hon. Howai: [Hon. Howai confers with his advisor] Chaguanas. They have identified a place in Chaguanas.

Mr. Imbert: And will you give us the name of the owner?

Mr. Chairman: Okay. We go on to—[Interruption]

Hon. Howai: They have not finalized the—[Interruption]

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Chairman, I have a general question.

Hon. Howai:—landlord as yet. I do not know if we want to necessarily give that landlord until they have—[Interruption]

Mr. Chairman: The general question will come after. Okay, Sub-Head 03, we have to move on.

Mr. Jeffrey: Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: All right briefly and swiftly.

Mr. Jeffrey: My question on Goods and Services, Maintenance of Vehicles. I would like to find out how many vehicles are owned by the Environmental Commission, because I see that under Minor Equipment they have a figure of $400,000 for vehicles, but if you look at the Maintenance of Vehicles, in 2013, the maintenance was $41,927, then it went up to $67,000 and went up to $75,000. We need to know how many vehicles then are—[Interruption]

Mr. Chairman: Okay, we have your point. How many vehicles are owned by the EMA?

Hon. Howai: Three vehicles are owned by the company right now, by the organization, right now.

Mr. Chairman: Three vehicles are owned by the EMA right now, Environmental Commission rather, okay.

We go on to Item 03, Minor Equipment Purchases; Item 001, General Administration. We go now to Development Programme, Item 09, Sub-Head 05 Multi Sectoral and Other Services. Yes, Member for Point Fortin?

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: May I just ask one question about the institutional strengthening of the Environmental Commission, this seems to be a new project. What is projected here? What are we looking at? What is this about?
Hon. Howai: Member, 117?

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Of the Development Programme.

Hon. Howai: And the specific one you are asking on is?

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: 002.

Hon. Howai: 002, the Institutional Strengthening. Is this with the European Union, the 400?

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Yeah. What is the project about?

[Hon. Howai confers with his advisor]

Hon. Howai: This is funding from the EU for an outreach programme that they are doing to inform the public in general about what they are doing, and what kind of services are available from them.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: So who will have oversight over that, is it strictly ministerial?

Hon. Howai: It will be, well, partially through the EU also, right, who will be monitoring it.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, I will take the overall question from the Member for Diego Martin North/East.

Mr. Imbert: Yes, all these many millions of dollars that are allocated to this commission, how many matters did they determine in 2014?

Mr. Chairman: All right. Can you all supply that?

Hon. Howai: We can supply that.

Mr. Imbert: Is it more than zero?

Hon. Howai: Yes, that is why they need to do research.

Mr. Imbert: More than one?

Mr. Chairman: All right, okay, they will supply that in writing. Hon. Members, the question is that the sum of $15,044,300 for Head 38, the Environmental Commission stand part of the Schedule.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 38 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.
Mr. Chairman: We want to do the Registration, Recognition and Certification Board, it is a small one, that should not—no, if they are not here, we are not responsible. The Minister of Finance and Economy will take charge of that?

Hon. Howai: Okay.

Mr. Chairman: Are they on their way?

Mr. Mc Leod: Yes, I am told that they are on their way.

Mr. Chairman: All right, well, we will give them a little contrition here. We will take 15 minutes. [Crosstalk] Okay, now it is 5.20 p.m., we come back at 5.45 p.m.

So the Committee’s proceedings are suspended until 5.45 p.m. When we come back, we will deal with the Registration, Recognition and Certification Board, we deal with the Ministry of Tertiary Education and Skills Training, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Science and Technology, those four and that will make us 10, and we will leave after, okay? Thank you.

5.21 p.m.: Standing Finance Committee suspended.

5.45 p.m.: Standing Finance Committee resumed.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, I would like to call the Standing Finance Committee meeting to order. We are dealing with Head 11, Registration, Recognition and Certification Board, $4,926,100.

Head 11.

Question proposed: That Head 11 stand part of the Schedule.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, the sum of $4,926,100 for Head 11, for the 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:

01: Personnel Expenditure

001: General Administration

02: Goods and Services

001: General Administration

Miss Mc Donald: I just want to find out about Contract Employment, Sir, Item 16.
Mr. Chairman: Item 16, the whole question of contract employment. Yes, hon. Prime Minister.

Mr. McLeod: There are currently three contract employees in the recognition and certification processes: a Business Operations Assistant, a Pension and Leave Officer, and an Examiner Specialist.

Miss Mc Donald: All right. Go to Item 28, Consulting and Other Contracting Services. That figure jumped from $30,000 to $100,000. Any—

Mr. Chairman: You want some clarification on that?

Miss Mc Donald: Yes, thank you.

Mr. McLeod: It is to provide for the upgrade of the IT services of the Registration, Recognition and Certification Board essentially, and this is really a small amount.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Thank you, Prime Minister. Under Contract Employment, when you said there were three persons on contract, am I to understand that $200,000 in the 2015 estimates is to pay these three persons? Just to clarify, please.

Mr. McLeod: These are short-term. Okay, this $200,000 is to provide for short-term contract employment, but we are looking at longer term involvement for persons as we bring the Registration, Recognition and Certification Board up to scratch. Right now, it is receiving our attention with the view to doing some legislative changes, so that the board can be more effectively engaged in the recognition and certification of trade unions and so on. The process is being overhauled as we speak.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Prime Minister, in response to the Member for Port of Spain South’s question, under 16—correct me if I am wrong—you said in your answer the contract employment was to employ three persons. My question is: is this $200,000, on the same line, Item 16, to pay three contract workers, which was your answer to the Member for Port of Spain South?

Mr. McLeod: There are three contract employees currently involved in the process and they are short-term contract employees, but we are moving towards beefing up the recognition board sufficiently so that it can better discharge its responsibility.

Mr. Deyalsingh: So, my interpretation of your answer is that these three short-term contract employees, between those three persons, receive $200,000 for 2015.
Mr. Mc Leod: No. They do not receive that.

Mr. Deyalsingh: So that is the clarification I am seeking.

Mr. Mc Leod: I am advised that we are looking for additional new blood and right now the three contract persons whom we have are in receipt of sums significantly lower than what you see mentioned here. So this is really to provide for those whom we are going to be recruiting on a short-term basis until we regularize the situation.

Mr. Deyalsingh: So the original answer to the Member for Port of Spain South, when she asked about line Item 16, Contract Employment, does not really mean three workers? I just want to be crystal clear.

Mr. Mc Leod: No. It did not.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Thank you.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, We go to Item Sub-Head 03: Minor Equipment; Item 001, General Administration.

Hon. Members, the question is that the sum of $4,926,100 for Head 11, the Registration, Recognition and Certification Board stand part of the Schedule.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 11 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much members of the Registration, Recognition and Certification Board. We now proceed to the Ministry of Tertiary Education and Skills Training.

Head 72.

Question proposed: That Head 72 stand part of the Schedule.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, the sum of $2,778,459,841 for Head 72, the Ministry of Tertiary Education and Skills Training 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:

01: Personnel Expenditure

001: General Administration

002: Eastern Caribbean Institute of Agriculture and Forestry

003: Technical/Vocational Education
004: Teachers’ Colleges
005: National Examinations Council
02: Goods and Services
001: General Administration
002: Eastern Caribbean Institute of Agriculture and Forestry
005: National Examinations Council
006: Spanish Secretariat

6.00 p.m.

I recognize the Member for Arouca/Maloney.

Miss Hospedales: Item 006?

Mr. Chairman: Yes. I am under Item 006, Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, Spanish Secretariat.

Miss Hospedales: Okay.

Mr. Chairman: We go to Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, Item 001 General Administration; Item 006 Spanish Secretariat; Sub-Head 04: Current Transfers and Subsidies; Item 001 Regional Bodies; Item 002 Commonwealth Bodies; Item 004 International Bodies; Item 006 Education Institutions. I recognize the Member for Arouca/Maloney.

Miss Hospedales: Mr. Chair, I am just referring to Sub-Item 38 and 39. Could the Minister indicate: what are the proposed locations for construction of the Chaguanas Technology Centre and the NESC Drilling School? The proposed commencement date, whether or not there has been request for tenders and what is the proposed end date for the construction?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister of Tertiary Education and Skills Training.

Hon. Karim: Mr. Chairman, let me thank you very much for the opportunity. We have with us the Permanent Secretary and our technical staff in the event that they need supporting information.

With respect to the question for the Chaguanas Technology Centre, that is the NESC Technology Centre at Woodford Lodge in Chaguanas, the former Caroni (1975) Limited Transport and Field Engineering Department. That centre has been completed and it is open.
With respect to the NESC Drilling School, that facility is located at the Usine Ste. Madeline Transport and Field Engineering Department of the former Caroni (1975) Limited. That facility is operational and has 100 students currently on board.

**Mr. Chairman:** We go to Item 007, Households.

**Miss Mc Donald:** Question.

**Mr. Chairman:** Yes, the hon. Member for Port of Spain South.

**Miss Mc Donald:** Item 15. Could the Minister state what is the policy with respect to—[**Interruption**]

**Hon. Karim:** Which one is that?

**Miss Mc Donald:**—this particular programme.

**Mr. Chairman:** Which one is that? Do you want to identify it?

**Miss. Mc Donald:** Item 15.

**Mr. Chairman:** No, you say it loud so that the *Hansard* could record you.

**Miss Mc Donald:** 15.

**Mr. Chairman:** And what is the Item?

**Miss Mc Donald:** Bursaries/Financial Assistance.

**Hon. Karim:** The financial assistance programme.

**Miss Mc Donald:** Yes. You are not hearing me? It is very unusual people do not hear me. Let me repeat it. No. 1,5 Bursaries/Financial Assistance—Tertiary.

**Mr. Chairman:** And you would like to have clarification on that?

**Miss Mc Donald:** Yes. I just want to ask the Minister about the policy because I have not been hearing much about this programme, so I would like to know how do you access the programme and your policy with respect to this.

**Hon. Karim:** Okay. Well, the policy is very much similar to what you would have developed and, in fact, has been improved in some cases. Let me just say that FASP was assigned to the Ministry of Tertiary Education and Skills Training in September 2013, so it is about one year old, and so far we have been able to disburse approximately 88 of these grants. But over the period of 2010/2011 to 2013/2014 a total of 247 were disbursed at a total cost of $9.3 million.

**Miss Mc Donald:** A further question.
Mr. Chairman: Yes.

Miss Mc Donald: Same point. A question was asked in this Parliament with respect to information. I think the Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann’s/West asked that question, it was never answered. So I would like to ask you, in this setting, whether you would provide this honourable House—provide me, with the listing of the 247 names, the cost of studies and the amount allocated to each person. There are 247 persons. I thank you.

Hon. Karim: Certainly. And if it is, Mr. Chairman, it is within the current period that we are looking at—if it is 2013/2014 or if it is that you would like it before that, we will be very happy, Mr. Chairman.

Miss Mc Donald: From 2010 we said, coming up.

Hon. Karim: And if you want it before that, we can give you before that.

Miss Mc Donald: No, I want it from 2010. There is a particular reason. [Interruption] Member for Oropouche East, I did not ask you any question.

Mr. Chairman: Please, please. Oh yes. I recognize the Member for Port of Spain/North St. Ann’s/West, then the Member for Laventille East/Morvant.

Miss Cox: On that same point.

Mr. Chairman: You are on that same point?

Miss Cox: Yes.

Mr. Chairman: Are you on that same point?

Mrs. Mc Intosh: Mr. Chairman, I would like to look at Sub-Item 02 under the same Item 007, Households.

Mr. Chairman: No. We will deal with the Member for Laventille East/Morvant first and then we will move on.

Miss Cox: Just the same point. I just wanted to find out if this information concerning Bursaries/Financial Assistance was advertised.

Hon. Karim: They always advertise, and we can also supply you, Mr. Chairman, if the Member is so minded, to give you a copy of the advertisement and the period of time when it was allowed to be responded to.

Miss Cox: Thank you.

Mr. Chairman: I recognize the Member—Member for St. Joseph, is it the same point?
Mr. Deyalsingh: No, sir.

Mr. Chairman: What item are you on? What sub-item are you on?

Mr. Deyalsingh: I was trying to catch your eye before you left Educational Institutions. I just had a simple question under Educational Institutions.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, go ahead.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Thank you. Hon. Minister, Sub-Head 006, Educational Institutions; Sub-Item 30, UWI Funds for Research Projects. In 2013, there was an allocation of $6.3 million and there are no subsequent allocations. Could you enlighten us as to the status of that type of funding?

Mr. Chairman: The hon. Minister.

Hon. Karim: Sure. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. What has been happening is that the University of the West Indies, prior to that and about eight years before that, had been receiving that allocation on an annual basis, and what we thought was something better to do through the National Commission for Higher Education that coordinates the entire tertiary sector, is to spread the gains, as it were, to other institutions so that they too can bid for their projects to be researched.

As such, a Cabinet decision, the amount allocated previously to the University of the West Indies was now assigned through the Ministry of Tertiary Education and Skills Training to the National Commission for Higher Education, and will be made available continuously to the University of the West Indies and all other tertiary level institutions.

Mr. Deyalsingh: So they will be the funding agency?


Mr. Deyalsingh: And that falls under?


Mr. Deyalsingh: Thank you.

Mr. Chairman: The hon. Member for Arouca/Maloney.

Miss Hospedales: Mr. Chairman, I am looking at Sub-Item 12 and I would like the Minister to indicate what has accounted for a $33 million-plus increase to Servol’s Human Development and Skills Training Programme. Previously, they received $21 million and this year the allocation is a little over $54 million.
Hon. Karim: Well, it appears as though there would have been the request for an increase in capital expenditure as well. One of the things that we are looking at, in fact, was how do we honour the work of Father Gerry Pantin, and we held discussions with Servol and they did indicate that they would like us to construct in his name a technology centre.

Mrs. Mc Intosh: I am looking at Sub-Item 02 Training Programme for Displaced Workers, and I see there is an increase of $2.8 million. I would like the Minister to say who are these—not to name them—displaced workers. What state enterprise or agencies have they been displaced from? What sort of training will they be offered and where will this training be held?

Hon. Karim: Well, the retraining programme is now under the remit of the Youth Training Employment Partnership Programme Limited, and this programme has been utilized for those persons who may have been retrenched and in some other way as well, involuntarily separated or voluntarily separated from their previous companies.

In most cases, what we have seen is that they are really enhancing their skilled areas and, in some cases, in the vocational sector. We can provide you with a list of the courses if you so mind, and we will also provide you with a list of the persons.

Mrs. Mc Intosh: It might be helpful for my constituents.

Hon. Karim: Sure.

Mrs. Mc Intosh: Thank you.

Mr. Chairman: Yes, the hon. Member for St. Joseph.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Hon. Minister, piggybacking on the last question which I asked, under 007, Sub-Item 13, National Commission for Higher Education, where you said that funding now comes from. I see the figure for 2014 Revised Estimates would have been $830 million. Is that correct, or thousand?

Hon. Karim: Thousand.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Right, $830,000. The 2015 estimates is $1.5 million, but UWI would have gotten $6.3 million. How does this fund now operate where it is clearly not sufficient to even fund what UWI was getting in 2013?
Hon. Karim: I think we have to differentiate the research fund which is defined by the Higher Education Research agenda as opposed to really populating the establishment and financing the establishment.

Mr. Deyalsingh: So Sub-Item 13 is to fund exactly what then?

Hon. Karim: To populate and to staff the National Commission for Education.

Mr. Deyalsingh: So could you guide me as to where in this document I would actually find the funding?


Mr. Deyalsingh: 420?

Hon. Karim: Yes, page 420, 36, the Higher Education Research Fund. You will see that is listed there and the reference that you made just now in terms of the NCHE, on page 421, Item no. 13, that is really for the establishment of the vacancies.

Mr. Deyalsingh: But then it still begs the question. UWI alone was getting $6.3 million but now here it is just 2015 Estimates, $2.5 million.

Hon. Karim: No. What I am saying is that that figure that you are quoting now is for the establishment; for staffing the commission. What I indicated before was that they were receiving that $6.5 million annually, but it is now going to be held and disbursed through the National Commission for Higher Education. So there is a different functional responsibility.

Mr. Chairman: Member for Laventille West.

Mr. Hypolite: Yes, Mr. Chairman. Did I hear the Minister say that under Item 12, the $33 million is for construction?

Hon. Karim: No. I am saying it may have been partly due to that for capital expenditure as well, because they had in fact asked for an additional sum of money, and one of the discussions that we are having is, how can we recognize the contribution? So that is one instance.

Mr. Hypolite: So, what exactly would have been the cause for that $33 million increase?

Hon. Karim: I think, as a matter of fact, what we are doing is partly that would be in terms of expenditure for increasing the capacity for delivering
Mr. Chairman: Yes, Member for Port of Spain South.

Miss Mc Donald: I am looking at 16 and 17. I note that these are new Sub-Items: Point Lisas Industrial Apprenticeship and the St. Augustine Education City. Minister, could you explain to me, for my own edification, because I would like my constituents, especially East Port of Spain to be part of this programme, first time I am seeing it. Could you tell me how do you access these programmes? What do they have to offer?

Hon. Karim: Okay. The Point Lisas Industrial Apprenticeship Programme was approved by Cabinet on September 12, 2013. What is it? It was really in response to the shortage of skilled technicians on the Point Lisas Industrial Estate and the apprentice programme really has four six-month rotations of each of the major industries.

It is being managed by a consortium which comprises of the NESC as well as IPS Nitrogen and what used to be Farmland Misschem, the Point Lisas Nitrogen Limited. Effectively, what is being done is that we expose them to the vocational skills, the theory, and they are also on the rotations on the plant; and they also do the National Life Skills curriculum. In order to access this programme it was, in fact, advertised publicly in the newspapers, and we invited applicants and we have applicants from all over the country. Although it is called the Point Lisas Industrial PLIP Apprentice Programme, but it is accessed by all citizens from anywhere in Trinidad and Tobago.

Miss Mc Donald: How often do you take in these students?

Hon. Karim: Every year we propose to take in a batch of about 40 students.

Miss Mc Donald: Could you tell me about the St. Augustine Education City?

Hon. Karim: The St. Augustine Education City was an initiative really to increase and to expand the kind of services within a geographic spread of Macoya in the east to the Arthur Lok Jack in the west to the Caroni River in the south to the foothills of the Northern Range. What you will find happening is that this was really a policy position, because you had within those confines, that geographical area, the major education institutions and the universities as well.

6.15 p.m.

So it was to improve, just like you will have in the United States of America and foreign countries, where you have education cities that really improve the
quality of delivery and services, and improvement of the economic life of the geographical area. It is not a programme as such, it is really an improvement of the quality of services and the enrichment in that geographical area.

**Miss Mc Donald:** So who are these people? So they are like locked down in a particular area?

**Hon. Karim:** No. Let me answer who are these people. First of all, it is managed by a board, the education city, a committee, and what it does really it meets with the training providers in this area, and you would recognize that we have the highest concentration of persons in the tertiary sector within this geographical area, and it is really in a sense as well to create business opportunities. How do we work with the regional corporation in the area? How do we work with the training providers to provide security? To provide opportunities for housing and other services, and I think what we have done as well, in terms of the transportation to and from classes, we also started what is called a “Hop-A-Bus” service with the PTSC. So it is really providing mobility and improvement to the quality of the services—

**Miss Mc Donald:** I thank you.

**Hon. Karim:**—but it is not only to deny anybody else these services.

**Miss Mc Donald:** No, Sir, I was not going in that direction, I just wanted information so I could get—

**Hon. Karim:** Sure. You are welcome, thank you.

**Mr. Chairman:** I recognize the Members for Port of Spain North/St. Ann’s West, Laventille West, and then we go on, we move on. So, Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann’s West.

**Mrs. Mc Intosh:** Sub-Item 15, Bursaries/Financial Assistance-Tertiary, only $10 million has been—

**Mr. Chairman:** No, we have already passed that. That was already dealt with. Yes, and a list will be provided.

**Mrs. Mc Intosh:** Okay. All right.

**Mr. Chairman:** Right. Member for Laventille West.

**Mr. Hypolite:** Item 004, On-the-Job Training. Can the Minister indicate approximately how many trainees would have passed through the programme for the past year, and if he can give an idea as to where they would have been placed, whether it is the private sector, public sector, something brief along that line?
Hon. Karim: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mrs. Mc Intosh: Chair?

Mr. Chairman: Yes.

Mrs. Mc Intosh: Chair, my question was not what she asked.

Mr. Chairman: All right, go ahead, pose your question. Just take a note first.

Mrs. Mc Intosh: No, after he is through.

Mr. Chairman: Yeah. Okay.

Hon. Karim: Thank you very much, Member for Laventille West. Currently we have 4,513 On-the-Job Training Programme as of August 31, 2014. We can in fact go up to a total of 8,000. We do have them at various levels, as you would recognize: level I is really those graduates who are CSEC and they get a stipend of $2,500; level II, the A level or the CAPE graduate, they get a stipend of $3,600; at the degree level, $6,250 and the postgraduate, $7,200—I am just giving you some supporting information. We are projected to place about 3,487 persons, and we do in fact have the figures in the public sector and in the private sector for each of the levels that I have so indicated.

You would recognize as well that more of them will be taken up in the public sector as opposed to the private sector. What we have done is we have a shared payment just like we would have had, you know, during the previous administration, and in this case we also lightened the burden of the private sector where they are only paying 40 per cent of the contribution cost.

Mr. Hypolite: Would you be willing to send a copy of—

Hon. Karim: Oh, certainly.

Mr. Chairman: Yes, go ahead, Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann’s West.

Mrs. Mc Intosh: My question is with respect to Sub-Item 15: could the Minister reconcile for me, the funding under Bursaries and Financial Assistance—Tertiary? And if you will permit me, Chair, just to refer because it relates to Sub-Item 13 in Educational Institutions, Subsidies to Mt. Hope Students, how does that reconcile with GATE funding? Because it is the students, subsidies to students and financial assistance, tertiary. How does it reconcile with the GATE funding?
Hon. Karim: Mr. Chairman, I am sure that you are very familiar with the process and from your past experience. Even though you may be accessing the GATE Programme, the Government Assistance for Tuition Expenses, you can also still apply for the HELP, the H-E-L-P, the Higher Education Loan Programme, as well as you can apply for the Financial Assistance Studies Programme. In some cases what we have seen is that even though people may be accessing the GATE Programme and we facilitated with their tuition, they may live in very remote areas from their place of study and, therefore, transportation cost in some cases, or housing cost in some cases, and in other cases, books and other ancillary services.

Mrs. Mc Intosh: So you have continued those policies?

Hon. Karim: We have improved on it.

Mr. Chairman: All right, we go on to Item 009, Other Transfers; Item 011, Transfers to State Enterprises; Sub-Head—

Dr. Browne: Chairman?

Mr. Chairman: Yes, the hon. Member for Diego Martin Central.

Dr. Browne: Transfers to State Enterprises—why has the transfer to COSTAATT been decreased by $1.5 million?

Mr. Chairman: We have not reached there as yet.

Dr. Browne: Oh, sorry, Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: We are going to Sub-Head 06; Current Transfers to Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies; Item 004, Statutory Boards—that is the one, right? Yes, you can now pose your question.

Dr. Browne: Do I need to repeat the question?

Mr. Chairman: Did you understand the question?

Hon. Karim: I think he was asking why do we have the $1.4 million decrease.

Mr. Chairman: Yes.

Hon. Karim: I can find out that, but in some cases what we also have is that we have increased expenditure for COSTAATT as a whole. But in answer to your specific question, we can get some details on that for you.

Mr. Chairman: So he will supply that to you before the end of the five-day period. Let us go to the Development Programme. Sub-Head 09; Development
Programme; Item 003, Economic Infrastructure; Item 004, Social Infrastructure; Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services, Infrastructure, Development Fund.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 72 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Chairman, you fly through the Development Programme.

Mr. Chairman: Yes, because I did go through all the Items—

Mr. Imbert: On the Development Programme?

Mr. Chairman: Yes, and nobody raised anything. So I am sorry that you were not alert, and you are a man always alert.

Mr. Imbert: It appears so. [Laughter]

Mr. Chairman: I am sorry, but you can always have discussions with the hon. Minister behind the Chair, but I have to proceed. I have a deadline to meet. I now proceed to the Ministry of Justice, but before doing so, may I say, on behalf of the [Desk thumping] Standing Finance Committee, we extend our thanks to you—

Hon. Karim: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Chairman:—the hon. Minister for being here with your staff. Thank you very much. The Ministry of Justice.

Hon. Member: Mr. Chair, you are moving too fast.

Mr. Chairman: Yes, I am moving very fast. Please pay attention. [Crosstalk] Thank you very much. We are going to resume at this time with the Ministry of Justice, Head 58, in the sum of $767,489,600. I will now invite the hon. Minister of Justice, if he so desires, to make a brief opening statement for no more than five minutes, as it relates to the priority areas of your Ministry. If you wish to take the time, you are so invited to do so at this time.

Hon. George: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, and may I, for the moment, decline that invitation and we can proceed.

Mr. Chairman: No problem.

Head 58.

Question proposed: That Head 58 stand part of the Schedule.
Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, the sum of $767,489,600 for Head 58, the Ministry of Justice, 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. Sub-Head 01: Personnel Expenditure; Item 001, General Administration; Item 003, Forensic Science Centre; Item 004, Prison Service—I recognize the hon. Member for Laventille East/Morvant.

Miss Cox: Mr. Chairman, I am seeing here under Sub-Item 03, Overtime; I would just like to know what caused this jump in an increase in overtime of $17 million?

Hon. George: Mr. Chairman, this increase arose as a result of the fact that, despite many of our efforts, there could not be a virement last year to pay the overtime owed to the prison officers, so it has been accounted for here by this increase in $17 million so that we could pay the sums due and outstanding for last year to prison officers.

Mr. Chairman: Okay. We go to Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services.

Miss Cox: Mr. Chairman?

Mr. Chairman: We are proceeding, you are going to the Prison Services, right?

Miss Cox: No, before.

Mr. Chairman: Oh, all right, so you are still on Prison Service?

Miss Cox: Yes, I am.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, yes.

Miss Cox: Item 08, concerning Vacant Posts; I know that there have been some rumblings about filling of vacancies. I see here an increase in $15 million, could you tell me what accounts for that?

Hon. George: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Yes, in respect of the vacant posts there are currently about 500 vacant posts in the prison service, and this is as a result of the retirement from the prison service of persons who take the opportunity to retire before time and so on, as well as those who retire at 50 and 55. So because of the unpredictability of these retirements you find yourself in a position where you have a lot of vacant posts. Then there are vacant posts also in the hierarchy, the top echelons, these too exist and have to be filled.
Miss Cox: Question: I just want to know how long have these posts been vacant? Could we get that information, please?

Hon. George: Well, I suppose the information would be on file, but we do not have it here but—

Miss Cox: Could we get it before the end of the—

Mr. Chairman: Yes. You could provide us with a—

Hon. George: Yes, you could get it.

Mr. Chairman: How long these vacant posts have been vacant?

Hon. George: Yes.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, let us proceed. We go to Sub-Head 02; Goods and Services; Item 001, General Administration. I recognize the Member for La Brea.

Mr. Jeffrey: Item 036, Extraordinary Expenditure, $30,594,000—2013, and of course we had $28 million and so on. My concern is that for Extraordinary Expenditure, $30 million looks like plenty money.

Hon. George: This money is money that is for the Witness Protection Programme, and that is a costly programme.

Mr. Jeffrey: Thirty million dollars?

Hon. George: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: Yes. All right, let us go. We go to Item 003, Forensic Science Centre. The hon. Member for Laventille West.

Mr. Hypolite: Item 061, Insurance, insurance for what exactly?

Hon. George: I have been informing the public and the Parliament from time to time that the Forensic Science Centre is equipping itself with state-of-the-art equipment, and we want to insure those items of equipment because they are very costly and we do not want to follow the normal process or procedure of Government where we do not insure things. I think it is important that we insure these items of equipment and this is what—

Mr. Hypolite: Who is the carrier of that insurance policy?

Hon. George: The money is set aside for it here if you see it for the first time so there is no carrier as yet; the money is set aside for it in the coming year.
Mr. Chairman: All right. We go into Item 04, Prison Service; Item 05—Okay. Item 04, Prison Service. Members for Laventille East/Morvant and Laventille West and Member for Diego Martin North/East. Okay, I recognize you as well. So, Member for Laventille East/Morvant.

6.30 p.m.

Miss Cox: Mr. Chair, I have a few questions.

Mr. Chairman: Yes, you go ahead.

Miss Cox: 16, Contract Employment. I want to know what constitutes this Contract Employment, an increase of $54,470.

Mr. Chairman: Could you take those questions down because the hon. Member has a few questions.

Miss Cox: Concerning Contract Employment under 16—training. I also would like to know if adequate training is taking place, because I know that there has been some problems with succession planning in the various services. So I am asking about that concerning the prisons service.

Repairs and Maintenance - Buildings, 21. Why I ask this question is because, Minister, I know in the past in the prison service a lot of repairs and so on would take place. The prisoners would do those repairs. I understand this is not taking place as much as before, but contracts are being awarded. Many contracts are being awarded for jobs that prisoners could have done. I would like to know what is happening here concerning contracts in the prison service. Why now everything to be done contracts are being awarded, while prisoners could have done those contracts?

Also Food at Institutions, there is an increase of $1.2 million. Could you tell me what has caused this increase? Security Services, I see there is an amount of $19 million. Could I get an explanation on that, please?

Mr. Chairman: Those are the questions?

Miss Cox: Yes.

Mr. Chairman: The hon. Minister will respond, then we go to the Member for Laventille West and then the Member for Diego Martin North/East.

Mr. Imbert: I have a question on one of the Heads that she raised.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, well, the Member for Laventille West and then the Member for Diego Martin North/East.
Mr. Hypolite: She actually asked the question that I was going to ask.

Mr. Chairman: So you are not going again?

Hon. George: So go ahead?

Mr. Imbert: No, no I have a question on 004/21 that the Member for Laventille East/Morvant asked about, Repairs and Maintenance—Buildings.

Mr. Chairman: You can pose your question and the Minister will take it down and respond.

Mr. Imbert: Could the Minister tell me which buildings are these?

Mr. Chairman: We are on 21, Repairs and Maintenance—Buildings. He would like to know which buildings are these. I recognize some hand going up. The Member for Diego Martin Central.

Mr. Imbert: After he answers that question, on that same line item when he says which buildings these are, could he say how this $5.5 million is allocated to those buildings.

Mr. Chairman: So the buildings and how the moneys are allocated.

Miss Cox: And also why.

Hon. George: So we are asking why the increase in Contract Employment.

The response is that from time to time the Commissioner of Prisons would encounter works that would require him to use a contractor rather than in-house, and so we have to use the contractors as against using the prisoners. But let me say categorically that the use of the prisoners to do works in the prison buildings for maintenance and so on, and even for construction of new buildings is ongoing. I have the Deputy Commissioner here and he could testify to that because they have been assuring me that that is what is going, and I have seen it for myself on my visits there.

Miss Cox: My question really has to deal with the fact that, yes, I know that some of that is taking place, but not as much as before, because there is work being contracted out that prisoners can do that, because the women’s prison was built by prisoners.

Hon. George: That is what I am saying, I am aware that there is a new administration building there that was built by prisoners, but there are still certain works that we have to contract.
Miss Cox: I agree with you.

Hon. George: I hope that that explains that particular—

Miss Cox: It does not.

Hon. George: It does not? You just said you knew, so that is why I am saying—

Miss Cox: No, I know work is taking place. I know that prisoners are doing some, but I am talking about now there is a difference. A lot of work that could be done by prisoners is being contracted out. Much more contracts are being given out. That is my point.

Hon. George: Noted, although I dispute it.

In respect of the Food at Institutions, let me answer that one. I think that we have to take as much care of the prisoners as we can, and the increase in the cost of food is provided for to ensure that we can properly feed the prisoners. You have to take care of them; they are in our care. We have to take care of them.

Mr. Chairman: Let the Minister respond and we will take it from there.

Hon. George: In respect of training—training for prisons officers is an ongoing exercise, and I assure that that is an exercise that we view with considerable seriousness and we are proceeding there. That is the reason you will see an increase in the provision for training of prisons officers.

Miss Cox: You did not answer one thing about training, which is succession planning. He did not answer the question, Mr. Chairman.

Hon. George: The matter of succession planning? The training and the succession planning are part and parcel of the same thing.

Miss Cox: That is why I wanted to know if it is part of it.

Hon. George: Yes. I think those are the ones that—

Mr. Chairman: The Security Services I think somebody mentioned.

Hon. George: This covers the prisoner transport. The transport of prisoners from the prisons to the various courts, that is what that is for—Securities Services.

Mr. Chairman: I think the Member for Diego Martin North/East—buildings.

Hon. George: Repairs and maintenance of buildings—of course, many of the buildings at the prisons are old buildings and there is an ongoing maintenance programme that we are pursuing, hence we have made provision.

Mr. Imbert: What buildings are these? Could you list them for me?
Hon. George: I suppose we could list them and get them to the Minister?

Mr. Imbert: You do not know what prisons you have? You have the women’s prison; the men’s prison; Golden Grove; Maximum Security; Carrera.

Hon. George: We have all of them, yes, and works go on at all of them. We will list them and get the information to you, no problem.

Mr. Imbert: Right. So it is virtually all the prisons?

Hon. George: Yes, you have to maintain.

Mr. Imbert: So this $5 million is for all the prisons?

Hon. George: Yes, the current prison buildings—well, we have other provisions made—

Mr. Imbert: My difficulty is, these buildings, as you quite rightly have just said, are very old; $5 million might do piece of a roof on one of the buildings. That is why I want to know what is the breakdown of this allocation of this $5 million? This is woefully inadequate.

Hon. George: Well, for maintenance work we will try to make do with what we have.

Mr. Imbert: $5 million?

Hon. George: We will try to make do with what we have.

Mr. Imbert: It should be about $500 million. So could I get a breakdown, please?

Hon. George: We will make do with what we have. No problem.

Mr. Imbert: Is that a “yes” or “no”?

Hon. George: Well we will give it to you as far as we can.

Mr. Imbert: As far as you can? You must know how you came up with this figure. Could you break it down prison by prison for me, please?

Hon. George: This is the figure that was allocated.

Mr. Imbert: Yes, but based on a request.

Hon. George: Yes, so we will give you—

Mr. Imbert: So what, a $10,000 for this prison, $50,000 for that one? That is what I want to know.
Hon. George: We will get that to you, Sir.

Mr. Imbert: Okay.

Dr. Browne: Chairman, Item 23, Fees. I just want to try to distinguish if the Minister could distinguish these fees here from the fees in the public domain, with respect to the Attorney General’s responsibility. How are the two allocations distinguished? And then, why are we asking for $200,000 when the most we have spent is $40,000 under this particular line item?

Hon. George: Well, the Commissioner has indicated that they use consultants from time to time and they would pay them fees. That is my information.

Dr. Browne: These are not legal fees?

Hon. George: No.

Dr. Browne: But why $200,000 when the most we have spent is $40,000?

Hon. George: That is a good question; I do not have the answer to that question for you, but we will seek to provide that information regarding the difference.

Mr. Chairman: So we could go on to Item 0005 Prison Service (Tobago). We go to Sub-Head 03: Minor Equipment; Purchases, Item 001, General Administration, Item 003, Forensic Science Centre; Item 004, Prison Service. [ Interruption ] Which one?


Mr. Chairman: We know you are from St. Ann’s East, do not worry. Which Item would you like us to focus on?

Mrs. Thomas: Mr. Chairman, 004, Prison Service Item 04, Other Minor Equipment. I just wanted the Minister to explain what accounts for the revised figure of $12 million and a reduction then of $9 million, when the first figure for was 2014 was $3.7 million.

Hon. George: You recall that there was an urgent requirement for the Government to purchase security equipment for the protection of the prisons officers, particularly vests, and this came as a result of the report of the committee earlier this year, but we did not have that money in our budget and we had to get the virement. So the virement accounts for the increase in what you are seeing here, from the $3 million to the $12 million.

Miss Cox: Yes, Mr. Chair, under Other Minor Equipment, I wanted to know where is money allocated for cell phone jammers?
Hon. George: The purchase of cell phone jammers and grabbers has been accounted for already. We have awarded a contract and we have that money set aside for that purchase, so that is not in this.

Miss Cox: Where is that funding coming from?

Hon. George: That funding is coming from the Office of the Prime Minister via the National Security Council’s decision.

Mr. Chairman: All right, let us go on to Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies; Item 009, Other Transfers. [Interruption] Oh yes, 04, Transfers and Subsidies, Other Transfers.

Miss Mc Donald: I just want to put a question to the Minister. The Legal Aid and Advisory Authority, what has happened to that?

Hon. George: It is transferred to the Ministry of Legal Affairs.

Miss Mc Donald: You all did not put a note there. I note there is nothing, but I could have been guided.

Mr. Chairman: Well you are now guided.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Chair, please. Under Head 009, Other Transfers Sub-Head 03, Penal Reform and Transformation Secretariat. On all these Sub-Heads, Police Complaints Authority, Criminal Injuries—have they, in fact, been transferred to the Ministry of Legal Affairs and the rationale behind it, please.

Hon. George: Yes, they have been transferred, but I cannot give you the rationale.

Mr. Chairman: They have been transferred by legislation.

Mr. Deyalsingh: If the Ministry of Justice is responsible for the penal system, then it seems to be counterintuitive to move penal reform to another Ministry. It should reside with the Ministry of Justice.

Mr. Chairman: Member, listen, these matters have been settled by law. We cannot engage in speculation as to whether it should have been there; that has been settled by law. Some other question, please. Anybody else?

Mr. Deyalsingh: Thank you, Chairman.

Miss Cox: Mr. Chairman, I am not seeing penal reform being transferred to Legal Affairs, from what I see here—Police Complaints, Criminal Injuries and Police Complaints Authority—
Hon. George: The Police Complaints Authority and the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board have been transferred. The Penal Reform and Transformation Secretariat is still with us, and their programme involves really a drug rehabilitation programme that we are doing in the prisons.

Miss Cox: I want to ask: What is the present status of the parole system that is supposed to be implemented? I believe it is supposed to be under this programme.

Hon. George: Yes, the parole legislation is currently with the Ministry, but we are going to be sending it to the LRC in the next couple of weeks, two weeks max. So for that legislation, our Ministry has done its work and it is going to be sent to the Legislative Review Committee for them to consider it.

6.45 p.m.

Miss Cox: Minister, are you aware that it is five years now that that legislation has been lingering?

Mr. Chairman: Okay. Let us go on to Sub-Head 09, Development Programme Item 4, Social Infrastructure. Yes, I recognize the Member for Diego Martin North/East.

Mr. Imbert: This time. [Laughter] Let us go to page 146, please, Development Programme.

Hon. Member: One what?

Mr. Imbert: 146.

Mr. Chairman: 146 of the Development Programme.

Mr. Imbert: Head 58, Development Programme, page 146, please.

Hon. George: Yes.

Mr. Imbert: I noticed that under 005/06, Establishing of an Electronic Monitoring Programme $7 million was allocated for 2014, none was spent. Why is that?

Hon. George: The Electronic Monitoring Programme, we have had some difficulty procuring the electronic monitoring manager, and of course, according to the legislation, we have to start with the electronic monitoring manager before we begin to recruit all the other persons who will staff that particular agency. And let me explain that we had advertised for those persons, for the two positions for the electronic monitoring manager in 2012, and those advertisements—there were 13 applications received, and none were found to be suitable. All right. So what
we have done now is to ask the British High Commission, through their criminal justice advisor, to seek to help us to recruit an individual who will be able to fill that position for us.

Mr. Imbert: Okay. [Crosstalk] Hold on, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: No. I recognize the Member for Diego Martin North/East.

Mr. Imbert: It is all right. I wanted to go through 5 and then go back to 4. So how do you want to do this? You want to let other people speak or—you tell me. Because 004 also deals with the same “Development Programme”. All right. So just let me just get rid of 005, and then go to 004. I noticed again on this 005 that there was an allocation of $5 million for an Offender Management Programme”, expenditure 0. Why is that? Just like ankle bracelets. No money spent. Offender Management Programme, no money spent. Why is that?

Hon. George: This is offender?

Mr. Imbert: Page 146.


Mr. Imbert: Yes. Expenditure naught, zero, nothing.

Hon. George: Yeah. Well, we were unable to expend funding under this item because we are still in the process of policy development really, you know, with respect to offender management. Because remember this is in here. We are dealing with the introduction of the NOMS which is the National Offender Management Service, and we have not been able to put that into place as yet.

Mr. Imbert: All right. Going to the previous page 4, could you tell me why you have allocated no money for the upgrading of the Carrera Convict Prison? I think that must be the oldest prison that we have.

Hon. George: Yes.

Mr. Imbert: So why you have no money to upgrade it? Does it not require upgrading?

Hon. George: Yes.

Mr. Imbert: Go ahead.

Hon. George: Mr. Chairman,—

Mr. Chairman: Yes, continue.
Hon. George:—to answer his question regarding no provision being made for works at the Carrera Prison, the intention is to move the prisoners who are currently housed in Carrera into the Maximum Security Prison. To do so, we have to do two things. We have to do the electronic upgrade to the Maximum Security Prison to bring it back up to its former pristine status because it was allowed to decline, so that all of the electronics deteriorated. That work is ongoing and it is to be finished in October/November of this year.

Side by side with that is the building, the construction of a security fence around the MSP. Once we have done those two things we will be able to bring the prisoners out of Carrera and into the Maximum Security Prison because the prison now, currently it is housing maybe a thousand prisoners when it was built to accommodate about 1,700 to 1,800 prisoners. We will be able to maximize its use once that electronic upgrade is done. And the reason for putting the fence now is because in Carrera the prisoners are accustomed to a certain ambiance in their environment, and we want to ensure that when they come to the MSP that they have a similar ambiance, and also to create an environment for prison industry to take place in a secured environment.

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Chairman, I will defer to the Member for Laventille East/Morvant.

Mr. Chairman: Yes. Member for Laventille East/Morvant, hon. Member.

Mr. Imbert: I will come back much later.

Miss Cox: Mr. Chairman, I just wanted to be clear. Is the Minister saying that Carrera Prison will be closed down?

Hon. George: We will remove—the intention is to remove all the prisoners who are currently housed there to the MSP.

Miss Cox: What is the reason for that?

Hon. George: Because there are a lot of problems having to do with transportation in particular between—there are a lot of other issues, and we feel that putting them up at MSP will give us the ability to use them more intensively in the prison industry and so on, and it will be better for them.

Miss Cox: But what are their plans for Carrera?

Hon. George: We have—I guess the national security people will consider utilizing the facility there, and that will have to take place in discussion with the
heritage people at the Ministry of Works and Infrastructure because there are heritage issues in respect of that site that must be taken into consideration.

Miss Cox: Okay.

Mr. Chairman: I recognize the Member for St. Joseph.

Miss Cox: I have more questions.

Mr. Chairman: One more.

Miss Cox: I have more questions. I see here the money allocated for the Construction of Quarters for Senior Officers, also Construction of Nursery at Women’s Prison, also three areas that have been repeated for the past three years, upgrading Construction of Senior Officers Mess, Construction of Quarters for Senior Officers, Construction of Nursery at Women’s Prison, and I also think that the CCTV. I have seen it being repeated in the Estimates. What is happening with that? Why is work not taking place or has it been progressing?

Hon. George: Well, my information is that the work is progressing albeit slowly because they are using prisoners to do this work.

Miss Cox: All this work that I—including the provision of CCTV cameras?

Hon. George: No. No. No. With respect to the construction of the nursery at the Women’s Prison—

Miss Cox: Yes. Has that started? Has the work started on that?

Hon. George: No.

Miss Cox: Because as far I know, the answer is no.

Hon. George: The nursery?

Miss Cox: No, the nursery has not started. Because this is the fifth year or the fourth year I am seeing it here in the Estimates, the women’s—the nursery. I just wanted to know the reason why this has not progressed because it is needed.

Hon. George: Well my PS is saying to me that work has started.

Miss Cox: Well, the Commissioner of Prisons is saying no? So, I do not know. What is the real answer?

Hon. George: Well my PS is saying that the work has started. I trust my PS. The foundation is in the ground, my PS is indicating.

Miss Cox: But is work taking place?
Hon. George: We will continue the work in the coming year.

Miss Cox: All right. I hope so.

Mr. Chairman: I recognize the Member for St. Joseph.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Thank you, Chair. Chair, can I ask a question on page 147 under Public Buildings?

Mr. Chairman: Yes.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Thank you.

Hon. George: Under—

Mr. Deyalsingh: Public Buildings. Hon. Minister, on page 147, sub 004. On the sum of $3.4 million in 2013 for the Construction of four Purpose-built Supreme Court of Judicature Buildings. How many buildings were actually built in 2013 with the $3.4 million?

Hon. George: Well no work was done in terms of the actual construction—

Mr. Deyalsingh: Right.

Hon. George: —because we had engaged UDeCOTT to undertake this work for us, and a lot of the funding here has gone to pay UDeCOTT for the procurement of design consultants and so on. In fact, we have gotten those designs now for one of those buildings, that is the Malabar—sorry—we got the—[Minister confers with advisor] it is NIPDEC not UDeCOTT eh. It is Nipdec—all right—for those buildings, and we will be pursuing those in the coming year.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Sorry. Is it UDeCOTT or NIPDEC?

Hon. George: NIPDEC.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Nipdec. Right. Okay. So this $3.4 million was basically for designs?

Hon. George: Yes.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Have the designs been accepted for use in Trinidad and Tobago—this $3.4 million? Are they suitable for the Trinidad criminal justice system?

Hon. George: I am sorry. The designs were completed already under a foreign consultant. This here is really for preconstruction activity that is being undertaken by—
Mr. Deyalsingh: That is the $3.4 million?

Hon. George: No.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Yes.

Hon. George: The 15.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Okay. What I am asking, you said you had designs done.

Hon. George: Yes.

Mr. Deyalsingh: My question is, are those designs suitable for our local criminal justice system, and that we can move ahead with it? [Crosstalk] No. No.

Hon. George: You are asking me an opinion.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Okay. If you cannot answer; sorry then. The 2014 Revised Estimate of $8.454 million, seeing that you have the designs, how many centres were actually constructed or are going to be constructed or foundations have been laid for?

Hon. George: Well, we have not started actual construction work yet, but we—[Crosstalk]

Mr. Deyalsingh: So nothing has been constructed. [Crosstalk]

Mr. Chairman: Please, please.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Correct?

Mr. Chairman: Please. Please.

Hon. George: I have said, no construction work has started—

Mr. Deyalsingh: Right.

Hon. George:—but preconstruction work has started.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Right. Good.

Hon. George: Yes.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Therefore, if it is that the Government is going ahead with the project, why is there no figure for 2015 estimates?

Hon. George: If you go to the other book, you will find it in the IDF.

Mr. Deyalsingh: All right. Thank you. So, no centres have been done to date.

Hon. George: Pre-construction work has commenced. [Crosstalk]
Dr. Moonilal: This is the part before construction.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Okay. I just wanted to—

Mr. Chairman: I recognize the Member of Diego Martin North/East, and then the Member for Arouca/Maloney, and then the Member for Laventille East/Morvant, and then we are going to close off.

Mr. Imbert: I will ask all my questions now—

Mr. Chairman: Yeah. Ask all your questions.

Mr. Imbert: —one time.

Mr. Chairman: I recognize the Member of for Diego Martin North/East.

Mr. Imbert: On page 145, 09 Development Programme. [Crosstalk]

Mr. Chairman: Please. Please, Members. Let us not engage in crosstalk, please. Member for St. Joseph and Tabaquite, please.

Mr. Imbert: Page 145, 09 Development Programme, 029; Construction of a Prison in Hope Tobago. Has that vanished?

Mr. Chairman: Minister of Justice.

Hon. George: That too is provided for in the IDF. That too is an initial sum—there is an initial sum provided for that in the IDF.

Mr. Imbert: All right. Let us go to the same item the Member for St. Joseph was asking about. I see on page 147, 004 Construction of four Purpose-built Supreme Court of Judicature Buildings. Then when you go to the IDF, page 274 under Public Buildings, you see Construction of six Purpose-built Supreme Court of Judicature Buildings. How did it move from four to six, and what methodology is being used, what procurement methodology is being used to implement this project? Similarly, Mr. Chairman, I see the forensic laboratory pathology, nothing in the estimates under the Consolidated Fund, but just $2 million under the IDF, is that $2 million adequate to construct a new laboratory? Those are all my questions.
Hon. George: Yeah. Well—

Mr. Imbert: My first question was, why did you go from four to six?

Hon. George: We have approval for six, but we are pursuing four. That is the only reason.

Mr. Imbert: No. No. No.

Hon. George: No. No. No. Hold on. Because we do not have enough money. You have to prioritize, and therefore—

Mr. Imbert: No. No. Minister, bear with me, please.

Hon. George: Yeah.

Mr. Imbert: On page 147, under the Consolidated Fund, in 2014 you had construction of four buildings. On page 274, under F “Public Buildings’, you have six. So last year you had four, now you have six. Why have you moved from four to six this year? That is my question.

7.00 p.m.

Hon. George: Well, we have approval for six and that is why the six is there.

Mr. Imbert: No, okay, let me ask you the question a different way.

Hon. George: I hear you, you know. I am saying we have approval for six, that is why the six are there.

Mr. Imbert: Let me ask you the question a different way. You had four last year, where were they? You have six this year, where are they?

Hon. George: The construction of one of the buildings is what we are pursuing.

Mr. Imbert: Okay.

Hon. George: Now, we are trying to do the Malabar first and we will follow with the others.

Mr. Imbert: So in 2015—[Interrupt]

Hon. George: Because we feel we can do, we are trying to do what we can.

Mr. Imbert: Fine. So in 2015, it is just one you are doing?

Hon. George: Well, we are hoping that we will get to the other. We want to start with the Malabar.
Mr. Imbert: Okay, but could you tell us in due course where these six buildings are, please, where do you plan to put them?

Mr. Chairman: Could you make available in writing.

Hon. George: We will make that information available.

Mr. Chairman: Yes, I recognize the Member for—[Interruption]

Mr. Imbert: No, but he has not answered my other questions.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, all right.

Mr. Imbert: Is $2 million adequate for the forensic lab?

Mr. Chairman: Is $2 million adequate?

Mr. Imbert: Is it enough money for that?

Hon. George: Well, we will start the process with the $2 million and see how far it takes us.

Mr. Imbert: And you did not answer my question on the procurement methodology for the judicial building. What method are you using, through a “CTB”, through an enterprise, how you are doing that?

Hon. George: We will do it through a state enterprise, namely NIPDEC.

Mr. Imbert: You are going through NIPDEC?

Hon. George: We will go through NIPDEC.

Mr. Imbert: Okay, and then the question on the Tobago prison, what happened?

Hon. George: Whether the $2 million is sufficient?

Mr. Imbert: No, it disappeared. The prison at Hope just gone.

Hon. George: Well, the prison at Hope is in the IDF.

Mr. Imbert: Okay, could you point me to the line item, please.

Mr. Chairman: He said it is in the IDF. I recognize the Member for St. Joseph and the Member for Arouca/Maloney.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Back to line Item, sub, sub 004. The Minister stated that he is in pre-construction. It is on Hansard where this Minister said that all four original sites were no longer available to the Government, the one in Siparia, the one in Carlsten Field, the one in Sangre Grande and the one in Arouca. That is on the Hansard.
Dr. Moonilal: Do you have the reference to the Hansard?

Mr. Deyalsingh: Is it now that the Minister has found four alternate sites so that pre-construction can begin? And where are those four alternate sites?

Dr. Moonilal: Just for the record, could we just get the Hansard reference that you have in front of you?

Mr. Deyalsingh: I can find it, but I do not have it here.

Dr. Moonilal: “Ohh”, you do not have it in front of you.

Mr. Deyalsingh: He was answering a question.

Dr. Moonilal: Okay, sure.

Mr. Deyalsingh: So, do you have four sites?

Hon. George: We have four sites. There was one that we had in Siparia—

Mr. Deyalsingh: Right.

Hon. George:—that was assigned to another use, and we are looking for a site there. That is the only issue.

Mr. Deyalsingh: So has any pre-construction started there?

Hon. George: No.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Great. Carlsen Field, do you have the other site, seeing that your first site was no longer available.

Hon. George: We do have the site in Carlsen Field.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Has any pre-construction started there?

Hon. George: No. I said earlier on that the pre-construction work we are doing at this time has to do with Malabar.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Malabar only, and Sangre Grande, nothing?

Hon. George: Well, we have identified the land and so on, and that is as far we have got.

Mr. Deyalsingh: So the only one is Malabar? Thank you. I just want it on the record.

Mr. Chairman: The Member for Arouca/Maloney and then the Member for Laventille East/Morvant and then we will move on.
Miss Hospedales: Mr. Chair, I think the Minister is confusing us a bit. One minute he is saying four sites, next minute we are reading in the IDF that it is six courts that are actually going to be constructed. I—[Interruption]

Mr. Chairman: What is the question, let us get a question, please.

Miss Hospedales: I would like to know if the Minister has identified six specific sites, and if he could let us know exactly where they are, please?

Hon. George: I will provide that information for you. I did say I will provide that information for you.

Mr. Chairman: He said he will provide that in writing. So let me recognize the Member for Laventille East/Morvant.

Miss Hospedales: And there is one other thing. Mr. Chair.

Mr. Chairman: The Member for Laventille East/Morvant, please.

Miss Cox: I think I heard her say there is one more.

Mr. Chairman: You have another question.

Miss Hospedales: Yes. Mr. Chair, under Administrative Services, there is a $500,000 allocation for training. I would like to ask the Minister if this is adequate?

Mr. Chairman: What page are you on?

Miss Hospedales: Page 146, Item 008, Training. Only $500,000 has been allocated.

Hon. George: I did answer that earlier on to say that training of prison personnel is an ongoing exercise, and that is what that funding is about.

Mr. Chairman: The hon. Member for Laventille East/Morvant.

Miss Cox: I just have two questions.

Mr. Chairman: Two questions? Yes.

Miss Cox: I want to go back to the Hope prison to find out if there is an expected date because it is urgent. The prison in Tobago is falling into the sea. Is the Minister not aware of that?

Mr. Chairman: And what is the next one.

Miss Cox: I would like to know how soon this work will start. The next question is, what provision has been made for Remand Yard, in Port of Spain and Golden Grove?
Hon. George: In respect of the Hope facility in Tobago, I think earlier this year the Tobago House of Assembly did assign or allocate a piece of land for the construction of this particular facility and that—we will start by addressing the pre-construction works in respect of the construction of this facility, because now we have the land. I could not give you a time frame as to when we are going to start putting concrete and steel into the ground, but that will eventually take place.

The other issue having to do with the Remand Yard both at Port of Spain and at Golden Grove, you will recall that coming out of the Deosaran Committee Report there were certain recommendations having to do with the purchase of beds, the improvement to the toilet and electrical facilities and so on, all of these things are ongoing.

In fact, the refurbishment works of the public toilet, so to speak, and these are toilets that are separated from the toilets in the cells, those public area toilets have been completed. The beds are currently being installed. So all of these works are going on as we speak. The plumbing works are also taking place to improve the facilities there so that the prisoners can be more comfortable in the environment. All of these works are ongoing. Recognize though, that because you are doing these works with prisoners around and you have to shift them from location to location to accommodate these works, it is proceeding not as quickly as we would like, but they are ongoing.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, let us go on to Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services, Infrastructure Development Fund.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 58 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, we would like to thank you for being here with us with your staff. Thank you very much. [Desk thumping] We now go on to Ministry of Science and Technology.

Okay, hon. Members, we shall resume. We are now dealing with Head 73, Ministry of Science and Technology.

Head 73.

Question proposed: That Head 73 stand part of the Schedule.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, the sum of $681,055,100 for Head 73, the Ministry of Science and Technology 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*.

Sub-Head 01: Personnel Expenditure; Item 001, General Administration; Sub-Head 02; Goods and Services, Item 001.

The hon. Member for Diego Martin North/East and the Member for Arouca/Maloney thereafter.

**Mr. Imbert:** Page 425, Item 28, Other Contracted Services.

**Hon. Dr. Griffith:** Mr. Chairman—

**Mr. Chairman:** Yes.

**Hon. Dr. Griffith:** At least I thought I would get the opportunity to say something.

**Mr. Chairman:** “Ohh”, all right, I thought that seeing that the trend has started where everyone declined—[*Interruption*]

**Miss McDonald:** We thought that you would have fallen in line.

**Hon. Dr. Griffith:** And if you talk I might just make a long statement for five minutes.

**Mr. Chairman:** I wish to apologize to the hon. Minister because each Minister is entitled to say a few opening remarks no more than five minutes. Hon. Minister of Science and Technology, the floor is yours.

**Hon. Dr. Griffith:** Just to thank you, Chairman, and welcome my PS, Miss Seerattan and her entire team from the Ministry of Science and Technology. Thank you.

**Mr. Chairman:** So, the hon. Member for Diego Martin North/East, the floor is yours, and then we go from there.

**Mr. Imbert:** True to form. Page 425, Item 28, Other Contracted Services, $265 million. What is this for?

**Mr. Chairman:** Other Contracted Services, $265 million. Any further questions?

**Mr. Imbert:** Oh, yes.

**Mr. Chairman:** Could we take a few so he can take notes.
Mr. Imbert: Similarly, on page 426, same Sub-Item 28, $49 million. What is that for? Similarly on page 428, under 01—[Interruption]

Mr. Chairman: No, no, no, I think, I thought you had questions under Goods and Services and General Administration.

Mr. Imbert: I just have two questions under Goods and Services which I have indicated on page 425 and page 426.

Mr. Chairman: But under General Administration, I think the first question hon. Minister is that $265 million under Other Contracted Services. The hon. Member would like to know what that is about.

Hon. Dr. Griffith: Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman. What it is about, is to facilitate payment for iGovTT: that is, the iGovTT 2, six months extension. GovNet 3, that is a new system that we are putting in place, in a price high availability portal. That is a portal to drive the public service and provide the necessary access and interaction we need throughout the entire public service. Also the Foundation Services Infrastructure and the PeopleSoft Pension for the Ministry of Public Administration and others. That is what that money is for.

Mr. Imbert: All right.

Hon. Dr. Griffith: Simply, to put a number of systems in place and to pay for GovNet 2 which is a new system we are operating in.

Mr. Imbert: Could you, before the end of this exercise, give us some further details, the names of all those things and the purpose of them and what procurement methodology you are using to spend this $265 million?

Hon. Griffith: Certainly, we will make that available to you.

Mr. Chairman: We are going on to Item 002, National Information and Communication Technology Centre, Secretariat.

Mr. Imbert: I had a question on 28, what is that $49 million for under Other Contracted Services?

Mr. Chairman: You got that question, honourable—

Hon. Griffith: Yes. As you know, Cabinet agreed to have 42 ICT access centres throughout Trinidad and Tobago. The first phase is building of six, three have been completed and the other three are well on the way. And we intend to build out 18 of those centres before the end of this fiscal year. That is what the money is for.
Mr. Imbert: So could I get the location of those 18, the approximate cost of each one and the facilities that will be in each one of them.

Hon. Griffith: We will be able to give you the 18 plus the six in the phase that is already going—

Mr. Imbert: Sure.

Hon. Griffith:—so you will receive 24.

Mr. Imbert: Right, thank you.

Mr. Chairman: All right, we go to Sub-Item 03: Minor Equipment Purchases; Item 001, General Administration; Item 002, National Information and Communication Technology Centres, Secretariat; Sub-Head 04: Current Transfers and Subsidies; Item 001, Regional Bodies; Item 002, Commonwealth Bodies; Item 003, United Nations Organizations; Item 011, Transfers to State Enterprises.

7.15 p.m.

Then we go to Sub-Head 06: Current Transfers to Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies; Item 004, Statutory Bodies. We now deal with the Development Programme.

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Chairman: Yes?

Mr. Imbert: I had “meh” hand up.

Mr. Chairman: Which one are you on?

Mr. Imbert: 011, and I had raised that before, on page 428: Transfers to State Enterprises.

Mr. Chairman: All right. Transfers to Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies.

Mr. Imbert: No. 011, Transfers to State Enterprises.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, okay, State Enterprises. I recognize the Member for Diego Martin North/East.

Mr. Imbert: At 01, I see this phenomenal sum of $190 million for National ICT. What is that? And what State Enterprise are you referring to here?

Mr. Chairman: The hon. Minister?

Hon. Dr. Griffith: Yeah. This $190,000 for 2015—
Mr. Chairman: It is $90 million. Is $90 million you said?

Mr. Imbert: $190 million.

Hon. Dr. Griffith: $190 million for 2015, an increase of $90 million. This is for iGovTT. iGovTT is the company that facilitates the ICT for the entire Government services and also some quasi-state services, and this money here, $190 million, is to facilitate the expenditure for 2015.

Mr. Imbert: Do you have a breakdown of that?

Hon. Dr. Griffith: We do have a breakdown.

Mr. Imbert: Okay, fine. So you will give it to us before the end of the exercise?

Hon. Dr. Griffith: Before the end of this five-year—five-day period.

Mr. Speaker: I thought you were going to say five-year period. [Laughter]

Hon. Dr. Griffith: It could be five years.

Mr. Chairman: Okay. We go to Sub-Head 06: Current Transfers to Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies; Item 004, Statutory Bodies, then we will deal with the Development Programme—Sub-Head 09, Development Programme; Item 004, Social Infrastructure; Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services.

Hon. Members, the question is that the sum of $681,055,100 for Head 73, the Ministry of Science and Technology, stand part of the Schedule.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 73 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much, hon. Minister of Science and Technology and your people.

Hon. Dr. Griffith: Thank you, Mr. Chairman and thank you to my team. Thank you.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, let us deal with some matters as we prepare for tomorrow.

Hon. Member: That is it for the day?

Mr. Chairman: Yes. We have completed 10.

Hon. Member: Well done. [Desk thumping]
Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, again, to try to facilitate Ministers who are travelling and rather than have people acting for them and coming before our Standing Committee, they have requested—I have spoken with the Chief Whip, even though we have the order as provided by the Leader of the Opposition, we wanted to be a little flexible to accommodate them, and we have gotten agreement. So the Minister of Planning and Sustainable Development is leaving the country tomorrow and he wants to be here very early tomorrow, so he will be the number one person coming here. Then we go to the Ministry of Works and Infrastructure as the number two Ministry. Then we go to the Ministry of National Security.

The hon. Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs is travelling tomorrow evening. He would like us to entertain him very early, so we have put him at number four. So he will come at number four. Then we are dealing with the Ministry of Health at number five. So the Ministry of Energy and Energy Affairs is number four; the Ministry of Health is number five. We are asking the Ministry of Education—hon. Minister of Education—to take the place of the Ministry of Energy and Energy Affairs, which would be number 24, and that would be on Thursday. You will be on Thursday.

Hon. Member: Who is that?

Mr. Chairman: The Ministry of Education. So that the Ministry of Health is number five, then the Ministry of Food Production is number six; the Ministry of Land and Marine Resources is number seven; the Ministry of Gender, Youth and Child Development is number eight; Pensions and Gratuities, number nine; Personnel Department, number 10.

Now, we are asking the following to stand by: Service Commission and the Statutory Authorities Service Commission. So we may be able to complete 12 tomorrow.

Miss Cox: Mr. Chair, I just want to ask—

Mr. Chairman: And also the Tax Appeal Board and the Equal Opportunity Tribunal. We have asked them to stand by so when we complete those 10, we would be able to deal with the four and finish 14 tomorrow—[Interruption]

Miss Cox: I have one question.

Mr. Chairman:—before Dr. Moonilal speaks. You want to say something?

Miss Cox: Yes. Seeing that we are doing National Security tomorrow, could we not have put Police one time, after? Because remember police is now separate.
Mr. Chairman: We will have to call the Leader of the Opposition on that one.

Miss Cox: All right.

Mr. Chairman: We would not want to do that without him.

The hon. Member for Oropouche East.

Dr. Moonilal: Chairman, just to indicate, as colleagues are aware, Wednesday is a public holiday—

Hon. Member: What is that?

Mr. Chairman: Republic Day.

Dr. Moonilal: Republic Day. But if the Members are so minded, we can consider coming out on Wednesday—

Hon. Members: Nooo!

Miss Mc Donald: “We not so minded.” [Crosstalk]

Dr. Moonilal: Mr. Chairman, on Thursday morning is our regular Cabinet meeting, of course—

Mr. Chairman: Yes.

Dr. Moonilal:—so that we will be very happy if Members can assist us to ensure that tomorrow we do as much as we can because on Thursday we will be abbreviated somewhat, because of that Cabinet meeting.

Miss Mc Donald: We will come for 1.00 o’clock on Thursday.

Dr. Moonilal: Just keep that in mind so that you can push on tomorrow and push on, on Thursday.

Mr. Imbert: Sir, I think Cabinet should be on Wednesday. [Laughter] That would free up the whole of Thursday. And they were planning to work anyway.

Mr. Chairman: So Members, I have advised Members that besides going with 10 Ministries, there are four small areas: Equal Opportunity, the Service Commission we mentioned; the Tax Appeal Board and the other one is the Statutory Authorities Service Commission. We want to complete those four along with the other 10 tomorrow.
So we convene at 10.00 a.m. as we have all agreed—sharp. So this meeting is adjourned until 10.00 a.m. We do not have to go until 12.00 to complete the 14. By 8.00 we should be over. Okay? So this meeting is now adjourned until 10.00 a.m.

7.22 p.m.: Standing Finance Committee suspended.
The Standing Finance Committee of the whole House resumed its deliberations on the Bill and Estimates.

[Chairman: Mr. Mark]

10.00 a.m.

Mr. Chairman: May I call the Standing Finance Committee to order and to make a few opening remarks as it relates to the next step in this new process of oversight of the budget. The assurances given to this committee and the details in relation to the proposed expenditure will form the basis of the work in the ensuing year of the new oversight committee, of one of the new oversight committees established under the revised Standing Orders, that is the Public Administration and Appropriation Committee. Therefore, the oversight process does not end here with this Standing Finance Committee.

At the Standing Finance Committee, Ministers share with this committee their plans for the expenditure to be appropriated and during the year, accounting officers will be asked by the new Public Administration and Appropriation Committee to give updates in relation to implementation or to account for their failure to implement. From time to time, the Public Administration and Appropriation Committee will report back to this House on these matters. The ultimate aim is to ensure proper administration of public finances. As we find our way in this new environment, the Chair continues to appreciate your amazing cooperation with this reform effort and commend all Members for their contributions.

Hon. Members, I would like to apologize if in trying to move the proceedings along yesterday to ensure that the committee completed its work schedule, I may have overlooked some persons who were trying to make interventions. May I suggest that a Member wishing to make an intervention should so indicate by raising his or her hand when I call the relevant Sub-Head? That way, I will see you. Of course, that would not preclude a Member from making an intervention if they did not indicate in the beginning.
So, I just want to let Members know that this is not the end of the road. You know, there is an old saying: a bend in the road does not represent the end of the road. It is just a turn that you have to take to continue your journey. So I want Members to know that after this exercise is over, the Public Administration and Appropriation Committee will be monitoring and tracking the spending and implementation of all proposals before this honourable House, approved at the appropriate time when the budget is passed.

We now go to Head 67 and we invite the accounting officers to join the hon. Minister of Planning and Sustainable Development.

**Head 67.**

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Minister, I will now invite you if you so desire to make a brief opening statement for no more than five minutes, if you so desire, by giving this committee an overview of your priority areas if you so desire. It is up to you.

**Hon. Dr. Tewarie:** Mr. Chairman, I would like to take the opportunity to give an overview of the work that we have been doing at the Ministry of Planning and Sustainable Development and to locate that within the context of the budgetary allocations that have been made over time and in particular with reference to this budget. As you know, the budgetary process is guided by a set of core priorities, although it is not limited by that, established by the Medium-Term Framework and those five priorities are: crime, law and order; agriculture and food security; health care services and hospitals; economic growth, job creation, competitiveness and innovation; and poverty reduction and human development. The priorities in allocation based on the entire appropriation’s process both on development and the larger budget is in a way influenced by this. At the present time, the Ministry is working on the Medium-Term Framework 2015—2021 and so far we have added to these five priorities, infrastructure development and governance.

So, in terms of this particular Ministry, the Ministry of Planning and Sustainable Development, there are three particular areas on which we focus: economic growth and innovation; national spatial development which is really Town and Country Planning driving this process; and research and data management which is driven by the Central Statistical Office.

In economic growth and innovation, the Economic Development Board and the Council for Competitiveness and Innovation play an important role, and they support two key things: the process of diversification in the seven areas that we
have identified and they support the five growth poles across the country as well. It is important to understand that the growth poles are not meant to be funded by Government, they are meant to be facilitated as growth poles by Government, and they also support the National Innovation Policy through idea2innovation programme.

The National Spatial Development, Town and Country Planning Initiative: as you know, Mr. Chairman, we have laid before this Parliament, the National Spatial Development Strategy which in fact guides the whole development framework in terms of physical planning for the country.

For research and data management, Cabinet has agreed to the recommendations of the consultants engaged with the Central Statistical Office for transformation of that particular entity into an independent entity, and we have also developed on the basis of the census a national population policy which we will share with the population before long.

In terms of the development plan 2015—2021, we proceed with that so that there will be continuity in the governance process and so that there will be continuation of policy in the governance process, and once a first draft of that plan is available, we will make it available to the population at large for general discussion and engagement.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much, hon. Minister.

Question proposed: That Head 67 stand part of the Schedule.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, this sum of $307,219,830 for Head 67, the Ministry of Planning and Sustainable 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 and the Draft Estimates of Development Programme. Sub-Head 01: Personnel Expenditure; Item 001, General Administration, Item 003, Technical Co-operation. [Crosstalk] Yes, I am.

Dr. Rowley: Sorry to stop you, Mr. Chairman, I thought you were still opening up the innings. I would like to place a couple of questions to the hon. Minister who has joined us this morning under 01/001, 01, with respect to Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance. Given the work programme that the Minister has outlined which we are fairly familiar with, could the Minister indicate what is the meaning of the decrease in the allocation for salaries and COLA with respect to the Ministry’s staff? What is the intention here? Are we
Dr. Rowley: There is a decrease of $1.2 million there. And this is with respect to the vacant posts with incumbents. There is an increase in the general Personnel Expenditure, but under salaries and COLA, 01, which is the first Sub-Item specific to salaries and COLA, there is $1.2 million reduction. What does that represent?

Mr. Chairman: Minister of Planning and Sustainable Development.

Hon. Dr. Tewarie: I mean, there is no reduction in staff that I am aware of and as far as I can see the reduction may have to do with the fact that—as far as I can see, it may take into account vacant posts that may or may not be filled and it may take into account SRC estimates for what might be needed and as a result, in trying to be accurate, it may have led to a decrease in request—a request for a decrease.

Dr. Rowley: Let me rephrase my enquiry because in 2014, the Ministry would have had a certain complement of staff and you required $12.9 million to service that staff. Somebody took a decision to reduce that allocation, either deliberately or otherwise, to reduce it by $1.2 million which means that you cannot then retain the same complement of staff that you utilized in 2014.

So what I am asking is: what was the basis for that decision? Is it that you do not expect to have that staff with you?

Hon. Dr. Tewarie: The difference, I am advised by my Deputy Permanent Secretary, is that we overestimated what the SRC would estimate and when we got the accurate figures, it led to a reduction, a decrease.

Dr. Rowley: So you are saying that the Revised Estimates of 2014 is further revised to $11,648,000.

Hon. Dr. Tewarie: Yes.

Dr. Rowley: Okay, thank you very much.

10.15 a.m.

Hon. Dr. Tewarie: Yes, and I just want to give the hon. Leader of the Opposition the commitment that there is no intention whatsoever for a reduction of staff at the Ministry, given the work it has to do.
Dr. Rowley: But then it brings me to another question: why then was the Revised Estimate increased from $11.5 million to $12.9 million in the first place? When you did your revision, why was it revised upwards?

Hon. Dr. Tewarie: Because we were not sure what the estimate was, what it would be. So in order to protect yourself, to make sure that you are properly covered, you know, you give an estimate that might be slightly larger. But when you get the accurate figure, we reduce it.

Dr. Rowley: Minister, you are the Minister for the CSO and that is why I am pressing you on this matter. In these documents, the Revised Estimate normally says to the rest of us, lesser mortals, that you have in fact got a better handle than the appropriation estimates, because the budget documents themselves are estimates. Later down in the year, you the operator get a clearer view and then you do a revised estimate which, over the years, we take to mean that this is a much clearer picture, and when you did that you upped your estimates by over $1 million. Now you have brought it back down. So, I am saying it is a little unclear to us. But the bottom line is that there is no intention to any staff reduction?

Hon. Dr. Tewarie: There is no staff reduction. My Permanent Secretary just indicated that in 2014, in particular, there were a number of arrears—[Interruption]

Dr. Rowley: Extraordinary payments.

Hon. Dr. Tewarie:—that we needed to cover.

Dr. Rowley: Okay, that might be a bit more palatable.

Hon. Dr. Tewarie: Yeah, and this is rooted in the fact that the Ministry of Planning and Sustainable Development derived out of a situation which you had planning housing and the environment, then economic and social restructuring and gender affairs, planning and the economy, and so on. So, as these changes took place they had to be—[Interruption]

Dr. Rowley: Understood. May I ask you, Minister, under Sub 23, what are Salaries - Direct Charges? What does that mean?

Hon. Dr. Tewarie: Yes, I understand these to mean the legal officers in the Ministry of Planning and Sustainable Development.

Dr. Rowley: How many legal officers do you have?

Hon. Dr. Tewarie: I think we have on the establishment eight, if I am not mistaken. Okay, we have two on the establishment and six on contract. I do not think all—[Interruption]
Dr. Rowley: Two on the establishment.

Hon. Dr. Tewarie: Yes, two on the establishment.

Dr. Rowley: Two on the establishment and six on contract.

Hon. Dr. Tewarie: Yes, one is a Senior State Counsel.

Dr. Rowley: And do you still utilize external legal support for your litigations?

Hon. Dr. Tewarie: Sometimes, sometimes.

Dr. Rowley: So, do you have any idea what your Ministry might have spent on legal support in total? Because here you spent $900,000. What was the overall picture, including external lawyers?

Hon. Dr. Tewarie: Well, what happened, a lot of the work of the Ministry is done in-house and generally it would have to do with Town and Country Planning-related issues, although not limited to that. When there are matters other than that, then external Counsel might be brought into the picture, through the Office of the Attorney General and they would then address that.

Dr. Rowley: So whenever you have the requirement for external Counsel that decision is made by the Attorney General’s office?

Hon. Dr. Tewarie: Yes.

Dr. Rowley: And when they make that decision, their budgetary consumption then, meaning the charges, are applied to that office or your office?

Hon. Dr. Tewarie: I think it is usually AG.

Dr. Rowley: To the AG’s office?

Hon. Dr. Tewarie: The AG’s office.

Dr. Rowley: Okay. So, once the AG directs legal help to your case, he takes over the matter—[Interruption]

Hon. Dr. Tewarie: Yes.

Dr. Rowley:—in terms of payment to the lawyers.

Hon. Dr. Tewarie: Well, we relate to the AG as the advisor of the Ministry and the Government so, the agents that he hires would be acting on his behalf.

Dr. Rowley: And at that time are any of your eight lawyers involved as instructing attorneys?
Hon. Dr. Tewarie: The Senior Counsel in my office in whom I have a lot of faith, is always involved.

Dr. Rowley: I was going to make a comment, but I will keep it. [Laughter]

Mr. Chairman: Okay, any further?

Dr. Rowley: Yes, Mr. Chairman we are still under 01. No, I think, given how we intend to best use our time today, I better leave you to go on to 003.

Mr. Chairman: All right, so we will go to Item 003, Technical Co-operation; Item 004, Central Statistical Office.

Dr. Rowley: Before we get there—[Interruption]

Mr. Chairman: Before, I think I recognize the Member for Arouca/Maloney.

Miss Hospedales: Mr. Chair, I give way to the Opposition Leader then I would ask my question.

Dr. Rowley: Mr. Chairman, under Item 003, the issue of Vacant Posts, which recurs throughout the document, not only in this Ministry but elsewhere, what is the story with respect to vacant posts in your Ministry? Where are these vacant posts, the ones that are represented under 003/08, specifically who are you referring to here?

Hon. Dr. Tewarie: For instance—it depends on the division—there are four vacant posts in legal for instance.

Dr. Rowley: In legal?

Hon. Dr. Tewarie: Yes.

Dr. Rowley: Over and above the eight that you already have?

Hon. Dr. Tewarie: No, we have eight positions in legal, four are filled, three positions of legal officer have been advertised and the business operations, the administrative person, that is also vacant. In communications we have one vacancy. In information technology we have two. In the National Transformation Unit we have 12. In Project Planning and Reconstruction we have two. These are the vacancies. So it spreads?

Dr. Rowley: Okay, I understand. Any intention to fill these positions? I see half a million dollars. That would not fill all those positions you mentioned there. But let me just ask you, the question I want to ask you, how do you proceed to fill these vacancies?
Hon. Dr. Tewarie: Well, basically what happens is that these positions are advertised. The Public Service Commission is involved, sometimes the GHRS they are involved in the process and it usually follows the public service procedure for the filling of vacancies.

Dr. Rowley: But given the long list of vacancies you just mentioned just for this one department, is it that you are being hamstrung by the fact that these vacancies exist within the establishment and there are no bodies there? For example, let us take Town and Country. There are always complaints about the speed in which things are done. Is it that you have these vacancies and outside of your control, the bodies are not put there because these agencies are not sufficiently responsive?

Hon. Dr. Tewarie: We do not have sufficient staff in some areas that are critical. That is true, and I must say that the staff makes up for it really by higher levels of productivity. But, for instance in the case of Town and Country Planning, if I am not mistaken, advertisements were done last year. Applications were done. The process, I think is either completed or near completion and it is just that we were waiting for the new allocations in order to be able to hire these people.

Dr. Rowley: But the other area—incidentally, I was Minister of Planning a few years ago and at that time, I had, in that Ministry, one legal officer and one legal advisor. I noticed that you have pretty much a full-fledged legal department. Could you clarify that? What is that?

Hon. Dr. Tewarie: The increase in the legal department?

Dr. Rowley: Yes, because it has moved from one officer since you had the backup of the AG’s office. But from the numbers you have just mentioned, which is eight—[Interruption]

Hon. Dr. Tewarie: It is eight of which I have four.

Dr. Rowley: So you have a full-fledged—you have an establishment of a full legal department.

Hon. Dr. Tewarie: Yes. Well, remember you have both what you call officers on the public service payroll as well as contract officers. Two of the officers in the legal department are on the public service payroll, the Senior Counsel and the other lawyer in the system who is the deputy. And we have hired lawyers on contract. We have eight contract positions. We have two additional hired and we have four of which three have been advertised, but we have not filled. So,
basically, that is the position. I think, hon. Member, you would agree with me that one lawyer for an institution like Planning and Sustainable Development is really inadequate.

**Dr. Rowley:** I know that and I agree but I am saying that when you have a legal department I would expect that the department would be more effective in reducing the outlay that you would incur going outside for legal help.

**Hon. Dr. Tewarie:** There are very few—during my three years or so in the Ministry—instances in which we have gone outside our legal department. If I am not mistaken, it may not be more than two occasions, yes.

**Dr. Rowley:** Mr. Chairman, we can move on.

**Mr. Chairman:** Yeah. Member for Arouca/Maloney.

**Miss Hospedales:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Based on the estimates that we have before us, in 2013, $15,625,072 was allocated to—[Interruption]

**Mr. Chairman:** That is Technical Co-operation, right Item 003, or you are dealing with CSO?

**Miss Hospedales:** CSO 004.

**Mr. Chairman:** Okay, good.

**Miss Hospedales:** 004, Sub-Item 01, Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance. Sir, what I want to find out from the Minister, in 2014, $15 million was allocated and this year as well, whether or not the allocation is adequate and what accounted for the decrease in the allocation for 2014 and 2015 and that is to the Central Statistical Office.

**Hon. Dr. Tewarie:** The decrease you are speaking about, hon. Member, is it a decrease of $625,000?

**Miss Hospedales:** Yes, Sir.

**Hon. Dr. Tewarie:** Yes?

**Mr. Chairman:** Yes.

**Hon. Dr. Tewarie:** I mean, I cannot remember thinking back now what the thinking might have been, but we have found $15 million to be reasonable and it is possible that it is an under-allocation but we feel that it is adequate to meet the challenges that we have. As you know, in the operations of a Ministry, generally what happens is that when you find yourself with something that demands more
financial support, you have a certain amount of flexibility and freedom to move funds around. But we feel $15 million will be adequate.

Mr. Warner: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Under 004/08, how many vacant posts are there at the CSO?

Hon. Dr. Tewarie: At the CSO? Just one second. We have 11 vacant posts in contract positions at the CSO.

Mr. Warner: For how long?

Mr. Chairman: What about on the establishment?

Hon. Dr. Tewarie: On the establishment, there are approximately 50 vacant posts.

Mr. Warner: Fifty?

Hon. Dr. Tewarie: Yes, but that cannot be done without the Public Service Commission acting, and it is not for want of requests that they have not been filled.

Mr. Warner: So 50, plus 14, that is 64 posts vacant?

Hon. Dr. Tewarie: Fifty, plus 11.

Mr. Warner: Plus 11?

Hon. Dr. Tewarie: Sixty-one, yes.

Mr. Warner: Could you tell me how long this has been going on?

Hon. Dr. Tewarie: This has been there—we have been trying with the CSO for some time to recruit staff. You have two problems. One is the Public Service Commission itself taking the action to proceed. It took me a year and a half to simply get them to act on the appointment of the acting director and deputy director. The process can be extremely trying and very slow.

10.30 a.m.

When the persons were selected, it took another six months before the process of actual appointment took place. So it took me two years to deal with that, and this matter is out of the control of the hands of any Minister as you know, and there is a limit to which you can engage the Public Service Commission in these matters. The other part of the equation is that for some of the skills, you need highly technical people, and sometimes they are not available for the kind of really low salaries that are available in the Central Statistical Office.
Mr. Chairman: Okay. So we will go now to Item 005, Urban and Regional Planning Division; Item 008, Project Planning and Reconstruction; Sub-Head 02; Good and Services; Item 001, General Administration; the Member for Diego Martin West.

Dr. Rowley: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to engage the Minister under this Sub-Head, but with respect to similar Sub-Heads that come a little later on, on the question of contract employment in the Ministry, because I see that we have moved from 2013 of $6 million to $9.7 million for Contract Employment, and that there is also another $3 million for short-term contract employment, and elsewhere there is another few millions dollars for Contract Employment. So I would like to ask the Minister, who determines who is hired on contract in your Ministry? And what is the procedure that is used to fill these contract positions?

Hon. Dr. Tewarie: We have a very transparent process.

Dr. Rowley: If you may say so yourself.

Hon. Dr. Tewarie: No. We have a very transparent process that is driven by the Permanent Secretary in the Ministry, and the normal process is to identify what are the posts we are going to advertise, advertise them, and at the point of advertisement, the Permanent Secretary takes a decision whether it will go through GHRS or some other form, and ultimately it is the public service system that takes over, which is that committees are established, the process of interviews is done and so on, and as you know, ultimately, three recommendations will come to you as a Minister for signing off.

Dr. Rowley: And what is the role of the CPO in determining the emoluments and—[Interrupt]

Hon. Dr. Tewarie: The same role that she has always played, which is that she would give guidelines on the matter, sometimes it is not possible to get people in contract positions for the—under the kind of terms and conditions that the CPO advises, and then there is a negotiation process, but all of this lengthens the process by which you can hire somebody, and while you are negotiating this with the CPO, the person might well get another job and go somewhere else.

Dr. Rowley: So you are saying that the process gets to a point where three names go to the Minister, and the Minister selects one or—[Interrupt]

Hon. Dr. Tewarie: Well, generally they are ranked, you know, they are ranked. A Minister would have to have an extraordinary reason for jumping the ranking.
Dr. Rowley: So what goes to the Minister is a ranking?

Hon. Dr. Tewarie: Yeah, it is a ranking—

Dr. Rowley: —of 1, 2, 3?

Hon. Dr. Tewarie: —of 1, 2, 3, yes.

Dr. Rowley: But are there instances where the Minister would have chosen No. 2 or No. 3, or does the Minister generally accept what is recommended?

Hon. Dr. Tewarie: I think my Permanent Secretary would answer that I generally approve whatever is the first ranking person. [Crosstalk]

Dr. Rowley: I understand that an assistant is trying to guide you off the track. You stay on the track. [Laughter] But could you provide us before the end of the proceedings or as you are able to, with the list of all the contract officers in your Ministry?

Hon. Dr. Tewarie: The names of the people you mean?

Dr. Rowley: The posts and names of persons in them and their packages, right, and also a summary of the vacancies that exist.

Hon. Dr. Tewarie: A summary—[Interuption]

Dr. Rowley: Like, for example, a summary of the posts that are vacant.

Hon. Dr. Tewarie: That are still vacant.

Dr. Rowley: Yes. And the Short Term Employment, who qualifies for Short Term Employment in the Ministry?

[Hon. Dr. Tewarie confers with the Permanent Secretary]

Hon. Dr. Tewarie: The Permanent Secretary has advised that generally as we need a skill, and we are not able to—or we need a skill for the time, and we do not really need to hire someone full-time for it, people like that would be brought in for specific purposes. So for instance, you know, we had to change the management situation in Town and Country Planning, we brought in a specialist for that, using the same transparent procedure, you know.

Dr. Rowley: Under 28, Sub-Item 28, Other Contracted Services, I see you have had a generous increase for 2014. What did that pay for, the allocation that you used in 2014 for Other Contracted Services? What services are covered by that, and what did we get for that? Because I also observed that you had a significant reduction for 2015. What is going on there?

[Hon. Dr. Tewarie confers with the Permanent Secretary]
**Hon. Dr. Tewarie:** They were small contracts usually janitorial and security. I do not know what else—[Hon. Dr. Tewarie confers with the Permanent Secretary] We had—listen, we have an HR Unit that is in a separate building. [Hon. Dr. Tewarie confers with the Permanent Secretary] It is on Henry Street, and we had a serious problem in which the place was infested with—I do not know if it was rats or whatever it is. We had to bring in Rentokil, we had to get some repairs done, we had to do various things, and ultimately, I think, we moved them. [Hon. Dr. Tewarie confers with the Permanent Secretary] We did not move them. It really was a challenge, so we had to bring in—contract these services in order to deal with a situation which the employees were complaining, really.

**Dr. Rowley:** A million dollars on rats and cockroaches in one office?

**Hon. Dr. Tewarie:** No, I do not think you could say so. I said janitorial services. I said security. I said, you know, Rentokil, I do not know if it was Rentokil or who it was, but various things. What I want to do is to assure you that these are not contracted officers, these are contracted services, right.

**Dr. Rowley:** Well, Mr. Chairman, I defer to you.

**Mr. Chairman:** All right. We—

**Hon. Dr. Tewarie:** Chair, with your permission, I will give the details, some of the details anyway: cost to service; 10 water coolers, petty contracts, $8,000 a month; disposal of e-waste, $200,000; Columbus Communications, $12,000; Rentokil, $9,000.

**Dr. Rowley:** That is a million dollars, eh.

**Hon. Dr. Tewarie:** Yeah, but they add up, you know.

**Mr. Chairman:** Let us proceed. We go to Item 002, Library Service Unit; Item 003, Technical Co-operation; Item 004, Central Statistical Office. Which one, Member for Chaguanas West?

**Mr. Warner:** I am talking about 08, 004, 08, Rent/Lease - Office Accommodation.

**Mr. Chairman:** All right. Yes, do you want to raise your concerns?

**Mr. Warner:** Yes, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Minister, in 2013 the rent/lease was $569,000 roughly. In 2015, it was $5 million, can you tell me what caused this phenomenal increase, and where these offices are, and if you have any proposed offices in mind?
Hon. Dr. Tewarie: It is simply explained, hon. Member. In 2013, the CSO would have had their offices in their building on Independence Square. Once that building was condemned, it means that you had to find office space for 800 officers of the Central Statistical Office. Office space has been found for some, but we have not yet found the office space for all 800 officers; some of them operate from home.

We have since though, with the help of Property Management, secured a building for which negotiations are now ongoing, and if those negotiations are effectively concluded, in about four months we should be able to prepare and occupy the building in January. So the additional cost is really for the spread of CSO all over Port of Spain.

Dr. Rowley: Sub-Head 16, Mr. Chairman, what I said earlier on about Contract Employment, I would like to have that applied to this, because it is very important.

Hon. Dr. Tewarie: What?

Dr. Rowley: Contract and short-term contracts, right.

Hon. Dr. Tewarie: Yes.

Dr. Rowley: We would like to see those, and just to ask, the provision here under 16 for Contract Employment in the CSO, given your present state of flux, and it does not sound as if you would solve it in a matter of a month or two. are you proposing to increase the CSO’s staff under this Contract Employment arrangement?

Hon. Dr. Tewarie: Well, we need strong technical capability and we will have to hire some people. It is possible that some of those can be filled on the basis of vacancies that exist on the books, but it may be because of the demand for more reasonable salaries that we may have to give contracts to some of these officers, but we do need some of the technical competence. Also, with the addressing of some of the issues that we have to address which require fieldwork officers, I think that there would be need not just to retain some of the people who have the skills, the knowledge, the experience in fieldwork, but perhaps to train a few more, so that we can be more effective as we try to get things on a more timely basis in the CSO.

Dr. Rowley: You mentioned that negotiations are taking place with respect to a building. Could you tell us where this building is?
Hon. Dr. Tewarie: It is on Frederick Street, it is No. 47 Frederick Street.

Dr. Rowley: As a Member of the Cabinet, you are aware that the Government has been paying for One Alexandra Place now for years, was any consideration being given for using that building?

Hon. Dr. Tewarie: We at one time tried to have that building assigned, but I think it has subsequently been assigned.

Dr. Rowley: Assigned to whom?

Mr. Chairman: The Member for Oropouche East.

Dr. Moonilal: The matter is under the Property Division of the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development. I do not know if the Member would want an answer now, or raise that later in the proceedings.

Dr. Rowley: No, no, I want it raised in the context of CSO looking for office, because what we are facing here as the taxpayer, is that we have a bill up there paying millions for what I knew—[Interruption]

Dr. Moonilal: What I can say is that the Member may be aware of the enormous difficulties we have had with that building because of a lack of proper approvals and so on. Before the former administration entered into arrangements to rent that building a few days prior to the general election in May 2010, subsequent to that, we have completed about 95 per cent of the outfitting now, and the Ministry of the People and Social Development is carded to go to that building, to free up an important building adjacent to the Red House for the office—for expanded facilities for the Director of Public Prosecutions. So as it is now, the Ministry of the People and Social Development would—a decision has been taken to relocate. We are 95 per cent complete, and I expect in a few days that Ministry to move in there.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, all right.

Miss Hospedales: Mr. Chair.

Mr. Chairman: Yes, I recognise the Member for Arouca/Maloney.

Miss Hospedales: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Sub-Item 08, I was trying to get your attention earlier on this one. The Minister indicated that approximately 800 workers were displaced, and he said that some of the workers are actually working from home. Could the Minister indicate to us how many of those workers are working from home, and over what period of time? How long have they been working from home?
10.45 a.m.

Mr. Chairman: Did you get the question, Minister? How many workers are working from their homes and what is the number involved; and over what period of time.

Hon. Dr. Tewarie: I think the number of 800 that I used was inaccurate. I was thinking of something else. That is in the Ministry of Planning and Sustainable Development, sorry. There are about 400 workers in the CSO—350 to 400. So I want to correct that for the record.

Of the 350 to 400, I would say about 40 or 45 per cent would be working from home and operating what you might call in shared spaces, so that they shift from time to time. What we have tried to do is to ensure that the field work is able to go on, so that the process involved in collecting and assessing the data is not as compromised; and, secondly, we have made sure that the technical capability staff, the high technical requirements are not dislodged so that that work can be ongoing and properly monitored. The staff, so to speak, in the middle, we have found a way of—I do not know—making the best out of a bad situation.

Mr. Chairman: All right we go to:

Item 005, Urban and Regional Planning Division
Item 008, Project Planning and Reconstruction

Sub-Head 03: Minor Equipment Purchases
Item 001, General Administration
Item 002, Library Service Unit
Item 003, Technical Co-operation
Item 004, Central Statistical Office
Item 005: Urban and Regional Planning Division
Item 008: Project Planning and Reconstruction

Sub-Head 04: Current Transfer and Subsidies
Item 001, Regional Bodies
Item 002, Commonwealth Bodies
Item 003, United Nations Organizations
Item 004, International Bodies
Item 006, Educational Institutions
Sub-Head 06: Current Transfers to Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies

We now go to Draft Estimates of the Development Programme:
Sub-Head 09: Development Programme

Item 001, Pre-Investment

I recognize the Member for Diego Martin North/East.

Mr. Imbert: I just wanted to make sure you did not reach Item 29, so I put up my hand. I have a question on the IDF on page 181.

Mr. Chairman: We have not reached there as yet, but I will make sure you are recognized when we reach there.

Mr. Imbert: I just wanted to make sure.

Mr. Chairman: The hon. Member for Diego Martin West.

Dr. Rowley: Mr. Chairman, I want to make sure that you recognize me. I just would like to join you, Mr. Chairman, on 09 and down at 003, the Seismic Microzonation Studies. In 2014, I see that we have appropriated, and I presumed used, $2 million there approximately for that programme. Could the Minister give us a bit of information as to how that programme has progressed and where we are with respect to the microzonation study?

Hon. Dr. Tewarie: We have almost completed Port of Spain. Let us say it is being finalized.

Dr. Rowley: Who is doing this work?

Hon. Dr. Tewarie: This is the Seismic Research Unit and the person who is the lead researcher is a professor who has been trained in seismic studies in Japan—as in earthquakes. So they are leading that study. Port of Spain is almost complete. They are doing the major cities first so—San Fernando, Chaguanas, Arima, et cetera, the main urban centres—and then they will move to six others. There are 10 areas that have been identified.

The entire study is 10 years long. We have gone from 2011 now—so three years have been completed—so I will say progress is reasonable because for the others like Chaguanas, San Fernando, Arima, they would have made progress as well although they are not close to the end yet.
Dr. Rowley: Are we waiting for a report at the end of the programme?

Hon. Dr. Tewarie: No—

Dr. Rowley: Are we going to get sectional—

Hon. Dr. Tewarie:—we will have interim reports on each location.

Dr. Rowley: As a location is completed, you will get that.

Hon. Dr. Tewarie: We will share that with the population.

Dr. Rowley: How is that feeding into the national building code work?

Hon. Dr. Tewarie: It is essential to that and that is why we started with Port of Spain, which is our main urban centre and where you are likely to have the tallest buildings. So one of the things, for instance, they found with the microzonation study, which may seem obvious now but it was important to have the documentation, is that the place where a building is safest might be East Port of Spain and the place where a building is most vulnerable would be West Port of Spain. But you now have the data to tell you that and it has implications, of course, for development and the microzonation studies are going to feed into the building codes.

Dr. Rowley: When you say Port of Spain, is that confined to the city limits or is it Port of Spain and environs?

Hon. Dr. Tewarie: No, Port of Spain and the environment, so it would take in Westmoorings and it would take in like Morvant.

Mr. Chairman: I recognize the Member for Point Fortin.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Thank you very much. With regard to economic infrastructures, there is your four growth pole development and with regard to, in particular, this—

Mr. Chairman: No, we have not reached there yet.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: I am so sorry.

Mr. Chairman: I recognize the Member for Laventille West.

Mr. Hypolite: Chair, we are on page 176?

Mr. Chairman: No, we are on the Item Sub-Head 09 Development Programme. Let us move on.

Item 001, Pre-Investment
Item 003, Economic Infrastructure

I recognize the Member for Point Fortin.

**Mrs. Gopee-Scoon:** Thank you. If there is no one else before me, with regard to the growth poles development, I notice there is an increase here. But I speak to the south-west peninsula in particular, because I do not know that any work has been done on the development of the south-west peninsula except for a meeting which was held very late in your term. So this only took place a few months ago. Where have you reached with that and why has south-west appeared to have been sidelined as well? I ask this in conjunction with the sustainable and emerging cities. How does that fit into this same growth pole development project and which of these emerging cities as well?

**Hon. Dr. Tewarie:** Chair, I think a lot has to do with a misunderstanding of the growth pole concept and the role of Government in it. You have a situation in Trinidad and Tobago in which you have a two-tiered economy because of petroleum. You also have a situation in which Dutch disease is a factor because of the cyclical nature of the oil economy; and you also have a challenge of Trinidad and Tobago being what you call a high-income country and, therefore, you are caught in what is known as the middle-income country trap.

So the question is: how do you make diversification possible in that context? That is why seven sectors have been selected, but five geographical poles have also been selected as well to spread the development possibilities. What it means is that Government identifies the growth pole area in the context of a national development plan. It then puts the infrastructure in—whether that be road or drainage or water or whatever infrastructure is necessary. It might be schools; it might be higher educational institutions. Government spends on those things and you then work one Ministry with the other so that the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Investment then establishes economic zones for which it then creates the conditions for the private sector to invest.

In addition, what you do is that you basically—we have done studies on all of these including the south-west in which you know what are the anchor industries in an economic zone or in a growth pole and what are the cluster possibilities of industries there. With Government, the Ministries working together with the private sector, both existing and coming in to invest, the growth poles are then triggered in terms of growth possibilities in the economy.

So Government does not have to allocate large sums of money for the growth poles, but you will see money allocated for the economic zone because that is
where you would have to put infrastructure for the investment. The growth pole thing is something that is facilitated—that is why the consultations are so important to bring people together to understand what is happening, what is possible, what is desirable and how this can be achieved through collaboration.

Mr. Chairman: I recognize Port of Spain South, then the Leader of the Opposition and the Member for St. Joseph.

Miss Mc Donald: Mr. Chairman, I am even more confused over the response given to my colleague, the Member for Point Fortin. Back in 2011, the then Minister of Finance and the Economy, Member for Tunapuna, when he came to this House, in his budget presentation he was very clear. He said what the Government was doing was opening up new economic spaces to facilitate sustainable development and growth.

Hon. Dr. Tewarie: I did not say anything different.

Miss Mc Donald: He identified five growth poles. My interest is in the East Port of Spain growth pole. I am asking the question because this has been in the budget from year to year, ending with this last budget on September 08, where the Minister said that technical work is still going on in the growth poles. He did not say which one. Growth poles—all five.

My question to you this morning is, Sir: what is happening with the East Port of Spain growth pole? What is going on there? What is the technical word because the Minister did not answer the question—that is the Minister of Finance and the Economy, not you—when I did my budget contribution? I want to find out: what infrastructure was done in East Port of Spain? What is happening?

Hon. Dr. Tewarie: In East Port of Spain, as you know, there are several agencies that are responsible for different things. Under the East Port of Spain Development Company, between 2011 and 2014, about 37 projects have been completed completely and there are 46 projects that will have been completed by 2015.

There are a number of collaborative engagement projects—the East Port of Spain Development Company as well as the Port of Spain City Council. There are projects under—the Sustainable Cities Dimension is not a project, it is a programme of projects, so the Women’s City Initiative is under the Ministry of Gender, Youth and Child Development. The initiative having to do with flood control and management is under the Ministry of the Environment and Water Resources. It is being funded by the IDB. The Linear Park is something that
requires completion of some of the flood work before you can begin along the East Dry River. The project at the top, with the canon, what is it? Fort Picton. They did the feasibility study. They have now tendered for the project and I think that project is about to be given out and started. The idea behind Fort Picton is that it would begin the process of restoration of some of the heritage sites.

11.00 a.m.

Development is a difficult process in a situation in which you are working with the communities that exist and the legacy that you have inherited, and you are not breaking down, demolishing in order to build anew. And, therefore, it is very painstaking in trying to get these projects connected to one another and getting so many institutions to collaborate. So, rest assured that the Sustainable Cities project is on. Part of the requirement is private sector investment, and I want to say to you that for the East Port of Spain area, there are two or three very important private sector players in the country that are prepared to invest in that particular area, notwithstanding the challenges.

**Miss Mc Donald:** All right. Just one further question. Minister, are you aware that not one single cent—we found out here yesterday—was allocated to East Port of Spain development in the budget.

**Hon. Dr. Tewarie:** Yes. I do not want to speak for the hon. Minister of Finance and the Economy. We detected that very early and I wrote a letter to the hon. Minister of Finance and the Economy. I know it came up here in the Committee. I am sure he is going to address it. I think it was an oversight, quite frankly.

**Mr. Chairman:** I think, Member for Barataria/San Juan, you want to make a point in connection with the growth poles?

**Dr. Khan:** Yes, I just want to ask something to the Minister since I am hearing all about the growth poles and where the growth poles are going to be. I have been in this Parliament since 1995 and since 2001 I have been hearing the then PNM Government, through the Member for San Fernando East, speaking about the East Port of Spain growth poles and— in fact I did not hear much about growth poles. Can the Minister indicate what was done prior to 2010, between 2001 and 2010, if there were any growth poles.

**Mr. Imbert:** Mr. Chairman. [Crosstalk]

**Dr. Khan:** No, no, I have my time here now. I have my time here now. I want my question answered.
Dr. Moonilal: So, he cannot ask a question. [Crosstalk]

Mr. Chairman: Please! Please! No, please!

Dr. Khan: And if at all, Mr. Chairman, have they done anything—[Interruption]

Mr. Chairman: Members! Members, order! Order!

Dr. Khan: Because they did nothing—[Continuous crosstalk]

Mr. Chairman: Members! Members! Members!

Dr. Khan:—and now they are questioning the Minister about growth poles. “They never had no growth poles.” When they were there they had no growth poles.

Hon. Member: Nobody can talk here or what?

Miss Mc Donald: This is our question time.

Dr. Moonilal: Whose question time? This is not question time.

Hon. Dr. Tewarie: It is a committee. [Crosstalk]

Mr. Chairman: Members! Members, listen, this is not a market. Please! This is not a market! [Interruption] No, no, this is a standing—

Mr. Imbert: You cannot take up our time.

Mr. Chairman: Member for Diego Martin North/East and Barataria/San Juan. [Interruption] Wait! Wait! Please! This is a meeting of the Standing Finance Committee, and any Member is entitled to raise questions. [Desk thumping] It is not only confined to the Opposition, it is confined to all Members who make up the Standing Finance Committee and so it is unfair to say that a Member of the Government cannot ask a question. They can ask a question.

Mr. Imbert: Chairman, I have a question.

Mr. Chairman: Yes.

Mr. Imbert: What year, what period can the questions be directed to?

Dr. Khan: You all went back to 2010. Member for Diego Martin North/East, you went back to 2010.

Mr. Imbert: I was stopped from asking about 2013. What year?
Dr. Khan: No, no, no. [ Interruption] You all are going back and we cannot go back? I want to find out what was the growth pole that you all did. Nothing. [ Crosstalk]

Mr. Chairman: All right. Okay! Order! Order! Please! [ Interruption] Member for Port of Spain South, please, and Member for Barataria/San Juan. Listen, you can make reference to 2010, but he is correct, we are not going back. [ Desk thumping] What we have here is not going back, but you can make a reference to 2010.

Dr. Khan: Okay. Could I ask a question then?

Mr. Chairman: Yes.

Dr. Khan: From January 2010 to May 2010, which is 2010, what growth poles were developed by the Member of Parliament for Point Fortin, the Member for Port of Spain South and the Member for Diego Martin North/East? [ Interruption] That is 2010. Mr. Chairman, that is 2010.

Mr. Chairman: No.

Dr. Khan: January 2010 to May 2010, what was done by that Government?

Mr. Chairman: All right, listen!

Dr. Khan: Nothing.

Mr. Chairman: Listen!

Dr. Khan: That is 2010.

Miss Mc Donald: That is not in the accounts.

Dr. Khan: That is 2010.

Miss Mc Donald: It is not in the accounts.

Dr. Khan: But it is 2010.

Miss Mc Donald: It is not in the accounts.

Mr. Chairman: Member for Port of Spain South, please.


Mr. Chairman: I do not think that I would allow Dr. Tewarie to go there. Please. Let us not go there, please.

Dr. Rowley: Mr. Chairman, if this goes on, this exercise would be defeated.

Dr. Khan: It is not going to be defeated.
Mr. Cadiz: Why?

Dr. Khan: When I ask questions it would be defeated?

Mr. Chairman: Member for Baratavia/San Juan, please!

Dr. Khan: No problem. [Interuption]

Mr. Chairman: Yes, but I am saying just allow—there is order here. Okay! You have spoken—no, no, you have spoken. Just cool it! Let the Member for Diego Martin West speak.

Dr. Rowley: Could I ask, Mr. Chairman, where are we in the proceedings, because I would like to return to the proceedings of the Standing Finance Committee?

Mr. Chairman: Yes. We are under item 003: Economic Infrastructure.

Dr. Rowley: Mr. Chairman, I crave your indulgence. If you are on Item 003—anyway, just to make it clear, I crave your indulgence on page 176, to just put a very simple question to the Minister, 176, 001, the Feasibility Study for the Development of San Fernando Waterfront, where are we with that? I have heard that the project is progressing, but I am seeing provision here in 2014 for the feasibility study. Has that study been completed and what do we have in hand?

Hon. Dr. Tewarie: The study has now been completed, about five or six, I do not recall exactly, consultations have been held leading to its completion. It was revised on each occasion that there was a consultation, and where we are now is that in the recommendations of the study there are projects that can be initiated immediately and completed. There are medium-term projects and there are long-term projects, but the projects, once more, in keeping with the philosophy of this Government, is not a waterfront development in which Government is the sole investor. It is a project in which there is public/private participation.

Dr. Rowley: So, does that mean that we have in hand now, or are about to have, an approved master plan which would carry the requisite approvals so the private sector could invest in a development?

Hon. Dr. Tewarie: Yes, we do not have the approvals yet.

Dr. Rowley: How soon do you expect to have this master-plan approval?

Hon. Dr. Tewarie: Well, as I said, the study is completed and I did promise that I would go back for one final presentation, in consultation mode, with the completed study and that is going to be done very soon.
Dr. Rowley: But, the final out-turn of all this exercise would be an approved development plan—

Hon. Dr. Tewarie: Yes, for San Fernando.

Dr. Rowley:—which would be known to one and all and, based on that approved plan, investment would take place in the waterfront international project?

Hon. Dr. Tewarie: Yes.

Dr. Rowley: Do you have any idea as to what public sector project will take place within there over and above any private sector interests?

Hon. Dr. Tewarie: The public sector projects would have to be, first of all, the realignment of public establishments in the San Fernando area. So, for instance we might have to move where the market is or where the bus is, things like that. You would probably have infrastructure investment there; you would have to deal with relocation of the fishermen or satisfying their needs in some form; you would have to deal with the issue of squatting which you would have to regularize or solve in some form. These would be issues that the State would have to address.

Dr. Rowley: Do you have sight of the report, because I want to ask you, does it include reclamation?

Hon. Dr. Tewarie: Reclamation has been suggested as one option. Yes.

Mr. Chairman: I recognize the Member for Laventille West and then we will come back to—

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Chairman, I want to go back to a point that I was making before.

Mr. Chairman: On infrastructure?

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Yes.

Mr. Chairman: Yes, Member for Laventille West.

Mr. Hypolite: Chair, two questions. With respect to the same Item the Opposition Leader was speaking about, we saw where the figures moved from $1 million to $2.7 million, can the Minister indicate what would have caused that increase or overrun? That is the first question. Second question would be with respect to 003/004: Growth Poles Development, the Minister would have made mention about East Port of Spain Development Company and having completed
some 37 or so contracts or projects, can the Minister indicate or send a listing of those projects to us? The completed ones, in addition to those that are expected to be done within the year ahead?

**Hon. Dr. Tewarie:** I can identify all the projects right here if you wish.

**Miss Cox:** Let him send a list.

**Hon. Dr. Tewarie:** I have a list of all the projects.

**Mr. Hypolite:** We would prefer a list.

**Hon. Dr. Tewarie:** You do not want the public to know?

**Hon. Member:** I would like to know.

**Mr. Chairman:** No, wait. If the Member can answer the question, it would be accepted—

**Hon. Member:** I am eager to hear it.

**Mr. Chairman:** And, of course, the Member can also pass on a hard copy, but remember you have five minutes.

**Hon. Dr. Tewarie:** The East Port of Spain—

**Mr. Hypolite:** For the first question—

**Hon. Dr. Tewarie:** Which is?

**Mr. Hypolite:** With respect to moving from $1 million to $2.7 million?

**Hon. Dr. Tewarie:** Oh, that was the—oh, you mean for the feasibility.

**Mr. Hypolite:** Yes. [Interruption]

**Mr. Chairman:** Member for Couva South, could we cool it behind there?

**Mr. Hypolite:** Overrun?

**Hon. Dr. Tewarie:** What happened on that occasion is that we had—

**Mr. Indarsingh:** The Member for Diego Martin Central—

**Mr. Chairman:** Yes, well you and the Member for Diego Martin Central cool it. Okay?

**Dr. Browne:** Mr. Chairman, I am not involved in that.

**Mr. Chairman:** Well, it does not matter, I am hearing your voice.
Hon. Dr. Tewarie: One million dollars had been allocated for the feasibility study and when the bids came in $1 million could not satisfy it, so the Central Tenders Board basically said to us that we had to open up. We had to go through the process again and based on what we saw—we saw, I mean, obviously, that you needed more money which is where the increase was given.

Mr. Chairman: Yes, could you go on to Part II now with the projects? You have five minutes.

Hon. Dr. Tewarie: I would like to start with the ones that are finished. Okay, restoration of Fort Picton, tenders were evaluated and preferred bidder selected, recommendation of the evaluation committee was considered and approved by East Port of Spain, so that project will go.

Mr. Hypolite: Chair, I am talking about completed projects.

Hon. Dr. Tewarie: Well, you see I—

Mr. Chairman: Listen, you cannot be interrupting the Member. You asked a question, let him answer.

Mr. Hypolite: Yes, but he—

Mr. Chairman: After he answers then—

Mr. Hypolite: We asked about completed projects.

Mr. Chairman: Yes, but allow the Minister to respond. You are interrupting him.

Hon. Dr. Tewarie: I am trying to find it. I am sorry.

Mr. Chairman: All right, whilst you are looking for that—

Hon. Member: He found it, he found it.

Mr. Chairman: You found it? [Interruption] No, no, hold on, Member for St. Joseph, I know you are anxious to raise your question. Hold on.

Hon. Dr. Tewarie: All right, Sea Lots East play park: completed. That is with the help of the National Commission for Self-Help, so they worked together; Pit Latrine Eradication Programme: 100 per cent completed, 40 pit latrines replaced with wet core containing septic tanks, et cetera. This is throughout East Port of Spain. Pit Latrine Eradication Programme, Phase II: we are doing 20 in Beetham Gardens, 15 in Sea Lots and 20 in East Gonzales. Those are the areas right now. David Street: steps and drains, completed; concrete stairs, walkways, slipper and
storm water drains; Pashley Street, Harlem: box drains, completed 100 per cent; St. Martin Welfare Association: completed, 100 per cent, existing facilities including ceiling, painting, air condition, refurbish and welding shop; Rocket Park, Beetham, Phase IV: construction of re-enforced drain, crossing and pave labour, installation of handrails, landscaping and concrete tables and benches, 100 per cent completed; Basilon Street Youth Facility: 100 per cent completed. This includes a two-storey structure. A new roof was replaced, window, furnishing, there is a computer centre in there as well; Beetham Gardens Community clinic: 100 per cent completed, refurbishment of existing private building, construction of bandstand and change rooms; Beetham Gardens Phases I to V: cleaning streets and drains, 100 per cent completed; restoration of Fort Picton, I mentioned that before. Desperados: two tender documents had to be revised; George Street and environs: designs in progress for facility; East Port of Spain Heritage Walk: discussions have been held with the Ministry of National Security; Blue Diamonds Pan Theatre upgrade: contract signed, contractor is expected to take possession of site during week of September 22—

Mr. Chairman: All right, hon. Minister, I think that you can circulate the rest. I think that your five minutes is up, you can circulate. [Interruption] I now recognize the Member for St. Joseph, and that would be the last question on this one—[Interruption]—oh, same one on infrastructure?

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: That is right.

Mr. Chairman: So, you go first and then the Member for St. Joseph.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Thank you. Minister, you made good conversation on the growth poles development, in particular I was concerned about the south-west growth pole.

Hon. Dr. Tewarie: Yes.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: But, I want to make the point that we have a highway to Point Fortin, it looks like it would be completed in a year or two [Desk thumping] but at the same time you have abandoned the development of the e Teck Park, and you speak to diversification but you have no provision for the development of the industrial site. That has been overtaken by the hospital. Further, the UTT campus which was meant to include COSTAATT, MIC and SAM which are all geared for further development, there has been no provision for that as well, so I cannot understand having a highway and not going along with the other developmental projects as well.
**Hon. Dr. Tewarie:** The other developmental projects are very much in train. You have in Trinidad and Tobago today in the year 2014, the very happy situation in which a community can ask for both a hospital and an industrial park at the same time, and a highway and get it. [Desk thumping]

**Mrs. Gopee-Scoon:** The industrial park is not coming, and as far as I am concerned the hospital is now placed on that same site.

**Hon. Dr. Tewarie:** No, I will clarify for you. There was a piece of property that had been designated for the industrial park. There is also a demand in Point Fortin for a hospital. The question is, where would have been the best place to put the hospital. It was decided because infrastructure had been put down on the industrial park—

**Mrs. Gopee-Scoon:** For the e Teck park?

**Hon. Dr. Tewarie:** Yes—that it would make sense to locate the hospital there. The hospital, however, will not take the entire piece of property under its charge given the hospital that is being built. And I think what is happening now is that, if I am correct, there is discussion and negotiation between the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development and the Ministry of Trade, Industry, Investments and Communication, to figure out how the people of Point Fortin might get both. So, it is not that—

**Mrs. Gopee-Scoon:** On the same site?

**Hon. Dr. Tewarie:** It is possible, on the same site.

**Mrs. Gopee-Scoon:** Will Town and Country Planning allow the hospital to be placed next to the industrial site?

**Hon. Dr. Tewarie:** It depends. I do not know, they will have to look at it. [ Interruption]

**Mrs. Gopee-Scoon:** It does not make sense to me. I had asked you further about 005, are there any identified emerging cities?

**Hon. Dr. Tewarie:** No. The emerging city of Port of Spain is a nomenclature that we use for—the sustainable city of Port of Spain, sorry.

**Mrs. Gopee-Scoon:** Okay, fine. Yes, I am okay with that.

**Hon. Dr. Tewarie:** Are you okay with that?

**Mrs. Gopee-Scoon:** Yes.
Hon. Dr. Tewarie: And the emerging city is really Chaguanas, and we see the potential as well for Arima.

Mr. Chairman: Yes, I recognize the Member for St. Joseph.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Thank you, Chair. I have about two or three short questions, would the Minister prefer I ask all or one by one?

Mr. Chairman: No, you ask all three.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Under Support to Industrial Development Initiatives: 001, Invaders Bay Infrastructure Development, 2013 there was allocation actually spent of $1.479 million; 2014 Estimate, nothing; 2014 Revised Estimate, nothing; 2015 Estimate, nothing. What is the fate of that Invaders Bay Infrastructure Development? That is question one. Question two, the hon. Minister would remember one of his previous statements when he said that the East Port of Spain development project was inextricably linked to the Invaders Bay project.

Hon. Member: Where he said that?

Mr. Deyalsingh: In the Senate. If it is now, what is the fate of the Invaders Bay project? Is it now delinked from the East Port of Spain growth pole? Those are two questions. Other question—

Mr. Chairman: No, the third one.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Third one, sorry. The growth pole for the north coast which was predicated on a tunnel from Tunapuna to Maracas, what is the fate of that north coast growth pole development project predicated on a tunnel from Tunapuna to Maracas? Is that growth pole still on the cards? Is the tunnel still on the cards? That is the third question.

Mr. Chairman: You are right. Okay, three questions. Minister of Planning and Sustainable Development.

Hon. Dr. Tewarie: Chair, I would try to answer the hon. Member but first I must dislodge the load from the questions. [Laughter] So, I will try to answer the questions. On the question of the north coast, a study has been done on the north coast. The north coast area has only 3,000 people living in it, but a number of natural assets including green forests and, of course, beaches that we know very well, and the people in those areas—you have very low skills in those areas, but skills directed towards things like agriculture, fishing, et cetera. And a development strategy is being pursued that would take into account the 3,000 people living there. The reality, that you need to populate the population to make
development happen, and therefore there must be attractors, and again, it is a strategy involving public as well as private sector funding. Or, if you like, public sector spending as well as private sector investment.

The growth pole concept seems to create a lot of problems. East Port of Spain has its own jurisdictional area. The growth pole concept has to do with a geographical zone that is targeted for growth, and it may or may not involve overlapping things in it. So, that is the situation in Port of Spain and the East Port of Spain set of projects is under the jurisdiction of East Port of Spain. I want to make one thing clear in relation to East Port of Spain. Although there was that issue of the operational cost being left out, there is, in fact, a $30 million allocation in the IDF for the East Port of Spain Developmental Company, and I think another $5 million for soft projects, that is to say human support projects in the area. Okay, I would just like to clarify that.

On the Invaders Bay project, what this reveals really is that despite all the charges that have been made about Invaders Bay, there is very negligible Government spending in Invaders Bay. There is very little Government expenditure, state expenditure, or public funds in Invaders Bay. And what has happened with Invaders Bay now, as we have proceeded to negotiate on the basis of Cabinet decisions with the people who have been selected, is that the project has been passed over to UDeCOTT, now that the land allocation has been made possible by the President of the country, which is what prevented the situation from happening before.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Could I just ask one quick—

Mr. Chairman: You wanted to raise another question?

Mr. Deyalsingh: No, just a clarification, because part of my question was, is the north coast growth pole still predicated on the tunnel from Tunapuna to Maracas? That part was not answered.

Hon. Dr. Tewarie: I do not think it ever was.

Mr. Chairman: All right, well let us move on. Member for Chaguanas West.

Mr. Warner: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Minister, I heard you say just now that Chaguanas is an emerging city, can you give me a status report, since I do not know about that?

Hon. Dr. Tewarie: Well, Chaguanas, based on the census, is an area in which there has been an 11 per cent—based on 2011 census—growth in the population...
of that area. I think you know that a lot of Government infrastructure spending has been on things like educational institutions, et cetera, in that part of the country, because of decentralization and I think you also know that there are a number of private sector housing developments in that area as well as a number of state housing development projects in that area. Because of all of that, that part of the area which has always been a retail and commercial centre, is emerging really as a city and is worthy of city status.

So, what we are seeking to do, is working with collaborators across the board; the borough council in Chaguanas and the Ministry of Local Government, the Ministry of Transport, local private sector chambers in the area, the downtown merchants in Chaguanas, the community at large through consultation, the vendors in the area who play an important entrepreneurial role in the area, we are trying to work together so see how we might cooperate and collaborate to make that possible.

**Mr. Chairman:** All right, let us move on. Members, you would allow me to move on. I know that I have to go on to infrastructure. Item 004, Social Infrastructure; Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services, and we go to Infrastructure Development Fund, I recognize the Member for—

**Miss Hospedales:** Mr. Chair, Item 004, you moved on so quickly.

**Mr. Chairman:** You are what?

**Miss Hospedales:** Item 004.

**Mr. Chairman:** Yes, quickly. We have to move on, eh.

**Miss Hospedales:** Mr. Chair, under Sub-Item 045, we are told that the CSO Physical Transitioning to new facilities—they are physically transitioning to new facilities. Could you tell us exactly where those facilities are?

**Mr. Chairman:** No, no, he answered that question already. Let us go on to Infrastructure Development Fund. I recognize the Member for Diego Martin North/East. [Interrupt] No, no, you must pay attention to what is taking place. [Interrupt] No, we are moving ahead. Member for Diego Martin North/East.

**Miss Hospedales:** Mr. Chair, I have other questions under this Item.

**Mr. Chairman:** Oh, you have other questions, good, continue.

**Miss Hospedales:** Mr. Chair, I would like to find out when exactly those staff members are going to be accommodated because the Minister did indicate that
there are 157; 45 per cent of the 350 staff members are at home and I am not sure if the Minister is aware that these people just go and they sign and they go back home. They have been on extended vacation; so we would like to know exactly when will they be accommodated?

**Mr. Chairman:** No, the Minister answered that. Listen, do you have any further questions? If not, I recognize the Member for Diego Martin North/East.

**Miss Hospedales:** Mr. Chair, it is the time frame I am talking about. These members of staff have been home for a long time.

**Mr. Chairman:** No, the Minister has answered that. He said that there is a building somewhere on Frederick Street and he is hoping that by January it would be outfitted and it would accommodate the 300 to 400 members. He said that; so to go back through that is not making sense. We are wasting time. I now recognize the Member for Diego Martin North/East. Could we have silence and allow the Member to speak? Member for Diego Martin North/East, please.

**Mr. Imbert:** There is some noise over there.

**Mr. Chairman:** Yes, I recognize that myself.

**Mr. Imbert:** Page 18—would you all stop it?

**Mr. Chairman:** Members, could we have silence and allow the Member to speak?

**Mr. Imbert:** Page 181.

**Mr. Chairman:** Page 181.

**Mr. Imbert:** 005.

**Mr. Chairman:** 005.

**Mr. Imbert:** 029 Boardwalk Phase II, when I add up the expenditure from 2013—I do not know what happened in 2012—you get $58 million; $10 million in 2013; $35 million in 2014 and $13 million projected for 2015 for this Boardwalk project and it says Phase II. What is the cost of this Boardwalk project, phase I and phase II, expected to be at the end of it all?

11.30 a.m.

**Hon. Dr. Tewarie:** It is almost complete now, Mr. Chairman, hon. Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann—[Interruption]

**Mr. Chairman:** Diego Martin North/East.
**Hon. Dr. Tewarie:** Sorry, Member for Diego Martin North/East.

**Mr. Imbert:** Just the cost please. The total cost of this Boardwalk project; phase I and phase II altogether.

**Hon. Dr. Tewarie:** I can provide that for you. I do not remember what the figures are.

**Mr. Chairman:** Do you have any further questions before I go to the Member for Diego Martin West?

**Mr. Imbert:** It seems to me it is at least $100 million.

**Hon. Dr. Tewarie:** No, it is not.

**Mr. Chairman:** He will provide the answer to us.

**Mr. Imbert:** Yes, I have another question on the IDF now.

**Mr. Chairman:** Yes, you have the floor.

**Mr. Imbert:** The IDF—[ Interruption]

**Dr. Khan:** Mr. Chairman.

**Mr. Chairman:** The Member is on the floor, please.

**Mr. Imbert:** The IDF with respect to the Ministry of Planning and Sustainable Development. I notice an allocation on page 293, 001 Economic Infrastructure, there was $50 million allocated to the Invaders Bay project. What was that for?

**Hon. Dr. Tewarie:** What we had hoped was that the contracts, et cetera, with the private sector would have been completed, and that we would have provided to UDeCOTT this basic infrastructure money for them to begin the infrastructure responsibilities that were the responsibilities of the State. The private sector has their own responsibilities under the contract, and this was the money allocated for that.

**Mr. Imbert:** All right. You are saying this $50 million was for infrastructure.

**Hon. Dr. Tewarie:** It was not spent.

**Mr. Imbert:** I realize it was not spent.

**Hon. Dr. Tewarie:** Yes.

**Mr. Imbert:** But the $50 million was allocated for infrastructure that was the responsibility of the State.
Hon. Dr. Tewarie: Yes.

Mr. Imbert: But you just—in answer to a question from the Member for St. Joseph—said the expenditure by the State is almost zero.

Hon. Dr. Tewarie: But if the money was not spent, and we did not spend any besides the money that was not spent, then the limit of expenditure would have to be extremely low by the State.

Mr. Imbert: Going forward, you said the expenditure will be very small.

Hon. Dr. Tewarie: Going forward, I expect that there would be some state expenditure for basic infrastructure works such as water, lights, et cetera.

Mr. Imbert: Right. So there will be expenditure along the line of this $50 million, perhaps, on an annual basis.

Hon. Dr. Tewarie: Yes.

Mr. Imbert: Okay, all right.

Mr. Chairman: I think I recognize the Member for Barataria/San Juan.

Dr. Khan: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I just wanted, on that note, whether the Minister could tell us what was the cost of the MV Su and whether the—[ Interruption]

Mr. Chairman: No, no. [Crosstalk] Out of order! Out of order! No, no, Member it is irrelevant. I rule you out of order.

I recognize the Member for Diego Martin West. [Crosstalk] Could we conduct ourselves properly in this meeting? [Crosstalk] That is out of order, man. Yeah. I recognize the Member for Diego Martin West. And, please, let us stop the crosstalk, please.

Dr. Rowley: Mr. Chairman, it is clear that the intention of some of my colleagues is to disrupt the proceedings. [Interruption]

Mr. Chairman: Please, please.

Dr. Rowley: Mr. Chairman, I am talking to you. Could I be protected from the rest of my colleagues, please?

Mr. Chairman: Yes.

Dr. Rowley: Good. Under 005, 001—[Interruption]

Mr. Chairman: What page?
**Dr. Rowley**: Page 181, 001. I would want to deal with a few items there so if you could bear with me, Mr. Chairman.

The allocations to Cariri, hon. Minister, what exactly are we getting for that with respect to that outlay? How is that going?

**Hon. Dr. Tewarie**: Okay. Actually, CARIRI is one of those institutions that I would say has been undervalued in terms of its potential for contribution. I can say right now, based on the services that CARIRI has provided traditionally and where their business has grown, CARIRI is now paying its way. I want to say that. So, it is now covering its cost. It is generating enough income for that. Where this money goes, as you can see, it is for infrastructure and the purchase of equipment. So, for instance, I can tell you one of the things that they have been able to purchase recently has been a 3D, equivalent of a Xerox machine, in which you draw the material that you want—[Interrupt]

**Dr. Rowley**: A hologram.

**Hon. Dr. Tewarie**: And you get a prototype. So what it means is that a person does not have to spend the time making the prototype. This is also linked to a number of things. It is linked to a collaborative project involved with the World Bank that is Caribbean-wide in scope to find entrepreneurial initiatives that are also climate-change solutions; it is linked to a collaboration with Microsoft for the establishment of the 111th Microsoft Innovation Centre in the world in Trinidad and Tobago in a few weeks’ time; it is linked to the enterprise development centre which is an incubator for the projects that come out of the idea to innovation programme where those ideas are nurtured over the period of a year to become businesses with new entrepreneurial initiatives in the country.

It also has to do with the creation of an app centre in which they are bringing people with IT knowledge to develop software applications which is a very important part of the new development thrust in ICT in the country. It is those kinds of things. All right.

**Dr. Rowley**: Mr. Chairman, I would like to go to 018 Surveillance of the Chaguaramas Peninsula—018 under 005. Now, we did appropriate in 2013 $300,000 for this assignment. I now see an appropriation was made for $1 million in 2014 and we spent $5 million. Could the Minister explain how we could have had an appropriation for $1 million and we spent $5 million on Surveillance of the Chaguaramas Peninsula? Could you explain that please?
Hon. Dr. Tewarie: The increase in allocation would have been by virement. Remember when you are talking about the Chaguaramas peninsula, you are talking about the peninsula itself and five islands. We took a very early decision that if you were going to open up Chaguaramas to the country—because that is what it has become. It is a place where, if you live in Cedros, for instance, you might want to come to Chaguaramas and spend a day with your family. If we took a decision to open up the peninsula like that, security was, perhaps, the most important thing. So the early decision was to make sure that we had surveillance equipment all over the peninsula and on the islands and, more than that, to expand the police force, the police fleet and the police mobility capability within Chaguaramas. So that was an early decision.

Dr. Rowley: So this is not just surveillance, it is surveillance and security.

Hon. Dr. Tewarie: And security.

Dr. Rowley: Okay, understood.

Could I go to 024, Strategic Plan for Chaguaramas Development? What number plan is that? Is it no. 9, 10, 12 or 15?

Hon. Dr. Tewarie: I do not know. I take your point.

Dr. Rowley: I am coming to this. I seem to recall in my short tenure around public life that there are a number of Chaguaramas development plans. Why is there a need for another strategic plan for Chaguaramas?

Hon. Dr. Tewarie: Okay. For the same reason that we had to do a plan for the Waterfront Project for which there had been I think 11 plans before, which is that as time moves on, as communities develop—different notions of what they want for a development—what happens is that they require consultation and inclusion all over again in the process.

So what we did in San Fernando was, we took the 11 plans and the first draft of the plan, which has now become the master plan, was an inclusion of a number of items from the 11 plans plus new things that we would suggest that could fit together, and that was the beginning of the consultation process.

In Chaguaramas, what they have done as well is to go back to the old plans, but with the thinking of how do you make Chaguaramas a sustainable peninsula in which the environment considerations are dominant, and in which you basically create a kind of green park for family enjoyment and with ancillary and support entertainment facilities that could include men, women and children. What kind
of plan would you need? And I think that is what is going on now. It should be finished in about four months.

**Dr. Rowley:** Mr. Minister—Mr. Chairman, through you—everything that you said cannot be challenged, but given the fact that there have been a number of comprehensive plans for Chaguaramas, and now that we are returning to the issue of a plan for Chaguaramas, do you really feel that $12 million is a reasonable figure?

We spent $2.3 million on that same plan, and this is a plan that comes after and must by necessity involve review of the previous plans. We have had a number of comprehensive plans for Chaguaramas. There are only so many ways you can turn mud into bricks and, therefore, when you assign your officers or whoever contractor you assign to give you your new plan, even though it is 2013, the groundwork that the previous plans would have incorporated, there must be somewhere useful. For in 2013, we spent $2.3 million on that plan; then we estimated $1 million more, but we ended up spending seven and a half million dollars in 2014. How do we justify spending seven and a half million dollars on a plan which is based on a series of other plans where a lot of previous work would have been done, where we had estimated $1 million, we spent seven and a half million dollars and we are now appropriating another $2 million, which in total would be $12 million on a plan which would be the last of a series of plans?

**Hon. Dr. Tewarie:** No. This is what you call a Chaguaramas master plan and it is going to have a—[**Interruption**]

**Dr. Rowley:** All the others were master plans.

**Hon. Dr. Tewarie:** Yeah, but there were problems with the plans. Remember 10 years ago, people were not thinking about sustainable development, you know?

**Dr. Rowley:** Says who?

**Hon. Dr. Tewarie:** The environment was not as dominant a concern as it is now.

**Dr. Rowley:** Minister, 10 years ago, I might have been the Minister of Planning.

**Hon. Dr. Tewarie:** Yes.

**Dr. Rowley:** People were thinking about sustainable development, because I do know that there are plans that are comprehensive for Chaguaramas, and to the
extent that any new plan is required, we are saying here that we would have spent between 2013 and 2015, $12 million. So I want to ask you: could we get a breakdown of how this money was spent, who was paid and what they were paid for and what they produced?

Hon. Dr. Tewarie: Yes, I could tell you. Let me consult the people involved in this. All the information can be transparent. We will give you.

Dr. Rowley: You do not have to give it to me now. I am asking for a complete breakdown.

Hon. Dr. Tewarie: First of all, the plan is done in phases. Okay. So, initially, what you do is—I forget what you call it. What do you call those plans where you—you would have had an initial draft of a plan which says that, look, given 15,000 acres of land, so and so, this is what, and that would be the basis, and then you go into detail about every cove, every nook, every cranny, which is what is being done now.

This is a 15-year master plan and, at the end of the day, it will basically say over a 15-year period these are the things that you can do and the options you can take for development.

Mr. Chairman: All right. Hon. Minister, could you submit.

Hon. Dr. Tewarie: Yes, yes.

Mr. Chairman: All right. I think that I want to move on now.

Dr. Rowley: Mr. Chairman, I just want to be clear as to what I am asking for and what I expect, which is a breakdown of how the $9 million was spent, who was paid and for what and what did they produce and, of course, for the other $2 million to come.

11.45 a.m.

Mr. Chairman: I recognize the Member for Diego Martin North/East, and these are the last for you.

Mr. Imbert: Yeah. One last question on 005.

Mr. Chairman: After that we are moving on.

Mr. Imbert: Sub-Item 031, in the context of the Minister’s statement that Chaguaramas is open to everyone and you are trying to open it up to everyone and so on, why have you abandoned the Water Taxi Terminal at Chaguaramas? Item 031; why have you abandoned it?
Hon. Dr. Tewarie: No.

Mr. Imbert: But it is gone, it has disappeared, so it must be abandoned. Why is there zero now?

Hon. Dr. Tewarie: It is a question of priorities and the utilization of the space—

Mr. Imbert: No, but that is not an answer. It was there, it is gone. [Crosstalk]

Mr. Chairman: Yeah, please. Please. Please. Please. Please, let us have order. The Minister is going to answer, please.

Hon. Dr. Tewarie: It is a question of what do you prioritize, what do you spend money on; there is nothing that prevents the water taxi from docking in Chaguaramas and having the people—

Mr. Imbert: What! There is no berthing facility.

Hon. Dr. Tewarie: The water taxi moves from here to Chaguaramas—

Mr. Imbert: Not efficiently.

Hon. Dr. Tewarie: It goes there every weekend.

Mr. Imbert: But not efficiently.

Hon. Dr. Tewarie: No, I do not see how you can say that, it does.

Mr. Imbert: I could say that, I am aware of it.

Mr. Chairman: All right, okay—

Mr. Imbert: It is a low priority—

Mr. Chairman: I think I recognize the Member for Arouca/Maloney—

Mr. Imbert: Access to Chaguaramas—low priority.

Mr. Chairman:—and then after, the Member for Point Fortin. The Member for Arouca/Maloney, please.

Miss Hospedales: Yes, thank you, Mr. Chair, Sub-Item 029, with respect to Phase II of the Boardwalk, I would like to find out exactly what is the total cost of that Boardwalk and when it will be completed.

Mr. Chairman: No, that was answered already and he will supply the answers to that. I recognize the Member for Point Fortin.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Just a further question on the Chaguaramas plan and one other question. [Crosstalk] With regard to the plan, was it included in here—

Mr. Chairman: Please, let us have order, please. [Crosstalk]

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: With regard to the Chaguaramas plan, Minister—
Mr. Chairman: Yes, order, order, please. I am trying to hear what the Member for Point Fortin is saying, please. Member.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Was it included then, the sale of Pier II? And if that did occur, did it include that?

Hon. Dr. Tewarie: No, it was not.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Or did it occur? It did not occur?

Mr. Chairman: No, it did not occur.

Hon. Dr. Tewarie: I want to say that under this watch, nobody can walk into Chaguaramas and buy anything just so.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Right. Okay.

Mr. Chairman: All right, I take your answer. Final question.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Okay, thank you. Under 069, you made an appropriation in 2014 for the VIII Americas Competitiveness and your appropriation was $6 million. That figure jumped to $31 million, is it that you did not contemplate a conference in 2014 and you made no such appropriation?

Mr. Chairman: No, it is—

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon:—Or were there cost overruns? Humongous, huge cost overruns. What is this about?

Hon. Dr. Tewarie: No, nothing of the kind. A conference like this takes a long time to plan and organize. The first thing is, internationally, you must get support for the conference, so that is done like two years in advance. Okay? Once that was done, what we had to do was to begin the preliminary preparations, including beginning the process of establishing a secretariat. The thing takes place in 2014, that is when most of your expenditure is going to take place because you have to conduct the thing in a certain way; it is international in scope, you are bringing people from all over the world and you want to make sure that it is run properly.

So the secretariat expands, which means that contract workers, for a limited time—and I want to say that they were only being given 11 months’ contract; I think they were hired for it. So this would have covered their salaries and will cover it until the end of possibly November, the conference is in October. And, of course, the expenditures that you have to incur, which is that you have to hire the Hyatt, you have to deal with transportation when they are here, you have to—
Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: But you obviously did not appropriate properly. You must have known.

Hon. Dr. Tewarie: No, it is not that. You do not appropriate all in one year. You appropriate—

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: All right. Okay. Thank you.

Mr. Chairman: All right. The last question is coming from the hon. Leader of the Opposition—[Interruption] Yes, please, please, let the Leader of the Opposition have the last say, and we go forward.

Dr. Rowley: Mr. Chairman, I would like to go to 032, the Rehabilitation of Guave Road for which a provision of $20 million is being made, and this comes on the heels of in 2014—Now Guave Road exists, it is overgrown by bush and it needs a few drains cleaned. There is a Guave Road in Chaguaramas.

Hon. Dr. Tewarie: But we are going to build a real road. [Laughter]

Mr. Chairman: Please, please, let us allow the Member to—

Dr. Rowley: Mr. Chairman, I am not one of those who laughs at tens of millions of dollars in this country. There seems to be an attitude in allocation that tens of millions and how much—Guave Road exists. It is overgrown and it needs clearing of the drains and to be paved. I see here Rehabilitation of Guave Road; that item was in the budget in 2014 with an estimate for $3.5 million: they spent $500,000. I would like to ask the Minister what was that $500,000 spent on because the road has not been touched. But now for the same assignment, rehabilitation of the existing Guave Road, I see a request for $20 million. So I want to ask the Minister, how does the scope of work change from 2014 to 2015 to cause the estimate of the Rehabilitation of Guave Road to move from $3.5 million to $20 million?

Hon. Dr. Tewarie: You cannot build anything all at once, okay? This $3.5 million was for collaboration between the Ministry of Works and Infrastructure and the CDA basically designing what was to be the road, the scope of the works, et cetera; it is $3.5 million. The actual cost—because I think the contract has been awarded—is $34 million, is what the road is going to cost.

Dr. Rowley: To rehabilitate the existing Guave Road?

Hon. Dr. Tewarie: It is going to be rehabilitation and addition. The road is a narrow road, I have gone through the road myself. You are right, it is overrun by bushes but it is an extremely narrow road. The road itself will have to be
resurfaced, you would have to build a wider road, you would have to make provision as you build the road in relation to the other things that you want to do on the sides of the road—

**Dr. Rowley:** Has a contract been awarded for this?

**Hon. Dr. Tewarie:** Yeah. As far as I am aware, I think CDA indicated—

**Dr. Rowley:** How was that contractor selected?

**Hon. Dr. Tewarie:** The normal process. I think that there was an advertisement. There were a number of bids. Ultimately, the board would have had a committee, that is to say a tenders committee look at it, evaluation, and every single thing that is done by any of the institutions under my charge, every Board Minute and every tender document comes back to the Permanent Secretary.

**Dr. Rowley:** Mr. Chairman, could I ask the Minister to provide this committee with all the details surrounding the request for that contract, and the documentation surrounding the award of that contract for the rehabilitation in Guave Road?

**Mr. Chairman:** Okay. Yeah. All right, we are moving on finally.

**Dr. Rowley:** Mr. Chairman, before we go to the vote, I know you want to run on, but we have some valid questions still, two more, and I crave your indulgence to ask them.

**Mr. Chairman:** Which one is that you want to go to now?

**Dr. Rowley:** I am on page 182, Item 021. No question was asked about that and I want to put a question to the Minister on that, Establishment of a High Level Panel of Experts, which we have spent $9 million on. I would like to ask the Minister—

**Mr. Chairman:** And which is the second one?

**Dr. Rowley:** The second one has to do with the Innovation Financing Facility for which a request is made for $90 million, and I would like to find out what is that $90 million for with respect to 2014.

**Hon. Dr. Tewarie:** I will deal with the second one first. Since this Government established under the Ministry of Planning and Sustainable Development—and executed by the Council for Competitiveness and Innovation—an Innovation Fund of $10 million, in 2011 not one penny of that fund was spent because we did not get our innovation idea off the ground. In
2012, 400 applicants applied to what is known as the idea2innovation programme, 400-plus, and 50 awards were made out of the Innovation Fund.

In 2013, close to 500 people applied, 53 awards were made out of the Innovation Fund, and in 2014 we just awarded 44, I think—out of 500 people who submitted—on merit; and these are going to be basically 150 entrepreneurs in the country. Not all of them will succeed but it is a way of seeding capital and giving them the opportunity to create a business.

Now, all of these innovations are innovations that are commercially oriented, and what we hope to do now is to introduce what we call “social innovation opportunities”. So we are going to expand the fund; it was $10 million before, it is close to $20 million now. We are going to expand the fund to offer opportunities for social innovators in the country as a way of stimulating entrepreneurship in Trinidad and Tobago.

**Dr. Rowley:** These awardees, what is the level of award they receive?

**Hon. Dr. Tewarie:** They receive between $75,000 to $200,000.

**Dr. Rowley:** As grants?

**Hon. Dr. Tewarie:** They receive them as grants, and these grants are administered through NEDCO. It is based on performance and that performance is monitored by CARIRI, which operates an incubation centre to support these businesses.

**Mr. Chairman:** All right, could you go to the next question, please, the High Level Panel of Experts.

**Hon. Dr. Tewarie:** The High Level Panel of Experts: this was a collaborative capability that we created from artistes and related people, not necessarily all artistes, in which they focused on the whole business of organizing the arts in the country, and out of that has come the rationalization of functions having to do with the creative industries, the integration of the Film Company with fashion—I forgot what. In any case, the idea was that these people would look at the arts and what would be the best way to stimulate and generate artistic expression, and out of that has come a rationalization of the institution and a rationalization of the responsibilities of Ministries for things related to creative industries, which is one of our sectors for diversification.

**Dr. Rowley:** So having paid $9 million to that idea, what did we get? A report? A plan? What did we get?
Hon. Dr. Tewarie: Well you got the recommendations, and out of the recommendations of course you had action.

Dr. Rowley: The recommendations came by way of a report?

Hon. Dr. Tewarie: Yes, there was a report that was done.

Dr. Rowley: Could we have access to that report, please?

Hon. Dr. Tewarie: Yes, we can give you the report.

Dr. Rowley: And could we also get a breakdown as to how that money was disbursed, who got it, and how much?

Mr. Chairman: All right, let us go. Hon. Members, the question is—

Dr. Rowley: Mr. Chairman, one more question, please, one more.

Mr. Chairman: But you cannot be interrupting me all the time when I am coming to a conclusion.

Dr. Rowley: But you are moving kind of fast.

Mr. Chairman: Yeah, but look we—two hours now, you know. Put your final question, go ahead.

Dr. Rowley: Sub-Item 064, Global Services Offshoring Promotion Programme, $5 million; who gets that money and what is it for? It seems to be a recurring $5 million.

12.00 noon

Hon. Dr. Tewarie: The money was allocated last year but was not spent, because the project was not ready. This is a project that is funded by the Inter-American Development Bank, IDB. Just as you have seven sectors for development, of which ICT is one, and you have the five growth poles, the services sector contributes about 64 per cent of the employment in the country and it is a sector, if built on ICT, has the capacity for exports in the country.

Therefore, what we have done is that we have worked with the IDB to establish a programme that would allow us to focus on ICT-based services as an export capability of Trinidad and Tobago, as part of the diversification thrust.

Dr. Rowley: So for what exactly is the money that we spent? What did you spend money on in that idea?

Hon. Dr. Tewarie: There are a number of things. I do not know how far this $5 million will carry. The entire loan is US $18 million, and I think it is a five-year project. But this $5 million is to establish the location where this can take place, a kind of innovation hub for the ICT services sector, to create the conditions
for what you might call “finishing schools”, in which people who are engineers, et
cetera, can be more focused on things like, let us say apps building or software
development, et cetera. Basically, it is to transition university graduates into
entrepreneurial and job opportunities in the services sector.

Mr. Chairman: I think we have it, thank you.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 67 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister of Planning and Sustainable Development, on
behalf of the Standing Finance Committee, we will like to thank you and your
team for being here with us. Thank you very much.

Hon. Dr. Tewarie: Thank you very much, Sir. I want to acknowledge the
tremendous support of my team here this morning and always in the Ministry.

Mr. Chairman: We now go to the Ministry of Works and Infrastructure,
Head 69. [Interuption]

Head 69.

Mr. Chairman: I now invite the hon. Minister of Works and Infrastructure, if
he so desires, to make a brief opening statement for no more than five minutes.

Hon. Dr. Rambachan: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. First I would
like to say how happy we are to be part of this experience and this event, because
we consider it an opportunity, not just for my Ministry, but I may say for the
Government to demonstrate the qualities and values of openness and transparency
in terms of how it does its business as a Government. [Desk thumping]

Mr. Chairman, I want to just introduce the members of my team, the key
members: Permanent Secretary, Mr. Isaac James; Deputy Permanent Secretary
Sonia Francis-Yearwood; the head of PURE, Mr. Hayden Phillip; the Director of
Highways, Mr. Roger Ganesh, and the rest of the team who are here with me.

This has been a very exciting year and a very successful year. One may even
describe it—people of the country are describing it as a record year in terms of
projects and the performance of the Ministry of Works and Infrastructure. For
this, the people who work in the Ministry ought to be warmly congratulated.

In fact, we have counted 2,541 locations in Trinidad where work has been
done over the last fiscal year, coming up to this month of September.

Miss Mc Donald: That does not include Port of Spain South?
Mr. Chairman: Member for Port of Spain South, please. Continue, please.

Hon. Dr. Rambachan: Mr. Chairman, as we look towards this fiscal year, we look towards opening several important projects. We have completed as you know the Diego Martin Highway, but we also look now to open the Valencia Bypass Road which will eliminate a lot of the traffic on the Valencia junction. The new Motor Vehicle Authority building is almost complete near La Paille Village, and we have now constructed a new roadway from the Caroni Bridge right on to Washington Junction, which will alleviate traffic pile up there on mornings, now that you will have a two-way flow of traffic.

That is one of several projects which will be completed in this fiscal year, inclusive of 13 more bridges and approximately 27 landslips across the country. Our work for 2015 will include: the continuation of the Port of Spain East-West Corridor Transportation Project; the redefinition of highway reserves; of course, the continuation of the extension of the Solomon Hochoy Highway from San Fernando to Point Fortin; the Traffic Management Programme and the Bridges and Landslips Programme. We are going to continue with the installation of cable barriers to medians of highways and roadside edges, as well as the supply and installation of New Jersey-type barriers.

In order to improve what happens at traffic intersections, we are going to be providing backup power supplies to several traffic signal lights intersections, as well as continue the programme we have of zebra crossings.

The traffic warden system would be further enhanced. We are now up to about 330 traffic wardens, and we hope to continue the recruitment until we get to the Cabinet-approved 700.

We are also paying very close attention to what is happening in the coastal regions of Trinidad and Tobago, and several coastal projects are on the cards. In fact, some tenders have already been awarded, and we are going to be doing extensive work on that.

The Unemployment Relief Programme, which is one of the most highly criticized programmes, has been turned around into a very efficient programme, and this year, in the last fiscal year, almost 1,000 projects have been done in 1,000 locations in Trinidad. Of course, there is a segment of the programme also in Tobago, which is under the Tobago House of Assembly.

With those few words, I thank you for this opportunity, and we are prepared to engage in the discussion with our colleagues.
Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much.

Question proposed: That Head 69 stand part of the Schedule.

The sum of $1,314,830 for Head 69, the Ministry of Works and Infrastructure, 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—01, Personnel Expenditure; 001, General Administration; 002, Highways; 003, Traffic Management—I recognize the Member for Diego Martin West.

Dr. Rowley: Under 001, General Administration, is the Minister aware that the Personnel Expenditure—I know that this Ministry has been—I should not say I know—is it that there has been some recombination between 2011 and now with respect to the scale of your operation which would have caused your Personnel Expenditure to move from $102 million to $420 million? The estimates for personnel under 01 is $420 million. As a matter of fact, the Revised Estimates for 2014 is $514 million.

The first question I want to ask is: What has caused the Personnel Expenditure to balloon from $102 million to $514 million under the Head of Ministry of Works and Infrastructure?

Hon. Dr. Rambachan: It used to be the Ministry of Works and Transport and Drainage also. As you realize now transport has been hived off, drainage has been hived off.

Dr. Rowley: But the Personnel Expenditure under these documents still remain Personnel Expenditure—two big hive offs took place, transport—

Hon. Dr. Rambachan: The figure that you are referring to, $100 and some million is for what year?

Dr. Rowley: Those are the actual figures for 2011. I know we are not dealing with 2011, but I am making a reference point.

Dr. Moonilal: Chairman, just on a point, if the Member is quoting figures from 2011 or 2010 or even 2008, could we have the figures so that we could—

Dr. Rowley: These figures are available to all of us. I am simply saying it is my understanding—

Dr. Moonilal: But because it is not before us now, I do not have it so I cannot follow you that way.
Dr. Rowley: I am putting it to the Minister that the expenditure under “Personnel” in 2011 was $102 million—unless the Minister is prepared to say that was not so. But the question I am putting to the Minister is that my reading of the documents over the period is that Personnel Expenditure has grown considerably, and I am asking the Minister whether, in fact, it had to do with any change in the structure of the Ministry.

He has said that—well, of course if they are querying that my figure is wrong, that is another story. In fact, another question I want to put to you, and that is: In 2014, in these documents in front of us, the figure was $514 million. For the 2015 figure, the request is for $420 million. What is causing that decrease? What are we anticipating here?

Hon. Dr. Rambachan: Let me say that I will certainly go and look back at the figures, but I do not have the year 2011 that the Member is referring to. The overall decrease in 2015 of $93,714,000 that is quoted here in the document on page 376 under Personnel, will have to do with the retroactive payments of salaries, allowances and wages that had to be paid.

Dr. Rowley: In 2014?

Hon. Dr. Rambachan: In 2014. So that is what would have brought down the figure.

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Chairman, on that same point, I can understand a reduction in wages, because that deals with daily-paid workers, but what is the reason for the reduction in salaries which is monthly-paid workers? There was a collective agreement for daily paid, but I am not aware of a similar thing for monthly paid.

Hon. Dr. Rambachan: Remember the $39 million that you are seeing there is a revised estimate. By January you will have what is the actual figure expended.

Mr. Imbert: If you look at each Sub-Head under 01, General Administration, Highways, 002, Traffic Management, et cetera, there is a reduction in each department for salaries. Why is that?

Hon. Dr. Rambachan: It might have been that there were certain things to be paid in that year that had been accumulated.

Mr. Imbert: For monthly paid?

Hon. Dr. Rambachan: It might have been. We will have to find out.

Mr. Imbert: Could you tell us what that is, please?
Hon. Dr. Rambachan: We will have to go back to the figures and examine the details.

Mr. Imbert: I cannot see any explanation for that. So you will give us the details of that?

Hon. Dr. Rambachan: We will look at it yes, surely.

12.15 p.m.

Mr. Chairman: So, we go on to 002 Highways, we go to 003 Traffic Management.

Dr. Rowley: Mr. Chairman—

Mr. Chairman: Yes. I recognize the Member for Diego Martin West and after the Member for Chaguanas West.

Dr. Rowley: We spend a considerable amount of money on traffic management but, Mr. Chairman, if a stranger comes to Port of Spain and rents a car and tries to get to Point Fortin, you basically have to do it by ear because the sign posting and the traffic management in this country is so chaotic. And if you come from south of Point Fortin to go to Arima, is another story. Now, I am asking the Minister, how are there $18 million in 2013, $26 million in 2014 and $20 million in 2015, and we are not seeing any improvement in the traffic management of the country.

Hon. Dr. Rambachan: What I would like to know—

Dr. Rowley: I am on page 377, Item 003/030, Traffic Management. Sorry, 003.

Dr. Moonilal: Salaries and cost of living allowance.

Mr. Chairman: We are on—

Dr. Rowley: 003 Traffic Management.

Hon. Dr. Rambachan: Yes. [Crosstalk]

Mr. Chairman: We are on Personnel Expenditure under that item.

Dr. Moonilal: Under vacant posts?

Dr. Rowley: So, I thought you called 003 under Personnel Expenditure.

Mr. Chairman: Personnel Expenditure, 003.

Dr. Rowley: Well that is where I am.
**Hon. Dr. Rambachan:** Yeah. But which line item are you on?

**Dr. Rowley:** The very last line of that page, 337.

**Hon. Dr. Rambachan:** You are looking at the totals?

**Dr. Rowley:** Yes. I am saying, the point that I am making, these are allocations which we are approving for traffic management, and I am making an observation to you that notwithstanding these annual expenditure, we are not seeing any improvement in the traffic management with respect to guidance around the country. It is chaotic in Chaguanas, it is chaotic in Arima, it is chaotic in Point Fortin, and the sign posting is poor.

**Hon. Dr. Rambachan:** Well, I do not agree with you that the sign posting is poor because we have a continuous programme where we are improving the signage in this country. In fact, we have done more than that. If you go to the areas near schools you will see that at several of those areas we have zebra crossings that have been established. In fact, in 2014, 47 zebra, pedestrian crossings with flashing amber lights were installed at various locations. And if you want a list of them, I have the full list here for you.

**Dr. Rowley:** No, I am not talking about that, Mr. Chairman, Mr. Minister. I am talking about finding your way around the country.

**Hon. Dr. Rambachan:** What are you—

**Dr. Rowley:** And I reference it against a stranger entering Arima from the west and trying to drive through Arima. How do you guide yourself through Arima? In the eyes of a stranger, you try to cross Arima and you are literally stuck in the middle of a town with very poor sign postage because you have to turn left, turn right, turn left, turn right, turn to go straight before you know.

**Hon. Dr. Rambachan:** I might say similarly—[Crosstalk]

**Mr. Chairman:** Please. Please. Let the Minister respond, please.

**Hon. Dr. Rambachan:** You would recognize in the boroughs and so on, it is also the responsibility of the corporations to also engage in signage, and that is something that we work collaboratively with them. But we have been improving signage across the country, and in fact, we are about to put up the first set of gantry signs on the—

**Dr. Rowley:** So, we can improve this?

**Hon. Dr. Rambachan:** Yes. We are doing that. We are doing that.
Dr. Rowley: And the point that I am making is, my final question, is this allocation sufficient to take us where we really should be?

Hon. Dr. Rambachan: This is not the allocation. This matter that you are referring to is Personnel Expenditure.

Mr. Chairman: Yes. It is Personnel Expenditure.

Hon. Dr. Rambachan: This is the amount to pay people who are working in the traffic management department: People who go and they do the analysis, put up the signs, they paint the roads in white and so on. This is money to pay them and to manage the system.

Dr. Rowley: And this is sufficient to do what has to be done.

Hon. Dr. Rambachan: As at this point, we would love to have more money. This is not what we asked for. We asked for more money, but everything else—

Dr. Rowley: That is the point I am trying to get to. Did you ask for more money?

Hon. Dr. Rambachan: Oh yes. If you want—the request that we had made, we can supply you with the request that was made, but like every Ministry we are subject to what is available in the pot. And when we got down to discussions with the Ministry officials at the Ministry of Finance and the Economy and Ministry of Planning and Sustainable Development, we decided that if this is what is available, we are going to prioritize and use our money in the best way that we can.

Mr. Chairman: All right. I recognize the Member for Chaguanas West.

Mr. Warner: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Minister, under 08—

Hon. Dr. Rambachan: 08.

Mr. Warner:—under 003/08, I see in 2014 an allocation for $500,000, and 2015 the same allocation. How many vacant posts have you in this department and what are they?

Mr. Chairman: Yeah, the hon. Minister.

Hon. Dr. Rambachan: I will have to find that out for you, Member. I cannot give you that figure, but I can find out and let you know.

Mr. Warner: Okay.

Mr. Chairman: All right. I recognize the Member for Diego Martin North/East.

Mr. Imbert: The Minister made a comment earlier about it being just estimates, but if you look at 2014, the Revised Estimates is, more or less, what
was actually spent, not the original estimate, the Revised Estimates in 2014. And in each one of these Heads, this one, Traffic Management, the previous one, Highways, et cetera, the actual expenditure on salaries in 2014, is significantly more than what was provided for in the Estimates.

Hon. Dr. Rambachan: What line are you referring to?

Mr. Imbert: Let us look at this particular one, 003/01, page 377, Revised Estimates $1.7 million. Your 2015 allocation was $1.2 million. Highways, the previous page, Revised Estimates which was the actual expenditure—$10 million, your 2015 is $8 million. So in each one of your divisions, departments, your allocation for 2015 is less than your actual expenditure in 2014. What is the reason?

Hon. Dr. Rambachan: The allocations—

Mr. Imbert: Your allocations in this fiscal going forward for salaries—

Hon. Dr. Rambachan: Is less than 2014.

Mr. Imbert:—significantly less, in some cases 20 per cent less.

Hon. Dr. Rambachan: And that might be due to the fact, and we can probably look at the—that we might be sub-contracting and outsourcing a lot of work in the traffic management division.

Mr. Imbert: It is not just Traffic Management, it is Highways it is 20 per cent less and so on. It is right through your salary allocation is 20 per cent less, in some cases more than 20 per cent less than your actual expenditure on salaries.

Hon. Dr. Rambachan: And as I say again, it might be a number of positions are not being filled, and work is being contracted out.

Mr. Imbert: No. No. No. You are missing my point.

Hon. Dr. Rambachan: I am not missing your point.

Mr. Imbert: If your actual last year is more than your allocation for this year, that has nothing to do with positions being filled. It is actual of last year being more than provision for this year. That is the point I am making. But how is this possible?

Hon. Dr. Rambachan: But this is still not actual. This is why Revised Estimates. If you look at 2013, you would have seen in 2013 that figure there would have been revised.
Mr. Imbert: So what is the basis for the Revised Estimates?

Hon. Dr. Rambachan: So we are going to see what the actual—

Mr. Imbert: You are telling me this Revised Estimates I should not use that as a guide?

Hon. Dr. Rambachan: No. I am not saying that. I am saying though that we have got to wait until the actual figures have been computed to know exactly what is going on here. Because you will see in 2014, the estimate was $1.2 million, the revised $1.7 million, so we are going to try to find out where is the difference.

Mr. Chairman: All right. We are going on to 004 Central Planning Unit, 04. Item 006 Mechanical Services. These seven items: 007, Maintenance; 008 Construction; 012 Unemployment Relief Programme. I recognize the Member for Laventille West.

Mr. Hypolite: Chair, we get to understand earlier on that the Unemployment Relief Programme would have been removed from the Prime Minister’s Office to the Ministry of Works and Infrastructure. Can the Minister indicate if the entire—because at one point in time the programme was split into three—if the entire programme is now under the Ministry of Works and Infrastructure, and can a breakdown of the various positions be circulated?

Hon. Dr. Rambachan: When you say—I would like to be clear, what you mean by breakdown in the different positions.

Mr. Hypolite: You should have an organizational structure.

Hon. Dr. Rambachan: Yes.

Mr. Hypolite: If that can be circulated.

Hon. Dr. Rambachan: Yes. You can get the organizational structure, and the programme is divided into three segments, as you correctly said. URP Infrastructure, which is under the Ministry of Works and Infrastructure, URP Agriculture which is under the Ministry of Food Production and URP Social which is under the Ministry of the People and Social Development, that continues to be. So the portion that has been moved from the Prime Minister’s office, is the entire URP Programme, and we administer it through the Ministry of Works and Infrastructure.

Mr. Hypolite: The administrative part of it.

Hon. Dr. Rambachan: Yes. So, I can give you the structure as you want.
Mr. Chairman: I recognize the Member for Diego Martin North/East.

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Chairman, I am going to ask the same question, hopefully I would not get the same answer. Mechanical Services, Maintenance Construction, Unemployment Relieve Programme, the allocation for this year for salaries is significantly less than what you spent last year. Why is that—in each one.

Mr. Chairman: Yes, the hon. Minister. What page are you on, Member for Diego Martin North/East?

Mr. Imbert: 378, 379, 006, 007, 008, 012, and I am dealing with salaries and not wages; because salaries are monthly paid officers.

Hon. Dr. Rambachan: Just a second.

Mr. Imbert: No it is not. Salaries. No, we are not talking 2013. We are dealing with 2015. [Crosstalk]

Mr. Chairman: Members, please, please.

Hon. Dr. Rambachan: If you remember earlier on I talked about the allocations that were to be made for back pay and so on, in each of these categories.

Mr. Imbert: No. Minister, let us not waste time. I know that there was back pay—

Hon. Dr. Rambachan: Therefore, you will find last year’s estimates are going to be higher than this year’s estimates because—

Mr. Imbert: No.

Hon. Dr. Rambachan:—the provisions are made in those figures therefore, it is very simple logic that those would be higher figures than this year.

Mr. Imbert: Minister, you are telling me that there was back pay to public servants last year; monthly-paid employees.

Hon. Dr. Rambachan: There were several payments to be made I indicated already. The question that you asked about the salaries and so on, I am going to research it and get back to you. [Crosstalk]

Mr. Chairman: All right. Cool. All right. Let us move on. [Crosstalk]

Mr. Imbert: Do not be rude to me, eh.

Mr. Chairman: The Minister has said that he will research that matter and get back to your good self and the committee. So, we are now going to 02 Goods and Services. Item 001 General Administration. Item 002, Highways, Item 003—

are you on Highways?
Miss Hospedales: Yes, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Chairman: I recognize the Member for Arouca/Maloney and then [Crosstalk] the Member for Chaguanas West as well.

Miss Hospedales: That is page 381.

Hon. Dr. Rambachan: Yes, “uh-hmm”.

Mr. Chairman: Page 381.

Miss Hospedales: Yes. Mr. Chair—

Mr. Chairman: And what Sub-Item?

Miss Hospedales: Sub-Item 28.

Mr. Chairman: Sub-Item 28.

Miss Hospedales: Could the Minister provide a breakdown of the contracted services for us, please?

Hon. Dr. Rambachan: Sure.

Miss Hospedales: And the cost for each.

Mr. Chairman: Okay. That will be provided before—I recognize the Member for Chaguanas West, then the Member for Diego Martin North/East.

Mr. Warner: Mr. Chairman, I was asking on 02, Goods and Services, Promotions, Publicity and Printing.

Mr. Chairman: Which page?

Mr. Warner: 381.

Mr. Chairman: 381. What Sub-Item?

Mr. Warner: 001/62. [Crosstalk]

Hon. Dr. Rambachan: Yes. There is a provision of $1 million.

Mr. Warner: I am asking what that involves?

Hon. Dr. Rambachan: That involves the printing of advertisements in the newspapers, and the regular advertising we also do on radio and so on, to deal with informing the public about developments in the Ministry or alerting them to traffic congestions or work that we might have going on on the highways and other parts of the country. You would recognize though over the last three months we have developed a system, an app called WIZE, and approximately 600-plus...
Appropriation Bill, 2014

Tuesday, September 23, 2014

persons have now logged on to that app, and they are getting that information as it happens on the app. So, we have moved into that technology, in addition to the Facebook that we have on our site and so on.

Mr. Chairman: Yes. All right. We go on to—are we all right, Member for Diego Martin North/East? [Crosstalk] Member for Diego Martin North/East.

Mr. Imbert: I am still trying to get over the fact—

Mr. Chairman: Yes. I know. Let us not get there. Let us move on.

Hon. Dr. Rambachan: It is called WIZE.

Mr. Imbert: 28, is this for the districts?

Hon. Dr. Rambachan: What is that?

Mr. Imbert: Page 381, Sub-Item 28, Other Contracted Services $150 million allocation—

Hon. Dr. Rambachan: That is throughout the country.

Mr. Imbert:—is this for the districts?

Hon. Dr. Rambachan: Throughout the country wherever work has to be done, we have contracted services.

Mr. Imbert: I am asking a specific question.

Hon. Dr. Rambachan: I will provide the total list, and you will see it by district. You will see the breakdown by districts.

Mr. Imbert: Thank you very much.

Hon. Dr. Rambachan: You will see the breakdown by districts.

Mr. Chairman: Let us go. Item 003, Traffic Management. Item 004, Central Planning Unit. Item 006. Yes. I recognize the Member for Diego Martin North/East.

Mr. Imbert: Yes, Mr. Chairman, 03/28, what is that for?

Mr. Chairman: Which page again. Just advise us again? Member for Diego Martin North/East, which page?

Mr. Imbert: 382, 03/28, Other Contracted Services, $4 million for 2015.

Mr. Chairman: Traffic Management, hon. Minister, 03.

Hon. Dr. Rambachan: You are referring to the $4 million under Other Contracted Services? Yeah. Well, again Other Contracted Services, things have to be done under traffic management.
Mr. Imbert: What is that?

Hon. Dr. Rambachan: Well, I will give you the list. It is a whole long list.

Mr. Imbert: Do you know?

Hon. Dr. Rambachan: Yes, I know. It consists of marking of roadways, it might consist of fixing of roads where landslips have developed. It might consist of patching roads—

12.30 p.m.

Mr. Chairman: And you said you will provide a list. I recognize the Member for Laventille West.

Mr. Hypolite: Does the traffic—[Interruption]

Hon. Dr. Rambachan:—traffic light maintenance also.

Mr. Chairman:—the Member for Laventille West, the Member for Arouca/Maloney later and then the Member for Diego Martin West.

Mr. Hypolite: Do the traffic wardens fall under this item?

Hon. Dr. Rambachan: No.

Mr. Hypolite: Under which item may I ask? I am not seeing it anywhere.

Mr. Chairman: The Member for Arouca/Maloney in the meantime.

Miss Hospedales: Mr. Chair, to the Minister, does the painting of speed humps come under Sub-Item 28, Other Contracted Services.

Hon. Dr. Rambachan: It falls under 010.

Miss Hospedales: Because I am asking, because since 2010 I have been asking, writing, pleading to get speed humps painted in the constituency of Arouca/Maloney.

Mr. Chairman: Speed humps for the constituency of Arouca/Maloney area. Is that your question?

Miss Hospedales: Yes. We have been pleading, begging, we sent them a list of all the speed humps in the constituency. We did our own survey and up to now none of them have been painted.

Mr. Chairman: The hon. Minister, you will want to respond to that?

Hon. Dr. Rambachan: Mr. Chairman, it is a legitimate request, the Member is making, and I will pass on the information to our traffic department.
Mr. Chairman: I recognize the Member for Diego Martin West.

Dr. Rowley: Mr. Chairman, with respect to page 381 under Highways, 28, I would like the Minister to provide us with a list of the contractors who were hired—

Hon. Member: Which—[ Interruption]

Mr. Chairman: Page 381—

Dr. Rowley: With respect to the 2014 Expenditure, Sub 28 of Other Contracted Services.

Mr. Chairman: Yes, he said he will provide us with a list.

Dr. Rowley: Under Other Contracted Services. The contractors who have been hired for these and their sum of each contract, and the time of the job spec.

Hon. Dr. Rambachan: Mr. Chairman, we will provide it by the district, we will provide it by the amount the contract was for. We will also, I think there is a description in the document that I have of the kind of work that has to be done—[ Interruption]

Dr. Rowley: Good.

Hon. Dr. Rambachan: And I believe also the amount is there and the name of the contractor is there.

Dr. Rowley: One question I would like to ask, how are these contractors selected before they are hired? What is the process?

Hon. Dr. Rambachan: They have to be prequalified and the contractors are normally prequalified in relation to the amount of work they can do.

I am advised by the officers at the Ministry, they will visit these contractors also to ensure that, if they claim that they have equipment, that the equipment can be demonstrated. For example, if Namalco, way down in Point Fortin, tells you I can do work that involves excavators, and he said he has 20 excavators, you may want to make a site visit to ensure that he has 20 excavators. Because in that way also you will then be able to qualify them for different levels of jobs. So some might be able to do work below $1 million, small contractors or $500,000. Some might be able to do $10 million and above and those are large contractors. So that kind of prequalification exercise takes place and then in terms of the job itself we have a tendering process that is strictly followed.

Dr. Rowley: Is the Minister aware of allegations of favouritism with respect to the award of contracts?

Dr. Moonilal: Is this a question based on the estimates?
Dr. Rowley: With respect to the procedure.

Dr. Moonilal: Mr. Chairman, again I want to make the point—[Interruption]

Mr. Chairman: Let us deal with Goods and Services, we are going under Mechanical Services.

Dr. Moonilal: What about the allegation in Las Alturas?

Mr. Chairman: Please, please, let us not get there, please. Goods and Services, Mechanical Services. I recognize the Member for Chaguanas West.

Mr. Warner: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Can the Minister supply, subsequently, under 43—[Interruption]

Mr. Chairman: What page again?

Mr. Warner:—383, 006/43.

Mr. Chairman: Right, Security.

Mr. Warner: A list of the firms, please.

Mr. Chairman: The hon. Member is asking whether, which firms or organizations are involved in the provision of security, and whether you could provide a listing or if you could provide it now.

Hon. Dr. Rambachan: I will provide a listing, but the main firm that is around the Ministry is in fact MTS.

Mr. Chairman: I recognize the Member for Arouca/Maloney.

Miss Hospedales: No.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, we go on to Item 007, Maintenance; 008, Construction, 009; Environmental Health and Safety Unit. I recognize the Member for Diego Martin North/East and the Member for Arouca/Maloney.

Mr. Imbert: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Page 385, 009, Environmental Health and Safety Unit; 16, Contract Employment. Two questions. I see you have an increase in that allocation, from $4.2 million to $5 million for contract employment. What is the reason for the increase? That is question one.

Mr. Chairman: Are you following, hon. Minister.

Hon. Dr. Rambachan: Yes, I am following.

Mr. Chairman: Right.
Hon. Dr. Rambachan: The Environmental Health and Safety Unit, I was trying to find a document here, their staffing is paid under contract employment in the main. And we are strengthening, in fact, our Environmental Health and Safety Unit, especially in the view of the increased amount of projects that we are doing as I showed you, this has been a record year in terms of the number of projects and I am told that the number of projects done this year exceeded any year by between 33 per cent and 40 per cent.

Mr. Imbert: Could you give us a breakdown of the employees that are hired under this Head?

Hon. Dr. Rambachan: That is possible.

Mr. Imbert: Okay, fine.

Mr. Chairman: All right, we go on to Item 10—the Member for Fyzabad.

Mr. Sharma: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Recently, it will come, perhaps, under different headings, the Ministry indicated an intake of young professionals. Can you advise us how is that going to proceed, and the numbers and the areas?

Mr. Chairman: Young professionals, under what Item?

Mr. Sharma: It is under a number of different headings, where the increase in funds are—Contract—

Mr. Imbert: “Doh try dat.” [Laughter]

Mr. Sharma: Unqualified.

Mr. Chairman: Under Contract Employment. Okay, I will ask the hon. Minister—

Hon. Dr. Rambachan: Mr. Chairman, we recognized very early in the Ministry of Works and Infrastructure that we needed to ensure that we had a sustainable Ministry when it came to human resource development and personnel into the future. And what we have done is that we have developed something called a mentorship programme in the Ministry.

In this mentorship programme we are currently involved in interviewing, I believe over 300 applicants for 50 positions, where these people would be mentored by the existing persons in different divisions, including Heads of Divisions, so they can then grow in the organization and be able to take over positions in the future.

During the summer vacation, we also took on persons, but these people will be taken on a three-year contract—50. During the summer vacation in the URP Programme 30 second-year graduates of UTT were taken on in a summer internship programme. And, Mr. Chairman, it was very encouraging to see them
design pavilions, design walls where landslips had occurred and so on, and that was part of the learning opportunity. Because in the URP Programme which we are transforming, we also have to bring in a higher calibre of persons, and we are also doing that in order to attract them. So, we have been working very hard in order to bring new people into the Ministry and people of a higher calibre in order to ensure sustainability and better quality.

**Mr. Chairman:** Okay, Item 010, Traffic Warden Unit. Yes, the Member for Chaguanas West.

**Mr. Warner:** Thank you. Mr. Chairman, 010/6, there is an increase of $30 million for traffic wardens. Is that increase for additional traffic wardens, and if yes, where are the new ones?

**Mr. Chairman:** You want to give us the page again.

**Mr. Warner:** 386.

**Mr. Chairman:** Page 386, and what is the Sub-Item?

**Mr. Warner:** 16.

**Hon. Dr. Rambachan:** Mr. Chairman, as you know we recently recruited another 85 traffic wardens and just before that we recruited 100. And as I said, we are up to about 337 traffic wardens now in the country, and we are about to engage in another recruitment exercise this year, and it will be in two batches hoping to get another 200 traffic wardens in this coming year.

**Mr. Warner:** Are the new ones deployed to new areas or are they in the same areas?

**Hon. Dr. Rambachan:** We are deploying them to new areas and we are trying to recruit them from several areas so that they do not have to travel far out of their areas to work. And the reason for this is that, we also believe that if you recruit traffic wardens from their own areas, they are more au courant with the traffic conditions in their area, they are more au courant with the people in their area, and they are more likely to get a better response and to give you better information in developing and managing the traffic flows.

**Mr. Chairman:** The Member for Talparo/La Horquetta.

**Mr. Seenungal:** Minister, can you share with me on that same Sub-Head 010 with respect to 16, what is the impact that this programme is having on the alleviation of traffic?
Mr. Chairman: You heard? Yes, and then we will go to the Member for Laventille West and then the Member for Arouca/Maloney.

Hon. Dr. Rambachan: Let me just tell you that, as of August 2014, and from the inception of the Traffic Warden Programme, 9,495 tickets for various offences have been issued at a cost of $8.9 million from the traffic wardens. What is interesting—[Interruption]

Mr. Chairman: Please, Member for Port of Spain South let us conduct ourselves properly, “nah”.

Hon. Dr. Rambachan:—to increase the fines by 50 per cent.

Mr. Chairman: The Member for Laventille East/Movant, let us conduct ourselves properly, “nah man”. Every Member has a right to ask questions here. And this is a democracy. Let us have patience, please. Continue, continue, hon. Member.

Hon. Dr. Rambachan: Mr. Chairman, I want to say that and also add that the proposal of the Minister of Finance and the Economy to increase the fines by 50 per cent will be something very important to the Traffic Warden Unit, because as you know if there are no strong consequences, people do not follow the law.

To answer specifically, whether it has improved the flow of traffic. I would say, yes, it has done quite a lot to improve the flow of traffic. If I may judge by my own constituency where there used to be tremendous pile-up on mornings, getting in and out of Petrotrin, and on evenings that has helped, and the traffic wardens not only assist with the regular traffic but there are events in the country when the traffic wardens are requested and we make provisions for that so that you may have a built-up area where you will need traffic wardens and a provision is made to accommodate such function.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much. The Member for Laventille West and then the Member for Arouca/Maloney.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Just a point of clarification, Chairman, please. A point of clarification. Yesterday, when I asked for an opinion I was told that this finance committee cannot ask for opinions from Ministers. Is it now that we can ask for opinions? [Interruption]

Mr. Chairman: No, he was asking for the impact. No, no, that was not an opinion. Out of order. Continue, Member for Laventille West, please.

Mr. Hypolite: With respect to Item 16, can the Minister circulate an organizational structure with respect to that particular unit?

Hon. Dr. Rambachan: The traffic wardens unit.
Mr. Hypolite: Yes, please.

Hon. Dr. Rambachan: Sure.

Mr. Hypolite: With respect to Item 17, Training, the Minister made mention that he intends to move the traffic wardens from 337 to some 700, but yet still we are seeing—[Interruption]

Hon. Dr. Rambachan: That is the approved number by Cabinet.

Mr. Hypolite: But we are seeing a decrease in terms of training. Will those traffic wardens be trained, those new ones?

Hon. Dr. Rambachan: Yes, and they go through—it is very interesting that you ask that question. They go through a very rigorous training and the training is—it is done by members of the police service. This will reflect our intake, what we need for the intake.

Mr. Chairman: All right, I recognize the Member for Arouca/Maloney.

Miss Hospedales: Yes, Mr. Chair, what I would like to find out is whether a comprehensive assessment has been done with reference to the deployment of the traffic wardens, particularly since some areas they are more challenged than others with reference to traffic management, and I heard the Minister saying that traffic wardens are actually being placed in the communities that they reside in, but is that justifiable.

Hon. Dr. Rambachan: Yes, the Director of Highways, Mr. Roger Ganesh, is constantly in a process of reviewing the traffic wardens, where traffic wardens are required. And at the moment, for example, we are looking, again, at Tunapuna; we are looking at Arima; we are looking at Sangre Grande also which has come into the picture and we are looking at Chaguana where we need more traffic wardens. We are also now looking at Point Fortin because we have had some requests from the police in the Point Fortin area to add traffic wardens to assist in the traffic on mornings, especially in the centre of the Borough of Point Fortin. So it is a continuous assessment exercise where both the head of the traffic warden division and that team together with the Director of Highways are involved.

Mr. Chairman: All right, we go to Item 011, Programme Monitoring. Yes, the Member for Diego Martin North/East.

Mr. Imbert: For the benefit of those opposite who are not listening, I am on page 387, Sub-Head 011, Item 16, I do not understand how this unit can function without any staff, because you have zero expenditure in 2014 for Contract Employment. Could you please explain?
12.45 p.m.

Hon. Dr. Rambachan: This is a new unit and it is in the process of being set up, and the process of recruitment and so on is on the way.

Mr. Chairman: Okay. Let us go on to Item 011, Programme Monitoring and Evaluation Unit; Item 012, Unemployment Relief Programme. We go on to Sub-Head 03: Minor Equipment Purchases. Item 001, General Administration.

Dr. Rowley: Mr. Chairman—

Mr. Chairman: Yes, I recognize the Member for Diego Martin West.

Dr. Rowley: Under URP, Mr. Chairman—and this is with respect to the small budgetary items, 2014—

Hon. Dr. Rambachan: Small?

Dr. Rowley: URP has a very large budget, but this particular Head, 012 deals with staff, does it?

Hon. Dr. Rambachan: This deals with the public servants. Remember you have the public servants—

Dr. Rowley: Yeah, public servant staff, that is what I am saying.

Hon. Dr. Rambachan: Public servant staff, yes.

Dr. Rowley: Yes, and the point I am getting to is this. I am aware that a series of small contracts are issued via the URP—very small contracts—all of them under half a million dollars, approximating $300,000, $400,000, but a series of those contracts.

Hon. Dr. Rambachan: $225,000 to $275,000.

Dr. Rowley: And you did mention a while ago that there are 1,000 projects or something like that. So 1,000 by 300 is a lot of money. In fact, recently I have had sight of a series of those contracts, all of which are below half a million dollars.

Hon. Dr. Rambachan: Yes.

Dr. Rowley: And when I tallied the total, it was $130 million in contracts—

Hon. Dr. Rambachan: Yes.

Dr. Rowley:—awarded in that way. The question I would like to ask the Minister is: what is the system that is in place in the Ministry to provide proper accountability and transparency for the expenditure of $130 million in contracts,
all of which are under half a million dollars? Which means, it appears to me, that they would have fallen under the limit of the Permanent Secretary. So is it the Permanent Secretary who is selecting these contractors? If not, who is? And, secondly, are these contractors subject to the payment of VAT and health surcharge and so on? I would like an explanation from the Minister.

Mr. Chairman: Yes. The hon. Minister?

Hon. Dr. Rambachan: These contractors have to be registered with the—limited liability, or some of them might be sole traders, but they have got to be registered legally. The tenders are done by inviting a minimum of three contractors to bid on each one of these jobs, and those tenders are evaluated by a tenders evaluation committee at the URP programme, involving the public servants, and they then award the tenders. It comes to the Permanent Secretary who then issues a letter of award for the contract.

In the case of URP, as you recognize, they do not get advanced payments. They have to finish their jobs and then the jobs are audited, and when the jobs are audited and the satisfaction that the job has been completed, only then are they paid for the work. In addition to that level of auditing, spot auditing is also done on jobs, so that the audit committee goes out there and audits jobs in order to ensure that they are done properly before payments are made. This year we have had a total of 603 community contractors who have worked on the projects of the URP.

Dr. Rowley: What is the total figure that the Ministry utilizes with respect to the 2014 URP budget for construction, by contractors?

Hon. Dr. Rambachan: Mr. Chairman, if I may, as at September 09, the value of work done—I will read it out for you: cheques issued 545, amounting to $123,944,000. The invoices in the accounts department and engineering department, which means work completed but being audited for payment, $34,763,000. And then jobs completed and invoices to submit, $29,624,000; jobs in progress, $52,354,000.

That means to say that you have to add $123,944,000 to $34,763,000 and $81,979, and therefore, that will give you the figure that will be utilized for this particular year. There are other jobs where the contracts have been delivered but work has not started, and I am not counting those there. So we are looking at $115,200 and about $38 million.

Dr. Rowley: What is this magical figure that always falls below half a million dollars where there are instances where one drain, or one trace, would have phase
one, phase two, phase three, and all of it going to the same contractor? Is it that we are breaking up contracts so as to let it fall below the level of a particular authority?

Hon. Dr. Rambachan: Well, it might be that you have, in one area, let us say, a box drain, and it is a very long box drain, so that you want to give it to different people. Sometimes one person might get phase one and phase two, and another person might get phase three and phase four. But it is not very regular that you have so many phases in a particular project, but you accommodate as many of the community contractors as is possible.

Mr. Chairman: All right. I recognize the Member for Laventille East/Morvant.

Miss Cox: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Minister, coming out of the conversation concerning small contracts, I would like to get a list of the small contracts that were issued in the constituency of Laventille East/Morvant and Laventille West, please.

Mr. Chairman: The hon. Minister.

Hon. Dr. Rambachan: Mr. Chairman, it is going to take me more than five minutes to read out—[Crosstalk] I just want to tell you, Mr. Chairman, in the region which is called Port of Spain, region two, for the fiscal year 2013/2014, thus far 39 projects have been done in that area, which will include your area. But you have to add into that, San Juan/Laventille, region three, where you have some overlap in your constituency. In San Juan/Laventille another 65 projects have been done. So when you add 65 and—how much did I say?

Hon. Member: Thirty-nine?

Hon. Dr. Rambachan: Sixty-five and 39, over 100 projects have been done in region two and region three in that particular area, and I can give you the list and give you the names of the contractors.

Mr. Chairman: All right. You will provide the listing. I recognize the Member for Arouca/Maloney.

Miss Hospedales: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I would like to get the same information for the constituency of Arouca/Maloney—

Mr. Chairman: Okay, you will get that information.

Miss Hospedales:—because of the fact that—
Mr. Jeffrey: Also La Brea.

Miss Hospedales:—I “doh” know where URP is operating.

Mr. Chairman: You would like to get it for La Brea too? Okay. All right. Let us go on to Item Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases: Item 001, General Administration; Item 002, Highways; Item 003, Traffic Management; Item 004, Central Planning Unit; 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 Evaluations Unit; Item 012, Unemployment Relief Programme.

We go on to 04 Sub-Head, Current Transfers and Subsidies; Item 005, Non-Profit Institutions. I recognize the Member for Diego Martin North/East.

Mr. Imbert: Page 391, 005.

Mr. Chairman: Yes.

Mr. Imbert: Where you have $449,640,000, what is that for? Page 391, 04, Transfers and Subsidies, Non-Profit Institutions, $449 million. What is that for?

Mr. Chairman: No, you are dealing with the total here. “Is not the total he dealing with here? That is the total figure yuh dealing with, yuh know”, Member for Diego Martin North/East. I thought you were dealing with individual items.

Mr. Imbert: Okay. All right. No problem.

Mr. Chairman: Okay?

Mr. Imbert: Let us deal with individual items then.

Mr. Chairman: Okay.

Mr. Imbert: Page 392, 011, Transfers to State Enterprises—15, Repayment of $1.5 billion—

Mr. Chairman: No, we have not gone to State Enterprises yet. “Yuh goin ahead of us.” So let us move on to Item 007. Or would you want, Member for Chaguanas West, anything on Non-Profit Institutions?

Mr. Warner: Item 007, 02.

Mr. Chairman: Right. Item 007, Households. Would you want to raise a question under Households?

Mr. Warner: No. I want to go under 09. I am waiting.
Mr. Chairman: Okay. The other one is Item 009, Other Transfers. I recognize the Member for Chaguanas West.

Mr. Warner: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Minister, I see in 2013, Agua Santa had $1.26 million allocation. Hear me well. I am aware that in 2013 that Agua Santa was due for closure. I see now it is $6 million allocated for it in 2015. Has the policy changed? And if so, why?

Hon. Dr. Rambachan: Well, you do not take a very worthwhile asset and simply mothball it, as it were. When I came into the Ministry I asked about Agua Santa and I recognized that it could be a highly effective unit in terms of the work that the Ministry has to do, especially with regard to the patching programme of the Ministry, and to make active. Because I think it was also one of your ideas that we should have an effective pothole-patching programme across the country, and I am very happy to advise that the plant is up and running and that we are using material right now from it to patch various parts of the country because I am re-introducing a pothole-patching unit across the country.

Mr. Warner: I like the word, “re-introducing”.

Hon. Dr. Rambachan: Sorry?

Mr. Warner: I like the word, “re-introducing”.

Mr. Chairman: We go on now—

Dr. Gopeesingh: Chair, Item 011 on page 392.

Mr. Chairman: No, no. We have not reached 011 yet. We are under Transfers, Item 009. Any matter under Item 009? If not, I go to Item 011, Transfers—

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Chairman, that is the one I asked about.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Yes, Chairman—

Mr. Imbert: I asked before you.

Mr. Chairman: All right. Well, I recognize the Member for Diego Martin North/East and then the Member for Caroni East.

Mr. Imbert: Two items I am noticing—well, several—down at the bottom: NIPDEC repayment of 1.5; fixed rate bonds for PURE, there are three Items, 11, 13, 14, and then NIDCO, repayment of $1.5 billion loan for Solomon Hochoy Highway. Let me start with the 15. Is that the only loan for that Solomon Hochoy Highway project, $1.5 billion?
Hon. Dr. Rambachan: This is a loan that is about to be taken, and what we have made here is a provision for repayment this year. But the loan has not been drawn down yet.

Mr. Imbert: Would that be the only loan for that project?

Hon. Dr. Rambachan: If it were the only loan?

Mr. Imbert: Yes.

Hon. Dr. Rambachan: We have to find ways and means of financing the project, and we will look at all our options. Maybe we can finance it out of certain assets we have or we probably go for loans and financing.

Mr. Imbert: Minister, you are not answering me, “yuh know”. You have a $7.5 billion project; I see a financing item of $1.5 billion, that leaves $6 billion. Is this $1.5 billion the only loan—

Hon. Dr. Rambachan: Well, it does not leave $6 billion because we have already paid certain amounts of money on the project.

Mr. Imbert: As you go forward—

Hon. Dr. Rambachan: As we go forward, if there is a necessity to get another loan we will go and get another loan to finance the project.

Mr. Imbert: How has this project been financed, using loan funds or Consolidated Fund money directly from the Treasury?

Hon. Dr. Rambachan: Part of it was Consolidated, and as you know, this is the first loan that is coming.

Mr. Imbert: How much money has been taken from the Consolidated Fund as opposed to loan financing for this project?

Hon. Dr. Rambachan: Mr. Chairman, to date, total payment made on the project is $3.16 billion of the $7.2 billion.

Mr. Imbert: And of that, how much—

Hon. Dr. Rambachan: So this includes fees to the OAS, to AECOM, also land acquisition fees—and let me say that over 315 properties have been properly acquired by private treaty negotiations;—community outreach, management fees, contingencies. In fact, 342 persons have been settled for their properties. Most of this money, as far as I am advised, is not loan money.

Mr. Imbert: So that came straight from the Treasury?
Hon. Dr. Rambachan: Yeah.

Mr. Imbert: Could you, since you have brought it up—I was not going to ask you but you brought it up. Could we get the names, locations, descriptions and amounts paid for those properties that you just spoke about that were acquired? [Crosstalk]

Hon. Dr. Rambachan: Mr. Chairman, I want to answer that question. Mr. Chairman, I think that one has to be very careful how one deals with matters involving people’s personal property and personal assets—

Mr. Imbert: What about expenditure of personal public funds?

Hon. Dr. Rambachan: While this is a matter—

Mr. Imbert: This is public money!

Hon. Dr. Rambachan:—involving public funds, at the same time we have to be careful that we protect the security interest of people.

Mr. Imbert: No, no, no, I cannot accept that.

Hon. Dr. Rambachan: But I am not averse to making it available for viewing by the Member, if he wishes.

1.00 p.m.

Mr. Chairman: I recognize the Member for Caroni East.

Mr. Imbert: No, but, Mr. Chairman, I had other questions.

Mr. Chairman: Or, you have other questions.

Mr. Imbert: Yes, I had other questions.

Hon. Dr. Rambachan: Mr. Chairman, I want to make it clear that I am not denying a request, I am saying I am talking about the process by which this is done, on legal advice.

Mr. Chairman: Yes, before—

Mr. Imbert: Yes, let me finish—

Mr. Chairman: No, I want to ask, Member for Diego Martin West, is it related?

Dr. Rowley: Directly on the matter before the Minister at this moment. Mr. Chairman, I am quite scandalized to hear the Minister saying that land acquisition is a matter for care and to be kept away from public view.
Hon. Dr. Rambachan: No, no, Mr. Chairman—

Dr. Rowley: Land acquisition, as far as I am aware, he just—

Mr. Chairman: All right, he wants to clarify it now.

Dr. Rowley: I am talking to you, Mr. Chairman, and after I am finished, I will ask him, if you can.

Mr. Chairman: Okay.

Dr. Rowley: My understanding, we are dealing with land acquisition for this highway, it does not matter who the owner is. My understanding was that land acquisition, as a matter of fact, usually comes before the Parliament by way of Motion. So you know who you are buying it from, what you are buying and for what purpose. Now, the Minister is telling us with respect to this highway, he has legal advice that the land acquisition associated with that highway should not be—we have to be careful—

Hon. Dr. Rambachan: No, no, no.

Mr. Chairman: No, he did not say he had legal advice.

Hon. Dr. Rambachan: I did not say that at all, Mr. Chairman.

Dr. Rowley: What did he say then? Clarify for me then.

Hon. Dr. Rambachan: Mr. Chairman, all I said is that I want to be cautious of how people’s business is brought into the public.

Dr. Rowley: What people’s business?

Hon. Dr. Rambachan: But I am not—Mr. Chairman, I made it clear and I will make it clear again, and I will repeat it again, I have no problems with providing the information to the Members. I have no problem providing the information to the Members.

Dr. Rowley: So what is the—where is the caution required?

Hon. Dr. Rambachan: Mr. Chairman, let me just say that—

Mr. Chairman: Member, look, I think the Minister has answered the question to the best of his ability and I recognize the Member for Caroni East. Right? We cannot badger.

Dr. Gopeseingh: 011 Sub-Item 07, NIDCO - Repayment of Trinidad Rapid Rail Transit System, I see you have here that you have to pay $58 million estimate
for 2015 and you paid $97 million for 2014 and you paid $101 million for 2013. Could you tell us then how much is left balance to be paid and how much was paid already for the rapid rail system?

Hon. Dr. Rambachan: As you know, this is a project that costs near $500 million plus and as you see, we are paying this year $58,716,000. In fact, the reality is that we still have moneys to pay even in the following year on this rapid rail project.

Dr. Gopeesingh: I have one more question and you could finish with me. 011, 04, NIDCO - Term Loan Facility (4 New Fast Ferries), does this include the MV Su?

Mr. Chairman: Please, let us not get—but I will leave it up to the Minister to respond to that.

Hon. Dr. Rambachan: I have to check that, I do not know—

Mr. Chairman: Okay, you have to check that. I recognize the Member for Diego Martin North/East and then the Member for Oropouche East.

Mr. Imbert: I had raised questions which are—they are trying to run away from it. 011, Sub-Items 11, 13, 14, do any of these loans provide the funding or provided the fund for PURE in 2014 and will any of them provide the funding for PURE in 2015?

Hon. Dr. Rambachan: As you know, these loans were taken in different years and they provide money for PURE to execute projects and we still have part of this money available to do work in this year. And there is another loan which we intend to draw down amounting to about $900 million which will help us to continue work in 2015 and beyond.

Mr. Chairman: I recognize the Member for—

Mr. Imbert: No, Mr. Chairman, I asked him whether any of these loan funds were used to finance PURE in 2014 and whether they will be used for 2015. I am assuming that he said some of it was used for it. He also said there is a new loan for 2015. Could the Minister—

Hon. Dr. Rambachan: But it has not been drawn down as yet.

Mr. Imbert: Fine. Since these loan funds or some of them were used for PURE in 2014, could we get a list of all the projects PURE did in 2014, please?

Hon. Dr. Rambachan: That is no problem. In fact, I will just let you know, and as a summary, that 778 projects were done by PURE in the last fiscal year.

Mr. Imbert: Give us the list.
Mr. Chairman: I recognize the Member for Oropouche East.

Dr. Moonilal: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I want to go back to a very bothering matter, 011, 07. Mr. Chairman, through you to the very distinguished Minister, am I to understand that the taxpayers of this country are still paying millions of dollars in 2015 on this rapid rail business? I am seeing $58 million as an estimate for 2015; I am seeing a revised estimate for 2014 of $97 million, 2014; $58 million in 2015, for a project that dates back to 2007 or 2008 somewhere there and—

Dr. Rowley: No, you idiot.

Mr. Chairman: You will withdraw that. Oh God, man, you cannot do that, man.

Dr. Rowley: I withdraw it.

Dr. Moonilal: Mr. Chairman, protect me from this Rottweiler, please.

Mr. Chairman: No, no, we are not going there. He has withdrawn.

Miss McDonald: Apologize.

Miss Cox: You have to withdraw that.

Mr. Chairman: Yeah, and do not use these kinds—

Miss Cox: You have to withdraw.

Mr. Chairman: Listen, Member for Laventille East, I can take care of myself. Member, you used a term, just withdraw it for me.

Dr. Moonilal: Mr. Chairman, I withdraw it hesitantly.

Mr. Chairman: Yes and let us not get into personalization, please. Continue, hon. Member for Oropouche East.

Dr. Moonilal: I really do not want to upset people by asking about the rapid rail.

Mr. Chairman: I know. Let us deal with the issue.

Dr. Moonilal: I want to get back to this rapid rail matter. I am asking the Minister a simple question and he has his technical people here. In 2015, $58 million is set aside to pay for rapid rail. Is this the same rapid rail project that had a consultancy fee of $485 million of taxpayers’ money? One.
Part two of that question. I want to ask the Minister if he can tell us now or probably submit to the committee in writing, how much more money the taxpayers have to pay and until what year—whether it is 2018, 2025—how much more millions of dollars of taxpayers’ money would be required to complete payment for this rapid rail transit system that was initiated prior to 2010? I asked two simple questions.

**Mr. Chairman:** Minister of Works and Infrastructure.

**Hon. Dr. Rambachan:** It is the same rapid rail project. [Crosstalk] Yes, I confirm that $58,716,000 has been set aside—

**Mr. Chairman:** Calm, calm, let us cool it. [Continuous crosstalk]

**Hon. Dr. Rambachan:** Mr. Chairman, $716,000 has been set aside and I will provide the information as to what is the balance that has to be paid after this year.

**Mr. Chairman:** All right, I think we have exhausted—yes.

**Dr. Rowley:** As the Minister provides that information which I am sure will be very useful, could the Minister indicate in detail exactly what was requested and what was paid for by those sums? And whether, in fact, that assignment was funded by loan funds and whether in fact any of these numbers mentioned are in relation to the loan being paid off?

**Mr. Chairman:** I recognize the Member for Chaguanas West.

**Mr. Warner:** I just want to remind the Minister, Mr. Chairman, I heard La Brea called and also Point Fortin, but Chaguanas West also wants to know under URP infrastructure, the number of contracts that were issued in Chaguanas West, the name of the contractors and the amount for each one.

**Mr. Chairman:** Diego Martin West would require that too.

**Mr. Deyalsingh:** Mr. Chairman, may I ask a question under URP infrastructure?

**Mr. Chairman:** Yes, I recognize the Member for St. Joseph and then Point Fortin and then the Member for Barataria/San Juan.

**Mr. Deyalsingh:** Thank you. Minister, under URP Infrastructure, is it possible to tell the finance committee the policy for starting projects in the constituency of St. Joseph—

**Mr. Chairman:** Where are you?
Mr. Deyalsingh: I am just asking a general question.

Mr. Chairman: No, you cannot do that, out of order right now.

Mr. Deyalsingh: All right. No problem.

Hon. Dr. Rambachan: Mr. Chairman—

Mr. Chairman: Wait, wait, no, I am not taking any response.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Chair, I would like to go back to 15, the $1.5 billion loan, I would like to know from whom and the conditionalities attached to that loan. Further, if you said that you have expended $3.6 billion already and this adds another 1.5, brings us up to, I think, 5.1 and if this project is to end next year, where exactly would you find—there is no provision made for it here and you are saying that this highway would end in 2015 but I am not seeing the provision for it.

Hon. Dr. Rambachan: The $1.5 billion loan is now being negotiated. All right? The provision is—

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: But you have terms of arrangements.

Hon. Dr. Rambachan: A payment will be due sometime in this fiscal year and—

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: But based on what?

Hon. Dr. Rambachan:—we are making a provision for it, that once we take the loan, certain costs have to be met so the provision is made. It does not mean to say that we are going to just take $1.5 billion and hand it to somebody but you have to have the money available to make sure that you can continue your project.

I did not get an opportunity to answer a question from the Member for Chaguanas West when he asked about the number of projects.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: No, no, you have not finished me. But I cannot understand—

Hon. Dr. Rambachan: Chaguanas West and Chaguanas East fall under region 12 of the URP, and I will provide the information for the hon. Member, but just to tell you, for fiscal 2013/2014, 208 projects have been done Chaguanas West and East.

Mr. Warner: No, I asked for a list.

Mr. Chairman: The final question under transfers in your name and then we are moving on.

Dr. Khan: Mr. Chairman, on 011, 07, I am just calculating between 2013—
Mr. Chairman: What is the question?

Dr. Khan: The question is that: where is this rapid rail transit system located in Trinidad and Tobago?

Mr. Chairman: Yeah, but I think he responded to that. Let us go on. Sub-Head 09, Development Programme; Item 001, Pre-Investment; Item 003, Economic Infrastructure; Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services; Infrastructure Development Fund. I recognize the Member for St. Joseph, then I recognize the Member for Diego Martin Central and the Member for La Brea in that order and then the Member for Diego Martin North/East.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Under the Development Programme, Item 09, 2014—

Mr. Chairman: I am under Infrastructure Development Programme, I have not gone ahead.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Yes, Sir, that is where I am, on page 188 of Infrastructure Development Programme. I am asking if any of these funds are allocated to restart all of the URP projects in the constituency of St. Joseph which were stopped on November 05, 2013 and why should a Member of Parliament have to resubmit all those URP projects under this Development Fund which were started for a by-election and which mysteriously stopped on November 05, and when I go to URP I am told there are no funds. How then were there funds to start it and there are no funds now to continue it? Could the Minister tell me if all those pre-by-election projects will continue?

Mr. Chairman: Is that related to this or this is another matter?

Mr. Deyalsingh: Definitely, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: Let me recognize the Member for Diego Martin Central, please.

Dr. Browne: Two things, Mr. Chairman. First of all, I am requesting the same list for URP with respect to Diego Martin—I would suggest for all the constituencies on this Bench. That is number one. Secondly, what Sub-Head have you arrived? You have just called several, I just want to be clear.

Mr. Chairman: We are on the Development Programme under the infrastructure, it begins on page 189.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Chairman, am I going to get an answer to my question?

Mr. Chairman: No, he has taken note and he will respond to you in a short while.
Dr. Browne: Well, my question is on the IDF so when you get there, I will ask.

Mr. Chairman: No, we are here at the IDF so could you tell us what your question is.

Dr. Browne: Okay, well, I am on page 299.

Mr. Chairman: Yes, I am on IDF.

Dr. Browne: You are on Consolidated Fund, that is why I asked, you know.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, I apologize, we are on the Development Programme. Continue, hon. Member.

Dr. Browne: So can I ask my question on the IDF now?

Mr. Chairman: No, we are not on that as yet.

Dr. Browne: Well, I am telling you that is where my question lies.

Mr. Chairman: Anybody else on Development Programme? Yes, I recognize the Member for Diego Martin North/East.

Mr. Imbert: Yes, page 193, 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services, Public Buildings, 238. What is the expected time frame for the completion of the restoration of the President’s residence?

Mr. Chairman: Any further questions, hon. Member?

Dr. Browne: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: No, not you, the hon. Member for Diego Martin North/East. Member for Diego Martin North/East, any further questions?

Mr. Imbert: Not on this, on the IDF.

Mr. Chairman: Yes, we will come back to that. Could you answer, hon. Minister?

1.15 p.m.

Hon. Dr. Rambachan: Mr. Chairman, as you know, that building collapsed on the eve of the election, due to very poor maintenance and management by the former administration. Since then we have been engaged in a process of protecting whatever assets are there to protect, in terms of the building because we have been working with the stakeholders, including those who are involved in the matter of historical sites and the preservation of historical sites. One of their
concerns was whether we are going to restore the building as close as possible to its original state and that is something we have adhered to because we believe that the building is of historical value and should be so restored.

Several things have been done. One, a temporary roof has been—

[Interruption]

Mr. Imbert: I did not ask that.

Mr. Chairman: Yes, but the Minister is responding.

Hon. Dr. Rambachan: Mr. Chairman, I have five minutes and I am responding.

Mr. Chairman: Yes, exactly. He has five minutes.

Hon. Dr. Rambachan: Mr. Chairman, a temporary roof has been built over the building.

Mr. Chairman: Yes, yes, he has five minutes.

Hon. Dr. Rambachan: A dilapidation survey is being completed and as I speak that report is at hand. It is being done by Bernard Mackay Architects.

Mr. Chairman: Member for Diego Martin West, help me “nah”, please.

Hon. Dr. Rambachan: You all were there for 40 years and you caused the building to go into disarray and fall down. It was a shame that you had a President in a house—[Interruption]

Mr. Chairman: Minister, Minister, please. Member for Diego Martin West, I am going to retire Members if they continue this way. [Interruption and crosstalk] I know, I know, I know. I am trying to complete. Yes, I know but I am trying to complete.

Miss Mc Donald: “Or gor man that high-shrilled voice.”

Mr. Chairman: Members, Members, Members. Member for Port of Spain South, I need your co-operation please and Member for Diego Martin West, I need your support.

Dr. Rowley: You have it, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you. Hon. Minister.

Hon. Dr. Rambachan: I might have a high-shrilled voice but there are a lot of people who love my singing in this country. [Laughter]
Mr. Chairman: Continue, hon. Minister.

Hon. Dr. Rambachan: Mr. Chairman, we expect that the contract for the actual work will be awarded by March 2015.

Mr. Chairman: Yes.

Hon. Dr. Rambachan: And that process is well on the way.

Mr. Chairman: All right, good.

Mr. Imbert: No, no, no. I asked him when does he expect the restoration—[ Interruption ]

Mr. Chairman: He has answered to the best of his ability.

Mr. Imbert: No, Mr. Chairman, he did not answer me.

Mr. Chairman: I recognize the Member for Chaguanas West.

Hon. Dr. Rambachan: Mr. Chairman, I will answer him.

Mr. Imbert: You did not.

Hon. Dr. Rambachan: I will answer him. The construction work is expected to take between 18 to 24 months.

Mr. Imbert: Now you have answered me.

Mr. Chairman: All right, Member for Chaguanas West.

Mr. Warner: Page 191, No. 163. Can the Minister advise on what is the cost to continually maintain the highway beautification programme for Chaguanas to Charlieville?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister?

Mr. Warner: And why are there no cable barriers installed in that area?

Hon. Dr. Rambachan: Mr. Chairman, we are installing new cable barriers. A contract has been awarded by the Central Tenders Board. Mr. Chairman, I would like to say something here. The cost of maintaining the cable barriers, I do not have it with me, but I can tell you it is very expensive. It is a good idea because so far we have had nearly 400 hits on those cable barriers, and of those 400 hits, approximately half of those were prevented from going over the median. So you cannot quantify even the savings, in terms of lives, that would have been saved. And it is a very long time that you would have heard anyone die by a car crossing the median on that Solomon Hochoy Highway going south, because of the cable
barriers. And it was a very good idea and it ought to be complimented and we are going to continue it.

Mr. Chairman, the problem is this—[Interruption]

**Miss Mc Donald:** And what about the one in—[Interruption]

**Mr. Chairman:** Please, Member, please, Member.

**Hon. Dr. Rambachan:**—that contractors bid very low on the project and the Central Tenders Board, of course, continues to give out the contracts to the lowest tenderer without taking into consideration the opinions offered by the Ministry of Works and Infrastructure officials that the contractor who is winning this job all the time is a contractor who does not have the capacity, it seems, to continue to do the maintenance by keeping the inventories that are required. And, therefore, I am saying this publicly because the public might think that the Ministry of Works and Infrastructure cannot get the job done, in terms of maintenance but these are proprietary systems, as I understand it, and the contractor has to provide the maintenance for the particular cable barrier when it breaks down and that contractor, I must say, has been negligent. But yet the CTB has not been taking our opinion into consideration, in terms of awarding the very contractor jobs at these low prices.

**Mr. Warner:** Mr. Chairman, my question has not been answered.

**Mr. Chairman:** Okay, well two more questions and then Development Programme, Members for St. Joseph and La Brea and then we go to Infrastructure.

**Mr. Deyalsingh:** I am on page 191, Sub-Head 15, line Item 221, Roads and Bridges, $15 million estimate for 2015. My direct question to the hon. Minister: is any of this money allocated to the constituency of St. Joseph to restart URP projects on roads, et cetera, which were stopped right after the by-election of November 04?

**Mr. Chairman:** All right. He will answer you. Member for La Brea.

**Hon. Dr. Rambachan:** Mr. Chairman, this Minister operates with a certain philosophy, that the interest of a citizen of this country must in no way at all be compromised at any time and, therefore, if there is need to do work, to satisfy the needs of citizens in any part of this country, the Ministry will respond accordingly consistent with the budget that the Ministry has. [Desk thumping]
Mr. Jeffrey: Mr. Chairman, coming back still at 221, I would like to find out whether or not that La Brea to Point Fortin Main Road and the Quarry to Erin Road is featured in that $9 million for 2014/2015.

Hon. Dr. Rambachan: What is the second one you named?

Mr. Jeffrey: La Brea to Point Fortin, particularly La Brea at this point in time and Quarry to Erin Main Road. Those two roads are in a deplorable condition and need urgent attention.

Hon. Dr. Rambachan: Mr. Chairman, the Member of Parliament for La Brea will know that I keep responding to his requirements. Recently, for example he asked that Boyack Terrace be rehabilitated and paved and that project is now being done through the URP. We also did work in Vance River and we re-paved a very big section of road there and recently we commenced rehabilitation works in the area of La Brea, where the road continuously folds up.

Mr. Chairman, having said that, and the Member making his request here, the Member made a statement on radio this week when he said that we are paving places in Valsayn and not dealing with La Brea. I want to say that we pave all over this country and we do not discriminate, and the evidence of the work done under my Ministry will show that across this country work is being done, including making up for the rural neglect and rural underdevelopment of infrastructure that took place under the PNM.

Mr. Chairman: Two final questions, the Member for Port of Spain South and La Horquetta/Talparo and we go to Infrastructure.

Miss Mc Donald: Mr. Chairman, I take serious umbrage to that; this Minister is paving roads all across this country. The Minister is well aware because I have been begging this Minister about fixing Plaisance Road.

Miss Roopnarine: Which Heading are you on?

Miss Mc Donald: Which Heading “ah” on? Roads and Bridges, Ma'am.

Mr. Chairman: Yes, Roads and Bridges.

Miss Mc Donald: Roads and Bridges. Plaisance Road, in John John, St. Paul Street, Clifton Street, Basilon Street, Siparia Hill.

Miss Cox: East Port of Spain.

Miss Mc Donald: The whole of East Port of Spain and he has done nothing. Do you know what this Minister said?
Hon. Dr. Rambachan: Mr. Chairman, Mr. Chairman.

Miss Mc Donald: This Minister said to me—allow me, please. I allowed you to speak. Mr. Chairman, this Minister told me until he could get a contractor to go in Plaisance Road he cannot do it because of whatever it is, coward tax or whatever it is. The point about it is we live here in Trinidad and Tobago. It is a road here in Trinidad and Tobago. Make every effort to get it done and he has not—I have not one road dug in the last four years.

Mr. Chairman: Allow the Minister to answer.

Hon. Dr. Rambachan: Mr. Chairman, the Member for Port of Spain South is not being totally truthful. I answered a question in the Parliament, which was filed about roads and I pointed out that we did Basilon Street and we did St. Paul. It is a fact that we have difficulty getting contractors who want to go and work in those areas.

Mr. Chairman, last year a contractor refused to work in the Belmont/Gonzales area because they went and taxed the contractor and the contractor had to pay $30,000 just to get his equipment back out of there and could not start a number of roads in that area and contractors are refusing to go in and work in those areas because they are afraid of the loss of their equipment.

Mr. Chairman, just in fiscal 2013/2014, in Laventille East/Morvant, under the PURE Programme we have spent $9,350,000 to pave. Between when we came into office and to date, we have spent $28.477 million in that area.

Laventille West—[Interruption]

Miss Cox: Roads, roads.

Mr. Chairman: Please, please.

Hon. Dr. Rambachan: This fiscal year we have spent $10,972,000 for a total so far of $36.874 million in Laventille West and Laventille East.

In Port of Spain South, for fiscal 2013/2014, we have spent $23,636,000 for a total since we came into office, of $42,514,950.

Mr. Chairman: I recognize the Member for La Horquetta/Talparo and last question.

Hon. Dr. Rambachan: You all do not know your constituencies.

Mr. Chairman: Order, order! I recognize the Member. That is the last question and we go to Infrastructure after that.
Miss Mc Donald: Look how long I am begging. You have no shame!

Mr. Chairman: Please, Member, please. You cannot say that. Withdraw that.

Miss Mc Donald: He knows my heart.

Mr. Chairman: Yes, I recognize the Member for La Horquetta/Talparo. Yes, continue.

Mr. Seemungal: Mr. Chairman, page 191, 221, with respect to Roads and Bridges. This is to the Minister. Minister, the Talparo Bridge, Minister, a bridge which is an over 100-year-old wooden bridge, is being replaced right now with a new concrete bridge. Do you have sufficient funds under this allocation to complete that particular bridge, because I know it would not be completed in this fiscal year?

The second question is: why did it take so long, after 50 years of Independence to replace the bridge? The last question: how many bridges have you completed in this year and how many bridges do you expect in the allocation of 2015?

Mr. Chairman: Which Head are you on?

Mr. Seemungal: The same Head, 221: Roads and Bridges.

Mr. Chairman: All right, Minister could you answer that quickly so we can go on to Infrastructure?

Hon. Dr. Rambachan: Yes, Mr. Chairman, the Talparo Main Road Bridge is 95 per cent complete. The only reason the bridge was not completed, Mr. Chairman, was the shortage of bitumen. Now that we have TLA out of Lake Asphalt, that bridge will shortly be paved and they will enjoy the facility of that bridge.

Mr. Chairman: All right, we go on to Infrastructure. No, we cannot continue. No, no, no Infrastructure Development. [Continuous interruption and crosstalk] No, no, no, no. We are going to Infrastructure. Anyone for Infrastructure? I recognize the Member for Diego Martin North/East, otherwise I am going to put the question now. I have recognized the Member for Diego Martin North/East. Infrastructure. I have to take charge, otherwise we are going to go on and go on. Continue, Member for Diego Martin North/East.

Mr. Imbert: Yes, Mr. Chairman. Page 299, Item 260 under Sub-Head 15: P.O.S - East/West Corridor Transportation Project. Minister, you may have trouble with the numbers. Page 299, Sub-Head 15, Item 260: P.O.S. - East/West Corridor Transportation Project. Are you with me Minister?
Hon. Dr. Rambachan: I am with you.

Mr. Imbert: Could you tell me what is the status of the award of the contract for the flyover at the Kay Donna intersection?

Hon. Dr. Rambachan: Mr. Chairman, the Member of Parliament had raised that question in a Motion on the Adjournment in this Parliament earlier this year. I would not like to say anything that will prejudice the outcome of the award of that tender. NIDCO Tendering Committee and NIDCO is proceeding with that. When they are finished with their evaluations and the process, they are going to make a recommendation, as they do, to the Ministry of Works and Infrastructure and we would be in a better position to advise the Member. But in the meantime, the process is continuing and the evaluations continue apace.

Mr. Chairman: The Members for Diego Martin Central and Laventille West. Member for Diego Martin Central, I recognize you.

Dr. Browne: Member for Diego Martin Central, thank you. My question is under Sub-Item 254, Diego Martin Highway - Wendy Fitzwilliam Boulevard to Diego Martin Main Road. [Crosstalk] Allow me, please.

Mr. Chairman: Please, yes, allow the Member to speak.

Dr. Browne: The Revised Estimate for 2014 indicates $6.5 million. I am interested to know what value the citizens got for that $6.5 million and then $4.5 million is estimated for 2015. I am interested in knowing exactly what is that going to be funding, particularly as this is known to be a very controversial prospective project, which is unlikely to be initiated in the near future. I am saying that as the Member of Parliament.

I have other questions, but I would like him to address that and I would ask my other questions.

1.30 p.m.

Hon. Dr. Rambachan: Yes, firstly, the consultancy was not awarded in 2014 and, therefore, that money was not utilized, it was vired for other things, but the consultancy will be awarded this year. The consultancy for the $4.5 million will be utilized to do the designs. You cannot do a major piece of highway work like that without proper designs. The designs will be completed and that work will be started.

Dr. Browne: All right. Well, I have a follow-up before my other questions. Are you going to be doing the design—[Interruption]
Hon. Dr. Rambachan: Sorry, feasibility, feasibility, yes, sorry.

Dr. Browne: Oh, all right. I have other questions, Mr. Chairman, and I will proceed before we have the—[Interrupt]

Mr. Chairman: The Member for Laventille West.

Dr. Browne: No, may I continue with my questions, Mr. Chairman?

Mr. Chairman: Okay, continue. [Crosstalk]

Dr. Browne: 258, Dualling of Diego Martin Highway from Victoria Gardens to Acton Court. This certainly appears to be the highway expansion project—

Hon. Dr. Rambachan: It is.

Dr. Browne:—which we are pleased that has been opened. My question is with respect to—

Hon. Dr. Rambachan: Very good, very good, glad you are pleased. [Desk thumping]

Dr. Browne: I said it in the budget debate. Why are you carrying on? My question is with respect to the 2015 allocation of $15 million, and I would like to know what that would entail? Does that include—there is a major issue, the Highways Division is aware of it with respect to the traffic lights that have been put on this new highway. We are removing traffic lights, Minister, from other highways, and we have put a major traffic light on Diego Martin Highway. Is there anything in this $15 million that will help us to solve that ongoing challenge? Secondly, does that include the issue of—the $15 million—a walkover at Franklyn Road which the residents have been requesting? Then I have one further question on another item after the Minister answers this.

Mr. Chairman: Yeah, we are not coming back. So it is better you raise all your questions now. Yeah, yeah, you raise your questions, because we are going.

Dr. Browne: The next question is with respect to Sub-Item 276, this Landslip Repairs Programme. I would like a listing of landslips that have been repaired in all areas of Trinidad and Tobago under this programme, including Diego Martin Central. I want to take this opportunity to express my dissatisfaction—the Diego Martin valley has many landslips—the dissatisfaction with the pace of any repairs, and I am seeing funds being allocated. I will like a listing. So I would like some answers—

Mr. Chairman: All right, the hon. Minister.
Hon. Dr. Rambachan: Mr. Chairman, a very good question was asked about the traffic lights and so on. The completion of the Diego Martin extension has to now be supplemented with another project, which is the construction of a vehicular and pedestrian bridge, that will take care of that traffic light problem. You will notice under 258, we have put—sorry, under 256, we are putting funding there in order to begin the feasibility and if possible, initial design works of that, and that will take you in the area of where West Mall is.

Dr. Browne: Right, well, Mr. Chairman, I just want to clarify, because I am aware of that aspect—

Mr. Chairman: Yeah, but we cannot take clarification at this time.

Dr. Browne: No, Mr. Chairman, he is responding to the wrong question. So I have to clarify on behalf of my constituents. That response does not take into account the issue of the traffic lights which is at the Four Roads area. So it is two different challenges we are addressing. I am talking about the major traffic lights at the Four Roads area. He is talking about at West Mall. So I have to clarify.

Hon. Dr. Rambachan: I am advised by the Director of Highways that they are studying that problem, and what they are doing is trying to do a traffic study there that will allow them to rephase the light, but they are aware of the situation and the problem.

Dr. Browne: That is not included in this $15 million.

Mr. Chairman: I recognize the Member for Laventille West.

Hon. Dr. Rambachan: No. Well, it does not take $15 million to do that, but since he asked about the $15 million, that is to complete payments on the highway.

Dr. Browne: I am awaiting an answer on my question on the landslip programme, Chairman of this Committee.

Mr. Chairman: The Member for Laventille West. I recognize the Member for Laventille West.

Mr. Hypolite: Thank you, Chair.

Dr. Browne: Chairman, I am awaiting an answer on my question on the landslip. [Continuous interruption]

Mr. Chairman: Yes, he will provide you with a list, okay? Continue Member for Laventille West.
Hon. Dr. Rambachan: The landslip, he wants the answer. Can I give him?

Mr. Chairman: Do you want to give him it now?

Hon. Dr. Rambachan: I am giving him it now. I tend to forget these things too easily. Mr. Chairman, under the Landslip Reconstruction Programme, 486 landslips were identified to be done over a period of five years, at a cost of $418 million. Mr. Chairman, this is a new programme by the way, and [Interruption] we have started. So in 2014, six landslips were awarded and right now, we have just tendered and awarded 22 landslips.

Dr. Browne: How many in Diego Martin?

Hon. Dr. Rambachan: And we are about to tender another set again, Mr. Chairman. I will have to tell you that—

Mr. Chairman: All right, you will have to supply him with a list of those landslips. I recognize the Member for Laventille West.

Mr. Hypolite: Three short questions, Mr. Chairman, 260. Laventille West falls in or makes up part of Port of Spain East. Can the Minister indicate exactly what this Port of Spain South East-West Corridor Transportation Project is all about? And while that is so, can he also give a list of the projects that would have formed the $10 million road repairs that he made mention of?

The second one be it the Port of Spain—Sub-Item 277, Port of Spain Northern Valleys Link Road. Can the Minister also explain what is that Project? And under 270, can the Minister also give a list of all the roads and the amount of money spent on fixing roads in Siparia? [Crosstalk]

Hon. Dr. Rambachan: Siparia or Siparia Hill?

Mr. Hypolite: Siparia constituency. [Interruption]

Hon. Dr. Rambachan: Mr. Chairman, the Port of Spain East-West Corridor Transportation Project included things like the Uriah Butler Interchange, the Aranguez Overpass. We have also had other widening of roads, the St. Joseph River, which was widened, a number of projects as you will see there. Mr. Chairman, by the way because of that project, we can now effectively put on the electronic boards at Beetham, just outside the market, the exact number of minutes it will take you to get from the Beetham to the interchange. We can do that now, that is being done. So commuters see that on a daily basis as they travel there.

The corridor project will include now, the Churchill Roosevelt Highway to the St. Joseph River being widened. Mr. Chairman, right outside of PTSC, you will see
we are widening the bridge there, so that it will allow three lanes coming out of Port of Spain, and that will quicken the traffic out of Port of Spain. The installation of traffic control and surveillance system, within the corridor from the Uriah Butler Highway to Colville Street, Port of Spain.

We recently announced that we are going to be putting more cameras along the East-West Corridor and particularly the highway up to Piarco, and down to Couva, and that will be monitored by the National Transport Traffic Management System we have at the Ministry itself.

Also we have done a pilot survey study using the red light enforcement at Wrightson Road. You would be amazed to know how many people break the red lights there, including Members of Parliament, [Laughter] including the police, including the regiment and so on and so forth. Then we are also about to start a project, spot speed enforcement, also on the highways. All of these form part and parcel of the East-West Corridor Transportation Project.

Mr. Chairman: Yes, I recognize the Member for La Brea.

Mr. Jeffrey: La Brea, right. Mr. Chairman—

Mr. Chairman: Then the Member for Arouca/Maloney, then the Member for Chaguanas West, then you.

Mr. Jeffrey: 276, Landslip Repair Programme. I want to find out from the hon. Minister whether or not the landslips in Upper Salazar Trace, 14 McCarthy Street in Vance River, Upper Sobo Extension, La Union in Erin and Lot 10 Village, whether they are in that allocation for 2015?

Hon. Dr. Rambachan: Mr. Chairman, let me say this, eh. I will provide the list, but at the same time, some landslips have a higher priority than others. If you go on Realize Road right now, Mr. Chairman, a house valued over $1.5 million has collapsed because of the landslide. Two other houses are threatened in the same way. [Interruption]

If you go on to Christian Avenue, in Plaisance Park, you will see that 10 houses there that if we do not put a $9 million wall behind those houses, those 10 houses are going to collapse in Pointe-a-Pierre, as we are doing now. So some landslips you have to enter urgently. So if it is in the Member of Parliament’s area in La Brea, there is an urgent requirement to go and do work there. Mr. Chairman, I want to give him the assurance that we are going to go in there and do the work as is necessary.
Mr. Chairman: All right. The Member for Arouca/Maloney, please.

Miss Hospedales: Yes, thank you, Mr. Chair. Page 298, Sub-Head 003, Sub-Item 003, Shore of Peace Costal Cliff Stabilization Works. Mr. Chair, there was a $2 million allocation for 2014. I want to know what has accounted for $22 million allocation in 2015. And if the Minister could provide for us a breakdown of the work to be done and the cost of each item, whether the contract was awarded? If it was awarded, who is the contractor? And if he can indicate to us if this is the final or total cost of the project.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Chair, I have a question relating to this—[Continuous interruption]

Hon. Dr. Rambachan: Mr. Chairman, in the area where the Shore of Peace is, just to be very specific on that one, the original road also that led to the Shore of Peace has been washed away by the sea, and the rate of erosion there has been very, very high. I toured with the Member for Point Fortin, and the Member for Point Fortin will tell you that several projects are being started in that area also, in terms of coastal erosion.

In Cedros and Icacos we are losing—I am told by the coastal people—about two metres of shore per year, annually. It is very, very bad. The Shore of Peace involves the building of 576 metres of wall, in addition to the other works that are necessary there, which is bringing a lot of rocks and so on to break the waves coming in there. So it is a very extensive piece of work there, and the price—it might not be—it might be higher than this, because we have now completed the tendering process and the tenders are being evaluated by NIDCO for that particular project, plus the one in Manzanilla.

Mr. Chairman: I recognize the Member for Chaguanas West and [ Interruption] also the Member for Diego Martin North/East. Listen, I had a list of all the hands [Crosstalk] that were up. I am coming. [Continuous interruption] You are coming. Your name is here, it is coming. Just exercise some patience. Your turn is coming. Yes, I have it here. Your name is here. I recognize the Member for Chaguanas West.

Mr. Warner: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: The Member for Diego Martin North/East and then the Member for Caroni East. [Continuous interruption]

Mr. Warner: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Minister, are you ready?
Hon. Dr. Rambachan: Yes.

Mr. Warner: 258, on page 299, Diego Martin Highway, have you paid all the persons whose lands you acquired for this highway? 258.

Hon. Dr. Rambachan: No, not all have been completed, I am advised by the Director of Highways.

Mr. Warner: But I will like to ask you, Mr. Minister, some of them have been owed for more than three years. The highway has been opened, can you please—

Hon. Dr. Rambachan: My own personal position is, it is very unfair to owe anybody whose land you have taken for that length of time, and I will make every effort in the Ministry to ensure that these matters are resolved.

Mr. Imbert: Page 299, Item 247, could we get a list, a breakdown of the projects in 2014 and 2015 on Item 247? Similarly, Item 275, could we get a breakdown of the expenditure in 2014 and projections for 2015? And on page 300, could you tell us why Item 273, the Ministry has abandoned the restoration of Mille Fleurs?

Mr. Chairman: Do you want to deal with the last one, because you would provide—

Hon. Dr. Rambachan: Because that is under the Ministry of National Diversity—

Mr. Imbert: There is nothing going on there.

Hon. Dr. Rambachan: And UDeCOTT.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Page 298, 003, and Sub-Head P from 001 to 008. I see a lot of shoreline stabilization works are being going—estimated. I see a revised estimate for 2014, which showed some work, but I see nothing for 2013. Could the Minister tell us what has been happening to shoreline stabilization works in so many areas of Trinidad prior to 2014.

Hon. Dr. Rambachan: I think that is a most important question. It is a situation that the Ministry recognized that needed attention, and a coastal unit in the Ministry has now been set up, and we recently got PMCD from the Ministry of Public Administration, the structure and we are now employing people also in that unit. This is why the work has intensified and been expanded to this extent. So thank you very much, because it is something that was prior to 2013 and 2010, very little was done in order to deal with these matters.
Mr. Chairman: Yes, hon. Members, the question is that the sum of $1,314,830,000 for Head 69, the Ministry of Works and Infrastructure, stand part of the Schedule.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 69 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

1.45 p.m.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, I want to thank the hon. Minister and his team for being here. Before we break for lunch, let me advise: we have the hon. Minister of National Security and the police waiting in line. They have been here for some time now. We have to reduce your lunch break. We are going for 30 minutes, half an hour, because I understand that the Security Chiefs have some very urgent matters to deal with and they want to be here with us and I do not want them to leave here. That would be very bad. So to accommodate them, I would ask Members, not to rush your lunch but just to take half an hour and we resume at 2.20 p.m. sharp.

Before you leave, let us hear the hon. Minister.

Hon. Dr. Rambachan: Mr. Chairman, with your permission, I simply want to thank my technical team, the PS and so on, for all the hard work they put together to make sure that this presentation was effective. [Desk thumping]

Mr. Chairman: The meeting of the Standing Finance Committee is suspended until 2.20 p.m.

1.47 p.m.: Standing Finance Committee suspended.

2.20 p.m.: Standing Finance Committee resumed.

Mr. Chairman: The meeting of the Standing Finance Committee will now be resumed. We go to:

Head 22.

I now invite the hon. Minister of National Security, if he so desires, to make a brief opening statement for no more than five minutes, giving us an overview of your priority areas for fiscal 2014/2015.
Hon. Griffith: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The percentage allocation in the Ministry of National Security for this upcoming year, as what we have seen for the past decade in this country, is on par with what we have seen worldwide in comparison to other countries' national security budgets in tandem with their annual allocation. Usually, in countries it is between 6 per cent and 15 per cent; the United Kingdom, US, China, Jamaica, it is 11 per cent/12 per cent. In Trinidad and Tobago, we have kept within that percentage for national security in your annual budget, of about 10 per cent.

What we are doing is not so much pumping in millions of dollars into national security assets, but what we are looking at is to ensure that there are proper principles of proper management, leadership, training and measured performance. What we have seen at home, in dealing with situations of gang warfare, the attempted coup in 1990, improvised explosive devices and now with global terrorism, is the importance for national security. It is unfortunate that some may see security as being a necessary evil rather than ensuring the most fundamental rights of citizens.

What we have done with this budget, it is a continuation of where we have been. Last year, there was a reduction of all serious crimes by over 30 per cent and we intend to continue along that pattern, bearing in mind that the barometer to measure crime really involves murders and because of that we do know the importance of dealing with that.

The budget was geared in mind to prepare for any eventuality. It is better that we prepare now than later. If we wait until later, it will cost us not just in dollars and cents that we are seeing—I am talking about today—but lives that could be lost.

So we have looked at the important aspects to ensure three things. First, we are looking at the asset acquisition and the asset acquisition was based on research. It was based on data and it was based on us actually working with the main stakeholders, not the politicians that just came up with any crime plans. We were never involved in the crime plan aspect, but to look at the asset acquisition in tandem with what our stakeholders required, that being the members of the law enforcement agencies.

The asset acquisition also involves a second—then we moved into the second part which had to do with manpower strength. You must have the manpower strength allocation to move in tandem with the asset acquisition. And the third had
to do with the training. The training is very critical to ensure that the manpower acquisition—they will be properly trained to utilize the assets that were provided for them.

So we would see a variety of assets to deal with all systems we have for law enforcement and it will vary from a very simple, yet mandatory requirement to protect our law enforcement officers in times of any crisis such as armoured personnel carriers and it will then move, at a high end, to things that could deal with border protection and that will involve aspects such as, again, interceptors, hovercraft, unmanned aerial vehicles, new helicopters, and more effective radars. The National Operations Centre, which is something that will be the communicational platform for all of the different systems that you will see in the Ministry of National Security.

With that, as I said, there is a lot of work we put in to ensure that the manpower strength will equate with the asset acquisition and also marketing. Marketing is very important because the public must be aware of what is happening. It is not so much crime reduction. We can reduce crime, but there is also a different aspect towards the perception and fear of crime. So we are also putting a heavy emphasis to ensure that that perception and fear of crime is also removed.

There would be concerns that some may say that we are going into overkill or doing too much, but I prefer that we do too much than to be recognized for doing too little or nothing at all and then when it happens, it will then be too late.

With that, Mr. Chairman, I do not think any more needs to be said, so I think I can wrap up here in five minutes.

Question proposed: That Head 22 stand part of the Schedule.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, the sum $2,692,486,170 for Head 22, the Ministry of National Security, 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:

Sub-Head 01: Personnel Expenditure
  Item 001, General Administration
  Item 002, Fire Service

I recognize the Member for Laventille East/Morvant.
Miss Cox: Mr. Chairman, Mr. Minister, Sub-Item 01, Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance: I understand that this includes vacant posts. I would like to know how many vacant posts exist in the Fire Service Division.

Hon. Griffith: You mean the regular members of the fire service?

Miss Cox: Yeah.

Hon. Griffith: I do not have the exact number. Now, I can also give you, apart from the Fire Service, the auxiliary fire officers. There is also a vacancy for that as well, so I can also provide that.

Miss Cox: You can provide that later on, but I just want to say, concerning the promotion in the Fire Service, I ask that question because, Minister, do you know that the last promotion in the rank of Fire Station Officer was in 2005 and the last promotion in the lower ranks was in 2010? I think you need to look at the vacant posts situation.

Hon. Griffith: We are looking at that because we also have the same situation with the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service and, through the Second Division, there are concerns and it goes with this system of concern pertaining to seniority and performance, which comes first and it has affected—we do know the importance of morale. We speak a lot about the Commissioner of Police appointment, but we also have to look at all the other aspects with the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service and the Fire Service. We are aware of that concern. We are not seeing that with the defence force.

Miss Cox: Concerning 03, Overtime, I see there is a large increase in overtime. What accounts for this?

Hon. Griffith: For Fire?

Miss Cox: For Fire. I am still under Fire Service.

Hon. Griffith: Overtime?

Miss Cox: Yes.

Mr. Chairman: That is on page 101: 02, 03. 111.

Miss Cox: 111, 03. What accounts for that?

Hon. Griffith: For the increase?

Miss Cox: Yes, this is a big increase in overtime, Fire Service.
2.30 p.m.

Hon. Griffith: It involves the operational officers. They have a 42-hour work week, and now they are being paid for the extra hours. Again, it is similar to the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service where there would be situations that once they work over the work hours, they would be paid the extra time.

Miss Cox: But that has always existed, so I want to know why is this increased now.

Hon. Griffith: Well, I do know that we have had situations where the officers, they were never actually paid, and we have had back pay that was just backing up for a long while back, and it has caused some concerns, and it even caused reluctance with certain members of the protective services wanting to come forward and work those extra hours because of the delay in the actual payment.

Miss Cox: Concerning allowances here 04, I wanted to know if the fire service is entitled to the $1 million for their family if they are killed in the line of duty. Are they entitled to that?

Hon. Griffith: Yes. It is not just members of the Ministry of National Security, it would involve, in the Ministry of National Security, all persons in the operational aspects of law enforcement. That would involve the police, members of the defence force, members of the fire services, but also members of the Trinidad and Tobago Prisons Service which is under the Ministry of Justice.

We still have to deal with—you see, there is a difference with killed in the line of duty and—it is not just a situation where the person was killed whilst in operation. He might very well be in a car accident whilst on patrol. So we are just trying to sift this to ensure that this will be dealt with in a proper manner and that those persons, the spouse will actually be provided with that support based on those persons giving their lives for their country.

Mr. Chairman: All right. We go on to Item 005, Regiment; Item 006, Coast Guard. I recognize the Member for Laventille East/Morvant.

Miss Cox: I just want clarification on Sub-Item 24 concerning Allowances—Direct Charges. There is an increase of $15 million, what accounts for that increase?

Mr. Chairman: Which one are you on my dear? You are on Item 006?
Miss Cox: Yes, 24, under allowances.

Hon. Griffith: Okay, I will get that information for you.

Mr. Chairman: All right. Are there any other matters? Can we move on?

Miss Cox: Yes, we can move on.

Mr. Chairman: All right. We go on to Item 007, Immigration; 015, Cadet Force. I recognize the Member for Laventille West.

Mr. Hypolite: Yes, Mr. Chairman. We continue to preach that one of the ways of reducing crime—[ Interruption ]

Mr. Chairman: Where are you on? We need to be guided.

Mr. Hypolite: 01.

Mr. Chairman: 01 under Item 015, Cadet Force.

Mr. Hypolite: Yes. We continue to preach that one of the ways of reducing crime in the country is by putting a unit in every secondary school. Is this $950,000 sufficient to hire or have sufficient staff to man that organization?

Mr. Chairman: The hon. Minister of National Security.

Hon. Griffith: Yes, Chairman, what you are speaking about, we are actually having meetings now with the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of National Security with that aspect to ensure that we can have a proper establishment of the presence of the cadets in every school. It does not mean that there is going to be an escalation to any great extent pertaining to budget allocation, because the whole concept of the cadets, it is not a massive expense where you require major fixed assets of any substance. But I think the important question is about the increased presence of cadets in different schools. I think the Ministry of National Security, we have stunted it to some extent that not as much presence we have in the secondary school which is why we are now working hand in hand with the Ministry of Education to deal with that.

Mr. Chairman: All right, we go on to Item 016, the Air Guard. We go to Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, Item 001, General Administration. I recognize the Member for Diego Martin North/East—no, I recognize the Member for Laventille East/Morvant; then the Member for Diego Martin North/East, then the Member for Chaguansas West and then the Member for Arouca/Maloney.

Miss Cox: Mr. Chairman, I give way to the Member.
Mr. Chairman: The hon. Member for Diego Martin West.

Dr. Rowley: Mr. Chairman, I take it that we are under 02 on page 115.

Mr. Chairman: Yes.

Dr. Rowley: Okay, Mr. Chairman, I just want to make a general observation to the Minister, and I notice that he has brought to the House our esteemed heads of divisions, so I just want to make an observation to him first before I put a few questions. When I look at the column increase and the column decrease, I notice that there is a consistent pattern of increases in this Ministry. Notwithstanding the requirement to make sure that we are properly secured, both at the personal level and at the level of the State, we have to be cognizant of the fact that we do not have unlimited resources and, therefore, in every area, including the Ministry of National Security, notwithstanding the requirement and the pressing needs to improve our performance in this area, that we just cannot be increasing everything, because against that background of increases, we still have a general feeling in the communities, and it is commonly reported that you talk to the police and you hear they do not have enough cars. You go to the station, not enough manpower in the station and things like that.

So, I come to the point of 09 under Vehicles and Equipment—and this is the Ministry of National Security, this is not in the departments like the army, the coast guard, this is the Ministry of National Security. What is the explanation for this increase in rental and lease of vehicles, which in 2013 was at $85 million? We budgeted $122 million in 2014. I am seeing a revised estimate of $119 million, and we are making a provision of $125 million for 2015, and this is the Ministry, the administrative arm of national security. Is there any effort being made to curb expenses in this kind of area and what exactly are we paying for here?

Hon. Griffith: Yes, Chairman, if we are just looking at the vehicles alone, in many instances such as in the intelligence agencies, there will be a host of vehicles that would be used for covert operatives, and that would be involving members of the defence force, the special branch, the SSA, where vehicles are rented. It is a very high cost. We are looking at doing a proper audit to ensure basically—the difficulty with these things, for example, you cannot purchase these vehicles, because you have to have a rotation. Now, I do not want to say too much more on this to cause any security breaches, but there would be expenses along these lines such as rental of vehicles for intelligence agencies and other
aspects. Sometimes, as much as we would try to cut the fat, sometimes there would be mandatory requirements to deal with aspects such as those.

Looking at the other elements, I know we actually have also vehicles for other aspects of secondary crime prevention measures such as the systems we have through the Hoop of Life and other systems, so that these vehicles would be rented. So even right now, sometimes it is over $2 million to $3 million a month just for rental of vehicles for covert agencies alone. So the cost can be high at times.

**Dr. Rowley:** Mr. Minister, what I am saying is, if you look at the increase between 2013 and 2015 as a percentage, it is a significant increase and to what extent are we using competitive arrangements to get the best value for money? Or is it that the people that you are renting from are fixed in the system in some way and they just keep pushing the price up. Are you sure that you are getting the benefit of competition for the vehicles you want in the service? If you are renting a hundred vehicles and you open it up to proper competition in fairness and transparency—I am not asking you to divulge any national security situation, because there is no national security consideration about renting vehicles. How do you get the benefit of competition to ensure that this significant increase in cost is controlled?

**Hon. Griffith:** Yes.

**Dr. Rowley:** What is the procedure for acquiring these vehicles?

**Hon. Griffith:** Well, we do have in fact—starting next week, we are having a special tender to ensure that we are actually getting the proper vehicles at the best cost.

**Dr. Rowley:** What is that?

**Hon. Griffith:** To ensure that we have the vehicles that would be appropriate for the law enforcement agencies at the most appropriate cost. So there is actually a special tender that is actually going out to verify that we have those vehicles that we are speaking about; the renting of the vehicles.

**Dr. Rowley:** I am not talking here specifically about any type of vehicle, I am talking about competition. It is competition that will give you the best price. I must tell you, there was one time in this country when you were told that only a particular model of vehicle could have carried a particular radio.

**Hon. Griffith:** Yes.
Dr. Rowley: I am not going there.

Hon. Griffith: Sure.

Dr. Rowley: I am talking about if you have a desire to obtain a certain number—tens or hundreds of vehicles—the only way you are going to control the price is if you operate by having competition. I am asking: what are the procedures that you are using which allow this price to be creeping up in this way?

Hon. Griffith: I think it is not so much the cost per vehicle, but the quantity that keeps going up by the demands of the intelligence agencies but, that again is a small percentage. If you look at the vehicle and equipment, we also had to see about the outstanding arrears owed to TSTT for the fibre-optic connectivity.

Dr. Rowley: We will get there. A hundred and twenty-five million dollars is not a small item. So, I would move on, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: Just put on your mike, your mike is not on.

Mr. Imbert: This item is for the rental or lease of vehicles. This item is for the rental and/or lease of vehicles?

Mr. Chairman: The same item.

Hon. Griffith: That is part of it. It also involves paying out the outstanding arrears for the fibre-optic cables.

Mr. Imbert: So there is commingling of things.

Hon. Griffith: Vehicles and equipment, yes.

Mr. Imbert: What amount of this would be rental of vehicles?

Hon. Griffith: You mean for covert agencies?

Mr. Imbert: No, no. You have a total of $125 million under 09 for the rental or lease of vehicles and equipment. How much of that is for vehicles?

Hon. Griffith: Well, I could tell you that for the covert vehicles alone that alone would be just about $15 million.

Mr. Imbert: What I am driving at, let us say 50 per cent of it is for vehicles. I am just guessing, right, $60 million?

Hon. Griffith: No, no, I would not say that. I know definitely about the covert vehicles that would be about $15 million.
Mr. Imbert: May I ask the question a different way and, perhaps, you could provide the information later on. How many vehicles are you leasing? Total.

Hon. Griffith: About approximately 80 vehicles.

Mr. Imbert: Less than 100? But that would be about $10 million.

Hon. Griffith: It is about $10 million to $15 million.

Mr. Imbert: So could you tell us what the other hundred odd million is for?

Hon. Griffith: One of the things I mentioned was about the outstanding arrears owed to TSTT for the fibre-optic connectivity for the 59 cameras on the surveillance bay on the Uriah Butler Highway. That is one. The cameras itself; acquisition of CCTVs.

Mr. Imbert: Perhaps you could give us a breakdown, a list.

Hon. Griffith: I could bring the breakdown.

Mr. Chairman: I recognize the Member for Chaguanas West.

Mr. Warner: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Minister, I want to go to Item 36, under 02, Goods and Services; 36, Extraordinary Expenditure. Could you tell us what that is please? And also, 62 Promotions, Publicity and Printing; I see that has moved from $1.6 million in 2013 to now $12.6 million in 2015. The expenditure from 111 to—$20 million, sorry, my apologies. So from $1 million in 2013 to $20 million in 2015 that is for Promotions, Publicity and Printing, and the extraordinary expenditure from $111 million in 2013 to $127.8 million in 2015. That is kind of steep, I must admit. I had planned not to ask any questions, you know, but I have to.

Mr. Chairman: Yes, the hon. Minister.

Hon. Griffith: Yes, Mr. Chairman, the first one, Extraordinary Expenditure. That is the increased allocation for the covert units; information assets required for the covert units. No, we are speaking about the Extraordinary Expenditure.

Mr. Warner: $127 million?

Hon. Griffith: Yes. The Transnational Organized Crime Unit which was a unit that was virtually made mandatory based on the concerns by our international partners to deal with the concerns of the illegal entry of drugs and, more so, the United Kingdom.

2.45 p.m.

So there was the establishment of the Transnational Organized Crime Unit and that alone was coming up to over $35 million, and there is also the National Coastal Surveillance Radar Centre for the improvement. Then they have the
Counter-Trafficking Unit as well, and then there was general administration. So, again, I can give you a breakdown of all of these different things, from the Transnational Organized Crime Unit, the radar implementation and the Counter-Trafficking Unit. The Counter-Trafficking Unit, in fact, has been very instrumental to deal with situations we have now where we have actually been upgraded from Tier 2 Watch List to Tier 2 by the United States based on the achievements that we have accomplished within the last year. So that the Counter-Trafficking Unit, obviously, there would have been a need again because of the concerns that we have seen internationally for us to revamp that, and also the Transnational Organized Crime Unit.

Mr. Chairman: Yes, I recognize the Member for Diego Martin West.

Mr. Warner: Sub-Item 62.

Mr. Chairman: Before we go on to 62, I think Diego Martin West—

Mr. Warner: Okay.

Dr. Rowley: Mr. Chairman, under 36, Extraordinary Expenditure, I draw your attention to xiv, Sub-Item 36, where in the budgetary process it specifically points out that Extraordinary Expenditure is, and I quote: “Unforeseen expenditure that is unlikely to”—occur—and “unlikely to occur” is printed in bold, meaning that it is very unlikely to occur. So Extraordinary Expenditure—

Dr. Moonilal: But in 2013, the unlikely was $111 million.

Dr. Rowley: Well, let me—Mr. Chairman, please.

Mr. Chairman: Yes, continue.

Dr. Rowley: I value the assistance of my colleague, but I would not be able to help you if I cannot complete my sentence.

Mr. Chairman: Continue, please.

Dr. Rowley: So I am saying, if in the budgetary process we have a Sub-Item of Extraordinary Expenditure and the categorization of such an expenditure is “Unforeseen expenditure that is unlikely to occur”, when we come to Sub-Item 36 here, I do not know what happened before 2013—

Mr. Chairman: “unlikely to recur”, not—
Dr. Rowley: “to recur”, yes. But in 2013 we budgeted $111 million, 2014 we budgeted $158 million, 2014 we revised it down to $104 million, we have budgeted $127 million—now, this clearly, Mr. Chairman, is not an item that we—and based on what the Minister has just said—is not something that we anticipate is unlikely to occur. It is in fact part of the regular arrangement now. They put some new unit in place in some new arrangements which have to be funded by prior knowledge. So, therefore, it ought not to be budgeted under Extraordinary Expenditure.

Hon. Griffith: I would give you an example: for example the Radar Centre, the cost and the parts, the maintenance of the radar system, it can increase at a very big cost from time to time based on just a change in technology, technology changes would cause the whole system to have to be revamped, similar to the veering system for example, where last year it was a $35 million change we had to make because of bmobile changes, the 4G; automatically over $30 million we had to move to upgrade that system to go with veerings.

So this will be seen as extraordinary based on just something that was not anticipated. So sometimes it becomes a catalyst—if something happens then, whether it is the radar, whether it is the intelligence systems, they will also need to be upgraded, and with that, that will cause that cost to escalate without it actually being planned prior to.

Dr. Rowley: Mr. Chairman, with your approval I would like to go back to 16, which is Contract Employment for which we are now budgeting $40 million when that Sub-Item was $28 million in 2013. Who are the people in the Ministry of National Security that are categorized as contract workers and why such a steep increase from $28 million to $40 million for contract workers? What category of persons are we talking about here?

Hon. Griffith: Yes, Chairman, well this is very in-depth, it involves scanner/data entry operators, business operations assistants, executive support officers, the legal officers, and, again, I can provide the list.

Dr. Rowley: Are these establishment posts which are being filled by contract officers?

Hon. Griffith: Yes. There are vacancies.

Dr. Rowley: These are vacancies on the establishment of the public service in the Ministry of National Security?

Hon. Griffith: It is contract-based which is outside of—
Dr. Rowley: Okay. So over and above the establishment of the Ministry of National Security in the public service, this provision is for additional persons. How are these persons sourced? $40 million worth. How are they sourced?

Hon. Griffith: I know there is a team and specific interviews and it is conducted by the—who chairs those interviews? Based on the criteria of—if it is matters, pertaining to legal, pertaining to IT, there is a specific process that is made to ensure that those persons are selected.

Dr. Rowley: Who makes that decision?

Hon. Griffith: Pertaining to what?

Dr. Rowley: Who determines how you spend this money? The Permanent Secretary? The Minister? Who?

Hon. Griffith: No, it is all based on the needs of the Ministry of National Security at the time; for example, if during the period there is a need to immediately establish the Transnational Organized Crime Unit, there would be contracted positions based on the establishment of that unit.

Dr. Rowley: That is not what I am asking. I have a budgetary item, a decision has to be made to spend the money, who makes that decision?

Hon. Griffith: Well, again—I understand now—the Permanent Secretary, he would make a recommendation based on the needs to fulfil any task that may be required and then it is brought to the Minister of National Security, and then the relevant interviews would be conducted.

Dr. Rowley: Is there any attempt to advertise these positions there? Are these positions advertised?

Hon. Griffith: They are advertised, yes.

Dr. Rowley: All?

Hon. Griffith: No, not all have been advertised.

Dr. Rowley: Which are the ones that you do not advertise?

Hon. Griffith: I could get that for you. I could provide that list for you, those that have not been advertised.

Dr. Rowley: That would be helpful, and with the reason—

Hon. Griffith: And the reason—yeah. Sure.
Miss Cox: Mr. Chairman, I am not finished.

Mr. Chairman: No, I thought you had given way to the—[Crosstalk] All right, Member for Laventille East/Morvant.

Miss Cox: Thank you, I just want to get back to the point on number 62, Promotions, Publicity and Printing; there is indeed a steep increase of $12.6 million and I would like to know what has caused this steep increase in promotions. I would like to ask a question too: where is the funding coming from the programme Beyond the Line? Is it from the police service or the Ministry of National Security?

Hon. Griffith: Yes, Chairman, what I mentioned is that we may have a major reduction in crime that may be there for statistics, but there is a difference between the actual reduction in crime and taking away the perception and fear of crime. It is very important that the public are aware of what strategies are taking place and, again, we have seen one of the concerns is that the public have been reluctant to come forward and be part of the process because of that breakdown in communication and trust between themselves and law enforcement agencies.

So, this is a very powerful tool to ensure that we have that element of trust that is brought back and getting people to understand the role and function of the different arms of the law enforcement agencies. So it is more of an objective to get the public to be aware, to respect, to trust, and to start believing in the law enforcement agencies. So that is where you are going to have that increase. For too long we have had this situation where many people are not aware of the importance of the different arms of the law enforcement agencies and what they do. So that is what that is. Pertaining to the other matter with Beyond the Line; definitely not from the Ministry of National Security. I am not aware if the police service—that would come after this and they will be able to confirm that from that end, but from the Ministry of National Security the answer is no.

Mr. Chairman: All right, the Member for Arouca/Maloney.

Miss Hospedales: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I am looking at Sub-Item 43; there is a significant increase in security services, from $1,844,711 in 2013 increasing to $2,982,400 in 2014, and taking another leap in 2015. Mr. Chairman, I would like to find out if the Minister can provide us with a list of the security firms that actually provide services to them, and if he can provide a detailed breakdown of the service that is provided.
Hon. Griffith: Yes, Mr. Chairman. I could provide the detailed breakdown if required. It involves the cost of security services at Temple Court, one; as well as the cost for Amalgamated Courier Service, and also at the EMBA building. There was also an increase in rates by MTS from last year.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, I am moving on to Item 5.

Dr. Rowley: Before you move on, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Chairman: Yeah, before I move on, I recognize the Member for Chaguanas West and then.

Mr. Warner: Minister, 08, Rent/Lease, I know for a fact that there is an office that is—sorry, Sir, I would not ask him. I would ask him by himself. [Laughter]

Mr. Chairman: The Member for Diego Martin West.

Dr. Rowley: Mr. Chairman, I think that some of our colleagues are hiding information from us. [Laughter] I wonder if they want to share it with us in his private meeting. Mr. Chairman, I know that the Ministry of National Security, from time to time, would be required to provide training for persons in various arms of the services and, therefore, when I look at 17, the budget for training is $2 million, but the budget for PR Promotion is $20 million; is it that the Ministry has its priorities upside down?

Hon. Griffith: This $2 million is just the general administration training. As I mentioned, there are three major aspects towards this budget. It has to do with the importance of asset acquisition, manpower strength and training, and the Ministry of National Security is really several mini Ministries, and every aspect—the Trinidad and Tobago Fire Service, the Defence Force, the police—they are all involved in difference aspects—

Dr. Rowley: This is General Administration—we are on General Administration—

Hon. Griffith: Yes, but this is General Administration, but if we only look at—

Dr. Rowley: So who accessed this?

Hon. Griffith: Well, again, that will involve persons within the administration of the Ministry of National Security and not the operational elements. So that $2 million does not involve the arms of the law enforcement agencies with the type of training that they require.
Dr. Rowley: So nobody from the coast guard—

Hon. Griffith: Not in this line.

Dr. Rowley: So this is just public servants in the Ministry?

Hon. Griffith: Yes.

Dr. Rowley: But I still think that a $20 million promotion budget is high.

Mr. Chairman: All right, let us go on. We go on to Item 005, Regiment.

Hon. Member: Not 005.

Mr. Chairman: Yes, we have just left—

Hon. Member: No, 002, Fire Service.

Mr. Chairman: Oh, I thought you dealt with that a short while ago.

Hon. Member: No, there is a next fire. [Crosstalk]

Mr. Chairman: Okay, sorry about that. Yes, the hon. Member for Laventille East/Morvant.

Miss Cox: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, I move to 13, Maintenance of Vehicles. There is an increase here—and why I ask about this is because I know that there is an engineering department in the Fire Service, and I understand that a lot of the maintenance of the vehicles is being contracted out when some of the work could be done by the engineering corps. As a matter of fact, some of the work, after it has been contracted out and the vehicle gets back into the fire service department, the persons there now still have to fix it, so I think that that is something that needs to be looked at—okay?—in the Fire Service. Too much work is being contracted out now compared to before. It also brings me to the point of training—

Hon. Griffith: Excuse me, just reconfirming, so you are saying that you recommend that the Fire Service, that they do internally, the maintenance?

Miss Cox: No, but you need to look at the fact that a lot of work is being contracted out that does not necessarily have to be contracted out.

Hon. Griffith: Okay, sure.

3.00 p.m.

Miss Cox: I move to Training. Just wanted to ask about—no, I will not bother with that question. I will talk personally about that.
Mr. Chairman, Repairs and Maintenance to Buildings, there is an increase of $9 million. Really that is the one I wanted to speak about, because I understand that is the same problem. There is a project unit and a lot of the maintenance that could be done by the members of the Fire Service, because there is a project department, but almost everything is being contracted out, and that there is a preferred contractor. So Minister you need to look into that. There is a preferred contractor getting a lot of work in the Fire Service, and there is some grumbling about that. I just wanted to talk to you about that.

**Hon. Griffith:** I do know as well that one of the things is that because of the OSHA Act, because of the level now of the health and safety issues, there are certain aspects that we have to do to refurbish new facilities such as in Macoya and Chaguanas and other places for relocating personnel. But I will look at that as well.

**Miss Cox:** Other Contracted Services, 28. There is an increase of four-point something million, I want to know what has resulted in that increase—$4.6 million.

**Hon. Griffith:** Mr. Chairman, that involves installation of fire hydrants, repairs, replacement of defective hydrants, refurbishment and maintenance of salt water pumps and systems.

**Miss Cox:** But, Minister, that is routine work in the Fire Service, so what would account for a $4.6 million increase?

**Hon. Griffith:** I can get that breakdown for you.

**Miss Cox:** One more—Janitorial Services, there is an increase of $1.4 million. Actually from 2013 it was $4 million, it has now reached $7 million. What has accounted for that increase?

**Hon. Griffith:** Because we have the new fire stations that would be there—obviously the janitorial services would increase because of the new fire stations that are opening.

**Mr. Imbert:** On that same first item there, Maintenance of Vehicles, do you have a list of the vehicles and could you tell me how many of them are maintained in-house?

**Hon. Griffith:** I can get that for you, but I know what we are doing now in the Ministry of National Security is the importance of that preventative maintenance aspect, which is why we are trying to keep as many vehicles on the
road as much as possible. Previously they would have this system—the vehicle would be down and then after you bring it in. Then we started having the problem of cannibalizing the vehicles. So now with the importance of us having the preventative maintenance, there will be that budget now, much more, in dealing with maintenance rather than the repairs.

Mr. Imbert: I did not have any questions on the quantum.

Hon. Griffith: Ok sure. Yes, I will get that for you.

Mr. Imbert: I am not concerned about the amount of money you are spending yet. I just wanted to know whether you are doing it in-house or not, and could I get a list of the vehicles that are being maintained under this Head.

Hon. Griffith: Yes, I will get that for you.

Mr. Chairman: All right, we go to Item 005, Regiment.

Dr. Rowley: Mr. Chairman, 05, Page 117. I just want to make an observation as to the good luck of the National Security Ministry. How did you manage to convince the Ministry of Finance and the Economy to approve a request for $7 million for telephones, when last year’s telephone bills were $2.6 million? What are we anticipating here to cause a provision of $7 million to be set aside for telephones in the regiment?

Hon. Griffith: Mr. Chairman, that has to do with the increasing of the usage charges due to the joint operations that we have.

Dr. Rowley: What?

Hon. Griffith: IATF, Inter-Agency Task Force. There has been an increase in the usage charges.

Dr. Rowley: From $2.6 million to $7 million?

Hon. Griffith: Yes. Chairman, I can provide the breakdown to justify that.

Dr. Rowley: I would like to ask the Minister to look into this, because I do not know, with all due respect, what they are doing, to have almost increased their telephone bill by 200 per cent. I take it down again, to raise the question of competition for services in the Ministry of National Security.

The Food at Institutions bill has jumped considerably in the last two years. I am not here accusing our officers of having an increased appetite; I am talking about the cost of food to the agencies. It has moved from $27 million to $40 million, and I do not know that we have drastically improved the numbers in these agencies. I suspect it has to do with competition for the supply. I am simply drawing this to the attention of the Minister, so that you can ensure that there is
proper competition so that we can get the benefit of competition for the supply to the agencies.

That also includes the quality of what you are supplying, because it may very well be that as we are paying more and more, you are getting less and less in terms of quality. But I suspect that this increase has some element of lack of competition, and there are people in the system who stay there and just offer their prices, and that we are price-takers. Inflation in the country on food has not gone along this line. So just look at that.

Hon. Griffith: Sure, I will do that, Mr. Chairman. There has actually been a decrease, but still I understand the point of it being $40 million even though there is a decrease. But I do recall there was this situation for years gone by where a lot of suppliers were not able to be paid—because I do not know whether it was that the estimates were inaccurate to deal with trying to see about meals for over 10,000 persons at three meals a day. Whether it is because of that—they actually have an allocation that is more conducive to the requirements of the agencies. But I do understand your point.

In fact, the Permanent Secretary and I were actually discussing that to ensure that all of these aspects would be dealt with. There is a relevant audit that is taking place in all these different law enforcement agencies to look at these systems.

Mr. Chairman: The Member for Laventille East/Morvant.

Miss Cox: Those were my questions.

Mr. Imbert: The same question on 13. Is this being done in-house—Maintenance of Vehicles—and could you give me a breakdown of the vehicles, please? How many vehicles, what types of vehicles and is the maintenance being done in-house—regiment.

Hon. Griffith: Go ahead or—

Mr. Imbert: No, I am under that same Item. You will find out why I am asking these questions shortly, because there is a vast disparity in the maintenance figures among divisions. But going now to 58, Medical Expenses; is this a medical plan or is this the actual expenses incurred for medical treatment?

Hon. Griffith: The medical is the actual expenses.

Mr. Imbert: How is it done? Do they go to a private doctor, what happens?
Hon. Griffith: The Defence Force, what they do have are persons who are assigned to the Trinidad and Tobago Defence Force on a permanent basis. Those individuals will go to the different military installations on a specific day every week to deal with matters for the soldiers. Whereas the Defence Force would have an infirmary, they would have a medical room that would deal with on a daily basis any person who has an injury, ailment, and that is what gives the authorization for them to have sick leave. If there will be situations where a doctor would be required, there are doctors that are contracted in the Trinidad and Tobago Defence Force to deal specifically with matters that will be beyond those of someone who is just a trained medical—involved in basic medical aspects.

Then we also have the dental and external bills that would come about. Those individuals would have to go outside of those persons who are doctors that are contracted by the Trinidad and Tobago Defence Force.

Mr. Imbert: So it is a combination of in-house treatment and external?

Hon. Griffith: Yes.

Mr. Imbert: But to what extent is a member of the regiment covered? Do you cover them for anything—bypass surgery?

Hon. Griffith: No.

Mr. Imbert: What is the coverage? That is what I want to know. You treat them for what, a headache, the flu, a broken hand, what?

Hon. Griffith: Injury related to their duties—whilst in the performance of their duties, but then there is also medical coverage. There is also a medical plan by the Trinidad and Tobago—

Mr. Imbert: That is what I am asking you. Does this include payment for a medical plan, this $10 million here?

Hon. Griffith: I will verify that for you.

Mr. Imbert: I just want to know the extent of medical coverage that is afforded to members of the regiment. To what extent, what level of treatment, what kind of procedures, and how far you will go in terms of assisting members of the regiment with medical expenses?

Hon. Griffith: It is all based on if that person had an injury that is related whilst in the performance of their duty, obviously, and that will be automatic. But then as members of the Trinidad and Tobago Defence Force, as with all persons in the military worldwide, there is that medical coverage that can facilitate those
Mr. Imbert: I know you do not have the information, but could you provide it, please.

Hon. Griffith: Sure, I could.

Mr. Imbert: The level of medical coverage.

Mr. Chairman: We go to Item 006, Coast Guard.

Mr. Imbert: Same question, 13. Is the maintenance of vehicles done in-house or not? Could you give a breakdown of the vehicles, please?

Hon. Griffith: Yes, that can be provided for you.

Mr. Imbert: Am I also to assume that your answer would be similar to a question on 58, Medical Expenses? You will have to get back to me on the extent of coverage they provide to the coast guard?

Hon. Griffith: I can. Pertaining to the maintenance of vehicles, that is to meet the increasing cost of repairs and to maintain the new assets, which will be inclusive of the armoured personnel carriers.

Mr. Imbert: Minister, I just asked you whether it is done in-house or not, and could I get a breakdown.

Hon. Griffith: It is; it is. There is a Mechanical Transport Division that deals specifically—

Mr. Imbert: The coast guard.

Hon. Griffith: Or you are on the coast guard now?

Mr. Imbert: Well we are on coast guard. “We pass regiment already, you know.”

Hon. Griffith: I thought you were still on the regiment.

Mr. Imbert: No, you are not listening, man; we are on 006, not so, Mr. Chairman?

Hon. Griffith: You are moving too fast.

Mr. Imbert: We are on 006. But he did not answer me, Mr. Chairman.

Hon. Griffith: What is the question?

Mr. Imbert: Is the maintenance of vehicles for the coast guard done in-house?
Mr. Chairman: Is the maintenance of coast guard vehicles done in-house?

Hon. Griffith: Yes; again, there is a Maintenance Division that deals specifically with those—

Mr. Imbert: And you will give me a list of the vehicles?

Hon. Griffith: Yes.

Dr. Browne: Sub-Item 17, Training for the Coast Guard—very important, but I just want to enquire whether this includes any training for the proposed larger vessels that the Minister has been speaking about, recognizing that that type of training has to occur even before vessels are received. So this $20 million, does this include that type of training?

Hon. Griffith: The type of vessels that we have presently, that will be acquired, the training from the Trinidad and Tobago Coast Guard is not to any great extent, because the type of vessels will be coastal patrol vessels, interceptors, hovercraft. So it will not require any type of training external to Trinidad and Tobago, where you require individuals to have to go abroad to be involved—for the whole crew, for example, like if we are acquiring 50-metre vessels. The Trinidad and Tobago Coast Guard, the persons have the capability to manoeuvre and to utilize these types of vessels. In fact, we are actually now refurbishing two vessels of similar size.

Dr. Browne: Very nice, well you have just triggered an additional question. I had assumed that $20 million involved extensive overseas training, similar to what may have been taking place prior, because when you look at the training in the other arms of the Defence Force, the entire regiment is $9 million. Coast guard you are saying all the training is occurring in Trinidad and Tobago for $20 million.

Hon. Griffith: No, that is for the vessels. There is a difference with the training for the vessels, to training in the Trinidad and Tobago Coast Guard, because there is a different variety. So the training for the coast guard is not specifically just to train them how to manoeuvre vessel. It involves Officer Cadet training for persons who are about to be commissioned. It involves development training. It involves other aspects of leadership training. Also we have the Special Naval Unit, and they are involved in counterterrorist activities.

So there are a number of different types of training elements that would be required by the Trinidad and Tobago Coast Guard, and not specifically to that training that is required for an offshore patrol/long range patrol vessel.
Dr. Browne: I have a further question on training; I will ask it later.

Miss Cox: That was my question.

Mr. Chairman: Let us go on to Item 007, Immigration.

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Chairman, 08. Could you tell us when you are going to properly accommodate Immigration Division and where you are going to accommodate them?

3.15 p.m.

Hon. Griffith: Mr. Chairman, by December we, the Immigration Department they would be moving to the building in the Government Campus Plaza, the PK9.

Mr. Imbert: Oh, on Richmond Street?

Hon. Griffith: Yes.

Mr. Chairman: All right.

Mr. Imbert: Wait. Wait.

Mr. Chairman: Yes.

Mr. Imbert: And I noticed a very small sum for Medical Expenses. Is the medical coverage for the Immigration Division different to the Regiment and Coast Guard?

Hon. Griffith: It is. It is. There is a different type of system for the medical coverage for the members of the Trinidad and Tobago Defence Force to that of Immigration.

Mr. Imbert: What is this $30,000 for under 58? Thirty thousand cannot do much.

Hon. Griffith: Where you see that?

Mr. Imbert: 58.

Mr. Chairman: Yeah, under Medical Expenses, $30,000, what is that for?

Mr. Imbert: What is that for?

Mr. Chairman: The hon. Minister.

Hon. Griffith: I will have to provide that for you.

Mr. Imbert: This is woefully inadequate.
Hon. Griffith: Thirty thousand.

Mr. Chairman: Member for Laventille East/Morvant.

Miss Cox: 62—I see a big increase in Promotions, Publicity and Printing, what is the reason for that?

Mr. Chairman: That is Immigration?

Miss Cox: Immigration. From $128,000 to 500—[Crosstalk] [Minister confers with advisor]

Hon. Griffith: I will have to provide that for you, Chairman. I believe I know what it is, but I do not want to give you the wrong information.

Mr. Chairman: The Member for Chaguanas West.

Mr. Warner: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. 51, Relocation of Overseas Staff, I read where many members of staff in the New York office, for example, were sent back home amid much tears and crying and so on. But I see you have increased the allocation for relocation. With less people working overseas, how do you have more staff, more money?

Hon. Griffith: No, there was a rotation. It was not a matter, Mr. Chairman, that we just sent persons home. There was the rotation, then after we had the increase—China now being established—so that is where you will see the increase.

Mr. Warner: Okay.

Mr. Chairman: All right. We go on to Item 010, Fire Service, (Tobago). Item 013, Immigration, (Tobago); Item 014, Defence Force Headquarters. Item 015, the Cadet Force and Item 016, Air Guard. I recognize the Member for Diego Martin North/East and the Member for Diego Martin West.

Mr. Imbert: Now, what I find this cost of the Maintenance of Vehicles for the Air Guard, shocking. Now, the Air Guard flies in the air. The cost of maintenance of vehicles, unless this is a misprint, $44 million for the air guard, a small unit of the protective services that flies aircraft. Whereas the regiment which drives on the road, the allocation is only $12 million. Can you explain this enormous difference for Maintenance of Vehicles? It does not make sense. What cars they have that they are maintaining so?—$44 million for Maintenance of Vehicles for the Air Guard, and only $12 million for the regiment?

Mr. Chairman: If I may. I normally do not get involved in these things—
Mr. Imbert: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Chairman:—but I say, if you go to page xii of the document, under the Maintenance of Vehicles you will see a number 13 where they say, for the:

“purchase of all items necessary for the upkeep and maintenance of Government Vehicles,”

—would include the cars, the vans, the trucks, the buses, the vessels and the aircraft. So, I do not know if that would explain.

Hon. Griffith: So with the vehicles, it would also involve maintenance, fuel for the helicopters, the Agusta helicopters and the fixed-wing aircraft, and that alone the fuel cost for those things—every time those Agusta helicopters just take off, once they get five feet off the ground that is $5,000 it will cost us.

Mr. Imbert: Okay. Fine.

Mr. Chairman: Could we move on?

Mr. Imbert: No. No. No. Hold on. Now that you have told me that maintenance of vehicles includes vessels and aircrafts, can you explain to me, why the cost of Maintenance of Vehicles for the Coast Guard is half the Air Guard?

Hon. Griffith: That has to do, Mr. Chairman, with the problem that we have encountered with the Agusta helicopter. The Agusta helicopter, the average cost for one such helicopter is arguably about US $12 million, we paid about $23 million. But the maintenance for these helicopters, each one, the cost is approximately $500 million. So whereas the cost for the helicopter is about a hundred, we are actually paying over $500 million for each of the four helicopters. So, we have actually been locked into a contract—

Mr. Imbert: Minister.

Hon. Griffith:—for the helicopters at $1.6 billion.

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Chairman, those figures bear no relation to what I am saying.

Hon. Griffith: It does. It does, Mr. Chairman, because—

Mr. Imbert: The Coast Guard is $20 million, the Air Guard is $44 million. You are talking about $500 million.

Hon. Griffith: No. You are right. It is an annual cost, Mr. Chairman, where the annual cost—

Mr. Imbert: This is an annual cost.
Hon. Griffith: Yes. And the annual cost also involves constant travel for when we have to send personnel to Pennsylvania.

Mr. Imbert: You said $500 million, I am seeing $20 million.

Hon. Griffith: That is just part of the pie. [Crosstalk] No. No. That is maintenance and training. That is what I said. It is $500 million for each helicopter for maintenance and training.

Mr. Imbert: Where is that reflected in the estimates?

Hon. Griffith: And there is also the fuel cost as well.

Mr. Imbert: Minister, where is that reflected in the estimates? If you say this item covers everything—as the Chairman so kindly told us—this is everything, vessels, aircraft, fuel, everything in here. I am seeing $20 million. You are saying it is $500 million.

Hon. Griffith: No. No. That is over a five-year period, and it is for each—

Mr. Imbert: That is a hundred.

Hon. Griffith: No. But this is maintenance, and when I said $500 million, it is maintenance and training. It is a whole variety of different aspects that have been locked into that contract.

Mr. Imbert: You cannot answer the question—

Hon. Griffith: I did.

Mr. Chairman: All right. I recognize the Member for Laventille East/Morvant.

Miss Cox: Mr. Chairman, I wanted to—my question had to do with cost of the helicopters and so on, and I know that helicopters and the small planes are very expense—maintenance and also operation. But who authorizes the use of these vehicles to bring the Member for Tobago East to and from Tobago.

Hon. Griffith: Sorry. The helicopters you are speaking about? Who brings—sorry.

Miss Cox: Who authorizes the use of these vehicles? You spoke about expense, maintenance and so on, to bring the Member for Tobago East to and from Tobago on a regular basis.

Hon. Griffith: I cannot recall the Member for Tobago East ever utilizing any of those helicopters—[Crosstalk]
Dr. Moonilal: Which heading?

Hon. Griffith:—from the Trinidad and Tobago Air Guard.

Dr. Moonilal: What is that a medical expense? [Crosstalk]

Miss Cox: If it is not from the Air Guard, then where is it from?

Mr. Chairman: All right. Let us move on. Let us not argue, if he makes a response.

Miss Cox: Who authorizes the one from NOC? [Crosstalk]

Dr. Rowley: Mr. Chairman—

Mr. Chairman: Yes.

Dr. Rowley:—with your concurrence.

Hon. Griffith: You should ask that question when they are talking NOC.

Dr. Rowley:—could the Minister tell me, Mr. Chairman—[Crosstalk]

Mr. Chairman: Yes, continue, hon. Member.

Dr. Rowley:—could the Minister tell me, please, what is the size of the complement, in numbers, of the Air Guard? And what is the size of the regiment in terms of complement—numbers?

Hon. Griffith: The Trinidad and Tobago Air Guard is a newly established arm of the Trinidad and Tobago Defence Force. It is much smaller than that of the Trinidad and Tobago Regiment.

Dr. Rowley: How many do they have there?


Dr. Rowley: And the regiment?

Hon. Griffith: Three thousand.

Dr. Rowley: So the regiment has 3,000 bodies and the Air Guard has 400, but the food bill for the Air Guard is a quarter of that of the regiment. So, we budget $40 million for food at institutions for the regiment, and we budget $10 million for the Air Guard. Something is not right here.

Hon. Griffith: Yes. I understand, but Mr. Chairman, what happens is that the members of the Trinidad and Tobago Regiment they are involved with much
more—where you have platoons and companies, they remain in camp for 24-hour periods. The facility for the Air Guard involves much more in operations for the use of the helicopters. So it is not—where as you may just be looking at the maths and multiply it by four, but the duties of the Trinidad and Tobago Regiment will facilitate many more persons being confined and remaining in the camp.

**Dr. Rowley**: And that is the point I am making. You are making my case. I am saying, you told me you have 3,000-odd people, and I am saying that is eight times as many people that you have in the Air Guard, but your budget for food at that institution is $40 million.

**Hon. Griffith**: Oh, in the Air Guard.

**Dr. Rowley**: But for the Air Guard which is a much smaller percentage of people, you are budgeting $10 million which is 25 per cent of the budget. How do you explain that?

**Hon. Griffith**: Oh. I understand. They eat. [Laughter]

**Mr. Chairman**: All right. We want to move on now.

**Dr. Rowley**: No. No. No. Mr. Chairman, I have not gotten an answer. I am asking for an answer.

**Hon. Griffith**: I will find that out, and I will also look at the menu.

**Mr. Chairman**: We go on to Item 17, Immigration Detention Centre. We are going to Immigration Detention Centre. I recognize the Member for Laventille East/Morvant and the Member for Arouca/Maloney.

**Miss Cox**: Mr. Chairman, Minister, there are many issues facing the Immigration Detention Centre, and I am just concerned whether sufficient funds are being expended for the proper management and running of the centre. I see here, under 17, there is no allocation for 2014 for training. Is there a particular reason?

**Hon. Griffith**: Sorry.

**Miss Cox**: But there is an estimated no allocation, but an estimated $6 million for 2015. Is there a reason why there is no money allocated for training?

**Hon. Griffith**: I will have that information provided for you. I will get that for you.

**Miss Cox**: Because there was none before.
Mr. Chairman: All right.

Miss Cox: Also, Other Contracted Services, what accounts for this? I see there is a decrease. What accounts for this?

Mr. Chairman: There is a decrease. What accounts for the decrease from $8 million to $6 million? [Crosstalk]

Dr. Moonilal: The Leader of the Opposition said to start cutting. That accounts for the decrease. They have advised us to cut. [Crosstalk]

Hon. Griffith: Just one minute, Chair. [Crosstalk]

Mr. Chairman: It is page 124. Okay. And we are going to Item 28—Sub-Item rather—28. What is the reason for the decrease?

Hon. Griffith: What is the reason for the decrease?

Mr. Chairman: I think you should provide that answer.

Hon. Griffith: Yeah. I will provide that answer for you.

Mr. Chairman: Yes.

Mr. Imbert: Could I just get confirmation from the Minister, since you are now defining vehicles as vessels and aircraft and everything, you are going to get a list of the vehicles, including vessels and aircraft, for each one of these?

Hon. Griffith: But I did not define it, the book defined it as that. [Crosstalk]

Mr. Chairman: I am just quoting from the book.

Mr. Imbert: Now, we have discovered this is what it is, you will get a list of vehicles which will include vessels and aircraft—

Hon. Griffith: And helicopters.

Mr. Imbert:—for each one of these.

Hon. Griffith: Understood.

Mr. Imbert: Right. Okay.

Mr. Chairman: The Member for Arouca/Maloney.

Miss Hospedales: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Under Sub-Item 16, Contract Employment, in 2013 and 2014 there was no allocation, but there is a $6 million allocation in 2015. Could the Minister provide us with the list of vacant positions, if any? And if there are no vacant positions, the number of contract positions that exist in that particular establishment.

Hon. Griffith: The structure was just approved, Chairman, hence the reason for that increase that you are seeing.
Mr. Chairman: All right. We go to Item 18, Volunteer Defence Force. I recognize the Member for St. Joseph and the Member for Laventille West.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Thank you, Chair. Hon. Minister, under Uniforms, line Item 03, could you tell me how many personnel make up the Volunteer Defence Force? And how many uniforms we are purchasing here?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister.

Hon. Griffith: My volunteer is not volunteering to give me any information in the back there, Chairman. [Crosstalk] It is 220.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Two hundred and twenty. Has this number been constant from 2013 to 2015? [Crosstalk]

Hon. Griffith: I know it to be 400, but I am being told it is 220.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Four hundred.

Hon. Griffith: Four hundred.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Has that number been constant for 2013 to 2015?

Mr. Chairman: What is the number?

Hon. Griffith: Has there been an increase?

Mr. Chairman: Give us the proper number, please?

Hon. Griffith: Okay. There are permanent members of the reserve defence force.

Mr. Chairman: That is how many?

Hon. Griffith: Two hundred.

Mr. Chairman: And how many are reserves?

Hon. Griffith: Well they are also reserves, but then there are those who are on reserve strength that will only come out if required based on the authority, and that will be another 220—400—sorry.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Hon. Minister, has that number been constant from 2013 to 2015 with minor variations? Not significant—

Hon. Griffith: Yes.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Thank you. Therefore, my question under line Item 09, Rent/Lease Vehicles and Equipment; in 2013, the actual was roughly $30,000 but in 2015 it has gone up by approximately seven times to $230,000.
3.30 p.m.

And this issue of rental of vehicles pervades all these documents, somebody is making a lot of money. What accounts for this sevenfold increase in the rent/lease of vehicles if the numbers have remained more or less constant from 2013 to 2015?

Hon. Griffith: Just a minute, please, Chairman. We actually have the documents here, I would have that provided for you.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Thank you. And lastly, line item 13: Maintenance of Vehicles. Again 2013, $295,000 actually spent; but the 2015 estimate for Maintenance of Vehicles is a fourfold increase to $1.3 million. So, these increases sevenfold for rent/lease, fourfold for maintenance of vehicles do not seem to fit if it is the manpower complement, as stated, has remained more or less the same from 2013 to 2015. So, we have a little conundrum there.

Mr. Chairman: Yes, Minister.

Hon. Griffith: Chairman, I do know that the reserve defence must have been involved a lot more in training and other elements that they were never involved before, so that may very well be the reason for that increase. But what I would do, I will verify and get to you the rationale why it is there has been that request for that increase.

Mr. Deyalsingh: And the maintenance to vehicles, is this done in-house or is it contracted to a third party?

Hon. Griffith: No. Again, there is a Mechanical Transport Division in the Trinidad and Tobago Defence Force, but also depending on the problem with the vehicle it may be contracted outside.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Thank you.

Mr. Chairman: All right, we are moving on to Sub-Head 03: Minor Equipment Purchases. Item 001, General Administration, I recognize the Member for Diego Martin West.

Dr. Rowley: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. My understanding of minor equipment is like photocopying machines, air condition units, and for the army, dogs and horses and things like that, but I noticed that we are making a provision of $45 million for minor equipment. A provision was made of $50 million in 2014, and of that I see a revision downwards to $29 million. So, if the $50 million provision of 2014 is to be revised downwards to $29 million at the closure of the
accounts of 2014, what is the reason for making a request and being provisioned to the tune of $45 million for minor equipment? What actually are we going to buy with that $45 million?

**Mr. Chairman:** You follow it?

**Hon. Griffith:** No, I am not seeing it.

**Dr. Rowley:** Page 126, last line.

**Hon. Griffith:** Oh, the last line, sorry.

**Mr. Chairman:** We are under 04.

**Hon. Griffith:** Oh, 04. It is regiment.

**Mr. Chairman:** Yes, under regiment.

**Dr. Rowley:** The second to last line. If you look at the pattern of expenditure—

**Hon. Griffith:** It is increased by $15 million.

**Dr. Rowley:** But, what is the reason for that provision under minor equipment?

**Mr. Chairman:** Could you provide the answer now or you want to—

**Hon. Griffith:** No, I would like to provide the answer later on, Mr. Chairman.

**Dr. Rowley:** Could we get a detailed—and by the way, if you could also tell us what did you—to understand this more clearly, could you provide this with details as to what you bought with the $29 million?

**Hon. Griffith:** With the $29 million?

**Dr. Rowley:** What did you spend $29 million on in 2014? You have to give us a good picture as to why you are looking for $45 million in 2015?

**Hon. Griffith:** Sure, understood. Yes, Chairman.

**Mr. Chairman:** Yes, Member for Laventille East/Morvant.

**Miss Cox:** Under Minor Equipment Purchases, under fire service vehicles there is an increase of $19.7 million for the purchase of vehicles. Found it? Same page 126, 002, Fire Service, and there is an increase of 19.7, what accounts for that huge increase? Also, I would like to know if provision is made for the purchase of a fire tender for the Crown Point Fire Service? I understand that they have one operating crash tender, and are you all also going to replace—are you listening?

**Hon. Griffith:** Yes, sorry.
Miss Cox:—the crashed fire tender that was crashed up on the north coast?

Hon. Griffith: Chairman, the drastic increase you are seeing there is because of the purchase of new vehicles for the new fire stations in Mayaro, Lady Hailes, Arouca, Penal, and the replacement of vehicles recommended by the board of survey—there are 236 fire vehicles; 48 are out of service and 48 for board of survey, and also we will be acquiring—

Dr. Rowley: Two hundred and—

Hon. Griffith: Two hundred and thirty six fire vehicles.

Dr. Rowley: You have the whole fleet up there.

Hon. Griffith: No, no, no. The fleet is 236; 46 would be out of service and 48 with the board of survey, and then ambulance as well, 18 would be acquired and 15 utility vehicles bought in fiscal—so because of the new stations being acquired.

Miss Cox: This is a follow-up question concerning Tobago one time. Okay? Is provision made for a vehicle for Crown Point, do you know?

Hon. Griffith: Yes, there is and there is something else. Not just a vehicle, a vehicle and another tender for Tobago as well.

Mr. Chairman: All right, we are going to Item 006, Coast Guard. Yes Member for Diego Martin North/East.

Miss Cox: Minister.

Hon. Griffith: Yes, sorry.

Miss Cox: I am waiting on my—“meh answer coming?”

Hon. Griffith: Sorry.

Miss Cox: The answer coming concerning the fire?

Hon. Griffith: Chairman, I would get that information for you later today.

Mr. Chairman: All right, we go on to the Member for Diego Martin North/East.

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Chairman, when I look at the definition of minor equipment I see cell phones, vacuum cleaners, refrigerators, stoves, lawn mowers, and things like that. How is it possible that the allocation for the Coast Guard for these things—cell phones and refrigerators and so on—is $9 million, the Regiment is
$45 million, and the Air Guard over the page is $15 million? What policy is used to come up with these numbers? They do not make any sense.

Hon. Griffith: Why?

Mr. Imbert: Why would the Air Guard minor equipment be more than the Coast Guard minor equipment? Coast guard is a much larger force.

Hon. Griffith: No, it is not really the manpower strength, you know. It is based on the requirements for—it is the equipment, not the manpower.

Mr. Imbert: Okay, the Coast Guard engages in at least as many operations as the Air Guard, I would think. They have far more equipment, far more men and far more operational manoeuvres than the Air Guard on a daily basis.

Hon. Griffith: With the type of equipment that would be required for communication would be different.

Mr. Imbert: It is refrigerators, photocopying machines—

Hon. Griffith: We also spoke about communication equipment.

Mr. Imbert: It says, cell phones, vacuum cleaners, refrigerators, stoves, lawn mowers, microwave ovens and so on. I cannot understand how the allocation for the Coast Guard is $9 million, the Air Guard is $15 million. We need to get a breakdown of these things. It does not make any sense.

Hon. Griffith: Okay. I could provide that right now, Chairman.

Mr. Imbert: Yes, we need to get it. We need to get it.

Hon. Griffith: Sure.

Mr. Imbert: What is it going on? No wonder the Coast Guard is underserved. That is what I am seeing here.

Mr. Chairman: All right, you would provide that information to us?

Hon. Griffith: Yes. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: We go to Item 007, Immigration. Item 010, we have passed Tobago; Item 014, Defence Force Headquarters; Item 015, Cadet Force; Item 016, Air Guard; Item 017, Immigration Detention Centre; Item 018, Volunteer Defence Force. We go to Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies; Item 001, Regional Bodies. I recognize the Member for Diego Martin North/East and the Member for Diego Martin Central.
Mr. Imbert: Mr. Chairman, we are apparently forced to contribute to this agency that is on 05, IMPACS, is it of any use to us? [Hon. G. Griffith laughs] $13 million—see, the Minister is laughing—you spent $13 million on this agency, does it provide any purpose at all?

Mr. Chairman: The hon. Minister.

Hon. Griffith: Chairman, the answer is yes. The first thing is that, IMPACS, there is supposed to be a contribution made between all arms of Caricom. The countries, they all agreed to the budget but they do not all contribute to the budget.

Hon. Member: So, we pay for it.

Hon. Griffith: It is unfortunate that Trinidad and Tobago, we actually see about, apart from the allocation we have annually to deal with IMPACS, our contribution, we also see about the rental and the salaries for those persons who are stationed here in Trinidad and Tobago. But the importance of IMPACS cannot be overemphasized at this time, especially because of global terrorism. IMPACS has been the avenue to assist in monitoring persons of interest on the watch list. So, IMPACS—it is important. My concern has always been the fact that we are the ones that have been contributing and keeping it afloat, but without Impacs, if that shuts down, it can definitely affect our security, especially based on the terrorists watch list and monitoring persons. So, what we do need to do is emphasize with our Caricom neighbours the importance of IMPACS and not just to support the budget but also to contribute to the budget.

Mr. Imbert: Okay.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, we go to Item 004, International Bodies; Item 007, Households. I recognize the Leader of the Opposition.

Dr. Rowley: Mr. Chairman, 04 under 007, Civilian Conservation Corps, could I just ask the Minister, what are we getting for $55 million? Is the Corps at full strength and meeting its expectations in terms of support, its original targets and so on?

Hon. Griffith: Mr. Chairman, the Civilian Conservation Corps is not along the aspect of just giving people fish but teaching them how to fish. The Civilian Conservation Corps has been very instrumental in getting young persons to utilize their energies in the right manner, and because of the character traits that one may acquire from the Trinidad and Tobago Defence Force, those character traits have played a very big part towards the development of the youths in different aspects.
It involves punctuality, discipline, leadership, organizational structure, teamwork, and also to assist them in trying to find avenues so that they can utilize their energies away from a life of crime.

So, the Civilian Conservation Corps has proven to be very effective. I do agree that we can improve it to ensure that we get maximum benefit from it, but it is one of the main aspects in the Trinidad and Tobago Defence Force to show the importance of the defence force outside of times of war.

Dr. Rowley: About how many youngsters we have in the corps now?

Hon. Griffith: Just over 1,000 at this time.

Hon. Moheni: It is wanted every six months, we have a new batch brought in and they go between 1,000 to 1,200.

Dr. Rowley: Thank you. Mr. Chairman, the Mentoring Programme for youth at risk—

Hon. Griffith: The Mentorship?

Dr. Rowley: Yes, that is Item 011, what is happening there with respect to that expenditure of $3 million? How many persons we have in that programme now?

Hon. Moheni: Presently we have approximately 350 persons.

Dr. Rowley: And are they rotated as well?

Hon. Moheni: No. They bring them as a group, they run them through a camp, then they train the mentors and then they match the mentors with the mentees.

Dr. Rowley: How long do the mentees stay in the programme?

Hon. Moheni: One year. At least one year, some go beyond that.

Dr. Rowley: I have a few more questions on 09 but I would give way to others at the moment.

Mr. Chairman: The Member for Laventille East/Morvant and then Member for Diego Martin North/East and the Member for Chaguanas West and then we will go to the Member for Diego Martin Central.

3.45 p.m.

Miss Cox: Mr. Chair, I just wanted to know about this. I am seeing here, School Discipline Initiative. What is that about?

Hon. Member: Which number?

Miss Cox: Households, 09.
Hon. Griffith: I can have the details provided for you.

Miss Cox: All right, because I am seeing some money allocated here so I was curious about it.

Hon. Griffith: One hundred thousand.

Mr. Chairman: The Member for Diego Martin North/East.

Miss Cox: Yes. I am not finished.

Mr. Chairman: Oh, you are not finished.

Miss Cox: HIV Coordinating Unit, I see—[Crosstalk] all right, good, hold on let me just get one more. National Security Officers Foundation, because are we still under 007, Mr. Chairman?

Mr. Chairman: Yes, yes.

Miss Cox: Right, what is—I see there is an increase of $136,000, eh, but the increase is not the issue. What is being put in place for veterans?

Hon. Griffith: Such as—

Miss Cox: Veterans.

Hon. Griffith: I know, but anything—

Miss Cox: Is there a plan for veterans in the service, because I know that they have been clamouring to be recognized and to be afforded a particular type of service by the Ministry. Is there anything in place for veterans?

Hon. Griffith: What I have been looking at, this is not in the budget, it has to do with the concerns that we have seen, where persons may have left the defence force—you retire at 45 years old, you are retired, and whether it is an insurance scheme or other aspects, they try to have those individuals—[Interruption]

Miss Cox: Taken care of.

Hon. Griffith: Yes, taken care of.

Miss Cox: That is being looked at?

Hon. Griffith: Yes.

Miss Cox: Okay.

Mr. Chairman: I recognize the Member for Diego Martin North/East.
Mr. Imbert: Yes, Mr. Chairman, going back to those items that the Leader of the Opposition brought up, 04 in particular and 05 under 007. What I have worked out is that it is costing us $50,000 a year to train one person in the Civilian Conservation Corps. Have you ever done a value for money audit on this?

Hon. Griffith: I think definitely, Mr. Chairman, the cost benefit analysis towards taking young persons and utilizing their energies away from a life of crime, I think that just by that—[Interruption]

Mr. Imbert: That is not what I meant. You are training these young people, it is costing you $50,000 per year, per trainee. Is there not another way to do this, where it could cost far less than $50,000 a year per person? What is your number? What will make you comfortable, $100,000 a year per person, $15,000? Have you ever done a value for money audit on this?

Hon. Griffith: Yes, that is why we are actually doing an audit that involves the aspect towards the Hoop of Life, the Mentorship Programme to do exactly that, to ensure that there is cost benefit analysis so that they are not putting excess funds on middle management, and it is actually not being utilized, yes.

Mr. Imbert: That is the point. But you have not done that yet?

Hon. Griffith: No, we actually spoke about the audit that was mentioned—[Interruption]

Mr. Imbert: You are in the process of doing it, you have not finished it yet?

Hon. Griffith: No.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, the Member for Diego Martin Central.

Dr. Browne: Well, first of all a follow-up on that issue. When you say an audit, are you referring to an evaluation? My question is on the strength or weakness of the monitoring and evaluation capacity within the Ministry, because from time to time—and there are several line items of relevance—these different programmes, different Ministers would have their brainwaves and you would have these social programmes with the national security.

Have you been strengthening—I am not seeing evidence of it here—the monitoring and evaluation capacity, so that these can be regularly evaluated on a structured basis and it could be reflected to the Parliament and the country? That is one question. My second question has to do with this same, as asked by my colleague, National Security Officers Foundation, and the concerns about retired defence force service members. There are reflecting issues of late payment of their—[Interruption]
Hon. Griffith: Gratuity.

Dr. Browne: Yes, and increases were granted since, I think, 2008, and there has been—[Interruption]

Hon. Griffith: And back pay.

Dr. Browne: Yeah, concerns about that. So I do not know if that has your attention. So those were two issues.

Hon. Griffith: Yes, the department is actually working on that. That is the latter point. Pertaining to the concept of the audit, the audit is not, similar to an audit, just a financial audit to look at dollars and cents, but it is to ensure exactly that—that [Crosstalk] it ensures systems that we can put in to make sure that we can maximize the value for all of these different projects, because it might very well be that we have funds that are being put into it that may not be required or that we need to put focus on other aspects to improve the performance of these projects.

Dr. Browne: Who is conducting that exercise or to conduct that exercise?

Hon. Griffith: The Permanent Secretary, he is actually, he is involved right now with a team to ensure that we have that agency to deal with the audit, because there might be different agencies depending on the requirement. For example, for the Mentorship Programme it could be something probably totally different to the requirement for the Hoop of Life.

Dr. Browne: Would it be in-house or contracted, that service?

Hon. Griffith: Contracted.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, we go to Item 009, Other Transfers. I recognize the Member for Chaguanas West and then the Member for Laventille East/Morvant and then my two colleagues down there.

Mr. Warner: Under 16, Transit Police Unit, can you tell me, how these people are recruited, how they are trained and if this $1 million for the police applies to them?

Hon. Griffith: If the—

Mr. Warner: One million dollars, if you are damaged in the line of duty, if that applies to these policemen?

Hon. Griffith: The $1 million, Mr. Chairman, again we are still looking at the system to ensure that no one will be left out, but in the same manner it is not abused. I can give you an example, if someone is playing a football game for the police and unfortunately something happens, if that is going to be considered
killing in the line of duty, if he is still performing his duty. [Crosstalk] Well, I know, but the thing is, it is very important that we be very clear to ensure that this is not abused in any way or it goes overboard, whilst at the same time ensuring that individuals who have performed in the line of duty and they are killed that they would be compensated. And that would involve not just transit police, we are also looking at the—[Interuption]

Mr. Warner: Mr. Minister, I am not of course too bothered, at another time I will go into that detail. Not that I do not understand you, because I have to talk about the SRP and all these people, so that is an aside already. My question really is, however, how these people are recruited, how they are trained? Because I see them almost every day, and I think that there needs to be some kind of overhaul of that unit. How they are trained, how they are being recruited, that is the critical point right now. The SRP I will come to at another time.

Mr. Chairman: You have information on that?

Hon. Griffith: Yes, Mr. Chairman, through OLEP there is a proper recruiting process that takes place, and the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service they do have a part to play in that process for the training of the transit police. Obviously, it will not be the same as the persons who actually go in as regular members of the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service, but there is that basic degree of training that is mandated. It is similar to the reserve Defence Force Reserves, similar to the SRPs. You must have some basic degree of training that is provided for those individuals.

Mr. Warner: Is recruitment exercise advertised?

Hon. Griffith: Yes, it is. In fact, it was advertised just recently.

Mr. Chairman: Yes, I recognize the Member for Laventille East/Morvant.

Miss Cox: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, I have a few questions. I just want to take all. SSA, there is an increase of $25 million, what accounts for that increase?

Hon. Griffith: I will have to liaise with the Director of SSA to ensure that I can provide that information and without actually revealing—there is a reason for it, this is not a “cloak-and-dagger” situation for the increase. There is something much more than that.

Miss Cox: Well, we know one already, but we want to know the other reasons.

Hon. Griffith: I do not know, you could tell me.
Miss Cox: All right, I move to the HIV Coordinating Unit. It is $2 million—I mean this unit, is it just for the Ministry of National Security General Administration? But I think it also covers defence force and so on.

Hon. Griffith: What is it?

Miss Cox: The HIV Unit.

Hon. Griffith: That works on, we work hand in hand with the Ministry of Health on this matter.

Miss Cox: The Morvant/Laventille Initiative, I see an estimate of $23 million for 2015 and for 2014, $26 million. I want to know what this is about, what was spent, what was done? Laventille/Morvant Initiative, where was this money spent?

Hon. Griffith: That is through OLEP. I can give you a breakdown of how all the funds were spent and to explain to you how it can be acquired.

Miss Cox: But was it spent in Morvant and Laventille? That is what I would like to know.

Hon. Griffith: Yeah.

Miss Cox: Okay, there was an increase concerning, as you spoke about OLEP, an increase of $2.8 million. What accounts for that increase to OLEP?

Hon. Griffith: OLEP is now being involved, Mr. Chairman, in a number of other activities. The Community Comfort Patrol being one and other avenues. So OLEP has become much more—heavily involved in other aspects, and again I can give you the comprehensive breakdown of all that has caused the increase.

Mr. Chairman: The Member for Diego Martin North/East.

Mr. Imbert: Why is there not a Diego Martin initiative? I see Morvant/Laventille, what is that?

Hon. Griffith: You have any concerns with this?

Mr. Imbert: I am serious, I am asking you. What is it? Twenty-three million dollars for what?

Mr. Chairman: That is the only one that you—[Interruption]

Mr. Imbert: They are not answering my question. What is this for?

Mr. Chairman: All right, let me recognize the Member for Diego Martin West, please.

Dr. Rowley: Mr. Chairman, I have an abiding concern about the management of these accounts under these transfers, not just in this Ministry, transfers in
Appropriation Bill, 2014  Tuesday, September 23, 2014

general, because it seems to have now become, not now, but it has turned out to be a major part of management of the Public Accounts of Trinidad and Tobago. And against the background of our recent development which our colleague here is very familiar with, there is an issue of public accounts management reporting, transparency and accountability. And against that background I want to ask the Minister, how are these moneys transferred to all these elements under 007 and 009? How is the operation run? Are there bank accounts that go with those transfers? Who is the money transferred to and how are the moneys accounted for by the accounting officer who would have transferred those moneys?

Hon. Griffith: Mr. Chairman, it is not that there is a specific bank account for these agencies, everything goes through the accounts department of the Ministry of National Security. So, with that, it will ensure that we have the checks and balances. I am not saying that it does not mean that we need to verify whether we need to cut the fat in anyway, but—[Interruption]

Dr. Rowley: I am not here raising the quantum at all. I am talking about the management of the accounts. If we agree that the sums are quite okay and there are no problems with the accounts, but what you just said only guarantees that the money leaves you—[Interruption]

Hon. Griffith: Yes.

Dr. Rowley:—and you send these transfers somewhere—for example, let us take the Morvant/Laventille Initiative, we are transferring, on an annual basis, over $20 million per annum to something called the Movant/Laventille Initiative. As far as I am concerned that is Lennox Smith. The accounting officer in your Ministry sends or causes to be sent to MLIO, $20-odd million of taxpayers’ money. The question I am putting to you, how does your accounting officer, who as an accounting officer for the Ministry, in which that transfer has been made and for which he is responsible as the accounting officer, how does he account for what goes on in MLIO? And what are the reporting arrangements for accounting for those moneys.

Hon. Griffith: I have it here to show the breakdown of every single thing that was spent for it. The breakdown with the schools, the project category, the start date, how it was approved, the number of persons benefited—[Interruption]

Dr. Rowley: Who gave you that?

Hon. Griffith: The Ministry of National Security. This came from—[Interruption]
Dr. Rowley: Where did they get it from? What is the accounting arrangement? Not just a document. You see, anybody could write anything, Mr. Chairman, and send it to you. What I am looking for is a proper accounting procedure. Once the money leaves your Ministry by way of your accounting officer sending it, how does he verify that what you are reading there for me has any base in fact? You remember LifeSport, I am sure you can give me a whole document, a whole box of paper about LifeSport with all kinds of numbers and all kinds of Companies and all kind of—but we notice in the end that they bore no relation to reality in many instances. So what I am asking, how does the accounting officer in your Ministry account for these transfers?

Dr. Moonilal: And you mean the project as well eh, not just the money.

Dr. Rowley: Because he is the accounting officer.

4.00 p.m.

You see, my fear is that once that cheque goes to the entity, that is the end of that, until some unpleasant story breaks. Could you tell us what is in place so that the accounting officer at the level of the Ministry can be properly held accountable for these large sums of moneys transferred to entities, even nebulous entities like MLIO? [Crosstalk] That is not the Lennox Smith MLIO?

Technocrat: Morvant/Laventille Initiative. It is a broad-based—sorry.

Dr. Rowley: That is something else? Well, I am glad to hear that because, I mean—

Dr. Moonilal: Having slandered the man, you are happy to hear that.

Dr. Rowley: Slander? But I am asking you—[Crosstalk]

Mr. Chairman: Yes, I recognize the Member for Diego Martin West.

Dr. Rowley: Mr. Chairman, there is more. It is not just MLIO, it is ODPM as well. You see, we have ODPM. How does ODPM get money from the Ministry? A cheque? Was a cheque sent to the ODPM?

Hon. Griffith: Chairman, for example, ODPM, if they were involved in disaster—when we had the disaster relief in St. Lucia, they would be the coordinating body and then they would send the list of the requirements. So for example, if we send water suppliers or whatever, cheques will be made payable directly to the supplier based on what was sent out.

Dr. Rowley: So the ODPM does not award contracts? Is that what you are telling me?

Hon. Griffith: No. Pertaining to disaster management?
Dr. Rowley: I am talking about the operations of the ODPM because they are here, the recipient of $65 million, and last year they got $60 million; the previous year they got $56 million, and I presume that this is in preparation to discharge their responsibility when there is a disaster. So it cannot be that—it is not my understanding that they only come into being. Do they award contracts?

Hon. Griffith: They have a limit up to $450,000. Anything other than that, they have to get the request and the approval from the Permanent Secretary for the acquisition.

Dr. Rowley: To award contracts for anything?


Dr. Moonilal: They have ongoing work too, eh, not just disaster—

Hon. Griffith: The ODPM we have is not just that they wait on a disaster, there are ongoing things of—

Dr. Moonilal: Awareness.

Hon. Griffith: Awareness programme, yes.

Mr. Chairman: You are over?

Dr. Rowley: I would just like to ask the Minister—

Hon. Member: Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: Just now.

Dr. Rowley: You see, the Minister has just confused me there because I would like him to confirm that the ODPM does not award contracts.

Hon. Griffith: No.

Dr. Rowley: Because if it does not, well then my fear is not based on—if it does, then I would like to know how those contracts are awarded and we would like a list of these contracts awarded by the ODPM in the last year and the forecast for what is to be spent—

Hon. Griffith: Just the contracts, or expenses?

Dr. Rowley: Who are the contractors; what they have contracted for and how the money was spent in the last year. Because it is my view, contrary to what you have just said, that the ODPM does, in fact, obtain goods and services. [Crosstalk]

Mr. Chairman: I recognize the Member for Diego Martin North/East.
Miss Mc Donald: “And me after.” [Crosstalk]

Mr. Imbert: Could the Minister finally tell me what is the Morvant/Laventille initiative and why is there not a Diego Martin initiative? Just tell me what it is, since it is dealing with crime or national security—

Mr. Chairman: And then I go to the Member for Diego Martin Central. Go ahead.

Dr. Khan: Mr. Chairman, in the vein of what the—Minister of National Security—

Mr. Imbert: But wait! “Why ah cyar geh meh answer?”

Dr. Khan:—in the vein of what the Member for Diego Martin West has been asking, about the management structure and how the contracts are awarded, et cetera, I would like to find out if the Minister of National Security could tell me what was the management structure for the Blimp and how was that contract awarded. [Crosstalk] No, I want to know! I want to know! [Crosstalk]

Mr. Chairman: Member for Diego Martin Central and the Member for Arouca/Maloney and then the Member for Port of Spain South. The Member for Diego Martin Central, please.

Dr. Browne: Minister, do I have your attention?

Mr. Chairman: Yeah. Please, please, please, please. [Crosstalk]

Hon. Member: We will discipline you!

Mr. Chairman: Please, please.

Dr. Khan: Did they have management structures before this?

Mr. Chairman: Please! Please!

Dr. Browne: Yes, Minister, I promised a follow-up question on Training and it is under Sub-Item 21, this National Security Training Academy. I would like some information about this. Are we not under Other Transfers?

Mr. Chairman: Yes, we are under Other Transfers, yes.

Dr. Browne: May I proceed with my question, Chairman?

Mr. Chairman: Yes.

Dr. Browne: Right. Where is this academy located? Who heads the academy? And I am looking at the allocation of $10 million, and when you add all
of the other arms of the defence force with respect to training, you end up with almost $60 million scattered, including $1.5 million at Defence Force Headquarters, $2 million at General Administration, et cetera. What is this training academy? And what role does it play vis à vis training in the various arms which each have their training budgets? Are there distinct training units in the various arms? How is training being coordinated?

**Hon. Griffith:** Chairman?

**Mr. Chairman:** Yes, hon. Minister.

**Hon. Griffith:** The National Security Training Academy is established at—

**Mr. Imbert:** “Ah ask yuh a question, yuh know.” You would not answer mine.

**Hon. Griffith:** “Ah coming tuh you. Ah saving the best for last.”

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

**Hon. Griffith:** It is established at Cumuto Barracks, Mr. Chairman. This is similar to when we had the Special Anti-Crime Unit, there was a training facility in Cumuto Barracks, but the difference with that academy is that it was limited for only those persons—primarily for the persons who were in SAUTT. What the National Security Training Academy is doing now is to ensure that it will provide—it is a department that will ensure that the proper type of security requirements would be provided for all arms of the law enforcement agencies. So, for example, this is not specific to any one agency. For example, if it is that we need to have an indoor range, they would facilitate how we can acquire an indoor range, not just for the police, but can be used by the Trinidad and Tobago Defence Force.

They are also looking at other types of training to ensure that we have a simulation theatre to deal with the area at Cumuto Barracks to assist the law enforcement agencies in joint patrols, in joint operations between the defence force and the police service, which we never had before.

It also provides a facility there for the Special Branch in their specific type of training. So it is now given that environment to allow all different arms of the law enforcement agencies for training. So what you will see in the National Security Training Academy, which is headed by Brig. Gen. Carl Alfonso, as the Executive Director, is more of a coordinating agency to assist in looking at the requirements for different arms of the law enforcement agencies, but where you could have that training facility provided for everyone and not just for a specific unit.
Mr. Chairman: Yes, Member for Arouca/Maloney. [Crosstalk] Member for Arouca/Maloney, please, and then you will deal with the Member for Diego Martin North/East on that Diego Martin initiative.

Hon. Griffith: What is the question?

Mr. Imbert: What is the Morvant/Laventille Initiative?

Hon. Griffith: There are a number of things, Mr. Chairman. As I said, I have the breakdown of all the different aspects that I have assisted in this. It goes again with secondary crime prevention where we looked at the location and tried to set a course intended to bring about social change, based on its promise of greater People’s Partnership in governance, what we spoke about.

So we are looking at different things in that area which may be deemed a high risk area, to provide youths with different opportunities to turn away from a life of crime and to give them just better opportunities. I have the whole breakdown of all the different things that can be done—

Mr. Imbert: Could you give one example?

Hon. Griffith: Of?

Mr. Imbert: Of an initiative. You say it is a whole list.

Miss Cox: He is supposed to provide us with a list.

Hon. Griffith: Yeah, look, I have the whole list here. I “doh” know if I could—I could run the whole thing. We have mediation training courses—[Crosstalk]

Mr. Chairman: Please, please, please.

Mr. Imbert: Why is there not a Diego Martin initiative? “We doh have crime in Diego Martin?”

Hon. Griffith: I could look into that. Yes, I could provide the copy for you.

Mr. Chairman: He would look into that. Member for Arouca/Maloney. That is the last area and then we go on, please.

Miss Hospedales: Mr. Chair, I would like to look at Sub-Item 10, Office of Disaster Preparedness and Management. Mr. Chair, what I have noticed is that there is a consistent increase in the transfer to this particular organization, from $56 million in 2013, $60 million in 2014, $65 million in 2015. I would like to find out from the Minister whether or not an assessment of the effectiveness of this
organization has been done. Some members of the population really do not take the ODPM seriously. We have issues of the communication system, weaknesses in coordination, as well as a lot of people are not aware of the disaster shelters. I saw in an article—

Mr. Chairman: All right. Let us hear how the Minister will respond to you. Minister?

Miss Hospedales: Mr. Chair, I am not finished.

Dr. Browne: She has five minutes.

Mr. Chairman: You are not finished?

Miss Hospedales: I saw in an article by Dr. Ramroop that they were going to increase the number of disaster shelters to 400. We are still not aware of those shelters, where they are located. In the event that a disaster occurs, a lot of people are not even aware of the evacuation procedures. Look at Port of Spain, during a normal flash flood, Mr. Chairman—

Mr. Chairman: Yes, we are hearing you. What is your next question? You have another question?

Miss Hospedales: Mr. Chairman, you are being extremely rude.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, we are dealing with the Development Programme now. Sub-Head 09, Development Programme. Item 04, Social Infrastructure. I recognize the Member for Laventille East/Morvant and the Member for Diego Martin East.

Miss Cox: Mr. Chair—

Mr. Chairman: Yes?

Miss Cox:—under 019, Purchase of Vessels for the Coast Guard, does this concern the long-range vessels?

Mr. Chairman: The hon. Minister?

Hon. Griffith: Just one minute. I am just getting—sorry, what were we looking at?

Miss Cox: All right. Under 019, Purchase of Vessels for the Coast Guard, does this involve the long-range vessels?

Hon. Griffith: No, no. There will be no acquisition for long-range patrol vessels in this fiscal year. That process will go within—we have a tender process that will take several months. What we are looking to acquire within this fiscal year, Mr. Chairman, will be the acquisition of hovercraft interceptors to secure the
low-lying waters which will be within the Gulf of Paria and the southern coastline, and also the possible acquisition of 50-metre vessels to secure between two and 12 miles offshore.

Mr. Chairman: Yes. Next question.

Miss Cox: Under 048, there is Logistic Support for the Acquisition of Naval Assets.

Mr. Chairman: Page?

Miss Cox: Sixty-two.

Mr. Chairman: Right, 62. What number?

Miss Cox: 048. I see there is no provision in 2014, but for 2015—

Hon. Member: It is a new project.

Miss Cox: It is a new project?

Hon. Griffith: Which one, sorry?

Mr. Chairman: 048.

Hon. Griffith: 048?

Miss Cox: Yeah, what is it about? I want to know what it is about, this new project; this $8 million.

Mr. Chairman: Is it the $8 million?

Miss Cox: Yes.

Mr. Chairman: Right.

Hon. Griffith: This involves—there is a specific implementation team, Mr. Chairman, comprising five persons and they have been going to different places to ascertain the types of vessels that are available and what we would require. So that team has gone to Korea, Colombia. They have been going to different places to ascertain the type of vessels that are available and will be conducive to what we require. We have had situations before where vessels have been acquired and then when we get them, they were not the vessels that were appropriate and they cost—such as the postal vessels where we have had that problem. So this is a team that has been going to ensure that we get the right vessels.

Miss Cox: Is there any plan to get vessels from China?
Hon. Griffith: China? No. Well, remember, we have the—there will be a tender process for the acquisition of long-range patrol vessels. So there has been actually no decision made pertaining to the decision for any vessel of that nature for offshore patrol.

Mr. Chairman: All right. Any further questions?

Miss Cox: Yes, I have.

Mr. Chairman: Yes?

Miss Cox: Upgrade of Roadways and Drainage to Teteron, is that not the work of the Ministry of Works and Infrastructure? Why would the Regiment be undertaking that?

Hon. Griffith: That roadway really is a private roadway. That is really from—if you are looking from Staubes go all the way into Teteron, and just even beyond. So that is why the cost was put under the Regiment rather than the Ministry of Works and Infrastructure, because it is private. That area of Teteron Barracks is a private roadway.

Miss Cox: I have one other question concerning the base infrastructure for camps at La Romaine, Felicity and Forres Park. What happened, I see $2 million was allocated but, Minister, I think the La Romaine camp is an important camp, strategically placed in the south of Trinidad and Tobago, and this work has been ongoing since 2008 at that camp, and I see here, three camps lumped together for $2 million. I feel that something should be done to finish that La Romaine Regiment camp.

4.15 p.m.

Hon. Griffith: Yes, right now, if you look at the camp, it is really a temporary camp and the facilities need to be upgraded. Likewise, we are actually looking towards the commencement for the camp in Felicity and also the coast guard bases as well, but I do understand with the Felicity camp to commence—

Miss Cox: The La Romaine because if something happens in the south, you know, you must have a proper basing.

Hon. Griffith: Yes, and because of our involvement now with the Energy Sector Security Initiative, we do know the importance to secure the energy sector. That $2 million is just for the design itself.
Mr. Imbert: Mr. Chairman, could I ask the Minister to go back to 019, can you confirm that the Chinese vessel the Prime Minister spoke about is not going to be acquired? Number one.

Hon. Griffith: Which one?

Mr. Imbert: The Chinese vessel that the Prime Minister spoke about when she went to China that we will be buying. Can the Minister confirm that that is no longer on the cards, that is off the radar, we would not be buying the Chinese vessel?

Hon. Griffith: No, I would not be able to say that.

Mr. Chairman: No, he would not be able to say that.

Mr. Imbert: Wait, okay, you cannot say. So could you give us some idea of this $50 million, what you are planning to buy with that? Do you have a breakdown?

Hon. Griffith: But I think I just mentioned that.

Mr. Imbert: No, you said interceptor, hovercraft, maybe a 50-metre, but one 50-metre will cost $50 million. So do you have an idea of what you plan to buy?

Hon. Griffith: Well, the request involves hovercrafts and interceptors. That alone will cover that whole aspect.

Mr. Imbert: So then why did you say you are buying a 50-metre since you do not have enough money for it?

Hon. Griffith: Because there is a certain—

Mr. Imbert: Right, okay.

Hon. Griffith: Wait a minute. There is actually the approval for two 50-metre vessels and in fact—

Mr. Imbert: But you do not have an allocation.

Hon. Griffith: Let me finish, you asked me a question.

Mr. Imbert: But you do not have an allocation for it. Two 50-metre vessels would cost—what? Over $100 million, $200 million. You do not have that—

Hon. Griffith: But you are not going to pay all in one.

Mr. Imbert: So you do plan to buy a 50-metre in 2015?
Hon. Griffith: Yes.

Mr. Chairman: All right, any further questions?

Mr. Imbert: No, hold on, he has not answered me. 047, have you abandoned the purchase of fast patrol vessels? 047, I see you have gone to zero. You had $25 million allocated in 2014, it disappeared. Have you abandoned the acquisition of fast patrol vessels?

Hon. Griffith: No, not at all.

Mr. Imbert: What has happened to that line item?

Hon. Griffith: For the fast patrol vessels?

Mr. Imbert: Yes.

Hon. Griffith: See again, it is all different. Whether you call it fast patrol, coastal patrol vessels, there is a difference with offshore patrol vessels and fast patrol vessels.

Mr. Imbert: I am talking about this line item, not offshore patrol, not coastal, this one, fast patrol vessels.

Dr. Browne: Why is there no allocation?

Mr. Imbert: Why have you abandoned the acquisition of fast patrol vessels? You have no allocation for it. I did not ask about offshore patrols, 047. I did not ask you about hovercraft, “I ent reach there yet”.

Hon. Griffith: It is under 019, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Imbert: So wait a minute, 50-metre vessels, fast patrol vessels, interceptors, hovercraft, côté ci côté là—all for $50 million? Okay, thank you. Let us go now to—

Hon. Griffith: But what is the question?

Mr. Chairman: No, before the Member for Diego Martin Central, I still have to recognize the Member for Diego Martin North/East. Go ahead.

Mr. Imbert: No, still on this. I would like to know what happened to the Refurbishment of Coast Guard Aircraft - c26. Have you scrapped that aircraft? Look at 030, zero allocation. Fixed Wing Twin Engine Trainer/Utility Aircraft, what happened to that in 2014?

Mr. Chairman: What page are you on?

Mr. Imbert: I am on page 63, it is the same Head. I am on Air Guard 030, page 63, Refurbishment of Coast Guard Aircraft - c26, no allocation. Have you scrapped that aircraft? I have not finished. Purchase of Fixed Wing Twin Engine Trainer/Utility Aircraft, what happened to that in 2014? And Upgrade of Air
Guard Fixed-Wing Fleet, what happened in 2014? I am seeing zero here right through. And, could you tell me where is the allocation for the Unmanned Aerial Vehicle, better known as the drones, which you keep talking about? I cannot find an allocation for drones inside of here. Where is the allocation for your drones?

[Crosstalk] No, no, he said UAVs. Where is your allocation for UAVs?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister.

Mr. Imbert: Could you deal with the fact that you have not refurbished the coast guard aircraft and why you have a zero allocation? Are you scrapping that aircraft?

Hon. Griffith: No, there is actually a tender process in place for us to acquire a proper fixed-wing aircraft. The C26, it has reached the point where—

Mr. Imbert: So you are scrapping it, why do you not answer yes or no?

Hon. Griffith: You are telling me how to answer my question?

Mr. Imbert: Are you scrapping the C26? Yes or no?

Hon. Griffith: You cannot tell me how to answer my question. You asked me a question, I am giving you an answer.

Mr. Imbert: Why is there no allocation for refurbishment of C26 aircraft?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, you want to take note of those—

Hon. Griffith: I will take note and I will give the answer—

Mr. Imbert: I need clarification for the Unmanned Aerial Vehicles, the drones that you have been talking about for the last year. Where are the drones?

Hon. Griffith: The cost for the UAVs will come under the National Operations Centre.

Mr. Imbert: This year?

Mr. Chairman: I recognize the Member for Diego Martin Central. I am coming back to you, Member for Laventille East/Morvant.

Dr. Browne: Minister of National Security, I refer you to Sub-Item 019 and 047, pages 61 and 62 under Coast Guard. [Interruption] Chairman, when they are ready, I will proceed.

Mr. Chairman: Yes, hon. Minister, are you ready for—
Hon. Griffith: I did not hear the question.

Mr. Chairman: All right, could you pose your question? Member for Diego Martin Central, I am ready.

Dr. Browne: Thank you, Chairman. 019, Purchase of Vessels for the Coast Guard and 047 Purchase of Fast Patrol Vessels. Because I listened to the budget and the Government has been speaking about support for local shipbuilding. There have been providers constructing marine vessels in this country for over 50 years now. Is the coast guard considering partnering with any local suppliers for the design and supply of some of the smaller vessels that may be required in the future for this service? Smaller fast vessels or—

Hon. Griffith: Interceptors.

Dr. Browne: Yes, exactly. Is that on the cards right now and if so, give an update as to any negotiations that are taking place?

Hon. Griffith: Yes, in fact, we are actually looking for the possible acquisition of six to eight local interceptors and these are the—

Dr. Browne: Sixty-eight?

Hon. Griffith: Six to eight interceptors and—that can be designed. We do have companies that actually have the capability to—

Dr. Browne: What size vessels are you talking about?

Hon. Griffith: The interceptors, that will be no more than 34 feet and anything other than that, once you start moving up to 50 metres, that is when you start looking towards countries such as Holland, United States, Korea, Colombia.

Mr. Chairman: All right, I recognize the Member for Laventille East/Morvant and then we move on.

Miss Cox: Air Guard, I know that you did not want the Member for Diego Martin North/East to tell you how to answer your question, could I answer a question to you?

Hon. Griffith: Please, please.

Miss Cox: Is it true or is it fair to say that the air guard is being underfunded in favour of NOC?

Hon. Griffith: Not at all. In fact, I think we have a massive expenditure actually dealing with the maintenance for the four Agusta helicopters. Likewise, we have seen the need to try to—the two C26 aircraft, we do need to have a new
fixed-wing aircraft. So there is absolutely nothing pertaining to it being competitive in any way at all.

It is unfortunate, however, because of the contractual obligations we have with the Agusta helicopters, we do not have that capability to use it as much as we should. We have situations where even the defence force, they cannot use the helicopters because the contract, for some reason, it was done under civilian licence so it cannot be used. When we had the blackout, we could not use the helicopters.

So there is nothing against the helicopters, they are very good helicopters, but the contractual arrangements, they were made in such a way that—we have lost the value for those helicopters. So we are actually putting good money into a system that we cannot use and we do have certain—even with the pilots, they are not getting the flying time—

**Dr. Rowley:** “So yuh buy something yuh cyah use?”

**Hon. Griffith:** Pardon? What is that?

**Dr. Rowley:** You bought something that you cannot use?

**Hon. Griffith:** Correct. That was Mariano Browne, I think. He was the one that keeps boasting about it. So we have had a situation with those helicopters and it will continue.

**Mr. Chairman:** I would now like to go to Infrastructure Development Fund. I recognize the Member for Arouca/Maloney.

**Miss Hospedales:** Page 242 under Public Order and Safety, 001, the Construction of the Arouca Fire Station, I would like to find out exactly when would the construction of that fire station begin?

**Hon. Griffith:** The final designs have been approved, the tender process has been initiated for construction of the facility.

**Miss Hospedales:** Exactly when is it going to be—

**Mr. Chairman:** Okay, hon. Members, the question is—I am proceeding—that the sum of $2,692,486,170 for Head 22, the Ministry of National Security stand part of the Schedule.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Head 22 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.*
Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, we would like to thank you but I want to let you know, you have given a lot of undertakings here and we have recorded all of them, and we shall be writing you to fulfil your commitment to the Parliament. Okay? We want to thank you on behalf of the Standing Finance Committee, and your technocrats. Thank you very much.

Hon. Griffith: Thank you.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, I understand that the police service will be with us on Thursday, they will not join us today. And as such, the next Ministry is Head 40, the Ministry of Energy and Energy Affairs. We will be here until about 12 because we want to complete about 15 tonight.

Mr. Imbert: Are we taking tea?

Mr. Chairman: Yes, we are asking people to stream out when they are ready to take some tea.

Mr. Imbert: So no break?

Mr. Chairman: Yeah, there is no break, we are going straight. We have a lot of work to do and tomorrow is Republic Day. [Crosstalk] We must celebrate it in style tonight by completing about 30.

So we invite the Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs to join us with his technocrats.

4.30 p.m.

Head 40.

Ministry of Energy and Energy Affairs, $6,160,615,800. I will now invite the hon. Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs, if he so desires, to make a brief opening statement for no more than five minutes dealing with the priority areas of the Ministry of Energy and Energy Affairs. Would you like to volunteer, Sir?

Hon. Ramnarine: Yes.

Mr. Chairman: I now invite you, thank you.

Hon. Ramnarine: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. The expenditure of the Ministry, as you just stated, is in the region of TT $6.1 billion. The majority of that expenditure is related to the subsidy for fuels. That is in the region of approximately 95 per cent. The administrative cost of the Ministry of Energy and Energy Affairs is met by the Petroleum impost under Regulation 73 of the Petroleum Act and that works in a manner where the oil companies reimburse the
Ministry of Finance and the Economy for the administrative cost of running the Ministry of Energy and Energy Affairs. The subsidy for fiscal 2014 is approximately—we estimate to be—TT $4.15 billion.

**Mr. Chairman:** That is the subsidy?

**Hon. Ramnarine:** The sum of TT $4.1 billion for fiscal 2014, which still has a couple days remaining, so it is a bit of an estimate.

**Mr. Chairman:** Okay.

**Hon. Ramnarine:** Of that amount, $3.5 billion is met by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago and approximately $0.6 billion is met by the petroleum production levy.

This figure of $4.1 billion is a decline over the 2013 figure, which stood at TT $4.4 billion. That represents a 6 per cent decline in the subsidy, and I wish to report to the Standing Finance Committee that we have seen a steady and significant decline in the sales of subsidized diesel where, in 2010, the figures stood at 649 million litres. In fiscal 2014, we are now down to 514 million litres of subsidized diesel being sold and that has contributed to a tremendous savings for the people of Trinidad and Tobago and is mainly as a consequence of the actions taken by the Ministry of Energy and Energy Affairs in the last four years to treat with illegal trade in subsidized diesel.

**Mr. Chairman:** Okay.

**Hon. Ramnarine:** That concludes my statement.

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

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

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Members, the sum of $6,160,615,800 for Head 40: the Ministry of Energy and Energy 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 get into Sub-Head 01: Personnel Expenditure and we deal with Item 001, General Administration. We go to Sub-Head 02: Goods and Services, Item 001, General Administration. I recognize the Member for Diego Martin North/East and then the Member for Point Fortin and then the Member for St. Joseph.
Mr. Imbert: Yes, Mr. Chairman. Could the Minister explain what Sub-Item 28, Other Contracted Services, is used for and why is there an increase of $15 million.

Mr. Chairman: Just speak a little loudly because I am not hearing you.

Mr. Imbert: Could the Minister explain what Head 28, Other Contracted Services, is used for on page 248, where there is an allocation of $38 million for this year, an increase of $15 million over last year, and could the Minister explain why there is such a high figure of $13 million for Contract Employment? And could you tell us whether anywhere in your allocation for Goods and Services, you have any expenditure for renewable energy for solar energy, wind, wave energy, projects, subsidy, plans/programmes dealing with renewable energy?

Hon. Ramnarine: Thank you very much. Just for everybody to be on the same page, we are on page 248, Mr. Chairman?

Mr. Chairman: Yes.

Hon. Ramnarine: With regard to the question from the Member of Parliament for Diego Martin North/East, he first went to Sub-Item 28, Other Contracted Services?

Mr. Imbert: Yeah.

Hon. Ramnarine: And the question had to do with the increase of $15 million.

Mr. Imbert: And what is it for.

Hon. Ramnarine: And what it is for. The main reason for that increase is provision being made for what we call a Minerals Ranger Squad, which is a provision that we are putting forward for policing those areas that Trinidad and Tobago—[Interruption]

Mr. Imbert: Is that a new item?

Hon. Ramnarine: That is part of that.

Mr. Imbert: I know, but it is a new squad?

Hon. Ramnarine: Yes, it is a new squad.

Mr. Imbert: Right, okay.

Hon. Ramnarine: So that is what is proposed there.
Mr. Chairman: Yeah, could you go on to the next part. He is clear on that.

Hon. Ramnarine: We also have in there renewal of licences for IT. The Ministry uses a lot of specialized software for reservoir engineering, and so on, and we have to renew some of those licences.

Mr. Imbert: Okay.

Hon. Ramnarine: The other issue you raised is Contract Employment, which is Sub-Item 16. The Ministry between the years 2013 and 2014, you would have noticed an increase in the amount of moneys for Contract Employment. That is mainly as a result of the Ministry taking our returning scholars—a lot of those returning scholars are assigned to the Ministry of Energy and Energy Affairs, in the fields of Geoscience, Law, and so on—and putting those people into contract positions. So that would have increased our Contract Employment expenditure.

Mr. Imbert: Okay, but going back to 28 and my other question, where in Goods and Services do you have expenditure for renewable energy?

Hon. Ramnarine: Yeah, sure. That expenditure is captured in our Development Programme.

Mr. Imbert: Okay.

Hon. Ramnarine: So we could treat with that when we reach that point.

Mr. Chairman: We will deal with that after. I recognize the Member for Point Fortin.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Mr. Chairman, I had my hand up first, so I beg to go back.

Mr. Chairman: I really want to apologize for not recognizing you first.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: That is alright. I just want to be able to go back to just minor thing, General Administration: 08, Vacant Posts. Even though it is just $1 million, my concern is that we are able to fill the professional level positions, because I notice there was no expenditure in 2014, so my sense is that there are still some positions vacant. Are these professional levels?

Hon. Ramnarine: Yes, we have vacant positions for contract officers in the Ministry. The Ministry is currently going through a restructuring process, which we expect to complete shortly and once that is completed, we would seek to fill those positions.
**Mrs. Gopee-Scoon:** May I ask a further question to that? Are we able to retain our professionals?

**Hon. Ramnarine:** That is not a—it is a well-known secret that the energy sector is quite possibly the highest paying sector in the country and we struggle to retain people at the Ministry of Energy and Energy Affairs. That is not something that started today. It has been an historic thing with the Ministry of Energy and Energy Affairs.

In 1999, I think it was, a professional allowance was introduced, which subsequently, I think, was also applied to the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Works but we have to continually review the compensation for the Ministry of Energy and Energy Affairs, given the fact that we interface with such a high-paying sector.

**Mrs. Gopee-Scoon:** Okay, is it that—in looking at Sub-Item 08, under Goods and Services, I notice that there is an additional $7 million, is there new accommodation or new offices?

**Hon. Ramnarine:** We are looking at page 248, Sub-Item 08. Is that Rent/Lease Accommodation, et cetera? There is an increase of $7 million and that is for two—we currently rent a facility in San Fernando for the Ministry's south office in the Maska building. We are acquiring more space from that landlord, from Maska, because the Ministry is currently very cramped in San Fernando.

San Fernando is also where the Ministry stores our wells files and a lot of our seismic data is stored in San Fernando and we have to ensure—that is the repository of the country's history of oil and gas—those things are properly stored. So we will be getting more space in Maska and we also have provision in here for renting an office in the eastern part of Trinidad and Tobago for the Minerals Division of the Ministry of Energy and Energy Affairs, given the fact that we need to have a greater oversight of what is happening in the areas like Matura and Valencia, and so on.

**Mr. Chairman:** All right.

**Mrs. Gopee-Scoon:** Looking further, sorry, Sir, at 62, even though there is a decrease in expenditure, in terms of Promotions, Publicity and Printing, I wish to enquire about the types of promotions and publicity, from the point of view that I do not know that the man in the street, to whom these promotions would appeal, is actually interested in any product of the NGC, the NEC, and so on, and I noticed that these are the types of advertisements that are out there. So I am not sure if this is really benefiting the public. I mean, it is still an expenditure of $6.5 million in 2014, and another projected $4.5 million.
Hon. Ramnarine: Right, I was not too clear on what the question was.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: I am saying that, even though I have seen a decrease, I am asking what types of promotional and publicity items are these for, bearing in mind that I do not think it really affects the man in the street, the kinds of promotions that I have been seeing under the Ministry of Energy and Energy Affairs for NGC, Petrotrin, and so on.

Hon. Ramnarine: NGC and Petrotrin's budget for promotion would not be here. This is strictly the Ministry. What we have recognized is that there is a need for the average citizen to have a better understanding, appreciation for how the energy sector works and how it affects his life directly. So we have launched some educational programmes on television. You may have seen a couple of them. There are some of them running on the radio right now and that is simply part of that entire promotional—it also includes the publications of the Ministry.

Mr. Chairman: All right, we go on.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Mr. Chairman, I had my hand.

Mr. Chairman: Which one are you on?

Mr. Deyalsingh: Chairman, you had recognized me third.

Mr. Chairman: Yes, I recognize the MP for St. Joseph.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Under 02, sub-sub 08: Rent/Lease, you mentioned that you are renting premises from Maska?

Hon. Ramnarine: Yes.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Could you tell me what is the monthly rental charge and the size of the compound?

Hon. Ramnarine: Yes, we would get that for you, Member.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Okay. How was Maska chosen?

Hon. Ramnarine: Maska was—I do not know how Maska was chosen. When I became Minister, Maska was there, but we could find out for you. But I believe Maska has been the home of the south office for the Ministry for a while. Prior to that it was Jap's building in San Fernando.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Okay, thank you.

Mr. Jeffrey: I just want to go back.

Mr. Chairman: No, not you yet. I think I recognize the Member for St. Joseph.
Mr. Deyalsingh: No, I asked.

Mr. Chairman: Member for St. Joseph you are through? Okay, Member for La Brea.

Mr. Jeffrey: I just want to go back to 62. Could we get a breakdown of the Promotions, Publicity and Printing? I am a little curious here.

Dr. Moonilal: What you curious about?

Mr. Jeffrey: A breakdown of the—[Interruption]

Mr. Chairman: You would like to know what comprises.

Mr. Jeffrey: Yes, yes.

Mr. Chairman: Minister, could you indicate?

Hon. Ramnarine: Yeah, let me just—Member I will commit to get that information to you. Okay? If you would so allow me.

Mr. Chairman: All right, cool. So we go on to Minor Equipment, Sub-Head 03.

Dr. Rowley: Mr. Chairman, did I hear the Minister say that, with respect to Item 28, Other Contracted Services, that it is anticipated that you would have a ranger squad?

Hon. Ramnarine: Yes.

Dr. Rowley: Is it that you intend to hire a contractor to function as a ranger squad, or you are going to establish within the Ministry, public officials as a ranger squad?

Hon. Ramnarine: No, it is the intention of the Ministry to hire people to work within the remit of the Ministry, not to hire a private firm to—[Interruption]

Dr. Rowley: Okay, so you are going to establish within the Ministry a squad?

Hon. Ramnarine: Yes, a unit in the Ministry. I just want to say, we have consulted with other stakeholder Ministries in this regard.

Mr. Chairman: All right, we go to Sub-Head 03: Minor Equipment Purchases; Item 001, General Administration. We go to Sub-Head 04: Current Transfer and Subsidies; Item 001, Regional Bodies; Item 004, International
4.45 p.m.

**Dr. Rowley:** Mr. Chairman, I did hear the Minister say that approximately 95 per cent of the subsidy due, of that figure had to do with petroleum subsidy.

**Hon. Ramnarine:** Yeah, correct.

**Dr. Rowley:** Ninety-five per cent, so for all practical purposes we can say that that is the subsidy? What is the other 5 per cent?

**Hon. Ramnarine:** No, well what we are saying is that the total allocation, in terms of expenditure for the Ministry, is $6,140,000,000, as per page 246, right, and the money allocated to the Ministry of Energy and Energy Affairs to treat with the subsidy in 2015, as per page 250, is $6 billion. So what I am saying is that the bulk of the money—

**Dr. Rowley:** For the Ministry is subsidy?

**Hon. Ramnarine:** Yeah.

**Dr. Rowley:** So on page 250, Households, that figure there, $4.4 billion in 2013, that is the petroleum subsidy?

**Hon. Ramnarine:** Yes.

**Dr. Rowley:** And that rose to $7 billion in 2014?

**Hon. Ramnarine:** Yeah, correct.

**Dr. Rowley:** So it went from $4.4 billion in 2013 to $7 billion in 2014.

**Hon. Ramnarine:** Yes. And if you would allow me to—

**Dr. Rowley:** What was the—

**Hon. Ramnarine:** The reason?

**Dr. Rowley:** Yeah.

**Hon. Ramnarine:** First of all, the moneys that are reflected here on page 250, Sub-Item Description 01—just so that everybody is following, right—those are the moneys allocated to the Ministry to treat with the subsidy. It does not include the levy, which is roughly about 15 per cent of the overall subsidy bill, that is in the Ministry of Finance and the Economy. The significant increase is that there were arrears that were owing to Petrotrin. Well how the subsidy is reimbursed is that the Ministry of Finance and the Economy reimburses the wholesalers, **NP and**
UNIPET, and they then reimburse Petrotrin. What had happened is that over the years arrears had built up.

Dr. Rowley: Please. Please. Please.

Mr. Chairman: Please, continue.

Hon. Ramnarine: What had happened is that over the years arrears had built up of moneys owed to Petrotrin and the Ministry of Finance and the Economy over the last couple of years had sought to make provision in every budget to begin to unwind that arrears.

Dr. Rowley: I want to get a clear picture of what the annual consumption is. So was 4.4 payment without arrears? So therefore that was the annual consumption?

Hon. Ramnarine: Yeah, there was arrears in there too. Yeah, there was a component of that figure in 2013 that was arrears.

Dr. Rowley: Could anybody tell us what—5 per cent, 10 per cent, how much? Because what I am trying to get at is what is the—forget the arrears, what exactly is the use of public money towards the subsidy? Is it $3.5 billion? Is it $4 billion? What is it?

Hon. Ramnarine: About $3.5 billion would be what the Government puts towards treating with the subsidy. The oil companies would come in with the levy, which is about 15 per cent of the total sum, and that is about $.6 to $.7 billion per year. So we run at—

Dr. Rowley: But the levy is still public money once it is levy—

Hon. Ramnarine: Yeah, that is public money.

Dr. Rowley:—so let us not separate them.

Hon. Ramnarine: Correct.

Dr. Rowley: What I am trying to get at, Minister, is what the annual subsidy is—

Mr. Chairman: Without arrears.


Dr. Rowley: Mr. Chairman, you are confusing me—
Hon. Ramnarine: Yeah, it ranges from, I would say between $4 billion to $4.5 billion, and it is a function, of course, of oil price as you know, and of consumption.

Dr. Rowley: Yeah, but let me ask you something. Not too long ago we had a change in the price of fuel when we took the premium—

Hon. Ramnarine: We increased the price of premium.

Dr. Rowley: Yeah. Where can you show me in these numbers that that action had a significant effect on the subsidy? Because that was the intention; we raise the price of the premium gasoline and it was supposed to have reflected as a reduction in the subsidy. Could you show me where that is happening?

Hon. Ramnarine: Yeah, I do not have that exact figure now, but there has been some savings, but, generally, it has not been significant. What we have seen of course is people have migrated from premium to super. I think it is about 60 per cent of persons who were buying premium moved to super.

Dr. Rowley: So in other words, when that action was taken we were told that is what was going to happen and it has happened, so we have not really had any significant reduction in the subsidy as a result of that.

Hon. Ramnarine: It has not been significant. I think the intention was of course to treat with that—the persons who use premium are generally the persons who could afford to pay a higher price for fuel, the persons at the upper spectrum of the income brackets and so on. So I think that was the intention, but there has been some savings but I would agree that there has been a migration to super.

Mr. Chairman: Are we still on Households or we can move forward.

Dr. Rowley: Yes, Mr. Chairman. Having embarked on paying these arrears, where does that leave us, Ministry, NP, Petrotrin, on this matter? What is the picture there?

Hon. Ramnarine: As I mentioned, what had happened is that significant arrears had been built up as a consequence of NP and UNIPET owing Petrotrin.

Dr. Rowley: UNIPET?

Hon. Ramnarine: Well they are both wholesalers so they have to reimburse Petrotrin, and this is actually—I am advised this formula, methodology was something that you all came up with in 2009.

Dr. Rowley: Why is UNIPET owing anybody? Because UNIPET is a private organization.
Hon. Ramnarine: Yeah, that is how it is reimbursed. The Ministry of Finance and the Economy reimburses the two wholesalers who then reimburse Petrotrin, because they pick up this fuel at Petrotrin and sell it, and Petrotrin of course has to be reimbursed because they are selling at an ex-refinery price, and the ex-refinery price is not what the consumer sees.

Dr. Rowley: So the Government owes UNIPET from time to time?

Hon. Ramnarine: Yes, that is a regular occurrence.

Dr. Rowley: So when the Government does not pay UNIPET, UNIPET does not pay NP?

Hon. Ramnarine: UNIPET has to reimburse Petrotrin.

Dr. Rowley: Petrotrin?

Hon. Ramnarine: UNIPET reimburses Petrotrin and NP reimburses Petrotrin, so the reimbursement for the subsidy goes from the Ministry of Finance and the Economy to the wholesalers, UNIPET and NP, and they then reimburse Petrotrin.

Mr. Chairman: I think this is a perfect subject for the energy committee of our Parliament. [Laughter]

Dr. Rowley: Yes, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Chairman: I think it is a very good topic for that committee, really.

Dr. Moonilal: We want the real questions for the Minister and a conversation going on.

Mr. Chairman: Yeah, it is a very good conversation.

Dr. Moonilal: It was exciting, I must say. [Laughter]

Dr. Rowley: Mr. Chairman, actually, these questions are in fact valid because we did take action on this problem in the Appropriation Bill, and what I am seeking to find out is whether the action had the desired effect. And I am also trying to get, as the Minister is quite helpful, in trying to get the picture, the nature of the problem subsequent to the action, because the problem still exists.

Hon. Ramnarine: Yeah.

Mr. Douglas: What problem? [Crosstalk]

Mr. Chairman: I think I want to just bring in Diego Martin North/East on this topic. [Crosstalk]
Mr. Imbert: On the same page—

Dr. Rowley: “Why you eh go and beat yuh drum” [Laughter]

Mr. Chairman: Diego Martin North/East—please—yes, yes, you have my protection. Continue.

Mr. Imbert: You are not controlling the House, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: Yes, I am. I am. People must have some freedom to relax too. [Crosstalk]

Mr. Imbert: Okay, on 2014 Revised Estimates, 007—Mr. Chairman, could you tell the Member for Lopinot/Bon Air West to stop talking?

Mr. Chairman: Yeah, well I think, you know, you know when you sit down for too long you get a bit uncomfortable.

Mr. Imbert: He is always like that. So 007—[Crosstalk]

Mr. Chairman: Yes, I think you are now annoying me too. So could you just cool it and allow the Member to speak.

Mr. Imbert: Item 007, 01, that same Item, 2014 Revised Estimates, $7 billion; what element of that would have been payment of arrears?

Hon. Ramnarine: Yeah, $3 billion of that $7 billion, $3.52 billion were moneys that the Government of Trinidad and Tobago would put out to meet the subsidy liability in that year, and the arrears would have been $3.48 billion.

Mr. Imbert: And those, you have not paid them yet or you intend to pay them?

Hon. Ramnarine: As far as I am aware there have been some payments to Petrotrin. I think it was in April and June, I think, of this year, yeah, there would have been two payments.

Mr. Imbert: Yeah, okay. The $6 billion in 2015, is there an element of arrears in that? And if so, how much?

Hon. Ramnarine: Yes. The arrears in that $6 billion is $2.53 billion in 2015. [Crosstalk]

Mr. Imbert: After you pay the $2.5 billion arrears—

Mr. Chairman: Please, please, Members.

Mr. Imbert: After you pay $2.5 billion in arrears in 2015, will you still have arrears?
Hon. Ramnarine: Yeah, there would be arrears rolling forward into 2016.

Mr. Imbert: What is causing this? This constant accumulation of arrears in the billions of dollars, what is causing that?

Hon. Ramnarine: I mean, in my analysis of it, in previous years—and this is going back, you know, historically—the amount of money that was budgeted for treating with the subsidy was never—

Mr. Imbert: It was not enough?

Hon. Ramnarine: Was not enough—yes.

Mr. Imbert: And is it still not enough?

Hon. Ramnarine: We are now budgeting—the budgeting is now more realistic in terms of—we cannot predict exactly what the subsidy would be, but we certainly have a more realistic assumption for subsidy in the budget now. So, hopefully, over time those arrears would be unwound.

Mr. Imbert: Okay, and you answered the Leader of the Opposition with respect to super and premium. You said 60 per cent of premium users switched to super, but super is far more subsidized than premium, so surely that would have caused an increase in the subsidy. The switch from premium to super would be a far greater subsidy on super than on premium would cause a nominal increase in the subsidy.

Hon. Ramnarine: Yeah, well mathematically you are correct. There has also been 49 per cent of what we consider as the subsidy is diesel. Diesel is really the big driver of the subsidy, and we have had some success, as you would know, with regard to—

Mr. Imbert: With the WASET.

Hon. Ramnarine: With the WASET. So I think that has overall contributed to bringing the subsidy down.

Mr. Imbert: All right.

Mr. Chairman: All right, let us go on.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Mr. Chair?

Mr. Chairman: Yes, Member for Point Fortin.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: On that particular Item, 01, if it is that we are projecting that the ultra-low diesel plant, sulphur plant, would in fact be introduced during 2015, should there not be an accompanying subsidy shortfall to match?
Hon. Ramnarine: Subsidy shortfall?

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Yeah. If we are in fact producing a higher quality diesel, would you not then be looking at reducing your subsidy to the diesel market? In other words, the consumer can in fact get a better product.

Hon. Ramnarine: Well, you are talking about quality as opposed to price.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Both.

Hon. Ramnarine: I do not know if you are suggesting that we should increase the price or decrease the price—

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: I am not suggesting, I am asking you. Is there a correlation?

Hon. Ramnarine: I do not see it having an impact on the overall quantum of the subsidy. There will be an impact on the quality of diesel that is sold into the market.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: But not on the quantum? [Crosstalk]

Hon. Ramnarine: Not on the quantum. I do not see that affecting the overall quantum.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Okay.

Mr. Chairman: All right, I think we had a good conversation there. Let us go on to Item 009, Other Transfers; Item 011, Transfers to State Enterprises—

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Chair?

Mr. Chairman: Yes.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: May I just ask the reason for the non-implementation of the Quarries Authority as was projected to take place in 2014, and when is this likely to be established?

Hon. Ramnarine: My information is that Cabinet, as per in 2006, took the decision to establish a Quarries Authority and that has been put on hold pending the finalization of changes to the law, legislative changes. There is a draft Minerals Bill right now before the Ministry of Energy and Energy Affairs and the finalization of the restructuring of the Ministry of Energy and Energy Affairs, so that may be part of the restructuring of the Ministry.

Mr. Chairman: The hon. Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Chair, on 011, Transfer to State Enterprises, I am not too sure where Petrotrin falls in this, 011, Transfer to State Enterprises, and if Petrotrin falls in this, where is the money from our victory on the World GTL in
terms of the Petrotrin issue?

Mr. Chairman: Can you answer that?

Hon. Ramnarine: Yeah. Petrotrin is not part of the transfer to state enterprises, but—

Mr. Chairman: All right, that is the answer. All right, we go on. We are going on to development now.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Yes, just one more question.

Mr. Chairman: Yes.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: On Item 03—just for my edification, and I am sure the public as well—the Environmental Indemnity to the PowerGen Company of Trinidad and Tobago that continues, just give me a little explanation on it.

Hon. Ramnarine: Yeah, let me just explain that.

Mr. Chairman: Yes, explain.

Hon. Ramnarine: Thank you very much, Chair, for the quiet. When we sign the production—[Crosstalk]

Mr. Chairman: Diego Martin North/East, I think you are disturbing the proceedings with whoever you are talking to.

Hon. Ramnarine: Sorry, Chair.

Mr. Chairman: Yes, continue, hon. Member.

Hon. Ramnarine: When the 1994 Power Purchase Agreement was signed the Government agreed to indemnify PowerGen with regard to any changes in environmental legislation that may come in the future. In the year 2011 we had the various Environmental Management Act Rules, the Noise Pollution Rules, the Water Pollution Rules and so on, so whatever remedial work that PowerGen has to do, as a consequence of that, under the 1994 Power Purchase Agreement, the Government has agreed to reimburse them.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Okay, thank you.

Mr. Chairman: All right, we go to Sub-Head 09, Development Programme: Item 05, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services—I recognize the Members for St. Joseph, Diego Martin North/East, La Brea, Point Fortin and Arouca/Maloney.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Thank you, Chair. Hon. Minister, under Development Programme, 09, Sub-Item 003, Renewable Energy, $16 million for the 2015 estimate. How much of that money has been allocated to the feasibility study for
the wind farm project off the coast of Mayaro and Manzanilla?

Hon. Ramnarine: Sorry, just finding the page here.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Sure.

Hon. Ramnarine: You are referring to page 124, Member?

Mr. Deyalsingh: Yes, Minister.

Hon. Ramnarine: Okay. First of all, the $16 million that is located there is—that $16 million allocation, first of all, the Ministry had actually requested $29.3 million for the following projects but we only got $16 million allocated, so we therefore will have to prioritize these projects. But it is mainly for the hiring of consultants to conduct needs assessment for the establishment of a Regional Renewable Energy Research Centre in Trinidad and Tobago, and that comes out of a memorandum of understanding that we signed with the US Government.

Two, it is to hire a consultant to conduct a needs assessment for the establishment of a local test facility for solar water heaters. Three, hiring a consultant to conduct an analysis of the waste energy potential for Trinidad and Tobago, and those come mainly out of our deliberations with international bodies like the IDB and the United Nations Environmental Programme. There is also a project in there for the introduction—

Mr. Deyalsingh: Minister, is there any allocation for the wind farm project?

Hon. Ramnarine: I am coming to that.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Right.

Hon. Ramnarine: You want me to answer that and stop—

Mr. Chairman: No, I think you should just answer because we want to kind of move quickly.

Hon. Ramnarine: The Wind Resource Assessment Programme (WRAP) is a project which is a joint enterprise between the National Energy Corporation, the University of the West Indies and the Ministry of Energy and Energy Affairs. The lead in the project is the University of the West Indies and they have made an application to the Green Fund for funding that the Green Fund is currently considering. So that is where the funding for that is coming from.

Mr. Deyalsingh: So the Green Fund will be funding the feasibility study for the wind farms?
Hon. Ramnarine: Yes.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Okay. So that is one. Two, the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiatives, the 2015 Estimate of $4.1 million over the 2014 revised of $2 million, a doubling of the amount, could you explain that, please?

Hon. Ramnarine: Yeah.

Mr. Chairman: All right, let me—No, there are five hands before yours, so I want you to know that in advance because you accuse me of not recognizing you.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Chairman, I “doh” accuse you of anything. [Laughter]

Mr. Chairman: Okay. All right, cool. So I am just letting you know, five before you. All right, so after the Member for St. Joseph, I am going to the Member for Diego Martin North/East, and then I am going to the Member for Point Fortin and then the Member for La Brea.

Mr. Chairman: Are you through?

Hon. Ramnarine: No, I am going to answer the Member for St. Joseph.

Mr. Chairman: I would like you to be very crisp in your responses because we are going until 12 and we have a lot of work to do. So these long introductions, just give us the answer and let us move, please.

Hon. Ramnarine: Yeah, thank you.

Mr. Chairman: Yes, and you will help everybody. Right. So could you answer straight and direct, the concerns of the Member for St. Joseph.

Hon. Ramnarine: Yeah. Member for St. Joseph, $4.11 million. That money is mainly for public awareness campaign, development of an electronic register; this is the computerization of the EITI process—

Mr. Deyalsingh: No, Sir, I am asking, the wind farm project feasibility study—no, sorry. Sorry.

Hon. Ramnarine: I just answered that.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Sorry. The extractives. I apologize. Sorry.

Hon. Ramnarine: So, I just gave the first two, and the final one is the completion and publication of the 2013 and 2014 EITI reports.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Finally, when would the wind farm project feasibility study begin?

Hon. Ramnarine: We are waiting approval from the Green Fund.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Thank you.
Mr. Chairman: All right, I recognize the Member for Diego Martin North/East and then we go to the Member for Point Fortin, and then the Member for La Brea and then the Member for Arouca, and then the Member for Caroni East.

Mr. Imbert: Can I deal with IDF now or deal with that—

Mr. Chairman: No. No. No IDF at this time.

Mr. Imbert: No, no, Consolidated Fund, just a question.

Mr. Chairman: Yes.

Mr. Imbert: All right, coming back to this same item there, Renewable Energy, could you itemize the solar energy projects that you are going to spend out of this $16 million and what are the objectives of these projects?

Hon. Ramnarine: Yeah. The solar energy projects—just to follow the Chairman’s instruction and be very crisp—we intend to introduce solar photovoltaic panels and solar stills in 25 schools around Trinidad and Tobago in fiscal 2015. That is one of the projects under that $16 million.

Mr. Imbert: Any other solar energy projects?

Hon. Ramnarine: No. From what I am seeing here that is—

Mr. Imbert: But you spoke about a test facility?

Hon. Ramnarine: Yeah, that is a consultant to conduct an analysis of an establishment of a local test facility for solar water heaters.

Mr. Imbert: What is that? What does that mean? Test facility for solar water heaters.

Hon. Ramnarine: If you allow us we will provide you with some more information about that.

Mr. Chairman: All right, I recognize the Member for Point Fortin.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: All I want is that you provide us with a list relative to 003 in writing.

Hon. Ramnarine: Sub-Item 003.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Yes. The same Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Initiatives, I would like just a list in writing circulated.

Mr. Chairman: Member for La Brea. Yes, you will provide that, right.
Mr. Jeffrey: Public Buildings, 001, Construction and Upgrade of Service Stations; in 2013, roughly $9 million was spent but in the 2015 just $773,000, I would like to get an explanation as to what is the reason for that reduction. Secondly, given the scarcity or the acute shortage of service stations in the south-western peninsula offering CNG, I would like to know what plans the Ministry has to construct—

Mr. Chairman: Under what Item are you?

Mr. Jeffrey: Item 001.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, good.

Mr. Jeffrey:—to construct or upgrade NGC service stations to offer CNG.

Hon. Ramnarine: First of all, almost $9 million in that was for the construction of the Roxborough gas station in Roxborough. So that was moneys that were allocated to NP for the construction of the Roxborough station, and the $773,000 is for the installation of a mobile pump and tanks for the La Ruffin fishing depot in the Moruga area. So we do not normally give NP PSIP funding, but in these two instances we thought it was necessary for these two particular projects.

Mr. Chairman: Member for Arouca/Maloney and then the Member for Caroni East.

Mr. Jeffrey: Mr. Chairman, I did not finish yet. The second question in terms of the south-western peninsula, given the—

Mr. Chairman: CNG.

Mr. Jeffrey:—acute shortage of CNG.

Mr. Chairman: The one about CNG stations in the south-western peninsula.

Hon. Ramnarine: The National Gas Company is rolling out their CNG initiative as we speak. They have a list of stations that will be fitted with CNG compressors and dispensers and so on, and I am sure that there would be stations in the south-west peninsula.

Mr. Jeffrey: But can they give us a time frame as to when that is likely to happen?

Hon. Ramnarine: The procurement has already commenced, the RFPs are in the newspapers and so on as we speak, and we expect to have these stations with compressors and dispensers by 2015.
Mr. Chairman: I recognize the Member for Arouca/Maloney.

Miss Hospedales: Mr, Chair, I would like to pass, my questions have been exhausted.

Mr. Chairman: Okay. I recognize the Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Item 001, same Public Buildings; is there any line item for allocation for the completion of the administrative building in Petrotrin for which there has been about $400 million spent already?

Hon. Ramnarine: That project has been, for all intents and purposes, abandoned, and it does not form any line item in this report but I think it was—

Mr. Chairman: All right, we hear you. We go on to Infrastructure Development Fund. I recognize the Members for Point Fortin, Diego Martin North/East.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Two questions, Mr. Chairman. Sub-Head 007, construction of a multi-fuel pipeline; this appears to be on its way finally, but you have 100 per cent increase in costs. So it appears to me to be substantial cost overruns because you have an actual of 152 then you went to 382, or is it a continuing project?

Hon. Ramnarine: The project is almost at the point where we are about to commence commissioning of the project. We expect to commence commissioning by the end of the year. As you know, that is a project that spans many years, and we have no allocation as you could see for the project in 2015. So that signals that the project is almost at an end.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: But if you said it commenced; when?

Hon. Ramnarine: We expect to commence commissioning, that is the introduction of fuel into the pipeline and the filling of the tanks and so on by the end of the year.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: So it is not a question of overruns, it just spanned over a couple of years?

Hon. Ramnarine: Well, yeah. The project had several design changes, one of them being the movement of the Petrotrin leg of the project from the west refinery into the east refinery, that meant a pipeline had to be built across the refinery. There was a decision not to have a new rack in Pointe-a-Pierre, so that meant that the loading rack in Caroni had to be made bigger, and there were, you know, moneys had to be expended for the acquisition of right-of-way and so on, where
lands were not lands belonging to the NGC.

**Mrs. Gopee-Scoon:** But what was the extent to the cost overruns on this project though?

**Hon. Ramnarine:** The project is at $1.1 billion right now, and a lot of that had to do with design changes and the work set we had to do as a consequence of design change.

**Mr. Chairman:** Any further? One final question.

**Mrs. Gopee-Scoon:** One final question on 001, and the development of industrial sites; do you have projected sites and, specifically, what are these for industrial as against, let us say, your e'TecK parks? So what are the industrial sites about?

**Hon. Ramnarine:** The $40 million with regard to development of industrial sites is specifically for the Union Industrial Estate, right, and it treats with the relocation of persons who live in the radius of the proposed Mitsubishi plant who have to be relocated, and it also treats with moneys to be spent on drainage works for the Union Industrial Estate, and these moneys would be transferred to the NCE for their execution.

**Mrs. Gopee-Scoon:** Okay.

**Mr. Chairman:** The Member for Diego Martin North/East.

**Mr. Imbert:** Yes, Mr. Chairman. I heard the Minister say that the multi-fuel pipeline is at $1.1 billion?

**Hon. Ramnarine:** Yes.

**Mr. Imbert:** But of that about $500 million would have been spent in the last two years?

**Hon. Ramnarine:** Well the project was in a very advanced stage in the year 2010. The last Cabinet approval for the project under your administration was for about $762 million. The increase is as a consequence of design changes that were already in train in the year 2010, so the project has landed up now at $1.1 billion, but the majority of that would have been spent by the year 2011.

**Mr. Imbert:** Okay, but I am seeing $500 million in the last two years.

**Hon. Ramnarine:** Yeah, well I think that is to pay for—it was committed to prior 2010 but spent in that period.
Mr. Imbert: All right. What is this?

Hon. Ramnarine: What is that?

Mr. Imbert: What is it?

Hon. Ramnarine: The multi-fuel project?

Mr. Imbert: Yeah.

Hon. Ramnarine: The multi-fuel project entails the pipeline from the Pointe-a-Pierre refinery to Piarco, and then there is the facility at Piarco which includes the tank farm in Piarco, which is what you see opposite the Caroni Cremation Site, and the loading rack, there is an automated loading rack in there, and there is a pipeline then from that facility to the Piarco International Airport that allows for Jet A-1 fuel to be sent to Piarco.

Mr. Imbert: So this was to provide fuel to the airport?

Hon. Ramnarine: No, it is not just for the airport, the facility also has storage capacity for super, premium and diesel.

Mr. Imbert: Just in that location?

Hon. Ramnarine: In that location, yeah.

Mr. Imbert: All right, okay.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 40 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Mr. Chairman: I would like to thank you, hon. Minister and your team, on behalf of the Standing Finance Committee, for coming. Thank you very much. Hon. Members, I want to propose for your consideration—all right we are now going to Head 28, the Ministry of Health—

Dr. Rambachan: Mr. Chairman, a lot of us are suffering from the cold of the air conditioning and we are asking if it could be reduced a little bit. It is really, really very cold. [Crosstalk]

Hon. Member: We need a break.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, I think Members are also saying they need a little 10/15 minutes to stretch their legs, so in the meantime we will do what you have requested. Okay, so this meeting of the Standing Finance Committee is suspended for 15 minutes—
Miss Mc Donald: Twenty. Twenty.

Mr. Chairman: We shall come back at 5.35.

5.15 p.m.: Standing Finance Committee suspended.

5.35 p.m.: Standing Finance Committee resumed.

Mr. Chairman: All right. Hon. Members, the Standing Finance Committee will now resume. There is an agreement that we will just stand down for the time being, the Ministry of Health, and there are three small entities, although in numbers they are small, they might be very powerful in their functions. One is the Equal Opportunity Commission, the other one is Pensions and Gratuities, and the third one is the Tax Appeal Board. So we will deal with these three Heads, and then we will revert to the hon. Minister of Health and his particular Ministry.

So we now have the Equal Opportunity Commission before us. Hon. Member for Diego Martin North/East, we will deal with the Equal Opportunity Commission now, after then, we will deal with Pensions and Gratuities, and the last one is the Tax Appeal Board. [Interruption] No, these were stand by we were saying that we ought to complete. These are small entities. This one is Head 75, page 436.

Head 75.

Question proposed: That Head 75 stand part of the Schedule.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, the sum of $4,780,800 for Head 75, the Equal Opportunity 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: 01, Personnel Expenditure; Item 001, General Administration; Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services. I recognize the Member for Arouca/Maloney.

Miss Hospedales: Mr. Chair, under Sub-Item 22, Short Term Employment, could the Minister indicate exactly what has accounted for the gradual increase of the allocation from $16 million in 2013 to $40 million in 2014 and $51 million in 2015?

Hon. Howai: $51,000.

Miss Hospedales: $51,000, sorry, Mr. Chair.

Hon. Howai: Short Term Employment. Now, I understand—is short-term employment, Sub-Item 22?
Mr. Chairman: Yes, it is Short Term Employment. The hon. Member would like to know what has caused the little drift in the numbers from the initial figure of $16,000.

[Hon. Howai confers with his advisors]

Hon. Howai: This would be part of the summer programme that they have introduced, where they have been taking in interns to work with the Commission, and this is the increase that is representative of that.

Mr. Chairman: I recognize the Member for Port of Spain South and then the Member for St. Joseph.

Miss Mc Donald: Yes, Sir. Minister, could you tell me how many people are employed with the Equal Opportunity Commission?

Hon. Howai: We have 20 persons employed currently.

Mr. Chairman: I recognize the Member for St. Joseph and then the Member for St. Ann’s East.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Thank you. Hon. Minister, Sub-Head 02, Sub-Item, 27, Official Overseas Travel, which is a new Sub-Item, there was no revised estimate for 2014; 2013, $130,000; 2014, we are now at $424,000. What is this new item about? And could you tell us why the quantity has been increased to this extent?

Hon. Howai: This represents visits to—the judge thought that it would be important to see the operations of other anti-discrimination jurisdictions, and as a consequence, there has been a budget to allow for that, for a team to visit some of these jurisdictions.

Mr. Deyalsingh: So it is more in the line of judicial contact, similar?

Mr. Imbert: Could you tell me which judge you are talking about?

Hon. Howai: Yes, it is. So it is a judge and two additional assessors.

Mr. Imbert: You have a judge there?

Hon. Howai: Yes, the judge is Judge Joseph, Rajmanlal Joseph.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Thank you.

Mr. Chairman: I recognise the Member for St. Ann’s East.

Mrs. Thomas: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am looking at Janitorial Services and Security Services. It is the first time janitorial services is budgeted, and also the security services have increased from the estimates for 2014. I just have one
other comment. What exactly is the Overseas Travel Facilities, which is Sub-Item 98? So those three questions please, Mr. Chairman.

Hon. Howai: Okay. With respect to Janitorial Services and Security Services, right now the Commission uses the offices, Mr. Chairman, of the Attorney General. They will be moving into their own offices shortly. [Hon. Howai confers with his advisors] In Chaguanas and, therefore, in those new offices, they will need to provide for these services which are currently being addressed by the Attorney General.

Mr. Chairman: Yes, Member for Arouca/Maloney?

Miss Hospedales: Yes, Mr. Chair, thank you.

Mr. Chairman: Oh, Member for St. Ann’s East?

Mrs. Thomas: Mr. Chairman, that Item 98, what exactly are Overseas Travel Facilities?

[Hon. Howai confers with his advisors]

Hon. Howai: This is an approved facility—a facility approved by the SRC for all judges, and this is for the judge.

Mr. Chairman: Apparently it is a facility approved by the SRC for judges.

Mrs. Thomas: And it is separate and apart from overseas travel which the Member asked?

Hon. Howai: Yeah, which is an operating expense, as opposed to a specific perk so to speak, or personal allowance.

Mr. Chairman: I recognize the Member for Arouca/Maloney.

Miss Hospedales: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Sub-Item 62, Promotions, Publicity and Printing, in 2013 there was a $27,200 allocation and then 2014, it gradually went up to $90,800 and now it is $100,000. I want to find out what is the rationale behind that gradual leap in the allocation.

Hon. Howai: This would be, Mr. Chairman, the expenses for the signage for the new building. So it will incur some additional cost for the signage, as well in the normal printing, as well as their annual report.

Mr. Chairman: I recognize the Member for Laventille West and then the Member for Port of Spain South.

Mr. Hypolite: The Minister just indicated that this agency will be moving to their own office in Chaguanas. Is that a rented office? Because when we look at
08, Chair, I am seeing $19,000. Is it $19,000 for the year for that particular office?

Hon. Howai: Mr. Chairman, that expense is paid for by the Attorney General. The rental expense is paid for by the Attorney General.

Mr. Hypolite: Therefore, what is the cost of the monthly rental figure?

Hon. Howai: One hundred and fifty thousand dollars plus VAT.

Mr. Chairman: I recognize the Member for Port of Spain South.

Miss Mc Donald: Yes, Sir.

Hon. Howai: This was again approved by the SRC, it is sort of a perk for the judge. Yeah, it is an additional payment for the judge.

Mr. Chairman: For the judge? Okay. We go on to Item 001, General Administration, Reconstruction, Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, Item 001, General Administration.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 75 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much, members of the Equal Opportunity Commission.

We now call on the members of the Pensions and Gratuities who will assist the hon. Minister of Finance and the Economy.

Miss Mc Donald: Are we going to do pensions now?

Mr. Chairman: Pensions and Gratuities.

Miss Mc Donald: What page?

Mr. Chairman: What page is that?

Miss Mc Donald: 106?

Hon. Howai: Head 20. [Crosstalk]

Mr. Chairman: Okay. Hon. Members, we go to Pensions and Gratuities.
Head 20.

*Question proposed:* That Head 20 stand part of the Schedule.

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Members, the sum of $50 million for Head 20, 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:* Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies; Item 007, Households. Then we go well, Households, that is it.

I recognize the Member for Diego Martin North/East and then the Member for St. Ann’s East.

**Miss Mc Donald:** And me.

**Mr. Chairman:** And the Member for Port of Spain South.

**Mr. Imbert:** Could the Minister state whether any additional provision has been made for increased pensions for Members of Parliament and judges in 2015?

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Minister, whether any additional increase—

**Mr. Imbert:** Additional increased allocations for pensions for Members of Parliament and judges.

5.50 p.m.

**Hon. Howai:** No, Mr. Chairman, no such provisions have been made.

**Mr. Imbert:** What?

**Hon. Howai:** We have made provisions for the public officers.

**Mr. Imbert:** No, no. I did not ask about public officers—members of Parliament and judges. You have made no provisions?

**Hon. Howai:** No, we made no provisions.

**Mr. Imbert:** What? We have to do something about that. I never!

**Mr. Chairman:** Who is the next person who would like to speak?

**Mr. Imbert:** But you are something else.

**Mr. Chairman:** I recognize the Member for Diego Martin Central and the Member for St. Ann’s East.

**Mr. Imbert:** I never! What jail is this?
Dr. Browne: With respect to the pensions for defence force officers, it arose in an earlier line of questioning with the Ministry of National Security and they indicated you might be able to help to clarify why these payments seem to be coming traditionally late every month to retired defence force officers. They have been complaining about that, so under this line item, can you clarify?

Hon. Howai: Mr. Chairman, that is something that I would need to get back to the hon. Member on.

Mr. Chairman: Who is the next person? St. Ann’s East.

Mrs. Thomas: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Item 10, Gratuities to Technical and Professional Contract Officers: what is the reason for the big reduction of $35 million?

Hon. Howai: This was an adjustment which was made by the Budget Division based on their projections regarding—what they were saying was the figures that we had last year would have been an arrears of gratuity which was paid in 2014. Therefore, this would have been their estimate of the figure going forward.

Mr. Chairman: The Member for Port of Spain South and the Member for Arouca/Maloney after.

Miss McDonald: Minister, under the same 007, Sub-Head 12, Ex-Gratia Awards, could you tell me what that $12 million is about and who is it payable to?

Hon. Howai: This would be for retirees. There has been an increase in the number of retirees. In 2013, they paid 160; in 2014, 202.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, the question is—oh, yes, Member for Arouca/Maloney. Sorry, hon. Member.

Miss Hospedales: Mr. Chair, Sub-Item 02: Public Officers’ Gratuities, I would like to know what accounted for a $20 million decrease in the allocation.

Hon. Howai: Sorry, Mr. Chair. It is the same issue as had occurred with the $35 million. It was arrears of gratuity, which was paid in 2014, which caused the number to look higher than in 2015.

Miss McDonald: I have another question.

Mr. Chairman: Yes, hon. Member for Port of Spain South.
Miss Mc Donald: Minister, you know I am just going through this quickly and I have seen increases all around: Public Officers, President’s Pension; what do you have? VTEP, everything. Yes, Fire Service, President’s Pension and everything inside of here. I am asking, with all these increases, no consideration—Minister, you are not looking at me.

Hon. Howai: I am hearing you. I only need to hear. I do not need to look. [Laughter]

Miss Mc Donald: No consideration has been given whatsoever for increases for parliamentarians nor to the judges?

Hon. Howai: I suppose that would be the mid-year review, Mr. Chairman. We come back in the mid-year review.

Miss Mc Donald: Minister, you know that is not true. You know that and I know that.

Hon. Howai: No, no provision was made, Mr. Chairman.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 20 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much, members of the Pensions and Gratuities Section. We now invite the Tax Appeal Board to appear before us. That is Head 9 and it is on page 42.

Head 09.

Question proposed: That Head 09 stand part of the Schedule.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, the sum of $7,313,000, for Head 09, the Tax Appeal Board is comprised of moneys proposed for expenditure under the following Sub-Head and Items to be found in the Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure Draft Estimates of Development Programme.

Sub-Head 01: Personnel Expenditure
  Item 001, General Administration

Sub-Head 02: Goods and Services
  Item 001, General Administration

Sub-Head 03: Minor Equipment Purchases
  Item 001, General Administration

Sub-Head 09: Development Programme
  Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services
Question put and agreed to.

Head 9 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much, Minister of Finance and the Economy. We now invite the Minister of Health to resume.

Head 28.

Hon. Members, first of all, Head 28, the Ministry of Health, $4,554,142,700.

I will now invite the hon. Minister of Health, if he so desires, to make a brief opening statement for a maximum of five minutes as it relates to your priority areas for fiscal 2014/2015.

Hon. Dr. Khan: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I want to thank the committee for having the Ministry of Health as well as our head executives, the Permanent Secretary and others from the Ministry of Health.

What I would like to indicate to the committee as well as the meeting, the Ministry of Health has started a process of trying to increase the infrastructure as well as the human resources, as well as the service-oriented medicine in Trinidad and Tobago. We have had a history of having a decreased service mentality in Trinidad and Tobago, so we are starting on an education campaign for one, service orientation, as well as looking at different aspects of promotion.

You will see in the details of the Ministry of Health certain areas of increases, certain areas of decreases, as well as other areas. We have also embarked upon a promotion of education to the population of Trinidad and Tobago where the NCD epidemic has increased to such an extent that the majority of our individuals in this country, as well as children, are suffering from severe obesity. [ Interruption]

Mr. Chairman: I am hearing—you know, you use an expression all the time. Is it “drone”? I am hearing, I am hearing, I am hearing, so I would like to hear the hon. Minister in silence.

Hon. Dr. Khan: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. So we are going forward this year. We have built the foundation of the infrastructure—as you see it is going at present—and we are going to continue with the infrastructure development. However, what I think is very important is the education of our population by means of proper promotion where they must understand healthy lifestyles as well as proper diet and exercise.

There has also been, over the years, a paucity of treatment of the mental health aspect of Trinidadians. We have found—and it is also a worldwide study—that
the mental health disorders are approximately 25 per cent. One in four people have some sort of mental disease, depression, et cetera, and mental health is going to be on the front burner, together with addiction and addiction in families. So that is exactly what the process will be.

We will go into the other parts of it where—those will be the broad concepts. However, mixed in this would be employment as well as places. You have different aspects of the Ministry of Health for the RHAs, as well as the vertical services such as insect vector. Right now, there is Chikungunya as well as the possibility of Ebola, which has not arrived yet, and dengue.

We are putting a thrust in that area with the insect vectors, trying to bring it up to a higher standard than it is already. So, Mr. Chairman, I think, in addition to that, what we also have embarked upon is the development of the electronic medical records, the paperless hospital; the digital hospital, as well as the Health Information Management System that will have a decreased amount of paper and an increased amount of efficiency.

The hospitals in Trinidad and Tobago and the health centres in rural areas, as well as other areas, have not been subjected to connectivity with the PAC System, the Patient Archive Computer System. We are going to be able to link every single health centre, as well, into the radiological department of the major hospitals and this will have a telemedicine type of approach to develop our citizens.

In addition to that, we are going to form a partnership with the possibility of an ambulance provider where we will have an increase in the number of emergency and intensive care ambulances, as well as ambulances specific to things like Ebola-infected disease, for transportation and also more ambulances and the training of paramedics and also emergency medical technicians.

We are hoping to do that this year and you will see, when you look through the details of the system, that is reflected in what we have forwarded. So, five minutes, I think Mr. Chairman, we would like to start into the—

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much, hon. Minister.

Question proposed: That Head 28 stand part of the Schedule.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, the sum of $4,545,142,700 for Head 28, the 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 Estimates of Development Programme:
Sub-Head 01: Personnel Expenditure

Item 001, General Administration

I recognize the hon. Member for Diego Martin Central and then the hon. Member for Port of Spain South.

Dr. Browne: Minister, I am just seeing, under Item 14, what Cabinet-appointed committees are currently serving within the Ministry of Health?

Hon. Dr. Khan: The Cabinet-appointed committees will be things like the Food and Drugs Committee and other committees of that ilk.

Dr. Browne: How many committees are currently serving and which are they? Or can that be provided if you do not have the information?

Hon. Dr. Khan: We can provide that later.

Dr. Browne: Okay, thank you. And I have an observation—

Hon. Dr. Khan: There are quite a number of committees.

Dr. Browne: Just list them. And I just have an observation I would like you to clarify. I see that the Wages and Cost of Living Allowance have gone down; NIS has gone down; Salaries, Direct Charges have gone down, but the allowances budget has gone up. What is happening at the Ministry in that regard?

6.05 p.m.

Hon. Dr. Khan: What is happening, the Wages and Cost of Living allowances, if you notice in the 2013/2014, et cetera, it was a bit high. The arrears for the daily-paid workers were paid there. We do not have that arrears to do again, so that is why there is a decrease, basically, at that level.

Dr. Browne: Does that apply to Salaries-Direct Charges as well?

Hon. Dr. Khan: Yes, it does.

Dr. Browne: Same explanation.

Hon. Dr. Khan: It will reflect in that manner.

Dr. Browne: All right. Mr. Chairman, Vertical Services, I do not know if there is another question from someone else on this section.

Mr. Chairman: Well, I recognize the Member for Port of Spain South.
Miss Mc Donald: Yes, Mr. Chairman, 08. I am wondering what would cause—in 2014 your revised estimate was $100,000 from $1.5 million, and then you decided that you will go back to that $1.5 million. What would you be doing different in 2015 that would account for a $1.4 million increase?

Hon. Dr. Khan: There are a number of vacant posts in the Ministry of Health, and that will be for the filling of the vacant posts in the Ministry of Health.

Miss Mc Donald: How many vacant posts, do you know?

Hon. Dr. Khan: We will supply that.

Mr. Chairman: I recognize the hon. Member for St. Ann’s East.

Mrs. Thomas: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Minister, I looked at Item 06, Remuneration to Boards Members, I saw there was an increase. Is it that the stipend to board members have increased or is it there are more board members? What exactly represents that increase?

Hon. Dr. Khan: The Toxic and Pesticides Board, they have all the members now, they did not have all the members before.

Mr. Chairman: All right, we go to Item 04, Vertical Services. I recognize the Member for Diego Martin Central.

Dr. Browne: Thank you, Chairman. Vertical Services still include the Insect Vector Control Division. Is that correct?

Hon. Dr. Khan: Yes.

Dr. Browne: So just a simple request, given the current situation, under Wages and Cost of Living Allowances, et cetera, I am interested in receiving the details of the current staffing at the Insect Vector Control Division. There are a lot of, you know, rumours circulating, I would like that clarified. In addition—no, well that will come under NWRHA. That is it for the—[Interruption]

Mr. Chairman: Okay. Do you want to answer?

Hon. Dr. Khan: It is just that what you are looking at is, once again, the same thing, the same explanation. The arrears of the daily-paid workers were paid, so you will find there is a decrease. The insect vector part of that $60 million will be approximately about $30 million mixed into that $60 million.

Dr. Browne: I understand the explanation it would carry, so I am not so concerned about the decrease there. Just I would like a schedule in terms of the staffing at—[Interruption]
Hon. Dr. Khan: Insect vector.

Dr. Browne: Yes.

Hon. Dr. Khan: Okay. We will get that for you.

Mr. Chairman: Yes, the hon. Member for La Brea.

Mr. Jeffrey: Under 01, Travelling and Subsistence, we notice that in 2014, $6.9 million.

Mr. Chairman: Where are you, under Vertical Services?

Mr. Jeffrey: Yeah, yeah, 01.

Mr. Chairman: That is salaries and cost of living, 01.

Mr. Jeffrey: Travelling and Subsistence, $6.9 million.

Mr. Chairman: Yes, he is on page 185, Vertical Services, Travelling and Subsistence. Is it here you are on?

Mr. Jeffrey: That is goods and services.

Mr. Chairman: No, we have not reached there yet. Let us go on now to Item 005, North West Regional Health Authority. Nothing under that? Item 006 North Central Regional Health Authority; Item 007, the Eastern Regional Health Authority; Item 008 the South West Regional Health Authority.

Yes, I recognize the Member for Diego Martin Central.

Dr. Browne: Under 01, is there currently a neurosurgery service at the San Fernando General Hospital?

Hon. Dr. Khan: Yes.

Dr. Browne: We can be provided with the staffing of that unit or that service?

Hon. Dr. Khan: Most definitely, but I can tell you now, there are neurosurgeons from Cuba—two neurosurgeons from Cuba and there is also a Belizean, he is located there. There are approximately three Chinese neurosurgeons who have done really good work for the last couple weeks.

Dr. Browne: But I would still like the schedule.

Hon. Dr. Khan: There are also house officers as well as—but if you would like the—[ Interruption]

Dr. Browne: Yes. There is a particular reason. I would like it provided in writing, all the staff.

Hon. Dr. Khan: Okay sure.
Mr. Chairman: All right. Item 009 National Alcohol and Drug Abuse Prevention. I recognize the Member for Arouca/Maloney and the hon. Member for Diego Martin Central.

Miss Hospedales: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Sub-Item 01, specific to the NADAPP, I would like the Minister to indicate whether the allocation of $1,071,400 is adequate for the number of staff required for that unit, and if he could indicate to us the current staffing at the unit. Based on the organizational structure and the required number of staff, if he can indicate when the new staff will come on and if he is even aware of the severe understaffing of that unit.

Hon. Dr. Khan: The hon. Member would bear with me. We had NADAPP come to the Ministry of Health, well just recently. I understand there is a decrease in staffing; I understand a lot of the things that you have said. However, if you notice in my opening statement I said that we are going to push forward with the addiction, mental health as well as families of addicts. So we will be trying to staff NADAPP in a different manner.

Miss Hospedales: Mr. Chair, through you, I would like to ask the Minister when they propose to beef up the staffing at NADAPP.

Hon. Dr. Khan: Within the year.

Mr. Jeffrey: Under Item 02, Goods and Services, number 23 Fees. In 2013, $324,000; in 2014, $1.4 million; and in 2015 an estimate of $5 million. What is it you could say is responsible for that?

Hon. Dr. Khan: There are two things in that Fees: one software licences for the HIMS programmes as well as for the Ministry of Health licences which are quite expensive and also legal fees. What has happened, there is a high rate of litigation as you would read in the newspapers, and we have had to deal with that by increasing the amount of legal work.

Mr. Jeffrey: Is it that you are anticipating that in 2015 you would have more litigation.

Hon. Dr. Khan: The licences for the HIMS might come up this year.

Mr. Jeffrey: Okay.

Hon. Dr. Khan: The Health Information Management System.
Mr. Chairman: I recognize the—do you have another question, Member for La Brea?

Mr. Jeffrey: Yes, I have another question. Under Vertical Services, Travelling and Subsistence; $6.9 million for 2014, and you have an estimated $9.2 million in 2015. What do you anticipate in terms of travelling that would cause that increase?

Mr. Chairman: The hon. Minister of Health.

Hon. Dr. Khan: What has been assumed in that area is that all the travelling officers for the Vertical Services will be travelling, so we have to make provisions for that.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, I recognize the Member for Diego Martin Central.

Dr. Browne: Thank you, Chairman. Under Vertical Services, Item 15, Repairs and Maintenance—Equipment; Minister, you have put into the public domain or it is in the public domain that there are issues with respect to the fogging machines—I am not sure what technical term you are using these days—and their current state of service. Can you provide a statement either now or to the committee in terms of the status of the equipment that deals with the mosquito vectors spraying?

Hon. Dr. Khan: That is a specific question, I would have to give you a specific answer. I would have to give you that.

Dr. Browne: That would come in writing?

Hon. Dr. Khan: It would have to come in writing, yes.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Chair, just a follow up question, please. In addition to the status—well, I do not know what status actually speaks to here—but could we get the optimum or optimal number of machines we need in Trinidad and Tobago and how many machines we have now, please?

Hon. Dr. Khan: Your second part of the question is the same as the Member for Diego Martin Central.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Just tell us what is the optimum.

Hon. Dr. Khan: Okay. We will try our best to supply that.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Thank you.

Dr. Browne: And then, Chairman, if I may.
Mr. Chairman: Yes. I think the Member for Diego Martin Central is on the floor. Are you through?

Dr. Browne: No, I am not through as yet, but it is a separate question. I do not know if another Member had a follow up on 15.

Miss Mc Donald: Yes, I am looking at Fees, Sub-Item 23.

Hon. Dr. Khan: Okay.

Miss Mc Donald: I just want to find out, Minister, if there is need in your Ministry for external legal advice—I am sure you would have a little legal unit there—but if there is need for external legal advice and you have to retain attorneys and whatnot to go to court: what is your procedure there? What do you do? Are you allowed to take your own attorneys or—?

Hon. Dr. Khan: Yes, we are and also the RHAs are allowed to take their own attorneys, as well as the Ministry of Health. We do have a list of attorneys and they tend to choose from the list.

Miss Mc Donald: All right, so you do not have to refer it to the Attorney General’s Office?

Hon. Dr. Khan: Sometimes we do.

Miss Mc Donald: In what circumstances?

Hon. Dr. Khan: In most circumstances.

Miss Mc Donald: In most circumstances.

Mr. Chairman: Okay. We go on to Item 05.

Dr. Browne: Just one further question under 39, that is the largest item under this Sub-Head: Drugs and Other Related Materials and Supplies. I see an increase of just $3 million with respect to drugs, other related materials and supplies, I am wondering if the Minister can provide any details with respect to improvement in the procurement process or distribution strategy for these pharmaceuticals.

Hon. Dr. Khan: That line item would be for the C40 total drugs and materials related. What we have done—because of what we have noticed happening—we have set up an evaluation and audit system from the Ministry of Health into the C40 looking at the supply chain—the methods of what is occurring; why there are so-called shortages although the drugs are available. So with that approach, we will be able to look at the whole supply chain, see where the snags are and deal with the problem.
Dr. Browne: Okay. Who is leading that particular effort?

Hon. Dr. Khan: The audit system? It is the Ministry of Health.

Dr. Browne: No, what office is leading that effort or officer? Can you provide that detail? Who?

Hon. Dr. Khan: It is the internal audit department of the Ministry of Health.

Dr. Browne: Okay.

Mr. Chairman: Okay. We will deal with Item 005 North West Regional Authority; Item 006 North Central Regional Health Authority; Item 007 Eastern Regional Health Authority; Item 008 South West Regional Health Authority; Item 009 National Alcohol and Drug Abuse Prevention. I recognize the hon. Member for Arouca/Maloney.

Miss Hospedales: Sub-Item 16 under Contract Employment, I would like the Minister to tell us the number of existing staff on contract and the number of vacant contract positions in NADAPP.

Hon. Dr. Khan: You would like to find out that? Okay, we will make that available.

Mr. Chairman: We would deal now with Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, Item 001, General Administration; Item 004 Vertical Services; Item 009 National Alcohol and Drug Abuse Prevention, Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies; Item 09 Regional Bodies; Item 003 United Nations Organisations; Item 004—[Interruption]

I recognize the hon. Member for Diego Martin Central.

Dr. Browne: 01, International Atomic Energy Agency. I seem to recall they were playing a role with respect to a radio monitoring or support for a radiotherapy service—something to do with our cancer treatment cycle, et cetera—but I am seeing a large increase. Maybe the Minister could just tell us what they do and why the decrease.

Hon. Dr. Khan: What you see in 2014 is the two years subvention in one, and that is why you might see a decrease in 2015; it is once per year. Also what the IAEA has done, they are working together with the Ministry of Health and we do have liaison officers, they are Dr. Narinesingh and Dr. Chin. They are training these doctors to work with the radioactive material in our system as well as providing assistance in developing legislation for the radiation, et cetera, in Trinidad and Tobago.
Dr. Browne: That training is occurring in Trinidad or abroad?

Hon. Dr. Khan: No, abroad. But they were here recently and they were looking at our system.

Mr. Chairman: Okay. Item 004 International Bodies; Item 005 Non-Profit Institutions. I recognize the Member for St. Joseph, the Member for Diego Martin Central; the Member for Arouca Maloney and also the Member for Port of Spain South.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Thank you. Hon. Minister, could you explain why there are no provisions for any of the non-profit institutions?

Hon. Dr. Khan: If you notice there is a block figure at the end, we have lumped them into a block figure rather than each one. They are like subventions that we have at the Ministry of Health. Instead of putting each one—because it tends to change over the year—we tend to have a block figure and then we give it out.

Mr. Deyalsingh: And what is the policy position to determine how much each of these gets from that block?

Hon. Dr. Khan: It depends on the budget; what budget they submit and the budget is looked at, at the policy department, and they determine exactly what is necessary.

Mr. Chairman: Yes, the hon. Member for Diego Martin Central.

6.20 p.m.

Dr. Browne: I appreciate the answer, but I would like a listing of the current non-profit institutions that are supported financially from the Ministry of Health.

There was a question before about policy. What determines whether a non-profit institution gets support via the Ministry of Health, as opposed to those that have been transferred already to other Ministries such as Community Development and the NGO Support Unit? What determines the retention?

Hon. Dr. Khan: The Policy Department of the Ministry of Health assesses all the non-profit organizations, and if it has moved then obviously they would not have any subventions. But if you notice here, you have the NADAPP still there at No. 22.

Dr. Browne: Well NADAPP is not a non-profit institution; that is a division of the Ministry.

Hon. Dr. Khan: Sorry, yes. Now it is, it was not before.
**Dr. Browne:** Minister, I think you are getting a little confused. At least let me clarify. My impression of these institutions are separate and apart from the Ministry that receive financial support from the Ministry.

**Hon. Dr. Khan:** But what we are saying is that they are assessed by the Policy Department in the Ministry of Health.

**Dr. Browne:** But the Government had indicated a new policy where all of these non-governmental organizations and non-profit entities would be appraised, assessed and funded through a consolidated unit, the NGO Support Unit. I am just trying to determine whether—

**Hon. Dr. Khan:** I have been advised that the Ministry of the People and Social Development has that body you are describing. However, the Ministry of Health communicates with the Ministry of the People and Social Development and what they are not providing, we provide.

**Dr. Browne:** And you will provide the list hopefully.

**Miss Mc Donald:** Minister, I am back on that same Non-Profit Institutions, 005. I heard you when you said that you now have a big figure, just one lump sum, a block figure, and due to some policy you have in the Ministry then moneys will be allocated to various institutions. Is that block figure $10.3 million?

**Hon. Dr. Khan:** No, it is $15.909 million.

**Miss Mc Donald:** Okay, put it this way, for substance abuse, 21 and 22, it cannot be that, Sir. It cannot be $15.9 million, because 21 and 22, and NADAPP which is substance abuse, has been transferred to the Community Development Ministry.

**Hon. Dr. Khan:** No, no, NADAPP is by us.

**Miss Mc Donald:** Well what am I seeing here—21 and 22 transferred from—you all have that from Community Development now. So you all have 21 and 22?

**Hon. Dr. Khan:** The $10.36 million is what the block figure is.

**Miss Mc Donald:** Right, that is the block figure. That is what I wanted to know.

**Hon. Dr. Khan:** There is an increase of $4.9 million.

**Miss Mc Donald:** Good, that is the original question I asked you. So it is out of this block figure that you would now make subventions to—and that would be determined on your stated policy?
Hon. Dr. Khan: Yes.

Miss Mc Donald: How would we know your stated policy?

Hon. Dr. Khan: The organizations supply information, audited statements, and we assess them and also we go to Cabinet for the subventions.

Miss Mc Donald: But how would an ordinary citizen know about this? Normally before, each year you make a budgetary allocation to each of these non-profit institutions. Now you are not saying how much the institution is getting. Let us assume, John Hayes Memorial Kidney Foundation was getting $200,000, but now there is a block figure, so you do not know what part of that $10.3 million John Hayes would get. Now the foundation has to apply, due to this new policy. How would we know that they would not be getting less than that $200,000?

Hon. Dr. Khan: John Hayes Memorial Kidney Foundation is quite a large dialysis provider in Trinidad and Tobago, so I doubt that the money they get would be less, but I understand your point: how would we know?

Miss Mc Donald: I used John Hayes as an example. Look at New Life Ministries—the point I am trying to make is: how are we to know that the initial subvention that the NGO was getting prior to this new policy, it would not be reduced because it is all hidden in that block figure, and we do not know?

Mr. Chairman: We would not know.

Hon. Dr. Khan: What I will do, hon. Member, I will give you a listing of what we do have.

Miss Mc Donald: I would like to see a listing of the policy. I want to know what the policy is about.

Hon. Dr. Khan: I will give you a listing of the policy—written.

Mr. Chairman: Let us deal with Item 007, Households.

Miss Hospedales: Mr. Chair, you missed me.

Mr. Chairman: All right; I recognize the Member for Arouca Maloney and the Member for Diego Martin Central.

Miss Hospedales: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair; Sub-Item 21, Substance Abuse Rehabilitation Centres. Mr. Chair, through you, I would like to find out from the Minister whether or not this allocation is actually for the provision of a
subvention to the Substance Abuse Rehabilitation Centres, and if yes, how many of those centres actually receive a subvention from the Ministry?

Hon. Dr. Khan: I could read here, it is a subvention: HEAL, Rebirth House, Oasis, Serenity Place, and you have one-off grants. The figures are here.

Dr. Browne: Where is that?

Hon. Dr. Khan: If you like me to make it available, I will.

Mr. Chairman: I think the Minister said that he will make available a policy on these matters, so that we will all be guided. Let us go on to Item 007.

Dr. Browne: I just want some clarity on Sub-Item 24, University of the West Indies TeleHealth Programme. I see it listed as a new Sub-Item, but I am not seeing any allocation at all. That is a very important programme up at UWI.

Miss Mc Donald: That must be part of the block figure that. That is in the $10.3 million with the others.

Dr. Browne: That cannot be in the $10.3 million.

Hon. Dr. Khan: The one you just told me, $10.3 million is above that and this is coming down so that is part of the $15 million. Now UWI TeleHealth is very important. What UWI TeleHealth does is that it links with sick kids, et cetera, with the University of the West Indies for a lot of childhood disorders. [Interruption]

Dr. Browne: Minister—

Miss Mc Donald: That is lacking transparency; before it was easy to look at it and see what each NGO is getting. I do not understand why we are not putting the figures there, and why we are hiding it in a block figure. I take serious objection to this.

Mr. Chairman: I know you did object earlier, and I have noted your objection.

Hon. Dr. Khan: Mr. Chairman, could I say something?

Mr. Chairman: Wait.

Hon. Dr. Khan: This has been done forever. This is not the first time this is happening, you know. [Interruption] For you to come across here—it is the first time you are reading the document? It is the first time you are reading the document.

Mr. Chairman: All right, Minister of Health. [Crosstalk]
Hon. Dr. Khan: This has been like this for the longest while.

Miss Mc Donald: I have the right to ask a question. [Crosstalk]

Dr. Browne: Chairman, could I bring something—

Mr. Chairman: Listen, I am invoking the Standing Orders—listen, order, order, order in this House. Minister of Health, I can ask you to leave if you continue, you know.

Miss Mc Donald: Exactly, tell him so!

Mr. Chairman: You too. [Laughter] We cannot continue how we are going, and I understand the point that you are making. Remember this is the first time, hon. Members, we as a Parliament and many of us who are Members of this honourable House, are taking the time to go through these documents. For years we have been Ministers and we have been Members of Parliament and we have not gone through those documents. So for the first time maybe the hon. Member for Port of Spain South is going through and seeing things for the first time. What the Minister is saying is that this has existed before now, but we are seeing it for the first time. So what I am saying, we must bear with each other. It is not the Minister trying to hide. In any event, he said he is going to make available to this Standing Finance Committee, a policy. So I ask the Member for Port of Spain South to hold your fire. [Crosstalk]

Miss Mc Donald: I am not tired.

Mr. Chairman: I recognize the Member for Diego Martin Central, and let us be disciplined. We did not cut a good picture today. I got a lot of calls from members of the public, and they are not happy with how Members of this honourable Parliament behaved this morning. We cut a very, very sad story in the minds of the people out there, how we behaved this morning, so let us be disciplined and dignified. The hon. Member for Diego Martin Central.

Dr. Browne: Thank you, Chairman. Just to be clear, I think it just went completely off course. We are talking about separate Sub-Items, so I do not agree that the TeleHealth programme is included in the vote under 20. Non-profit Institutions is Sub-Item 20, and the UWI TeleHealth Programme is Sub-Item 24. So I am simply asking the Minister for that listing of the non-profit institutions—that is number one; he has agreed to that. But just to clarify, why even though this is a new Sub-Item and an important programme, there is no allocation identified? That is all.
Hon. Dr. Khan: It was part of the block figure initially when Ministry of Finance and the Economy was putting it together, that is why they put it like that in those areas, but it was part of the block figure I am being advised.

Mr. Chairman: Let us go to Item 007, Households. I recognize the hon. Member for Diego Martin Central.

Dr. Browne: Medical Treatment for Nationals at Institutions, $65 million. I would like the Minister to provide some detail of what this covers, separate and apart from the RHA subvention.

Hon. Dr. Khan: That will be for radiation treatment in the institutions; dialysis treatment, that is growing as we speak. That is why we are promoting the healthy lifestyles, to decrease that amount of kidney disease, and also medical aids which sometimes is a one-off treatment or multiple treatments for people who need assistance. The majority is radiation and dialysis.

Mr. Chairman: Item 007, Households; we go to Item 009, Other Transfers; Item 010 Other Transfers Abroad.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Under Other Transfers, Sub-Head 04, sub-sub 06, Children's Life Fund Authority. Could the hon. Minister tell us how these sums are administered, is it by a board under 01/06 earlier, Board Members.

Hon. Dr. Khan: Yes.

Mr. Deyalsingh: The Children's Life Fund Authority or board, when is the term of office for that board expiring?

Hon. Dr. Khan: It expired about a couple of months ago, and there is a new board in place.

Mr. Deyalsingh: So it has expired?

Hon. Dr. Khan: Before.

Mr. Deyalsingh: And there is a new board in place?

Hon. Dr. Khan: There is a new board in place.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Just for clarity, yesterday we had the issue of fraud at the Children's Life Fund, and we heard the board is examining the issue. Which board is doing the investigation?

Hon. Dr. Khan: The new board.

Mr. Deyalsingh: The new board is investigating the member of the old board who allegedly—
Hon. Dr. Khan: There is no member of the board.

Mr. Deyalsingh: It was not a member of the board? So the new board is conducting the investigation?

Hon. Dr. Khan: Into the allegations.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Thank you.

Mr. Chairman: All right. I recognize the Member for Arouca/Maloney and then the Member for Diego Martin Central.

6.35 p.m.

Miss Hospedales: Mr. Chair, I am looking at Sub-Item 07, and I am asking the Minister, if $4 million is adequate for the allocation of National Emergency Ambulance Services Authority? And I am putting it in a little more context, what is happening with the ambulance services in Trinidad and Tobago? Because I am saying this—the Member for Arima I had an experience one night when there was an accident on the Priority Bus Route. It took approximately an hour and half for the ambulance service to arrive to remove the injured, and it was actually five minutes away from the Eric Williams Medical Sciences Complex, Mr. Chairman, so I would like the Minister to tell us what is going on.

Hon. Dr. Khan: Okay. I will first start with 04/07. That is the National Emergency Ambulance Services Authority, that $4 million is operating expenses. That is not the ambulance you are talking about. Right. If you look back at 009/01, Regional Health Authorities, you will see 01, Emergency Ambulance Service—$86 million. That is the emergency ambulance service that we speak about. And if you recall, back to the start of my presentation when I said that we have to start looking at a provider, a public/private provider that will increase the number of ambulances, and also increase their type of ambulances, as well as the training, and also the staffing—then we will take care of that, that problem that you see there.

Mr. Chairman: Yes. The hon. Member for Diego Martin Central.

Dr. Browne: 08 and 06, request to the Minister to provide a schedule of all the staff members currently under this response to HIV/AIDS, including if there is an advisory council. There may be an advisory council, a schedule of the membership of such council. Same applies to the Children’s Life Fund Authority, a listing of all the current board members, as well as all staff members employed at the Children’s Life Fund.
Hon. Dr. Khan: Okay. We will do that.

Mr. Chairman: Sub-Head 06, Current Transfers to Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies. Item 004, Statutory Bodies.

Mr. Jeffrey: I want to go back to 009, Current Transfers and Subsidies, 05. South-West Regional Health Authority, $810 million. Could we get some details on that?

Hon. Dr. Khan: That is going to be a lot of details, you know. What specifics do you want? What specifics are you asking about?

Mr. Jeffrey: I do not know if the $810 million—[Inaudible]

Hon. Dr. Khan: What is that? No. I mean, to go into that would be a lot of details. If you could point me in a direction where you are looking, I could—

Mr. Jeffrey: I am curious about what comprises the figure.

Hon. Dr. Khan: What comprises it? It is a massive region, you know. What specifically are you looking for? I need to know so I could look for it.

Mr. Jeffrey: You see, there is the figure we have for $810 million. Right. So, I thought we would have had somebody submitting an explanation—

Hon. Dr. Khan: When we go down you will see it.

Mr. Chairman: If we go through the documents you will find them, Member for La Brea.

Hon. Dr. Khan: It is there.

Mr. Chairman: In the documents. I am now under Sub-Head 006, Current Transfer to Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies; Item 004, Statutory Bodies. I recognize the Member for Diego Martin Central.

Dr. Browne: 14, Princess Elizabeth Home for—well it is an old name—for Handicapped Children. Can the Minister just provide some clarity to a concern, I understand, has been expressed at the institution, that the clinic there might be removed from Woodbrook to somewhere else in the country. Is the Minister aware of anything like that?

Hon. Dr. Khan: No. No. No.

Dr. Browne: Some new facility?

Hon. Dr. Khan: No. What we have done recently is put a new elevator for a dental clinic. So we most likely we will—
Dr. Browne: I did not hear what you said.

Hon. Dr. Khan: We have put in a new elevator for the clinic, the dental clinic. I do not think that that will be moving at any time.

Dr. Browne: The dental clinic you said?

Hon. Dr. Khan: We have started—the Rotary Club of Trinidad and Tobago, the Port of Spain Rotary.

Dr. Browne: I am referring to the orthopaedic, Dr. Toby’s—

Hon. Dr. Khan: No. In fact, we have just brought C-arms, et cetera, for him, so I cannot see that we are moving.

Dr. Browne: You are staying right there.

Hon. Dr. Khan: Yeah. The only problem I will tell you is it tends to flood sometimes—

Dr. Browne: Well a lot of money was spent.

Hon. Dr. Khan: So, we are trying to work with that.

Dr. Browne: Okay.

Mr. Chairman: We go on to Sub-Head 09, Development Programme; Item 004, Social Infrastructure; Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services; the Infrastructure Development Fund. We are under Sub-Head 09, under the item Infrastructure Development Fund. Any matters, I shall now put the question.

Dr. Browne: Hold on.

Mr. Chairman: Are you under Infrastructure, hon. Member?

Dr. Browne: Well, I am not too sure—no, I am under the Consolidated Fund, Development Programme 07.

Mr. Chairman: No. No. No. I am under Infrastructure Development Fund, and if you go to your Development Programme Expenditure, go to page 87.

Dr. Browne: Okay. Good. We are on the same page.

Mr. Chairman: 87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 253. So, I am looking at 253, 254 and 255. Those are the three pages that you can look at now.

Dr. Browne: All right. I am on 89, 90 and 91.
Mr. Chairman: Oh, so you want us to go back now.

Dr. Browne: I do not know if we are right there at all, Chairman.

Hon. Dr. Khan: No. We can do the IDF first, and then we can go back to that.

Dr. Browne: Sorry. Okay. I thought, it seemed as if you were skipping over that.

Mr. Chairman: All right. Member for Diego Martin Central, you can go to the Development Programme, starting from 87. Let us go.

Dr. Browne: Thank you. Well, I have some questions under 07, Other Services, waiting lists for surgeries, 007. Can the Minister provide us with some detail on how this waiting list programme operates, and what measures are in place to prevent possible abuse by surgeons or others in terms of routing?

Hon. Dr. Khan: What—I could tell you that, it is really—

Dr. Browne: Routing of patients.

Hon. Dr. Khan: No. What we have done—well I will give you that in writing, it is normally called EPP, the external patient programme, and the money for the waiting list is a line item that has always been there. So, we have increased that to utilize—a lot of procedures where people have been waiting a long time in institutions. However, we are also cognizant of the fact that we could have that routing of patients, and it is being very closely managed in that regard. But I will give you that in writing. I will give you it in writing.

Dr. Browne: More than what you have just said, hopefully.

Hon. Dr. Khan: That is a lot, but if you want more I will give you more.

Dr. Browne: Well I want a lot more, Minister, serious.

Hon. Dr. Khan: You see, the thing about it, what you are asking is supposition, how do I stop routing a patient? I cannot stand up in every single clinic and watch a patient.

Dr. Browne: No. No. No. No one is asking at this committee for you to go and stand up and watch at what is going on.

Hon. Dr. Khan: No. What I am saying—

Dr. Browne: Chairman, I want to be clear here. We are talking about taxpayers’ dollars.
Hon. Dr. Khan: Exactly.

Dr. Browne: As a member of the committee, I am asking what measures the Ministry has put in place to reduce that potential for abuse under that—

Hon. Dr. Khan: We will give you that in writing.

Dr. Browne:—once that is provided, I am happy.

Hon. Dr. Khan: We will give you that in writing, Member.

Dr. Browne: Do not have to get into all of that now.

Mr. Chairman: Any further question, hon. Member?

Dr. Browne: Medical Research and Development, 03. I see that this has been decreased. What is this line item? [Crosstalk] 023, Medical Research and Development.

Hon. Dr. Khan: That was a stimulus for members of the RHAs to do papers on any research in the Regional Health Authorities and the public health institutions. It was not taken up much, but it has been taken up by one or two of the university doctors. One is the BOLD study which we have started, as well as we have been looking at a dementia study. So that is what has been placed in line item to stimulate the research in the actual institutions, based on not only policy, but on activity.

Dr. Browne: Why have you cut it because they were not—

Hon. Dr. Khan: It was cut, but we can always get more funds for it.

Dr. Browne: From where?

Hon. Dr. Khan: It depends on the amount—you see, people are applying for research grants. There were not many last year.

Mr. Chairman: I recognize the hon. Member for Arouca/Maloney.

Miss Hospedales: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Sub-Item 010 under Community Outreach Family Medicine Programme. Could the Minister provide some details with reference to the implementation of this programme?

Hon. Dr. Khan: 010?

Mr. Chairman: Yes. That is on page 89.

Hon. Dr. Khan: Oh, 010. Yes. Well, that is basically—I could tell you that money has been put in there for the mobile blood banks, and the evaluation is finished. So, we should be able to be going out to purchase these mobile blood banks.
Mr. Chairman: The hon. Member for Laventille West.

Mr. Hypolite: Chair, page 91.

Mr. Chairman: 91?

Hon. Dr. Khan: We have not reached there yet, you know.

Mr. Chairman: Page 91.

Mr. Hypolite: 234.

Mr. Chairman: Item 234.

Mr. Hypolite: Chairman, I am interested in knowing, which health centres are up for—

Mr. Chairman: A physical upgrade?

Hon. Dr. Khan: All health centres—

Mr. Hypolite: All?

Hon. Dr. Khan: Yeah— are earmarked for an upgrade. The Ministry of Health will be putting their activity in the health centres, as well as—we are asking if the CEPEP and URP, with their funds, would assist most of the health centres. North-west, I think, is being done—which is your constituency—by the CEPEP programme, as well as the Ministry of Health.

Mr. Hypolite: The CEPEP Programme?

Hon. Dr. Khan: Yes. We are trying our best to ask them to assist us.

Mr. Hypolite: In upgrading community centres.

Hon. Dr. Khan: Upgrading the health centres.

Mr. Hypolite: Health centres.

Hon. Dr. Khan: Painting, plumbing and those types of things.

Hon. Member: “Why yuh eh put dem central?”

Hon. Dr. Khan: What is that?

Mr. Hypolite: CEPEP, not the Ministry of Works and Infrastructure?

[Crosstalk]

Hon. Dr. Khan: Central where?

Mr. Chairman: All right. I think the point has been made. Let us go on?
Dr. Browne: Chairman—

Mr. Chairman: Yes, Member.

Dr. Browne:—I have a question with respect to the Point Fortin hospital. I am trying to identify it. I am seeing an item “Hospitals”, so I think I would just ask the question, and it is really on behalf of my colleague, Member for Point Fortin.

Hon. Dr. Khan: The Point Fortin hospital—the sod turning with Austria—

Dr. Browne: There was some arrangement with—

Mr. Chairman: Yes. He is answering now—hon. Minister of Health.

Hon. Dr. Khan: There is an arrangement, and the loan is being—what they say—the loan with Minister of Finance and the Economy is being done, you know, with Austria, the due diligence has been done, and hopefully the sod turning will be done early in October.

Dr. Browne: What is the estimate in terms of cost?

Hon. Dr. Khan: Approximately $1.5 million.

Dr. Browne: And there is no allocation here for that.

Hon. Dr. Khan: I spoke to the Minister of Finance and the Economy on that, and after the loan has been achieved, then we will be placing that on the system.

Dr. Browne: We will be coming back for the supplemental—

Mr. Chairman: All right. I recognize the hon. Member for Couva North.

Miss Randial: Chairman, Sub-Head 09, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services, construction of the oncology centre. Minister, is this $56 million for the completion for the long-awaited oncology centre?

Hon. Dr. Khan: Yes. And also the oncology centre is approximately $891 million for that. Hopefully it would be completed very soon.

Mr. Chairman: The hon. Member for Arouca/Maloney. That is the final one under Development. We will be going to Infrastructure—

Hon. Dr. Khan: No more. No more.

Mr. Chairman: After that it is you, and then we go to Infrastructure. Yes.

Miss Hospedales: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Chair. I am focussing my attention on page 90 under the social and community services, Sub-Item 086 HIV/AIDS Social
Marketing. I want the Minister to indicate what has accounted for the $5 million decrease in the allocation for this particular social marketing programme, and if he thinks that the $4 million that is allocated is adequate for the fiscal period?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister of Health.

Hon. Dr. Khan: That figure was adjusted by the Ministry of Finance and the Economy, but if we do need to go back for money for the agency, we will do that.

Mr. Chairman: I recognize the hon. Member for Diego Martin Central.

Dr. Browne: Chairman, that is precisely the question that I wanted to ask, so we could save some time.

Mr. Chairman: Okay. Let us go to the Infrastructure Development Fund. Is there any question under there? I recognize here the hon. Member for Arouca/Maloney.

Miss Hospedales: Mr. Chairman, under Sub-Item 001, I would like to ask the Minister, when do they propose to construct the Trincity health centre? I have written several times—

Mr. Chairman: All right. The Trincity health centre, when would you be able to construct that health centre?

Hon. Dr. Khan: Well, I will have to get that information and give it to you.

Mr. Chairman: He will get that information and return to us with that information.

Hon. Members, the sum of $4,554,142,700. Head 28: the Ministry of Health stand part of the Schedule.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 28 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much, hon. Minister of Health and your team. Thank you very much.

Hon. Dr. Khan: Could I say that I want to thank my team as well as the Committee, as well as the Members on the Opposition.

6.50 p.m.

Mr. Chairman: Yes, thank you very much.
Hon. Members, we have three small Heads that we could dispatch before we go on to the Ministry of Food Production, and I seek your indulgence here. The first one is the Service Commissions Department or we are going with CPO first, Personnel Department, Service Commissions Department after and the Statutory Authorities Service Commission.

**Head 17.**

Hon. Members, that is Head 17, page 60, Recurrent Expenditure and page 54 Development Programme. Okay, so Members are guided accordingly. It is Head 17, Personnel Department.

Hon. Members, Head 17, Personnel Department, $126,570,700. I will now invite the hon. Minister of Public Administration who is responsible for these agencies, has some role to deal with these agencies, to make if she so desires, a brief opening statement for no more than five minutes as it relates to the Personnel Department at this time, and maybe what you can do, seeing that the next two—[Crosstalk] no, just the Personnel Department.

Hon. Minister, would you like to make a statement?

**Hon. Seepersad-Bachan:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman, we are ready. I just want to say I have here with me the Chief Personnel Officer, Ms. Stephanie Lewis and Deputy Chief Personnel Officer, Mr. Beresford Riley. So, Mr. Chairman, we are ready for the questions.

**Question proposed:** That Head 17 stand part of the Schedule.

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Members, the sum of $126,570,700 for Head 17, is comprised of moneys proposed for expenditure under the Sub-Heads and Items found in both the Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure as well as the Development Programme. We now go to Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure; Item 001, General Administration.

I recognize the hon. Member for Diego Martin North/East.

**Mr. Imbert:** Mr. Chairman, could I find out what is the establishment at the Personnel Department, how many staff members and contracted employees the department is supposed to have?

**Hon. Seepersad-Bachan:** Okay, 160 on the establishment, and in terms of contract positions we have 33 for which we have already received Cabinet approval, and we have another 48 which is going into what we call a six-year contract plan.
Mr. Imbert: Okay, so that is a total of how much?

Hon. Seepersad-Bachan: 160, plus—

Mr. Imbert: Total, total.

Hon. Seepersad-Bachan: 160 plus 33, 160 in the establishment so that is 193 and then we have 40 that is being proposed on contract.

Mr. Imbert: That is 230?

Hon. Seepersad-Bachan: About that, yeah.

Mr. Imbert: How many bodies do you have in posts?

Hon. Seepersad-Bachan: Okay, we have 43 vacant posts with bodies in them and we have 39 vacant posts without bodies.

Mr. Imbert: Well, that is only 80, what about—is 230 positions you spoke of.

Hon. Seepersad-Bachan: Yeah.

Mr. Imbert: So of the 230 approved posts that you have, how many have bodies in them, out of the 230?

Hon. Seepersad-Bachan: No, we have 230 what we just gave you, you have to add on the vacant on to them, yeah? [Hon. Seepersad-Bachan confers with advisor] Let me just say, take out the 48, as I mentioned earlier, that we do not have approval for yet. It is going into the six-year contact plan which will go to Cabinet for approval. So go with your 33 plus 193—[Interruption]

Mr. Imbert: Of all the positions that are approved now and the positions you hope to fill, how many of them are empty, vacant?

Hon. Seepersad-Bachan: Okay, let us deal with established positions first. So let us go back. We have 160 established positions. Out of that you have 43 vacant but with people acting in them, and then you have another 39 which is vacant without any bodies in it.

Mr. Imbert: And of the other 70 positions—

Hon. Seepersad-Bachan: Of the other—33 approved contract positions, okay, those are filled. Are they filled? [Hon. Seepersad-Bachan confers with advisor] Can we get that information to you?

Mr. Imbert: And the others are obviously not filled.

Hon. Seepersad-Bachan: The 48 no, that is now in the process of—they do not exist. We are now in the process of creating those positions.
Mr. Imbert: You are talking about 100 existing and potential vacancies then. You need about 100 more people. Is that what you are saying?

Hon. Seepersad-Bachan: Yeah, “umm hmm”.

Mr. Imbert: Is this why there is such a backlog with the preparation of contracts for public servants and contract employees.

Hon. Seepersad-Bachan: Yes.

Mr. Imbert: That is the reason?

Hon. Seepersad-Bachan: There is a shortage.

Mr. Imbert: But is your department not responsible for hiring people? Are you not responsible for hiring yourself? Who does hiring? Is it not the Personnel Department?

Hon. Seepersad-Bachan: The Service Commissions Department.

Mr. Imbert: Okay, who is the support unit for the Service Commissions? Is it not the Personnel Department?

Hon. Seepersad-Bachan: The Service Commissions have to be the one and that is the issue you would have seen going right through with all the Ministries.

Mr. Imbert: Who is the liaison between the Ministry of Public Administration and the Service Commissions? Not the Personnel Department? There is no relationship between the Personnel Department and the Service Commissions?

Hon. Seepersad-Bachan: There is a relationship, but that is when matters may be referred to them for comment on issues of—[Interruption]

Mr. Imbert: What is the function of the Personnel Department?

Hon. Seepersad-Bachan: Sorry, let me hear what you are saying.

Mr. Imbert: What is the purpose of the Personnel Department?

Hon. Seepersad-Bachan: The Personnel Department is to determine terms and conditions. And terms and conditions for whether they are established positions as you would know, they carry out wage negotiations. From time to time they would have to look at classification of positions in order to determine if you will need to revise the remuneration package for established positions, and when we are dealing with contract positions they determine the terms and conditions for contract positions.
Mr. Imbert: And they do job evaluation exercises also?
Hon. Seepersad-Bachan: And they do job evaluation exercises.
Mr. Imbert: Like the one that is supposed to be done for parliamentarians for all these years?
Hon. Seepersad-Bachan: Yes, but—[Interruption]
Mr. Imbert: What is keeping that back?
Hon. Seepersad-Bachan: That is the SRC, but, Mr. Chairman, I think we need to stay on the—
Mr. Imbert: No, it is Personnel Expenditure, staffing—it is directly related.
Mr. Cadiz: That is an operational issue.
Mr. Imbert: No, no, no.
Mr. Cadiz: We have the budgets for it.
Mr. Imbert: No, no, no.

Mr. Cadiz: You either agree with the budget or you do not agree with the budget.
Mr. Imbert: No!

Hon. Seepersad-Bachan: In fact, if you go down the line, all I am suggesting, Member, let me just suggest, as you go through the budget items there are other areas again that will come under the Development Programme, you will see that there is moneys budgeted for a project under PSIP for the very same project you are referring to.

Mr. Imbert: How are you going to deal with this problem of not finalizing terms and conditions of people within the Government service, since you are missing 100 bodies? How are you going to deal with it?

Hon. Seepersad-Bachan: Terms and conditions—

Mr. Imbert: There is a huge backlog. I know people working two, three contracts, working for nine years and they cannot get a contract.

Hon. Seepersad-Bachan: Minister, if I may, Member, let me just say that during the budget contribution I explained some of the strategies that we are deploying to expedite the terms and conditions through standardization of contracts which the CPO’s office, together with the Personnel Department,
together with the Ministry of Public Administration, has established a project which was allowed to standardize many of these contract positions so that we have standard terms and conditions, so that people know their terms and conditions before they even come onto the job, and we have done that for 49 positions.

And secondly, the area of the backlog itself, we have established a project and we have cleared 1,400 or so of the backlog. Now, you are quite right it was really in an appalling situation that we inherited, when we looked at the number of people who were on contract for ten years and had no terms and conditions determined, and yes, we are going forward and I had outlined that in detail with respect to the backlog project.

Mr. Imbert: I noticed Minister Cadiz for some reason is thanking you, I do not know why. You said you cleared a backlog of 1,400—[Interruption]

Hon. Seepersad-Bachan: And we are continuing—[Interruption]

Mr. Imbert: What is the remaining backlog?

[Hon. Seepersad-Bachan confers with advisor]

Hon. Seepersad-Bachan: I had mentioned it in the debate, you know.

Mr. Imbert: Remind me, “nah”.

Mr. Cadiz: Remind the Minister, “nah”.

Hon. Seepersad-Bachan: I cannot recall now, I will get back to you, but—[Interruption]

Mr. Imbert: You do not know what the backlog is?

Hon. Seepersad-Bachan: We cleared 1,400 in the backlog—[Interruption]

Mr. Imbert: I think I better let somebody else talk—[Interruption]

Hon. Seepersad-Bachan: I will pull the Hansard for you if you want—

Mr. Imbert: I will let somebody else talk since the Minister does not know how many public servants working without a contract.

Mr. Chairman: Yes, I recognize the Member for St. Joseph.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Thank you, hon. Minister, of the 43 vacant positions that you have acting bodies in, whose responsibility is it to transfer these people from acting to a state of permanence? Which department sees about that?
Hon. Seepersad-Bachan: Service Commissions Department.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Right. And how long have these 43 people been acting, and has the Service Commissions been responsive to your overtures?

Hon. Seepersad-Bachan: Okay, Member for St. Joseph, we have been trying for a number of years, I am informed, I am advised by the CPO that she has been urging the Service Commissions Department. We have gotten some at the entry level but the others there is a commitment now that we would be able to get it possibly within the next year, and this is why you will note that you do have allocations there, requests have been made for the rest of the positions to be filled.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Because, hon. Minister, the issue of the Service Commissions has been propping up time and time again and it seems to be a fly in the ointment in having positions filled.

Mr. Chairman: Hold your fire on Service Commissions. They are coming.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Okay, let me ask another question. Of the 39 positions where you have no one acting, what is the modus operandi there now? What steps are you taking to at least fill those permanently or with acting bodies? You said you have 39 positions, 39 vacancies with no one.

Hon. Seepersad-Bachan: Some of them may have to be abolished because they may be outdated.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Right.

Hon. Seepersad-Bachan: So they may have to be abolished. I can always forward that information, the details on the 39 positions to you, but again too, requests have been made to the Service Commissions to have them filled, whatever remains that will not be abolished we have made our requests to the Service Commissions.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Chair, I will take your advice and hold my fire for the Service Commissions.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, we are going to Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services; Item 001, General Administration. Member of Parliament for Laventille West.

Mr. Hypolite: Chair, Sub-Item 08. We are seeing where in 2014, rental of office space, $19 million, but in 2015 we will be looking at $58.9 million. Can the Minister indicate what is the reason for that increase? If it is that they are moving to a new building, where would that new building be and who will be the landlords?
Hon. Seepersad-Bachan: Well, you know the new building that they are moving into, and it is a fact—[Hon. Seepersad-Bachan confers with advisor] I think five offices for the Personnel Department are located in Port of Spain. We were able to get them to go into a building in Barataria. This was a building selected by the Properties and Real Estate Division of the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development. It includes an estimated cost, that is why you are seeing that increase for outfitting that new building, and there is an amortized rent in there for the rental cost, because as you—the outfitting is going to be done by the owner, and therefore we are going to be amortizing that cost with an increased rental. The owner of the building is GV Holdings.

Mr. Chairman: The hon. Member for St. Ann’s East.

Mrs Thomas: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I am looking at Item 16, Contract Employment. Minister, are there plans to take on new contract workers?

7.05 p.m.

Hon. Seepersad-Bachan: Yes, there are plans to take on new contract officers who are needed to perform functions of the department pending the appointment of persons—the existing vacant positions. Is that okay, Member?

Mrs. Thomas: Yes.

Mr. Chairman: All right. We go to Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases; Item 001, General Administration. We go to Sub-Head 04, Current Transfer and Subsidies; Item 001, Regional Bodies; Item 004, International Bodies. We go to Sub-Head 09, Development Programme; Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services. Any questions? I recognize the Members for Arouca/Maloney and Laventille West.

Miss Hospedales: Mr. Chair, thank you. Sub-Item 038, there is a $10 million allocation for the Conduct of a Job Evaluation Exercise for Offices within the Purview of the Salaries Review Commission, I think. Mr. Chairman, I would just like to find out if this is an ongoing exercise and, if not—exactly when will the evaluation exercise be complete?

Mr. Chairman: Yes, hon. Minister?

Hon. Seepersad-Bachan: The tendering process commenced in July 2013. Four firms responded to the advertisements. The evaluation committee, comprising staff from the Personnel Department and a representative from the Central Tenders Board, was appointed on September 13, 2013. There was an
evaluation of technical proposals which was in October of 2013, and the committee completed its evaluation and submitted its report to the CTB in March of 2014.

The evaluation committee commenced its deliberations on the financial proposal in April 2014. The negotiation process started in June 2014 and it is ongoing. In this regard, the committee has been seeking additional information or clarification from the preferred consultant on a number of issues, which I do not think you want. Do you want the details, Member?

**Mr. Cadiz:** You could give it in writing.

**Miss Hospedales:** Yes, we would like to have the details.

**Mr. Imbert:** Mr. Chairman, could I come in on this item?

**Hon. Seepersad-Bachan:** Sure.

**Mr. Imbert:** We are on 09, Development Programme, 038?

**Mr. Chairman:** Yes.

**Mr. Imbert:** Did the Minister just say you took one year to invite tenders? Is that what you said?

**Hon. Seepersad-Bachan:** Yes.

**Mr. Imbert:** To do the job evaluation exercise for our salaries? And you have not started yet? That is what you said?

**Hon. Seepersad-Bachan:** Yes, the SRC.

**Mr. Imbert:** So one year to start the process for a job evaluation exercise for offices within the purview of the SRC and it has not begun. The actual physical work has not begun. That is what you are saying?

**Hon. Seepersad-Bachan:** Yes.

**Mr. Imbert:** Could we get full details so we could understand this calamity? And I notice the 2014 Revised Estimate for this sub-item is $3 million. What is that spent on? 038, $3 million Revised Estimate for 2014, what was that money spent on? There is no wonder we “cyar get better salaries and pension in here”.

**Hon. Seepersad-Bachan:** Member, that money has not been spent because, as I indicated, it was expected that the consultants would have been on board by July 2014. It was reviewed by the Ministry of Finance and the Economy but, to
date, all that has been spent is $8,214.

**Mr. Imbert:** Do you think you will do anything in 2015 on this very important matter, improved terms and conditions for people under the purview of the SRC? “You spend a whole year and do nothing.” Do you think you will do something in 2015?

**Hon. Seepersad-Bachan:** Yes, Member. I am advised by the—

**Mr. Imbert:** What is your time frame? You have a schedule?

**Hon. Seepersad-Bachan:** I have been advised by the Chief Personnel Officer that they would be doing something in 2015. They are about to complete negotiations and—

**Mr. Imbert:** Mr. Chairman, through you, could I ask the Minister, could you give us timelines, targets, objectives; what do you plan to do; when will you start; when will this exercise be completed?

**Hon. Seepersad-Bachan:** Member, we will forward that information to you.

**Mr. Imbert:** You have any idea when it will be completed?

**Mr. Cadiz:** It will be forwarded to you.

**Hon. Seepersad-Bachan:** The estimated time is 12 months from the start of the project.

**Mr. Imbert:** So it would not be finished until next year—end of next year? “We in September, yuh know, and yuh eh start yet.”

**Hon. Seepersad-Bachan:** We would be forwarding the timelines for you, Member.

**Mr. Imbert:** Mr. Chairman, I “cyar” stay here. This is just ridiculous. I think I will go and have some tea.

**Mr. Chairman:** Any other questions? Okay. Did the Member for—okay. Hon. Members, the question is that the sum of $126,570,700 for Head 17, Personnel Department, stand part of the Schedule.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Head 17 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.*

**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you very much, Personnel Department and the Chief Personnel Officer and the deputy and staff.
Hon. Seepersad-Bachan: Mr. Chairman, I would like to thank the members of the Personnel Department and the Chief and her deputy for being here.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much. We now go to the Service Commissions. We invite the Service Commissions before this Standing Finance Committee to appear at this time.

Head 6.

We are under Head 06, Service Commissions. Hon. Members, the question is that the sum of $91 million.

Miss Mc Donald: “We aih find it yet.”

Mr. Chairman: Oh, you have not found it as yet.

Hon. Member: Page 28.

Mr. Chairman: Page 28. [Interruption] Yes, we know. But we are moving fast.

Question proposed: That Head 06 stand part of the Schedule.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, the sum of $91,021,200 for Head 06 to Service Commissions is comprised of moneys proposed for expenditure under the following Sub-Heads and Items to be found in the Draft Estimates of the Recurrent Expenditure and the Draft Estimates of Development Programme: Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure; Item 001, General Administration. I recognize the Member for St. Joseph.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Thank you. Minister, under Service Commissions, 01 sub, sub, 08, Vacant Posts, are these vacant posts within the Service Commissions?

Hon. Seepersad-Bachan: Yes.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Within the body of the Service Commissions?

Hon. Seepersad-Bachan: Yes.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Right, good. How many vacant posts are there, hon. Minister? A rough figure.

Mr. Chairman: The hon. Minister of Public Administration.

Hon. Seepersad-Bachan: I am advised about 60.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Sixty, great. Under line item 26, Vacant Posts, Salaries and Cost of Living, how many would there be there, hon. Minister?
Hon. Seepersad-Bachan: Under 26?

Mr. Deyalsingh: Yes.

Hon. Seepersad-Bachan: Okay. Just remember, if I could just distinguish for you—

Mr. Deyalsingh: Sure.

Hon. Seepersad-Bachan: The vacant posts, wherever you see direct charges, will be posts, for example, like State Counsel.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Okay.

Hon. Seepersad-Bachan: So those are people falling under the SRC. So under that, we have one State Counsel—

Mr. Deyalsingh: So if you had to guide me and tell me how many, let us say, administrative vacant posts there are then?

Hon. Seepersad-Bachan: 08.

Mr. Deyalsingh: 08?

Hon. Seepersad-Bachan: Vacant posts without—

Mr. Deyalsingh: Let us say for, administrative, not for senior counsels, or anything like that.

Hon. Seepersad-Bachan: No. Without incumbents, you go to 08.

Mr. Deyalsingh: 08, okay. If it is that the Service Commissions cannot even hire themselves, to man themselves, how do the Service Commissions intend to do the work to hire other people for other Ministries?

Hon. Seepersad-Bachan: Mr. Chairman, I feel that is an opinion. I am not sure if that is related to the Estimates.

Mr. Deyalsingh: But if it is that the Service Commissions have these vacancies to fill their own positions—are they able to fill their own positions? I am not asking for an opinion.

Mr. Chairman: So are you asking the Service Commissions what time frame it will take—

Mr. Deyalsingh: To fill their own positions.

Mr. Chairman:—to fill those vacancies.
Mr. Deyalsingh: And could the hon. Minister tell us what are some of the reasons why the Service Commissions cannot fill their own positions?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister?

Hon. Seepersad-Bachan: I am advised, Mr. Chairman, that in these cases here where we are talking about vacant posts without incumbents, that you have officers not yet qualified to move into these senior positions. Sometimes you have the vacant posts but people are not qualified with the right qualifications, or they do not meet the requirements and, therefore, until they meet the qualification requirements, then they can move into those posts.

Mr. Deyalsingh: So is it that one of the major reasons you are saying is that we do not have qualified persons to fill these positions?

Hon. Seepersad-Bachan: In some cases, yes. I am advised that we do not have the qualified people to fill those positions at this point, in some cases.

Mr. Deyalsingh: But, surely, Minister, these positions are not positions that require a degree in rocket science. I am really stunned to hear that with all this boast of 64 per cent tertiary education participation rate, that we cannot find administrative people in Trinidad and Tobago to fill administrative posts in the Service Commissions. And we boast that we have 64 per cent participation rate in tertiary education.

Mr. Chairman: Minister, would you like to respond?

Hon. Seepersad-Bachan: Mr. Chairman, I think during my budget contribution I did try to treat with some of these challenges that we face, as we know, in all Ministries. We know that the current systems for promotions, and so on, are not based on merit. It is not strictly merit as yet and it is based on seniority for promotions, which are systems that we are trying to change. Hon. Members would know—from opposite—that when they were in Government, those were the same challenges that they faced. Hence, that is why, if you go back, you will see that this is the same trend that has obtained.

Mr. Deyalsingh: So has any progress been made from 2010 to 2014?

Hon. Seepersad-Bachan: In terms of that—and again, too, we are getting back into the budget debate—

Mr. Deyalsingh: Yes, no problem.

Hon. Seepersad-Bachan: I think, Mr. Chairman, we would have a public administration committee for monitoring where we can discuss some of these
issues, but we have started looking at merit-based-systems implementation. It
would require the review and a revision of the regulations. We have been doing
some of that. We have started looking at advertising in and out. Again, too, the
regulations have been revised. So these are now kicking in, Member, but, as you
know, it takes time when we are dealing with a regulatory framework. And you
would also appreciate that the Service Commissions Department and the
Personnel Department, they are recognized as constitutionally independent
bodies, and as a result of that it takes some time for us to discuss.

I also mention, Mr. Chairman, a couple years now we have been talking about
our SHRM Council, the Strategic Human Resource Management Council, where
we have been discussing some of these reform measures and taking them into
consideration and are currently in implementation mode.

Mr. Deyalsingh: My last intervention, Chair. Surely, Minister, the role of
independence of the Service Commissions, in my view, does not excuse them, or
does not justify their tardiness. Independence from political interference, in my
view, has nothing to do with their tardiness. Thank you.

7.20 p.m.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services; Item 001,
General Administration. The Member for St. Ann’s East.

Mrs. Thomas: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I go to Sub-Item 62, Promotions,
Publicity and Printing, and through you, Mr. Chair, Madam Minister, I am aware
of the advertisement for several jobs because I know every week in the papers,
there are two days where you advertise a lot of jobs in the Government service, in
Service Commissions, just this weekend had a lot of jobs. What I want to ask the
Member, are people responding to these ads and if so, how is the recruitment and
selection process going—or is it that the ads are just placed and no persons in the
HR department or no time to do recruiting because every single week, there are
always ads on the papers for positions in the Government service.

In all the various Ministries, I noticed, in particular, this last weekend, there
were a number of ads. How are these ads being addressed and are you getting to
fill the positions?

Hon. Seepersad-Bachan: Okay, you are on 62? Is that it?

Mrs. Thomas: Yes. Well, I know the advertisement will come under that line.

Hon. Seepersad-Bachan: Okay, these are advertisements for established
positions in Ministries. I would say that I know since I have been the Minister of
Appropriation Bill, 2014

Tuesday, September 23, 2014

[Hon. C. SEEPERSAD-BACHAN]

Public Administration, even for Service Commissions, we had complaints and, Mr. Chairman, Parliament has also had complaints for the compensation/remuneration packages not being adequate to attract people to the positions and I think that is what you are getting at.

But the second issue you are referring to is contract positions which are not under the Service Commissions Department. What you see, Ministries are advertising sometimes—you refer to many Ministries—are contract positions. That too, when terms and conditions are determined for those contract positions, we are not finding many takers.

However, I would like to indicate that since the Service Commissions Department has started advertising, recently in and out, I think in the case of the customs officers, they had almost 15,000 applicants for customs officers, so you are finding people responding. So it has been a step-up process for the Service Commissions Department to institute more panels and you will see the expenses higher in some areas for that reason where you have had to have more interview panels, you have to go to Tobago and carry out more interviews and so on. So I just want to make sure that we got that distinction in terms of—

In this one here, in Sub-Item 62, we are talking about advertisements for established positions in the public service, not contract positions. What you are referring to are contract positions you are seeing advertised by Ministries. So, Ministries will not advertise public service positions, Service Commissions will advertise public service positions and Ministries will advertise their contract positions.

Mrs. Thomas: Okay, so just to piggyback on what the Member for St. Joseph mentioned about the filling of positions, you have identified a shortlist of staff that you need to do the work that you want to do, so is there some aggression being placed into really filling the positions and so allow the commission and whoever to do their jobs?

Hon. Seepersad-Bachan: Yes, we have had the selection centres. In fact, even in Tobago, special interviews were carried out for just Tobago alone, so you will see the cost actually increasing as we go along. There are other Items in here that you will note where there are increases because of those interview panels and so on that have to be set up and more selection panels as well.

Mrs. Thomas: Okay, great.

Mr. Chairman: I recognize the hon. Member for La Horquetta/Talparo.
Mr. Seemungal: Chair, on that same point with advertisement and recruitment, can the Minister say what is the process by which the shortlisting occurs? For instance, in the Land and Surveys Division department of my Ministry, I have known that an interview was done more than two years ago, a shortlisting was done, and it is only now they started filling the position. Has the Ministry—

Mr. Chairman: Which particular line are you on?

Mr. Seemungal: I am on the same one with advertisement and—. Has the Ministry sought to engage newer technology by way of computerized system to assist them in the shortlisting and the recruitment after the advertisement is done, maybe an online applicant system and shortlisting?

Hon. Seepersad-Bachan: You are talking about an electronic document management system, yes, there is a move to technology, but there was not much allocation this year under PSIP for that particular project, so yes, there has been a move towards that. But if you want the details for what you are talking about with those positions two years ago, we can always forward that information to you and we do not have that information at this point in time.

Mr. Chairman: All right, let us go to—yes, Member for Couva North.

Miss Ramdial: Under Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services; 99; Employee Assistance Programme, could you explain a little bit about what that is?

Hon. Seepersad-Bachan: All Ministries carry an Employee Assistance Programme. Your Ministry would also have that as an EAP. That is where employees themselves, if they have problems, they are able to meet with an expert, but it is done in a confidential way. No one knows who they are. In this particular case, are you asking who is the—

Miss Ramdial: No, no.

Hon. Seepersad-Bachan: What is an EAP is what you are asking? What is the programme?

Miss Ramdial: Yes.

Hon. Seepersad-Bachan: All Ministries have an EAP programme. So this is why this is here. If you look at the Estimates under all Ministries, you will see an estimate for EAP. It is, again, a programme that allows for employees to access these services and it is confidential in nature.
Mr. Chairman: All right, we go to Item 002, Tobago Services; Item 003, Public Service Commission; Item 004, Teaching Service Commission; Item 005, Judicial and Legal Service Commission; Item 006, Police Service Commission. Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases.

Miss Randial: Chair, sorry, Teaching Service Commission. Just to go back, 004.

Mr. Chairman: Yes, Item 004. Quickly.

Miss Randial: Hosting of Conferences, Seminars and Other Functions, the estimate for that, I am seeing $200,000. Can you say when these or how often these activities take place within—?

Hon. Seepersad-Bachan: Okay, there is a conference for school principals, annual school supervisors, seminars with managers of school boards and stakeholders. The conferences are held once a year, seminars as well for the managers of school boards, once a year.

Miss Randial: So it is funded solely by Service Commissions, nothing to do with the Ministry of Education in terms of funding?

Hon. Seepersad-Bachan: No, this is by Service Commissions—well, the Teaching Service Commission.

Miss Randial: All right. Great. Thanks.

Mr. Chairman: All right. We go to Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases; Item 001, General Administration; Item 002, Tobago Services. We go to the Development Programme, Sub-Head 09; Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services.

Hon. Members, the question is that the sum of $91,021,200 for Head 06 Service Commissions stand part of the Schedule.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 06 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much, members of the Service Commissions. We now proceed to the Statutory Authorities’ Service Commission.

Hon. Seepersad-Bachan: Mr. Chairman, let me just thank the DPA, Director of Public Administration and her deputy, Miss Creed for being here today with her, together with her staff.
Appropriation Bill, 2014

Tuesday, September 23, 2014

Head 07.

Question proposed: That Head 07 stand part of the Schedule.

Mr. Chairman: The sum of $6,554,200 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; Item 001, General Administration. Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services; Item 001, General Administration. Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases; Item 001, General Administration.

Hon. Members, the question of the sum of $6,554,200 for Head 07, Statutory Authorities’ Service Commission stand part of the Schedule.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 07 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much, members of the Statutory Authorities’ Service Commission.

Hon. Seepersad-Bachan: Mr. Chairman, let me just thank Miss Charleen Phillip, the Executive Officer of the Statutory Authorities’ Service Commission and her deputy for being here with us today.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much. We now go to the Ministry of Food Production, after we go to the Ministry of Land and Marine Resources and the final Ministry is the Ministry of Gender, Youth and Child Development. Where is the Minister? If he is not here, we will take Land and Marine Resources. Okay, let us take the Ministry of Land and Marine Resources whilst we await the arrival of—[Crosstalk] Okay, you will have to hold on, the Minister has arrived. We were now about to take someone else but you have arrived.

Hon. Maharaj: You moved a little fast.

Mr. Chairman: Yes, thank you.

Head 25.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, the question is that the sum—well, first of all, Head 25, Ministry of Food Production, $665,851,000. I now invite the hon. Minister of Food Production if he wishes to make a brief opening statement as it relates to your priority areas within a period of less than five minutes.

Hon. Maharaj: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman and Members of the House. I am pleased to have with me today my Permanent Secretary and members of the technical staff with me at this hour. I would like to thank you for this
opportunity to come before the Standing Finance Committee and really give you an idea in brief of the Ministry’s priority.

As you know, the Ministry of Food Production was given the mandate in its national food action plan to pursue increasing our food security in Trinidad and Tobago, reducing our food inflation and reducing our food import bill. In setting out to do this work, the Ministry recognized that the country was on a tightrope as far as food security was concerned, and if we did not take corrective and immediate action, we may have found ourselves as a nation in an unenviable position to have a robust economy based on oil and gas but being unable to purchase food from the global market.

Today, therefore, the Ministry of Food Production as outlined in our national food action plan, we were more likely to grow food locally and make available to our citizens in a safe, nutritious and affordable manner in sufficient quantities so as to ensure the nation’s food and nutrition security and provide an attractive and profitable livelihood for all producers.

The Ministry’s food action plan provided comprehensive strategies which aligned with resources with national priorities and created the platform for the national Government and private sector to venture into strategic partnerships, to effectively mobilise and utilize the available land and marine resources, labour, human resources and technology. It allows the stakeholders to actively participate in the development of the sector with the potential to extend into the national economic and social development.

7.35 p.m.

The growth of the sector was driven by a number of initiatives, including but not limited to the strengthening of the agriculture infrastructure across farming communities, unprecedented private sector initiatives, the Ministry revamping its incentive programme, the increase of access to land through the awards of leases, and so on, in collaboration with the sister Ministry of Land and Marine Affairs.

This resulted in several achievements, more notably, with the reduction of food inflation. The Ministry’s, in this area, I think, achievement is historic in nature. Food inflation, as you know, Mr. Chairman, is calculated using the retail price index. Components of that index included food such as bread and cereals, meat, fish, milk, cheese, eggs, oils, fats, and so on. Additionally, non-alcoholic beverages such as coffee, tea, and so on, are included in this food price index. Food inflation is very important to the agricultural sector and in fact headline
inflation, a core component of it, is food inflation. So, if food inflation is down, our headline inflation also follows.

Mr. Chairman, food inflation in January 2014 measured 3.2 per cent; for February 2014, it was 5.2 per cent; for March it was 6.7 per cent and for April it was 4.1 per cent and for May the figure measured at 3.8 per cent. The recent figures for June 2014, put food inflation at 3.5 per cent. This signifies an unprecedented achievement for the Ministry of Food Production as it marked, for the first time in over 21 years in Trinidad and Tobago, that food price inflation rate remained at single digit figures for the first consecutive six months of the year.

I could go on about what we are doing in food, but you get an idea.

Mr. Chairman: No, no. Thank you very much. I think you did a very good job.

Question proposed: That Head 25 stand part of the Schedule.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, the sum of $665,851,000 for Head 25: the Ministry of Food Production 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.

Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure; Item 001, General Administration. I recognize the hon. Member for La Brea.

Mr. Jeffrey: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I have four questions under Personnel Expenditure. Under 03, Overtime - Monthly Paid.

Hon. Maharaj: What page is that?

Mr. Jeffrey: Page 151.

Hon. Maharaj: Okay, I am following.

Mr. Jeffrey: For 2013, it was $604,000. It went down to $300,000 in 2014, when things looked good but, we see for 2015, the estimate is $550,000 and it raises a few questions. What happened in 2014, when it was reduced by 50 per cent, that cannot be replicated in 2015? That is my first question.

My second question has to do with 06, Remuneration to Board Members. From $3,760 in 2014, it went to $20,000 and then $130,300. This raises a few questions. One, is it that the remuneration package for the board members went up? Or two, we had an increase in the number of board members between 2013
and 2014? Could we get some clarification on that?

And the same thing goes for under 14, Remuneration - Members of Cabinet-Appointed Committees. Can you tell us, because we recognize here again $58,200 in 2013? It went to $195,000 in 2014 and we see an estimate for $500,000. So it is rising all the time. Could you tell us the number of persons on that committee, or whether or not the remuneration package has increased over time in that scenario?

And under 29, Overtime - Daily-Rated Workers, in 2013, $1.6 million and in 2014, $2.9 million. It raises a question as to whether or not it may not be more prudent to increase the complement rather than pay overtime for the daily-rated workers? So those are my four questions.

Hon. Maharaj: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. With regard to the first question, the overtime to the monthly-paid officers, that is where the general admin is paying the overtime for most of the divisions that fall under the Ministry of Food Production in the various regions, and so on. So that accounts for the increase in overtime there.

Mr. Jeffrey: I mean, in 2014, it went down to $300,000. So what we want to find out is what happened in 2014, that could not have been replicated in the other two time periods?

Hon. Maharaj: Well what you had was the adjustment of salaries, and so on, there. This is an estimate, a 2015 estimate. If you look at the actual, it may not materialize to be $500,000. So the Ministry of Finance and the Economy has allocated an estimate expenditure of $500,000. That does not mean that the Ministry will actually spend $500,000. And given the historical evidence before us that we have spent $300,000 in 2014, we have spent $300,000 in 2013, it is more likely and conservative to estimate that in 2015, we would similarly spend $300,000. While, however, we are grateful that the Ministry of Finance and the Economy has given us $500,000 that if the need arises we can accommodate for overtime arrangements.

Mr. Chairman: All right, we go on to the next question.

Hon. Maharaj: The next question regarding the board members, 06, well there have been two new additional boards the Cocoa Company of Trinidad and Tobago and Caroni Green. We have filled out the complement of all the boards that fell under our remit, so that may have taken up for the additional board members, an additional costing.
With the Cabinet-appointed committees, those rates, as well as the board members, are standard rates set by Cabinet. So it is not that it would raise for one Ministry and remain the same for some other Ministry. What we have found is that there were several Cabinet-conceptualized committees but were never implemented. We have so now implemented those committees and these committees include the National Task Force for the Management and Control of Zoonotic Diseases, which is a new committee and this is to prevent the transfer of diseases from animals to human beings; Monitoring and Advisory Committee of Inshore Coastal, National Advisory, Agricultural Advisory Commission Committee under the purview of the NAAC Commission, the World Food Day Committee. Those are the committees that fall there.

The daily-rated workers, 29, the overtime rates, again that is another estimated position of 2.9.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, we will now go to Item 002, Agriculture. I recognize the Member for St. Ann's East.

Mrs. Thomas: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Minister, under agriculture, I know a lot of focus in our country is on agriculture but I see a big reduction in the estimates of $17 million.

Hon. Maharaj: Which one?

Mrs. Thomas: Page 152. We are on 002, Agriculture and it is Sub-Item 02, Wages. Right? There is a big reduction of $17 million. So, in my mind when thinking that the focus should be on agriculture, we see a big reduction here. Is it a reduction of staff or what is it?

Hon. Maharaj: No, that is a function of the new collective agreement.

Mrs. Thomas: So they are getting less salary, $17 million less?

Hon. Maharaj: And remember too that there has been a reassignment of staff from this Ministry to the Ministry of Land and Marine Affairs. So that Ministry would have taken some of the staff for fisheries, and so on, land administration.

Mrs. Thomas: Okay.

Mr. Chairman: All right. I recognize the Member for Laventille West.

Mr. Hypolite: To the Minister, earlier on we were told that URP was divided into three. One part of it would have been under agriculture. Can you say whether 002, if the Wages and Cost of Living Allowances that are placed there take up the wages—
Hon. Maharaj: Let me clarify. In terms of the splitting of the URP, the URP was divided among the Ministry of the People, Ministry of Food Production and the Ministry of Works and Infrastructure. Our function has been to identify projects to be done under the URP project. The administration, procurement and payment of staff falls under the administrating agency, which is the Ministry of Works and Infrastructure.

Mr. Hypolite: So, am I hearing that the Ministry of Agriculture is not responsible for making any payment?

Hon. Maharaj: None at all. All we do is identify projects.

Mr. Chairman: All right, we go to Item 004: Animal Production and Health; Item 010, Horticulture; Sub-Head 02: Goods and Services; Item 001, General Administration.

Mr. Jeffrey: Mr. Chairman, Travelling and Subsistence, you had 2013, $2.8 million; 2014, $3 million and 2015, $4 million. Could we get some explanation as to whether or not there is a policy for Travelling and Subsistence? What is the policy they use for Travelling and Subsistence?

Hon. Maharaj: That is set by the terms and conditions by the Public Service Commission and the Statutory Authorities’ Service Commission, not by the Ministry itself. So whatever applies to all Ministries across the board applies to this Ministry.

Mr. Jeffrey: Well, in terms of who gets travelling and when?

Hon. Maharaj: That is when the post is classified, it is determined to be if it is a travelling post or not. There are cases when officers put up arguments that their posts should be made a travelling position and they would have to go through a process in which they would claim under regulation 16 after a year or so and justify their claim.

Mr. Chairman: All right, we are going now to Item 002.

Mr. Jeffrey: No, Mr. Chairman, I still have another question again.

Mr. Chairman: Yes.

Mr. Jeffrey: It has to do with Contract Employment.

Hon. Maharaj: Where are you seeing that?

Mr. Jeffrey: That is 16 on the said 155, $9.8 million in 2013. We see here in 2014, the revised estimate of $21 million and the estimate is $24 million. All
right? Is there not a case for more permanent staff?

Hon. Maharaj: No, this jump here really is to take into consideration the establishment of the Praedial Larceny Unit of the Ministry of Food Production, which constitutes a large part, not all but a large part, over 75 per cent of this figure here.

As you know, there was an attempt to introduce a praedial larceny unit under the last administration, which failed abysmally. We have introduced the Praedial Larceny Unit and it has been working and we have in fact had calls from various sections of the national community, farming communities, and so on, to have that praedial larceny unit go into those different areas. So this year is really to provision that squad to prevent praedial larceny from happening in our farming communities.

Mr. Jeffrey: What is the size of that praedial larceny squad now?

Hon. Maharaj: About 101 persons right now.

Mr. Hypolite: Do you have an organizational structure that you can submit?

Hon. Maharaj: Yes, we have an organizational structure. Would you like to have it?

Mr. Chairman: Yes, you can submit it. We go to Item 004, Animal Production and Health; Item 010, Horticulture; Sub-Head 03: Minor Equipment Purchases; Item 01, General Administration; Item 002; Agriculture; Item 004, Animal Production and Health; Item 010, Horticulture.

Sub-Head 04: Current Transfers—no, listen, listen, listen follow.

Mr. Deyalsingh: What page are you on, please?

Mr. Chairman: I am on Sub-Head 04: Current Transfers and Subsidies. Under that, I am dealing with Item 002, Commonwealth Bodies. Then I go to Item 003, United Nations Organization. We go to Item 005, Non-profit Institutions; Item 007, Households; Item 008, Subsidies. I recognize the Member of Parliament for Arouca/Maloney.

Miss Hospedales: Thank you, Mr. Chair, Sub-Item 06, Agriculture Incentive Programme. Could the Minister tell us exactly why there is an $11 million—

Hon. Member: What page is that?

Miss Hospedales: That is page 163.
Mr. Chairman: Page 163, yes.

Miss Hospedales: Could the Minister indicate why is there an $11 million decrease in the subsidy for this particular programme? That is one.

7.50 p.m.

The number of beneficiaries of this Agricultural Incentive Programme to date and is this incentive programme not a measure of impacting on the amount of money that is spent on the food import bill? Is it not supposed to create some measure of impact and reduce our food import bill?

Hon. Maharaj: As to why the reduction is made, I think that question is best suited for the Ministry of Finance and the Economy. We would have put in an application for as much as we would have liked to have gotten in the Ministry, as other ministries. We would have liked to have gotten more money than what—the Ministry of Finance and the Economy has assigned us this figure and allocated this.

As to the numbers, which is the second question, last year we processed 2,975 incentives in region north for the sum of $90,727,426.46. In region south, we processed 2,210 applications for the value of $10,091,057.63. As to its impact into the agricultural programme and the food import bill, everything we do at the Ministry of Food Production is geared at reducing our food import bill and as such it is hard to quantify one or the other because this programme, the Agricultural Incentive Programme, really is to add an incentive and provide some sort of relief or financial support to farmers when they buy equipment and so on, so that they get some taxation off and the like.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, we go to Item—

Miss Hospedales: Mr. Chair?

Mr. Chairman: Yes, hon. Member.

Miss Hospedales: Sub-Item 07—

Mr. Chairman: Yes?

Miss Hospedales: I would like to find out the number of beneficiaries for the Relief of Flood Damage.

Hon. Maharaj: I will provide that.

Mr. Chairman: The hon. Minister will provide that in writing. We go to Item 09, Other Transfers; Item 010, Other Transfers Abroad; Sub-Head 06: Current—
Mr. Deyalsingh: Mr. Chairman?

Mr. Chairman: Yes.

Mr. Deyalsingh: May I ask a question under Sub-Head 06, Current Transfers to Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies?

Mr. Chairman: Yes, of course.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Thank you. Sub-Head 06, Sub-Item 08, Agricultural Society of Trinidad and Tobago. Minister, was the sum of $5.1 million for 2013 paid?

Hon. Maharaj: No.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Any reason why, Sir?

Hon. Maharaj: Yes, the election, as conducted, has been challenged in the courts of Trinidad and Tobago by persons who felt that the elections were less than fair. The Ministry’s report indicated as such and the matter is before the courts at this point in time.

Mr. Deyalsingh: So the 2014 Estimates of $4.7 million and the Revised Estimates—because you see, the Agricultural Society, as far as I know, is supposed to be the flagship for agricultural development and to really drive the agricultural diversification away from sugar. What is the Ministry doing as far as helping them to overcome their problems, instead of just withholding the funds?

Hon. Maharaj: Well, I think, Mr. Chairman, through you, your premise is wrong that the Agricultural Society is supposed to help farmers away from the dependency on sugar because the composition of the Agricultural Society is 24 members, of which eight come from the sugar industry, eight come from the coffee industry and eight come from the cocoa industry. It is a function of an Act which is close to over 100 years old, really to reinforce the plantocracy of the colonial society of the day.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Sorry, sorry, could you just repeat? You are saying the Agricultural Society is to reinforce the agricultural plantocracy—

Hon. Maharaj: The colonial plantocracy, indeed, because it is an Act of the 1900. As such, it has never kept in step with the modernization of the agricultural sector in Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Deyalsingh: So you are saying that they are outdated, outmoded?

Hon. Maharaj: They are outdated. By no stretch of the imagination—they are outdated and they have never driven the sector in the last four years. It is the Ministry of Food Production that has taken the lead in driving the sector.
Mr. Deyalsingh: But the allocation for 2015 of $4.827 million, so that will be held in abeyance again.

Hon. Maharaj: Well, our recommendation to the Ministry of Finance and the Economy was to have a substantially less figure than this.

Mr. Deyalsingh: What figure does the Agricultural Society need to conduct their affairs?

Hon. Maharaj: Well, that is something which is something of a court matter right now and I would not like to go in much further there.

Mr. Chairman: All right, I—

Mr. Deyalsingh: Okay, could I—

Mr. Chairman: Yes, one final question, Member for St. Joseph, then we go to the Member for La Brea and then the Member for Arouca/Maloney.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Thank you. Sub-Item 10, Cocoa and Coffee Industry Board, I think that has been replaced by the cocoa board, I believe?


Mr. Deyalsingh: The Cocoa Development Company, thank you. Could you tell me who are the members of that company?

Hon. Maharaj: I know the chairman’s name offhand, Mr. Brandon Khan. I could provide the list of—

Mr. Deyalsingh: Mr. Brandon Khan.

Hon. Maharaj: Yeah.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Thank you.

Mr. Chairman: All right, I recognize the Member for La Brea and then the hon. Member for Arouca/Maloney.

Mr. Jeffrey: Okay, Sub-Item 09, National Agricultural Marketing and Development Corporation (NAMDEVCO), from $34.6 million, 2013; and 2014, we have $45.5 million. My question is, when was the last audited statement received from NAMDEVCO?

Hon. Maharaj: Mr. Chairman, if I am not mistaken, I laid in the Parliament the latest audited figure from NAMDEVCO, the Parliament could check the date.

Mr. Chairman: You cannot remember the date.
Hon. Maharaj: I cannot remember it offhand, Sir, sorry.

Mr. Chairman: The hon. Minister said a report was laid but he cannot remember the date but he will certainly—what other question do you have, hon. Member?

Hon. Maharaj: I have the last audited figure, 2011.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, 2011.

Hon. Maharaj: We laid that in the Parliament.

Mr. Jeffrey: Really and truly, my question was premised on the basis that if, in fact, we had a lot of audited statements outstanding then there may not be any justification in giving them allocation in 2015 but we will wait and see.

Mr. Chairman: All right, let us go to the Member for Arouca/Maloney.

Miss Hospedales: Mr. Chair, Sub-Item 08, I would like to find out from the Minister whether or not they have done an audit on the Agricultural Society of Trinidad and Tobago and if they have not, if they intend to do so in the near future.

Mr. Chairman: Have you done an audit?

Hon. Maharaj: The Ministry of Food Production has done an audit.

Mr. Chairman: Yes, an audit has been done.

Miss Hospedales: And one other thing, Mr. Chairman, Sub-Item 09 with reference to the National—well, NAMDEVCO, there had been reports of the officials there not following procurement procedures. What measures have been put in place to ensure that those procedures are followed?

Mr. Chairman: Is that an allegation or is that a fact?

Hon. Maharaj: Mr. Chairman, I am not aware of any allegations by any persons that NAMDEVCO follows any other procedure other than what is prescribed by the Ministry of Finance and the Economy.

Mr. Chairman: All right, we go to Sub-Head 09: Development Programme; Item 002, Productive Sectors; Item 003, Economic Infrastructure; Item 004, Social Infrastructure. I recognize the hon. Member for Laventille West.

Mr. Hypolite: Chair, I am on page 76. I am looking at 276: Development of Fishing Centres and related Facilities. I am seeing, in 2013, $1.9 million being spent but 2014 and 2015, I am seeing no—
Mr. Chairman: That is under what heading?

Hon. Maharaj: What head? What heading?

Mr. Hypolite: Sub-Item.

Mr. Chairman: Which Sub-Item? Because I am under Social Infrastructure. Which one are you under?

Hon. Maharaj: Mr. Chairman, that is because it has been moved to the Ministry of Land and Marine Resources. So when my colleague comes after me, you can ask him.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services; Infrastructure Development Fund. Hon. Members, the question is that the sum of $665,851,000 for Head 25—

Dr. Browne: Mr. Chairman, I just want some clarification on what the Minister just said because these allocations appear under the Ministry of Food Production still. Is it that the Minister of Land and Marine Resources will be prepared to answer questions on the allocations here, these Sub-Items once they are associated with Fisheries that has been transferred? I just want to be clear on that. Because if not—

Mr. Chairman: Which Sub-Items? Do you want to tell us which Sub-Items you are referring to?

Dr. Browne: Well, he just said anything under Fisheries, the Fisheries Division. I will give you some examples: 508—

Mr. Chairman: Is it any item—

Dr. Browne: 8—

Mr. Chairman: Just hold a second. Hon. Minister, is it any Item under Fisheries?

Hon. Maharaj: All marine fisheries fall under the Ministry of Land and Marine Resources. All land fisheries, which is aquaculture such as tilapia and so on, fall under the Ministry of Food Production.

Dr. Browne: I am referring to marine fisheries. I just want to be clear whether that Minister would be prepared to answer questions even though it does not—it is not listed under his ministry.
Mr. Chairman: Well, the Minister is not here as yet but I am sure that when he comes you would bring those matters to his attention. Okay? Hon. Members, the—

Dr. Browne: No, Mr. Chairman, it is not a matter of bringing it to his attention. I want to be clear, otherwise I would ask them now.

Mr. Chairman: Well, it is not before us.

Dr. Browne: It is before us.

Mr. Chairman: No, I am saying that the hon. Minister has said even though it is before us, he is claiming that those matters have now been transferred to the hon. Minister of Land and Marine Resources. So, we are saying that when he comes here, he should be in a position to deal with those matters.

Dr. Browne: I am just saying, in the manner in which you have been approaching the task, when you call the Heads, Sub-Heads, Ministry, this will not arise. So it will take a specific decision of the Committee to cover these Items then.

Mr. Chairman: May I ask the Minister whether in the 2015 Estimates any provision was made for marine fisheries under—I am talking about the hon. Minister of Land and Marine Resources.

Hon. Maharaj: Yes, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: All right. So, then we will deal with that when it comes. So you are correct. So you can hold your fire. The sum of $665,851,000 for Head 25, the Ministry of Food Production now stands part of the Schedule.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 25 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister of Food Production, we would like to thank you and your team very much for gracing us with your presence at this Standing Finance Committee. Thank you very much.

Hon. Maharaj: Thank you, Members.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much. We now proceed to the other Head, which is Head 76, Ministry of Land and Marine Resources. After this, we have one more, which is the Ministry of Gender, Youth and Child Development. We would then have completed 15 today. [Interruption] Fifteen and 10 is 25, so we have 25 again to go. Any other officers or is that it? [Interruption] Oh, your
officers are coming. All right, whilst your team is assembling, let me proceed. Hon. Members, the question is—well, first of all Head 76, Ministry of Land and Marine Resources, $254,994,700.

8.05 p.m.

*Head 76.*

Hon. Minister, would you like to make a few opening remarks before we get into the substantive matter?

**Hon. Seemungal:** Mr. Chairman, let me thank you for allowing my technocrats from the Ministry to be here to assist me with these questions. Well, Mr. Chairman, this Ministry, this month, is exactly one-year-old. You see, it is one of the newest Ministries that had been created under this People’s Partnership Government.

My Permanent Secretary, Miss Sheryl-Anne Haynes, who sits on my left, she actually comes from the Town and Country Planning Division, where she spent some 24 years of her life, and I think she was well placed in this Ministry, because a lot of what this Ministry does requires the assistance of the Town and Country Planning Division. We have many programmes which impact on having the regulations of the State with respect to development of lands and the creation of housing estates, which requires the Town and Country Planning Division’s input.

The Fisheries Department of the Ministry was just transferred to the Ministry just about a month ago, and we are still putting things in place to have the remainder of the staff transferred to us. This Ministry comprises of staff who came from the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development and the Ministry of Food Production, and now the last piece of the puzzle also came from the Ministry of Food Production.

Mr. Chairman, the Ministry of Land and Marine Resources has, I would say, a client base of just about over 200,000 in terms of who we have to deal with, just the programmes which fall under the Ministry which include the Agriculture Land Programme, the Caroni VSEP Programme, the Land for the Landless, the Squatter Regularization Programme. These alone have a large impact, because just over 60 per cent of the lands in this country still comprise of State lands which falls under the Ministry of Land and Marine Resources and the Commissioner of State Lands office. Incidentally, that is a position which actually reports to the President by way of this quasi-jurisdiction, because the lands in this country, State lands, are
still vested under the President of the Republic. Under the Ministry, there are two arms that deal with these lands, one of which is the Land Settlement Agency and the Commissioner of State Lands.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, thank you very much. Hon. Members, the question is that the sum of $254,994,700 for Head 76, the Ministry of Land and Marine Resources, stand part of the Schedule.

Question proposed: That Head 76 stand part of the Schedule.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, the sum of 254,994,700 for Head 76, the Ministry of Land and Marine Resources. Hon. Members, the sum of $254,994,700 for Head 76, the Ministry of Land and Marine Resources 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: Sub-Head 01: Personnel Expenditure; Item 001, General Administration; Item 002, Surveys and Mapping; Item 003, Land Management.

I recognize the hon. Member for La Brea.

Hon. Jeffrey: I want to refer to Contract Employment, 16; Goods and Services.

Mr. Chairman: You are on Personnel Expenditure, right?

Hon. Member: No. That is the wrong page.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, just hold a second for me. I will come back to you. We are on Item 003, Land Management; Item 004, Fisheries; Item 005, Agricultural Land Administration Division. We now go Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services. I think there is where you are.

Hon. Jeffrey: Yeah, Mr. Chairman. Contract employment for 2014, $1.5 million, but the estimate for 2015 is $8 million. I would like to get some clarification on what informed that decision to increase to $8 million?

Hon. Seemungal: Mr. Chairman, the Ministry of Land and Marine Resources though newly formed, and much of its staff is now being transferred from different Ministries, including the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development and the Ministry of Food Production. We also took a Note to Cabinet which allowed for the establishment of additional posts, and this will account for the increase in the allocation.
Mr. Chairman: Okay, shall we go to Item 002, Surveys and Mapping?

Hon. Jeffrey: No, Mr. Chairman, I still have one, 23, Fees. In 2014, $3.5 million, but we saw a reduction in 2015 for the estimate of $393,000. Again, we are looking for some clarification on that. [Crosstalk]

Mr. Chairman: Are you dealing with Short-Term Employment?

Hon. Jeffrey: Yeah, Fees, 23.

Mr. Chairman: Which one are you dealing with? [Cell phone rings] Does somebody have a phone on? Could you switch off all phones?

Hon. Seemungal: “Yuh kinda” confusing me because—

Mr. Chairman: All right. I think you are not clear. Whilst you are clarifying, I am moving on. Item 002, Surveys and Mapping; Item 003, Land Management; Item 004, Fisheries; Item 005, Agricultural Land Administration Division; Sub-Head 03: Minor Equipment Purchases; Item 001, General Administration; Item 002, Surveys and Mapping; Item 003, Land Management; Item 004, Fisheries; Item 005, Agricultural Land Administration Division. Sub-Head 004: Current Transfers and Subsidies; Item 005, Non-Profit Institutions; Item 007, Households; Item 008, Subsidies; Item 009, Other Transfers; Item 010, Other Transfers Abroad. Sub-Head 06, Current Transfers to Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies; Item 004, Statutory Boards.

We now turn to Development Programme: Item 001, Pre-Investment; Item 003, Economic—I recognize the hon. Member for Diego Martin Central.

Dr. Browne: Chairman, I am on page 221. I just want to confirm that you are there as well? 001, Marine Baseline Study in the North Western Peninsula.

Mr. Chairman: Yes, I am with you.

Dr. Browne: Yes. Minister, what are the objectives of this study? When will it be initiated? Which agency is being contracted if it is not an in-house study? What is the duration?

Hon. Seemungal: That is a study that is being done by the Institute of Marine Affairs, and they will be commencing that very early in this new financial year.

Dr. Browne: What is the objective?

[Hon. Seemungal confers with his advisors]
Hon. Seemungal: This is to pick up any illegal reclamations that may have occurred, so that we can have this entire mapping of the area, so that we can then start dealing with some of these reclamation matters.

Hon. Jeffrey: Land Acquisition, K, 001, Acquisition of Sites for Non-Agricultural, 2014, $50 million. Could you tell us where these sites are located?

Mr. Chairman: Are you following him?

Hon. Seemungal: Yes.

Mr. Chairman: Yes, continue, hon. Member.

Hon. Jeffrey: Could you tell us where these sites are located?

Mr. Chairman: Could you indicate where those sites are located? Do you have that information? If you do not, make it available in writing.

Hon. Seemungal: We have more than 50 sites that are located throughout the country. Actually, the estimate that will be submitted next year, is over $140 million. These are reclamation matters going back as far as 20 and 30 years that have not been satisfied. I have given the Ministry the mandate that we are to settle all of these outstanding matters. Last year we got $50 million. This year we are at $10 million, by March of next year we will then be submitting another $100 million to satisfy these backlogs throughout the country.

Hon. Jeffrey: Can we get a listing of those sites?

Hon. Seemungal: Yes, I could provide a listing of the sites for you.

Mr. Chairman: The hon. Member for Diego Martin Central and then the Member for Arouca/Maloney.

Dr. Browne: All right. Mr. Chairman, I want to revert under Ministry of Food Production now as promised prior. I take you to page 77, under the Consolidated Fund, and I have a question with respect to—tell me when you are there—line Items 508 and 534. I am seeing past expenditure on two related aspects of research in the marine fisheries industry and Inshore/Costal Fisheries. I am not seeing any allocation for this year, and I am tempted to assume that those studies have been completed. I am asking whether they have been completed. I want to confirm that. Are the findings available? I would like them to be made available to this Committee. Further, I am asking the Minister, again, under these items, if there are any plans to protect fish spawning—I do not know if he is listening.

Mr. Chairman: Yes, he is following you.
Hon. Seemungal: Sorry.

Dr. Browne: — sites in the Gulf of Paria. And on the north coast there are some specific locations in which these fish spawn, maybe based on this research, are there any plans within the Ministry? And finally, assuming again that the research is completed, is it aimed at culminating in laws that will assist in the protection of our marine fisheries industry?

Hon. Seemungal: Yes. Mr. Chairman, through you, we have both international and regional obligations as far as the fish spawning sites are concerned. And also some of this research goes into the protection of the queen conches as well. Some of this research will go off the baselines as far as Tobago, because of our regional obligations, but many of these projects have been absorbed within the recurrent expenditure, because they are no longer considered to be the development programme. Many of them have almost reached to their end and the Ministry is now looking at a comprehensive overview of our fishing Act to bring it into modernization, and to also bring it in tune with upgrading the fines and penalties, so that we can continue to manage the fish spawning sites, and also continue to manage the fish resources of the surrounding seas.

Dr. Browne: Are there any plans for an artificial reef programme within the Ministry?

Hon. Seemungal: That is something that we are considering. Actually, one of the research projects that we are looking at right now is the research with respect to sharks and that entire programme, but we are, in fact, looking at some of the waters off Tobago. We actually will be having the—we have started having discussions with the Tobago House of Assembly on it already. One of the areas that we are seriously considering, whether or not to make it into a marine park or some form of protected area, is that Speyside seas. Actually, that is considered the clearest water in the entire world, that is the best water for recreation diving. So at least that is an area which we are seriously considering in protection of the marine environment and also the protection of the fish spawning areas around that particular region.

Dr. Browne: I have a question on the IDF. I do not know if now is the time, maybe— [Interruption]

Hon. Jeffrey: I still have one question under— [Interruption]

Mr. Chairman: No, let us deal with DP first, and then IDF after.
Hon. Jeffrey: I have a question, Mr. Chairman, G, 001—

Hon. Seemungal: What page?

Hon. Jeffrey: Page 224, Equipment and Vehicles, right. I would like to find out firstly, which company is scheduled to do the refurbishment of the hydrographic unit’s vessel? And secondly, is it seaworthy at this point in time?

Hon. Seemungal: Yes, we are looking at a project under the Central Tenders Board. We have not chosen any particular company, and we have done the research. It can be made seaworthy. Actually, I am talking—we are having discussion with the Ministry of Transport to assist us with respect to those vessels—[Interruption]

Dr. Browne: What is the name of that vessel?

Hon. Seemungal:—to make available a couple vessels that we can use for this marine survey. The marine survey is necessary, that is the hydrographic survey is necessary with the opening up of the Panama Canal, that is necessary to survey the waters around the land so that we can create now a digital mapping system.

We are also having discussion with the hydrographic unit of the United Kingdom who we are engaging in consultation and they are recommending—they have seen the vessels and they have recommended other vessels that we need to procure as well.

We are also having discussion with the Ministry of Energy and Energy Affairs to use some of their barges so that we can then use their vessels to survey the east coast, that is along the Maracas—all those areas, and with the coming into stream of their new port, that will make it much cheaper and much easier for us to continue those surveys.

Miss Hospedales: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to take you all to page 223, Sub-Item 240, Residential Lots Programme (Land for the Landless). I would like to find out from the Minister, how many lots have been distributed to date? The number of lots that you all have reserved for distribution? And if you can tell us about the number of applicants for the programme? And I also want to link this back to Item 001 on page 222, to ask whether or not the land acquisition that you speak of for non-agricultural purposes is for the Land for the Landless programme. And actually, if you can tell us the actual locations of those parcels of land that you are looking at.
8.20 p.m.

**Hon. Seemungal:** It is about 10 questions in one, but I will try to see how many of them I can answer. The Residential Lots Programme, which was started just about two years ago, we have thus far prepared close to 1,000 lots of land to be distributed. None has been distributed to date, the reason being that it takes close to 22 months to actually have the final approval from Town and Country Planning, which is a requirement of the Act, State Lands (Regularisation of Tenure) Act, before we can actually distribute lands to persons.

We have an applicant database of just over 40,000 persons who would have applied, many of whom would fall into the Squatter Regularisation Programme as well, but because they did not have lands, they applied under the programme itself.

We have right now 10 sites being prepared under the IDB Programme, which is not really cited here as an allocation, but that is a project we are doing through the Ministry of Public Administration and Ministry of Planning and Sustainable Development, and those projects will be starting very soon. They are not here because there is no requirement to list those, but those will be starting very soon. They will bring an additional 3,000 lots, making them available for persons under this particular programme.

We continue to take applications. Every single day, persons can go down to the Land Settlement Agency situated at Orange Grove and lodge their application.

**Miss Hospedales:** Mr. Chair, follow-up. I would like to find out from the Minister if they can provide us with a list of all the recipients to date.

**Hon. Seemungal:** I just said we have no recipients because they have not allocated any as yet.

**Miss Hospedales:** We were provided by the media with information that there were two distribution programmes where 500 persons for each programme were identified.

**Hon. Seemungal:** But, I am giving you the correct information. This is the Minister of Land and Marine Resources who is giving you the correct information.

**Mr. Chairman:** All right. The Minister is giving you the correct information. Let us go on now to the Infrastructure Development Fund and I now recognize the hon. Member for Diego Martin Central and the Member for La Brea.
Dr. Browne: Thank you, Chairman. I am on page 311—

Hon. Seemungal: Same book?

Dr. Browne: Yes, the DP, Head 76 and Land Management Services, 003, Upgrading/Construction of Fishing Facilities in Trinidad. And I see a 2015 allocation of $10 million and my question to the Minister is, as he did mention it in his budget contribution, this $10 million, does it specifically include funding for development for the fishermen at the Cocorite Fish Facility and market? If so, how much of this $10 million is identified for Cocorite and what other locations would be allocated under this sum?

Hon. Seemungal: Mr. Chairman, through you, the Cocorite Facility was tendered and a contract has been awarded and signed by NIPDEC to the tune of $6.2 million to one RGB Contractors. That funding, though, would be taken out of the 2014 and only if they have not been able to draw all the funding, then we will take it out of the 2015.

In addition to that, the Blanchisseuse Facility has also been tendered and that contract is in the process of being awarded, but this funding here, we wanted to make sure that we have coverage. Remember, I only received this Division just about a month ago and I wanted to make sure that we have coverage for these two particular facilities for which contracts have been signed.

In addition to this, the Cabinet has approved $300 million by way of raising of a bond or funds to be raised by NIPDEC, which will take into consideration all the other 39 facilities that we have throughout the country to make sure that we bring some kind of at least first stage or part one of what we want to do to bring some of these facilities up to scratch.

Dr. Browne: On behalf of the Cocorite fishermen, I am very pleased to hear that and I hope the Ministry will follow through quickly. It is good news.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member for La Brea.

Mr. Jeffrey: 003 again, Construction of Fishing Facilities in Trinidad. I see that the 2015 estimate, $10 million. I would like to find out whether or not the La Brea Fishing Facility is factored in that.

Hon. Seemungal: La Brea Fishing Facility and all the other fishing facilities are factored into a project. I just said the Cabinet has approved $300 million-plus for NIPDEC to raise a bond this year, so that we can complete all these facilities during the course of this year. We have already visited most of the sites and we have held consultation with at least 80 per cent of the sites thus far.
What we are doing now, we have brought into my Ministry an architect and a
senior civil engineer and they are hard at work trying to refine all of the proposals
that we have received thus far and trying to standardize, as far as possible, the
designs, so that we can move forward with what the fishermen want and, in
addition to that, make the facilities very user-friendly and easy to maintain in the
long run.

Mr. Jeffrey: You said you visited 80 per cent of the sites. I just want to find
out if La Brea was one of those that you visited.

Hon. Seemungal: La Brea was one of those that we have visited.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 76 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much, hon. Minister and your team.

Hon. Seemungal: Mr. Chairman, through you, I would like to thank the
Commissioner of State Lands, the PS, Director of Fisheries, the CEO of LSA and
all the other staff for coming out and assisting us.

Mr. Chairman: We would like to thank you as well. We now invite the
Minister of Gender, Youth and Child Development and his team. This is the final
Head that we would be looking at.

Head 66.

Mr. Chairman: I will now invite the hon. Minister of Gender, Youth and
Child Development, if he so desires, to make a brief opening statement for no
more than five minutes.

Hon. De Coteau: Thank you, Chairman. The Ministry of Gender, Youth and
Child Development was established in 2011 to ensure that dedicated attention is
given to the issues of gender, youth and child development. Over the past three
and a half years, the Ministry has focused on developing the necessary framework
for effectively managing the gender, youth and child development portfolios.

In this regard, the Ministry focused on policy formulation, institutional
strengthening, improvement of service delivery and building a robust monitoring
and evaluation platform to measure growth and address gaps which may occur, to
ensure that success is achieved.

In 2015, under the gender portfolio, the Ministry will continue its focus on the
policy, the legislation and programme to address gender equality and gender-
based and sexual violence and developing the national strategic plan. Further, development of the tool kit for gender-responsive budgeting, the establishment of the National Commission for Women’s Empowerment and Gender Equity and the IT-based National Domestic Violence Registry are some of the key initiatives for 2015.

Under the portfolio of youth, the Ministry will continue its implementation of the National Youth Policy while focusing on youths in challenging circumstances; a new and different curriculum for the Youth Empowerment Centres; and the refurbishment of the existing centres with two additional centres for girls will also be the focus. These will include the Game Keepers Project, Youth Volunteer, the programmes at all the youth centres and relevant intervention programmes.

In the area of child development, the Ministry is aware of this country’s need to catch up with other developing nations to bridge the gaps existing. The focus will be on ensuring that the Children’s Authority is fully operational and the legislation and infrastructure are in place for its operations. A large portion of the development programme will be used for the construction and refurbishment facilities to meet the growing needs of the children associated with this strengthening of the families.

Mr. Chairman, I thank you for the opportunity to make that comment.

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

*Question proposed:* That Head 6, stand part of the Schedule.

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Members, the sum of $230,282,670, for Head 66, the Ministry of Gender, Youth and Child 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* and the *Draft Estimates of Development Programme*.

We go to:

**Sub-Head 01: Personnel Expenditure**

Item 001, General Administration

Item 002, Gender Affairs Division

Item 003, Youth Affairs

Item 005, National Youth Development and Apprenticeship Centres

Item 006, Child Development Centre
Item 007, National Family Services

Sub-Head 02: Goods and Services
Item 001, General Administration
Item 002, Gender Affairs Division
Item 003, Youth Affairs
Item 004, Youth Centres
Item 005, National Youth Development and Apprenticeship Centres
Item 006, Child Development Centre
Item 007, National Family Services

We go to:

Sub-Head 03: Minor Equipment Purchases
Item 001, General Administration
Item 003, Youth Affairs
Item 004, Youth Centres
Item 005, National Youth Development and Apprenticeship Centres
Item 006, Child Development Centre
Item 007, National Family Services

We go to:

Sub-Head 04: Current Transfers and Subsidies
Item 002, Commonwealth Bodies
Item 003, United Nations Organizations
Item 005, Non-Profit Institutions
Item 007, Households

Sub-Head 06: Current Transfers to Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies
Item 004, Statutory Boards

We now go to the Development Programme:

Sub-Head 09: Development Programme
Item 004, Social Infrastructure
Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services
Infrastructure Development Fund
Question put and agreed to.

Head 66, ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, I wish to thank you and your staff. Thank you very much.

Hon. De Coteau: Chairman, I want to thank my colleagues, the members of the committee, for their 150 per cent support. Thank you.

8.35 p.m.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, hon. Members, before we bring the proceedings to an adjournment, I just want to let you know—and I want to thank all Members—we have been able to complete 14 Heads of expenditure today, bringing us up to 24 and we now, therefore, have 26 more Heads to complete. Tomorrow being Republic Day, we resume on Thursday at 1.30 in the afternoon, and I want to serve notice that we will be dealing with 15 Heads on that day:

1. Ministry of Sport
2. Ministry of the People and Social Development
3. Trinidad and Tobago Police Service
4. Ministry of Education
5. Ministry of Tobago Development
6. Ministry of the Arts and Multiculturalism
7. Ministry of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development
8. Ministry of Public Administration
9. Ministry of Transport
10. Ministry of Public Utilities
11. Ministry of Community Development
12. The Judiciary
13. The Industrial Court
14. Tobago House of Assembly
15. Ministry of Legal Affairs
[MR. CHAIRMAN]  

On Friday, we bring the curtains down, first before us:  

1. The Attorney General  
2. Ministry of Local Government  
3. Ministry of the Environment and Water Resources  
4. Ministry of Housing and Urban Development  
5. Ministry of Foreign Affairs  
6. The Office of the President  
7. Elections and Boundaries Commission  
8. The Public Service Appeal Board  
9. The Parliament  
10. Auditor General  

These will constitute the final 26 Heads, and we hope to bring these matters to a close on Friday evening.  

Hon. Members, I would like to thank all of you. It has been a long day, and we would like to thank all of you, especially the Members who came out today, for being cooperative. Today we were a bit tense at times, that is understandable. We are going through a very new period of transparency, accountability and openness, and there is an old culture that is still in the system that we have to shift from, but we know that that is going to come by as we proceed. So we ask all our Members to be patient, and to ensure that when we proceed, we deal with matters in a very cool, calm and collective way.  

How could I forget the hon. Minister of National Diversity and Social Integration, and you said nothing. [Laughter] Well, I want to let you know, you have not been forgotten, and you are incorporated. I want to serve notice on you [Laughter] that on Thursday, September 25, you will be No. 16. If you feel that you were going to escape scrutiny of this Legislature, you are wrong. You are going to be fully scrutinized. So I want to let you know that on Thursday you are going to be part of the examination.  

Hon. Members, at this time, I want to move that the proceedings of this Standing Finance Committee is adjourned to Thursday at 1.30 p.m. This sitting of the committee is adjourned until Thursday at 1.30 p.m. in the evening.  

8.41 p.m.: Standing Finance Committee suspended.
The Standing Finance Committee of the whole House resumed its deliberations on the Bill and Estimates.

[Chairman: Mr. Mark]

1.30 p.m.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, the meeting of the Standing Finance Committee is called to order.

I recognize the Member for Tobago West.

Dr. Baker: Thank you, Chairman. After having sat with you to work through the new rules by which this committee is now sitting and meeting, I think we would be at a loss if we did not have the Chief Secretary of the Tobago House of Assembly appear before us to answer for his administration.

Mr. Chairman: You are asking before we reach there, whether the Chief Secretary would appear here?

Dr. Baker: Yes.

Mr. Chairman: He is not the accounting officer.

Dr. Moonilal: Mr. Chairman, could I indicate that over the past three days or so, Ministers of Government have been attending. They themselves are not the accounting officers, but they carry responsibility for the Ministry, and while the Chief Secretary is not the accounting officer, he carries the responsibility for the Tobago House of Assembly.

If Members of the Finance Committee are so minded that the Chief Secretary should be asked to present himself to the Finance Committee, as each Minister has done, to give a proper account for the expenditure, along with his accounting officer, the Chief Administrator, I believe that is something that the Member for Tobago West is making a request for, and other Members of the Finance Committee may be so minded. There is no proper reason why the Chief Secretary should absent himself, if asked to come here and explain, because Ministers are giving explanations, not only on the dollars and cents, but on certain
policy issues that Members are asking. I think it would be helpful if the Chief Secretary would be properly invited to attend on the Finance Committee.

**Dr. Rowley:** Mr. Chairman—

**Mr. Chairman:** Before you speak. Hon. Members, in accordance with Standing Order 83(2):

> “The procedure in Standing Finance Committee shall be as follows:
> (a) the Estimates shall be considered first; and
> (b) the Committee shall be empowered to send for relevant Accounting Officers and technocrats to provide information to the Committee.”

I do not see in this instance where—unless, for instance, the Member for Tobago West and the Member for Oropouche East are submitting that the Chief Secretary is a technocrat. But as far as I am aware, he is an elected official in the Tobago House of Assembly. In accordance with our Standing Orders we are empowered to send for the relevant Accounting Officers and technocrats. Unless we change our Standing Orders, that is what the Standing Order says.

**Mr. Imbert:** Mr. Chairman—

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

What I am suggesting is that unless—I could always seek advice subsequent to what these Standing Orders say, but I am guided by the Standing Orders. Therefore, in those circumstances, until I get further advice on the matter, I would want to ask that we proceed with what we have before us. Okay?

I recognize the Member for Diego Martin West wanted to say something earlier, and also the Member for Diego Martin North/East.

**Dr. Rowley:** Mr. Chairman, it is unfortunate that we are getting off on the foot that we have been placed by the Member for Tobago West, because my understanding of the Standing Orders is exactly as you have read them there, but if the Committee would like to talk to any public official and the Committee makes that request, I would find it reasonable if the request is properly made.

When I was given the responsibility to speak to issues under various Ministries, by proper channels, through the Clerk of the House, I did indicate who I would like to see here, and I think a piece of correspondence went quite properly. For example, this afternoon we are seeing the Head under Police, and I specifically asked the Clerk so that the Commissioner of Police should be here as the Accounting Officer, and so on.
But to come here on the day when the THA is to be examined, and to make the request in this way as though the THA Chief Secretary should be here and somehow is evading this Committee is quite wrong. The argument as put forward against those Standing Orders, I may want to ask, this afternoon we are supposed to examine the Judiciary, is it that we are expecting the Chief Justice?

Let us be guided by your correct ruling, Mr. Chairman, and if it is that the Committee requires the presence of the Chief Secretary, then let us make the request in the proper way and not in this way as though something wrong is happening.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, I have ruled on this matter. I do not think that we should proceed there.

Mr. Imbert: Just a related matter. That would also apply to corporations. So I cannot ask the Mayor of Chaguanas to come here?

Mr. Chairman: I have ruled on this matter specifically raised by—let us go to Head 68, the Ministry of Sport, $466,657,704.

I will now invite the hon. Minister of Sport to make a brief opening statement for no more than five minutes, if he so desires.

Hon. Dr. Griffith: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

I really have no brief statement to make, more than to introduce the team that is with me here today. We are prepared to answer any questions that are forthcoming.

We have here the Permanent Secretary, Mr. Amroodeen Ali. We have Mr. Adrian Raymond, the Acting CEO of the Sport Company, and Mr. Bhaggan from the Boxing Board Company.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much, hon. Minister.

Head 68.

Question proposed: That Head 68 stand part of the Schedule

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, the sum of $466,657,704 for Head 68, the Ministry of Sport, 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. I go to Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure, Item 1, General Administration.
I recognize the hon. Member for Diego Martin West, Leader of the Opposition.

Dr. Rowley: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I would like to preface my questions under 01 under the summary Sub-Head 01 on page 368, because when I examined the expenditure pattern in this Ministry in preparation for this exercise, I observed that in 2014 this Ministry was responsible for spending $682 million. That draws my attention to what is recurrent expenditure. Recurrent expenditure seems to have exploded in this Ministry.

The Revised Estimates show under recurrent $682 million and a request in 2015 of $451 million. But to get the full impact on that on recurrent, one has to understand that the documents available to this Parliament, maybe not all in front of us here, show that the recurrent expenditure in the Ministry of Sport, as recently as 2011 was just over $28 million. So it would mean that in a period of stricture, in a deficit budget, we have somehow contrived to move the recurrent expenditure in this Ministry in a way that is quite substantial.

I would like to ask the spokespersons for the Ministry today to explain to us, what was the reason for the explosion in expenditure to $682 million in 2014 as per the Estimates, and what is going to be cut out of the Ministry’s programme with respect to the Estimates for 2015 of $451 million? We start with that, Mr. Chairman, before we get to 001, General Administration.

Mr. Chairman: We have to go through, if you want the Items under 01, which is Personnel Expenditure—you see, what I suspect you are doing is dealing with all the Items, that is, Goods and Services, Minor Equipment Purchases, as well as Current Transfers and Subsidies, which is going ahead of the Standing Finance Committee.

So we are taking things by Item, and the first Item I called was Item 1, Sub-Head 1 which is Personnel Expenditure. Under Personnel Expenditure we have Item 1, General Administration. Which one are you dealing with in terms of—

Dr. Rowley: If you go the way we have been going, Mr. Chairman, what I have discovered by examination of all the numbers in front of us, is that if we go the way we have gone, it is possible that we will not get the answers that we are looking for with respect to what happened in 2014, because there have been significant omissions in terms of recurrent in this Ministry. So what I was looking for was a general comment as to what has happened with the general pattern before we get to the specifics. I do expect to go through the specifics as we have
normally gone, going down the Heads on the various pages. But if you find a
difficulty with that, I will not push the point.

**Mr. Chairman:** I would suggest that we go with the specific Items first and
maybe as we go along we would get the general answer. Let us deal with the
specifics first.

**Dr. Rowley:** That takes me, Mr. Chairman, to 001. Again, we are talking
about an increase in the expenditure under Personnel. I would like an
explanation—if you look at page 369,001, the total under Personnel Expenditure,
we are looking at $21 million for Personnel Expenditure. I would like that to be
explained in the context of the recent expenditure. Has there been any increase in
Personnel Expenditure in the Ministry and if so, what is the basis for this
increase?

1.45 p.m.

**Mr. Chairman:** The hon. Minister of Sport.

**Hon. Dr. Griffith:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just to note that the Member in
his initial—except we nullify what he said initially, but he made mention of 2011
which is not before us. So if that is nullified, we then could look at 001 and you
will note that the revised estimate for 2014 was $21 million, for 2015 it is $19.5
million. So, I think the question pertaining to what were the increases, you would
see over to the left there is a decrease, not an increase.

**Dr. Rowley:** What is the basis for that?

**Hon. Dr. Griffith:** What is the basis of the decrease? Well a number of
things. One, the LifeSport is no longer in the Ministry of Sport, there was some
migration there, and then there are other positions that are still vacant in the
establishment that are not yet filled. And I do remind the Member, this is an
estimate—the 2015 is an estimate.

**Mr. Chairman:** Yes.

**Miss Mc Donald:** I have a question.

**Mr. Chairman:** Yes. Member for Port of Spain South.

**Miss Mc Donald:** I think I want to follow up on the question that Dr. Rowley
had asked. And let us look at 2013 actuals: $16.3 million; and 2015 $19.5 million.
There has been a major increase there of some $3 million. What has accounted for
that increase?
Hon. Dr. Griffith: Of course, these are estimates, and as was already mentioned in previous discussions, an estimate is merely what is expected for 2015, it is not saying that that will be expended in 2015.

Dr. Rowley: Well then the question follows because—I raised this last Friday to the Government—the revised estimates used to mean something. It meant that, with respect to the actual expenditure, the Ministry is in a better position to determine what the final outcome will be at the end of the fiscal year. And if the Ministry of Finance and the Economy has told this House, this committee, that the revised estimates is $21 million, I would like to ask the Minister, since he is taking this position, what was the basis for revising the estimates upwards by $3 million?

Hon. Dr. Griffith: Okay. I am guided by the PS, he says the revised estimates—and I think he is correct on that—between 2013 and 2014 went from $12.2 million to $12.8 million.

Dr. Rowley: That is not before us, Mr. Chairman.

Hon. Dr. Griffith: Well it is there, if you look at 20—

Mr. Chairman: Yes, the information is before us, but that is not the question.

Hon. Dr. Griffith: Well if he is prepared to ask the question again. Maybe I misinterpreted what you meant.

Dr. Rowley: We have some numbers that we are relying on the Ministry of Finance and the Economy. The Ministry of Finance and the Economy tells us—let us take General Administration. They said the actual figure in 2013, which is last fiscal year, not the one that is ending now, the one that we have confirmed expenditure on, was $9.7 million. There was an appropriation, right, for $12.8 million for 2014 which was close to the estimate, which is the revised estimate, so there is a $12 million that is a $3 million approximate difference in there. And you are now asking in 2015 to pitch the level at $12.5 million. And I am asking, what moved the expenditure from $9.7 million to $12.8 million?

Hon. Dr. Griffith: Well the $9.7 million was at 2013; you note that.

Dr. Rowley: So because—[Crosstalk]

Mr. Chairman: Well let him answer.

Hon. Dr. Griffith: I am answering your question.

Mr. Chairman: Continue, please.
Hon. Dr. Griffith: Then you would see the estimate in 2014 was $12.27 million, and the revised estimate is $12.8 million; so just a .7.

Dr. Rowley: What is the basis? Because the Ministry has an establishment; we knew what the cost to the establishment was in 2013. You are telling us now that it would have changed by almost $3 million. I am asking you, what has changed in the Ministry to require that additional money for the establishment?

Mr. Chairman: The hon. Minister of Sport.

Hon. Dr. Griffith: Well, there are certain positions on the establishment that are not yet filled, and there are projections to have those filled. That is going to incur additional cost.

Dr. Rowley: No. No. Vacant posts are already included in that figure.

Hon. Dr. Griffith: Just relax. I am giving you the answer, except you said—

Dr. Rowley: The answer you gave me cannot be held up.

Hon. Dr. Griffith: Well if you are not satisfied with the answer, we can move on to another question. So if you ask me the question, I am going to give you the answer. All I am asking you to do is to be patient so I can help you with the answer that you are seeking.

Mr. Chairman: Well, I think if you address the Chair as opposed to addressing the Member, it would avoid a lot of crosstalk.

Hon. Dr. Griffith: Yes. I agree with you.

Mr. Chairman: Just address it to me. And if for some reason, hon. Minister of Sport, you are unable to provide the answer to the hon. Member, you reserve the right always to provide the proper answer, rather than providing answers that you may not be 100 per cent certain of. You can always check your records and submit your proper and correct answer at a subsequent time. So, I just want to guide you on that.

Hon. Dr. Griffith: Okay. I am guided by that, Mr. Chairman.

Dr. Rowley: Mr. Chairman, may I draw to your attention: I am not wanting to get into any fight with the Minister, except that the Minister gave me an answer in the offering of explanation that it is vacant posts that would answer the question I asked. I simply want to draw to his attention, through you, Mr. Chairman, that Item 08 is Vacant Posts. That tells its own story as a component of the figure I put
to him. So, he cannot raise Vacant Posts as an explanation. That is all I am saying to the Minister.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, may I suggest that once we understood what is being requested, if we can provide that answer in subsequent time because I do not get the impression we have that answer now. So let us go on now. Any other further questions under General Administration? We can go on to Goods and Services, Sub-Head 02, Item 1 General Administration; Item 2 Physical Education in Sport; Item 3, Dwight Yorke Stadium. We go on to Sub-Head 03.

Mr. Imbert: 02, Mr. Chair?

Mr. Chairman: Okay. I recognize the Member for Diego Martin North/East, Item 3, Dwight Yorke Stadium.

Mr. Imbert: No. No. No, 02, Goods and Services. I am waiting for you to go through 02.

Mr. Chairman: Okay. All right. So, we go to Sub-Head 02, Item 1, General Administration. [Crosstalk] Under Goods and Services. The first Item, General Administration. I recognize the Member for Diego Martin North/East.

Mr. Imbert: Yes, Mr. Chairman, could the Minister please explain what 08 is for, and where are these facilities that are being rented? And could the Minister explain what 16 is for? Who is this for? Who are the people being employed under 16? Similarly 22, could the Minister explain what that is for, and who are the people who are being employed under what terms and conditions? And could the Minister also explain what 62 is for, and give us some details on 62? And in addition, 002, I would like further details on 16, Contract Employment, exactly what this is for?

Mr. Chairman: Where is 002?

Mr. Imbert: Physical Education and Sport Division. We are still on 02.

Mr. Chairman: No. No. No. We have not reached there. We are still on General Administration.

Mr. Imbert: No. When you called it out, you went all the way—

Mr. Chairman: No. No. No. I have come back. So, we are just only on Item 1.

Mr. Imbert: So, 08, 16, 22, 28, 62, could I get further and better particulars.
Mr. Chairman: The hon.—is there any question, hon. Member for Diego Martin North/East, you would like him to consider one time, the hon. Minister? Or you want him to answer? Hon. Minister, could you respond to those concerns?

Hon. Dr. Griffith: The first one, 08. These are currently rent being paid, like for instance, the head office and the four stadia where it is being paid for.

Mr. Imbert: You are renting the stadiums?

Mr. Ali: No, it is a lease.

Hon. Dr. Griffith: It is not a rent, it is a lease.

Dr. Rowley: Chairman, could we ask the persons on the other side to provide us with a list of all the components of this expenditure, which is $52.9 million spent in 2014, and a similar amount to be spent in 2015? We would like to know who that money was paid to in 2014, and who they propose to pay in 2015, the actual recipients and the amount for each recipient?

Mr. Chairman: All right. So, you will take a note of that.

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Chairman, before they go on. Am I correct to conclude, this is built up of rent for buildings and lease for stadiums?

Hon. Dr. Griffith: Yeah. That is the answer.

Dr. Rowley: I will look for the breakdown, please.

Mr. Chairman: Yes.

Hon. Dr. Griffith: No problem, we can provide that, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: Could we now go on to 16, hon. Minister, Contract Employment?

Hon. Dr. Griffith: Contract Employment. All right. These are contracted employees throughout the Ministry at this time. We have a number of contracted employees in the Ministry. If the Member so desires to get the list, we could provide that for you. That is what it is for.

Mr. Imbert: Let me tell you what I am driving at, Mr. Chairman. I asked the question.

Mr. Chairman: Yes.

Mr. Imbert: I am trying to find out, the sport development officers assigned to areas, like my constituency for example, are they hired under 16 or 22? That is
my first question. And when you tell me which one of them they are hired under, could you tell me what their terms and conditions of employment are?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister of Sport.

Hon. Dr. Griffith: Okay, Mr. Chairman, one moment.

Mr. Chairman: No problem.

Hon. Dr. Griffith: 16, Contract Employment.

Mr. Imbert: The people who are hired to manage sporting activities in constituencies.

Hon. Dr. Griffith: Community officers.

Mr. Imbert: And they are hired under—it appears to me they are in a very unstable, erratic basis. Sometimes they are at home. Sometimes they are at work. Their contract expires. They have to wait months for it to be renewed. Which one of the Items is it?—16 or 22?

Hon. Dr. Griffith: They are hired under 16 and they are all on contracts.

Mr. Imbert: Okay. Why would it be that these sport officers would be at home for months at a time because their contracts, which seem to be just for a couple of months, have expired?

Hon. Dr. Griffith: Well, that is news to me. I do not know if that is a fact.

Mr. Imbert: No. That is a fact. It is a fact.

Hon. Dr. Griffith: Do you have evidence of that?

Mr. Imbert: Yes, I do. I can speak for myself. In my area, the sport officer was at home for months, and received no allocation for sporting activities either in 2014. Could you look into that for me, please?

Mr. Chairman: Could you look into that particular allegation? [Crosstalk]

Mr. Imbert: I would like some sort of explanation.

Hon. Dr. Griffith: That, to me, is speculation.

Mr. Imbert: No. No. No. It is a fact.

Hon. Dr. Griffith: So I am going to ask.

Mr. Imbert: It is not speculation.

Hon. Dr. Griffith: If you have the evidence per se.
Mr. Imbert: It is not speculation.

Hon. Dr. Griffith: I would like if you could produce it to us.

Mr. Imbert: Just let me put on the record. In previous years the people were hired, received an allocation, and were able to conduct cricket competitions and other sporting activities. I was very pleased with it. In the last 12 months, the persons were sent home and got no allocation. I just want an explanation as to why this programme came to an abrupt end, Mr. Chairman?

Mr. Chairman: May I suggest, hon. Minister of Sport, if an allegation is being made and you are not fully aware of it, could you give us an undertaking that you will just look into it?

Mr. Imbert: Look into it and give us an answer.

Mr. Chairman: Because if it is not true, you will just say so, you know.

Hon. Dr. Griffith: But, Mr. Chairman, we are on record here and we are going live. I think we ought to be reminded, I am not aware of that situation. What I am aware of is that these officers are on contract at various terms, and they expire at various terms. The Member is speculating in my opinion—

Mr. Imbert: This is fact.

Hon. Dr. Griffith: The Member is speculating—[Crosstalk]

Mr. Chairman: Please.

Mr. Imbert: I am telling you what has happened in my area.

Hon. Dr. Griffith: But I do not accept what you are telling me.

Mr. Imbert: How would you know? You just come.

Mr. Chairman: All right. [Crosstalk] Okay. Member for Diego Martin North/East, you cannot badger. [Crosstalk] No, wait “nah”. No. No. No. Wait “nah”. If anything, talk to the Chair. You are not talking to the Minister.

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Chairman, through you—

Mr. Chairman: Wait. I just want to ask the hon. Member, an allegation has been made. I would prefer that you just look into it and let us move on because this is only detaining the process. You have already said that there is no truth in the statement, that is on record, but you will look into it and say further. So let us move on.
Hon. Dr. Griffith: And on the record, each officer is on contract with terms and conditions.

Mr. Chairman: Okay. Let us move on to the next item, please.

Dr. Rowley: Mr. Chairman, please, before you go to the next item.

Mr. Chairman: Yes.

Dr. Rowley: Could I ask the Minister, with this substantial budget under 16 and 22 for Contract Employment and Short-term Contract Employment, who determines who is hired on contract in this Ministry, and by what process are contract officers sourced?

2.00 p.m.

Hon. Dr. Griffith: Well, Ministries can, through advertisements in the newspaper, contract persons to carry out certain functions on contracts. Normally, how it happens is that there is an interview panel. Having gone through the advertisement procedure, advertisement process, there is an evaluation panel and persons are selected and offered contracts. That is how it is done.

Dr. Rowley: Is it that all the persons who have been employed in the Ministry as contract officers have been by way of public advertisements?

Hon. Dr. Griffith: As far as I know.

Mr. Chairman: Let us move on to the next one that was raised. Any other? Let us go to Sub-Item 62: Promotions, Publicity—

Dr. Rowley: Sub-Item 43 first, what is the cause of the doubling of the security budget?

Mr. Chairman: No, the Member for Diego Martin North/East did not raise that. I am dealing with the—

Mr. Imbert: Sub-Item 28.

Mr. Chairman: You dealt with Sub-Item 28. Could you deal—

Mr. Imbert: And Sub-Item 62.

Mr. Chairman: And Sub-Item 62. And then we will go to Security Services.

Dr. Rowley: Okay.

Mr. Chairman: Let us deal with Sub-Item 28, hon. Minister. We are not dealing with security now, eh.
Hon. Dr. Griffith: Yes, I understand. The PS advised that most of those contract services you are referring to are more like janitorial services and maintenance.

Mr. Chairman: All right, could we go on to Sub-Item 62, Promotions, Publicity and Printing? He would like you to explain the numbers involved here. The hon. Member, that is.

Hon. Dr. Griffith: Well, we had a decrease in that Mr. Chairman, I am not sure what they are referring to.

Mr. Chairman: In other words, could you indicate to the Committee what the money was spent on, whether it is advertisement, for what, that sort of thing? I think that is what the Member is trying to get.

Hon. Dr. Griffith: Oh yes, basically the ads, newspaper ads, television ads and other types of promotions, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: All right, I now turn to the hon. Member for Diego Martin West and you were dealing with the Sub-Item 43, Security Services.

Dr. Rowley: Yes, Mr. Chairman. We have had a steady allocation from 2013 of $740 million—$747.20 million—and now we see it is gone to $1.5 million, that means a doubling of the budget. I am asking the Minister, what is the reason for a doubling of the allocation for security in the Ministry?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister.

Hon. Dr. Griffith: Yes, Mr. Chairman. I am advised that this is a revised contract for security and also increase in manpower. There are also some new rates.

Dr. Rowley: I just would like to ask—

Mr. Chairman: Yes.

Dr. Rowley:—was this obtained by competitive arrangements? This is 100 per cent increase—for the last two years—and I am sure if I go back off this chart to 2011, 2012, I am likely to see a lower figure, so am I being told that because you have gone for a renewal of the contract, the contractor doubled the price and you accepted that?

Hon. Dr. Griffith: You said “renewal”, we said new contracts. There is a difference between “renewal” and “new contracts”. And also there is the increase in manpower.
Dr. Rowley: Was the new contract obtained by competitive means?

Hon. Dr. Griffith: Yes, it was.

Mr. Chairman: It was, okay. Let us go on to—

Dr. Rowley: Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: Yes.

Dr. Rowley: We would like to get a list of who the contractor is and what price is being paid per hour and details as to how many contractors are involved and so on, for 2014 and 2015 proposed.

Mr. Chairman: That is under Security Services?

Dr. Rowley: Yes, it is.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, we go to Item 002: Physical Education and Sport Division. I recognize the Member for Diego Martin North/East.

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Speaker, could the Minister explain whether 002/16 involves community sports in any way?

Hon. Dr. Griffith: 002/16? 06?

Mr. Imbert: Um hmm. 16. 00—does that involve community sports in any way? And if it does, where is the allocation for services and goods associated with the employment of community sporting officers?

Hon. Dr. Griffith: 16 says, Contract Employment.

Mr. Imbert: Is that to hire people to work in the community and community sporting events and programmes?

Hon. Dr. Griffith: One moment, please. I am advised by the PS that these are 16 community sport officers.

Mr. Imbert: Fine. Where is the allocation for support to NGOs, local sporting groups, provision of trophies and other support to community sporting activities? All I see here is employment. Where is the allocation to support the activities?

Hon. Dr. Griffith: I think you may be ahead of yourself. I think that will come, Mr. Chairman, under 04.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, well under 04, we shall again deal with it. We go to Item 03. When we come to 04, we will look at that, right?

Mr. Imbert: It is not there.
Hon. Dr. Griffith: 04.

Mr. Imbert: It is not there.

Mr. Chairman: We will look at that. We go to Dwight Yorke Stadium, Sub-Item 003; then we go to Sub-Head 03: Minor Equipment Purchases; Sub-Item 001: General Administration; Sub-Item 002: Physical Education and Sport Division; Sub-Item 003: Dwight Yorke Stadium. We go to Sub-Head 04: Current Transfers and Subsidies. I recognize the Member for Chaguanas West, the hon. Member for Diego Martin West, then the Member for Laventille East/Morvant; then I recognize the Member for Port of Spain South, the Member for Diego Martin North/East and the Member for Arouca/Maloney. The Member for Chaguanas West.

Mr. Warner: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Based on what I see here, is the Minister saying, categorically, that the Boxing Board of Control got no allocation for 2014?

Hon. Dr. Griffith: To answer the question for the Member for Chaguanas West, I am advised that it is under—they received some funds under 04, the 2014 Revised Estimates; the $57 million, they got some moneys through that.

Mr. Warner: Where? Where is that?

Mr. Chairman: Under what Item?

Hon. Dr. Griffith: 04.

Mr. Warner: The Boxing Board, I said, you know.

Mr. Chairman: 04?

Mr. Warner: The Boxing Board of Control. Under 04, are you saying they got no money for 2014?

Hon. Dr. Griffith: I will provide that information for you because what I am being told now is that they got $2 million from 2014 and that is why it is reflected in the Estimates under 2015. But I think, specifically, I would provide that information for you, Member.

Mr. Chairman: All right, I go on to the Member for Diego Martin West.

Dr. Rowley: Mr. Chairman, as you know, there are questions over the reliability of some of these figures raised in the debate itself and I would like to ask if there was any allocation made in 2013, or any expenditure made, because we do have a Sub-Item 02 which specifically says Boxing Board of Control and I
am confused to be sent somewhere else to look for moneys that were directed to the Boxing Board of Control. I see here, according to these documents, that we are being told that there was no expenditure to the Boxing Board of Control in 2013 and none in 2014.

A request is now being made, because the 2015 figures here are the requests that we are dealing with. So I cannot understand and accept from the Minister that the figure of the request is, in fact, the expenditure of 2014. If we accept that, we would be accepting a serious level of unreliability on these numbers. So I would like to ask again whether, in fact, there was any expenditure, a transfer to the Boxing Board in 2013 and in 2014, and what is the basis on which the request for $2.9 million is being made for 2015?

Mr. Chairman: The Minister said he would provide that information to us. I go to the Member for Laventille East/Morvant and then the Member for Port of Spain South. [Interruption] You were not through?

Dr. Rowley: No.

Mr. Chairman: But he will provide that in writing.

Dr. Rowley: I have gone past that.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, you continue, Member.

Dr. Rowley:—29—so that when you leave me, you would just come to the answers. The Non-Profit Institutions. If one goes back, Mr. Chairman, I have done that—I am not saying it is here but it is part of the appreciation of what is happening. We have figures here for the actual expenditure for 2013, under Non-Profit Institutions. My researchers have told me that this would have been—this $72 million—$23 million in excess of what was approved and I would like to ask if the Minister or his technocrats know anything about that. And if they do, to justify for what that increase was generated by and we would like a breakdown for how that money was expended. And then tell us how the $57 million in 2014 was expended, who got it in each individual case, which agency and how much? And how is the 2015 to be allocated?

There is one question I want to ask after that about these transfers and I am directing this to the accounting officer, through the Minister. How is this money transferred to these agencies? And once the transfer is made, is there a bank account in these agencies in which this cash goes? And how does the Ministry’s accounting officer proceed to account for what has been transferred to these agencies?
Mr. Chairman: The hon. Minister of Sport.

Hon. Dr. Griffith: Let us take your first question which is Sub-Item 29. That is quite an extensive question and I will provide that information for you.

Dr. Rowley: Which one, which one?

Hon. Dr. Griffith: 29.

Mr. Chairman: That is the breakdown that you requested.

Hon. Dr. Griffith: 29 was about a four-part question. That is a four-part question you asked and some of the details are quite extensive so what I would like to do, Mr. Chairman, for the point of accuracy, I would like to provide that to you.

Dr. Rowley: Well, the questions are all there.

Mr. Chairman: Yeah. And what about the accounting procedures that was asked?

Hon. Dr. Griffith: The accounting—

Mr. Chairman: These non-profit organizations when they request money, do we have a banking account and what is the accounting procedure and what follow-up takes place? I think that is the question that was asked.

Hon. Dr. Griffith: Yeah. What he says is a combination of things. The body would probably make a request and going through a committee in the Ministry, if it is approved, a cheque is issued, Mr. Chairman, and on some occasions if there is a bank account that is given too, it can be placed into that account rather than giving the individual a cheque. That is what I am advised.

Mr. Chairman: I recognize the Member for Laventille East/Morvant and then the Member for Port of Spain South.

Miss Cox: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. This is a spin-off from the same question, Sub-Item 29, I would like to know where the elite funding money comes from, is it from that same vote? If yes, I would like to get a list of persons who received that money from 2013, 2014 and the amounts. I would also like to know how many sporting organizations were funded because I am seeing here Assistance to Sporting Organizations and I know there is normally assistance to sporting organizations but there is no money expended under this. So, I would like to know if that money comes from there also and we would like a list of those sporting organizations.
I would like to know where the money for the funding of Malabar FC, where that money came from, if it came from the same vote. I would also like to know—I have a letter here that was—I would like to know how much they got in total, Malabar FC. I have a letter here, Malabar FC writing, asking for an increase from $60,000 to $80,000 and there is a note from the Minister to the then Permanent Secretary approving it as per policy. I would like to know what policy existed or exists that Malabar FC could get this funding. And did they get the increase of $80,000?

Mr. Chairman: The hon. Minister of Sport.

Hon. Dr. Griffith: You said a note from the Minister to the Permanent Secretary.

Miss Cox: Yes.

Hon. Dr. Griffith: Just for the record and for clarity—

Miss Cox: I will give you a copy of the letter.

Hon. Dr. Griffith: Yes, please. Pass a copy to me. The Minister you are speaking of is the former Minister.

Miss Cox: The former Minister.

Hon. Dr. Griffith: The former Minister.

Miss Cox: Malabar FC letterhead, asking for the increase. This is the original letter.

Hon. Dr. Griffith: Yeah. If you would be so kind to give us a copy.

Miss Cox: No problem.

Hon. Dr. Griffith: And the second part of your—well the first part of your question, we would be more than happy to provide you the list of the elite athletes and—

Miss Cox: The funding they received.

Hon. Dr. Griffith: Yeah, well all that, the funding they received, et cetera. Okay?

Mr. Chairman: All right. The Member for Port of Spain South.

Miss Mc Donald: Mr. Chairman, I am at Sub-Item 20, St. Paul Street Gymnasium. I notice that there has been a persistent non-allocation of funds for
this multipurpose complex. I am asking why no allocation has been made to this particular complex?

**Mr. Chairman:** The hon. Minister of Sport.

**Hon. Dr. Griffith:** PS will have to check that information for you.

**Miss Mc Donald:** Check? I am seeing a dash there. That means none.

**Hon. Dr. Griffith:** There is none but he is—[Crosstalk]—the Member seems a little confused. What he is saying is that it is part—

**Miss Mc Donald:** I am not confused.

**Mr. Chairman:** No.

**Hon. Dr. Griffith:** Well then, fine, then okay, let us move on.

**Mr. Chairman:** All right, listen, you said that you would provide the information?

**Hon. Dr. Griffith:** Sure.

**Mr. Chairman:** All right. I recognize the Member for Diego Martin North/East after, then I will deal with the Member for Arouca/Maloney and then the Member for St. Joseph. So, I recognize the Member for Diego Martin North/East. [Interruption] Well within the time frame that we said.

**Mr. Imbert:** A similar question, 005/01.

**Mr. Chairman:** 005—

**Mr. Imbert:** 01, Assistance to Sport—[Crosstalk]

**Mr. Chairman:** Please, please, Member for Port of Spain South.

**Mr. Imbert:** Assistance to Sporting Organizations. I see a zero allocation and a zero expenditure. Could I get an explanation for that? Regional Complexes, zero allocation, zero expenditure, could I get an explanation for that? Other Social Programmes in sport, zero allocation, zero expenditure, could I get an explanation for that? Could I get an explanation as to why it appears on the face of the document that the West Indies Players Association has been abandoned by the Ministry of Sport? Because there is a zero allocation and a zero expenditure. And could the Minister explain what falls under the heading Non-Profit Institutions, which is 29?

**Mr. Chairman:** The hon. Minister of Sport.
Hon. Dr. Griffith: That is a very simple answer. The way how this document is laid out, you will see a lot of dashes under the things, all of that is included in the $57 million.

Mr. Imbert: Which you will give us a list of.

Hon. Dr. Griffith: If you request, I will—

Mr. Imbert: Yes, give us a breakdown, please—

Hon. Dr. Griffith: I will be happy to do that.

Mr. Imbert:—so we could verify the accuracy of what you have just said.

Mr. Chairman: All right. So, we recognize the Member for Arouca/Maloney, then St. Joseph and then we would come back to the Member for Diego Martin West.

Miss Hospedales: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I would like to make reference to Sub-Item 02, the Boxing Board of Control and to find out from the Minister whether an audit has been conducted on this particular organization? And to also find out what systems have they put in place to ensure accountability and transparency with reference to the allocation that has been given to the Board.

Mr. Chairman: The hon. Minister of Sport.

Hon. Dr. Griffith: Yes, Mr. Chairman. The Boxing Board of Control, an audit was done by the internal auditors and I am just advised that the report is about ready for submission.

Mr. Chairman: The hon. Member for St. Joseph.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Thank you, Chair. Chair, my question follows on that of the Member for Arouca/Maloney, but not whether an audit was done on the Boxing Board of Control but whether the Boxing Board of Control is requested to submit audited financial accounts before they get this $3 million? And when last has the Boxing Board of Control submitted any audited financial statements?

Mr. Chairman: The hon. Minister of Sport.

Hon. Dr. Griffith: Yes, Mr. Chairman. The request for any allocation, the Boxing Board of Control, like many similar organizations, must submit a statement. With their request, they must submit a financial statement. I am told that the Boxing Board—I am just advised that the Boxing Board of Control did not submit a statement.
Mr. Deyalsingh: So, hon. Minister, am I to understand that the Boxing Board of Control will not be able to access this $3 million until and unless they submit audited financial statements?

Hon. Dr. Griffith: That request has been made and they are in the process of submitting that statement before any allocations are made.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Hon. Minister, could you tell me, for the years 2013/2014, 2013, whether the Boxing Board of Control received any taxpayers’ funds without submitting audited financial statements?

Hon. Dr. Griffith: I think I answered that question already.

Mr. Deyalsingh: No, for 2013, I am asking. Did they receive any moneys without the provision of audited financial statements?

Hon. Dr. Griffith: All right, I will have to check that one for you.

Mr. Chairman: I recognize the Member for Diego Martin West.

Dr. Rowley: Mr. Chairman, from a procedural standpoint at the Ministry, we have six Sub-Heads that have been established here before 2015 and these Sub-Heads are 01 to 28. Could the Minister tell us why the expenditure to these various Sub-Heads have not been reported as expenditure on the existing Sub-Heads and that there is a lump sum figure under 29 which now has us asking all these questions because there are Sub-Heads in the structure for each of these recipients. Therefore, I am asking the Minister why did this happen and how can we get this improved so that we can have, in the next go-around, a report from the Ministry where the expenditure to each agency or organization is put under the relevant Sub-Head?

Mr. Chairman: The hon. Minister of Sport.

Hon Dr. Griffith: Mr. Speaker, this is the way the Ministry of Finance and the Economy presented the information. I already established that all of these organizations here, the expenditure came out of that $57 million that is listed.

Mr. Chairman: Yeah, but I think what the Member is asking—

Hon. Dr. Griffith: Well, then if he wants us to drill down—

Mr. Chairman: No. What he is asking is that in future, it would be more tidy, seeing that we have all these items, that the allocation should be recorded so that when you add up the figures, you will get $57 million.

Dr. Rowley: And we would know, at a glance, who got what.
Mr. Chairman: Exactly. In the future, is that something that you are willing to do?

Hon. Dr. Griffith: Well, we will so advise the Ministry of Finance and the Economy because we know in our budget proposal, the run-up to the budget proposal, we have all the details by each item. The Ministry of Finance and the Economy chose to give a block vote and present it in this way so I think the Ministry of Finance and the Economy could be so advised.

Dr. Rowley: Yes, but the Ministry of Finance and the Economy, having taken the liberty of ignoring the Sub-Heads and doing that, how does the Minister proceed in allocating to the various bodies from this lump sum figure? Who makes that decision?

Hon. Dr. Griffith: Well, we have that proposal we made to the Ministry of Finance and the Economy for each Sub-Head. We would be guided by that as long as it falls within this overall limit that is allocated here.

Dr. Rowley: Now that we are approving a block figure, I am asking, who is going to make the decision as to how the various components are disbursed?

Hon. Dr. Griffith: The accounting officer and the accounts department in the Ministry of Sport.

Dr. Rowley: Based on what criteria?

Hon. Dr. Griffith: Based on the criteria they used in the submission of the proposal for the budget.

Mr. Chairman: All right, I recognize the Member for Laventille East/Morvant.

Miss Cox: Mr. Chair, I just wanted to be clear on something. There is some information I need to get. It concerns the national sporting organizations. I want to know where their funding is coming from and if we could get a list—

Mr. Chairman: Where is that? Where is that under the Item we are dealing with? That is a separate matter. That is a general question.

Miss Cox: No, no, no. It is not. It is under 29.

Mr. Chairman: Where?

Miss Cox: 29.

Hon. Dr. Griffith: Non-Profit Institutions?
Miss Cox: Yes.

Mr. Chairman: Okay. National sporting organizations, you would like to know where they get their funding from.

Miss Cox: I would like to know where they are getting their funding from, the national sporting organizations, okay? Where is the money coming from? How much does each organization get? And which organizations receive funding from the Ministry?

Mr. Chairman: All right, you could provide that information?

Hon. Dr. Griffith: Yeah, because, Mr. Chairman, I think it should be known that that funding comes from the Sports Company but we could provide the information.

Miss Cox: I would like to get a listing, please.

Hon. Dr. Griffith: Not a problem.

Mr. Chairman: We go to Item 007: Commonwealth Bodies; Item 009—[Interruption] Are you under Commonwealth Bodies?

Mr. Warner: Item 009.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, we go to Item 009: Other Transfers. I recognize the Member for Chaguanas West, the Member for Diego Martin West, the Members for Laventille East/Morvant and Diego Martin North/East.

Mr. Warner: 009/04.

Mr. Chairman: 009/04.

Mr. Warner: The Sports Company of Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Chairman: Right.

Mr. Warner: They got $134 million. Can I get a breakdown on how this money was allocated? And on 13, National Football Development Plan, $13.7 million, how was that figure arrived at? [Interruption] Sorry, $15.0 million, how was that figure arrived at?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, you heard that?

Hon. Dr. Griffith: Yes, Mr. Chairman, just one moment, please.

Mr. Chairman: Okay.

Hon. Dr. Griffith: All right, the first one is 04, Member for Chaguanas West?
Mr. Warner: Yes, $134 million.

Mr. Chairman: Yes?

Hon. Dr. Griffith: Mr. Chairman, the Sports Company just gave me a breakdown, as the Member requested for the $134 million. That is with effect up to August this year. We would be happy to give it to him so he can see for himself in great detail, as it seems a voluminous breakdown.

Mr. Chairman: Well, could you provide it to the Members in writing? You can pass it to me, I can get it copied and pass it on to the Members.

Mr. Warner: And the same question, Mr. Chairman, the same figure was there for 2013, 2014 Revised Estimates, same figure.

Mr. Chairman: Where are you?

Mr. Warner: Same 04, Sir.

Hon. Dr. Griffith: Same 04, 009.

Mr. Chairman: You would like to have a breakdown for what?

Mr. Warner: 2014.

Mr. Chairman: You will get 2014, not 2013.

Mr. Warner: 2014.

Mr. Chairman: You will get 2014, not 2013.

Mr. Warner: 2014.

Mr. Chairman: Yes, 2014, no problem.

Mr. Warner: All right.

Mr. Chairman: And the other one you asked the Member for?

Mr. Warner: Sub-Item 13.

Hon. Dr. Griffith: That is the National Football Development—

Mr. Warner: How the figure, $15 million, was arrived at?

Mr. Chairman: How was that figure arrived at?

Hon. Dr. Griffith: The 009/13, that was the basis of a Cabinet decision, Member, and I have the Cabinet Minute before me. So, that was a Cabinet decision.

Mr. Chairman: All right, let us go on to the Members for Diego Martin West, then Laventille East/Morvant and then Diego Martin North/East.
Dr. Rowley: I refine a question on 13, that $13 million. I know it is a Cabinet decision because I hope that all these decisions are Cabinet decisions because the Cabinet has the responsibility for all the expenditure. What I want to ask is, what is the Ministry expecting to spend that money on?

Mr. Warner: That is the question. That was the question I asked.

Dr. Rowley: Yes, the $13 million increase under Sub-Item 13, from $1.2 million to $15 million, we are now told, and we are very happy to hear that, that there was a Cabinet decision to do that. So, I am asking, what is that money to be spent on?

Mr. Chairman: The hon. Minister of Sport. Do you have that information?

Hon. Dr. Griffith: Yes, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: Could you provide it?

Hon. Dr. Griffith: There are about seven bullet points here, it is kind of long.

Mr. Chairman: Well, you could just list it for us.

Hon. Dr. Griffith: The seven bullet points?

Mr. Chairman: Yes.

Hon. Dr. Griffith: Okay.

Providing technical content and directions for initiatives such as…

Dr. Rowley: Sorry, I missed—could the Minister start at the beginning again, please?

Hon. Dr. Griffith: Okay.

In this regard…

Do you want it from there?

…the Minister proposes the establishment of a Football Development Unit within the Ministry to provide leadership and support for all football stakeholders with the objective of effectively implementing new initiatives and enhancing existing ones.

And they give an appendix II refers. I do not know if you want to go into that.

The Unit would be responsible for:
Providing technical content and directions for initiatives such as small-sided football, national youth league and national academies.

Developing and disseminating national skills testing such as national strength and coordinating standards and accreditation of clubs and coaches.

Development of a national curriculum.

Creation and production of support resources such as marketing, capacity building, research and planning.

Creating commercial partnerships.

Dr. Rowley: Mr. Chairman, question to the Minister. Is the Minister aware that that workload covered by this $13 million of the Ministry’s allocation is, in fact, the mandate of the Trinidad and Tobago Football Association? And is it the Ministry’s intention to run a parallel organization in the Ministry which duplicates the effort of the Trinidad and Tobago Football Association, which in itself would also look to the taxpayer for support?

Hon. Dr. Griffith: What the Minister is aware, Mr. Speaker, is that we are partnering with the Association.

2.30 p.m.

Dr. Rowley: Mr. Chairman, before we move on, I heard the Minister. I made my point that I just draw to his attention that this increase from $1.2 million to $13 million based on what he has just told us here, the work programme of that money, this is a parallel organization to the Trinidad and Tobago Football Association to be run within the Ministry, and I, Mr. Chairman, have difficulty in approving that. And I draw the Minister’s attention to Item 10, the Pathway Programme-LifeSport. And the first question I would like to ask the Minister, was there a Pathway Programme in this Ministry before LifeSport was born or is LifeSport and Pathway one and the same?

Mr. Chairman: After him I will recognize the Member for Oropouche East.

Hon. Dr. Griffith: It is one of the same as the Member I am sure is aware.

Mr. Chairman: All right, if it is one and the same—I recognize the Member for Oropouche East and then go to the Member for Laventille East/Morvant.

Dr. Moonilal: 001, Transfers to State Enterprises, could we ask a question?

Dr. Rowley: No, no—

Mr. Chairman: We have not reached there as yet. I would like to reach there.
Dr. Rowley: We are on Other Transfers.

Mr. Chairman: No, are you on Other Transfers? [Crosstalk] No, we have not reached there as yet, Member for Oropouche East. Member for Laventille East/Morvant and then the Member for Diego Martin North/East. You are still—[Interrupt]

Dr. Rowley:—indulgence—[Interrupt]

Mr. Chairman: Okay, sorry.

Dr. Rowley: Since they are one and the same, how was the Pathway Programme, at its initiation, different to the LifeSport programme that emerged in 2013, 2014 and 2015?

Hon. Dr. Griffith: Mr. Chairman, I think that question is one that I think we need to exercise some reserve judgment. That LifeSport issue is under serious investigation at this point in time and I think any statement made on record, and we are on record here, could be prejudicial to the outcome. So I rather not say much more about the LifeSport.

Dr. Rowley: Mr. Chairman, this finance committee has expended or has caused to examine an expenditure of $109 million in 2014. As a member of this committee, I know of no stricture to prevent this Parliament from asking this Ministry how that money was spent, especially since, in 2013 the expenditure was $29 million. It jumped to $113 million in 2014 and then it disappears in 2015. I happened to have known that there was a Pathway Programme in the Ministry which original intention was to be a cradle for developing sportsmen to move up and how eventually they will get to the elite level of sportsmanship which is another programme mentioned a while ago.

What I am asking these officers, is how did that programme of the Pathway Programme which was meant to nurture athletes who would move towards elite state, how did that programme become LifeSport and the scandal that he is now asking us not to mention?

Hon. Dr. Griffith: I have answered the question already, and my answer still stands.

Dr. Rowley: Is the Minister telling his colleagues in this House that the matter is sub judice and therefore we cannot discuss it. [Crosstalk] In which case, I reject that, Mr. Chairman. There is no sub judice issue here.
Hon. Dr. Griffith: Mr. Chairman, Mr. Chairman, I think it is noted that the only person mention sub judice issue here is the hon. Member for Diego Martin West.

Dr. Rowley: Well then why we cannot talk before that.

Hon. Dr. Griffith: I have said—[Interruption]

Mr. Chairman: Yes, we know what you have said.

Hon. Dr. Griffith: It is under serious investigation.

Mr. Chairman: I cannot force the Minister to answer a question. I go to the Member for Laventille East/Morvant.

Miss Cox: Mr. Chairman, I actually had another question on LifeSport, but I will go a little later.

Mr. Chairman: I recognize the Member for Diego Martin North/East.

Miss Cox: I want to find out about the Anti-Doping in Sport Organization.

Mr. Chairman: Yeah, that is later. Let us go on to the Member for Diego Martin North/East.

Miss Cox: This is under Other Transfers.

Mr. Chairman: I thought you said you wanted to ask something later?

Mr. Imbert: Anti-doping.

Mr. Chairman: Where is Anti-Doping?

Miss Cox: You on LifeSport, Member for Diego Martin North/East?

Mr. Imbert: No, no, I am helping him. It is 08.

Mr. Chairman: Yes, Anti-Doping. What is your question, Member?

Miss Cox: I give way to the—[Interruption]

Mr. Chairman: Okay, the hon. Member for Diego Martin North/East.

Mr. Imbert: Could the Minister tell us of this $134 million transferred and spent by the Sport Company in 2014, whether any of that $134 million was spent on anything associated with the LifeSport programme?

Hon. Dr. Griffith: What Head is he under, Mr. Chairman?

Mr. Imbert: I am on 04.
Hon. Dr. Griffith: All right, okay. The $134 million he is referring to—
[Interruption]

Hon. Member: Is it LifeSport?

Hon. Dr. Griffith: Yes. None of it was spent on LifeSport I am advised.

Mr. Imbert: And we are getting a breakdown of this $134 million.

Hon. Dr. Griffith: If you request it.

Mr. Imbert: I am asking for it, further and better particulars of the ones that they gave.

Mr. Chairman: I recognize the Member for Laventille East/Morvant and then the Member for Diego Martin West.

Dr. Rowley: The same thing 10. Since the Minister is saying that because some investigation is taking place, that investigation cannot be facilitated by any question asked here. I am asking the Minister to provide us with a breakdown of the expenditure under 10 Pathway Programme-LifeSport of $109 million in 2014, and to tell us why no provision is made for this programme in 2015.

Hon. Dr. Griffith: Well, first of all, Mr. Chairman, that programme is now within, well, it is disbanded for one, and two, it was transferred to the Ministry of National Security. That answers the why part.

Dr. Rowley: Okay, the Ministry of Sport, expenditure in this programme took place in the Ministry of Sport in 2013/2014. We are asking the Ministry of Sport for a detailed breakdown of the expenditure of $113 million in 2014, which has been revised to $109 million. So the Ministry of Sport is responsible for that expenditure.

Hon. Dr. Griffith: Okay, well, we can give for 2014, you can have that breakdown.

Dr. Rowley: Yes, a detailed breakdown.

Mr. Chairman: I recognize the Member for Diego Martin North/East and then the Member for Laventille East/Morvant.

Mr. Imbert: The question on 10 has been asked by the Leader of the Opposition. I have a question on 12. Since Trinidad and Tobago did not make it to the World Cup in 2014, could the Minister explain the reason for expenditure of $283,000 in 2014? We did not have a team at the World Cup.
Hon. Dr. Griffith: I smile at that question because the World Cup—and my good friend from Chaguanas West will tell him—does not only include the players on the field.

Mr. Imbert: I would like to know, since we had no team, we were out for a whole year before 2014, what are we doing spending $283,000 in 2014?

Hon. Dr. Griffith: If you would like to know, all you have to simply do is just—[Crosstalk]

Mr. Chairman: Yes, but he is going to answer you, but you are going on. He is not getting a chance to answer.

Mr. Imbert: No problem, no problem.

Mr. Chairman: The hon. Minister of Sport, please. Would you want to provide a breakdown for the hon. Member?

Hon. Dr. Griffith: Yeah, I mean if he would request it he will receive it.

Mr. Chairman: The Member for Laventille East/Movant. I am going on to item—[ Interruption]

Miss Cox: No, I am not finished.

Mr. Chairman: Item 07 Commonwealth Bodies.

Miss Cox: No, I just want to ask him on the Anti-Doping. I gave way to LifeSport.

Mr. Chairman: “Ohh”, you gave way. All right, Anti-Doping.

Miss Cox: I want to find out what is the present position on Anti-Doping Organization, what is the status?

Hon. Dr. Griffith: Good question.

Mr. Chairman: The status of the Anti-Doping Organization.

Hon. Dr. Griffith: Good question. Mr. Chairman, you will recall we debated the Anti-Doping Bill in this honourable House and it was passed in both Houses. It is being proclaimed and the rules are currently being developed by the Ministry.

Miss Cox: Okay.

Mr. Chairman: All right, let us deal with the whole issue of Other Transfers and Transfers to State Enterprises. I think Oropouche East wanted to raise something under Transfers to State Enterprises. We are now on that item.
Dr. Moonilal: Yes, thank you, Chairman. Mr. Chairman, I wanted to raise a matter here for really clarification under 011/01. I am seeing here from 2013/2014 revised 2015, the estimates $67 million plus for repayment of loan for the Brian Lara Cricket Stadium. I wanted to confirm whether that is the Brian Lara Cricket Stadium in Tarouba or the Brian Lara facility somewhere else. [Crosstalk] I wanted to also ask—[Interuption]

Mr. Chairman: Please, please, you have the chance to ask your question in silence, you know. So allow the Member to ask in silence. He has the right to ask.

Dr. Moonilal: Mr. Chairman, let me repeat that because he may not have heard.

Mr. Chairman: Yeah, you go ahead.

Dr. Moonilal: I am asking for the status of this loan arrangement, whether it involves the Ministry of Sport, whether it involves UDeCOTT. For what facility is this Brian Lara Cricket Stadium, where is that facility, and—[Crosstalk] Mr. Chairman, please.

Mr. Chairman: Yes, you have my protection.

Dr. Moonilal: Let me repeat again. Which facility is this? Because I am aware that there are other facilities with the name Brian Lara on it, eh. Recreation ground and so on, and I am seeing repayment of loan from 2013 to 2015 of $67 million plus. I would like to know first, what is the size of that loan that was taken? When was it taken? I am seeing every year there is a figure for the Ministry of Sport in their estimates here of $67.8 million per year. I want to know when would that loan be paid off? In what year would that loan be paid off for that? And I want to be very, very, clear, Mr. Chairman, that this loan arrangement for the Brian Lara Cricket Stadium—[Interuption]

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Chairman, is this a question or a statement? Is this a speech?

Mr. Chairman: No, no, listen, every member has five minutes to speak.

Mr. Imbert: I did not know that. I am glad you told me.

Mr. Chairman: He has not exceeded his five minutes as yet. When he does that I will stop him. He can ask questions, he can make a statement. That is his right.

Hon. Member: “Ohh goood.”

Mr. Chairman: Yes, yes, you can make a statement too.
Mr. Imbert: Thank you for clarifying.

Mr. Chairman: Yes, Member.

Dr. Moonilal: Mr. Chairman, this frequent interruption is making me lost my train of thought.

Mr. Chairman: Continue with the question, please.

Dr. Moonilal: I want to ask now—[Crosstalk]

Mr. Chairman: Please, please, please.

Dr. Moonilal: Let me get to the crux of the matter. I would like the Minister to confirm whether this is the Brian Lara Stadium in Tarouba. I would like him to tell us how much money in loans were taken for this? Because I was under the impression that funding came directly from the Consolidated Fund, they were taking the money directly from the Treasury for the Brian Lara. Now, I am seeing a massive loan here of $67 million to pay every year. I want to know how much money—[Crosstalk]

Mr. Chairman: All right, Minister.

Dr. Moonilal: I am demanding from the Minister, when would the people of Trinidad and Tobago be paying off for a cricket stadium that is incomplete? [Crosstalk] And whether or not my 10-week-old child has to pay a loan for the Brian Lara Stadium.

Mr. Chairman: The hon. Minister of Sport, please.

Hon. Dr. Griffith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The loan was made in 2009. The principal sum was $497,342,684 and—[Crosstalk]

Mr. Imbert: How convenient he remembers that.

Mr. Chairman: Member, Member for Diego Martin—Member for Port of Spain South, listen, listen, I am going to invoke the Standing Orders and ask Members to remove themselves from the Standing Finance Committee if we do not exercise discipline. Allow Members to speak in silence. I gave everybody protection. You may not like what is being asked, but each Member has a right to ask a question. You may not like the question. When you ask questions on the Opposition Benches, the Government does not like it. When the Government asks, the Opposition does not like it. This is what democracy is about. But I have to protect everyone. Everyone is entitled to ask their questions and I have to protect them, and the Minister is replying. Give the Minister a chance to reply.
The hon. Minister, could you reply.

**Hon. Dr. Griffith:** Thank you so much, Mr. Chairman. I do not think Members heard because of the noise so let me quickly repeat, Mr. Chairman. The loan was made in 2009. The principal, well, the loan amount was $497,342,684 and it will be liquidated on September 30, 2019.

**Dr. Moonilal:** 2019?

**Hon. Dr. Griffith:** 2019.

**Mr. Chairman:** I recognize the Member for Diego Martin West.

**Dr. Rowley:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I trust that you will allow me to ask my question without being disturbed on either side.

**Mr. Chairman:** Yes, I agree.

*2.45 p.m.*

**Dr. Rowley:** Mr. Chairman, I heard the Minister who just asked that question. Well, obviously he had no information, but he was not uninformed enough to prevent him from saying that it will cost $200 million to finish this stadium on which we have already expended, among other moneys, the proceeds of this loan of $497 million. So a loan was taken, expended on the stadium; the Minister has said publicly it will cost $200 million to finish the stadium. Could the Minister of Sport tell us what are the outstanding works to be done and what will that $200 million cover, and whether, in fact, any professional, technical assessment has been made with respect to bringing that stadium into utilization, and what is the exact figure, and what date that partially completed facility will be brought into use?

**Mr. Chairman:** The hon. Minister of Sport.

**Hon. Dr. Griffith:** Thank you, Chairman. I would not deal with the speculative part of the question, but I will inform—

**Dr. Rowley:** Mr. Chairman, I made no speculation here.

**Hon. Dr. Griffith:** I will inform the Member—

**Dr. Rowley:** I put specific questions to the Minister.

**Hon. Dr. Griffith:** I will inform the Member that it is a UDeCOTT project—

**Dr. Rowley:** I did not ask you that.
Hon. Dr. Griffith:—and it can best be answered by the Minister responsible for UDeCOTT.

Dr. Rowley: I am asking—

Mr. Chairman: Yeah, but he is answering.

Dr. Rowley: But he is ascribing to me what I have not put to you, Mr. Chairman, so on that basis I crave your indulgence to place back what I put to you. It has been said by a spokesperson for the Government, especially the one who has just spoken, about the loan which was taken in 2009 for $497 million, and we know that there is a partially completed facility there. Interestingly enough, the person who spoke about its completion is the Minister who just asked the question about the loan, and he said it will cost $200 million to finish it. I am simply asking, without speculation, whether a technical, professional assessment was made on that facility to determine what has to be done so that moneys can be expended to get those works done so the facility can be completed and be put to use. And we want a list of what has to be done which comprises $200 million outstanding expenditure. That is all. There is no speculation there.

Mr. Chairman: Can I call on the Member for Oropouche East to respond?

Dr. Moonilal: Thank you very much Minister of Sport, who indicated that this matter is the responsibility, of course, of UDeCOTT. I want to assure the Member for Diego Martin West that over the past three years or so, it is not the case that nothing has been done. When we came in and saw the condition of the Brian Lara facility, and the state that was in, in terms of the deficiencies at almost every level: design, construction, infrastructure and so on, we adopted the same course of action we adopted in terms of the Las Alturas project, for example, in that we got professional people—professional and internationally reputable companies and agencies to do an assessment of that Brian Lara facility, and what it would take to complete it.

It is the same principle like the Las Alturas, and it takes time. When you are dealing with international companies and so on, first to procure those companies is a process. They will take time to conduct their reports. The relevant Minister, myself, took a note to Cabinet with the technical report of an international agency, with local consultants and so on, and at that time—which I believe was almost a year ago—it was $189 million. We expect that with miscellaneous and so on, it will climb to $200 million.
It includes, for example, roofing work; it includes protective covers. For example, at that stadium, as you know, I think it would seat around 7,000 persons, but not one single person is protected from the rain or the sun. It involves massive infrastructural work. That stadium was built in the cane field, and in the cane field, it required extensive infrastructure work.

The same thing happened, Mr. Chairman, when they were building houses in Retrench and Wellington. They did not do the infrastructure work.

**Mr. Imbert:** Mr. Chairman, is the five-minute period—

**Mr. Chairman:** No, no, he is responding. He has five minutes to respond, yes.

**Dr. Moonilal:** So at the Brian Lara stadium it requires extensive infrastructure work and drainage work. It requires roofing work; it requires seating work; it requires a redesign for VIP areas and hospitality areas, even media centre. But there is a report, and I am quite prepared to share that report with the Member for Diego Martin West because it is done by professional people, as I am prepared to give you the Las Alturas report.

**Dr. Rowley:** “I doh want dat.”

**Dr. Moonilal:** “You doh want dat one? Yeah, you doh want dat one, for obvious reasons.”

**Mr. Chairman:** All right. I go to Chaguanas West. [Crosstalk]

**Dr. Moonilal:** “He eh want dah one.”

**Mr. Chairman:** All right. The Member for Diego Martin West. [Crosstalk] The Member for Diego Martin West. [Crosstalk] No problem. Let us go. The Member for Diego Martin West, yes.

**Dr. Rowley:** They are disturbing my trend of thought! In dealing with this problem of the Brian Lara stadium and all that the Minister has said about how much time it took to get to this point from Tarouba to Las Alturas, has the Minister paid any attention to the liability of contractors who may be liable for the litany of shortcomings that the Minister has outlined, and whether they have kept their eyes on the matter being statute-barred? In other words, are they prepared to recover from contractors who are liable in that construction?
Mr. Chairman: The hon. Minister of—Oropouche East.

Dr. Moonilal: Mr. Chairman, I can assure you that our technical people at UDeCOTT have worked side by side with our legal people, in terms of contract administration—[Crosstalk]

Mr. Chairman: I recognize you, but not now.

Dr. Moonilal:—and liability. We also have the issue of arbitration and possibilities that we may have to arbitrate over some of those matters. At the Las Alturas, we have also done the same thing—

Miss Cox: “We eh talkin bout Las Alturas here, yuh know.”

Dr. Moonilal: But he raised the issue of Las Alturas. The Member raised it. At that site, there is a question on the four-year limit—[Crosstalk]

Mr. Chairman: No, no, the Member raised the question and he is responding to—[Crosstalk]

Dr. Rowley: And I am listening to the answer, Mr. Chairman!

Mr. Chairman: And the Member for Diego Martin North/East is interrupting us, “becor” he is saying that he is being irrelevant, and I am saying, you asked the question and he is responding to you.

Dr. Rowley: Mr. Chairman—

Dr. Moonilal: Let me make the answer brief.

Dr. Rowley: Would you need any assistance on any side?

Dr. Moonilal: What you said?

Dr. Rowley: I am asking the Chairman if he needs any assistance to deal with persons on either side.

Mr. Chairman: No. I think I am quite able and competent.

Dr. Rowley: So I have asked a very serious question on a very serious project, on a very serious problem.

Mr. Chairman: And he is responding to you.

Dr. Rowley: The Minister is giving me the answer, and the answer is very pertinent, so I would like the Minister to complete the answer because I am asking: Have you been keeping your eyes on the statute-barred situation? And, Minister, I would like to get that cleared up.
Dr. Moonilal: And I assure you that in both the Las Alturas and in the Brian Lara, we are keeping our eyes on the legal clock, so to speak. I think that is what you are focused on. It is a bit more complicated in the context of the Brian Lara, a stadium, because of the defects that have been picked up there, working along with the contractors in a project that is not complete—because it is incomplete. The Las Alturas, as you know, is a project, whether it “stand up or fall dong” it was complete. So we are working on that.

Now, I will not go further because some of these matters, of course, are very serious legal issues dealing with contract administration during, and post completion. But I can tell you that we have been keeping our eyes on the issues of liability—the legal clock—and working with the contractors in that Brian Lara case, to see how best we can come to a solution. But we could not come to a solution without a technical, independent evaluation of what is there because we simply cannot take, you know, a report from a contractor who himself, or herself, is involved there. And we had to do that work. It took some time, but it is highly complicated, as you could imagine, and I must indicate to you, there is a cost of that work and I will present you with the—I will share the report, so to speak.

Mr. Chairman: The Member for Chaguanas West.

Mr. Warner: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. 04, under 011. Can you name those nine regional recreation facilities?

Mr. Chairman: Under 04, the nine regional recreation grounds. You could name them now or you want to provide that in writing?

Mr. Warner: He just give out the money they owe by Brian Lara stadium.

Hon. Dr. Griffith: What he wants? The list of the nine—

Mr. Warner: The nine regional recreation facilities. Where are they? I know you have a very good memory because you gave some figures just now. So I am asking you if you could give me those nine regional facilities.

Hon. Dr. Griffith: You are so kind to let me know about my memory. Thank you, Member.

Mr. Warner: Yes, in kind.

Hon. Dr. Griffith: I will provide that information to you.

Mr. Chairman: All right. I recognize the Member for Caroni East—

Dr. Rowley: Mr. Chairman—[Crosstalk]
Mr. Chairman: Yes, hold on, hold on. I recognize the Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Mr. Chairman, on the line item which preceded the Member for Chaguanas West, I would like to ask the Minister of Sport whether there were any other payments, aside from the loan payments, made on the Brian Lara Stadium—if you are aware. That is under the same line item, payments to the Brian Lara Stadium. Are you aware whether there are any other payments beside the loan payments on the Brian Lara Stadium?

Mr. Chairman: Are you aware, Minister?

Hon. Dr. Griffith: No, I am not aware, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: All right, you are not aware and so on. I recognize the Members for Diego Martin West, Fyzabad and then Laventille East/Morvant. After that I am moving on, please.

Dr. Rowley: With respect to 04, Mr. Chairman, these nine recreation grounds, I want a specific detailed listing of all the works done on the Northern Recreation Ground, Diego Martin, with respect to this purported expenditure of the nine regional grounds. In the event that Diego Martin recreation ground is one of those nine, I would like a detailed report as to what was expended during that period of 2013/2014; how much money was paid and to whom and also what is proposed for 2015 on that project.

Mr. Chairman: Minister, you have that?

Hon. Dr. Griffith: We will provide that, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: I recognize the Member for Fyzabad, please.

Mr. Sharma: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Can the hon. Minister advise this committee on the said loan—[Crosstalk]

Mr. Chairman: Yes, Member? Member for Port of Spain South, I cannot hear. I am trying to hear the Member for Fyzabad.

Mr. Sharma: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Can the Minister advise this committee on the said loan, the total commissions paid on the same loan and to whom; the total interest over the period?

Mr. Chairman: Yes?

Mr. Sharma: Those three questions.
Mr. Chairman: Minister, you could provide that now, or you will provide it in writing?

Hon. Dr. Griffith: Mr. Chairman, I do not have it with me right now but it can be provided.

Mr. Chairman: The last person is the Member for Laventille East/Morvant, then we move on.

Miss Cox: Mr. Chairman, 03, I have two—one for 03 and one 04.

Mr. Chairman: Right.

Miss Cox: 03, what is the total loan for LifeSport, and when do you intend to finish the repayment of this loan?

Mr. Chairman: Yes, the hon. Minister?

Hon. Dr. Griffith: Mr. Chairman, I am advised that that loan was paid off. It was a total of $77 million. It was paid off.

Mr. Chairman: All right. We are going on to Head—

Miss Cox: Mr. Chairman, I said I have another one.

Miss Mc Donald: Mr. Chairman, I have a question.

Mr. Chairman: No, but I just said the last one. I will come back to you and we will wrap up. Yes, Member for Laventille East/Morvant?

Miss Cox: 04, concerning the nine regional recreation facilities, I want to know how these facilities were chosen and what is the policy of the Ministry re the development of recreation facilities.

Hon. Dr. Griffith: Okay. When we provide the listing of the nine, we will also state that for you.

Miss Cox: Yes.

Mr. Chairman: All right, the hon. Member for Port of Spain South.

Miss Mc Donald: Yes, Mr. Chairman, a question to the hon. Minister.

Mr. Chairman: Yes.

Miss Mc Donald: Minister, you said that the total of the loan was some $70-something million paid off for the LifeSport, but just about two or three weeks ago in the newspapers, in the public domain, the Minister of Finance and the Economy said that $150 million of loans taken by LifeSport, he had to pay it
off. So how do you reconcile your $70-something million and—“look it right here, Minister, 114”. And why you saying $70-something million?

Mr. Chairman: All right. Okay. Okay. Yes, hon. Minister.

Hon. Dr. Griffith: For the LifeSport, there were two loans. Amounts were taken to cover LifeSport programme—two loans: one, $77,233,000.05; the second was $76,899,010.

Mr. Chairman: All right, two loans. Okay.

Hon. Dr. Griffith: These were taken from FCB and repaid by the Ministry of Sport for year 2014.

Mr. Chairman: All right. Head 09, Development Programme: Item 04, Social Infrastructure; Item 02, Multisectoral—[Crosstalk] “Which one you going on to now?”

Miss Cox: “I just want to open the book.”

Mr. Chairman: You want to open the book? Your book needs to be constantly open because I am not waiting on “nobody to open book”.

Hon. Dr. Griffith: Development Programme—

Mr. Chairman: I recognize the Member for Diego Martin North/East. Development Programme, Item 04; Social Infrastructure.

Mr. Imbert: My question is on IDF.

Mr. Chairman: No, “we coming to IDF”.

Mr. Imbert: I just want to make sure, you know.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, I recognize that. [Laughter]

Mr. Imbert: “Before yuh rush.”

Mr. Chairman: Yes, the Members for Port of Spain South and then Laventille East/Morvant. Member for Port of Spain South, of course, I am recognizing you.

Miss Mc Donald: Under Sport, 117, Improvement to Indoor Sporting Arenas, that $9 million—

Mr. Chairman: What page? Could you guide us?

Miss Mc Donald: I am on 186, Sub-Item 117.
Mr. Chairman: Right.

3.00 p.m.

Miss Mc Donald: I am looking at that $9 million there, estimate for 2015. I want a list, because I want to know whether St. Paul Street Multipurpose Indoor Complex is inside of there. So I want a list of that $9 million and how it is going to be allocated and the name of all the indoor sporting complex.

Hon. Dr. Griffith: Right, again, Mr. Chairman, I am handed by my accounting officer here what we have for St. Paul Street. If you are interested, I could read it for you, but it is here.

Miss Mc Donald: “Leh meh hear how much we getting.”

Hon. Dr. Griffith: All right, you are getting $1.3 million. Do you want the items?

Mr. Chairman: All right, so you are happy with that. Let us move on to Laventille East/Morvant.

Miss Cox: No, that was my question.

Mr. Chairman: All right, well, you are happy now. Okay we go on now to Item 005: Multi-sectoral and Other Services and we now go to the Infrastructure Development Fund. I recognize the Members for Diego Martin North/East, Laventille West, Laventille East/Morvant, Port of Spain South. No, your hand was not first. It was the Member for Diego Martin North/East.

Mr. Imbert: “Long time.”

Mr. Chairman: I recognized him very early. The Member for Arouca/Maloney is after.

Hon. Dr. Griffith: What Head are we on, Mr. Chairman?

Mr. Chairman: We are on Infrastructure Development Fund.

Mr. Imbert: Page 296.

Mr. Chairman: Page 296.

Mr. Imbert: Head 004, Sub-Item 094. The Minister has the Item 094: Construction of Swimming Pools? Page 296.

Hon. Dr. Griffith: Go ahead.

Mr. Imbert: Head 004 - 094: Construction of Swimming Pools. “Yuh have it?”
Appropriation Bill, 2014  Thursday, September 25, 2014

**Hon. Dr. Griffith:** “Yeah ah have it.”

**Mr. Imbert:** How many swimming pools were constructed in Diego Martin in 2014? That is question No. 1. Question No. 2, 115: Development of Regional and Sub-Regional Grounds. How much money was spent on the Diego Martin Recreation Ground, the only large recreation ground in the entire municipality of Diego Martin? How much of this money was spent on the Northern Recreation Ground, which has remained in a state of abandonment since this Government came into office? I am using my five minutes, Mr. Chairman.

Sub-Item 133: Construction of a National Cycle Track. Which constituency is that in? Sub-Item 137, of this $40 million spent on upgrading recreational grounds, how much money was spent in the region of Diego Martin, specifically the constituency of Diego Martin North/East? Mr. Chairman, we have had no expenditure from this Ministry in our area in Diego Martin. I want the Minister to say how much was spent and why he is victimizing Diego Martin.

**Mr. Chairman:** But are you answering the question? You have the answer?

**Mr. Imbert:** No, no, I want him to answer.

**Mr. Chairman:** You have the answer. You said no. *[Laughter]*

**Mr. Imbert:** No, Mr. Chairman. For clarity, I want him to answer the question.

**Mr. Chairman:** I recognize the hon. Minister of Sport. *[Crosstalk]* I have your name down. Do not believe that I am not seeing you in the corner of my eyes, eh. I am seeing you.

**Dr. Griffith:** Mr. Chairman, the hon. Member asked the question and he answered his question but I have—*[Interruption]*

**Mr. Imbert:** No, no, no.

**Mr. Chairman:** All right. No.

**Mr. Imbert:** He has to answer it.

**Dr. Griffith:** I am answering.

**Mr. Chairman:** Yes, you are answering.

**Mr. Imbert:** Do not say I answered it.

**Mr. Chairman:** Continue, please.
Hon. Dr. Griffith: I have the detailed document here. What I can do, Mr. Chairman, for the three items the hon. Member raised—[Interuption]

Mr. Imbert: “You cyah answer?”

Hon. Dr. Griffith: 094, 015 and the other one was 137.

Mr. Imbert: 133.

Hon. Dr. Griffith: 133 and 137.

Mr. Imbert: And 137.

Hon. Dr. Griffith: I shall give you that information.

Mr. Imbert: “So yuh cyah give it to me? But yuh know how much the Brian Lara Stadium cost down to the last dollar, but yuh cyah give meh dis?”

Hon. Dr. Griffith: I could give you what I have now. This one is—[Interuption]

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Chairman, this is a travesty.

Hon. Dr. Griffith: All right, the Member, among the questions he asked, northern recreation is one of them. Is that so?

Mr. Imbert: Yes.

Mr. Chairman: Yes.

Hon. Dr. Griffith: All right, it is included.

Mr. Imbert: No, how much was spent in 2014?

Hon. Dr. Griffith: Well, I told you I would give you the information.

Mr. Imbert: But you said it was included.

Mr. Chairman: I recognize the Member for Laventille West.

Mr. Imbert: Not a cent, a red cent.

Mr. Chairman: He will provide it in writing to you. Member for Laventille West.

Mr. Hypolite: Mr. Chairman, with respect to Item 141: Upgrading of Corporation Grounds, can the Minister give a detailed list of the various recreation grounds?

Also, with respect to 094, I would also like to know how many swimming pools would have been built or constructed in the Laventille West constituency.
Likewise, under 137, I would like to know how many recreation grounds in the Laventille West constituency, the names of those recreation grounds and how much was spent on those recreation grounds?

**Mr. Chairman:** Yes, would all Members like to have the same answers for all the—[ Interruption]

**Dr. Moonilal:** Yes, yes.

**Miss Mc Donald:** No, I have another.

**Miss Cox:** I have a—[ Interruption]

**Mr. Chairman:** No, no, I am saying rather than going through all, if all Members, the Member will take note of all the Members and they have requested you, you, you, the areas that they have identified. I recognize the Member for Port of Spain South.

**Miss Cox:** Mr. Chairman, you forgot me.

**Mr. Chairman:** No, I thought you were asking the same question.

**Miss Cox:** No.

**Mr. Chairman:** All right, the Member for Laventille East/Morvant, then the Member for Port of Spain South and then my colleague from Chaguanas West.

**Miss Cox:** I have a question, Mr. Chair, one is there is a new $3 million for the Development of a Master Plan for Sport and Youth Facilities.

**Hon. Dr. Griffith:** What is the Item?

**Miss Cox:** Item 100. What is this about, please?

**Mr. Chairman:** Item 100?

**Hon. Dr. Griffith:** Sport and Youth Facilities. I will get that information and I will submit it to you.

**Miss Cox:** Okay.

**Mr. Chairman:** All right, hon. Member for Port of Spain South.

**Miss Cox:** Mr. Chairman, I have another question.

**Mr. Chairman:** Sorry, sorry.

**Miss Cox:** My concerns are—[ Interruption]

**Dr. Moonilal:** “Yuh open yuh book now eh?”
Miss Cox: Question 146, “long time”. I was just trying to find the page. I see under the revised estimate for 2014 and 2015 the National Excellence in Sport in Trinidad and Tobago. Does this mean that the Ministry will not be hosting this function anymore?

Hon. Dr. Griffith: You mean, the fact that there is no expenditure? Yes, more than likely. It is aborted, so more than likely it will not be held.

Miss Cox: So, what I wanted to know, as we are talking about awards here, concerning the gentleman who was supposed to get the National Award, was any apology forwarded to him?

Hon. Dr. Griffith: Which gentleman is that?

Miss Cox: Mr. Hypolite in sport.

Mr. Chairman: All right. He could always respond to that. I recognize the Member for Port of Spain South.

Miss McDonald: Mr. Chairman, I want to go back to 049. Now, just to develop on the point from the Member for Diego Martin North/East, I would like to see a listing of the venues or where all the pools would be built.

But more so, in 2010 there was a comprehensive plan, which was submitted to the Ministry of Sport, with respect to the construction of a swimming pool in the east Port of Spain area, on Basilon Street and that contract was awarded and then it was pulled back when we demitted office in 2010. So I want to know if there is any plan whatsoever to construct that swimming pool, which would be the first, in east Port of Spain?

Second, second. One more question. With respect to the Development and Upgrading of Recreational Grounds, Parks and Spaces, 137, for the past four years I have been speaking and asking and begging the Minister of Sport—

[Interruption]

Hon. Dr. Griffith: The former Minister of Sport.

Miss McDonald:—the former Minister of Sport, my apologies, for refurbishment of the St. Paul Street grounds. That is the facility to the back of the multipurpose complex, nothing has been done and for four years I begged, I cajoled, I pleaded and nothing has happened. I want to know whether this $40 million allocated for 2015, whether the St. Paul Street grounds could be included in that figure.
Hon. Dr. Griffith: I will look into that. The hon. Member is talking about 2010, since 2010. So I will have to look into that and I will so advise her. Fair enough?

Miss McDonald: Fair enough.

Miss Hospedales: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to find out from the Minister if any efforts would be made to retrieve moneys that were issued to contractors under the LifeSport Programme for the upgrade of recreational grounds that were never upgraded. I am asking this within a particular context. I remember, in the Auditor General’s Report for 2013, it indicated that a contract was awarded for the upgrade of the Clayton Ince Recreational Ground to a contractor, and to date that ground has not been upgraded. So, I would like to find out from the Minister if any attempt whatsoever would be made to retrieve the money for those recreational grounds that were not done.

Hon. Dr. Griffith: Mr. Chairman, my earlier submission with respect to the LifeSport, because of the intensive investigation that is going on now, applies here too as well.

Mr. Warner: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Minister, I see under 135—I have three questions, eh—we have—[Interruption]

Hon. Dr. Griffith: What page?

Mr. Warner: Page 296. You have Construction of Multi-purpose Sport and Indoor Facilities and you have Charlieville. I mean, that is news to me, but Charlieville is in my constituency. Where is this actually and how much of that money is for Charlieville?

Hon. Dr. Griffith: You want to find out about Charlieville?

Mr. Chairman: Yes, hon. Minister.

Mr. Warner: You have $3 million.

Hon. Dr. Griffith: Mr. Chairman, I am advised that was a proposal and that has been abandoned.

Mr. Chairman: Port of Spain North/St. Ann’s West.

Mr. Warner: I have two more questions, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: Two more questions from the Member for Chaguanas West.
Mr. Warner: What was the answer?

Mr. Chairman: He said that has been abandoned. So go on to your next two questions, please.

Mr. Warner: Mr. Minister, under 141, can you give this committee the assurance that those corporation grounds are not the same grounds that NGC is upgrading and also the corporation themselves.

Dr. Rowley: And LifeSport.

Mr. Warner: And LifeSport, so there is no duplication or triplication.

Hon. Dr. Griffith: The same applies to the LifeSport.

Mr. Warner: What did he say?

Mr. Chairman: Next question. Last question, hon. Member for Chaguanas West.

Mr. Warner: Mr. Chairman, 145.

Mr. Chairman: Minister, could you listen to the Member for Chaguanas West, he is on 145, please?

Mr. Warner: Where are those multi-purpose stadiums?

Dr. Moonilal: The same applies to the LifeSport.

Mr. Chairman: The multi-purpose stadiums, where are they? The hon. Member for Chaguanas West would like to know.

Mr. Warner: Just tell me how many.

Hon. Dr. Griffith: Mr. Chairman, where are the multi-purpose stadiums? I have a few of them here. Let me quickly list them out for you:

- Hasley Crawford, the boxing gym there is 100 per cent completed.
- The Elite Athlete physiotherapy facility, 100 per cent completed. That is in Port of Spain if the Member did not know.
- Jean Pierre Complex paving works completed. That is Port of Spain too.
- Dwight Yorke Stadium, installation of track surface, 100 per cent completed.
- Manny Ramjohn Stadium, installation of track surface, 100 per cent completed and all three fields, 100 per cent completed.
- Larry Gomes Stadium, the Member knows, it is in Arima, Larry Gomes. Stadium field refurbishment, 100 per cent completed. All stadia,
consultants have completed the preliminary designs, work and budget on all five stadia.

**Mr. Chairman:** I recognize the Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann’s West.

**Mrs. Mc Intosh:** Mr. Chairman, although you said the hon. Minister will take all the concerns in, so to speak, a blanket concern about grounds, I think it is necessary for each Member to identify the grounds that they are concerned about, or else he would not know which grounds we are talking about.

Having said that, Mr. Chairman, with respect to Sub-Item 137, I would like to ask the hon. Member what moneys have been allocated for the development and upgrading of the President’s Grounds in St. Ann’s, something that I have written about copiously and asked about since 2010, as the hon. Member for Port of Spain South said about her grounds. I am concerned about President’s Ground.

**Hon. Dr. Griffith:** Mr. Chairman, I agree with you to do it expeditiously. What I will do, all the grounds that we now have in plan or proposals for working on, we will do a comprehensive listing and submit it.

**Mr. Chairman:** I recognize the Members for La Brea and then Diego Martin Central.

**Mr. Jeffrey:** Mr. Chairman, 115. I have three questions: 115, 137 and 141.

**Dr. Moonilal:** All that deals with LifeSport, we cannot answer that.

**Mr. Jeffrey:** In 115, I want to refer to a question I had asked, Question for Oral Answers. The former Minister of Sport told this House of plans to develop the La Brea Community Recreation Ground in 2014. I would like to know if of that $6 million that is projected for 2014, whether or not the La Brea Community Recreation Ground is in that figure. That is my first question.

The second question with the Development and Upgrading of Recreation Grounds, Parks and Spaces—*[Interruption]*

**Hon. Dr. Griffith:** That is 137?

**Mr. Jeffrey:**—I would like to know—137—how much of that $40 million is allocated for recreation grounds in the La Brea constituency, because so far, not one recreation ground in the La Brea constituency has been attended to by this Ministry for the past four years.
The third question, Mr. Speaker, is 141. I would like to get a detailed breakdown of all the corporation grounds that this Ministry says are under their purview.

Hon. Dr. Griffith: The answers have been given already, Mr. Speaker. I said earlier when someone asked, I cannot recall who it was, about the upgrading of the corporation grounds, that we will provide a list of all of these grounds. If the Member wants something additional—[Interruption]

Dr. Moonilal: He would get it. “Doh worry.”

Mr. Jeffrey: He has two answers for me. It has to do with that La Brea Community Recreation Ground.

Mr. Chairman: The La Brea Community Recreation Ground?

Hon. Dr. Griffith: And also when we provide that comprehensive list, because all the Members are more or less asking the same question.

Mr. Jeffrey: No, no, no, no.

Hon. Dr. Griffith: That would also be—[Interruption]

Mr. Chairman: The La Brea Community Centre. He wants to know if you could give him an answer on that.

Hon. Dr. Griffith: The La Brea Community Centre?

Mr. Jeffrey: No, no, La Brea Community Recreation Ground.

Mr. Chairman: Recreation ground.

Hon. Dr. Griffith: Okay, and the question was whether part of that $40 million would be spent on it?

Mr. Jeffrey: No, no, the $6 million.

Hon. Dr. Griffith: The $6 million?

Mr. Chairman: Do you know?

Hon. Dr. Griffith: No, I do not know. I would have to look—[Interruption]

Mr. Chairman: 2014 is gone eh.

Dr. Griffith:—and provide that information.

Mr. Jeffrey: But Mr. Chairman, nothing has happened, eh.
Mr. Chairman: Well then you would communicate. Let us go to the Member for Diego Martin Central, please.

Dr. Browne: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I just want clarity on behalf of the committee, on the list that would be provided by the Ministry of Sport. Certainly, my interest would be with respect to 094: Swimming pools in the various constituencies, 137: Upgrading of Recreational Grounds, et cetera, and 141: Upgrading of Corporation Grounds. So I just want clarity from the Minister on it.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, do you have any clarity?

Dr. Browne: That would be those three lines that we would be getting comprehensive listing on?

Hon. Dr. Griffith: Sure. With respect to 094, that is the National Swimming Pool.

Dr. Browne: Well, I am seeing plural here. That is just one pool?

Hon. Dr. Griffith: The Aquatic Centre Pool.

Dr. Browne: Well that leaves me—thank you for that clarification. [Crosstalk and interruption] Mr. Chairman, I am not through.

Miss Hospedales: We still have more questions.

Mr. Chairman: We?

Dr. Browne: I am not through.

Miss Hospedales: And I am not through.

Mr. Chairman: Listen, we have to move.

Dr. Browne: Chairman, I am not through.

Mr. Chairman: I am now recognizing the Member for Diego Martin West. After him, the Member for Arouca/Maloney, two.

Dr. Browne: Chairman, I am not through with my questions.

Mr. Chairman: Oh, I apologize, Member for Diego Martin Central. Apparently you were not through, so I would go back to the Member for Diego Martin Central. I will then recognize the Member for Diego Martin West and after that we close off.

Dr. Browne: Apology accepted. Mr. Chairman, given the Minister’s clarification on 094, I would like a written report on the status of the controversial proposed swimming pool at Powder Magazine location. There are many questions in the Diego Martin area as to the status of that specific location.
And my final question—so that is a request for a written report—is with respect to 100: Development of a Master Plan for Sport and Youth Facilities. I would like the Minister to indicate the status completion of this particular plan and is there any interim report that can be shared?

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Minister of Sport, one is a written statement and the other one.

**Hon. Dr. Griffith:** The first question is an HDC project and the hon. Minister would be happy to provide you with that information and answer your question.

**Mr. Chairman:** And the second one.

**Hon. Dr. Griffith:** The second one was what again, Mr. Chairman? Sorry.

**Mr. Chairman:** Item 100, the Master Plan status.

**Hon. Dr. Griffith:** What is the status of it? Right now that plan is with the consultant. Substantial work has been done but it is not yet final.

**Mr. Chairman:** Finally the hon. Member for—[Interrupt]

**Dr. Browne:** Mr. Chairman, I just want to get a commitment from the Minister of Housing whether that status report would be provided.

**Mr. Chairman:** Member for Arouca/Maloney, you have spoken already. Finally is the Member for Diego Martin West. Hon. Member for Diego Martin West, unless you want to give way to the Member for Arouca/Maloney.

**Dr. Rowley:** Mr. Chairman, I give way.

**Mr. Chairman:** You are on the floor now. The hon. Member has given way to you.

**Dr. Browne:** Mr. Chairman, the Minister just indicated he is not able to answer the question on the Powder Magazine but he would refer it to another Minister. I just want to get a response whether that Minister would provide that report.

**Mr. Chairman:** So when we come to housing you would just take a note so you would ask housing. Member for Arouca/Maloney, please.

**Miss Hospedales:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and I give thanks to the Opposition Leader for giving way to me. Mr. Chair, under the corporation grounds, I am interested in finding out who the contractors were and how much was actually
paid for the work done on those grounds, the commencement date and the end
date as well?

Hon. Dr. Griffith: Okay the list would be provided to the hon. Member.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 68 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, thank you very much and your officers.

We now call on the Ministry of the People and Social Development.

Hon. Dr. Griffith: Mr. Chairman, I just want to thank all of the officers in the
Ministry of Sport who came here today and assisted me. Thank you very much.

Mr. Chairman: All right, thank you very much. We now call on the Ministry
of the People and Social Development and the accounting officers. Thank you
very much. Are you ready, hon. Minister?

Head 56.

Ministry of the People and Social Development, $4,139,334,641. I will now
invite the hon. Minister of State in the Ministry of the People and Social
Development to make a brief opening statement for no more than five minutes.
Hon. Minister.

Hon. Alleyne-Toppin: I thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I applaud our line Minister, Prime Minister and Member of Parliament for
Siparia, for her direction and control of the Ministry of the People and Social
Development. And allow me to introduce our hard-working staff here, beginning
with our PS, Mr. Simeon Yearwood; DPS, Angela Edwards; DPS, Ethlyn John;
CTO, Dennis Williams; Director Social Welfare, Vijay Gangapersad; Director
People’s Issues, Asauph Ghany; Project Manager and Project Implementation
Unit, Farida Ali; Senior Human Resource Officer, Lesanne Seberan; Director
Human Resources, Melanie Noel; Design and Drafting Technician, Carlyle
Jeanville; Research Officer, Terry Herera; Co-ordinator NGO Unit, Ann Marie
Quamie-Alleyne, and I want to say congratulations. I want to also applaud the
hard work of all our members of staff in the Ministry of the People and Social
Development.

The Ministry of the People and Social Development is the core social sector
Ministry with responsibility for coordinating the implementation of Government’s
social and human development objectives.
In 2010, the People’s Partnership Government developed a framework which identified seven inter-connected pillars for sustainable development. The Ministry of the People and Social Development has identified four pillars which guide our work.

- **Pillar one: People-Centred Development.** MPSD, our key focus is human and social development, disability affairs, HIV/AIDS sensitization, aging initiatives, social displacement initiatives, citizens resolution.

- **Pillar two: Poverty Eradication and Social Justice.** MPSD’s key focus is social safety networks, sustainable development, microenterprise development, social assistance, public welfare and workforce (URP Social), research.

- **Pillar three: National and Personal Security through probation services.**

- **Pillar six: Good governance, people participation, outreaches, direct effect and direct impact, Main People Issues Resolution Coordinating Unit, Regional Human and Social Development Councils.**

Our various initiatives are further informed by the Government’s strategic approach to break the cycle of poverty, enable self-sufficiency and create opportunities for wealth generation as outlined in the Medium Term Policy Framework document. Within this framework, poverty reduction and human capital development have been identified as part of our five strategic priorities to be pursued over the period 2011—2014. This strategic priority serves as the impetus behind the activities of the MPSD.

In keeping with the aforementioned pillars, the Ministry is mandated with the responsibility of addressing the social challenges of poverty, social inequality and social exclusion. Particular emphasis is placed on developing and executing programmes and services that protect and assist vulnerable and marginalized groups in society such as persons with disabilities, the elderly, the poor and indigent, the socially displaced, ex-prisoners, deportees and persons living with HIV/AIDS.

Guided by the tenets ‘Helping, Empowering and Transforming Lives’, the Ministry seeks to empower its clientele through rehabilitative and skill enhancement initiatives, which promote human prosperity in the context of sustainable development. The MPSD is also responsible for developing, coordinating, monitoring and evaluating social sector policies and programmes to ensure sustainability, cultural relevance and economic viability.
Moreover, the major functions of the Ministry of the People and Social Development are to:

1. serve as a central coordinating body for the social sector;
2. deliver social services;
3. facilitate networking;
4. make recommendations for the effective functioning of the social sector;
5. facilitate decentralization;
6. develop systems, strategies and programmes;
7. identify gaps;
8. foster good governance;
9. monitor regional and international conventions; and
10. serve as a coordinating body to address people’s issues.

I thank you.

Question proposed: That Head 56 stand part of the Schedule.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, the sum of $4,139,334,641 for Head 56: the Ministry of the People and Social 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 and the Draft Estimates of Development Programme.

Sub-Head 01: Personnel Expenditure; Item 001: General Administration. I recognize the hon. Member for Diego Martin Central.

Dr. Browne: Mr. Chairman, the name of this Ministry was changed to People and Social Development and my first line of question is with regard to the people aspect under Salaries and Cost of Living Allowances. Is there a specific division, desk or unit related to people’s resolution in this Ministry? If so, what is the breakdown? I would like a breakdown of the staffing of such a division, unit or desk, with respect to establishment positions and with respect to contract positions specific to this People Unit.

Secondly, under 14: Remuneration of Cabinet-Appointed Committees, I would like a list of such committees under the Ministry at this time. I would like a specification of the membership of these committees, the date when they were appointed and the date of expiry of such committees.
Hon. Alleyne-Toppin: Mr. Chairman, that is a very complex question. I think we will have to supply that data in writing after.

3.30 p.m.

Mr. Chairman: All right. Let us go on to the next Item. We go to Item 004 Probation Services, we go to item 005—

Dr. Browne: Hold on.

Mr. Chairman: Are you on Probation Services?

Dr. Browne: Mr. Chairman, yes, I am seeing Division of Ageing before Probation Services—I think you skipped that—at the bottom of page 271.

Mr. Chairman: Yes, you are correct. Division of Ageing, my apologies.

Dr. Browne: That is okay. We are learning as we go along.

Mr. Chairman: I recognize the Member for Diego Martin Central.

Dr. Browne: Yes, Chairman. There is a saying—anyway. Under Division of Ageing, I would like a breakdown of the staff at the Division of Ageing at this time. I am not seeing any allocation here with respect to the Division of Ageing. I would like information with respect to the situational analysis on the accessibility of government buildings which this Division should be able to provide to the committee.

Hon. Alleyne-Toppin: Please repeat the question.

Dr. Browne: Well, it was not that complex. The breakdown of the staffing at the Division of Ageing at this time, establishment and contract positions and a report on the situational analysis of accessibility of government buildings, if it could be provided.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, could you provide those things?

Hon. Mrs. Alleyne-Toppin: We could provide those things.

Mr. Chairman: All right. We go to Item 004, Probation Services, Item 005 Social Welfare. I recognize the hon. Member for Diego Martin North/East.

Mr. Imbert: Item 005, Social Welfare, could the Minister tell us what is the total number on your establishment of social workers in this division; how many vacancies you have and what is being done to fill these vacancies?
Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, how many social workers do you have in this division?

Mr. Imbert: How many vacancies?

Mr. Chairman: How many vacancies there are?

Mr. Imbert: And what is being done to fill the vacancies?

Mr. Chairman: And what is being done to fill those vacancies?

Hon. Alleyne-Toppin: We have 75 workers on the establishment and 25 on contract.

Mr. Imbert: How many social workers? It is a specific type of person.

Hon. Alleyne-Toppin: Yes, I answered your question.

Mr. Imbert: How many social workers do you—

Hon. Alleyne-Toppin: We have 75 on the establishment.

Mr. Imbert: How many vacancies?

Hon. Alleyne-Toppin: Twenty-five on contract.

Mr. Chairman: So we have 75 live bodies on the establishment and you have 25 on contract, so you have 100 in all. How many vacancies do we have?

Hon. Alleyne-Toppin: Twenty vacancies.

Mr. Imbert: And what is being done to fill these vacancies?

Hon. Alleyne-Toppin: We are awaiting Service Commissions’ intervention again. We are ready to advertise but we are awaiting our instructions from Service Commissions.

Mr. Imbert: Okay. Could you not fill these vacancies through contract employment? You said you have 25 social workers on contract. Could you not fill them through contract employment?

Hon. Alleyne-Toppin: We are filling these vacancies of contract workers. We are filling those. We are working on that.

Mr. Imbert: No, the 20 vacancies that you have, could you not—since Service Commissions is taking its time, dragging its feet, whatever, could you not fill those vacancies with contract employment?
Hon. Alleyne-Toppin: Yes, but I do not want to throw that into Service Commissions. We are working on filling our contract workers and we are working with Service Commissions. We are waiting on that.

Mr. Imbert: All right, I see I will not get a proper answer but—

Mr. Chairman: No, no—hon. Minister—Vernella.

Hon. Alleyne-Toppin: Yes.

Mr. Chairman: Yeah, apparently “like ah ha to call Vernella” to get your attention. [Laughter] I think what the hon. Member is asking is whether those 25 vacancies, can you tamper with those things in terms of doing it on contract or do you have to wait on the Public Service Commission? I think that is the question that you are asking.

Mr. Imbert: Excellent.

Hon. Alleyne-Toppin: The vacancies exist—I have to talk to my people—the Service Commissions will fill them. We cannot fill them.

Mr. Chairman: Right, that is the point.

Mr. Imbert: While you are waiting on them, can you not create contract positions and recruit people? Where did those 25 contract people come from?

Hon. Alleyne-Toppin: Yes, we can create but we have not created any.

Mr. Imbert: Okay fine. Is the absence of this significant number of social workers, from what you are telling me, about 30 per cent of your establishment, about that, is vacant?

Hon. Alleyne-Toppin: Yes.

Mr. Imbert: The absence of these social workers, is it affecting your ability to deliver?

Hon. Alleyne-Toppin: Necessarily yes, it is, but this is why we are working so diligently.

Mr. Imbert: Well I urge you to see if you could fill them on contract.

Mr. Chairman: All right. We go to Sub-Head 02: Goods and Services, we go to Item 001 General Administration. I recognize the Members for Arouca/Maloney, Diego Martin North/East, Diego Martin Central and then Laventille West.
Miss Hospedales: Thank you, Mr. Chair, Sub-Item 16, Contract Employment, could the Minister indicate to us the number of staff on contract and if she can provide a breakdown by unit or department; the number of vacancies by unit or department as well?

Hon. Alleyne-Toppin: We will supply the details in writing.

Miss Hospedales: Okay.

Mr. Chairman: I recognize the Members for Diego Martin North/East, Diego Martin Central and Laventille West.

Dr. Browne: Mr. Chairman, I am seeing under Sub-Item 21, Repairs and Maintenance - Buildings has gone down by $450,000. But the Government very recently made an announcement of a move of this Ministry to a building on Alexandra Street. I would want confirmation from the Minister as to the prospective date of that move, and looking at line Items 21, 37, 43 and several others, would the Ministry now have to make variation to these requests or do these allocations take into account that proposed move which was just recently announced to the public?

Hon. Alleyne-Toppin: We expect to move on November 01 and just let me consult with my PS to give you that further information.

Mr. Chairman: You expect to move on November 01—

Hon. Alleyne-Toppin: We expect on November 01—

Dr. Browne: Well, that is the first part of the question.

Hon. Alleyne-Toppin: Yes—and we have, of course, the allocation would go down because we are being assisted in this by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development and we expect to spend much less than we have.

Dr. Browne: All right, let me just be clear on the question because I do not think you are clear on the answer. When these requests were made of the Ministry of Finance and the Economy, was the Ministry then aware of and planning for this specific move of headquarters or were these requests made in the absence of that knowledge?

Hon. Alleyne-Toppin: The requests were made after that.

Mr. Chairman: All right. I recognize the Member for Diego Martin North/East and then the Member for Laventille West.
Mr. Imbert: Mr. Chairman, did the Minister indicate that she would give a breakdown of Item 16, Contract Employment?

Mr. Chairman: Yes.

Mr. Imbert: Okay. Could the Minister explain why—well, firstly, explain what is Short-Term Employment which is Item 22? What is that? What are the terms and conditions associated with this Short-Term Employment and could the Minister explain why you are spending such a huge sum of money, $23 million, on short-term employment?

Hon. Alleyne-Toppin: To meet its social and human development objectives and to alleviate some of the social issues identified in our strategic plan, we have had to employ that number of persons on short-term employment in order to get our work done in the Ministry.

Mr. Imbert: What does short-term employment mean? Three months, six months, one month, what is it? Two days? What is it? What does short-term mean?

Dr. Moonilal: It means the same thing when you were in Government.

Mr. Imbert: I did not ask you. Mr. Chairman, could you control this meeting, please?

Mr. Chairman: Yes, I am controlling it. At the same time, I am controlling myself.

Mr. Imbert: I did not ask you. Minister Toppin.

Hon. Alleyne-Toppin: Short-term for revolving employment is in specific government departments for each employee’s term does not exceed six months.

Mr. Imbert: Six months, okay. What sort of duties do these people have? What are they doing?

Hon. Alleyne-Toppin: You could have that in writing. We have so many different ones.

Mr. Imbert: Okay, no problem.

Mr. Chairman: I recognize the hon. Member for Laventille West.

Mr. Hypolite: Chair, under Item 16, the Minister made mention of a pillar called URP social pillar, can the Minister indicate whether or not the employees under that URP social pillar comes under this Item 16, Contract Employment?

Mr. Hypolite: Yes, in your five minutes.

Hon. Alleyne-Toppin: No, I did not identify—URP Social is not a pillar. Pillars, I told you: pillar one, people-centred development; pillar two, poverty eradication and social justice; pillar three, national and personal security; pillar six, good governance, people participation.

Mr. Chairman: So I think that you have misread that so let us go to Item 003, Division of Ageing, then we go to Item 004, Probation Services. The Member for Diego Martin Central, you would like to raise—

Dr. Browne: Yes, Division of Ageing, two questions. The current location of the Division of Ageing; the landlord associated with this rent and lease; the date and the date of rent and lease of such accommodation. That is question number one. That is a specific request that the Ministry can provide.

On line Item 16, Contract Employment—[Crosstalk] Mr. Chairman, I am receiving unwanted compliments from the Member for Couva South. In the revised estimates of 2014, I am seeing no allocation for contract employment under the Division of Ageing. For 2015, I am seeing a request for $1.4 million. Can the Minister explain this?

Hon. Alleyne-Toppin: The Division of Ageing is at Ansa McAL Building—that is the first part of your question—on Independence Square. Let me get some clarification on that second part of the question.

Dr. Browne: Would you like me to repeat it?

Mr. Chairman: No, I could repeat that for you. He wants to know why there is no allocation under the particular for contract. [Crosstalk]

Hon. Alleyne-Toppin: No, I am not confused at all.

Mr. Chairman: No, no, she needs no help from you.

Hon. Alleyne-Toppin: I just need to know exactly what he wants to know so I could tell him.

Mr. Chairman: Otherwise, we are going to ask her to come across here.

Hon. Alleyne-Toppin: I am not just talking to him, I am talking to the whole nation and everybody is watching, so I will have to make sure that people are clear. You asked a question that has many parts to it, maybe I should be
answering it accordingly. I do not want to give you any information that is not correct.

**Dr. Browne:** You are free to answer.

**Mr. Chairman:** Yes, yes.

**Hon. Alleyne-Toppin:** Thank you for your patience. Item 16, Contract Employment—tell me the question again.

**Mr. Chairman:** No, no, no. [*Laughter]*

**Dr. Browne:** Okay, you want to hear it from me or the Chairman?

**Hon. Alleyne-Toppin:** Tell me the question again because you are reading it, I am listening.

**Dr. Browne:** Well, I am not reading it but I hear you. Let us try again.

**Mr. Chairman:** Member for Diego Martin Central, could you repeat?

**Dr. Browne:** Yes. Under Sub-Item 16—hon. Minister—Contract Employment within the Division of Ageing, I am looking at the revised estimates for 2014, and there was no figure entered whatsoever so there is a blank for 2014.

**Hon. Alleyne-Toppin:** So there was no need then for us to ask for any more money because we had enough.

**Dr. Browne:** Hold on—for 2015, there is an estimate of $1.4 million. I would like an explanation or what transpired within the Division of Ageing over the last year where there was no contract employment and now $1.4 million is being requested.

**Hon. Alleyne-Toppin:** We expect to hire inspectors and other board members who will be on board in 2015.

**Dr. Browne:** Do board members fall under contract employment, Minister?

**Hon. Alleyne-Toppin:** We have inspectors who will be on board in 2015.

**Mr. Chairman:** No, on board, not a board of directors.

**Dr. Browne:** [Inaudible]—distinctly on board members?

**Mr. Chairman:** Well, employed then. All right, let us go to Item 004, Probation Services, we go to—no, I think I recognize the hon. Member for Chaguanas West.
Mr. Warner: Thank you, Sir, I have two questions. First of all, Security Services, under 43, has increased by 20 per cent to $9.6 million—page 273, Item 43. It has been increased by 20 per cent to $9.6 million, what caused this phenomenal increase?

Mr. Chairman: No, we are now in the Division of Ageing, you know, we have bypassed General Administration.

Mr. Warner: I had my hand up all the time, Sir.

3.45 p.m.

Mr. Chairman: So you are back to General Administration?

Mr. Warner: No, Sir. I am on page 273.

Dr. Moonilal: He is in the Division of Ageing. [Laughter and crosstalk]

Mr. Chairman: No, what page are you on, Sir?

Mr. Warner: 273, Sir. [Crosstalk]

Mr. Chairman: Oh, you have gone back to General Administration.

Mr. Warner: Sir, forget it. It is all right, forget it.

Mr. Chairman: Do you not want to answer the question on Security Services? The hon. Member is asking if you could explain that situation, from $8.2 million to $9.6 million. What is accountable for that increase?

Hon. Member: What page is that?

Mr. Chairman: That is on page 273, the Item is on Security Services. Can you answer that? Or you want to provide the information in writing?

Hon. Alleyne-Toppin: We will provide the information in writing.

Mr. Warner: Right. Secondly, a former Minister told us that there are three URPs, one is social, one is—I cannot remember what the other one is, but one is URPs. What is URPs Social in the context of your Ministry?

Mr. Chairman: No, but where is that in terms of this item?

Mr. Warner: The whole Ministry, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: No, no, no, that is a general question. We have to deal with what is before us. We cannot deal with that overall. Let us go on to Item 004, Probation Services. I recognize the Member for Arouca/Maloney and the hon. Member for Diego Martin Central.
Miss Hospedales: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I am going to Sub-Item 08, Rent/Lease - Office Accommodation and Storage. Could the Minister indicate what has accounted for such a large allocation for rent/lease of office accommodation in 2015, as compared to 2014, when $588,430 was provided, but this year we have a $2 million-plus allocation.

Hon. Member: What page?

Mr. Chairman: Page 274. We are looking on page 274, Sub-Item 08.

Miss Hospedales: Did the Minister hear the question?

Mr. Chairman: Yes, yes, we have the question here. Minister, could you answer?

Hon. Alleyne-Toppin: We are moving to new head offices. We have to have more money.

Hon. Member: To do what?

Hon. Alleyne-Toppin: To outfit, to do the networking. We have to have more, that is—

Miss Hospedales: So, will Probation also be moving to One Alexandra Place?

Hon. Alleyne-Toppin: No.

Dr. Browne: Well, perfect segue. What divisions will be accommodated at No. 1 Alexandra Street? Could you provide a listing of the divisions that will be so accommodated? Secondly, with respect to line item 16, Contract Employment. Again, there was no provision in 2014, no drawdown from the figures in front of us for contract employment under probation, but there is a request. It seems for several of these divisions, there is going to be a surge of contract employment for the year 2015. With the ageing, you said it was to hire inspectors. What is the reason for this surge in the Probation Services Division?

Hon. Alleyne-Toppin: We are moving to One Alexandra Place, but I will provide that in writing for you, what divisions will move to One Alexandra Place. The surge for probation, you have Community Service Officers, who are paid by the Ministry of Justice for fiscal 2014. In 2015, they would be paid by the Ministry of the People and Social Development, and that includes NIS payments.

Dr. Browne: Well, you know, I want the Minister to verify and maybe repeat that answer, because I am seeing an estimate made under this Ministry for 2014. So if she is saying it was being paid from another Ministry, I do not understand
why this Ministry would have made the request. The fact is there was no revised estimate which suggests that there was no expenditure. So I am questioning the veracity of that response.

**Hon. Alleyne-Toppin:** Well, the probation office was moved to the Ministry of the People and Social Development from the Ministry of Justice. At that time, the Ministry of Justice was paying salaries, the MPSD will now have to pay those salaries.

**Dr. Browne:** It does not explain why the Ministry of the People and Social Development made a request of $1.4 million.

**Mr. Chairman:** All right, all right, the hon. Minister has explained to the best of her ability. We continue Item 05, Social Welfare; Item 008, Disability Affairs Unit. I recognize the Member for Laventille West and the Member for Arouca/Maloney.

**Mr. Hypolite:** Social Welfare, Item 22, which is on page 276, Short-Term Employment. Mr. Chairman, again, I am asking, with respect to the URP Social. I would like to know, Mr. Chairman, if those employees are hired under this sub-heading? How many employees are under that particular programme? And exactly what that programme does within the Ministry of the People and Social Development?

**Hon. Alleyne-Toppin:** URP Social, we do direct construct, we do Project Runway 100. Do I explain what direct construct is?

**Mr. Chairman:** No, no, Minister, please. I think all the hon. Member is asking is, whether these workers are short-term employment, whether URP Social, whether persons are employed on short-term contract, are they engaged under URP Social? I think that is the question I get him to be asking.

**Hon. Alleyne-Toppin:** Is that, he also asked—

**Mr. Hypolite:** In addition, too, exactly what that department is all about? What do they do?

**Hon. Alleyne-Toppin:** Okay. That department is paid by the Ministry of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development. It is paid by the Ministry of Works and Infrastructure and—let me get my advice clear. Labour comes from the Ministry of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development, but the Ministry of the People and Social Development pays those workers.

**Mr. Hypolite:** Ministry of the—
**Hon. Alleyne-Toppin:** Ministry of the People and Social Development, our Ministry pays them.

**Mr. Hypolite:** Pays those workers?

**Hon. Alleyne-Toppin:** Yes.

**Mr. Hypolite:** Under what? Under this same line 22?

**Hon. Alleyne-Toppin:** Yes, under line 22.

**Mr. Chairman:** All right. Let us go to Item 008. We have the Member for La Brea and the Member for Arouca/Maloney.

**Mr. Jeffrey:** Fees, in 2013, $8 million; in 2014, $7 million. I am a bit curious, can you provide us with a breakdown of the fees that are being paid? What is that for? And could you tell us who the beneficiaries are?

**Mr. Chairman:** What are these fees about, the hon. Member is asking and if you could provide a breakdown? Do you want to tell us what these fees are about? Or you do not have the information now?

**Hon. Alleyne-Toppin:** We will provide that information in writing, Sir.

**Mr. Jeffrey:** We also need to know who are the attorneys who will benefit from this thing.

**Mr. Chairman:** Whether attorneys are involved, and if you could provide a listing of the attorneys, okay? I recognize the hon. Member for Arouca/Maloney.

**Miss Hospedales:** Mr. Chair, I am on item 008, Disability Affairs Unit; Sub-Item 66, Hosting of Conferences, Seminars and Other Functions. I would like to find out from the Minister whether or not $5,000 is adequate for the Disability Affairs Unit, particularly since they have a heavy mandate with reference to sensitizing the general public about the need to provide access to the disabled, in terms of accessing public buildings, private buildings, the importance of employing them, and as well as providing equal access across the board for these individuals. Five thousand dollars is woefully inadequate.

**Mr. Chairman:** Sub-Item 66, under Disability Affairs Unit.

**Hon. Alleyne-Toppin:** Mr. Chairman, this item caters for hosting of conferences and seminars in Trinidad and Tobago as agreed by Cabinet for visiting foreign heads and other dignitaries, programmes for excellent service, customer care and dependability and that—
Mr. Chairman: No, no, it is $5,000 she—

Hon. Alleyne-Toppin: I know. I know, I am—

Mr. Chairman: What the Member is asking is why $5,000?

Hon. Alleyne-Toppin: I know, I know, $5,000 is projected for expenses because we have agencies that support us in these.

Dr. Browne: Mr. Chairman, a short follow-up because I think the further question to my colleague would be then, with respect to conferences that are not for foreign guests or officials, but are targeting the local disabled population, where is the funding for those which would be the primary responsibility of the Disability Affairs Unit? We are not seeing such funding.

Hon. Alleyne-Toppin: I am advised that that comes under General Administration, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: All right, could we go on to Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases; Item 001, General Administration; Item 003, Division of Ageing; Item 004, Probation Services; Item 005, Social Welfare; Item 008, Disability Affairs Unit. We go to Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies. We go to Item 005, Non-Profit Institutions.

The hon. Members for Diego Martin North/East, Diego Martin Central, Arouca/Maloney and Port of Spain South. Did I miss you first? Were you first?

Miss Mc Donald: I do not know.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, well, you will come last. Continue, hon. Member.

Mr. Imbert: Could the Minister explain what has happened to the allocations for St. Vincent de Paul, Cheshire Foundation Home, Chest and Heart Association, Red Cross, Coterie of Social Workers, Legion of The Royal Commonwealth Ex-Services, Goodwill Industries, International Institute for Healthcare & Human Development, Family Planning, St. Vincent de Paul by two. And could the—there are a whole bunch of others, Lifetime Limited Disabled Persons, Rebirth House, Hope Centre, et cetera. And if all of these things are now subsumed in non-profit institutions? If? Could we get a breakdown of the expenditure in 2014, $29 million in non-profit, a breakdown of the allocations for 2015 to make up the $20 million, and an explanation. Why in a $64 billion budget you have cut the allocations for places like the Red Cross, the Cheshire Foundation Home, the St. Vincent de Paul, the Rape Crisis Centre? Why you have cut their allocation by $9 million in 2015 in a $64 billion budget?
Hon. Alleyne-Toppin: Yes, should I list all of the ones above? Autism Services of Trinidad and Tobago South Support Group, Cheshire Disability Services, Goodwill Industries of the West Indies, International Institute of Health Care and Human Development, National Centre for Persons with Disabilities, T&T Association for the Hearing Impaired, Trinidad and Tobago Blind Welfare Association, Trinidad and Tobago Chapter of Disabled Persons International, Visionary Learning Centre, St. Vincent de Paul—

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, are you repeating what we have before us? No, hon. Minister, I think what the hon. Member wanted was, if he could get a breakdown?

Hon. Alleyne-Toppin: We have to give him that in writing.

Mr. Chairman: And then the second question he asked was, why did we reduce?

Mr. Imbert: Why are allocations being cut by $9 million in a $64 budget? What are you cutting Red Cross and all of “dem people for”? Sixty-four billion and you are cutting Red Cross, Rape Crisis Centre? Why?

Mr. Chairman: Could you put those things in writing as to what is the justification for this cut from $29.6 million to $20 million. I think that is what the hon. Member is asking.

Mr. Imbert: A $9.5 million reduction.

Hon. Alleyne-Toppin: We will put it in writing.

Mr. Imbert: Okay.

Mr. Chairman: All right. Let us go to Item 07—no, we have more persons.

Dr. Browne: Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: Yes, we go to the hon. Member for Diego Martin Central; then the Member for St. Joseph.

Mr. Deyalsingh: No, I said nothing.

Mr. Chairman: All right, the Member for Diego Martin Central, then the Member for Arouca/Maloney, then the Member for Port of Spain South.

Dr. Browne: Thank you, Chairman. Two specific questions, I concur with the request for a breakdown. During the budget debate, the issue of the Family Planning Association was raised, and I am asking if the Ministry is now minded to programme an increase in subvention for the Family Planning Association.
4.00 p.m.

On line Item 38, Families in Action, this NGO, hon. Minister of State, has been identified as one of two partners in the National Parenting Programme. I am asking for details on the scope of works, budget and contract details on the arrangement between Families in Action and the Ministry of the People and Social Development. The same would apply to the other partner in the National Parenting Programme, which is the University of the Southern Caribbean—written details with respect to the scope of works, budget and details of the contract of those two non-profit institutions.

**Hon. Alleyne-Toppin:** Yes, Mr. Chairman, we will provide all of that information in writing.

**Mr. Chairman:** Member for Arouca/Maloney.

**Miss Hospedales:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, I would like to find out from the Minister whether Transformed Life Ministries received a subvention from the Ministry of the People and Social Development and, if the answer to my question is yes, why was the subvention stopped?

**Hon. Alleyne-Toppin:** They do not receive a subvention from the Ministry of the People and Social Development.

**Miss Hospedales:** Why was the subvention stopped?

**Hon. Alleyne-Toppin:** We do not give a subvention, so it could not be stopped. They do not receive a subvention.

**Miss Hospedales:** Or a grant.

**Mr. Chairman:** Port of Spain South. I recognize the Member for Port of Spain South.

**Miss Mc Donald:** Through you, Mr. Chair, Minister, are you aware that there is a centre called the Brother Bowen Centre, straight at the top of St. Paul Street—do a lot of community work? I am wondering why they are not listed here.

**Hon. Alleyne-Toppin:** We are not aware of that centre. I am not aware of that centre.

**Mr. Chairman:** Well, you will put it in writing, hon. Member for Port of Spain South, okay? We are dealing with Item 07, Households, then we are dealing with Item 09, Other Transfers. Households, Members for Diego Martin Central and Arouca/Maloney.
Dr. Browne: Thank you, Chairman. Three questions: Assistance to National Heroes, very important area, has been decreased by almost half a million dollars. I would like an explanation for that. I do not know that we lost that many during the year.

Secondly, Urgent Temporary Assistance has been identified as a vital area of the Ministry to provide fairly swift relief in cases of desperation. That has also been slashed by more than half—decreased by $25 million. I would like an explanation for that. I would like those two answered before my third and final question under this Head.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister.

Hon. Alleyne-Toppin: We will respond in writing to that one.

Mr. Chairman: What is your third and final question?

Dr. Browne: Line Item 22, Relief for Underprivileged Newborn. That is a new Sub-Item and I have some specific questions to the Ministry. How will this programme of Relief for Underprivileged Newborn be administered specifically? Is there an appeal process and could you provide the details of such an appeal process if a mother or parent is not provided with the so-called grant? Could you identify whether there is specific staffing identified to support this $120 million programme? Could you provide the details of that staffing or are existing staff expected to manage this programme? Is there any specific training planned to enable the administration of this programme? If so, who is providing said training? What are the procedures and is there a procedural manual to support the implementation of this programme, which I believe is due to commence in six or so days’ time?

There is also a question that I have with respect to the possibility of fathers, as well as mothers, accessing this particular grant. How will that be monitored to avoid overlap or duplication? What are the monitoring and evaluation parameters that have been outlined to ensure accountability and transparency in this process? If a mother has two babies in the same year, will she be accessing one grant for each baby?

Is there any decision by the Ministry—I had a recommendation in the budget debate with respect to drug and alcohol testing of proposed recipients for this grant. Is that being considered by the Ministry at this time for this $120 million programme, or any other programme within the Ministry of the People and Social Development? Thank you, Chairman.
Hon. Alleyne-Toppin: Let me give you an overview of that, so that if I miss out any of what you need to know, we will provide it in writing. Let me give you an overview of the relief for underprivileged newborns.

The Ministry will continue its goal of reducing the number of persons living below the poverty line. I am telling you all of that. The Baby Care Assistance Initiative will be introduced for one year in the first instance whereby parents and primary caregivers with an infant, zero to 12 months, born between the periods October 01, 2014 to September 30, 2015, earning a combined monthly income of $3,000—

Dr. Browne: Mr. Chairman, the questions were very specific and I think we are getting a bit of a speech, which I appreciate, but it is not—

Hon. Alleyne-Toppin: But, I am giving you—the content is in what I am telling you. You want me to say it: for households under $3,000. Mr. Chairman, can he ask me the question and say how I must answer it?

Mr. Chairman: No.

Hon. Alleyne-Toppin: I am giving you the details.

Mr. Chairman: Member, the hon. Minister has five minutes to respond and she is entitled to her five minutes. So could you continue?

Hon. Alleyne-Toppin: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Households earning a combined monthly income of $3,000 can qualify for assistance valued at $500 per month. The grant will assist the parents or guardians to adequately provide for the nutritional requirements and care for the infant. Recipients of the grant are required to enter into a social contract with the Ministry of the People and Social Development to participate in the Ministry’s development programme—Rights of Individuals to Social and Economic Security, Universal Prosperity, Rise Up.

The programme is a holistic approach to poverty alleviation which takes into consideration conditions that confine the family’s efforts to move out of poverty. It provides families in extreme poverty with access to critical services, linking them and facilitating their access to benefits relevant to their needs. It seeks to empower the household to improve its quality of life in eight dimensions: health, education, family dynamics, housing, personal identification, safety and security, income, employment.

They are required to attend—the expectant mothers—postnatal visits at health facilities as prescribed by the attending medical practitioner. They are required to attend parenting outreach workshops conducted by SERVOL. They are expected to
attend Family Planning sessions and to attend Financial Literacy sessions. The sum of $120 million is allocated under the vote Relief for the Underprivileged Newborn, Head 56, 722, for this initiative.

We can give you the details in writing. I am speaking again, Mr. Chairman, to the whole nation. People want to know about this and I have provided the details as we have them now.

Mr. Chairman: The hon. Member for Arouca/Maloney.

Miss Hospedales: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I am going to Sub-Item 17, the Targeted Conditional Cash Transfer Programme. Based on the information provided by the Ministry, they are telling us that $2 million is allocated for this programme for 2015. The Minister of Finance and the Economy, during the Standing Finance Committee, indicated to us that $264 million was allocated to the Food Support Programme and this money is utilized by the Ministry of the People and Social Development. I would like to find out exactly how much of the $264 million is utilized on a yearly basis and if they can tell us the total expenditure of the Food Card Programme for the year 2014.

I also want to ask about 21, the People’s Card—

Mr. Chairman: Let her answer first and then you will come to 21 after.

Hon. Minister.

Hon. Alleyne-Toppin: We will provide those details in writing.

Mr. Chairman: All right; 21, please.

Miss Hospedales: Sub-Item 21, The People’s Card. What is the People’s Card and what was $21 million spent on in 2014 and what will $12 million be spent on in 2015? And what is the difference between the People’s Card and the Targeted Conditional Cash Transfer Programme?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister.

Hon. Alleyne-Toppin: The Cash Transfer Programme, as it is in effect now, has a card that we use for the people who are on the two-year long-term and a temporary assistance card. We are introducing a biometric card we call the People’s Card, which will facilitate all of the other—what do you call those?—cash transfers that we make to our clients, whether it be disability grant, pension grant; whether it be school books assistance; whether it be for the cerebral palsy, the mothers of children with cerebral palsy.
We are using a card that gives you access to all of the areas in which you are accessing money from the Ministry of the People and Social Development. That card will carry data that will prevent fraud, we expect. It will carry data that will prevent double-dipping, of people coming for one or the other grant dipping in our coffers and also dipping in places like the Ministry of Health. It will really streamline how we do business.

**Dr. Browne:** Chairman, to clarify: the Minister is indicating that the People’s Card under 21 is a proposed programme in design now. Is that right?

**Hon. Alleyne-Toppin:** Well, it should be in place in a few days.

**Dr. Browne:** All right, in a few days; but I am seeing $22 million expended in 2014 under that programme and under the Targeted Conditional Cash Transfer Programme, I am only seeing $2 million expended and $2 million allocated. So I just want to be clear as to which of these line items is providing that household nutritional support which persons refer to as the card or the TT Card, at this time—if the latter is a proposed programme, the People’s Card, under 21, and the former is the Targeted Conditional Cash Transfer Programme? That is not clear at all from her answer.

The follow-up question is: I would like itemized between the two-year card and the temporary card, what has been the expenditure for 2014 for each, segmented, and what is the proposed expenditure for each in 2015 fiscal between the two-year card and the temporary card?

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

**Hon. Alleyne-Toppin:** My advice here is that we will have to provide that in writing.

**Mr. Chairman:** The hon. Member for Port of Spain South.

**Miss Mc Donald:** Just a clarification: Senior Citizens Grant of $2.8 billion, I am seeing an increase of some $535,584,000 over 2014. Is this Senior Citizens Grant of $2.8 billion the same thing as the Senior Citizens Pension? Is it the same?

**Hon. Alleyne-Toppin:** Yes, it is. You are seeing an increase. We have an increase in our ageing population. We also have an increase in the grant.

**Miss Mc Donald:** I know, but I just wanted clarification because I note that this Government took pains in saying that it is no longer a grant; it is a pension because a grant can be taken away at any time. So I was surprised to see the word “grant” here as opposed to “pension”.
Hon. Alleyne-Toppin: The word “pension” should be there; you can replace it. Just replace the word.

Miss Mc Donald: No problem. You clarified it.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, Sub-Head 06, Current Transfers to Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies; Item 04, Statutory Boards. Member for Port of Spain South.

4.15 p.m.

Miss Mc Donald: Minister, could you explain to me?

Mr. Chairman: Are you on transfers?

Miss Mc Donald: Yeah, 009 to the bottom; to the bottom there, Sir.

Hon. Alleyne-Toppin: What page is that?

Miss Mc Donald: 02, National Social Development Programme.

Hon. Alleyne-Toppin: What page you are on?

Miss Mc Donald: Page 280, some $33 million. What is that about?

Hon. Alleyne-Toppin: This programme is designed to improve the standard of living conditions of citizens in T&T and will provide basic infrastructure for essential services like house wiring, minor house repairs, water supply, electrification and lighting of community facilities and children’s play parks.

Miss Mc Donald: How do you access this?

Hon. Alleyne-Toppin: We have a system where you can apply. We have application forms at our various offices. We also have a means test by which we decide who is indigent; who should receive such a grant, house repairs.

Miss Mc Donald: House repairs?

Hon. Alleyne-Toppin: Yes.

Miss Mc Donald: Wiring of homes also?

Hon. Alleyne-Toppin: Yes. We have officers who do the assessments and this is accessible to all of our citizens of Trinidad and Tobago. It is something that people should know about.

Mr. Chairman: Yes, the hon. Member.
Mr. Imbert: Mr. Chairman, could we get a breakdown or any brochure or any information you have on this programme? What it is catered for? How does one access this facility? And also a breakdown of the expenditure in 2014; what it spent on and who were the beneficiaries of all of this money. Could there also be an explanation as to why you had an allocation of $80 million but only spent $32 million in 2014?

Mr. Chairman: The hon. Minister.

Hon. Alleyne-Toppin: I am advised that we will give you that in writing.

Mr. Imbert: No problem.

Hon. Alleyne-Toppin: Because it is extensive.

Mr. Imbert: No problem.

Mr. Chairman: We go to Sub-Head 06, Current Transfers to Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies. Item 004, Statutory Boards. The Member for Arouca/Maloney.

Miss Hospedales: Yes, thank you, Mr. Chair. Sub-Item 42, The Trinidad and Tobago Blind Welfare Association. I am just registering my concern that the Ministry has allocated an additional $78,000 to the Blind Welfare Association, considering the fact that there are numerous problems at that association that need to be rectified by the Ministry, particularly, with issues of accountability, transparency, the concerns about hiring procedures and the fact that they have not submitted all their audited financial statements.

Mr. Chairman: The hon. Minister.

Hon. Alleyne-Toppin: We are working with the Blind Welfare Association to ensure that best practices are exercised within the association, and that they satisfy all of our needs but, in the meantime we are supporting our blind and visually impaired people.

Dr. Browne: Follow up. When last have you received audited accounts with respect to the Blind Welfare Association?

Hon. Alleyne-Toppin: We will supply that information.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, we go to Sub-Head 09, Development Programme; Item 004, Social Infrastructure.

Miss Mc Donald: A question.
Mr. Chairman: Yes, the hon. Member for Port of Spain South.

Miss Mc Donald: Minister, through you, Mr. Chair. Minister, I do not know if I am asking this question under the right Sub-Head 004, which speaks to the establishment of social displacement centres, Queen Street and Duncan Street. Now, I ought not to deal with this one, but I want to talk to the one to the bottom of Piccadilly Street, just hanging over the East Dry River at the bottom there, that centre next to the multipurpose car park. What is happening with that centre? Because I am noticing there is no allocation for, you know, the removal of those persons, displacement—or should I say, “reallotment” is the word, of those persons from that awful place to elsewhere. Do you know what I am talking about, to the bottom of Piccadilly Street? Could you tell me what are your plans and where is the money allocated here for the reallocation of those persons from the bottom of Piccadilly Street?

Mr. Chairman: The hon. Minister.

Hon. Alleyne-Toppin: Yes, that is the Centre for Socially Displaced Persons at Riverside Plaza Car Park. The street dwellers, rehabilitation and reintegration project, we had requested $2 million and we actually did get an allocation of $4 million and we have been given the ownership, control and management of the building by a Cabinet Note, and we are removing street dwellers to that facility. It is a continuous process.

Miss Mc Donald: Minister, so I should be speaking to 096; that is the development centre for persons. Not that one. Which is the one should I talk to with respect to Riverside Plaza?

Hon. Alleyne-Toppin: C112.

Miss Mc Donald: C112? What is the problem there? Would you be relocating these persons?

Hon. Alleyne-Toppin: We will be refurbishing that facility, and we continue to spend money, refurbishing it. We had a $10 million allocated by Cabinet as at October 31, 2013, and we have been doing work on that. We continue to do that rehabilitation process, assessment and evaluation of residents, provisions of meals, medical health screening with referrals, needs assessment, counselling, training to address job skills and occupational therapy, spiritual and physical health programme and other rehabilitation programmes.

Miss Mc Donald: I hear you Minister, but just one further question. Do you think that $2 million is sufficient in a budget of $64 billion or whatever or $64
billion—do you think that $2 million is sufficient to undertake this type of work you have to do?

Hon. Alleyne-Toppin: Now, remember that I said we have a Cabinet Note which gave us $10 million over a period of years, so we have been drawing down as the time goes by, and we continue to facilitate those drawdowns. This year coming, this fiscal year, we will use $4 million on that.

Mr. Chairman: The hon. Member for Diego Martin West and then—

Hon. Alleyne-Toppin: Two is what was requested for this year, because we have ongoing works, we were allocated $4 million.

Mr. Chairman: The hon. Member for Diego Martin West and then the Member for Point Fortin and then the Member for St. Joseph.

Dr. Rowley: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, I have a few questions under 09/004 and I would like to ask them one by one, so that I can get a clear answer from the Minister.

I notice, Mr. Chairman, that under 044 we spent under Establishment of Social Displacement Centres, Queen Street and Duncan Street, $635,000 in 2013. In 2014, there was an estimate for $2 million and one would have been led to believe that this meant that persons who were benefiting from this would have anticipated an enhanced service, but then when the revised estimate is reported to us, I see a “-”. My interpretation of that “-” is that none of the $2 million that was allocated by the Parliament in 2014 was spent. Could I get an explanation for that from this Ministry, please?

Mr. Chairman: The hon. Minister.

Hon. Alleyne-Toppin: Let me tell you about the Queen Street development programme. We have the development project under user briefs and detail specifications. We engaged NIPDEC for consultancy services to prepare designs and tender documents. A letter of intent was signed between MPSD and NIPDEC to continue design services towards the completion of tender documents for refurbishment.

Construction of the building: this year we are moving on to the completion of designs, completion of the tendering documents and refurbishment and we are going on to our consultancy team to provide architectural and civil engineering.
Dr. Rowley: Is it, Mr. Chairman, that all of that which was supposed to have been done have been done for free in 2014 and that this Ministry found it fit or no payment claim was made on this Ministry for any or all of that work? How come there is no report of expenditure in 2014 on that work programme or is it that all of that is an intention?

Hon. Alleyne-Toppin: All of this work was done by the internal staff. We have our designers, we have our technical draftsmen.

Dr. Rowley: So the $2 million that was budgeted was just a flight of fantasy which brings me to the other question. That being so, if there was no requirement to spend any of the $2 million in 2014, because it is being done by in-house staff, what then is the basis for a provision of $1 million in 2015 on the same item?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister.

Hon. Alleyne-Toppin: I am advised that we are using this to pay NIPDEC to carry out the procurement process.

Dr. Rowley: But I was just told that it was all being done in-house, and so the $2 million you had, you did not spend any of it.

Hon. Alleyne-Toppin: The procurement is different from the drawings and the designs and the planning.

Dr. Rowley: So you paid none of the $2 million to do the work and you paid $1 million to get the work done.

Mr. Chairman: When you say procurement, what items are you talking about?

Hon. Alleyne-Toppin: I am advised here procurement and project management would cost us $1 million.

Dr. Rowley: Mr. Chairman, I give up on that one. I go on to 048, Poverty Reduction Programme. Again, we spent $832 million in 2013 on that, then in 2014, we provision $2 million for it, and we spent $200,000 of the $2 million in 2014, and for 2015 we make no provision. Could I have an explanation for that please?

Hon. Alleyne-Toppin: We will give you that explanation in writing, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: Do you have any further question? She said she would provide it in writing.
Dr. Rowley: Mr. Chairman, I just start. 050, the Food Support Programme Conditional Cash Transfer. For a start, what aspect of this food card programme falls under the Development Programme?

Hon. Alleyne-Toppin: Mr. Chairman, please tell me where he is? I am not sure where he is. What page?

Miss Mc Donald: 141.

Dr. Rowley: Let me help you here.

Hon. Alleyne-Toppin: So he has gone back?

Dr. Rowley: I am on page 141 of the Development Programme under 09 sub-Item 050. If you go to the Development Programme on page 141, Head 09, Sub-Item 050.

Hon. Alleyne-Toppin: Yes.

Dr. Rowley: Food Support Programme - Conditional-Cash Transfer, namely food card. How is that a part of the development programme? What is that money to be spent on? When we spent $280,000 in 2013, we budgeted $1 million in 2014 from which $125,000 was spent, and we now have budgeted nothing in 2015. What exactly is that?

Hon. Alleyne-Toppin: I am advised that it was used to outfit the food card unit. So we already set that up, we do not need to spend any more money on that.

[Crosstalk]

Dr. Rowley: I am asking, because I am being told it was to outfit the unit. So, we had over-budgeted by 10 times. I am asking a simple question. The estimate to do it was $1 million and it was done for $125,000. Is that what I am being told? It is good news, do not be afraid.

Mr. Chairman, finally, I want to ask a question on 099, Vision on Mission Development Programme. This I consider to be a very useful private sector initiative driven by good intentions. In 2013, there was a programme here which cost $2 million and in 2014 we budgeted $1.9 million towards continuing that programme, and in 2015 I see no allocation. Could I be told what happened with that programme? Is the programme there completed and what was it and why are we not assisting them in 2015?

Hon. Alleyne-Toppin: We are closing off that project.

Dr. Rowley: What was the project?

Hon. Alleyne-Toppin: The Vision on Mission project what they did.
**Dr. Rowley:** What was the project? What did we spend the money on?

**Hon. Alleyne-Toppin:** My advice here is that the Vision on Mission designs programmes to provide adequate transitional housing, counselling, reintegration and rehabilitation with regard to returning national deportees. Vision on Mission assists in finding employment, travelling expenses, you know, and accommodation. Additionally, services that Vision on Mission provides in Trinidad and Tobago both inside the prison, to ex-prisoners and deportees continue to have significant positive impact on society in terms of the number of ex-prisoners and deportees whose lives have been transformed and who are now making a significant contribution to society.

4.30 p.m.

We are closing off the project and we have a facility at Wallerfield that has been refurbished and outfitted for its first intake of ex-prisoner and deportees. The formal opening is scheduled for later in October.

**Dr. Rowley:** So this money was spent on physical support, a physical structure?

**Hon. Alleyne-Toppin:** Yes.

**Dr. Rowley:** And therefore there is no requirement for any further support from the structure?

**Hon. Alleyne-Toppin:** Yes.

**Dr. Rowley:** But support from the State goes to the programme Vision on Mission?

**Hon. Alleyne-Toppin:** Yes.

**Dr. Rowley:** And where is that money located?

**Hon. Alleyne-Toppin:** Under recurrent.

**Dr. Rowley:** Okay.

**Mr. Chairman:** Okay, I recognize the Member for Point Fortin.

**Mrs. Gopee-Scoon:** Thank you very much. I have interest in 036, 076 and 096; I will take 076 first, Establishment of Social Services Centre in Point Fortin, which you wanted to do in 2014 and you were not able to implement it, but in 2015 you have now projected to spend twice that amount. There is already a Ministry of the People and Social Development in Point Fortin; what is this social services centre about and where is it going to be?
Hon. Alleyne-Toppin: Item 036, 096, and which other?

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: I am dealing with 076 to make it easy on you.

Hon. Alleyne-Toppin: Item 076, Establishment of Social Services Centre in Point Fortin?

Mr. Chairman: Yes.

Hon. Alleyne-Toppin: All right. I am advised here by our team, the property is at No. 4 Furlong Street. It is 10,000 square feet, approximately. It is an old structure in a state of disrepair and this structure is beyond refurbishment. It was proposed that we demolish and erect a multistorey building to be constructed at a cost of $7 million, and this division proposes to accommodate this centre. At the centre, the divisions will be Social Welfare Unit, Family Services Centre, Community Telecentre, Targeted Conditional Cash Transfer Programme, Poverty Reduction Programme, People’s Issues Resolution Unit—

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Okay. But you said $7 million; I am seeing here provision for $1 million.

Hon. Alleyne-Toppin: Well, incrementally we will—

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: So you are building this over time?

Hon. Alleyne-Toppin: Over time.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: You could not build this in a few months? [Crosstalk]

Hon. Alleyne-Toppin: We have to conduct some studies, some necessary feasibility studies, designs, you know, so we are taking it incrementally.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: All right. Okay. Item 036—I said I had an interest in three issues today—a Substance Abuse Rehabilitation Centre that is going to cost $2 million; where is this?

Hon. Alleyne-Toppin: Piparo.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: That is the Piparo one. Okay. And your interest in the development centre for persons with challenges; I realize in 2015 there is no estimate for this programme, so is that discontinued?

Hon. Alleyne-Toppin: That is the one at Carlsen Field—you are on 096, right?

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Yes.
Hon. Alleyne-Toppin: We have built a rehabilitation centre for people with disabilities; that is completed. We are doing work on the—

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Where is that?

Hon. Alleyne-Toppin: Carlsen Field, Chaguanas.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Okay.

Hon. Alleyne-Toppin: We are doing work on the grounds, and we hope to get into that building soon enough, very soon.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: So what types of persons with challenges? What type of challenges you would be accommodating there?

Hon. Alleyne-Toppin: Broadly, persons with disabilities, persons who are physically disabled—

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: To do what? To work? Children? What?

Hon. Alleyne-Toppin: We have therapeutic services. We have life-skill programmes. We have socially interactive activities. We have a day-care centre—

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Okay.

Mr. Chairman: I recognize the Member for Laventille East/Morvant.

Miss Cox: Mr. Chairman, I would like to—number 102, Toco Home for Senior Citizens, I see there was an allocation of $1.5 million for 2014 and $2 million estimated for 2015; is this some special arrangement with this home? But before I get the answer, I think that I want to know what the Ministry is doing about elderly homes. There have been some concerns concerning the dilapidated state of many homes for the elderly right across the country, and we feel that more money is needed. I saw elsewhere that there is some money allocated for elderly homes but that really is not enough for the amount of elderly homes in Trinidad and Tobago, and I think that we need to take more care of our elderly. Some of them are not even being treated properly at home. So I feel that the Ministry needs to look at this, but tell me about this 102, the home in Toco.

Hon. Alleyne-Toppin: The elderly home in Toco is about to be launched, I could say. We have finished the building, it is complete. We are now looking at outfitting and finalizing, you know, the space as we need to have it for older persons who will come in on a daily basis, remain active—you know, we have all the therapy, all the rehabilitative skills, training, and the medical assistance
necessary here. What is happening is that we have legislation pending which should be proclaimed but we need to put amendments to our legislation. We are working with the Ministry of Gender, Youth and Child Development through the legislation that governs older persons and the abuse of older persons.

We are working on those parts of the legislation which need to be amended so that we can enter into homes other than senior citizens’ homes. We will be able to enter into private homes if we discern that there is abuse somewhere. This initiative is also going to come with a lot of new staff, a lot of inspectors who will be going out to examine homes, public and private homes, and all of this is tied in with the legislation that we are working on. When this is completed then we will be able to move into that—

Miss Cox: I just want to be clear on something—

Hon. Alleyne-Toppin: I think you are right that we will need a whole lot of money, but we have already done—this money that we had was for the building and now we are doing the outfitting.

Miss Cox: Okay. This is a further from the same question, Mr. Chairman. I just want to be clear that—I wanted to know if there are any plans to assist other homes in the country because, really, most of them are in a bad state, and we feel that more money should be allocated to the senior citizens’ homes.

Hon. Alleyne-Toppin: Well we are actually doing assessments of homes, and this is one of the reasons why we have to bring in more inspectors. We are actually doing the assessments and we are putting in very stringent rules about physical structure, physical amenities, as well as the kind of care that people will be getting, and it will all be legislated. There are some very serious fines recommended, some very serious rewards and punishments, and we are going to do it. We welcome any ideas and any discussions—

Mr. Chairman: Diego Martin West, you want to come in now?

Dr. Rowley: Yes, please.

Mr. Chairman: Okay.

Dr. Rowley: Mr. Chairman, two questions I want to put. I would like to put one through you to the Leader of Government Business. Given the specific nature of this problem and the good that it will do, could we go beyond the academic exercise of identifying shortcomings and ask the Leader of Government Business whether this committee could recommend and make an amendment to improve
the allocation to this particular Head? What is provisioned there is just not enough for the nature of the problem. So I will put that to the Leader of Government Business for an amendment to the number.

I move on to ask—I would just like to go back a bit to 094, Blind Welfare Association, and to ask the Ministry what was the anticipated work programme for which $4 million was allocated in 2014 and why is it showing that none of that money was spent as per the revised estimate? What did we set out to do there?

**Hon. Alleyne-Toppin:** This money was requested to develop the user briefs and specification for the construction and refurbishment of an administration centre, academic cluster, dormitory cluster, and these works included the finalization of designs, to engage a contractor, to conduct preliminary studies and to stake out the boundaries.

**Dr. Rowley:** Was this project advanced in any way?

**Hon. Alleyne-Toppin:** We have some issues with the Board, maybe we should give you that in writing. There were issues with the Board and there were issues with divisions, and which set off the, you know, they had some—the matter is in court because there are two different factions of that Board that we have to—

**Dr. Rowley:** But it resulted in—we had $4 million to advance the project and we were not able to spend any of it because the project has moved. How are we addressing that problem?

**Hon. Alleyne-Toppin:** When the court decides the matter—

**Dr. Rowley:** Oh, the matter is in court?

**Hon. Alleyne-Toppin:** The matter is in court. When the court decides the matter we will take it from there.

**Mr. Chairman:** All right, the Member for Diego Martin Central and then the Member for St. Joseph, and the last is the Member for Arouca/Malone.

**Dr. Browne:** Thank you, Chairman. I will try to keep the questions as simple as possible, maybe yes and no if when required. Line Item 036, Establishment of a Substance Abuse Rehabilitation Facility at Piparo, very important project; I am seeing $2 million for 2015, can you clarify whether this is Phase II of that development project commencing? If so, when was Phase I completed? What is the reason for the delay between the completion of Phase I and commencement of Phase II? And I would like a breakdown of the proposed expenditure for 2015, that $2 million. I have further questions, I would like her response—
Mr. Chairman: No, well ask your questions so she can take them down and then answer all.

Dr. Browne: Well, she gets a little confused sometimes, but fair enough, I will try. You will take it now?

Hon. Alleyne-Toppin: No, you are confusing. I am not getting confused. You are confusing.

Dr. Browne: I am sorry if I have confused you. Do you want all in a lump?

Hon. Alleyne-Toppin: Your technique in questioning is very confusing.

Dr. Browne: Well, that is not my fault, but would you like all the questions?

Mr. Chairman: Yes, I am suggesting that you bring all the questions.

Dr. Browne: All right. Well, I am just bearing her in mind. Okay, the second question is with respect to the expansion of the community-based telecentres; again, another programme that was there before. What community-based telecentres were opened for 2014 and what are the locations of the proposed telecentres for the upcoming fiscal year? A very straightforward question. The third one is with regard to 092, HIV/AIDS Co-ordinating Programme; what expansion or expenditure occurred under development programme for $1 million in 2014 and why is there nothing for 2015 under the HIV/AIDS Co-ordinating Programme?

And then 106, Adult Daycare Model; what is this Adult Daycare Model? Where is it being proposed? I see $500,000 was requested prior, none was expended, none is requested now; could we just get an update on this Adult Daycare Model? Finally, 107, Governance Service Centres; what is this Governance Service Centres? Where is it located? Are there any staff associated with it? And a breakdown of the $1 million requested. I am not familiar with that particular heading.

Hon. Alleyne-Toppin: We requested for Piparo, for the rehabilitation facility at Piparo, to commence refurbishment works as follows: for the clinical staff building, retaining wall at the Kiosk Building, a workshop building, toilets and closets, dormitories and outfitting of a gym. And our main areas we are targeting to begin: toilets and closets, dormitories and the gym. A Note is being drafted and finalized to upgrade the facility in Cabinet. The second one is the telecentres project; we requested $.5 million, we got $.5 million, and we are finalizing Cabinet approval to establish satellite telecentres in Couva, Tabaquite, Talparo and Princes Town. Yes?

Dr. Browne: “Um humm.”
Hon. Alleyne-Toppin: The cost estimates are to procure equipment also for telecentres and—

Dr. Browne: Nice list. And which were opened in 2014?

Hon. Alleyne-Toppin: Which will open—

Dr. Browne: Which were opened? Which telecentres? Locations.

Hon. Alleyne-Toppin: None were opened in 2014.

Dr. Browne: Ahh!

Hon. Alleyne-Toppin: None was—

Dr. Browne: Okay, and the Member for La Horquetta/Talparo is asking when his will be opened, but he will have to ask that question directly.

Hon. Alleyne-Toppin: 2014 is not finished yet.

Dr. Browne: No—well, the fiscal year is.

4.45 p.m.


Dr. Browne: A million dollars.

Hon. Alleyne-Toppin: Requested the money for sensitization of the staff. It includes the awareness of HIV-related issues; will assist participants to understand and address the stigma and discrimination associated with AIDS and provide clients with HIV-related information which would impact their interactions with other persons. [Interruption] In 2015.

Dr. Browne: None in 2015?

Hon. Alleyne-Toppin: The funds were transferred to recurrent.

Dr. Browne: Then the Adult Daycare Model update and the Governance Service Centres.

Hon. Alleyne-Toppin: Cabinet by Minute No. 2580 of September 16, 2004 agreed, inter alia, to approve in principle the proposal for the design and development of a continuum of health and social support services for older persons. The components of the continuum include: senior centres; meals on wheels; transport escort services; companion care; adult care; day-care centres and assisted living facilities. In 2015, we propose to complete our designs and obtain outline approval, finalize our designs, engage contractors, conduct preliminaries and stake out our boundaries.

Dr. Browne: That would be free because there is no allocation in 2015?
Mr. Chairman: We go to the Member for St. Joseph, and then the Member for Arouca/Maloney is the final one.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Thank you, Chair. This Ministry is a quite important Ministry, and I concur with the Member for Diego Martin West that the allocation should be varied. However, in an answer to line Item, Sub-Head 09, Sub-Item 099, to the hon. Member for Diego Martin West, under Vision on Mission, unfortunately the Minister’s answers raised a number of other questions pertinent to St. Joseph, because this is located in the constituency of St. Joseph. I will ask one question and depending on the answer I may have no further questions, or vice versa.

In 2013 there was a $2 million allocation, 2014 $1.9 million, roughly the same. The Minister said, if I am correct, this was for some sort of support. Was it technical support, or institutional strengthening?

Dr. Moonilal: “Ask de question nuh, man.”

Mr. Deyalsingh: What type of support was this $2 million grant and the same amount in two consecutive years meant for? Was it meant for technical support, for instance, institutional strengthening, corporate governance or was it for operational expenses, example food, training, rent? Was it to help with their physical location? Because, Chairman, I want to ask the question: Did the management of Vision on Mission know that this grant, subvention—whatever you want to call it—was going to be stopped in 2015? Further question: If it is going to be stopped in 2015, did they know it was going to be stopped?

Then you further went on to state that your Ministry will be conducting a similar programme in some other part of the country. Is it that you are taking over Vision on Mission by doing your own programme?—which I have no problem with. If that is the case, where does that leave Vision on Mission?

Hon. Alleyne-Toppin: I am advised that we will give you that in writing.

Mr. Chairman: I go now to the Member for Arouca/Maloney and then we close off.

Mr. Deyalsingh: In other words, they do not know. [Laughter]

Miss Hospedales: Mr. Chair, there are two items that I would like to look at.

Mr. Chairman: Member for Arouca/Maloney, where are we?

Miss Hospedales: Two items, page 142, I am looking at Sub-Item 112, the Street Dwellers Rehabilitation and Reintegration Project. I would like to know
what percentage of this $2 million allocation is going to Transform Life Ministries; whether or not the Ministry contracted with Transform Life Ministries to house street dwellers on its behalf; the number of street dwellers that the Ministry has there; the cost of housing each street dweller; the total number of clients sent to the facility to date?

I would also like to know how much money has been spent on renovating Transform Life Ministries to accommodate the street dwellers for reintegration and rehabilitation; and the overall amount of money paid to Transform Life Ministries to date by the Ministry. I would also like the Minister to indicate why those street dwellers were not sent to New Horizons, a facility that is owned by the Ministry that can house 200 persons.

Hon. Alleyne-Toppin: My advice here is that we will give you that answer in writing.

Mr. Chairman: I recognize the hon. Member for Diego Martin West and your good self, and we close off.

Dr. Rowley: Closing off?

Mr. Chairman: Yes.

Dr. Rowley: I have a question with respect to page 143, 032 under 005, Establishment of an Integrated Social Enterprise Management System. This is an item which has been on the budget for 2013, $4.3 million; 2014, $5 million; revised downwards to $1.4 million. I would like to ask the Ministry, since this expenditure was taking place on what, in effect, is a management system, what accounted for the downward revision of the allocation and why is the allocation now spiked up to $10 million, what is that for?

Hon. Alleyne-Toppin: We will also provide that information in writing.

Mr. Chairman: Next question.

Dr. Rowley: Chairman, let me ask you another question? Is the Minister saying that they are asking for $10 million and nobody knows what it is for?

Hon. Alleyne-Toppin: No I am not saying that. I did not say nobody knows what it is for. I am saying that I am advised by the team here, by the PS and his team, that we will give you that information in writing.

Dr. Rowley: With respect to what happened in 2014, nobody could say what happened in 2014?
Hon. Alleyne-Toppin: We can write and tell you what happened. We will put it in writing. We will give you an account.

Mr. Chairman: Do you have a second question?

Dr. Rowley: I am stunned. [Laughter]

Mr. Chairman: I know, but do you have a second question?

Dr. Rowley: “Ah done.” [Laughter]

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Page 142, No. 108, Survey of Living Conditions, where you are projected to spend $500,000, half a million in 2014, and that ballooned to $7 million—quite a big amount. Is that survey completed? Has it been completed and what was that survey about?

Hon. Alleyne-Toppin: Cabinet by Minute 982 of December 05, 2013, agreed to approve a revised budget of up to $8.2 million to facilitate the conduct of the Survey of Living Conditions.

The survey is proposed to be completed—was proposed to be completed in 12 months. The survey would assess the living conditions in Trinidad and Tobago according to socio-economic indicators, including but not limited to, health, housing, education, food security, recreation and leisure, poverty levels measured in terms of the line gap ratio and level.

The survey itself has been completed. We conducted the field work; we processed the data. We are now advertising for a consultancy that will analyze the data and then we will drive our programmes by what comes out of those analyses.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Further, could that data be made public at this stage? Can it be circulated to us?

Hon. Alleyne-Toppin: It cannot be made public yet, because our officers have to—our consultants will have to extrapolate on the data and present it properly to us, and we have to wait on that.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: And do the analysis, thank you.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 56 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Chair, procedurally please. The variation that the Member for Diego Martin West had asked for, how do we deal with that?

Mr. Chairman: What variation?
Mr. Deyalsingh: It is okay, Chair, thank you.

Mr. Chairman: I want to thank the hon. Minister and her team for being here.

May I advise, hon. Members, before we take a 20-minute break for tea, that when we return the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service is next. We have made some revision, based on consultation with the hon. Leader of the Opposition, to facilitate some smaller entities.

In so doing, I wish to advise hon. Members of this Standing Finance Committee, after the TTPS we shall then go to the Ministry of Tobago Development; then to the Ministry of the Arts and Multiculturalism. We will then proceed to the Judiciary. We will then go to the Industrial Court and then the Tobago House of Assembly. We will then revert to the Ministry of Education and then come down to the Ministry of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development; Public Administration; Transport; Public Utilities; the Ministry of Community Development and the Ministry of Legal Affairs and the Ministry of National Diversity and Social Integration.

Dr. Moonilal: Chairman, I just want to make a quick point. I say with great respect to all involved, when these matters are fixed, the Leader of the Opposition quite rightly and properly indicated his order of priority for all. It is not the first time I am hearing that the Leader of the Opposition has changed his—

Mr. Chairman: No, no, no—

Dr. Moonilal: I am not finished.

Mr. Chairman: This request came from the hon. Minister of Finance and the Economy, and that is why we approached him in order to agree to this.

Dr. Moonilal: But, Chairman, please; there is a certain order that we would like to have before us. We also have further requests to make of the Leader of the Opposition. Is the Leader of the Opposition prepared to consider further changes for the evening?

Mr. Chairman: I would suggest that when we break—

Dr. Moonilal: I did not know they were open to changes like this. [Crosstalk]

Mr. Chairman: No, no, no. What I am suggesting is that the only reason we approached the Leader of the Opposition, I received a text message from the hon. Minister of Finance and the Economy, and it is based on that, to accommodate the smaller Ministries, I went to the hon. Leader of the Opposition and he has agreed to accommodate the smaller entities so we can proceed.
Dr. Moonilal: We will be sending some more text messages.

Mr. Chairman: That is the reason why we made the request in order to facilitate these. If we need further adjustments, I will ask the Leader of Government Business to meet with the Chief Whip and they can discuss and see what further changes, if we so want, to bring to the attention of the hon. Leader of the Opposition.

The proceedings of this Standing Finance Committee is suspended until 5.20 p.m.

4.58 p.m.: Standing Finance Committee suspended.

5.20 p.m.: Standing Finance Committee resumed.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, the meeting of the Standing Finance Committee is resumed, and we are now going to Head 64, the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service.

Head 64.

Question proposed: That Head 64 stand part of the Schedule.

Mr. Chairman: I would like to take this opportunity to invite the hon. Minister of National Security, if he so desires, to make a brief statement for no more than five minutes, as I take this opportunity to welcome the Commissioner of Police and his team. The hon. Minister.

Hon. Griffith: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I wish to state that this started with the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service having their budgetary allocation just about two or three years now, and it has proven to be very effective. One of the problems that we have seen in dealing with law enforcement, apart from the concerns of lack of training and acquisition of assets, has to do with management. And through this system that we have now with the budget allocation being dealt with by the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service, they have the better knowledge to ascertain exactly what is required, and how soon it is required.

The previous system, it was very difficult for them to acquire specific things. It was affecting the performance of the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service. And through this system, with the Commissioner of Police being the accounting officer, it allows him now to be involved in good accountability, having that proper management, and to be able to acquire the assets that the police service needs on an immediate basis. So it has proven to be very effective. I think the
management—along this—has assisted greatly towards law enforcement, and with that, Mr. Chairman, I look forward for us to deal with this matter.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you, hon. Minister. Hon. Members, the sum $2,431,926,800 for Head 64 the 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. I go immediately to Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure; Item 001, Police Service. I recognize the hon. Member for Laventille East/Morvant.

Miss Cox: Thank you very much. Mr. Chairman: Oh, I am sorry. I recognize the hon. Member for Laventille East/Morvant and then the Member for Port of Spain South.

Miss Cox: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I have a few questions, but I will start with Sub-Head 03, Overtime.

Mr. Chairman: Sub-Head 03, Overtime.

Miss Cox: I see that the 2015 estimates $275 million—

Mr. Chairman: Yes.

Miss Cox:—and what accounts for that high figure?

Mr. Chairman: The hon. Minister of National Security.

Hon. Griffith: Yes, Mr. Chairman, we are aware that the police service they work a 40-hour work week, and because of the shortage of the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service, remember the manpower strength is just about 1,000 less than what is required. So because of this, unfortunately, and because of the high demand of policing, we have been forced to go along this line. However, with the upcoming fiscal year, we intend to have the increase of the police manpower strength of at least 1,000, and by doing this, with more police officers being on strength, there will be less need for that on a continuous basis. But this has really been because of the shortage of the police manpower strength and the police service working the 40-hour work week.

Miss Cox: Just a similar question. I just want to know how soon—

Mr. Imbert: I would like to speak on this item.

Mr. Chairman: Of course. Of course.
Mr. Imbert: I just want to make—

Mr. Chairman: Of course. Of course. Yes, hon. Member.

Miss Cox: There has been a lot of talk about reducing overtime, you know—what is being put in place, and how soon could that be done with the police service?

Hon. Griffith: Well again, the reduction of the overtime would come with the increase of the manpower strength—if the police service gets to the manpower strength that is required, the 8,000-odd.

Miss Cox: Do you have a time frame?

Hon. Griffith: There are two batches that we are looking at. They are doing it in batches of just 400 to 500. By doing this, hopefully by July of next year, we would start reaching that position where the police would be, for the first time, close to or equal to the establishment.

Mr. Chairman: All right. I recognize the Member for Port of Spain South.

Miss Mc Donald: Mr. Chair, it is a follow-on to what the Member for Laventille East/Morvant would have asked. For 08, Vacant Posts, they have allocated $150 million for this item. What is happening here? What steps are you taking to fill these posts?

Hon. Griffith: That, Mr. Chairman, again goes with the vacancies. What we have had is a revolving door where the police recruiting process would be in batches of just about 100 every six months, and within that six-month period you will have the attrition rate based on resignation, retirement and so forth, and because of that we were always playing catch up. Now, because we are doing batches of 400 to 500, it means that within a year we will now have an increase of 1,000, but a loss of probably a couple hundred. So that means they will actually have that increase of about 800 by the end of the fiscal year—end of the calendar year.

Mr. Chairman: Okay. I recognize the hon. Member for Diego Martin North/East and then the Member for Diego Martin Central.

Mr. Imbert: Yes. Mr. Chairman, first let me apologize if I ask a question that was asked when I was not in the Chamber. Could the Minister tell us what is the approved establishment of the police service?

Hon. Griffith: It is 7,715.
Mr. Imbert: And how many of those positions are filled?

Hon. Griffith: Six thousand two hundred.

Mr. Imbert: So, we are short 1,500?

Hon. Griffith: About 1,500, yes.

Mr. Imbert: Okay.

Hon. Griffith: So with the two batches of 500 each—

Mr. Imbert: Okay.

Hon. Griffith:—we will be getting close.

Mr. Imbert: How does this shortage affect the ability of the police service to conduct its operations?

Hon. Griffith: Well, and again, that is where the problem lies when we go right back to Sub-Item 03 with the overtime. Because of this, the 6,000 serving officers now have to do the work of 7,700; hence the reason for the overtime because of the 40-hour work week.

Mr. Imbert: Okay. The other point on that same Item 001, these 1,500 vacancies, are they across the ranks or are they at the intake level, the constable level?

Hon. Griffith: Well, the bulk will be at the rank of constable, but remember there is that pyramid. So as more persons leave there will be vacancies, but the bulk of that 1,500-odd would be the recruits, that recruiting level for the rank of constable.

Mr. Imbert: So are you saying therefore, that most of the senior ranks are filled, the positions are filled? That is what you are saying?

Hon. Griffith: Well we also have persons holding the acting rank and the acting positions as well.

Mr. Imbert: I want to ask about that as well. How many acting, how many persons do you have in acting positions?

Hon. Griffith: All the ranks, acting commissioner, senior superintendent—sorry—assistant commissioner, senior superintendent, superintendent, those have been filled.

Mr. Imbert: No. The total of the—you say you have 6,200 police officers at this time.
Hon. Griffith: Yes.

Mr. Imbert: How many of those are in acting positions, approximately?

Hon. Griffith: Yeah. I will have to assess that and get that information for you.

Mr. Imbert: No problem. And since the Commissioner of Police was given the responsibility for hiring, discipline, promotion, et cetera, of all ranks I think below Deputy Commissioner, if I am right, has there been any improvement in the filling of positions and dealing with grievances with respect to acting positions?

Mr. Chairman: The hon. Minister.

Hon. Griffith: Yes.

Mr. Imbert: I am just trying to find out if the police reform exercise is working in terms of delegating responsibility to the commissioner.

Hon. Griffith: All right. The acting, it is not just by the substantive vacancies. At times there will be situations where persons will go on courses, sick leave, vacation, so at times it will vary.

Mr. Imbert: No. I understand that. Let me explain what I am driving at. In the past there was always this complaint that the Police Service Commission took very long to fill positions and promote police officers and so on. We made some changes some years ago giving the Commissioner of Police now the authority to hire, promote, et cetera. Has there been any significant improvement in the filling of vacancies and promotions and so on?

Hon. Griffith: Yes. More so in the Second Division.

Mr. Imbert: Well could we get some details on this?

Hon. Griffith: Sure.

Mr. Imbert: You can provide it in writing. Okay. Could I go now to 03 and 04? Those two together are $700 million, more or less, $703 million actually—sorry, $603 million. The total salary bill for the police service is $850 million. So overtime and allowances now are getting close to the basic salary of police officers. Is this a healthy situation to be in? Should we not be paying the officers more? Why do we have to do this, pay them overtime and allowances and so on?

Hon. Griffith: Well as I have said, the reason for the overtime is because—
Mr. Imbert: The sum of it.

Hon. Griffith: Oh, the sum itself. No. You are talking about the rationale for the overtime.

Mr. Imbert: In my opinion, one of the reasons for overtime would be the fact that you are short.

Hon. Griffith: Correct.

Mr. Imbert: You are short staffed, but surely that cannot explain a $600 million expenditure for overtime and allowances in the context of a wage bill of $850 million. It is a huge amount. Does it not point to the fact that the basic salary should be higher?

Hon. Griffith: The basic salary of the police officers?

Mr. Imbert: Yeah. Because you are spending $600 million on allowances and overtime, should you not be paying them more?

Hon. Griffith: Well that will be decided on when we have the audit, which is pending, and the audit would verify if we need to improve the salaries.

Mr. Imbert: Are you doing a job evaluation exercise? You know, it is not being done for Members of Parliament, judges and people like that, under the SRC, the Speaker and so on. They are not doing it for us. They do not really care about us too much. But is a job evaluation exercise being done for police officers?

Hon. Griffith: But again, my focus is on the audit itself. The audit itself is—

Mr. Imbert: It is a serious question.

Hon. Griffith:—it is going to ensure all aspects. You see, sometimes you look at the audit and you are just thinking about finance. This audit is going to ascertain not just how to improve the police service, but also you are looking at—there are certain—for the last few decades, you have the police service in a structured manner, and things have changed in law enforcement, and there might be need for new units. There might be a need to reassign persons who will be in one unit. What might have been important 20 years, to what is here now.

Mr. Imbert: No. I am talking about compensation. You see, the job evaluation exercise for Members of Parliament and judges and so on determines our hours of work, our responsibilities, what we do. We stay here for 12 hours a day, two weeks in a row, we get paid part time. I am just wondering if, while they do not care about us, [Laughter] whether somebody in the Government is doing a
job evaluation exercise on the duties, responsibilities, working conditions of police officers to see whether their pay package is commensurate with their duties, responsibilities and working conditions, even though it is not being done for parliamentarians and judges.

Hon. Griffith: You are stressing on that.

5.35 p.m.

Mr. Imbert: No, I am serious. They do not care about us or judges or other people like that, but is someone caring about the police officers and doing a job evaluation exercise to see if their compensation package matches their duties and responsibilities?

Hon. Griffith: Yes, and the audit. With the audit from the present Commissioner of Police, Bill Bratton when he was here, he actually said it and I emphasized the point that the officers need to be compensated so that they will be able to perform better especially based on their duties. So the audit would also be part of that process to show that the status right now, may very well show that the salary that the police officers receive it is not in keeping with what is required especially, best practice.

Mr. Imbert: So as we get along later in the Estimates, we will find an allocation for that then, for the job evaluation exercise you spoke about?

Hon. Griffith: Possible.

Mr. Imbert: You have to pay for it, so it has to be in here somewhere.

Hon. Griffith: Well, remember with the audit—well, then the recommendations in the audit and then we will have to move from there after we get—

Mr. Imbert: As we go along, I will look for it and see if I can find it, because I could not find it.

Hon. Griffith: Please.

Mr. Chairman: I recognize the hon. Member for Diego Martin West, Leader of the Opposition.

Dr. Rowley: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, I am very pleased to see the Minister here this evening, because the last time I had the opportunity to speak to him face to face like this was about the police, he was the advisor to the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago on matters of national
security. And in that discussion, which was a visit by the Opposition to the Prime Minister’s Office, the question of a manpower audit of the police service featured very prominently. And I got the impression—I came away from that meeting that
the advisor, who is now the Minister, was in agreement that that was an urgent requirement. And I am not here talking about a manpower audit against the background of emoluments, I am talking about deployment.

We have an establishment of 6,000 people or we have 6,000 persons in charge—[Interuption]

Hon. Griffith: Six thousand, yeah, out of 7,000.

Dr. Rowley: Sixty-three hundred, okay. The manpower audit is really meant to answer a question. What do we have and where are they deployed? What are they doing? To answer another question, are we getting the best use of what we have, and also, do we have enough of the right people in the right places? That is what a manpower audit answers. And when you answer those questions then you come to the other answer about how you pay them and if you are paying them properly. But I would like to hear, from the Minister, whether the manpower audit as conceded in that meeting, I think it was August sometime last year or about, which is—[Interuption]

Hon. Griffith: Four years.

Dr. Rowley:—to deal with the deployment of bodies in the police service and whether we have the right mix of skills in the right places, if that is being done now?

Hon. Griffith: Yes, and that audit is being conducted by the—[Interuption]

Dr. Rowley: Who is doing it?

Hon. Griffith: Hartnett, I will have to get the date exactly, Hartnett and Company, but that is the company that was under the present Commissioner of Police, Bill Bratton, when he was here.

So they are aware of what is required. We are just waiting now for it to commence. It has already been approved at Cabinet level. And that is exactly what you said, I am in agreement with you 100 per cent. That manpower audit is very critical before we even move to deal with salary increase, and the audit will dictate the whole structure of the police service. Because right now where we had a situation years ago where police officers would spend more time in the
buildings, it has changed now. Now it is more customer service, where you need to have the police officers out in the streets much more than in the police buildings.

So now you see less police buildings in other cities and more police officers out in the streets. There is also, because of the situations now with law enforcement, there may be need for other types of agencies that we never had before, more focused on crime scene investigation to deal with detection rate. Do we need a forensic centre of department assigned to the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service? Do we need to have more undercover police officers?

New York, for example, one-third of their police department, they are undercover officers. Do we have the proper training facilities for the police service? Are there certain agencies in the police service that we need to disband because there may not be a need for it based on the threat assessment? So that manpower audit will do exactly that.

Dr. Rowley: And that is being done. Do you have any idea when we can look to that being commenced and completed?

Hon. Griffith: We hope for it to commence by late October early November.

Dr. Rowley: You do not know yet what kind of completion date.

Hon. Griffith: I think it will take a few months to complete. We are looking at about February.

Dr. Rowley: Given what the Minister has just said, Mr. Chairman, I crave your indulgence to follow-on to what he said before we go back to the numbers. And that is to try and get an understanding of what problem we are trying to solve.

Mr. Chairman, in looking at the police service and what exactly the police service understands as its mandate, I found out that the police service understands that its mandate is to maintain law and order, public safety and defence against aggression, manage disaster preparedness and response, monitor and control the flow of persons into and out of the country.

Now, that is my understanding from what I have researched. Maintain law and order and public safety, I would not argue with that. But defence against aggression, is that something that is carried on from colonial times? Because I do know that since we have got a defence force that the police service still has that as its main focus, then manage disaster preparedness and response. We have created a very expensive ODPM body. So is the police still seeing that part of its role? And
monitor and control the flow of persons into and out of the country, is that not Immigration Department’s role? So really, if what I have discovered here existed from colonial days, the real function in the police service which is relevant today, is maintain law and order and public safety.

And then I come down to the Mission. What does the police understand as its Mission? And I discovered the Mission is:

“In partnership with the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago, we provide for safe and secure communities and other places through professional policing, focused leadership and consistent, high quality service.”

And the Vision is:

“To make every place in Trinidad and Tobago safe.”

Against that background of those components, I would like to ask the Minister, how are we succeeding or failing against that Mission Statement and that Vision for the police service?

Hon. Griffith: Yes, Chairman, and again, that is why we are trying to—we do not want to have the audit done internally. What we are trying to look at is what we have seen as best practice, and exactly what you have said. It is quite possible that a lot of—many of the—you will see the roles and functions of the police service is something that was 40 years ago. And because the times have changed in law enforcement, there is a different need, there is a different threat assessment and there will be different roles and functions. So the things that we will see here, may not be what is required now, and that is exactly what the audit will do. Some of the things however, from a secondary perspective, the police would have a part to play. For example, to deal with—one of the things you spoke about, in a case of natural or manmade disaster—[Interruption]

Dr. Rowley: Control flow of people into and out of Trinidad and Tobago—

Hon. Griffith: Yes.

Dr. Rowley:—and defence against aggression.

Hon. Griffith: Defence against aggression and to deal with any natural or manmade disaster, there would be some aspects of policing that we could have seen in the attempted coup in 1990. That was a situation where there was a clear and present danger, but there was a need for the police presence, and even though the defence force became the front line, because of the state of emergency and it was based on insurgents trying to destroy our democracy as we know it, the police
still had a part to play. But that was really secondary, that was not their primary role and function.

Likewise, in any natural or manmade disaster, there would be need for police to assist in traffic control, in movement of the crowds to avoid riots or anything like that. So there would be situations where the police would be involved in those aspects but from a secondary perspective. But what I am just speaking about, is again, it is all based on perception. The audit will verify, based on what is best practice worldwide, how the police service should be established, especially, and this is not to have a template, because different police units worldwide will have different roles and functions based on the threat assessment. What our Trinidad and Tobago Police Service will be required to do here will be totally different, to probably, what they will want in Costa Rica, because they do not have a defence force, or Colombia or even in New York. However, there would be a general concept, but I think there are certain things that I have seen that require changes.

**Dr. Rowley:** But would you agree that if the manpower audit is to be used as a tool for refocusing the police, that one has to have the mission clarified—

**Hon. Griffith:** Yeah.

**Dr. Rowley:**—so as to determine what the requirements are against the background of any findings of the audit.

**Hon. Griffith:** Agreed, yes.

**Dr. Rowley:** And from what I just read there and from what you have said, it appears as though there is going to be the need for a serious restructuring in the police service. Are you seeing that?

**Hon. Griffith:** Agreed, and I think that is where the audit would verify exactly the direction that we need to go, and also looking at the mission, but more importantly looking at their role and function, both primary and secondary, agreed.

**Mr. Chairman:** Yes, I recognize Diego Martin Central.

**Dr. Browne:** Thank you, Chairman. Listening to the explanation about the upcoming audit, and I am sure there are police officers in my constituency saying, “while the grass is growing, the cow is starving or the cows are starving”. My question is with respect to a system of incentives for police officers in various branches. I am particularly concerned about the Anti-Corruption Investigations Bureau and other officers—[**Interruption**]
Mr. Chairman: If you could point to us where that is located.

Dr. Browne: 02.

Mr. Chairman: 02?

Dr. Browne: Yes, Wages and Cost of Living Allowance. So is there any system of financial incentives in place for officers in specific branches? And secondly, my question on Wages and Cost of Living Allowances has to do with other paymasters for officers within the police service, whether they are on or off duty, and the legality, Mr. Minister—

Hon. Griffith: Sorry.

Dr. Browne: The legality of the existence of other paymasters for specific police officers, whether they are on duty or off duty. And I am speaking with respect to engagement at fetes, bars, parties, escort service for heavy vehicles and a range of other services that police officers provide from time to time, on occasion with remuneration involved, and as I am saying paymasters other than the Treasury of Trinidad and Tobago. I am asking about whether this is legal, is the Commissioner or Minister aware of any such practice, and if so, what steps are being taken or proposed to deal with such?

Mr. Chairman: Before you answer, I just want to remind hon. Members, there is a committee that we will be populating next week on national security, and that committee’s mandate is broad. Those matters that you are raising I feel could best be discussed at that level. Right now we are dealing with line Items. The hon. Leader of the Opposition sought my indulgence, which I facilitated, but I do not want that to become a practice or a habit. We are dealing with line Items and the Minister of National Security and the team headed by the Commissioner of Police, they have come prepared to deal with these line Items. So let us deal with the line Items. And these extra matters that you are talking about, whether people are paid legally or illegally, that is not before us. What is before us is Salaries and Cost Of Living Allowance, we have a sum. You believe it is small—

Dr. Browne: Mr. Chairman, I was guided by precedent set a little earlier—in the form of questions.

Mr. Chairman: No, no, the precedent was only for the Leader.

Dr. Browne: I was not referring to the Leader of the Opposition—when there were questions about the Brian Lara Stadium, et cetera. But I hear you and I actually agree with your guidance. If the Minister is not able to respond now—
Hon. Griffith: Chair.

Mr. Chairman: Yes, go ahead.

Hon. Griffith: Shall I?

Mr. Chairman: Yes, go ahead, please.

Hon. Griffith: Now, there is a provision in the police service for police officers who are off duty. I just want to clarify the point here, Mr. Chairman, because there are two aspects here. If a police officer is off duty, there is a provision that is made that allows persons to then go to the police service to make the request, so if it is a duty outside of the role and function they can then—the payment is then made to the police service and they then pay the police officer for that duty when he is off duty.

Now, I do not know if that is what you are speaking about or police officers who are off duty and they are just paid directly by individuals such as Carnival fêtes and so forth. That has nothing to do with the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service. That is not within the authorization of the police service. That is a private venture that is done between a police officer on its own time—[Interruption]

Hon. Member: Legal.

Hon. Griffith: No, illegal, but what makes it worse is especially if the police officer will use his firearm in the performance of that duty.

Hon. Member: Illegal

Hon. Griffith: Very illegal, yes.

5.50 p.m.

Mr. Chairman: Let us go to Laventille East/Morvant.

Miss Cox: I just want to go back to 03—02. I know that I heard the Minister say that 6,200 persons are active. Could I get the figure on how many persons would be on sick leave, suspension or vacation or so?

Hon. Griffith: I could get that exact amount for you, but it would vary.

Miss Cox: I know it is a high figure, so I want to know how much—

Mr. Chairman: Yes, and we would not want you to mislead us.

Hon. Griffith: Yes, that is right.

Mr. Chairman: So give us the proper—
Hon. Griffith: Yes, Chairman, I will give you the proper—

Mr. Chairman: Yes, by providing to us in writing.

Hon. Griffith: Yes, please.

Mr. Chairman: All right? We go to 02, Goods and Services, and we go to Item 001, Police Service (Trinidad). I recognize the Leader of the Opposition.

Dr. Rowley: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. 02/03, Uniforms. Is it that we buy new uniforms every year? Or we stock up on a purchase and then draw down on the stores? Because, Mr. Chairman, I am seeing here, under Police Uniforms—and this is just police uniforms: 2013, $20 million; 2014, $35 million; 2015, $40 million. Now, that seems to be a very generous allocation for uniforms, so I would like an explanation as to how we proceed to spend that money.

Mr. Chairman: The hon. Minister of National Security.

Hon. Griffith: Yes, Mr. Chairman. The Trinidad and Tobago Police Service will purchase uniforms for all police officers in accordance with the Police Service Regulations and the Standing Orders. Now, what we have seen, again, because of the increase in the manpower strength, the numbers would increase. So when we are looking at the allocation, as mentioned, whereas before we would just bring a batch of 100 and 80 persons would leave, we are always at that number, but because of the anticipation that we will get very close to the establishment of 7,000, it is going to be an increase, whereas before, like last year, there may have only been about 6,000 police officers. If next year we will have 1,000 more, there would be an increase in the uniform, and with the increase in the uniform there would be an increase in the budget allocation for the uniform.

Dr. Rowley: No, well, I am saying that you spent $35 million in 2014 on your current establishment.

Hon. Griffith: Yes.

Dr. Rowley: You are telling me there would be some more next year so you will go up. But I am starting from the base level of $35 million.

Hon. Griffith: Yes.

Dr. Rowley: And I am saying, is it that every year we will have an—look at 2013. In 2013 it was $28 million, and if I go backwards in time, I am sure I am going to see—so is it that every year we buy a few 10 of millions of dollars in uniforms?
Hon. Griffith: Yes. And it is not just—remember, we have the task force, the mounted branch, the Guard and Emergency Branch, and every police officer, they have about four or five, I think, uniforms, for ceremonial, for a parade.

Dr. Rowley: So you do not think that this is an exorbitant figure? It is a required figure.

Hon. Griffith: Well, again, if we do the maths—

Dr. Rowley: I am just asking. I am just asking. I have no predisposed position. I am just asking, looking at the numbers because $40 million is not a small amount of money.

Hon. Griffith: Yes.

Dr. Rowley: So I am asking, is that $40 million going to be repeated every year when your establishment is established in 18 months or thereabouts, or in 12 months? Can we look forward every year to be spending that on uniforms? Is that what is required?

Hon. Griffith: I think at this time the—again, with the Commissioner of Police being the accounting officer, I do trust the—

Dr. Rowley: He is there, ask him.

Hon. Griffith: I asked him. He said yes. [Laughter]

Dr. Rowley: That is what I am asking. That is the answer I am looking for. Does the Commissioner feel that in making his budget, as we go forward, that this is the kind of outlay they have to look for with respect to uniforms? So, if he says yes, well, we will be examining it later on as we go forward.

Mr. Chairman, telephone—

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Chairman, on this same item—

Dr. Rowley: On telephone?

Mr. Imbert: Should I come back to that when I am speaking, or can we deal with this same item now?

Mr. Chairman: Well, you could deal with it.

Hon. Griffith: Mr. Chairman, if I could, I could just do the maths roughly here: $40 million, when you divide that by 7,000 officers—I am just ballparking—you are looking at just about $6,000 per officer, and with five
different types of uniform, you are looking at just about $1,000, and that includes from boots, belt and so forth. So ballpark—and then including the SRPs, you are looking at just about for every uniform it is between $800.

**Dr. Rowley:** So the figure is reasonable.

**Hon. Griffith:** Yes.

**Dr. Rowley:** That is what I am getting at.

**Miss Cox:** Chair—

**Mr. Chairman:** No, I will ask the Member for Diego Martin North/East on the same matter, and then you after—

**Mr. Imbert:** On this same matter—

**Mr. Chairman:**—and then we come back to the hon. Member.

**Mr. Imbert:**—is the Minister saying, or implying, that these six uniforms that each officer has, more or less, are changed every year? In other words, they last for 12 months only? Is that what you are saying? I have another question on this same item.

**Hon. Griffith:** Again, Mr. Chairman, as I said, there are four or five different types of uniforms, but—

**Mr. Imbert:** Minister, focus on my question.

**Hon. Griffith:** I know. I am coming to it. That is what I am saying.

**Mr. Chairman:** Yeah, yeah, yeah, “he coming”.

**Hon. Griffith:** I am on the question. So with those, there will be certain uniforms that they use on a daily basis and those, based on the wear and tear, they would be the ones that you will have to change on an annual basis. There may be others, such as for ceremonial parades and so forth, it may not be required. So it is really difficult to say that all the uniforms would be changed on an annual basis. It is based, really, on the duty of the individual.

**Dr. Rowley:** Mr. Chairman, may I assist—the reason why this matter has gotten my attention is because in 2011 the figure was $10 million, and I am sure police were properly provisioned or almost properly provisioned. So we got by in
2011 with $10 million. We are now saying that three years down the road, or two years down the road, the satisfying figure is $40 million. So what caused this drastic change?

Hon. Griffith: Okay. What I would like—I see what you are speaking about. You are talking about a 400 per cent increase. But I know at that time, the police second division were very upset because the uniforms were not being purchased on an annual basis. It does not mean that to just—what I will do, I will just look at the difference and verify—

Dr. Rowley: Check it out.

Hon. Griffith: Check it out, yes.

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Chairman, so could we get a breakdown of how many uniforms you buy per officer, what type and so on, on an annual basis? And what procurement procedure do you use, and who designs these uniforms? Because, Mr. Chairman, the former Commissioner of Police, Mr. Gibbs—

Mr. Cadiz: What does that have to do with the line item; who designed the uniforms?

Mr. Imbert: Come on! This is a purchase of—

Mr. Chairman: Please, please, please.

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Chairman, could you control them?

Mr. Chairman: Yes.

Mr. Imbert: I mean, clearly, the design of the uniform must have some effect on its cost. So the former Commissioner of Police had said that the uniforms that the police officers are using were unsuitable, something to do with the type of material, and the material was not suited for a tropical climate. I distinctly remember a public statement made by Mr. Gibbs to this effect, and that he was going to change out all the uniforms and so on. So could this expenditure have anything to do with that, that the old styled uniforms is now being changed out and new uniforms are being designed? Could you tell us who designs these uniforms and the procurement procedure for them, please?

Mr. Chairman: The hon. Minister?

Hon. Griffith: No, the uniform has not changed. It is the same uniform we had from the colonial-type uniform.

Mr. Imbert: Okay. So what is the procurement procedure?
Dr. Rowley: They had short pants. You used the short pants at one stage. [Laughter and crosstalk]

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Chairman, could you control that side for me, please? I am trying to get an answer here and I am being disturbed by this side here.

Hon. Griffith: You are talking about the colonial grey.

Mr. Imbert: Procurement procedure.

Hon. Griffith: There is a set procurement procedure. If you require, I can actually give the breakdown and show how it is done, for uniforms.

Mr. Imbert: It is a lot of money. I would like to know how you go about—do you get three quotes? Do you have a bonded supplier? How are you doing this? I would like to know. Is it competitive bidding? Or you just have a preferred contractor? I would like to know.

Mr. Chairman: Could you supply that in writing?

Hon. Griffith: Yes, Chairman. And, Chairman, I could also speak—the police second division, in fact, they have actually written to me and we had meetings on several occasions where they have voiced their concern and request to have the whole uniform changed.

Dr. Rowley: So the uniform is an issue.

Mr. Chairman: I recognize the Member for Laventille East/Morvant.

Miss Cox: I just wanted to ask if there was a policy with regard to the distribution of uniforms and the use of uniforms—a written policy on that.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister?

Hon. Griffith: Yes, there is an established practice with the distribution where there are certain items—it is like an issue—and each police officer will have his issue. There will be times where, based on an item being unserviceable, it would be returned to the quartermaster and then they would get a new issue. So there may be a specific period for wear and tear based on certain situations where the boots, or whatever, may take place, there would be that change.

Miss Cox: I just have a follow-up question. What measures are being put in place—because now there seem to be a lot of persons with police uniforms—authentic uniforms. So what measures are being put in place to prevent that from
happening? What security measures with regard to uniforms and accountability, where police officers are issued uniforms and they turn up in the hands of bandits—what is being put in place to deal with that?

**Hon. Griffith:** Well, in the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service they do have lists of Standing Orders where internal audits will be done on a regular basis. It does not mean that it is going to automatically prevent all aspects of police officers either misplacing, or even deliberately being handed over to the wrong side. But through the Standing Orders and the regular audits—and there may be a need to have more audits and regular checks done to ensure that police officers—they have the equipment and the equipment that they have—I know you are speaking about, even like a bulletproof vest and it has “Police” on it, if it gets in the wrong hands, what can happen. I know, well, from the side of the Customs, there is a lock to ensure that those items do not enter from ports of entry, but police officers who presently have their uniforms—to ensure that it stays there with the police officer and it is used in the right manner. Through the Standing Orders we have that.

**Mr. Chairman:** Member for Arouca/Maloney?

**Miss Mc Donald:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

**Miss Hospedales:** Mr. Chairman—

**Mr. Chairman:** Yeah, “ah coming to you in a short while.”

**Miss Hospedales:** Mr. Chair, what I wanted to ask was, with reference to the purchase of uniforms that were printed in the media in 2012, whether or not those uniforms would be utilized, and if not, where are they?

**Mr. Chairman:** What is that? You want to know about uniforms where? Listen, let us try to stick—

**Miss Hospedales:** No, I am speaking under the item.

**Mr. Chairman:** So you are going to where, in 2010?

**Miss Hospedales:** Sub-Item 03.

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

**Hon. Griffith:** Chairman, what is being discussed here is exactly what I just spoke about. With the police second division, they had a recommendation to change the uniform of the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service. It was a totally different brand, a different feel; it will look different. It was to just transform the
whole image of the police service and they stated—similar to what the previous Commissioner of Police said about the type of uniform. But that was just based on a recommendation. Those are just samples. So that has absolutely nothing to do with the actual allocation of the uniform in the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service in the quartermaster department. Those were just samples that you saw. There is absolutely no decision that has been made as yet, to confirm if it will go in that direction. That really will be the call of the Commissioner of Police.

**Mr. Chairman:** The Member for Port of Spain South.

**Miss Mc Donald:** Sorry, Mr. Chair, but the Member for Diego Martin North/East asked my question.

**Mr. Chairman:** Okay. The Member for St. Ann’s East and then the hon. Leader of the Opposition.

**Mrs. Thomas:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I was just looking at Item number 51, Relocation of Overseas Staff and I just wanted to enquire from the Minister—

**Mr. Chairman:** Item what?

**Mrs. Thomas:** Number 51, page 330, under Goods and Services.

**Mr. Chairman:** Yes.

**Mrs. Thomas:** Relocation of Overseas Staff, I just wanted to know what exactly that increase related to; what type of staff.

**Hon. Griffith:** Those are Special Branch officers assigned to the embassies, Mr. Chairman. So we are looking at Miami, New York, and we now have approval for another to be stationed in London.

**Mr. Chairman:** The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

**Dr. Rowley:** Mr. Chairman, if I may come back to 05, Telephones. We are very well off as a country, but we do have some challenges, and I am wondering whether there are any specific efforts within the police service to keep the telephone bill cost within a reasonable, or—how should I put it? You need to use the phone as much as you have to for the job, but to prevent abuse or minimize abuse. Because, Mr. Chairman, given the priorities we have for expenditure in the country of other items, 2013, $38 million in telephone; 2014, we budgeted $40 million, estimated down to be $39 million, and we are looking now to add $6 million more to that, so we are budgeting $45 million, which would mean that over a three-year period, we would have spent well over $100 million in
telephone service within the police service. I am wondering if this is properly managed within the service. And what are the control systems in place to make sure that this line item expenditure is in keeping with what is required and no excesses?

6.05 p.m.

Hon. Griffith: Yes, Mr. Chairman, the point is taken but I just want to add, however, with that Item we see Telephones, whereas in other Ministries, you will just see it as telephones, this here also includes IT, Internet, the Broadband to be used between the IATF and other arms of the law enforcement agencies. So, yes, it is utilized to pay for landlines but also the official mobile units, the cellular phones that are given to numerous police officers, and then you have the wide area networks, the data lines and Internet to over 102 locations at 77 police stations. I do understand your point, however, I do see where you are coming from, for us to just ensure that the system and the process is not abused. I think the abuse can only be really based on the individuals who may have the mobile phones and the landlines.

Dr. Rowley: What controls are in place? Are there limits to personal use? What do you have in place or is it just wide open?

Hon. Griffith: Yes, I know, not with the landline but the mobile phone, there is a limit, but, again, the limit could be based on the officer in his line of duty. So some may have a limit different to others, $300.

Dr. Rowley: But it is an area that you would look at to make sure that it can be controlled?

Hon. Griffith: What we will do is we will look at, especially the landlines and look at the different police stations and then we could verify if it is being abused in a specific area or if there is justification for it.

Dr. Rowley: How are you charged for Internet services? Your charge is station by station or you have a package from the supplier because that is an area where cost can run away if you do not have a proper arrangement in place. Have you tried to get a package service that services—

Hon. Griffith: For all 77 stations.

Dr. Rowley: Yeah, what do you have in place now?

Hon. Griffith: I think it is packaged—there are three centralized locations and they are all based on a package itself. So it is not that the more you use it, the more it will cost.
Dr. Rowley: But within there, we do have more than one supplier in the country. Is competition taken into account when you seek the service?

Hon. Griffith: Yes, some, I know, have been used through Flow based on cost. So the competition is there but I mean, it is limited and there would be some fly-by-night companies that obviously you would not even consider.

Mr. Chairman: All right, we go on to Item 002, Police Service (Tobago).

Hon. Members: No, no, no, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: So we are still under Goods and Services?

Hon. Members: Yes.

Mr. Chairman: Okay. I recognize the Member for Laventille East/Morvant, the Member for Diego Martin North/East, the Member for La Brea and then the Member for Arouca/Maloney.

Miss Cox: I have a few questions, please. Under 09 Rent/Lease - Vehicles and Equipment, I see it moved from 2013 $5 million to $9 million in 2015. I just would like to know what is the cause of this increase? Also, what are the procurement systems used?

Hon. Griffith: Sorry, this is under—

Miss Cox: Item 09, what is the procurement process used for the rental and lease of vehicles? Did you find it?

Hon. Griffith: Yes.

Miss Cox: From $5 million to $9 million in 2015.

Hon. Griffith: There is a selective tender process but there are several companies that the options are made—

Miss Cox: You use one company or you use several?

Hon. Griffith: No, several different companies, but there will be for different purpose. There will be some that will be used by some of the intelligence agencies in the police service, some operation undercover and they are obviously unmarked.

Miss Cox: So what is the reason for this big increase in expenditure from $5 million to $9 million?

Hon. Griffith: Because of the units that we have now: the organized crime unit, the criminal gangs and intelligence unit, special branch.
Miss Cox: Okay, I go to 16. There is an increase from 2014 to 2015, $15 million under Contract Employment. What accounts for this? I would like to get a list of the contract employees in the police service and their positions.

Hon. Griffith: You would like to get the list?

Miss Cox: A list of all the contract persons and their positions, and what accounts for this $15 million increase from one year to the other.

Mr. Chairman: Let me just ask a question: are these contract employees police officers or are they civilians?

Hon. Griffith: No, no, civilian employees. But when I give the list, the list will actually show the difference as to what has caused the increase of the $15 million.

Miss Cox: Okay, no problem. I want to find out about the police service concerning police officers.

Mr. Chairman: Which item?

Miss Cox: How many ex-police officers are on contract in the police service? I am still under 16.

Hon. Griffith: I will have that provided in the list as well.

Miss Cox: Okay. Under Training, I know that there was a vacancy for a provost, has that vacancy been filled and by who?

Mr. Chairman: Which one is that, Member for Laventille East/Morvant?

Miss Cox: Item 17, Training.

Mr. Chairman: What are you asking there? The increase?

Miss Cox: No, I am asking about a provost in the Police Training Academy. I know that there was a vacancy. Was that vacancy filled? And I would like to know by whom.

Hon. Griffith: That vacancy was filled just a week or so ago by a retired police officer.

Miss Cox: What is his name?

Hon. Griffith: Simon Alexis.

Dr. Rowley: A retired person?

Hon. Griffith: He was an Assistant Commissioner, police.
Miss Cox: Is he qualified for the post?

Hon. Griffith: Yes, definitely.

Miss Cox: Could you send us his qualifications and so on?

Mr. Chairman: Could we go to the—yes, one more.

Miss Cox: I have a question concerning the buying out of leave of police officers. Minister, could you tell us from 2013 to 2014, how many police officers’ leave was bought out and who are they?

Hon. Griffith: No, we would not have that list.

Miss Cox: Yes, you could provide it.

Hon. Griffith: But what I can say, it is very—we try to avoid this as much as possible.

Miss Cox: Buying out leave?

Hon. Griffith: Buying out leave. The only time that it could be done is if there is a specific need based on an assessment and a reason to have the individual remain for that extra period in time.

Miss Cox: Okay, but could we be furnished with information?

Hon. Griffith: Sure. For what period? What time frame?

Miss Cox: From 2013 to 2014, and the list of the officers’ leave bought out.

Hon. Griffith: Yes, and I could also provide you with the amount of leave that was bought out as well.

Miss Cox: Item 36, Extraordinary Expenditure, could you tell me what accounted for the expenditure of $10 million and what constitutes Extraordinary Expenditure?

Mr. Chairman: Do you want to provide that or you could deal with that?

Hon. Griffith: No, actually I could get that now. We have it here so I can have it provided.

Mr. Chairman: Well, whilst they are waiting to supply that—

Miss Cox: I have another question, while they are waiting. Food at Institutions, there is a $16 million—[Crosstalk] Why I asked this is because we observed that in all the institutions, the food bill is very high. Now, I know that the regiment and the coast guard provide food for their—
Hon. Griffith: Because of overnight duty and—yes.

Miss Cox: Right, but police officers do not provide food on that basis unless they are the recruits and so on.

Hon. Griffith: Yes, they get a meal allowance.

Miss Cox: So how come this expenditure is so high, $16 million? Where did this come from?

Hon. Griffith: Mr. Chairman, the bulk of that really will be those persons who are actually held for over a week in the—prisoners. Persons who would be in the cells for a few days until they move to where they belong.

Miss Cox: You all provide them with food to the tune $16 million? Minister, I am listening.

Hon. Griffith: “They eating.” [Laughter]

Miss Cox: Okay, I have one question concerning—

Hon. Griffith: I understand your point, we will look at the list and get a breakdown.

Mr. Chairman: Final question before we go on.

Miss Cox: Medical Expenses, there is a $5 million increase in the medical expenses, what accounted for that? Item 58.

Hon. Griffith: Again, because of the increase in manpower strength, the increase in staff would also cause the increase in the allocation for medical expenses.

Miss Cox: What was that increase over the year that will account for $5 million?

Hon. Griffith: The increase would have been about 1,200 SRPs and 400 from the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service and with the plan to have another 1,000 added, that would cause the increase by the $5 million.

Miss Cox: Or so you are paying the medical upfront or something?

Hon. Griffith: No, this is in anticipation of.

Miss Cox: Okay, all right.

Mr. Chairman: I recognize the Member for Diego Martin North/East.
**Mr. Imbert:** Let us go back to 08, Rent/Lease - Office Accommodation and Storage. What is storage? On page 329, 02, 001, 08, Rent/Lease - Office Accommodation and Storage. Please, explain what “Storage” means and could you give us a list of all the properties that the police service is renting, who their owners are and what the rent is? Hold on, that is just question one.

Question two: Item 09, Rent/Lease, Vehicles and Equipment, again, could we get a list of all vehicles being rented and from whom and at what cost? Could I ask on this one, a related question: could I be told how many vehicles the police service is renting and why—this is just a deduction I have come to—is the police service purchasing vehicles as opposed to renting vehicles? Because the allocation for rental is $9 million but on another Head, which we will come to in due course, I saw an allocation of $50 million for acquisition of vehicles. Could I get the general philosophy behind purchase of vehicles?

Which then leads to my next question: 013, $75 million on Maintenance of Vehicles, is this being done in-house or is it being farmed out to private contractors? If it is being farmed out to private contractors, the maintenance of vehicles, could I get a list of the names of these contractors and the amounts paid to them in 2014 and what you expect for 2015?

With respect to 16, Contract Employment, could we get the positions, a description of the positions of all these people who are hired on contract—

**Miss Cox:** I asked that already.

**Mr. Imbert:** No. Did you ask for the positions? And the actual persons who were hired in 2014 and who do you expect to hire in 2015.

Could you explain on Item 22 what is Short Term Employment and what caused short-term employment to go from its 2014 estimate of $5 million to its revised estimate of $23,500,000 which is an increase of about 600 per cent or 500 per cent. And what is Item 23 for, Fees? Is that legal fees or consultancy fees? If it is, could we get a list of everybody paid under Fees in 2014 and a breakdown of what you expect to spend $15 million on, on fees in 2015?

**6.20 p.m.**

Could you explain in Item 28, what is Other Contracted Services—[Interruption] no, these are questions. I want answers. What is Other Contracted Services? How did you spend this $10 million in 2014? How do you expect to spend $12 million in 2015? You have already answered Extraordinary Expenditure, I think. Did you get an answer for Extraordinary Expenditure?
Miss Cox: No, he said he would provide it.

Mr. Chairman: No, he would provide us.

Mr. Imbert: Did he say what it was?

Mr. Chairman: Yeah.

Dr. Moonilal: What is that?

Mr. Imbert: Extraordinary Expenditure, did he explain what it was? Could we even get a brief explanation?

Hon. Griffith: Sure, sure.

Mr. Imbert: Before you get to the list, tell us what is this? And then with respect to Food and Institutions, could we find out if this is done in-house or you buy from caterers, or KFC or whatever it is you do? And could we get a breakdown of the major persons who you acquired food from in 2014 and who you intend to buy food from in 2015, for Food and Institutions, we are talking about $16 million here.

With respect to Housing Accommodation, who are you housing at a cost of $1.5 million? And with respect to Medical Expenses, could you clarify whether police officers get complete coverage, not just for injuries in the line of duty, but for lifestyle problems, cardiac problems, problems with high blood pressure, and so on? That is it. Just on this item alone, that is it. [Laughter]

Hon. Griffith: Chairman, I do not know where to start.

Mr. Imbert: Well, start at the beginning, [Laughter] which was Office Accommodation, which was 08.

Hon. Griffith: Okay, Chairman, the housing accommodation that is for the overseas special branch.

Hon. Member: Which item?

Mr. Imbert: Is that the last one I just said there?

Hon. Griffith: The last shall by first.

Mr. Imbert: 50, okay, right, yeah.

Hon. Griffith: So the housing accommodation those are for the individuals who are stationed abroad. The Extraordinary Expenditure, that would involve funeral expenses, removal of dead bodies, and paying for informants and other aspects, along those lines.
Pertaining to the rental of vehicles, there are 50 vehicles being rented, those vehicles would be used for covert operations. Unfortunately, I do not think we would be able to provide you with the—what you wanted to get, the numbers?

Mr. Imbert: Types, the numbers, who you are renting them from?

Hon. Griffith: No, no, we cannot give you the vehicle numbers.

Mr. Imbert: No, no—[ Interruption]

Hon. Griffith: Right, right, sure.

Mr. Imbert: Mazda, five Nissans, two Toyotas.

Hon. Griffith: Yes, yes, sure, sure, that I could provide you with.

Mr. Imbert: Right, and who you are renting them from? And I had a much more fundamental question.

Hon. Griffith: Yeah, Mr. Chairman, again, it would be difficult for us to state with those 50 vehicles, exactly the companies that they will be rented from.

Mr. Imbert: You cannot tell that? [ Crosstalk]

Hon. Griffith: Well, that could obviously—if you are getting them from Rudy’s Car Rental, all you need now to go to—

Mr. Indarsingh: I do not like that example, but anyway—[Laughter]

Mr. Imbert: So you do not want to compromise the covert operations?

Hon. Griffith: Yes.

Mr. Imbert: All right, okay, okay. Could you then explain—because I had a related question on this—why are you focusing on the purchase of vehicles, which carries with it a maintenance responsibility, as opposed to rental of vehicles?

Hon. Griffith: Well, most of the vehicles—[ Interruption] yes, that is the standard approach in the public service, and with the maintenance of all of these vehicles, they are sent to Toyota, Massy and Lifestyle, and then there would be some that would go to—with the Omega, VMcott, because through the—there were some vehicles such as the Omega vehicles that were purchased, so VMcott would deal with the maintenance of those vehicles.

Mr. Imbert: No, but you are not answering my question. Have you done a cost benefit analysis and efficiency audit to determine whether it would be more
efficient and more beneficial in terms of cost to rent or lease vehicles on a long-term basis, other than having to have this huge infrastructure and bureaucracy to maintain all these vehicles?

**Hon. Griffith:** No, no, no, we have not done that.

**Mr. Imbert:** Do you intend to do that?

**Hon. Griffith:** No.

**Dr. Rowley:** Will you consider to do that?

**Hon. Griffith:** Well, what I would do again, liaising with the Commissioner of Police, this is an ongoing basis for us to improve the police service, and if at any time we can see something that can improve it, I would liaise with the Commissioner of Police to look into it.

**Mr. Imbert:** Rather than buying a vehicle and then sending it by Toyota for Toyota to fix, why do you not just lease it from Toyota or Mazda as the case may be? [Interruption] Mr. Chairman, I am being disturbed by non-security personnel. So I would really—since you are saying this—you met it so, this is the practice in the public service, you should really bring in an expert, because look at the money you are spending $75 million on maintenance, $50 million on acquisition of vehicles, that is $125 million. You really should consider bringing in an expert to advise you on whether you should go into long-term leases with maintenance included, or whether you should continue this practice of purchase and maintenance.

**Hon. Griffith:** Yes, we would consider that.

**Mr. Chairman:** Let us go again.

**Hon. Griffith:** Yes, Chairman.

**Mr. Jeffrey:** Mr. Chairman, I have a number of questions.

**Mr. Chairman:** I hope you are not repeating.

**Mr. Jeffrey:** No, no, no, I am not repeating at all. Rent and Lease of Office or Office Accommodation and Storage, in 2013, $30 million; 2014, $36 million; 2015, $40 million. I will like to find out, Mr. Chairman, the total number of buildings under a lease arrangement, and the total cost? And also the total number of buildings under rental arrangement and total cost? I would also like to find out as well, in terms of the congested La Brea Police Station—
Mr. Chairman: Yeah, we can all hear you.

Mr. Jeffrey:—is that building—

Mr. Chairman: We can all hear you. [Laughter] No, you do not have to shout. [Laughter]

Mr. Jeffrey: I am not shouting.

Mr. Chairman: Well, I mean, I thought so. [Crosstalk] Okay, go on.

Mr. Jeffrey: In terms of the La Brea Police Station, because this is La Brea Police Station, is that building under lease arrangement or rental? And if so, what is the cost, the annual cost? That is the first question.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, can you respond?

Hon. Griffith: Mr. Chairman, I think that question was already asked. We are going to provide that information. However, with the La Brea Police Station, that is a UDeCOTT project; that is a new building.

Mr. Jeffrey: No, no, no, no, where the—right now, where the La Brea Police officers are stationed, that building there.

Hon. Griffith: Oh, oh.

Mr. Chairman: All right, Minister, then you will provide that in writing? What is your next question, hon. Member?

Mr. Jeffrey: The second question has to do with—

Hon. Griffith: It is a Government building, by the way. It is a Government building, where the police are stationed now; the old one?

Mr. Jeffrey: The old police station, that is where Republic Bank—

Hon. Griffith: Yes, where the bank was. It is a rental, sorry, Mr. Chairman. It is a rental, that one there.

Mr. Jeffrey: And if so, what is the rental cost?

Hon. Griffith: Okay, I will get that for you. I will provide it for you.

Mr. Chairman: What is the next question?

Mr. Jeffrey: 21, Repairs and Maintenance - Buildings. I will like to know how many buildings are under this Repair and Maintenance Programme, because that is a huge figure of 16 x 20 x 25.
Hon. Griffith: It is 102.

Mr. Jeffrey: 102?

Hon. Griffith: Yes, plus there will be eight new buildings that will be coming on board shortly.

Mr. Chairman: Next question.

Mr. Jeffrey: No, no, Mr. Chairman. Coming back to that same La Brea Police Station where the officers “an dem” now occupy, that building is in a state of disrepair. Who maintains—who is seeing about the maintenance of that building?

Hon. Griffith: That is why it is they have, we have the new building, Mr. Chairman, and they are moving into that new station shortly.

Mr. Chairman: You have an old building and a new is there, and they are moving in shortly.

Mr. Jeffrey: I am asking this question against the backdrop that even though you have a new building that they are going to occupy shortly, all right, to have those officers occupy the premises that they have right now, in that condition, it worries me.

Mr. Chairman: All right, what is the next question?

Hon. Griffith: Chairman, I think they could wait a week. Within a week or so they will be moving.

Mr. Chairman: Member for La Brea, next question. Are you through?

Mr. Jeffrey: No, that is it.

Mr. Chairman: The Member for Arouca/Maloney.

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Chairman, could I just get an assurance that all the questions I asked—

Miss Hospedales: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Based on—

Mr. Chairman: Yes, yes, we will ensure that.

Hon. Griffith: You have my assurance.

Miss Hospedales:—Sub-Item 13, page 330, Maintenance of Vehicles and Repair. I am just asking whether or not this particular allocation of $75 million,
which is a $10 million increase from last year, will be utilized to repair the vehicles or all the police vehicles that are at the St. James Barracks that are in dire need of being repaired.

**Hon. Griffith:** Well, within the last two years, Mr. Chairman, we acquired 550 new vehicles, but what is the question that—the St. James—

**Miss Hospedales:** There are a lot of vehicles at the St. James Barracks that are in dire need of being repaired, those vehicles are basically packed up at one side of the compound.

**Hon. Griffith:** Yes, there is a Board of Survey, some will be disposed and some to be repaired, Mr. Chairman.

**Dr. Rowley:** Thank you very much. Mr. Chairman, I would like to go to Item 23, Fees.

**Mr. Chairman:** Yes, I think that was raised already.

**Dr. Rowley:** While I was out of the room?

**Mr. Imbert:** Yes, I raised that.

**Mr. Chairman:** Yes, somebody raised that, the Member for Diego Martin North/East, and they promised to provide a breakdown.

**Mr. Imbert:** They did not promise, they alleged that they will.

**Mr. Chairman:** I do not know if you want to ask this—

**Dr. Rowley:** Okay, since I was not there, my apologies, but was it legal fees?

**Hon. Member:** No.

**Dr. Rowley:** Other fees? Other fees?

**Hon. Griffith:** Licences, the Internet and—

**Dr. Rowley:** Other fees? Okay, but—

**Hon. Griffith:** Software.

**Dr. Rowley:** No problem.

**Mr. Chairman:** We will now proceed to Sub-Item 03, Minor Equipment Purchases. Before we move on—

**Dr. Rowley:** Just one before I move on to that, and I would like to move on to that one too. But I just want to ask the Minister, what is it under Hosting of
Appropriation Bill, 2014

Thursday, September 25, 2014

[DR. ROWLEY]

Conferences, Seminars and Other Functions, what is it that we are going to be doing for $9 million in 2015, having spent $10 million in 2014 on that? What is that?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister?

Hon. Griffith: Yes, Mr. Chairman.

Dr. Rowley: Pretty generous there. We would have spent $10 million in 2014, and we are budgeting $9 million in 2015 for conferences and seminars.

Hon. Griffith: Right, yes. We do have the breakdown for that, Mr. Chairman, so I could have that provided for you.

Dr. Rowley: Thank you. I would move on then, Mr. Chairman, on to Minor Equipment.

Mr. Chairman: Right, so we go to Minor Equipment, Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment; Item 147, Trinidad, Police Service (Tobago), Item 02. I recognise the hon. Member for Diego Martin West.

Dr. Rowley: No, no, not Tobago. I was going to advance past Tobago to 03. We have 03.

Mr. Chairman: Yes, we are at 03.

Dr. Rowley: So it is Trinidad.

Mr. Chairman: Yeah, you could deal with Tobago too.

Dr. Rowley: So 03, 001, and I am here dealing with 01 and 04, Vehicles and Other Minor Equipment. Mr. Chairman, over and above the other expenses for vehicles that are found elsewhere in their arrangements, what exactly are these vehicles covered under minor equipment here for $42 million in 2015? And what did we buy for $20 million in 2014, because we have some other provisions here for vehicles. So could we get a clarification there, please? While I am at it then, we have other minor equipment for another $65 million. So could we get some clarification there just to tell us what exactly we are buying there?

I crave your indulgence, Mr. Chairman, to mention under 99, Employee Assistance Programme, was that raised in my absence?

Mr. Chairman: No.

Dr. Rowley: Could you answer that question, Mr. Chairman? I am asking why is the allocation so low for the employee assistance programme? One expects
that the police service is one area in the public service where employees, because of the nature of their duty, would require significant intervention under employee assistance programmes. Why then is the allocation so low and constantly low, from $137,000 to $500,000? Should that not be a more substantial allocation to treat with known problems?

Mr. Chairman: That is under Goods and Services. We are going to accommodate the hon. Leader, and we will come back.

Hon. Griffith: Yes, Mr. Chairman, okay. There is internal EAP, so they deal with most of those other issues. So because of the—

Dr. Rowley: And they are not budgeted for?

Hon. Griffith: Well, no, that will be part under salaries.

Dr. Rowley: So what is this then?

Hon. Griffith: Well, this will be external.

Dr. Rowley: This is to hire external support?

Hon. Griffith: Yes. Even if somebody—

Dr. Rowley: So this does not represent the total amount of effort?

Hon. Griffith: No it is an internal. Just now, let me—pertaining to the 2014, 101 vehicles were purchased and that is the cost of the bulk of the $20 million. In 2015, the anticipation would be—it is anticipated for 226 vehicles and that will be vehicles being replaced through the—because of the Board of Survey at a cost of $42 million, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: All right, we go to Sub-Head 03.

Miss Cox: Mr. Chair, my hand is up.

Mr. Chairman: No, no, I am saying we are back to Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment and Purchases. I recognize—

6.35 p.m.

Hon. Leader of the Opposition, you asked about 04.

Dr. Rowley: And he answered both, I thought.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, so we will now go to the Member for Laventille East/Morvant.
**Dr. Rowley:** You answered vehicles, but you did not tell me about the other minor equipment, the $65 million, what is that for?

**Hon. Griffith:** Yes, that is the firearms, ammunition, bulletproof vests. If you want, I can get the breakdown for you.

**Dr. Rowley:** No, no, no. I do not think so.

**Mr. Chairman:** No, no, no; we do not want that.

Could we go to the Member for Laventille East/Morvant? [Interruption] Your name is here. You are coming up. You cannot jump the queue. You were a teacher. [Laughter]

**Miss Cox:** I just would like to know—“he talkin with yuh, man”—[Interruption]—are you all listening to me now?

**Mr. Chairman:** Yes, continue.

**Miss Cox:** I just would like to know what is being put in place to ensure—because the expenditure is really a lot, $22 million here, 01—what is being put in place to ensure proper use and maintenance of the vehicles. Concerning the GPS, how many vehicles are outfitted with the GPS system?

**Hon. Griffith:** It is four.

**Miss Cox:** Also, I would like to know about the procurement process concerning the vehicles. Who are the suppliers and are these vehicles customized police vehicles?

**Hon. Griffith:** All the new vehicles have GPS on them, the total being 970.

**Miss Cox:** All the new vehicles?

**Hon. Griffith:** Yes, over the last three years.

**Miss Cox:** Are allowances being made for the older ones?

**Hon. Griffith:** Yes, and it is continuing. We are covering all.

**Miss Cox:** Procurement process, who are the suppliers?

**Hon. Griffith:** Central Tenders Board.

**Mr. Chairman:** Central Tenders Board. We recognize the Member for Diego Martin North/East.

**Miss Cox:** Hold on. They did not answer all.
Mr. Chairman: Which one again you want?

Miss Cox: What is being put in place to ensure proper maintenance and is it up to date, please? Because we are still seeing police vehicles in places that they should not be seen. What is being put in place?

Hon. Griffith: Chairman, I just want to clarify: the maintenance of the vehicles, where they are being maintained or—

Dr. Rowley: Track them with the GPS.

Hon. Griffith:—to be tracked.

Dr. Rowley: So that they are where they are supposed to be and not elsewhere.

Hon. Griffith: Well, no, they are being monitored at the police headquarters, their Command Centre, and they can be monitored through the National Operations Centre.

Miss Cox: What accounting procedure is in place concerning drivers of the vehicles, the police officers themselves, to make sure that they take care of the vehicles?

Hon. Griffith: You mean preventative maintenance. There is a preventative maintenance scheme similar to what you have with your private vehicle where, over a specific period or miles, the vehicles will then go into either Toyota, LifeStar, Neal & Massy or VMCOTT.

Mr. Chairman: Member for Diego Martin North/East.

Mr. Imbert: A few years ago, there was a move by the police service and the national security to have customized police vehicles, purpose-designed police vehicles. However, I have observed that the vehicles that were purchased in 2014—and I assume from what you are saying, the vehicles that will be purchased in 2015—are all standard typical sedans, pick-ups, SUVs. Has a decision been taken by the Ministry of National Security and/or the police service not to bother with acquisition of specialized vehicles and you are now buying ordinary, run-of-the-mill sedans, SUVs and pick-ups?

Hon. Griffith: There is no decision to have the custom-built vehicles, in the short term. It will continue the process—

Mr. Imbert: You are buying what is available on the market in terms of sedans, SUVs, pick-ups, et cetera. In that context, therefore, since I know what the
reason was that the ordinary vehicles do not last—they do not stand up to the rigours of police work and so on—what is the average lifespan of one of these vehicles?

Hon. Griffith: Mr. Chairman, because of the preventative maintenance now and the system that is being used to ensure that over a specific period or miles the vehicles go in for maintenance, I think—what is the attrition rate now? All the vehicles are roadworthy at this time.

Mr. Imbert: You are not answering my question. Do the vehicles last for one year, two years, four years, five years? What is the lifespan?

Hon. Griffith: Three years.

Mr. Imbert: Three years so you change out a vehicle after three years? That is what is happening?

Hon. Griffith: Sorry, my apologies. It would be more like six years. Because of how it is being run now with the preventative maintenance, we are looking at six years.

Mr. Imbert: You are keeping a police vehicle for six years, then changing it because you are doing better maintenance. That is what you are saying. That is what you are telling me? Are you saying that you are now keeping police vehicles for six years because you have improved the maintenance of police vehicles?

Hon. Griffith: They are all staying on the road; they are roadworthy.

Mr. Chairman: All right.

Mr. Imbert: Wait, wait, wait, wait. No, no, no, no.

Mr. Chairman: Go ahead, hon. Member.

Mr. Imbert: I do not want to know whom you are buying firearms and bulletproof vests and all these sort of things from, but could you give us some kind of global breakdown?

Hon. Griffith: Of?

Mr. Imbert: Well, you have $65 million here. Is it all for firearms, or—?

[Minister confers with advisor] You will come back to us on that or you have the information?

Hon. Griffith: We have it.
Mr. Chairman: Just the numbers, you know, like what proportion goes for that.

Mr. Imbert: So much more firearms; so much for bulletproof vests.

Mr. Chairman: And the last one. After you is the Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann’s West.

Mr. Imbert: I am really concerned about the procurement procedures for firearms. Is that a national security thing?

Hon. Griffith: What? The breakdown?

Mr. Imbert: When you give me the breakdown—I am concerned about the procurement procedures for firearms. How do you go about doing this?

Hon. Griffith: Forty-one million dollars—just over $41 million for firearms.

Mr. Imbert: Okay, so say $40 million for firearms.

Hon. Griffith: Twelve million dollars for rifles.

Mr. Imbert: How do you decide what type of firearm to buy, whom you buy it from?

Hon. Griffith: Well, the type of weapons to buy will be based on the threat assessment and based on the needs of the specific agencies in the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service. So the IATF may have something totally different from undercover officers or to officers who will be on patrol.

Mr. Imbert: But we do not make guns in Trinidad—at least not as far as I know. So you import them from somewhere. How do you decide whether you are bringing guns from Israel, United States or from the Czech Republic, which is a big manufacturer? How do you go about doing this? Is there a science to all of this?

Hon. Griffith: There are different types of weapons, Mr. Chairman. Let us say with the sidearms, there will be an assessment that will be made because there will be different things you need to look at—the maintenance, the wear and tear of the weapon, the range of fire.

Mr. Imbert: Let me tell you what I am driving at. I assume you have to change out firearms as well. You keep a car for five/six years and then you change it. I assume you keep firearms for a certain period and then you have to change them out; otherwise you would not keep buying guns all the time. Have you ever done any sort of value for money audit? Have you looked at this?
Because this is a huge expenditure item. It is $40 million a year. That is the question I am asking.

Hon. Griffith: The plan is to standardize, at least with the firearms, to have one set of the pistols across the board.

Mr. Imbert: Based on advice?

Hon. Griffith: Based on assessment, consultation. You want to try to acquire to ensure the procurement process—

Mr. Imbert: You are spending $40 million a year acquiring firearms, such a large sum of money. I assume next year you may spend another $30 million/$40 million.

Hon. Griffith: Not every year we are going at this $40 million because we are changing to one specific firearm.

Mr. Imbert: I am just wondering how you go about doing this. I am not asking you National Security—

Hon. Griffith: I understand, yeah.

Mr. Imbert: Do you have a policy?

Hon. Griffith: Yes, we do.

Mr. Imbert: All right. Okay. I will talk to you off record.

Mr. Chairman: Can I recognize the Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann’s West?

Mrs. Mc Intosh: Thank you, Chair. I want to ask a question about the EAP.

Mr. Chairman: Just press your—right. Good.

Mrs. Mc Intosh: How many employees, on an average, you would say, utilize the external EAP service annually?

Hon. Griffith: The external?

Mrs. Mc Intosh: Yes, the external. You say you have an internal service and an external service. How many employees you will say?

Hon. Griffith: The social workers, they will have a record with that, Mr. Chairman, so I can have that provided for you.

Mrs. Mc Intosh: I would just like to ask: when did the service actually commence? Was it in 2013?
Hon. Griffith: The external?

Mrs. Mc Intosh: Yes. And who is the provider?

Hon. Griffith: It is ongoing.

Mrs. Mc Intosh: And who is the provider of this service?

Mr. Chairman: When was it started and who is the provider? Could you provide that in writing?

Hon. Griffith: I will have it provided for you, Mr. Chairman.

Mrs. Mc Intosh: And last thing: has there been an increase in usage recently to warrant the increase in expenditure, small as it is? Have more officers been using the external service recently?

Hon. Griffith: Chairman, the answer is yes, but remember we also have an increase in the strength of the police service. So with the increase in the strength of the police service, there would be a need for more persons to use the external EAP.

Mr. Chairman: Final question, Member for Laventille West and we go on to Current Transfers and Subsidies after.

Mr. Hypolite: Thank you, Chair. I am looking at 04, Other Minor Equipment. Can the Minister indicate whether or not this figure includes the purchase of body cameras, radar guns and the bulletproof vests?

Miss Mc Donald: And the body bag?

Hon. Griffith: That is ODPM.

Mr. Hypolite: If so, who are the suppliers specifically towards the body cameras and the cost of those? And with respect to the bulletproof vests, are those vests presently in use?

Mr. Chairman: The Minister of National Security.

Hon. Griffith: This is bulletproof vest.

Mr. Chairman: Vests, cameras—

Hon. Griffith: This would not include the body cameras. It will not include the body cameras.

Mr. Chairman: What about the vests?

Hon. Griffith: Yes.
Mr. Hypolite: The bulletproof vests from China and India.

Mr. Chairman: Yes. He said yes. Yes. I recognize the Member for Diego Martin Central and that is the last one before we go to the next item.

Dr. Browne: More than a year ago, your Government made an announcement of a bicycle squad, bicycled officers. Some have been seen on the roads. I do not know if it will be found under Vehicles or Equipment. But I am asking, at this point—I see your officers are smiling—how many bicycles have been purchased by the police service? Who is the supplier? Are any further to be purchased in 2015 or has this idea perished? And I would like an idea of the deployment by division of these bicycles.

Mr. Chairman: What about the bicycles? Are they on stream?

Hon. Griffith: Mr. Chairman, the bicycle patrol is only in Tobago and not purchased by the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service. They were donated by National Gas Company.

Mr. Chairman: All right, so we are going on to, Sub 04, Current Transfer and Subsidies: Item 001, Regional Bodies; Item 004, International Bodies; Item 005, Non-Profit Institutions. I recognize the Member for Laventille West.

Mr. Hypolite: Police Youth Clubs, can the Minister indicate how many police youth clubs there are presently?

Hon. Griffith: Ninety-one.

Mr. Chairman: There are 91. Member for Laventille East/Morvant.

Miss Cox: Mr. Chairman, Police Youth Clubs and also Non-Profit Institutions: concerning Police Youth Clubs, my concern is: has any evaluation been done of these Police Youth Clubs? I know they have been in existence for a while, but is there any evaluation process? Have they been meeting their objective?

Hon. Griffith: The Citizens Security Programme, they actually did an assessment with the youth clubs. There were recommendations made to improve the youth clubs. You want a report on it?

Miss Cox: Yes, I would like it.

Hon. Griffith: It is not a confidential document.

Miss Cox: There is some information that I have concerning the youth clubs. I just want to know if you all are doing an evaluation to see if they are meeting the objective.
Concerning non-profit institutions, I just would like to get a list of these institutions. I see here that there is an allocation for $5 million. What are these institutions?

Mr. Griffith: The youth clubs.

Mr. Chairman: That is the total, you know.

Miss Cox: Oh, this is just the total—the same youth clubs; only the youth clubs? No other organization? Okay, thanks.

6.50 p.m.

Mr. Chairman: I recognize the Member for Port of Spain South.

Miss Mc Donald: I have a complaint—now that we are on the Police Youth Club—on the one that is operating at the George Street Soup Centre. Yes. I would have to talk to the Minister and the Commissioner of Police.

Mr. Chairman: Behind the Chair.

Miss Mc Donald: Behind the Chair, it is serious.

Mr. Chairman: No problem. Let us go to Item 007, Households. We are going to Item 009, Other Transfers.

Dr. Rowley: No, no, Mr. Chairman, I was on households.

Mr. Chairman: Oh you are on household, right.

Dr. Rowley: 007, 01, Ex Gratia Awards. The first question is, what exactly is that? Who gets it and under what circumstances? What explains the significant increase in the allocation where in 2013 we used up $2 million for that; the following year 2014, we budgeted $8 million and, apparently, we spent $4 million of that $8 million, and now we are budgeting $14 million in 2015, could we get an explanation for those movements, please?

Mr. Chairman: The hon. Minister.

Hon. Griffith: Yes, Mr. Chairman. This has to do with persons who were killed or injured in the line of duty and compensation is given to the family.

Dr. Rowley: From $2 million to $14 million? Half the police service dead! [Laughter]

Hon. Griffith: No, well it depends on what it is you are giving them. Remember there was this decision that was made for $1 million to be given out to the spouse of persons who were killed in the line of duty.
Dr. Rowley: So the $14 million anticipates that?

Hon. Griffith: We are anticipating that all the money will come back to us and it will not be spent.

Dr. Rowley: In 2014, before this $1 million thing kicked in, it appears here that you have budgeted—well not appears, you had budgeted $8 million for that issue. It turns out, under revised estimates 2014, we only spent $4 million. That is what the number says here. Right? So we had over-budgeted by 100 per cent. Now, we are budgeting $14 million for what we had actually spent $4 million on, and you are saying this is in anticipation of the new arrangements.

Hon. Griffith: Well, Mr. Chairman, it is good we have the budget. What we do not want to do is to not have it budgeted and then we have a situation where the spouse now, we are scrambling looking for something. It is hoped that this would not be spent in any way at all.

Dr. Rowley: I just want to understand what is the justification for what you asked for.

Hon. Griffith: Again, because of the $1 million, we just want to make sure that it is there, so if at any time it is required, hopefully not, there would not be any concern for us to try to find funds. If we put $2 million and three persons are killed in the line of duty.

Mr. Chairman: I think your point is taken. Minister, I think you have explained yourself. Let us go to Item 009, Other Transfers. Then we go to Sub-Head 09, Development Programme; Item 004, Social Infrastructure. Member for Diego Martin North/East and hon. Member for Laventille East/Morvant.

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Chairman, I notice there is an Item here 001—002 sorry, Purchase of Vehicles and Equipment for the Police Service. This is on page 164. Could you please explain why you have the purchase of vehicles in two different locations? You have purchase of vehicles under Goods and Services in recurrent expenditure and you have purchase of vehicles in your IDF, and when you are explaining that to me, I heard a comment from the Commissioner of Police saying that the Central Tenders Board was the one who was acquiring these vehicles for you. I am shocked to hear that. I thought we had given the police some autonomy. We really need to look into that. But is it that the procurement procedures under the IDF are different to the procurement procedures for vehicles under Goods and Services? And, could you also explain what refurbishment of Riverside Plaza means. Is it that the police have taken over that building or part of it?
Could you tell me what is the procurement procedure for purchase of furniture and furnishings, that is 003, Riverside Plaza is 029. Is it that the police have to go through the CTB for all non—I do not know what word to use—non secret, non-military hardware? Is it that everything else you have to go through the Central Tenders Board? Are you humbug with that? Could you explain all of this to me, please?

**Hon. Griffith:** The first thing, the vehicles, one has to do with the expansion of the number of vehicles and the other has to do with the replacement of the vehicles—the recurrent, dealing with the replacement.

**Mr. Imbert:** I understand that, but I heard a comment from the Commissioner saying the Central Tenders Board procured these vehicles. Is that true?

**Hon. Griffith:** Yes.

**Mr. Imbert:** Is that for both replacement and new vehicles?

**Hon. Griffith:** Yes, that is right.

**Mr. Imbert:** Does the CTB also procure furniture for the police service?

**Hon. Griffith:** No, no, Chairman.

**Mr. Imbert:** Could you then explain how come you are stock with the CTB for the acquisition of vehicles, but you have flexibility with respect to the acquisition of furniture?

**Hon. Griffith:** It has to do with the authorization the Commissioner of Police will have at the time.

**Mr. Imbert:** From who?

**Hon. Griffith:** Well, the $1 million—remember the Commissioner of Police, with this, he has his budget allocation. Anything more than $1 million, it then has to go to the Central Tenders Board. So when you have to purchase 40 vehicles.

**Mr. Imbert:** I understand.

**Mr. Chairman:** Could I now go to the Member for Laventille East/Morvant.

**Mr. Imbert:** I empathize with the police service.

**Miss Cox:** I go back to Riverside Plaza. This is a new project. What is the plan for Riverside Plaza? I see $10 million allocated.

**Mr. Chairman:** Riverside Plaza, what is the plan?
Hon. Griffith: That was initially to house several units of the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service: the Anti-Corruption Investigation Bureau, the Financial Investigation Bureau, the Homicide Bureau of Investigation; Finance Branch and several different units in the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service.

Miss Cox: But then I see you said Homicide Prevention Unit too?

Hon. Griffith: Yes.

Miss Cox: Well, then there is a separate allocation here for the Homicide Prevention Unit.

Mr. Chairman: Which sub-item?

Miss Cox: Sub-Item 18?

Mr. Chairman: 18?

Hon. Griffith: Remember there are several different arms in that location for that bureau.

Miss Cox: Well, I am seeing Homicide Prevention Unit, and then you are saying that part of Riverside Plaza is the Homicide Prevention Unit, so are you saying there are different branches?

Hon. Griffith: Yes, there are different regions. So that is for that region.

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Chairman, I did not get an answer. Have the police taken over the whole of Riverside Plaza? Is the Ministry of Labour—[Interruption]

Hon. Griffith: Yes.

Mr. Imbert: So only police inside Riverside Plaza.

Hon. Griffith: Yes, that is right.

Mr. Chairman: All right. We go to the Member for Arouca/Maloney.

Miss Hospedales: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I looked under all of the sub-items here specifically for two things: one the expansion of the Arouca Police Station. Could the Minister indicate exactly when that will be done? Two, the refurbishment of the SRP headquarters in Arouca. I am not sure—the Minister had the fortunate pleasure or displeasure to visit that facility. It is in a dilapidated condition and it is in dire need of refurbishment.

Mr. Chairman: The hon. Minister and then the Member for Port of Spain South.
Hon. Griffith: Yes, Mr. Chairman, that is accurate. I looked at the conditions there for the SRPs. It is not anything even remotely close to being acceptable. I have spoken to the Commissioner of Police and we are trying to find somewhere to accommodate them.

Pertaining to the Arouca Police Station: do you want me to get the date? There is another question you asked.

Mr. Chairman: Member for Port of Spain South.

Miss Mc Donald: Yes, like my colleague from Arouca/Maloney I, too, am looking at the various organizations here, but I am not seeing the police post on Duncan Street, because there need to be an upgrade there. You were there when it was opened last year, Minister, and the public or the constituents there were assured that a community facility would have been placed there. Not one computer; absolutely nothing for the neighbourhood was placed there! It is just a police post, always closed up and does not even respond to the constituents in the area.

But, more so, the Prime Minister had promised that that would be a community facility at the time; a homework centre. That was the thing. We have actually seen the space for the community centre—sorry homework centre on the ground floor of that building; absolutely nothing has happened. So I expected to see some form of allocation here for the upgrading of the police post on Duncan Street.

Mr. Chairman: The hon. Minister.

Hon. Griffith: Yes, Mr. Chairman, there are some computers that are being provided. I would liaise with the Commissioner of Police to see how fast we can—[Interruption]

Miss Mc Donald: Who is using them, the police? Not the community.

Hon. Griffith: They would be provided.

Miss Mc Donald: Were?


Mr. Chairman: Would be provided.

Dr. Browne: Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: Yes, I recognize the Member for Diego Martin Central and then we are going on.
Dr. Browne: 013, Refurbishment of Police Commissioner’s Residence.

Mr. Chairman: Yes.

Dr. Browne: I see $1 million was expended in 2014 and $2 million is requested in 2015 for the refurbishment of the Commissioner’s residence. When will this project come to an end? What is the overall estimated cost of this refurbishment? Is this residence owned by the State or a leased property?

Mr. Chairman: The hon. Minister.

Hon. Griffith: Because of the historical nature, Mr. Chairman, the $1 million, that was not expended.

Mr. Chairman: So it was not expended last year?

Hon. Griffith: The request to refurbish it is $7 million. We cannot just spend and just reach—[Interruption]

Dr. Browne: Hold on.

Mr. Chairman: He just want to know the time frame.

Dr. Browne: The refurbishment estimate is $7 million?

Hon. Griffith: Yes.

Dr. Browne: When will that project come to an end?

Hon. Griffith: We have not started.

Dr. Browne: I am asking, when will it come to an end? The completion date.

Mr. Chairman: What is the duration of the project?

Hon. Griffith: Well, when we get the allocation then they will be able to comment and then I will be able to give you a timeline.

Dr. Browne: So, $2 million is allocated for this fiscal year, and you are suggesting that $5 million more will be requested. Does the State own this building or is it a leased building?

Hon. Griffith: It is owned. It is a historical site.

Mr. Chairman: Let us move on. Item 005, Multi-sectorial and Other Services, Infrastructure Development Fund. The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Dr. Rowley: Mr. Chairman, under 001, we had provision $3.6 million in 2013.
Mr. Chairman: Just advise us what page you are on again?

Dr. Rowley: I am on page 166, Development Programme. I am saying in 2013, we had provision $3.6 million and I presume it was spent, because it is recorded as actual and then, subsequently, we provision $10 million and I see the revised estimates point to $10 million being spent. I see also another $10 million set aside for the same thing in 2015. So what I would like to ask the Minister—this was to develop a computer system for the police service, what exactly is this paying for? Do we have a computer system in the police service? Are we building one? Are we buying one? Why is this regular serious allocation for the last three or four years?

Hon. Griffith: Mr. Chairman, what we are trying to do is to upgrade all the different police stations. We are talking about 77 police stations, so it is an ongoing project to upgrade the police stations with IT.

Dr. Rowley: I have been into a few police stations and I cannot recall getting the feeling that I am in an IT environment. But if we are spending this kind of money, how is it changing the average police station?

Hon. Griffith: The allocation required, they did not receive it.

Dr. Rowley: But they received fourteen and a half million in the last year and a half, and we are now putting down another $10 million.

Hon. Griffith: So you would like to find out what—[Interruption]

Dr. Rowley: What have we done with the $14 million? You see, Minister, $64 billion is a lot of money and these figures like $10 million, $15 million and $20 million are beginning to sound in this country like chick feed. There are some territories in the Caribbean for which $20 million is their national budget. So I am trying to get our finger here on the pulse that these are not minor expenditures.

7.05 p.m.

Hon. Griffith: What I can do, Mr. Chairman, is give a breakdown of everything that was utilized and where it is located at this time.

Dr. Rowley: What has happened with the computer system that we have set out to establish in the police service for which we already spent $13 million, and we are down to spend another $10 million in the next 12 months? I would like to know what we have spent it on and where we are in that programme.

Hon. Griffith: Sure.
Mr. Chairman: You could provide that for the—

Hon. Griffith: Yes, we have it here—

Dr. Rowley: I will move on from there, Mr. Chairman, on to 003, something called Transformation of the Police Service, for which we have spent $3,573,374, a very precise number in 2013, and then we provisioned $11 million in 2014, and we are now asking for another $10 million. While we accept that we are on a mission to transform the police service, I would like to ask the Minister, what did we do with the $14 million that was spent in the last 24 months and what are we going to be doing with the $10 million that we are asking for, specific to an assignment to transform the police service?

Hon. Griffith: Yes, Mr. Chairman, and that goes into all the breakdown for the introduction of the body cameras, national survey to deal with the anatomy of the fear of crime, community relations involving facilities, minor equipment, community caravans, the K-9 Unit, the Police Band and training, which is an integral plan to the transformation of the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service. I do have the breakdown I could give to you and you could take a look at.

Dr. Rowley: Minister, some of those Sub-Heads you called there are old police Sub-Heads you know. Ever since I know the police they have a band, so how is the Police Band being budgeted as transformation of the police service? I was expecting to hear something exciting and something new, like you go into something new, not the Police Band and the K-9 Unit. Because I saw somewhere else in these documents a K-9 Unit in Chaguaramas for a few millions. So something is not right here.

Hon. Griffith: Well it is expansion. The K-9 Unit, to acquire 30 dogs will cost $3.5 million. For the Police Band with new equipment, that alone would be over $4 million—

Dr. Rowley: But why does budgeting for the K-9 Unit have anything to do with transformation? That is maintenance. We have always had a K-Unit. I mean, I love it. I mean, I look forward to seeing the dogs out there and being put to work, so do not tell us that under Transformation of the Police Service is the K-9 Unit. It cannot be that. So it must be something else.

Hon. Griffith: But with the K-9 Unit though, Mr. Chairman, there is going to be a total change in the approach. They have the passive, the tactical dogs, cadaver dogs, explosives, dogs that would be at the airports, dogs that would be on road blocks, so there is going to be a whole revamp of the K-9 Unit.
Dr. Rowley: A sort of expansion of the K-9 Unit?

Hon. Griffith: Yes.

Dr. Rowley: Okay. That is what I am saying, I want to hear new things. You will have tracker dogs, you will have dogs that smell—

Hon. Griffith: In the airport and roadblocks—


Miss Cox: Infrastructure Development Fund.

Mr. Imbert: Chair, this is an important matter. There is an item that—just one—

Mr. Chairman: And then after the Member for Laventille East/Morvant and then we close off. The hon. Members for Diego Martin North/East and Laventille East/Morvant, and then we close off.

Mr. Imbert: There is an item that I omitted to speak about in the Development Programme, page 164, 001, Improvement Works to Police Stations. Unless my eyes are tricking me, the allocation has been cut from $29 million to $5 million; $29 million in 2014 to $5 million in 2015—I cannot ask the Commissioner this, I have to ask the Minister—are our police stations in such good shape that you no longer need to improve them? Why would anybody cut the allocation for improvement work to police stations from $29 million to $5 million in a $64 billion budget? Could you explain that to me, and it is not anywhere else before you tell me that. I looked all about, it is nowhere else. Explain that to me, please.

Hon. Griffith: It was based on the budget allocation.

Mr. Imbert: So you are telling me the Minister of Finance and the Economy decided this was low priority? Improvement Works to Police Stations is low priority.

Hon. Griffith: No. If there is a need for it to increase—

Mr. Imbert: They put $17 million for food, $40 million for car and $5 million for Improvement Works for Police Stations? What is going on? Why are you treating the police service like this?

Mr. Chairman: All right, your point is taken, we go to the Member for Laventille East/Morvant and then the Member for Laventille West.
Dr. Rowley: Mr. Chairman, just give me half of your time, and I will make it up, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: Okay.

Dr. Rowley: Mr. Chairman, I crave your indulgence outside of a line Item, since I have the Minister and the Commissioner here, just to ask—

Mr. Chairman: Could we have one meeting, please.

Dr. Rowley:—a question on the Development Programme, and maybe the Commissioner might be able to assist the Minister. What is the story with respect to the Carenage Police Station? What is on the cards for the Carenage Police Station under the Development Programme?

Hon. Griffith: Those are one of the—I actually met with UDeCOTT dealing with that same matter and I am aware of the concern on where the police station is at present, and we have had meetings with UDeCOTT to deal with this matter to see how fast we can move forward with it. I am aware of the situation.

Dr. Rowley: Well, is it on the front burner? Is that what you are telling me?

Hon. Griffith: It is definitely. There is a draft. We are actually doing a draft Note on it, yes.

Dr. Rowley: That is not just a Carenage Police Station, it is the western peninsula, which does not really have a proper police presence.

Hon. Griffith: And where it is at present is not really the ideal place. I am aware.

Dr. Rowley: So could we give it some priority.

Hon. Griffith: Definitely. It is, yes.

Dr. Rowley: Okay, thanks, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: The hon. Member for Laventille East/Morvant.

Miss Cox: I just want to ask about the Besson Street Police Station; what is the status of the Besson Street Police Station?

Mr. Chairman: It is under the IDF, you know.

Miss Cox: Well, we move before you close off.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, yeah. [Crosstalk]

Hon. Griffith: The tender is being evaluated at this time by UDeCOTT.
Miss Cox: What did you say?

Hon. Griffith: It is being evaluated by UDeCOTT, the tender.

Miss Cox: All right. So how soon do you think this—I mean, given the area the police station is, I think—

Hon. Griffith: By the first quarter of the year.

Miss Cox:—it is an urgent station.

Hon. Griffith: The first quarter, yes.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 64 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister of National Security, thank you very much; Commissioner of Police, thank you very much; and the team, thank you very much. We now invite the Judiciary.

Hon. Members, Head 03, the Judiciary, $353,073,800. Hon. Members, this Head of Expenditure for the Judiciary is now up for your consideration. The Minister of Finance and the Economy has kindly agreed to assist the committee in its consideration of this Head, which is an independent arm of the State. I wish to emphasize that point. He will assist in obtaining clarification from the accounting officer in relation to expenditure proposed by the Judiciary, and will answer those questions that directly relate to his portfolio as the Minister of Finance and the Economy.

Head 03.

Question proposed: That Head 03 stand part of the Schedule.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, the sum of $353,073,800 for Head 03, the Judiciary, is comprised of moneys proposed for expenditure under the following Sub-Heads and Items to be found from the Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure and the Draft Estimates of the Development Programme. Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure, Item 001, Judiciary Trinidad. I recognize the hon. Member for Diego Martin West.

Dr. Rowley: Recognizing, Mr. Speaker, and I want to confirm that we examine these numbers in the context that this House does not interfere in the independence of the dispensing of justice, but we do have an interest in ensuring that the Judiciary has what it requires, against the background that we do have, as a national problem, some issues at the Judiciary mentioned in great wordings by the Chief Justice in recent days.
Mr. Chairman, if you permit me to put my question again because I am trying to find out where the reductions have come from to end up in the summary on page 11, because I have been trying to add them up and maybe I was not doing a good job, except that I am seeing in the summary under Personnel Expenditure on page 11, I just want to make sure that—I am not seeing the decreases that reflect themselves in the overall reduction in Personnel Expenditure that is showing up on page 11. So if I could be assisted in that by somebody. [Crosstalk] Contract employment; is that what it is? So if I may ask, Mr. Chairman, the global question of the Minister of Finance and the Economy or through the executive officer; what exactly are we reducing under Personnel Expenditure to result in a reduction of $22 million under Head 03? Because that surprised me. I did not expect to see any reduction in the Judiciary because I thought that was one area where we would have been expending more resources.

While the Minister is thinking, I would like to ask this question, which we had not put to any other department, which I would now put to this department; what exactly did the Judiciary request of the Ministry of Finance and the Economy? Because we need to know what you asked for, what you wanted, to be able to judge what the Minister of Finance and the Economy gave you as against to what you said you needed.

Hon. Howai: If I could, while Ms. Austin is looking for the figure of the request, the largest reduction would have been on—if you look at page 12 there is a $19 million reduction in salaries, and that big reduction really reflected the back pay that we paid last year—well, this year, 2014. So you would see a figure of $64 million here. That $64 million includes about $20 million of back pay, roughly, and, therefore, when that was not repeated this year it came down, so that accounted for the largest change.

Dr. Rowley: Okay. And the second question, in terms of going forward, given what has been put to the public, which requires some serious restructuring of public accounting for an independent management of the Judiciary’s budget, what did the Judiciary ask for in 2015? So we can see what was asked for and what was given.

7.20 p.m.

Hon. Howai: The big difference is really in the Development Programme.

Dr. Rowley: In which case we can leave it until we come to that.

Mr. Chairman: Yes, we could leave it until we come to that.
So we could go to Item 002, Judiciary Tobago. [Interruption] We are still on Judiciary, Trinidad?

Mr. Imbert: Of course. I noticed that in the allocation for Salaries and Cost of Living Allowances, you have an increase of $3.5 million for 2015 over 2014. Does that $3.5 million simply reflect the increase in emoluments for judges arising out of the last Salaries Review Commission Report, or does that indicate an intention to engage additional judges in 2015? It would seem to me it is not sufficient to allow the Judiciary to engage additional judges.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister of Finance and the Economy, what does that $3.5 million—

Hon. Howai: This is the increases which were approved by the SRC. These are their increments.

Mr. Imbert: So there is no anticipation that any new judges would be hired in 2015?

Hon. Howai: Except as approved by the SRC, it was just for the public officers I am told.

Mr. Imbert: Then 23 will be the judges?

Hon. Howai: Yes.

Mr. Imbert: Well okay, that $19 million is all as you implied earlier on associated with back pay?

Hon. Howai: Yes.

Mr. Imbert: And does it mean that there are not going to be any new judges hired in 2015?

Hon. Howai: I cannot speak for the Chief Justice on that.

Mr. Imbert: I am talking about allocation. I am not talking about the policy of the Chief Justice.

Hon. Howai: I do not think that we included anything for increases. You see, what we do too, if you look in the line down below you would see where we have vacant posts at $2 million.

Mr. Imbert: I saw that; I am coming to that.

Hon. Howai: So what we normally do is we vire from that into the other areas.
Mr. Imbert: I saw that; I am coming to that. I am just saying with respect to 23, Direct Charges, does that only cover the existing complement of justices of the High Court and the Court of Appeal?

Hon. Howai: This is what I am told, yes.

Mr. Imbert: Okay, so there is no provision other than what is in 26?

Hon. Howai: Yes.

Mr. Imbert: But that is about three judges? That is equivalent to about three judges at their present terms, probably less than—only two and a half judges. Could I find out what is the establishment in terms of High Court judges—let me see if I get the pronunciation right—puisne judges—and Court of Appeal judges? [Crosstalk] I always mispronounce the word. How many High Court judges are on the establishment? How many Court of Appeal judges are on the establishment? How many vacancies are there in each post?

Hon. Howai: We have 41 judges in the High Court, and 11 in the Court of Appeal. We have two vacancies—[Interuption]

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Chairman—

Mr. Chairman: Yes, could we have your complete attention.

Mr. Imbert: This is an important topic, Mr. Chairman. They do not think so, but I do.

Mr. Chairman: Yes, of course.

Hon. Howai: So we have two vacancies in the Court of Appeal.

Mr. Imbert: How many in the High Court?

Hon. Howai: Nine in the High Court; nine masters; two puisne judges.

Mr. Imbert: Nine masters are vacant. How many High Court judges vacant?

Hon. Howai: Two.

Mr. Imbert: Two, and two Court of Appeal judges vacant?

Hon. Howai: Yes, two Court of Appeal judges.

Mr. Imbert: So that the allocations are insufficient to fill the vacancies?

Hon. Howai: That is if they do identify all the people.

Mr. Imbert: I am just asking a question.
Hon. Howai: It takes time, and in any event you will not fill the position on the first day of the new fiscal year. It takes time. By the time you get around to doing it some months would have gone. So you make a judgment about what kind of allocation you would put in in order to ensure that you can meet the requirements.

Mr. Imbert: Minister of Finance and the Economy, could I ask you: Did the Judiciary, when they asked you for funds, indicate they intended or they were going to attempt to fill all vacant positions in 2015? That is a straight yes or no?

Hon. Howai: We need to come back to you on that.

Mr. Imbert: I mean, I would really like to know. And if so, why did you not put funds for that?

Dr. Rowley: Given what has been said by the Chief Justice, to what extent will the provision of sufficient resources from day one be a motivating and driving factor to have those positions filled as quickly as possible?—[Interruption]

Mr. Chairman: Somebody’s phone nearby.

Dr. Rowley:—so as to get more man-hours on the Bench? Because if the money is there, there might be an incentive to have them filled immediately. On the other hand, if the attitude is that, “We do not have the allocation we need so we cannot speed up the filling”, that in itself might be the problem.

Hon. Howai: We take the point that if perhaps one puts all of the funding in, it might help to speed up the process.

Dr. Rowley: Or most of it.

Hon. Howai: What I am being told is that there are issues apart from just the human resource too. There are issues of accommodation and other issues which need to be addressed as part of the process. Even if you do make the allocation, it does not mean necessarily that it will get done immediately, so that you can fill the posts immediately.

Dr. Rowley: In other words the vacancies are chronic?

Hon. Howai: There are some logistical issues that will need to be addressed if you are to fill the position and, therefore, it takes some time.

Dr. Rowley: Mr. Chairman, once we raise that as a major factor, what we are saying is that the vacancies in the system are chronic and they will happen from
year to year. We are talking here about breaking that cycle, given where we are at and what is being said.

**Mr. Imbert:** Is the Minister saying that in addition to there not being adequate funds to fill all the vacancies in the Judiciary in terms of judges, masters, you also do not have sufficient funds for judicial support officers and all the other support staff that go with a judge? Is that one of the logistical problems that you have, that in addition to not having enough money to hire all of them one time, you also do not have funds for JSOs and so on? I notice one of the technocrats is saying yes, so I hope you would say yes too.

**Hon. Howai:** No, no, no, do not put words in their mouths, please.

**Mr. Imbert:** I am talking to you, Sir.

**Hon. Howai:** I know, but you are suggesting that they are saying yes already.

**Mr. Imbert:** I am just talking to you, I am not speaking to them.

**Hon. Howai:** Sorry, just repeat the question?

**Mr. Imbert:** I am getting an impression, in your statement you just made to the Leader of the Opposition that there are logistical problems in filling the vacancies of nine masters, two High Court judges and two Court of Appeal judges, and included among these logistical problems are all the things that accompany the appointment and the functioning of a judge. I happen to know one of these things would be the provision of judicial support officers. So I am asking, in addition to the funding not being sufficient to hire everybody one time, fill all the vacancies in 2015, do you also have a shortfall in terms of the support staff that judges require in order to function effectively?

**Hon. Howai:** I do not think the issue is so much the support staff. As I said, I think it is more the issue of technology, accommodation, those kinds of things.

**Mr. Imbert:** So there are sufficient judicial support officers for all of the vacancies?

**Hon. Howai:** I do not think the Chief Justice would bring on persons unless he is in a position to bring the judge on.

**Mr. Imbert:** I am talking about allocations.

**Hon. Howai:** There is allocation that would allow us to support the increases that we have budgeted for in this year.

**Mr. Imbert:** So you have allocations for JSOs in here?
Hon. Howai: Inside of here, I think there are other areas of vacancies where we have made allowances, which would allow us to bring those.

Mr. Imbert: You think.

Hon. Howai: For example, if you look on page 13 you would see where there are vacant posts also, which also would allow us to bring some additional staff on.

Mr. Chairman: Let us go to Goods and Services, Item 001, Judiciary Trinidad; Item 002, Judiciary Tobago. We go to Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases.

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Chairman, you are going too fast; 02, Goods and Services. You are going too fast.

Mr. Chairman: Well I have to go.

Mr. Imbert: I know you have to, but you are going too fast. In terms of Office Accommodation and Storage, and Vehicles and Equipment, is this only for the public service element of the Judiciary or is this for the judges?

Hon. Howai: Yes it is for everybody; it is not just for the—

Miss Cox: Public service.

Mr. Imbert: As I see that the increase is nominal, just $1.4 million over—because you only have a nominal increase here for office accommodation, et cetera, is this one of the logistical problems you are talking about with respect to filling the vacancies?

Hon. Howai: No, no; in terms of accommodation, this is the rent of those buildings that we already have, with the exception—I think the one increase is this one here, which is the storage space in Lot 29 in Trincity. So this increase represents that particular one.

Mr. Imbert: All I am asking is: Does each judge have an office?

Hon. Howai: Yes.

Mr. Imbert: And if you bring on the additional nine masters and four judges, 13 people, would you have 13 offices for them?

Hon. Howai: No, we do not have enough. If you were to bring additional on we would need to make some additional arrangements for accommodation.

Mr. Imbert: So you need to assist the Judiciary in the provision of this accommodation? That is what I am driving at.
Hon. Howai: Yes, I hear you.

Mr. Chairman: We go to what is called Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases; Item 001, Judiciary Trinidad; Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies; Item 002, Commonwealth Bodies; Item 009, Other Transfers. We go to the Development Programme; Sub-Head 09, Development Programme; Item 005, Multi-sectoral and Other Services; Infrastructure Development Fund.

Mr. Imbert: You are going very fast.

Miss McDonald: Just now, no, no, no.

Dr. Rowley: You are going very fast. By the time I turn the page with the Development Programme you were gone.

Miss McDonald: We are now on Development Programme.

Dr. Rowley: Mr. Chairman, I take you to page 4,03, please.

Mr. Chairman: Yes, yes.

Dr. Rowley: Page 4 of the Development Programme, Head 03. Again, Mr. Chairman, I might have left the room, but I did not leave the country. I would like to ask, and the Minister of Finance and the Economy may want to whisper to his staff, because I do not want to ask the staff directly: What exactly is the Ministry of Finance and the Economy provisioning here for under 012, which is Implementation of the Administration of Justice (Indictable Proceedings) Act No. 20 of 2011.

I seem to recall that that is the omnibus legislation of the infamous section 34 which, as far as I am aware, has been repealed. If that is so, who is making a provision for $1 million for a repealed Act, and what did we spend $1 million on in 2014 under this Act? Maybe the Minister of Finance and the Economy could help us here, because I do not know what this is or if it is just Finance doing nominal rotational provision, because I see a number of provisions like that across the Judiciary of nominal numbers, where in this case nominal is $1 million. In fact, why are we maintaining Head 012, if the law has been repealed?

7.35 p.m.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister of Finance and the Economy.

Hon. Howai: I am advised that—there is really a provision for certain kinds of expenditures that they were anticipating might have occurred. And no such expenditure, I think very nominal expenditure, $232,000, occurred in 2014. The
amount that was provisioned, the $1 million estimate, just remains that way as an estimate for the time being. They have only used that $232,000 out of it. And in doing this year’s budget they had asked that the provision be maintained in the event that there were any expenses to be incurred. So this really is just a provision.

**Dr. Rowley:** So, could I ask a question? We have a number of laws in this country, why is this particular law being provisioned as a line item and no other? What exactly are we spending money on here? It said that you spent a million in 2014, and before that you spent $2.8 million in 2013, what did you spend that money on?

**Hon. Howai:** Mr. Chairman, what it was is that there were some expenses that were expected to be incurred in terms of things like courts and so on, courtrooms and so on—

**Dr. Rowley:** Things like what?

**Hon. Howai:**—and initially—some courtrooms and so on—

**Dr. Rowley:** Okay.

**Hon. Howai:**—infrastructure works. That had started in anticipation of the law coming into effect. Subsequent to that, after 2012, well I think what happened is that we then—[Minister confers with advisor] yeah—so there were some minor expenses incurred in sort of bringing the work that had originally started to some kind of a conclusion, and that was the purpose of that spending at that time. And it was identified in this way simply because of the fact that they needed to make provision to bring this particular one into effect.

**Dr. Rowley:** But we had already spent $3.8 million.

**Hon. Howai:** We had already spent $2.8 million.

**Dr. Rowley:** $3.8 million.

**Hon. Howai:** Including the one—

**Dr. Rowley:** We spent $2.8 million in 2013—

**Hon. Howai:** Yeah.

**Dr. Rowley:**—and one in 2014.

**Hon. Howai:** No. No. No. Out of this one we have only spent $232,000.
Dr. Rowley: So you spent $3 million.

Hon. Howai: Yeah, about $3 million—$3.1 million.

Dr. Rowley: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Where are we at with Item 001 the Information Systems, where we have spent $11 million in the last three years, and we are provisioning another $4 million in 2015? How is that programme going?

Mr. Chairman: Yes. The Minister of Finance and the Economy.

Hon. Howai: Perhaps, Mr. Chairman—I have a list of it here. So, perhaps it would be better if we just share the list.

Dr. Rowley: Yes.

Hon. Howai: So, I have a list of what has been done.

Dr. Rowley: I have one other question and I am under 03, 09, and that is 015, Construction of an Official Residence for the hon. Chief Justice. They had provisioned $2 million for that. Where is this residence to be constructed, and how far advanced is that project?

Hon. Howai: Yeah. It is supposed to be in St. Clair. Cabinet has agreed—

Dr. Rowley: A site has been identified?

Hon. Howai:—a site has been identified.

Dr. Rowley: Do you know where that site is?

Hon. Howai: Hayes Street.

Dr. Rowley: Okay. And how far along are we with the project?

Hon. Howai: The MOU is now being drafted with UDeCOTT, and then from there they will start doing the design work, and getting the designs approved, and then they will proceed from there.

Mr. Chairman: I think, the Member for St. Joseph and the Member for Diego Martin North/East, and then the Member for Port of Spain South.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Hon. Minister of Finance and the Economy, you just stated that about $2 million has been spent on construction of buildings for the courts. When the Member for Diego Martin West asked you about the section 34 and that Act, I want to remind you, hon. Minister, that when we examined the Ministry of Justice, $12 million had already been spent on what was called preconstruction
work for four judicial centres. Is it that we are spending moneys on these judicial centres under two Heads—the Judiciary and the Ministry of Justice? Could you clarify, please?

Hon. Howai: The Ministry of Justice will deal with some of the new buildings. This was dealing with existing buildings, trying to reconfigure and refurbish in order to create additional room to accommodate the additional judges.

Mr. Deyalsingh: And has that been accomplished?

Hon. Howai: [Minister confers with advisor] How far have we reached with it. I think we started the work. Yes. The legislation has changed. So it has not been completed. No, it has not been completed. They had started to do it for this purpose, and I suppose what you will do is use it for something else. So they will use it for something else.

Mr. Chairman: Member for Diego Martin North/East.

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Chairman, I heard a complaint from the Chief Justice that the Judiciary is not in control of its construction programme. Could you tell me who is responsible for the implementation of all these works here? For example, rehabilitation of the Hall of Justice, et cetera? That is a general question. It is the Judiciary that is in control or not?

And secondly, what does the Ministry of Finance and the Economy expect the Judiciary to do with an allocation of $4 million for the rehabilitation of the Hall of Justice? Because as far as I am concerned that might change the carpet on the second floor. So, why would the Ministry of Finance and the Economy only allocate $4 million to rehabilitate the Hall of Justice?

And similarly, I am looking at the allocations here for all of the courts and so on, the sum seems to be exceedingly small. So could you give us some idea of the request that came from the Judiciary, and the reasons why the Ministry of Finance and the Economy has decided not to accede to the request from the Judiciary for refurbishment and rehabilitation of buildings? And following on that last point, why are there two separate agencies responsible for the construction of judicial buildings?


Mr. Imbert: Judicial buildings.

Hon. Howai: Yeah. In terms of the existing buildings, the refurbishment and restoration work is conducted by the Judiciary. For new buildings and new courts and so on, that is dealt with by the Ministry of Justice.
Mr. Imbert: I know. So why?

Hon. Howai: Well that is a policy decision.

Mr. Imbert: So the Government has decided that the Ministry of Justice will construct new buildings, the Judiciary will maintain and repair old buildings. Is that what you are saying?


Mr. Imbert: Well, old buildings.

Hon. Howai: Yeah.

Mr. Imbert: But why? Could you tell me why?

Hon. Howai: Well it is a policy decision in terms of how they would—

Mr. Imbert: But come on. I will like to know why.

Hon. Howai: Certainly it would have predated even my position here, so I will need to get some—I cannot say exactly when.

Mr. Imbert: No, but it is a perennial complaint from the Judiciary that they are not in control of construction of facilities. So, okay, you do not want to tell me why.

Hon. Howai: No. I think that the point that the Chief Justice was making was really that this here, in a sense, the amount he got for what he wanted to do, was not sufficient.

Mr. Imbert: Well that is my second question.

Hon. Howai: And therefore, in that sense he is not in control.

Dr. Rowley: Since that has gone on record, I do not think that is the point that was being made—which has attracted my attention. The point I read from it is that there are other people in charge on the Chief Justice’s portfolio, and that “other people” are state enterprises that are executing agencies on behalf of the Minister of Finance and the Economy.

For example, I asked you just now about the residence. You told me it is UDeCOTT. And I am sure if I ask you about every single building, it will be UDeCOTT or “COTTeDU”. And then, they now take their own sweet time, in their own priorities, with their own accounting or other systems, and the Chief Justice is an innocent bystander. That is what I read from what he said. It was not just the allocation of money, it was the allocation of authority and urgency.
Hon. Howai: No. Because the Judiciary is responsible for getting these done and they can choose whichever executing agency they wish to use. It is not that, you know, we would say, well look, you should use this particular agency to do something. They would use the executing agency that they choose to use.

Dr. Rowley: But the very fact that the Judiciary has been confined to old buildings and repainting, and somebody else is responsible for building the building that the Chief Justice desperately wants to expand the Judiciary in, that I think is the problem. That the money is somewhere else, the authority is somewhere else, and they are looking on at other people’s pace.

Dr. Moonilal: Chairman, if I could just join—

Mr. Chairman: Yes.

Dr. Moonilal:—this interesting line of questioning. The hon. Prime Minister in the period after the last statement from the hon. Chief Justice did indicate in the Parliament that the Government would welcome proposals from the Judiciary on new arrangements and reform to the entire process of managing the Judiciary.

Dr. Rowley: Which is over and above the size of the allocation.

Dr. Moonilal: Which is over and above, which has to do with creation of a new institutional relationship, very much as what the Parliament is doing.

Dr. Rowley: That is my understanding.

Dr. Moonilal: So that the Prime Minister has already invited the Judiciary to submit proposals that would bring about fundamental change, so that the door is open there. But might I add that the Judiciary has had the responsibility, for a long time now, of maintaining the existing infrastructure and so on, but the building, the construction programme for new infrastructure and new assets of the Judiciary, has been undertaken by the Ministry of Justice.

Now, it is akin to saying that the police service should build police stations. Now, that does not happen. The police service will have police stations built by an executing Ministry of National Security, and by UDeCOTT or NIPDEC or whoever you want. So that one has to also reflect—and I am not making a judgment—on the capacity and the institutional capacity of a particular agency that may not have the full ambit of the capacity of a Ministry or a construction Ministry to undertake significant construction of major assets.

So that is why, for example, the court, the buildings of the courts, were entrusted through the Ministry of Justice. Now, this is done on a collaborative
basis. There is a particular committee that meets that includes the Judiciary, Minister of Justice and others that will discuss and build consensus as to policy, as to buildings required, as to whether it is a courthouse here, there, what type of courthouse, all those things are cleared with the Judiciary as well. It is just that the driving force of that would be a Ministry, and through a Ministry a project-managing executing agency. But all of that may be subject to change given new policy proposals that may come.

**Dr. Rowley:** So, we await the proposals to see what—

**Dr. Moonilal:** Well, we will look at that. While proposal is coming, the police service “doh build police station”. You know, there is a Ministry and a project manager that will do that. So that has been happening in this area. But it is not done in a way that is out of sync or delinked from the Judiciary itself.

**Mr. Imbert:** Mr. Chairman, I am listening to what the Minister with responsibility for public buildings—is that one of your portfolios?—public buildings? It is all right. I know where it is. I am listening to what the UDeCOTT Minister is saying. It is easy to say that the Judiciary does not have the capacity, but the Ministry of Justice has had the responsibility to construct four new judicial centres for the last four years, and has failed to do so. So it is easy to get stuck in this cycle and say the Judiciary does not have the manpower, the institutional knowledge, the expertise to construct the judicial centres, but the current arrangements are not working. Four years have elapsed and not a blade of grass has been cut—

**Dr. Moonilal:** This is why we are looking at new proposals. [Crosstalk]

**Mr. Imbert:**—for the centres. All right.

**Mr. Chairman:** Okay, the hon. Member for Port of Spain South.

**Miss Mc Donald:** I am looking at 002, Acquisition of Property. Could you tell me where this property is being bought, and for what purpose?

**Mr. Ali:** Which property?

**Miss Mc Donald:** Page 4.

**Dr. Rowley:** F 002.

**Miss Mc Donald:** F, under Public Buildings, Acquisition of Property.

**Mr. Chairman:** Acquisition of Property. Minister of Finance and the Economy.
Hon. Howai: Okay. It is really to deal with the acquisition of a property to serve as a car park for the San Fernando Magistrates’ Court. They are also looking at two other properties to be acquired in Port of Spain, again for administrative offices. The thing is that the Ministry did not approve all of the allocations, so they are going to have to do it on a phased basis.

Miss Mc Donald: So this $2 million is really just for the car park, the acquisition for the land in San Fernando, for the car park.

Hon. Howai: That is right.

Mr. Chairman: Okay. Hon. Members, the sum of $353,073,800 for Head 03: the Judiciary now stands part of the Schedule.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 03 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Mr. Chairman: I want to thank you very much, Madam Court Executive Administrator and your team and of course the hon. Minister who helped just to bring to our attention how he allocated moneys for the Judiciary. Thank you very much.

Hon. Howai: I want to say thank you very much as well.

Dr. Moonilal: Mr. Chairman, at this point while we await the next entity, I just wanted to raise a matter that we are, Chairman, unless I am mistaken, we are at the fourth, going to the fifth item for the day. On a day when it was projected that we would have accomplished examination of 16 entities, we are now entering our fifth, at ten minutes to eight.

Mr. Chairman: Yes.

Dr. Moonilal: Now, what I am saying, Chairman, is that maybe Members will like to reflect and get a realistic projection for the rest of the evening’s work because I am not inclined and I am not that comfortable having senior public servants and others here in the building waiting to whatever time and then only to be told later in the night that they will not be needed for this evening, but tomorrow. Now, Mr. Chairman, in no way am I suggesting that the Committee rush its important work because we are permitted to come back on Monday, next week. It may well be that we will have to look at the full five days, to Monday, and do not rush our business in this way. I do not know if the Committee is minded to shave off some ministries immediately or you believe that we can
continue. Some will not take a long time but I just wanted to flag that because I really do not want public officers to be, all hour of the night, at the building—not only all hours of the night but staying here all night and not being called upon. [Interruption] You are okay, you can stall all night.

**Dr. Rowley**: We will make every effort.

**Mr. Imbert**: Some of the Items would be done quickly, you know.

**Mr. Chairman**: To finish all.

**Dr. Rowley**: I think we can stay on the programme, Mr. Chairman. We will try to speed it up.

**Mr. Chairman**: Okay?

**Dr. Moonilal**: Sure.

**Mr. Chairman**: So we will now invite the Industrial Court.

**Mrs. Thomas**: Mr. Chairman, we on this side down here just wanted to know if you could arrange with the air condition to go down a bit. It is real cold.

**Mr. Chairman**: Oh, it is a bit cold.

**Dr. Rambachan**: Very cold.

**Mr. Chairman**: Oh, I see. Marshall, could you adjust it?

**Mrs. Thomas**: Thank you.

**Mr. Chairman**: We will adjust it. Okay?

**Head 04**.

**Mr. Chairman**: Hon. Members, we are now dealing with Head 04: Industrial Court. The Minister of Finance and the Economy has kindly agreed to assist the Committee in its consideration of this Head, which is an independent body. He would assist in obtaining clarification from the accounting officer in relation to expenditure proposed by the Industrial Court and will answer those questions that directly relate to his portfolio as Minister of Finance and the Economy.

*Question proposed*: That Head 04 stand part of the Schedule.

**Mr. Chairman**: Hon. Members, the sum of $30,680,080 for Head 04, the 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.
I go immediately to Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure; Item 001, General Administration; Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services; Item 001, General Administration; Item 002, South Office. Hon. Members, we will now refer to the Development Programme. Sub-Head 09, Development Programme; Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 04 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much, Registrar of the Industrial Court. Thank you very much. Could we invite the THA at this time? [Interruption] Well, seeing that he is here and we are moving rapidly. Or, do you want to go to the Ministry of Education?

Head 15.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, Head 15: Tobago House of Assembly. Hon. Members, the next Head of Expenditure up for consideration is the Tobago House of Assembly. The Minister of Finance and the Economy has kindly agreed to assist the Committee in its consideration of this Head. He will assist in obtaining clarification from the accounting officer in relation to expenditure proposed by the Tobago House of Assembly and will answer those questions that directly relate to his portfolio as Minister of Finance and the Economy.

Question proposed: That Head 15 stand part of the Schedule.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, the sum of $2,586,207,000 for Head 15, the 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 and the Draft Estimates of Development Programme. You wanted to raise a question?

Dr. Rowley: Mr. Chairman, I just want to raise it with you to clear our minds. The last Head that we examined, there was a specific question that was put. We had asked the Judiciary to tell this House what they had requested from the Minister of Finance and the Economy, for us to gauge what was requested and what was allocated. Was that question answered?

Hon. Howai: No. It was not.

Dr. Rowley: Is there an offer to come later?

Hon. Howai: I could send that subsequently, yeah.
Dr. Rowley: So, it would be answered?

Hon. Howai: Yeah, it will be answered. What had happened is at the time we said for Recurrent there was no problem, so we went straight to Recurrent.

Mr. Chairman: And then we said we would have raised it under Development.

Hon. Howai: We said we would deal with it under DP and it just was not raised under DP.

Dr. Rowley: So, an answer would come to the question.

Hon. Howai: I would give you the answer.

Dr. Rowley: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: So we go immediately to Sub-Head 06: Current Transfers to Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies. Item 001: Tobago House of Assembly.

Dr. Baker: Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: Yes.

Dr. Baker: I will just like to get the clarification of the Chief Administrator, of course through the Minister of Finance and the Economy, if, in his opinion, the allocation made by that Ministry meets the recommendations by the Dispute Resolution Commission, in the first instance.

Hon. Howai: The total, when we prepared the budget, Mr. Chairman, always meets the requirement of the Dispute Resolution Commission.

Dr. Baker: In that light, can you give us some historical underpinnings, particularly with respect to the allocation for 2014, as to the sums likely to be unspent by the THA and whether that has been a recurring theme over the last three or four fiscal years? Just some historical underpinnings.

Hon. Howai: The Chief Administrator advises, Mr. Chairman, that information can be provided subsequently. He does not have it at the moment.

Dr. Rowley: Mr. Chairman, may I ask—

Dr. Baker: May I not be interrupted? I am still going, Mr. Chairman. Where does that unexpended balance go? Into which account, which bank and what is the total amount in that account?

Mr. Chairman: The Minister of Finance and the Economy.
Hon. Howai: Again, Mr. Chairman, we will have to provide that information subsequently.

Dr. Baker: Are we getting the undertaking that will be provided before tomorrow’s end, if we had to end tomorrow?

Mr. Chairman: No. Well we have an undertaking and a commitment from everyone who has come here that they will try to provide the information before the end of our Committee period. That is the undertaking. If otherwise, we will inform Members. Yes, I recognize the Member—

Dr. Rowley: Mr. Chairman, I would like to participate in these proceedings.

Mr. Chairman: Yes.

Dr. Rowley: So I would have to be able to follow what is being said. Are there other documents that we do not have? [Interruption] No, this is the Development Programme, I am on Recurrent. Is there a document that we do not have? I just want to know if there is another document somewhere that we do not have.

Hon. Howai: No, everybody has one.

Dr. Rowley: Because, Mr. Chairman, in this document under Recurrent, I am seeing—well before I go there, this is the Summary. I want to look at the Summary in the light of the questions asked. The Summary is on page 5. Is that correct? This is the correct one now, right?

Mr. Chairman: Yes.

8.05 p.m.

Dr. Rowley: Just the Summary.

Hon. Howai: This will be page 2, Member.

Miss Cox: Or, page 58?

Dr. Rowley: Page 58.

Hon. Howai: Oh, okay you are looking at the Recurrent.

Dr. Rowley: Page 58, Draft Estimates of the Recurrent.

Hon. Howai: Okay.

Dr. Rowley: Am I correct? That is where the question is now, eh? We started out—
Appropriation Bill, 2014

Thursday, September 25, 2014

Mr. Chairman: Yes, Current Transfers to Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies.

Dr. Rowley: Okay, I just wanted to ask, it is not documented because if we look at current transfers, 2014, the estimate was 2.095 and we are being told that the revised estimates for the THA appears to be 2.011. That is 2 billion and 95 million against 2 billion and 11 million. So if I am to ask, the Member is asking about the difference between 2 billion and 95 million and 2 billion and 11 million. Is that the question being put to you, Mr. Speaker? Is that what you understand it to be? He is asking for the difference between those two numbers.

Dr. Baker: Mr. Chairman, if the Member has a question for me he should wait until my Ministry is presenting. He is questioning the Chief Administrator through the Minister of Finance and the Economy. He should not be asking you to clarify—do your job, Mr. Chairman.

Dr. Rowley: When you get in the Chair I will talk to you.

Dr. Baker: You be quiet. I am speaking to the Chair.

Dr. Rowley: “You ketch yourself.” Who you talking about—

Dr. Baker: Be quiet, Sir. [Crosstalk]

Dr. Rowley: “You, ketch yuhself please!”

Mr. Chairman: Please, please, Member let us not—please, please, please. Let us behave in a disciplined manner and have respect for each other, please. [Crosstalk] Please, Members, please, please, let us have respect for each other, let us have respect for each other, please.

Dr. Rowley: I am talking to you and I ask for clarification—[Interrupt]

Mr. Chairman: Yes.

Dr. Rowley: There is a matter before us of unspent balances, and I am asking whether the difference between 2.095 and 2.011, if that is what you are looking for, with respect to an unspent balance? Because the question that I am following from that, I would ask the Minister of Finance and the Economy if 2.095 was provided to the THA, and according to these documents they only spent 2.011. That is the clarification I am looking for.

Hon. Howai: Yeah, the 2.011 represents our estimate of the trend based on expenditure to date. So we think they will only spend 2.011. I think what the
Minister was asking is, then what becomes of the difference between the 2.095 and the 2.011, which is, we would provide the 2.095 to the THA.

Dr. Rowley: So as of now, this is what, September—

Hon. Howai: 25th.

Dr. Rowley: September 25th, would that 2.095 have already transferred to the THA?

Hon. Howai: We would have, yes, it should have been transferred by now.

Dr. Rowley: And we are estimating that they would only spend 2.011.

Hon. Howai: Yeah.

Dr. Rowley: And that is all I was asking.

Hon. Howai: No, I think what the hon. Member is also asking is then, what becomes of the difference.

Dr. Rowley: Well, that will flow on from that. So we now have a question in front of us to clear the answer. And could we get that answer now, Mr. Chairman?

Mr. Chairman: We were told by the Minister of Finance and the Economy through advice given to him by the Chief Administrator, that that will be provided to us in writing. That is what he said, subsequently.

Dr. Rowley: Let me put my own question to him, because I am sure this is not a new question, and I am putting this to the hon. Minister of Finance and the Economy: What happens in situations like this when there is a difference on the positive, because I am not asking for the number, amount of dollars, I am asking what is the procedure to be followed that the law permits?

Hon. Howai: In the case of the THA, there is no requirement to remit the funds back to the Central Government. In the case of Ministries, their cheques are drawn against the Central Bank so that we really do not give them cash in the same way that we would give to the THA. What we do is that we do releases. So we do a release for the various Ministries, and if it is not spent then it falls away.

Dr. Rowley: But in the case of the THA—

Hon. Howai: We send a cash.

Dr. Rowley: In the case of the THA if there is an unspent balance and that is retained by the THA in its account, that is not an improper act?
Hon. Howai: Not as far as I am aware.

Dr. Rowley: Okay. So the THA is permitted, unlike other bodies, to hold on to unspent balances?

Hon. Howai: As far as I am aware.

Dr. Rowley: And is it also true to say that the THA is allowed to use those unspent balances in its own development programme?

Hon. Howai: It is allowed to do so, yes.

Dr. Rowley: So there is nothing improper or illegal about the THA having an unspent balance which is used in a development programme in Tobago for Tobago.

Hon. Howai: I do not think the Minister is suggesting—[ Interruption]

Dr. Rowley: I am not talking about the Minister, I am listening to him, I am talking to you through the Chair. [Crosstalk] Mr. Chairman, with your permission I still have the floor. I am dealing with a matter which is on record in this House, right, and I would like for the record—[Crosstalk]

Mr. Chairman: Please, Members, let us have respect.

Dr. Rowley: Mr. Chairman, for the record and the reason—[Crosstalk] Mr. Chairman, I am talking to you, eh.

Mr. Chairman: Please, please, Members on both sides, let us have one meeting.

Dr. Rowley: The reason I am doing this, Mr. Chairman, is because I want to be clear and I want you to be clear and I want the population be clear, because I have heard it on many occasions where an allegation is being made by persons known and unknown that the THA is squirrelling away money illegally under the guise of unspent balances. When I know, that the THA as a public entity, is allowed as the Minister has just confirmed, to retain its unspent balance to use it in Tobago’s development. That is all I am saying to you.

Mr. Chairman: I recognise the hon. Member for Tobago East.

Mrs. Alleyne-Toppin: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I want us to be very clear on what, if I may ask, what are unspent balances supposed to be used for, legally? And whether when these projects or whatever are accomplished or whether they are undertaken, who reports to whom about what has been spent and for what purpose?
Hon. Howai: The funds that are left unspent are allowed to be spent for capital expenditure. What was the second part of the question?

Mrs. Alleyne-Toppin: The second part of the question was: if this is done, who receives a report, what that capital expenditure was, what it was used for, whether the projects were completed, who is responsible for receiving such a report?

Hon. Howai: Yeah, now, the PSIP actually falls under the Ministry of Planning and Sustainable Development, so that some of the things here in development programme is really dealt with by the Ministry of Planning and Sustainable Development, not by the Ministry of Finance and the Economy. It is something I did not mention because I thought it is better, I can deal with it. But the thing is that, what I am being told by Mr. Sandy is that if there are any reports, those are sent to the Ministry of Planning and Sustainable Development.

Mrs. Alleyne-Toppin: May I ask another question, please, Mr. Chairman?

Mr. Chairman: Yes.

Mrs. Alleyne-Toppin: Can you give us a listing of some of the capital projects that you have undertaken under the Assembly with unspent balances over the past years?

Hon. Howai: I am told that some of them would be such as the cultural complex and other similar type of projects. [Minister conveys with advisor] Is there a list that we can give them? So we will provide a list of what those are.

Mr. Chairman: I recognise the hon. Member for Tabaquite.

Dr. Rambachan: Mr. Chairman, thank you. Following the question of the Member for Tobago East, what I would like to get is, not only what are the capital projects or development projects that have been done, but what was the original estimated cost of those development projects, and how much has been spent to date on those projects that have not been completed, as well as those that have been completed, to see whether they are substantial or any cost overruns on those projects.

Mr. Chairman: Let us deal with a structure here otherwise you are going to get confused. We are dealing with recurrent and then we will come to development. Okay, so hold that question until we reach development. I am dealing with Item 001, Tobago House of Assembly; Division 01, Assembly Legislature. Item 001, Tobago House of Assembly on this particular area,
Division 01, Assembly Legislature, Personnel Expenditure, Goods And Services, Minor Equipment Purchases, Current Transfers And Subsidies. That is the first matter that is before this committee. Any questions? I recognize the Member for Tabaquite.

Dr. Rambachan: Mr. Chairman, in the 2015 estimates a provision was made of $19,186,400 as against $17,200—

Mr. Chairman: What page are you on?

Dr. Rambachan: Oh, sorry, page 60.

Mr. Chairman: Page 60 of what?

Dr. Rambachan: 01, Personnel Expenditure.

Mr. Chairman: Page 60 of which document?

Hon. Member: That is Personnel Department.

Dr. Rambachan: Oh, sorry, sorry, I got the wrong—

Mr. Chairman: All right, okay, you get the wrong one. Hon. Member for Tobago West.

Dr. Baker: It is reported in the THA’s very budget documents that the unemployment rate in Tobago is 5.1 per cent. In that light, what are the number of vacant posts in the THA, under Personnel Expenditure, Item 01 and when are those posts likely to be filled by the Tobago House of Assembly? That is Item 01, Vacant Posts under Personnel Expenditure. [Crosstalk]

Mr. Chairman: We are on page 13, under Personnel Expenditure, Tobago House of Assembly, Vacant Posts. So he is on target. [Crosstalk]

You could go to page 11. [Crosstalk] We are dealing with the one on Draft Estimates of the Revenue and Expenditure of the Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies and of the Tobago House of Assembly for 2015, page 11. And we are dealing with the Sub-Item 08. Please, follow. Vacant Posts, the hon. Minister of Finance and the Economy.

Hon. Howai: I will have to get back to you on that.

Dr. Baker: Can we get the undertaking that you will provide that list?

Mr. Chairman: All right, we go to Division 02: Office of the Chief Secretary, Personnel Expenditure, Goods and Services, Minor Equipment Purchases, Current Transfers and Subsidies. We go to Division 03: Finance and
Enterprise Development, Personnel Expenditure, Goods and Services, Minor Equipment Purchases, Current Transfers and Subsidies. We go to Division 05.

_**Dr. Baker:**__ Before you go, Mr. Chair, there are a number of quasi-state bodies under this Heading.

_**Mr. Chairman:**__ Which Heading?

_**Dr. Baker:**__ Goods and Transfers, Regional Bodies—

_**Mr. Chairman:**__ You are talking about Finance and Enterprise Development.

_**Dr. Baker:**__ Yes.

_**Mr. Chairman:**__ What page are you referring to? Is it page 19?

_**Dr. Baker:**__ I am on page 63.

_**Hon. Member:**__ Wrong book.

_**Mr. Chairman:**__ No, no, it could be confusing to some people. What is the question that you are trying to ask hon. Member?

_**Dr. Baker:**__ You could go ahead.

_**Mr. Chairman:**__ Okay, all right, so we were on Division 03, we have completed that.

_**Hon. Member:**__ What page is that?

_**Mr. Chairman:**__ We were on Division 03: Finance and Enterprise Development. We have completed that one. We now go to Division 05: Tourism and Transportation, Personnel Expenditure, Goods and Services, Minor Equipment Purchases, Current Transfers and Subsidies. We go to Division 06: Education, Youth Affairs and Sports, Personnel Expenditure, Goods and Services, Minor Equipment Purchases, Current Transfers and Subsidies.

_8.20 p.m._

I recognize the hon. Member for Tobago Development and Member for Tobago West.

Dr. Baker: Just enquiring as to the number of ambulances that are on the ground in Tobago this year, Mr. Chairman.

Hon. Howai: Mr. Chairman, we have to get back to you on that information—number of ambulances on the ground.

Mr. Chairman: All right. The hon. Minister of Finance and the Economy said that he will have to report to the Standing Finance Committee on the matter of ambulances on the ground.

I recognize the hon. Member for Fyzabad.

Mr. Sharma: Mr. Chairman, there is a little difficulty in the document because I am unable to find under which heading—

Hon. Member: That is to be expected.

Mr. Chairman: Please. Members, please—[Crosstalk] Listen, listen, listen! [Crosstalk] All right, when you all are happy, let me know. [Laughter] Listen, we have to help each other here. This is a collective, you know. This is the Standing Finance Committee, so if a Member, for some reason, is not following and he wants to get some help, it is our duty to help him. I “doh” see why we should be laughing at each other. Member, may I again advise that the document that we are dealing with is the Draft Estimates of the Revenue and Expenditure of the Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies and the Tobago House of Assembly for 2015, where you will find all the details of what we are dealing with.

Dr. Moonilal: Chairman, could I say, maybe it would be helpful if, as you go through the heading, the Clerk could just advise on the page you are at, because you are not saying the page; you are just reciting the—

Mr. Chairman: Okay.

Dr. Moonilal: And we want to move fast.

Mr. Sharma: Chairman, may I ask the question? [Crosstalk]

Mr. Chairman: Please, please.

Mr. Sharma: I am on the same book. The difficulty I have is that I am looking for the award of scholarships and I thought it might be under Transfers and Subsidies. It does not appear; it does not appear under Education. Can you
advise under which heading scholarships awarded by the THA appears? And then I will be able to ask the question.

**Hon. Howai:** It would be part of the Development Programme estimates. So if we can—

**Mr. Chairman:** That will be part of the Development Programme and we are yet to arrive at that. So I would ask, if you are interested, look at your Development Programme and that is where you will follow us.

**Mr. Sharma:** Thank you.

**Mr. Chairman:** So we are coming now to Division 10: Health—

**Mr. Seemungal:** Chair, may I? On that same book, page 16 on the book.

**Mr. Chairman:** Are you on Division 10, Health?

**Mr. Seemungal:** I am at page 16 of your book, Mr. Chairman.

**Mr. Chairman:** No, no, no. We are not on page 16. Just refer to the pages for me—Division 10: Health and Social Services. We are now on page 63. So I will give our colleague some guidance, as was advised by the hon. Member for Fyzabad. [Crosstalk] Please, Member for Port of Spain South, let us conduct ourselves properly.

**Mr. Seemungal:** Chair, you started off the exercise by saying we are looking at Recurrent Expenditure, and then you turn to the book. That is what is confusing the entire thing.

**Mr. Chairman:** And that is where you will find the details.

**Mr. Seemungal:** No, but that is where you confuse the issue. You started off by saying—

**Mr. Chairman:** I did not confuse “no issue. I eh confuse issues.”

**Mr. Seemungal:** That is where the issue was confused.

**Mr. Chairman:** No, no, no. No, no, no. I would simply say that if Members were prepared, they would never be confused. I am fully prepared for what I am doing here.

**Miss Mc Donald:** They are not prepared.

**Mr. Chairman:** So do not accuse the Chairman of doing anything contrary to proper standards. Okay? So what I am now trying to do to assist Members who are not properly prepared, I am guiding you according to the pages, so all
Members will know, as I call Division 10: Health and Social Services, we tell you page 63, so you will go immediately to page 63. I am helping Members, so I take objection to anybody accusing this Chair of being anything but fair to all Members here.

Mr. Seemungal: We are getting accustomed with this book. This is a first time for all of us.

Mr. Chairman: All right, good. Take your time. Let us go. We go to Division 10: Health and Social Services, Personnel Expenditure, page 63.

Miss Cox: How long we will stay on 63?

Mr. Chairman: Well, we going. Goods and Services, Minor Equipment Purchases, Current Transfers and Subsidies. We go now to Division 11: Settlements and Labour. We are on page 71, Member for La Horquetta/Talparo.

Mr. Seemungal: Sixty-three to 71—

Mr. Chairman: Page 70, that is Settlements and Labour: Personnel Expenditure—

Dr. Baker: Chair?

Mr. Chairman: I recognize the Member for Tobago West.

Dr. Baker: Under Personnel Expenditure, could the administrators, through the Minister of Finance and the Economy, indicate to us how members are hired in this department?

Mr. Chairman: Which particular Sub-Item are you on? In terms of salary and cost of living allowance?

Dr. Baker: Yes, Chair.

Mr. Chairman: Yes, hon. Minister of Finance and the Economy, the Member has asked a question: How are persons hired under this particular item?


Mr. Chairman: Yeah, Settlements and Labour.

Hon. Howai: I am advised that hiring for all the posts in the various heads are handled in the normal way as it is done for public officers.

Mr. Chairman: You follow, hon. Member?

Dr. Baker: Yes.
Mr. Chairman: Okay. I recognize the hon. Member for Oropouche East.

Dr. Moonilal: Mr. Chairman, I want to be very clear where I am. [Laughter] First, I am on page 71, Goods and Services, under Settlements and Labour. I just want to ask a quick question to the Minister of Finance and the Economy. I notice that in two areas, in particular, we have had what could be tantamount to 100 per cent increase in 2015, from the 2013 figure in Other Contracted Services.

Mr. Chairman: Other Contracted Services?

Dr. Moonilal: That is 28. And then in Promotions, Publicity and Printing, we have increased by 100 per cent. And I just wanted to have a sense of what had triggered this increase for Promotions, Publicity and Printing, 100 per cent, and for Other Contracted Services. In 2013 it was $53,000 and the estimate for 2015 is $150,000.

Mr. Chairman: Now, you are on page 71 as we speak, right?

Dr. Moonilal: Right.

Mr. Chairman: And you are referring to—

Dr. Moonilal: I am referring to 28—

Mr. Chairman: —Other Contracted Services?

Dr. Moonilal: —and 62.

Mr. Chairman: —and 62. The hon. Minister of Finance and the Economy.

Hon. Howai: One minute, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: I recognize the Member for Caroni Central but they are just awaiting a response and I will come to you after.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Sure.

Hon. Howai: The area of promotions and publicity is the outreach programme which they are working on. Under the Other Contracted Services, Mr. Chairman, those would deal with things like manpower assessments and labour market surveys.

Dr. Moonilal: Chairman, as I have your attention, I notice in 2013, Short-Term Employment, number 22, $1.2 million in 2013, but by 2014 this had gone down to $480,000—Short-Term Employment—and I am wondering what happened in 2013 that by 2014 there was a need to reduce Short-Term
Employment so dramatically. So that if there is some reason why this short-term—[Interuption]

Mr. Chairman: Oh God, please, Member for Port of Spain South, please!

Dr. Moonilal: I have a big interest in Tobago. Short-Term Employment, $1.2 million—this is just in the heading of Settlement and Labour—in 2013, but there was some reason why it went down so dramatically by 2014. I just wanted to get some explanation.

Mr. Chairman: The hon. Minister of Finance and the Economy.

Whilst we are waiting on you, I recognize the Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Mr. Chair, I crave your indulgence, if you would kindly permit me. You moved relatively fast and you lost me along the way. Can we go back to 69 let me just ask one question—page 69?

Miss Mc Donald: No. “We only going forward”. [Crosstalk]

Dr. Gopeesingh: Just 009, Mr. Chairman.

Miss Cox: No, “we going forward”. The train waiting on no one.

Dr. Gopeesingh: The Chairman moved very swiftly. He lost me. Can I just ask, Mr. Chairman, for consideration, a question on 009, Sub-Item 07, Tobago Regional Health Authority? There has been an increase of—

Mr. Chairman: Just that one I am permitting eh?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Yeah.

Mr. Chairman: That is on page 69?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Yes. 009, Other Transfers is the heading, sub-heading, 07: Tobago Regional Health Authority. In 2014, there was $335 million expenditure and the estimates for 2015 is $450 million. Could the Tobago House of Assembly explain the rationale for the increase of $114 million? That is a big item, Mr. Chairman. What is the reason for the $114 million increase for the Tobago Regional Health Authority?

Mr. Chairman: The hon. Minister of Finance and the Economy.

Hon. Howai: If I may, Mr. Chairman, just to answer the previous question before I get to this one—

Mr. Chairman: Yes.
Hon. Howai:—which dealt with short-term employment. I am told that the reason for the reduction is because this related to the vacation employment and so on, and with effect from 2014 that was transferred to the Office of the Chief Secretary so that the allocations were transferred to that particular Head. The second is the Member for Caroni East’s question. The increase is due to the new hospital and the additional staff associated. My apologies, Minister, it is the operationalization of the new hospital.

Dr. Gopeesingh: That is the reason for the $114 million?

Hon. Howai: That is what I am told.

Hon. Chairman: I recognize the Member for Oropouche East and then the hon. Member for Tobago East.

Dr. Moonilal: First, I want to thank the Minister of Finance and the Economy very much for his clarification on the matter. The Minister of Finance and the Economy has informed us that the short-term employment vote, of $1.2 million for 2013, was subsequently transferred to the office of Chief Secretary. This is why there was a drop to $480,000. I imagine, Minister of Finance and the Economy, that under the heading of Labour on page 72, when you look at contract employment at number 16, contract employment was also transferred to the Chief Secretary, because you have $1.4 million in 2013 and this was reduced dramatically by 2014, to $585,000. Is it that contract employment, short-term employment and other headings, maybe, have all been centralized at that office of the Chief Secretary? And was that a policy decision?

Miss Mc Donald: You trying to be cynical.

Mr. Chairman: Please, please.

Dr. Moonilal: And what influence—you see, the point I am making, Chairman, is that these transfers have been made to the office of Chief Secretary, as I understand it, but they continue to use the subheading of Contract Employment and Short-Term Employment. I just wanted to know what would have informed such a policy shift.

8.35 p.m.

Hon. Howai: That second Item, Minister, was not transferred to the Office of the Chief Secretary. I will have to get a response—I have to provide a further response on that Item.
Dr. Moonilal: Maybe the Minister can tell us then that the reduction from $1.4 million in 2013 to $585,000 by 2014, there would have been probably some contract workers who may not have continued on.

Mr. Chairman: All right. I recognize the hon. Member for Tobago East.

Mrs. Alleyne-Toppin: I want to go to the top of page 69, if you will allow me.

Mr. Chairman: No, no, we are not going back. I simply facilitated the Member for Caroni East. Let us go forward, please. We are under Division 11, Settlements and Labour and we have just completed Goods and Services and we now go to Minor Equipment Purchases. We are on page 72. Do you have any questions there, hon. Member for Tobago East?

Mrs. Alleyne-Toppin: Not yet.

Mr. Chairman: And then we go to Current Transfers—

Dr. Rambachan: Page 72. Well, you know, generally, but under 003 Labour: Item 16, Contract Employment, we notice it goes up from $585,000 to $1 million.

Mr. Chairman: Yeah, that was just addressed by the Member for Oropouche East.

Dr. Moonilal: No, no, I was addressing the 2013, I think the Minister is addressing 2015.

Dr. Rambachan: Well, in that case, I also address 2013 which was $1.442 million and 2014 went down $585,000. Why the dramatic drop between the two years and now it goes back up to $1 million? Why the dramatic drop? And through this document, under Contract Employment, it has been increasing.

Mr. Chairman, with due respect to you, you are jumping fast and you jumped over page 71 and I do not mean to go back. [Crosstalk] But with due respect, if you ask me to leave it, I will leave it but Contract Employment under Settlements went from $3.7 million to $4 million.

Mr. Chairman: So you are seeking an explanation?

Dr. Rambachan: I am raising it. I do not think I will ever get an explanation but I am raising it.

Mr. Chairman: Minister of Finance and the Economy.
Hon. Howai: The administrator has advised that we will do a full response on the different short-term and contracts so that we could provide a proper response to the committee on this matter.

Mr. Chairman: Something will come in writing from the administrative officer. The Member for Tobago West.

Dr. Baker: Before you go, Mr. Chairman, I want to get a clear distinction from the Chief Administrator, through the Minister of Finance and the Economy, of what is a short-term contract in the THA; how are contract posts created by the Assembly and what are the hiring practices—specific hiring practices? Are those posts advertised? And I have a specific question for him in relation to a matter after he gives the response to those.

Hon. Howai: Mr. Chairman, I am told that the Executive Council will approve the creation of the post on the recommendation of the MSSU—the Management Support Services Unit. The thing is that all of these positions are advertised in accordance with the civil service procedure. So that is the process that they go through.

Mr. Chairman: Did you hear that response?

Dr. Baker: Yes, but to this specific question: Is the THA under the regulations of the public service, required to go through the CPO before those contract salaries are determined, required to go through the Ministry of Public Administration with respect to the Public Management Consulting Division before a Cabinet Note is sent up and Cabinet’s approval is required in the creation of those posts, and under which regulation does the Executive Council have the right to create its own contract posts?

Hon. Howai: While some guidelines from the CPO are used, the overall compensation package is set by the Management Support Services Unit.

Dr. Moonilal: What is that unit? The Management Support Services Unit? Is this a unit of the THA?

Administrator (THA): Yes, it is.

Dr. Moonilal: Okay, and they have the remit to set job specifications and evaluate—

Dr. Baker: Mr. Chairman—

Mr. Chairman: Just now, Minister of Finance and the Economy.
Hon. Howai: They work closely with the PMCD so they would consult with the PMCD, and they would use guidelines that the CPO uses but apparently there is some level of discretion as far as the MSSU is concerned.

Dr. Baker: Mr. Chairman, I am still not getting clearly what regulations allow the Executive Council to override the authority of the Cabinet in the creation of a contract post. Every Ministry has to follow the same public administration guidelines, a recommendation from PMCD, the post then goes to Cabinet for approval. The THA operates through the Permanent Secretaries of the Ministry of Finance and the Economy or the Ministry of Tobago Development and are still part of the public service infrastructure and architecture.

Hon. Howai: Mr. Chairman, the THA is of the view that in their interpretation of the Act that they can be used to be guided, but they do not fall directly under the remit of these particular bodies.

Mr. Chairman: All right, we go on to Division 12.

Mrs. Alleyne-Toppin: Mr. Chairman—

Dr. Baker: Can I get it clear from the Minister of Finance and the Economy that the THA—[Crosstalk]

Mr. Chairman: Please, Members, please.

Dr. Baker:—can create its own contract posts determined by the Executive Council, the salaries for those posts—

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Chairman?

Dr. Baker:—and then apply to the Ministry of Finance and the Economy for the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago to fund those positions?

Hon. Howai: I cannot answer that—[Interruption]

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Chairman, is the five-minute rule applying here? But the Minister keeps asking the same question over and over and over.

Mr. Chairman: I recognize the hon. Member for Tobago East.

Mrs. Alleyne-Toppin: Page 73, 04, 005, Non-Profit Institutions, 01 Contribution to Non-Profit Organizations, I want to know what—give me a list of the non-profit organizations that this money is expended on. I am saying this in
light of the fact that the homes for the aged and the children’s homes in Tobago do not receive any subventions from the Tobago House of Assembly or from the national purse. So I am saying the contribution to non-profit organizations, which organizations does this money go to?

**Mr. Chairman:** Under Settlements and Labour, the Member is asking which non-profit organizations, the sum of $500,000 would go to.

**Hon. Howai:** This matter was under the Finance Division at one stage but then it was subsequently decided to spread it out among the different Divisions of the THA, and this is intended to be contributions to various organizations. I do not have a list of those.

**Mr. Chairman:** The Member has asked for a list. You will provide that list?

**Hon. Howai:** Yeah, we could.

**Mr. Chairman:** All right, let us go on. Member for Caroni East.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Yes, I am on page 74: 02, Goods and Services; Sub-Item 08, Rent/Lease.

**Mr. Chairman:** All right. Let me now proceed to Division 12, Planning and Development: 01, Personnel Expenditure; Sub-Item 02, Goods and Services. Member for Caroni East.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** In 2015, you have an estimate for $1 million for rent/lease. Is this the rental that was given by the rental for the Chief Secretary at Tobago Plantation? Is it $1 million for the rental of the property when he resided there for a few months that rent/lease? Is that $1 million the rental for the property in Tobago Plantation? And then if I may draw you to 21, Repairs and Maintenance – Buildings. Is that $200,000 the repair for the Chief Secretary’s building in Tobago?

**Hon. Howai:** No, those expenditures will have to be—they will not fall under this Head of Planning and Development, it will fall under the Office of the Chief Secretary.

**Mr. Chairman:** No, it will not fall under that Head.

**Hon. Howai:** This would be in respect of premises and repairs for this particular Division.

**Mr. Chairman:** All right, we go on to Minor—sorry, Member for Oropouche East.
Dr. Moonilal: Mr. Chairman, I just want to confirm under—I am on page 74, of course, Goods and Services, Item 16, Contract Employment under Planning and Development, to confirm as well the Contract Employment figure for 2013 was $3.5 million. This was also reduced dramatically by 2014 but it is expected to pick up in 2015. Could you confirm as well, Mr. Minister, that this was also the same summer programme that you ceased to—that persons were not carried forward in 2014 so that there was no need to spend as much as you did in 2013, but you expect that this programme will kick-start itself by 2015?

Hon. Howai: Mr. Chairman, as we said, we would give a comprehensive response to this.

Mr. Chairman: All right. The Member for Tobago West.

Dr. Baker: Yes, I am going back to Rent/Lease - Office Accommodation and Storage, can we be provided with a list of all the—

Hon. Member: You are going back again?

Mr. Chairman: No, no, under the same Planning and Development.

Dr. Baker: Yes, 74, Personnel Expenditure; 02, Goods and Services; Sub-Item 08, Rent/Lease – Office Accommodation and Storage. Can I get a listing from the Chief Administrator indicating the number of office spaces or buildings being rented by this Division; the landlord; the amount paid for each of those buildings; and when the THA started occupying those buildings and whether they are occupied at present? Because I am aware of one building that has been unoccupied for more than six months on this same stretch with the Ministry for Tobago Development.

Mr. Chairman: So the hon. Minister of Finance and the Economy, that will be provided. Right?

Hon. Howai: Yes.

Mr. Chairman: Let us go on. Current Transfers and Subsidies. So we now go to the Development Programme on page 19, Item 002, Productive Sectors. Hon. Member for Couva North.

Miss Ramdial: Mr. Chairman, under 09, Development Programme: 002, 467, I. Production and Marketing, Establishment of Processing facilities for Coconut, Bayleaf Oil and Pigeon Peas. I am seeing estimates from 2013, $300,000; 2014, $280,000; 2014 Revised Estimate, $280,000, and in 2015 a reduction by $80,000, at $200,000. Could they explain the reason for this decrease?
8.50 p.m.

Chair, wait just one more part to that question. So the explanation for the decrease and also the location of this processing facility.

Hon. Member: Tobago.

Miss Ramdial: Where in Tobago?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister of Finance and the Economy, where and what is responsible?

Hon. Howai: Mr. Chairman, the location is in Hope Farm, which is in Hope Estate and it is operational but it has a fairly low level of operation.

Mr. Chairman: It is in Hope Farm, okay.

Mrs. Alleyne-Toppin: Mr. Chairman, please, do we actually have a processing plant facility for coconuts in Tobago? Where are the coconut estates that we are getting these coconuts from to process? Do we have bay leaf oil processing? I have never seen any. Where do we have that facility? Where do we have the bay leaf trees from which we can process? Do we have pigeon peas, any plantation of pigeon peas? Where is this facility? Where are the things that have been processed and who have been eating them or rubbing with them or whatever? I do not know them at all. I have not seen them. I live in Tobago.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, we understand your question.

Hon. Howai: Mr. Chairman, I am told—[Crosstalk]

Mrs. Alleyne-Toppin: I live in Tobago.

Mr. Chairman: Yes, please, please, let us get the answer from the hon. Minister of Finance and the Economy.

Mrs. Alleyne-Toppin: We are actually living in Hope.

Mr. Chairman: Yes. Order!

Hon. Howai: Mr. Chairman, the focus is really on the bay leaf oil, not so much the other areas. And the bay leaf trees are on the Hope Farm and they are—[ Interruption]

Mrs. Alleyne-Toppin: Mr. Chairman, I am not hearing properly.

Miss Mc Donald: On the Hope Farm.

Mrs. Alleyne-Toppin: We are living in Hope.
Mr. Chairman: We do not need your help really. Otherwise we would ask you to come and sit here.

Mrs. Alleyne-Toppin: We are not hearing the answer.

Mr. Chairman: Minister of Finance and the Economy, could you just repeat? Members are not hearing you.

Hon. Howai: Mr. Chairman, it is really the bay leaf oil facility that is really operational, not coconut and pigeon peas just yet. The intention is to expand into those areas. But at the present time it is bay leaf and the bay leaf trees are actually grown on the Hope Farm.

Mrs. Alleyne-Toppin: Mr. Chairman, I would like to see some details of the production elements of that. I have never seen any. How many trees we have? What is our production output?

Mr. Chairman: Could you provide some details for us? We go on to Item 003: Economic Infrastructure; Item 004: Social Infrastructure.

Mr. Chairman: I recognize the Member for Couva North.

Mrs. Alleyne-Toppin: Mr. Chairman, you are going too quickly.

Miss Ramdial: Chair, 003: Economic Infrastructure, D fishing, 156: Flying Fish Processing. I am seeing an estimate for $100,000 here. Exactly where is this processing facility and why at such a low cost of $100,000 and what stage of processing are we at?

Hon. Howai: Mr. Chairman, it is just a provision. It has not actually been used.

Mr. Chairman: Has not been used. Member for Oropouche East.

Dr. Moonilal: Mr. Chairman, I am at Economic Infrastructure, of course, and I am looking at 463: Agriculture Access Roads. I just want to be clear that I am here reading this correct. In 2013, under this area of Agriculture Access Roads the THA managed to spend $28.2 million but by 2014, that went down to $5 million. Now, they built the roads. So 2014 did not want, but they estimate that they will need $20 million more to build more roads in 2014. Mr. Chairman, I just wanted to be clear that the $28 million in 2013, initially they budgeted or requested $5 million but that has gone to $20 million as a revised estimate. I am just concerned that would have been a $15 million more expenditure in 2014, if they had suddenly discovered that after receiving the subvention?
Mr. Chairman: Minister of Finance and the Economy, and then the Member for Couva North and then the Member for Tobago West.

Hon. Howai: I will come back with the answer.

Mr. Chairman: He will come back with the answer. Member for Couva North, then Tobago West and then Tobago East.

Miss Ramdial: Same under Economic Infrastructure D. 165: Commercial Tilapia/Prawn Production. Am I to assume that is another provision that has not been used for $200,000?

Hon. Howai: Yeah, it is supposed to be a pilot project, which did not take off really.

Miss Ramdial: So it has not been used, right? Am I to understand that? The pilot project did not come off the ground?

Hon. Howai: I suspect it has not been used.

Mr. Chairman: The hon. Member for Tobago West and later the Member for Tobago East and Caroni after.

Dr. Baker: I am looking at Land Management Services, F. on page 21. I am seeing Sub-Item 454: Sub-division of Estates, and Sub-Item 459: Tobago Heritage Land Trust. What is the sum of $400,000 to be used for with regard to the subdivision of estates? I need a list to be provided to this committee as to the number of estates under the purview of the Tobago House of Assembly, as to who the Assembly intends to subdivide these estates and share to, if they have not yet done it? And as to what law are they utilizing and to whom? Do they plan to share up this heritage land? What are they doing with this Tobago Heritage Land Trust for which they received $16 million in 2013 and are receiving $2 million in fiscal 2015?

Hon. Howai: Chairman, the $400,000 would have been for the lands which are owned by the THA already. It would be for things such as surveying with a view to subdividing the land. So the allocation is simply an allocation to facilitate that. This would be subdivision of agriculture estates, mainly. Right?

Mr. Chairman: The Member for Tobago East and then Caroni and then we moving on.

Mrs. Alleyne-Toppin: Mr. Chairman, I want to ask a question of the Minister of Finance and the Economy here and I want to broadly move from 467, right down to 165. Mr. Chairman, I am submitting that these things I have not seen:
development of demonstration and training centre at Goldsborough. I have seen other things developed at Goldsborough, including a Chubby Place to buy Chubby, including a heritage park. I have not seen any of these facilities.

Mr. Chairman: What page are you on?

Mrs. Alleyne-Toppin: I am on page 21 actually, but I am talking generally about this agriculture section here.

Mr. Chairman: No, no, no.

Mrs. Alleyne-Toppin: Page 21, 025.

Mr. Chairman: No, please, please. Let us deal with page 21.

Mrs. Alleyne-Toppin: Page 21, 025.

Mr. Chairman: Item 025, okay.

Mrs. Alleyne-Toppin: Yes, Development of Demonstration and Training Centre at Goldsborough, 027: Development of Government Stock Farm; 031: Establishment of Sheep Semen Export Facility.

Mr. Chairman, what I am saying here, notwithstanding the noise on the other side, this is really important stuff that is not happening in Tobago, item after item, not happening year after year. Nothing happening here and the land that the Member for Tobago West is describing is being subdivided and given to people who are not in agriculture and who are not using it for that purpose. We are serious here.

Mr. Chairman: All right, let the Minister of Finance and the Economy answer that question.

Hon. Howai: Mr. Chairman, I am told that these are all ongoing programmes and projects which a certain amount is provided on an annual basis to ensure that they continue.

Mr. Chairman: I recognize the Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Mr. Chairman, my colleague, Member for Tobago West asked the question under F 459 on page 21, but I am not getting the answer, the Tobago Heritage Land Trust.

Mr. Chairman: No, they said they will provide that in writing for you.

Dr. Gopeesingh: They would provide it in writing?
Mr. Chairman: The Tobago Heritage. They will provide that. Hon. Member for Caroni East, that will be provided in writing. We go on to Item 005: Multisectoral and Other Services.

Dr. Moonilal: What page, Sir?

Mr. Chairman: That is Item 005. What page is that?

Miss Mc Donald: The last page.

Dr. Moonilal: Mr. Chairman, did you go to research and development? Did you call research and development?

Mr. Chairman: That would be Economic Infrastructure.

Dr. Moonilal: Research and development, I have one question.

Mr. Chairman: What page are you?

Dr. Moonilal: Page 23, No. 580, a quick question to the Minister of Finance and the Economy.

Miss Ramdial: Page 22.

Mrs. Alleyne-Toppin: Page 22, Mr. Chairman.

Dr. Moonilal: Page 23, No 580.

Miss Ramdial: Page 22.

Dr. Moonilal: A quick question.

Mr. Chairman: Take it easy. We have the Member for Oropouche East.

Dr. Moonilal: I would just like the Minister of Finance and the Economy to indicate to the committee what exactly constitutes the Urban Forestry Programme, because I see in 2013, the Urban Forestry Programme was able to spend $3.1 million but by 2014, it went down to $100,000 and by 2015, they do not estimate that they would need anything again. But in 2013, they managed to do a lot in the Urban Forestry Programme. So if we can just get an understanding of what this—and maybe it should be sustained in 2015.

Hon. Howai: Mr. Chairman, we will have to get the answer.

Mr. Chairman: We would have to get the answer for you on that one. I am looking at the Member for Couva North, the Member for Tobago West, the Member for Tobago East. After that I am wrapping up.
Miss Ramdial: Chair, under Research and Development, 482: Cocoa Rehabilitation, I am seeing a decrease from 2014 by $500,000, is there a reason for this decrease, and if so what is the status of that Cocoa Rehabilitation programme that you have asked for a decrease?

Mr. Chairman: Item 482.

Hon. Howai: What I was told, Mr. Chairman, is that they would have asked for more but this is the allocation that they would have gotten from the THA.

Mr. Chairman: I recognize the Member for Tobago West and then the Member for Tobago East.

Dr. Baker: Chair, quite frankly very little—[Interruption]

Mr. Chairman: Please, let us have one meeting, please and it is one love here.

Dr. Baker: Very little of the activity listed under H from Sub-Item 472 unto 588 is actually happening on the ground in Tobago. Seriously, through the Chief Administrator, I would like to have a project update on each of the Items listed between 472 to 588. When those projects started, the sum expended to date, the number of consultants employed in each of these projects, the number of staff members employed in each project and as to the value outcome for the people of Tobago for each of these projects between Items 472 to 588. I am fully aware that very little of those activities are happening.

Mr. Chairman: All right, we deal with Tobago East and then Caroni East and then we close.

Mrs. Alleyne-Toppin: I want to extend that to page 24 to 590 and 600 and I want especially to have a report on what is happening with the mistletoe invasion, the plant invasion, in Tobago and whether we are doing anything about it because it is destroying our crops and we have no programme in place, and if you count all of this money that goes from 472 to 600, you will find millions of dollars that are not being spent year after year, with no cultivation on the 34 estates held by the Tobago House of Assembly in Tobago and agriculture is being neglected.

Mr. Chairman: I recognize the Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Mr. Chair, page 29, under Transport and Communication, D, Nos. 690, 698 and 700. Under 690 you have Resurfacing Programme and in 2013, approximately $32 million was spent, and I want to note that in 2012, only $5 million is asked for.
In 698: Programme for Upgrading PURE in Tobago was $20 million, now you are asking for $8 million and Windward Road Special Development Programme, was $23 million, you are asking for $4 million. So in 2013, $75 million was spent on these three areas of resurfacing, PURE and Windward Road, $75 million, and now in 2015, $5 million, $8 million and $4 million, $17 million. So we have gone down from $75 million in 2013, to $17 million in 2015.

9.05 p.m.

We just want an explanation of what happened in 2013 that would have caused the expenditure of $75 million for road surfacing, et cetera. In 2013, $75 million spent for roads.

Mr. Chairman: Yes.

Hon. Howai: We will have to come back to them on that.

Mr. Chairman: The last question is from the Member for Oropouche East.

Dr. Moonilal: Mr. Chairman, I just want to—under Business Services, 009 page 27.

Mr. Chairman: Page what?

Dr. Moonilal: Page 27, 009 under Business Services, in 2013, the Enterprise Development Company of Tobago managed to spend $12 million, but by 2014, this had gone down to $2 million. Just an explanation as to what work was done by this company in 2013 that had an expenditure of $12 million, as opposed to $2 million required by 2014 and $2 million by 2015.

Mr. Chairman: It will be provided.

Hon. Howai: The $12 million, Chairman, would have been the construction of the factory shelves in Cove, and that would have created the figure for 2012, most of that having been completed in 2013, the figures came down thereafter.

Mr. Chairman: I am closing off now.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Ask them to provide the list of the contractors for us please, on these three—

Mr. Chairman: Member for Tobago East, final question before I close off.

Mrs. Alleyne-Toppin: Mr. Chairman, I want to know how many factory shelves were constructed at Cove.
Mr. Chairman: All right, good. Hon. Members—“yuh hear dat”, right? Hon. Members, the question is that the sum of $2,586,207,000 for Head 15, the Tobago House of Assembly stand part of the Schedule.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 15 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Mr. Chairman: The sum of $2,586,207,000 for Head 15, the Tobago House of Assembly now stands part of the Schedule. [Crosstalk]

Before—please! Please! I want to advise everyone who is coming before this Standing Finance Committee, those who have gone, and those who are coming. We in the Parliament are taking copious notes. The Hansard is recording every request coming from the Members of the Standing Finance Committee. We will be writing to the Tobago House of Assembly, and any other agency, the Judiciary and those that have gone before, and requesting the answers to every question that Members have asked, and we expect answers from those agencies. I want to put it on record this is no Mickey Mouse arrangement, this is serious business, and anybody coming before this Committee, must bring answers at the end of the process.

I want to thank the hon. Minister of Finance and the Economy for assisting us, although this Tobago House of Assembly is an autonomous body, we understand your responsibility. And those who were asking for the Chief Secretary to appear here, let me make it very clear, until the THA Act is repealed, and it is said that the THA Secretary is accountable to the Parliament, he is not compelled to come here. And even if he comes here, he has to sit there in the Speaker’s Gallery. He cannot come here, that is the law.

So I will like to thank the Minister of Finance and the Economy. Mr. Sandy and your team, thank you very much.

We now go to the Ministry of Education.

Head 26.

Question proposed: That Head 26 stand part of the Schedule.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, we are on Head 26, Ministry of Education, $4,445,761,328. I will now invite the hon. Minister of Education, if he so desires, to make a brief opening statement, for no more than five minutes giving us an overview of his priority areas for 2014/2015. The hon. Minister of Education.
Hon. Dr. Gopeesingh: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. May I first introduce my team from the Ministry of Education, Permanent Secretary, Mrs. Jennifer Daniel; Director of Finance and Accounts, Mrs. Vidya Heeraman; Deputy Permanent Secretary, Ms. Natasha Barrow; Mr. Bhadase Seetahal-Maraj, Project Manager and Mrs. Simone Thorne-Mora, Deputy Permanent Secretary.

Mr. Chair, the Ministry of Education has over the last four years been strategically re-engineering the education system, to make it more outcome and purpose driven, such transformation has been an absolute imperative. We are at the stage where there is greater clarity and assurance, that the direction pursued and plans implemented are delivering the decided results. Much work has been done, but lots more to be done, while we are successfully achieving changes. The confidence where we are and where we are going, have brought us to understand and create our strategic positioning for greater excellence in our re-engineered education system, which differentiates us on a global basis.

Mr. Chairman, the allocation of $10.1 billion to the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Tertiary Education and Skills Training, places Trinidad and Tobago as a world leader in our quest on human capital development or people-centred development for sustainable development. Close to 16 per cent of our national expenditure annually, and nearly 6 per cent of GDP, way beyond some of our developed countries internationally.

Mr. Chairman, on coming into office, all education task force reports, action plans and recommendations sitting in the Ministry were analysed, and due recognition were given to them. However, there was an absence on the value outcome of education on our education system, and what do we want for our students to become. In that context, the major paradigm shift or transformation or retooling of the Ministry of Education, was urgently needed. Our mission and vision were redefined.

A business development report was prepared in 2010, and the strategic plan 2011/2015 was produced with an annual roll over, 2012/2016. We became focused on 16 prioritized areas, Mr. Chairman, and they remained prioritized.

The laptop initiative, universal early childhood education, literacy and numeracy, expansion of CVQ at the secondary level, pilot testing and neurodiagnostic of children, change of the date of the SEA which we did, and we successfully implemented; continuous assessment component, improving academic performance improving infrastructure in schools, teacher training and
development, curriculum reform, human resource management, with full computerization; organizational restructuring and institutional strengthening, career guidance, parenting in education and a strong communication strategy.

So far we can say with confidence, we have succeeded in implementing approximately 85 per cent of our promises and prioritized areas, and by 2015, we would have succeeded in complete implementation of all our promises.

We wish to thank and congratulate all our near quarter million students, 126,000 approximately primary, 96,000 secondary, and 34,000 ECCE students, and their teachers, parents, guardians, the Ministry of Education employees, the principals, school supervisors, and the executive management of the Ministry of Education in their successful efforts.

Mr. Chair, in closing, for our quarter million students, and close to 16,000 teachers, nearly 2,600 Ministry of Education public service employees, and 1,000 contract officers, and having to manage 134 secondary schools, 476 primary schools, and linking with 76 private primary schools, 18 private secondary schools and nearly 700 ECCE Centres, our goal of achieving universal early childhood education is now a reality. We have universal primary education, universal secondary education, universal tertiary education, up to the undergraduate level, and Trinidad and Tobago is now a world leader in education, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you. Thank you. Thank you very much. Hon. Members, the question is that the sum of $4,445,761,328 for Head 26, the Ministry of Education, now stand part of the Schedule.

Hon. Members, the sum of $4,445,761,328 for Head 26, the 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 and the Draft Estimates of Development Programme. I go immediately to Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure; Item 001, General Administration. I recognize the Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann’s West.

Mrs. Mcintosh: I want to refer to Item 01, Chair, Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance, and I see there has been a substantial increase of $12.5 million over the revised estimates for 2014. I would like the Minister to elucidate on this for me please.

Hon. Dr. Gopeesingh: I think you are referring Member, to Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance, 2014, the revised estimate was $2.139 billion and in 2015,
$2.256 billion that is an increase of $117 million. There are a number of vacancies that we have at the Ministry, both from the public service and some of the contract positions, and there is expansion of the ECCE Programme, and this will be—this $117 million will be paying for some of the positions that are unfilled now, that will be filled subsequently in the various areas, primary, secondary, the Ministry of Education, public service and ECCE.

Mrs. Mc Intosh: Did you mean $171 million?

Hon. Dr. Gopeesingh: Yes, $117 million.

Mrs. Mc Intosh: I am seeing $171 million here.

Mr. Chairman: No, we are on page 167, hon. Minister. We are under Personnel Expenditure, 01; Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance, that is the reference that the hon. Member is making.

Hon. Dr. Gopeesingh: Well, I was looking at the first page still—$117 million.

Mr. Chairman: Go on to page 167. She is asking why this increase? What is responsible for the—

Hon. Dr. Gopeesingh: I am being advised as well, there is expected wage negotiations for the public service and, therefore, this is an estimate that will probably be the rationale and being incorporated for the increase.

Mrs. Mc Intosh: All right. I see Sub-Item 08, Vacant Posts, Salaries and COLA (without incumbents), and I see there is an increase of $10 million. Where there was no—no it is new. There was no allocation for that—no it was—previous year, previous year.

Hon. Dr. Gopeesingh: No, it was there. It is not new. It is additional funding.

Mrs. Mc Intosh: Additional funding for?

Hon. Dr. Gopeesingh: The same thing, the salaries.

Mrs. Mc Intosh: The vacant posts, does this concern contract positions?

Hon. Dr. Gopeesingh: No, this is public service.

Mr. Hypolite: Can the Minister indicate how many vacant positions there are? And in what area, whether they are—

Hon. Dr. Gopeesingh: Sure. In our secondary school system the established positions, 7,458; the number of positions filled, 7,302; and that includes supervisors, heads of departments, deans, et cetera. The number of positions
vacant without bodies, nobody there, 156 and the difference will be people who are acting, from this total, 7,458, 5,952 are teaching positions.

Mr. Hypolite: What steps are—

9.20 p.m.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Let me go on to primary: 8,827 established positions for the primary schools; the amount filled, 8,725; and without bodies, it is 102. So we have 7,699 teaching positions and 1,128 administrative positions in the primary schools. In the civil service, 2,788 established positions: number of positions filled, 2,450; vacancies, 338; and the recruitment is now being done by the Service Commission in a number of these areas. [Interruption]

Let me just complete and I will come back to you. The contract positions, 2,893: number of positions filled, 1,621; and we have a large vacancy under contract positions: 1,272.

Delinked positions—remember we were under the Public Service Commission and under Schedule 3 of the Education Act, a number of these positions were delinked and went to the Teaching Service Commission. So out of the 376 established positions, 333 are filled and 43 vacant.

So, altogether, the Ministry of Education established positions are 22,342, number of positions filled, 20,431; and number of positions without bodies, 1,911.

Mrs. Mc Intosh: Of the teaching positions, how many are literacy experts?

Hon. Dr. Gopeesingh: I will have to come back to you and give you that information, but I can tell you that we had, graduating from the University of the West Indies, 83 students graduating with their masters in 2012 and we are now utilizing them to be literacy coaches across the primary schools, supported by other—

Mrs. Mc Intosh: They are already in the system?

Hon. Dr. Gopeesingh: They are in the system.

Mrs. Mc Intosh: Are they on contract or permanent positions?

Hon. Dr. Gopeesingh: Permanent positions, but we have to give them an additional stipend because they are pulled out of the teaching positions, but roving through the primary school system.

Mrs. Mc Intosh: They are not on contract?
Hon. Dr. Gopeesingh: No, those are—and some of them came from primary schools and some came from secondary.

Mrs. Mc Intosh: How soon do you expect to fill your 1,272 vacant contract positions?

Hon. Dr. Gopeesingh: It is ongoing. Some of these areas can be suppressed and we will probably look at contract positions. A lot of these are ECCE positions which we are filling from time to time because, you know, we have built 53 new ECCE centres and we are filling these positions as they become vacant.

Mr. Chairman: I recognize the Member for Laventille West.

Mr. Hypolite: Item 14, Remuneration to Members of Cabinet-appointed Committees of $500,000. Can the Minister indicate what Cabinet-appointed committee?

Hon. Dr. Gopeesingh: We were searching, the Permanent Secretary and our team, for those committees, but I do not believe we have any.

Mr. Hypolite: So this is just a figure.

Hon. Dr. Gopeesingh: In the past, there were a few committees, but we may be reconsidering some of these. You see, there is an Advisory Committee on Special Education. We will probably have to reconstitute that. The Learning Materials Evaluation Committee, that is to be reconstituted. A Committee for Teacher Education, that is a National Curriculum Council. These were some of the committees that were there up to 2005/2006, but we have restructured the organization and we have brought some of these committees under the restructured organization. So that is part of the $500,000 as well.

Mr. Chairman: We go to Item 5, Secondary Education; Item 6, Primary Education. We go to Goods and Services. I recognize the hon. Member for Arouca/Maloney.

Miss Hospedales: Thank you, Mr. Chair. In referring to Item 005 and 006—it is the same, similar, things—Sub-Item 32, Remuneration to Substitute Teachers in the secondary schools and in the primary schools.

I want to know whether or not this allocation is adequate and if the Minister could tell us the current number of substitute teachers in the secondary school as well as in the primary school, and if he can identify for us the schools where this type of service is provided.
Mr. Chair, the reason why I am asking, I am not sure if the Minister is aware, particularly in the primary schools, when the teachers are not going to attend school on a particular day, they normally would advise the parents to keep the children at home and I do not think that is a good practice.

Hon. Dr. Gopeesingh: We do not advise that the children be kept at home at all because we do not have substitute teachers in the primary schools, but the principals make adjustments—if we have any training programme for any of the teachers in the primary schools—for filling these classes during the time that the teachers are absent on their training.

I missed one of your questions, Member.

Miss Hospedales: I asked the current number—

Hon. Dr. Gopeesingh: That Note is being prepared for Cabinet to bring substitute teachers for primary schools, remedial teachers as well and there is another category.

Mr. Chairman: Let us go to Port of Spain North/St. Ann’s West.

Mrs. McIntosh: Do you have the substitute teachers’ system functioning in the secondary schools?

Hon. Dr. Gopeesingh: It fell into some disrepute and we have begun to strengthen it because we needed a strong IT communications strategy for it by putting the names. First of all, we are getting Cabinet’s position now to go with more remedial and substitute teachers and we will have these on an IT list that the principals can pull down from and have the teachers in the school as readily as we want.

Mr. Chairman: Let us go the Sub-Head 02.

Mrs. McIntosh: Chair, I need to say something on—I will be guided by you, but I think it is appropriate for me, at this point, to note that in the Auditor General’s Report on this Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services and 001, General Administration, certain concerns were raised about expenditure in this area and I should like to know what oversight is there in spending of moneys.

The concerns that were raised were: one, vouchers bore no evidence that availability of funds was checked before payments were processed. What I would like to ask is: what is the process for making payments and why are payments being made before checking the availability of funds? That is one.

The other one is: the dates of cheques were not included on vouchers and on schedules of accounts as required by Financial Instruction 27. Who is responsible
for making these cheques? Why are the dates excluded? And the third point the Auditor General’s Report referred to in respect of this particular Sub-Head and Item is that invoice orders were not being completed and properly utilized. I would like to know why were the invoice orders not being completed? If we are talking about expenditure, we have to know why—

**Hon. Dr. Gopeesingh:** Could you guide me on the line item there, Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann’s West? Are you speaking about the substitute teachers?

**Mrs. McIntosh:** It was 02, Goods and Services; Item 001, General Administration. These were observations in the Auditor General’s Report. I would just like some—

**Mr. Chairman:** I understand what the Member is saying. Just for your consideration and your team, she is making reference to the Auditor General’s Report. It is not a direct item, but she is asking you to consider that report to strengthen the administration of the Ministry to avoid these occurrences taking place in the future. That is all she is asking.

**Hon. Dr. Gopeesingh:** Mr. Chairman and Member, I just spoke with my accounting officer and they have indicated that this was brought to their attention and they have responded to the Auditor General on these matters.

**Mr. Chairman:** All right. So let us go on to Item 005, Secondary Education. We can go on now to Item 006, Primary Education; Item 007, District Services Division; Item 008, Rudranath Capildeo Learning Resource Centre; and then we go to Item 009, Early Childhood Care—[Interruption]

**Miss Hospedales:** Chair, you are going too—

**Mr. Chairman:** Where are we? But I am at Early Childhood Care and Education Unit.

**Miss Hospedales:** Will you just back up a little bit for one second, please. I just want to ask about 05, Sub-Item 05, Telephones.

**Hon. Dr. Gopeesingh:** What page are you on?

**Mr. Chairman:** Where are we?

**Hon. Dr. Gopeesingh:** What page, Member?

**Mrs. McIntosh:** I am at page 169; all of us are on 169. You are not finished there. There is an increase of $60 million for telephones and the provision of free Internet access to schools. Is there a particular state enterprise that will be
managing this? Has a contract been signed with a supplier for this provision? If so, who is the supplier?

**Hon. Dr. Gopeesingh:** This here is an estimate for the proposed introduction of the Wi-Fi system in the schools where we have Internet connectivity and a dedicated fibre-optic cable link. You yourself had asked the question in one of the debates whether we are going to improve the connectivity and this here is the estimate that we believe—

The tender was before the Central Tenders Board and held up there for nine months. It is going to be re-tendered pretty shortly and this will take care of the Wi-Fi and the dedicated fibre-optic cabling.

**Mr. Chairman:** I recognize the Member for Arouca/Maloney.

**Miss Hospedales:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Sub-Item 16, under Contract Employment, could the Minister indicate the current number of persons on contract and if there are any vacancies and the units the vacancies are in?

**Hon. Dr. Gopeesingh:** Member, I think I gave all those figures—

**Mr. Chairman:** He gave an overview of all the contract officers. Let us go on now—

**Hon. Dr. Gopeesingh:** I think my voice is loud enough to—

**Mr. Chairman:** Let us go on to secondary education.

**Miss Hospedales:** The same applies for short-term employment as well, if the Minister can give a breakdown in terms of the number of persons employed and proposed to be—

**Mr. Chairman:** That will be provided in writing, short-term employment.

**Hon. Dr. Gopeesingh:** It is not many.

**Mrs. Mc Intosh:** Mr. Chair.

**Mr. Chairman:** Yes, Ma’am.

**Mrs. Mc Intosh:** Item 23, Fees. Minister, could you give us a little more detail about the fees, please? A little breakdown.

**Hon. Dr. Gopeesingh:** Well, you know, Trinidad and Tobago is one of the major contributors towards the sustainability of CXC. I think we pay the most amount of fees that any Caribbean country, including Jamaica, pays to CXC for fees. These are the fees that we pay, close to $50 million, on a yearly basis.
Mr. Chairman: That is for CXC, fees. Okay? Member for Arouca/Maloney.

Miss Hospedales: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I would like to refer to Sub-Item 37, with reference to Janitorial Services. What we have seen is an increase in the allocation for janitorial services from $105 million to $120 million. I want to find out from the Minister whether or not they have done an evaluation of the janitorial services that are being provided for both the primary and secondary schools and, in conducting that assessment, if they intend to make changes where those janitors are concerned because some of the primary schools and even secondary schools are extremely dirty and they have people filling those positions as janitors.

Mr. Chairman: The hon. Minister.

Hon. Dr. Gopeesingh: Chair and Members, to date, MTS is providing maintenance and janitorial services in 76 of the secondary schools and institutions; to 18 primary schools, and security services in 85 secondary schools, 320 primary schools and 29 Early Childhood Care and Education centres.

At the moment, the Ministry of Education pays MTS for over 800 employees in the secondary schools, consisting of close to 83, and we pay for at least eight, nine or 10 people for each one of our government secondary schools and the fees that we pay to MTS for maintaining and doing some work in our schools comprise of people like Building Supervisor. Let me give you an example. At Aranguez North Secondary, there are 12 people that we are paying MTS for: Building Supervisor, three groundspeople, seven Maintenance Technicians I and one Maintenance Technician II.

I must say publicly that we have been appalled by their inability to do exactly what they were being paid for over a period of time. We had to call them in and read the riot act to them. And so now we could see that we are getting better performance from them. It is a state company, people are employed. Your first issue is that you do not want to separate anybody, but we have asked them to improve their performance.

Over 800 people, so the maintenance and janitorial services in our government secondary schools are done by MTS and the board-assisted schools they get their payments through the other way.

Mr. Chairman: We are now going to Item 005, Secondary Education.

9.35 p.m.

Mr. Hypolite: Chair, my hand was up. I have one question on page 170, 65.
Hon. Dr. Gopeseingh: Let me just make a point. We paid close to about $110 million—where it is, janitorial?

Mrs. Mc Intosh: An increase of $50 million.

Hon. Dr. Gopeseingh: Yes, because they are asking for increased fees and so on because of their new wage negotiations, et cetera.

Mrs. Mc Intosh: What accounts for the increase in security services—$39 million? Is that cameras?

Hon. Dr. Gopeseingh: Well, Member, you had been a principal as well and you know we are having some difficulties in certain schools, and we have had to increase security.

Mrs. Mc Intosh: Does that include camera equipment?

Hon. Dr. Gopeseingh: Yes, it will, particularly in the ECCE centres where we have to pay for the entire 24 hours as well. We believe with the ECCE centres we can do some CCTV camera system for 12 hours, and while the students are in school during the 12 hours, we will have the security guards. So it is a combination of increased fees that MTS needs; more schools—ECCE centres constructed, and we have beefed up the security in some of the other schools.

Mr. Chairman: Yes, I recognize the Member for Laventille West.

Mr. Hypolite: Chair, Item 65. Earlier on it was made mention that there were no Cabinet-appointed committees, but yet still we are seeing here in 2014, $10,000 was spent, and in 2015 we are looking at $200,000. Can the Minister indicate exactly what is happening there?

Hon. Dr. Gopeseingh: Well the Permanent Secretary is just telling me she does not know why this was—but we do not know—[ Interruption]

Mr. Hypolite: Why that is inside there?

Hon. Dr. Gopeseingh: In the event probably we formed something, so they gave us—[ Interruption]

Mr. Hypolite: That is $10,000 that was put.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, let us go to Item 005, Secondary Education; we go to Item 006, Primary Education; Item 007, District Service Division; Item 008, Rudranath Capildeo Learning Resource Centre; Item 009, Early Childhood Care and Education Centres.
Miss Hospedales: Mr. Chair.

Mr. Speaker: Which one would you want to raise?

Miss Hospedales: 008.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, quickly.

Miss Hospedales: Sub-Item 22, Short Term Employment. Again, could the Minister indicate what has accounted for that significant decrease of $3 million plus?

Hon. Dr. Gopeesingh: Yes, you know, we had the reform of the primary school curriculum which we successfully did, and we also reformed the Early Childhood Education curriculum, and we are now moving to reform the secondary school curriculum. We had a number of consultations nationally and through the district offices for the review of the primary school curriculum, and out of that emanated the request for the inclusion of physical education and visual and performing arts, which we have included for the last two years in the primary school curriculum.

In addition, we included morals, values, ethics, citizenry development, character development, agri-science, science, health and family life education. In that component we have introduced the continuous assessment component which gave the 20 per cent marks before the SEA examination. So we needed to have a number of expert moderators and monitors for these areas, and this is the fee we had paid to them. I think, if I am correct, there are about 80 monitors—147 moderators and monitors in the primary school curriculum.

Mr. Chairman: All right. We go on to Sub-Head 003, Minor Equipment Purchases; Item 001, General Administration; Item 006, Primary Education; Item 007, District Services Division; Item 008, Rudranath Capildeo Learning Resource Centre; Item 009, Early Childhood Care and Education Unit. I recognize the hon. Member for Laventille East/Morvant.

Miss Cox: Mr. Chairman, through you to the Minister, I wanted to find out about the Early Childhood Care and Education Centre in Morvant. What is the present—?

Hon. Dr. Gopeesingh: Yeah, sure, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair and Member, you know, we completed construction of 53 new Early Childhood Care and Education centres. If I search the list for those that we did in the PNM constituencies—

Mr. Chairman: No, no, no.

Hon. Dr. Gopeesingh: Well, sorry.
Mr. Chairman: I think the Member asked if you could give her an update. You see, we have a problem with time and we have about 20 more to complete until 12 o’clock.

Hon. Dr. Gopeesingh: Is that Cosmos Street, Coconut Drive in Morvant.

Miss Cox: Yes.

Hon. Dr. Gopeesingh: That had a sewer problem for a while, and I think we have now put in a new type of sewer system. If it is not functioning yet, it will soon be functioning.

Mr. Chairman: All right. So could we go on to Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies? The hon. Member for Port of Spain North St. Ann’s/West.

Mrs. Mc Intosh: Hon. Minister, the grant you are saying for secondary schools education programme, what is that programme about please? Thank you.

Hon. Dr. Gopeesingh: Where is that?

Mrs. Mc Intosh: It is Sub-Item 24 under 04.

Mr. Chairman: Under 04, okay. You are dealing with Regional Bodies under 04?

Mrs. Mc Intosh: Sub-Item 24.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, I understand; I understand. Okay.

Hon. Dr. Gopeesingh: 76.

Mr. Chairman: Right. Educational Institutions. The hon. Minister. The Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann’s West has gone ahead of you. We gone to educational institutions long time.

Mrs. Mc Intosh: “Ah press de gas.”

Mr. Chairman: Of course. You have to wait on the Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann’s West.

Hon. Dr. Gopeesingh: Grants paid in respect of government-assisted denominational primary schools—[Interruption]

Mrs. Mc Intosh: It says educational programme.
Hon. Dr. Gopeesingh: We have 317 primary schools that are managed by denominational boards. We pay approximately $34 million for the cleaning and maintenance and requisites to the primary schools. So the grants to government secondary schools—that is money that we give to each one of the secondary schools—the government secondary schools. I have it here—this is what I have been saying—they have the ability to spend the money.

For secondary schools annually, we gave to the denominational secondary schools $60 million. That takes care of the practical subjects, books, materials and services, running costs, minor equipment and protective gear. So there are 39 denominational secondary schools. When I look through the list here, we pay approximately $7 million per month to these 30-something schools, and the total we pay to these schools range between $1.5 million, $1.6 million, $1.9 million, $1.7 million and $1.2 million. So it is a range depending on the size of the schools and the number of students.

These government secondary schools are given a substantial amount to the tune of—the 39 schools—over $60 million for them to spend as they believe that they should in the management of the schools, and value about $50,000, they seek the guidance and the protection of the Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Education.

Mrs. Mc Intosh: Now, Mr. Chairman, we asked a question about the textbooks. Sub-Item 27 Textbook Rental Primary Schools and Sub-Item 30 Textbook Rental Secondary Schools. I see you have increases here.

Hon. Dr. Gopeesingh: Yes.

Mrs. Mc Intosh: But I would like to know, why is the Ministry of Education still owing moneys to local and foreign publishers since 2013? I want to know why the local and foreign publishers have not to date received purchase orders for textbooks.

Hon. Dr. Gopeesingh: Just today, I think we had a Cabinet Note for that and they have been preparing the orders to give to them pretty shortly. So before the end of this fiscal year, they would have been given the purchase orders. Most of these books now that we are purchasing are from sole publishers. They are not varying publishers. So, the tendering process is not difficult with that. There is only but 6 per cent of the publishers that we have to tender—go through for some international tendering, but so far over the four-year period, we have purchased over 2.2 million textbooks for our students in the schools at a cost close to about $200 million.
Mrs. Mc Intosh: What about the moneys going to the publishers?

Hon. Dr. Gopeesingh: We are paying them now. EFCL has been the company, as a special purpose company, given in 2004, that was formed under your administration, but in 2009, I believe you all gave them the authority to purchase books which we have continued, and they purchase books on behalf of the Ministry of Education. We are trying to get the producers to bring books with PDF format now—and they are a little reluctant—for the e-textbook.

Mr. Chairman: Please. The hon. Member for Laventille East/Morvant.

Miss Cox: Thank you. Mr. Chairman, I would like to know, the publishers—[Interuption]

Mr. Chairman: Yes and then the Member for Tabaquite and then the Member for Laventille West and then the Member for Arouca/Maloney.

Miss Cox: I would like to be supplied with the list of publishers that were paid and those who were not paid, please.

Hon. Dr. Gopeesingh: Sure.

Miss Cox: I would like to get that list.

Hon. Dr. Gopeesingh: We have 34 publishers.

Mr. Chairman: The Member for Laventille West and then the Member for Arouca/Maloney.

Hon. Dr. Gopeesingh: Most of them are paid. Some of them have been paid, not the full amount. One of the problems we had is the delivery. They had to satisfy the delivery.

Mr. Chairman: No problem, hon. Minister. The Member for Laventille West and then the Member for Arouca/Maloney.

Mr. Hypolite: Chair, page 176, Item 22—[Interuption]

Mr. Chairman: Oh, yes, I recognize the Member for Tabaquite after. Sorry.

Mr. Hypolite: Items 22 and 28 Local School Boards. Can the Minister indicate how many local school boards are there under the secondary schools and the primary schools? Can a list be provided of all those schools?

Mr. Chairman: Could you provide that list?

Hon. Dr. Gopeesingh: Yes, they are very easy. We have it.
Mr. Hypolite: Also, Mr. Chairman, Item 34 Grants for Expansion of the Universal ECCE. It is a new item. Can the Minister give some more information on that?

Mr. Chairman: The hon. Member for Tabaquite.

Hon. Dr. Gopeesingh: Can I just answer him?

Mr. Chairman: Oh, I thought you said you are going to provide him with the information.

Hon. Dr. Gopeesingh: Eighty-two school boards were introduced for the government secondary schools. The same school board is responsible for about two or three primary schools as a cluster for the time being, while we bring on more school boards for the primary schools, but the local school boards now are interacting with a school-based management team where the same members of the school boards are members also of the school-based management team.

So, in terms of the management of the schools, we have a school-based management team here and we have the local school boards with nine members on the local school boards with principal, vice-principal, three members of the community. So they are interacting now and managing the schools and, basically, owning the schools and this is going to improve the education system for the students. [Interruption] You gave me some names, and I introduced those names. The people you gave from the communities—remember I had asked all of you and I believe we put all the names of the people that you all recommended on the board.

Mr. Hypolite: Some more information, Item 34. It is a new sub, Universal ECCE.

Hon. Dr. Gopeesingh: Well, you know, we are in a strong construction programme. We have constructed 53 Early Childhood Care and Education centres. We have 31 under construction now and we have another 52 to be started pretty shortly. Of course, we have to go through the major tendering process. [Crosstalk] Hold on. So this is to be paid for the new construction.

Mr. Hypolite: This is for construction?

Hon. Dr. Gopeesingh: Part for construction, but part for paying for students in the public/private sector partnership for ECCE. At the moment, this year, at September, we are paying for 5,062 places in private ECCE centres. That is bringing us closer to fulfilling the goal of universal early childhood education—[Interruption]
Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much.

Hon. Dr. Gopeesingh: —$3,600 per student per year.

Mr. Chairman: Member for Arouca/Maloney, hold on. The Member for Tabaquite and then the Member for Arouca/Maloney.

Dr. Rambachan: Chair, thank you. The question was answered in terms of 34. Just that I wanted to know on 26, Special Education Resources Programme: a lot of children have difficulty, for example, in the schools. You have ADD and ADHD children, for example, and they tend to fall through the cracks. Does this include dealing with those kinds of children?

Hon. Dr. Gopeesingh: Yes, Member for Tabaquite. In fact, you have come straight to the point that there are a lot of students. We have 14 government special needs schools and 11 private special needs schools, and we take care of almost 3,000 students in the special needs schools. We provide materials and learning materials for these 3,000 students. Also, with the inclusive education model, we have special needs students in our mainstream schools where we get all the things for them like braille machines, et cetera.

9.50 p.m.

Miss Hospedales: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am referring to Sub-Items 22 as well as 28, with reference to the Local School Boards for both the primary and the secondary schools—could the Minister indicate exactly when those persons who are appointed to be on those boards are expected to be appointed? Because there are some boards that are not yet appointed, and if he can indicate exactly, you know, what school—well, my colleague did ask about the schools that they are assigned to.

Hon. Dr. Gopeesingh: All right, we will verify, Member, which schools have not had their boards appointed and we will ensure that—

Mr. Chairman: Right, you will get that. So we go to Item 007, Households, then we go to Item 011, Transfers to State Enterprises—

Miss Mc Donald: I want to find out something at 011—

Mr. Chairman: Where?

Miss Mc Donald: At 011, at 05.

Mr. Chairman: Yes, go ahead.
Miss Mc Donald: Repayment of Loan and Interest - Procurement of Laptops; could you, Minister—

Hon. Dr. Gopeesingh: Where are you? Port of Spain South—

Mr. Chairman: What Item are you on?

Miss Hospedales: We are on Households, Mr. Chair.

Miss Mc Donald: Page 177.

Mr. Chairman: We will come to you in a short while, let the Member for Port of Spain South answer.

Miss Mc Donald: Page 177, under 011, Transfers to State Enterprises, I am looking at 05. I want to find out from the Minister, these figures here represent the loan from 2010 for the purchase of laptops? What does it represents?

Hon. Dr. Gopeesingh: Yes. In the first year, remember when we came into office in June 2010, when the Prime Minister had promised that we will deliver the laptops to the students by September. We did not have the budgeting there so we had to borrow the money for the first set of laptops which cost about $83 million in 2010—

Miss Mc Donald: So how much was the total?

Hon. Dr. Gopeesingh: Eighty-three million was in 2010, and so I think this might be the last year for repayment, if I am not—

Miss Mc Donald: So this represents the payment from 2010?

Hon. Dr. Gopeesingh: Payment for the borrowing for the first year.

Mr. Chairman: So you did not have to borrow for the 2011/2012—

Hon. Dr. Gopeesingh: No, in 2011 we budgeted and that cost $54 million; in 2012 it was $56 million; 2013, $49 million, and this year it is $46 million, so the cost for a laptop has gone down from $4,000 each, now to $2,250.

Mr. Chairman: The hon. Member for Arouca/Maloney and then the Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann’s West.

Miss Hospedales: Mr. Chair, under Sub-Head 007, Sub-Item 15, Student Support Services; I am asking the Minister whether or not they intend to rectify the problem faced by Guidance Officers and Guidance Counsellors with reference to the non-payment of travelling, as well as their communication allowance, and within which time frame, how soon are they expected to get their payments?
Hon. Dr. Gopeesingh: Member, you remember you gave me that note and I brought it immediately to the Permanent Secretary. The Permanent Secretary has just advised me that the travelling aspect of it has been completed. It is just the communication aspect, 200 is going to be done. But may I say that Cabinet had passed a Note for us to expand the Student Support Services to 732, we now have one Guidance Counsellor or one Guidance Officer in every secondary school. We have School Social Workers, Clinical Psychologists and Behavioural Educational psychologists around our schools now, and taking care of the students.

Mr. Chairman: The hon. Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann’s West.

Mrs. Mc Intosh: Chair, I am on page 177, I think I am saying it right, Item 011, Transfers to State Enterprises; Sub-Item 03, Education Facilities Company Limited—Repayment of Interest on loan-ECCE centres. We will see, hon. Minister, that since 2013, $21.4 million has been appropriated to EFCL for repayment of a loan to ECCE project, but this amount is not reflected on EFCL financial statement. I want to know why it is not reflected on your statements, on your notes, and what exactly was the loan for?

Hon. Dr. Gopeesingh: The EFCL statement is not before me, Member, so, unfortunately, I cannot comment whether—

Mrs. Mc Intosh: But you will respond to this?

Hon. Dr. Gopeesingh: I will look into it, certainly.

Mrs. Mc Intosh: Thank you.

Hon. Dr. Gopeesingh: But this is a loan repayment on a bond issue, remember we had borrowed $400 million, which your administration had sought to do. You wanted to build 600 ECCE centres by 2012; unfortunately you built 22—

Mrs. Mc Intosh: More than that. More than that.

Hon. Dr. Gopeesingh:—but we borrowed the $400 million and we built 53 so far, and this is a loan repayment on the bond issue.

Mr. Chairman: Yes, Port of Spain North/St. Ann’s West.

Mrs. Mc Intosh: Yes, I just have one last question, and this is one on the laptops. Has any assessment been undertaken to determine the impact of the laptops on the pedagogical process? Have you had an assessment conducted?

Hon. Dr. Gopeesingh: Well, Member, you spurred me on when we spoke in the debates last year and, subsequent, when we discussed things, and we did do an
evaluation. I have a very voluminous thing, I have to study it myself, and I will probably come and speak about it in Parliament. But it has benefited students and, you know now, we have moved to 21st Century “smart classroom”, every school now has a computer lab; 128 of the 134 schools have Internet connectivity, some schools have one to six labs, some labs have up to 60 computers. We have 150 ICT technicians in the schools, and we have audiovisual rooms in most schools. We gave them smart televisions and multimedia projectors and so on, so we are going ahead.

Mrs. Mc Intosh: Hon. Minister, you had made a statement, you accepted that some of the laptops are not functional; how many laptops are in a state of disrepair? I am particularly concerned about Forms 4 and 5, where students have a lot of SBAs and research work to do for their exams, very critical to their CSEC. So those were the students who were first given the laptops in Form I. I understand, my information is that a lot of those laptops are in a state of disrepair. What arrangements have been made—

Hon. Dr. Gopeesingh: I have kept my word.

Mrs. Mc Intosh: What numbers—

Hon. Dr. Gopeesingh: I will tell you.

Mrs. Mc Intosh: How many are in a state of disrepair?

Hon. Dr. Gopeesingh: I sought to get the information from the school supervisors who I asked to collect the information for the—one minute. All right, I will try to give you the information. There are a number of laptops that have to be repaired and we have been collecting the information from the principals and the supervisors. We have collected them now, and next year’s budgeting takes care of about $10 million. We expect to use—

Mr. Chairman: So you will get the information.

Mrs. Mc Intosh: No. No. No. Sir, I am not finished. I am not finished.

Mr. Chairman: Yeah, final question and then we go to the Member for Laventille East/Morvant.

Hon. Dr. Gopeesingh: I have been advised it is not very significant.

Mrs. Mc Intosh: Well my advice is—okay. What arrangements you have put in place? I know you have $10 million, how are you going to go about to repair?
Hon. Dr. Gopeesingh: We have to tender. We have to get, first, what areas of the laptops are down, and we have to provide that information in the scope of work for a request for proposal for tendering. We will have to open it up quickly we will do it.

Mrs. Mc Intosh: I just want with your permission, Mr. Chair, hon. Minister, I just want to suggest: do you think it is beneficial—technologically-wise and cost-wise—to repair what will be now five years old, obsolete laptops, because the technology is moving fast, rather than purchase for those students, new laptops which are cheaper?

Hon. Dr. Gopeesingh: We will have to do a cost analysis. We will do a cost analysis, Member, and we will weigh the pros and cons and then we will work on it.

Mrs. Mc Intosh: Think of it, and give them new laptops in Form 5 and Form 4.

Hon. Dr. Gopeesingh: Well, if it is needed we will have to—

Mr. Chairman: The Member for Laventille East/Morvant.

Miss Cox: Thank you, Mr. Chair, under Transfers to State Enterprises, 02, National Schools Dietary Services Limited, I see an increase of $11.3 million; what accounts for this increase?

Hon. Dr. Gopeesingh: All right. First of all, we have increased the amount of meals to students. We now provide about 100,000 lunches and about 55,000 breakfasts, and we have now included a number of the ECCE centres, the younger children, in provision of meals for the students in the ECCE centres.

In addition, the contractors, the caterers had been complaining for years, bitterly, that they had no increase in the amount that we were paying them for the provision of a meal, and on discussions at a wide level, Cabinet passed a Note to give them an increased payment of about, I think 70 cents per meal—yes, and that will cause an increase. We pay $1.2 million per day for school meals, and it is approximately $236 million for the year for the students. We have now staffed the area, and we are now monitoring and evaluating the whole aspect of the use of the meals and the wastage areas and so on.

Mr. Chairman: All right, let us go. We go to Sub-Head 06, Current Transfers to Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies; Item 004, Statutory Boards. We go now to the Development Programme, Sub-Head 09, Development Programme; Item 004, Social Infrastructure. [Crosstalk]
Hon. Dr. Gopeesingh: We are in the next book?

Mr. Chairman: We are now in the Development Programme. Yes.

Miss Mc Donald: Physical Security of Secondary Schools; I would have thought that—

Mr. Chairman: Which Item are you on?

Miss Mc Donald: I am on 380, Mr. Chair.

Hon. Dr. Gopeesingh: What page?

Mr. Chairman: Page 85.

Miss Mc Donald: Page 85, under Physical Security of Secondary Schools. I thought that that figure was a bit low, but I do not know what it is for, so can I get an explanation there?

Hon. Dr. Gopeesingh: But that was just one little minor aspect—fencing.

Miss Mc Donald: Pardon me.

Hon. Dr. Gopeesingh: The fencing.

Miss Mc Donald: Fencing. Okay.

Hon. Dr. Gopeesingh: But with the security of schools it is about $210 million per year, and if we have three security guards—one security guard costs about $30,000 per month, so $360,000 per year—so three security guards are $1.08 million per year. We spend over $210 million for security services per year.

Mr. Chairman: We recognize the hon. Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann’s West.

Mrs. Mc Intosh: Chair, are you at Educational Services? Have you reached there?

Mr. Chairman: We are on Development Programme under Infrastructure.

Mrs. Mc Intosh: Well, I am at Educational Services.

Mr. Chairman: Yes, you can go.

Mrs. Mc Intosh: Item 711, this Development of a Management Information System Unit, has this already been contracted? Is there a provider?
Hon. Dr. Gopeesingh: My understanding is part of the Project Planning and Management Unit—

Mrs. Mc Intosh: Was this project tendered? When did it start?

Hon. Dr. Gopeesingh: Is it Library Service (NALIS)? Is it 711?

Mrs. Mc Intosh: No. No. No. This is the Development of a Management Information System Unit; tell us about it.

Hon. Dr. Gopeesingh: We have X-amount of teachers around the country and, over the years, we have had to use files, and we are using now the IHRIS programme, to work with the IHRIS programme to computerize the information related to the teachers within the school system. My understanding about this is, today, CTB would have given a letter of award for a contract on that, I think, to PricewaterhouseCoopers.

Mrs. Mc Intosh: It was tendered?

Hon. Dr. Gopeesingh: Yes, of course, international tendering.

Mrs. Mc Intosh: So it has not started as yet? It has not been implemented as yet?

Hon. Dr. Gopeesingh: No. Preliminary work has started, but we hope—completion time is about nine months.

Mr. Chairman: Let us go to Item 05, Multi-sectoral and Other Services, Infrastructure Development Fund—

Miss Hospedales: Mr. Chair, I have some questions on the IDF. [Crosstalk]

Mr. Chairman: I recognize the hon. Members for Laventille East/Morvant, Port of Spain South, Port of Spain North/St. Ann’s West, Arouca/Maloney—hon. Member for Port of Spain South, the floor is yours, then the Member for Laventille East/Morvant.

Miss Mc Donald: I am looking at page 250. I am looking at, Minister, Construction of Piccadilly Primary School, $3 million budgeted for 2014, as well as St. Philips Government Primary School, $3 million budgeted, nothing in 2015. Am I to assume that these two schools have already been built, or because I see a dash, nothing is happening? Clarify it please.

Hon. Dr. Gopeesingh: First of all, I believe we are going ahead with the Lower Morvant for you.
Miss Mc Donald: No. No. I am not Lower Morvant. I am—

Hon. Dr. Gopeesingh: Rose Hill. Rose Hill is yours?

Miss Mc Donald: Yeah, Rose Hill.

Hon. Dr. Gopeesingh: We have completed Rose Hill, but obviously—

Miss Mc Donald: No. No. No. Let us talk about these two here.

Hon. Dr. Gopeesingh:—the Member is desirous of having these two schools constructed. Receiving no allocation under the PSIP does not mean that we will not be able to construct it. We will have to have discussion for you, but in terms of the prioritization and where the funding can be available, we have 31 primary schools under construction now so, you know, and we have been able to reduce the cost of these primary schools from about $40 million/$45 million to about $25 million. There is a possibility—

Miss Mc Donald: Just now, just a minute. Minister, let me help you and then I could ask you—

Hon. Dr. Gopeesingh: You think I need help?

Miss Mc Donald: Yeah, I want to help you.

Hon. Dr. Gopeesingh: All right.

Miss Mc Donald: On what basis were some of these schools here? And I do not want to call out the schools’ names, these schools here were selected to begin their construction. And why these two schools, Piccadilly Primary and St. Philips Government Primary, why were they not in that back batch? What was the justification or criteria for selection?

Mr. Chairman: Could you give an undertaking as to when these schools are going to be addressed?

Hon. Dr. Gopeesingh: Member, there are varying requests from all over the country. For instance, Chatham from Point Fortin, Rousillac from La Brea, Lower Morvant from Laventille East, Cap-De-Ville from Point Fortin, Point Cumana, Diego Martin West; Paramin, Diego Martin East; Belmont from St. Ann’s West, San Juan Girls and Boys in St. Joseph, Fanny Village—all these have been constructed. Mr. Chair, all these have been constructed.

10.05 p.m.

We have constructed so much so far—
Mr. Chairman: The hon. Member is asking—[Crosstalk]

Hon. Dr. Gopeesingh: And all these are within the constituency of—

Miss Mc Donald: Minister, you are waffling—you are waffling. [Crosstalk]

Hon. Dr. Gopeesingh: No, I will try my best to make sure that the schools are started.

Mr. Chairman: The hon. Minister said that he will meet with you to discuss priorities.

Hon. Members, final two questions, the Member for Arouca/Maloney and the Member for St. Ann’s East, and then we are finished.

Miss Hospedales: Mr. Chair, I too would like to ask the Minister exactly what has happened to the Arouca Government Primary School. The school is very old. You have instances where two classes are sharing—

Mr. Chairman: You would like to find out what is happening with the Arouca School?

Miss Hospedales: Yes. I would like to find out exactly what is going on with that school. It is in dire need of reconstruction.

Mr. Chairman: Minister, could we go direct to the answer, please; and, also let us take the Member for St. Ann’s East one time.

Miss Hospedales: I will also like to find out from the Minister exactly when the Arouca library would be constructed. That is located under Multi-sectoral and Other Services at Sub-Item 029. I saw an allocation of $9 million was made in 2014. I would like to know why has there been a reduction in that allocation from $9 million to $4 million in 2015. Minister, could you indicate to us exactly when would that facility be constructed?

Mr. Chairman: Both the library and the Arouca Primary School.

Hon. Dr. Gopeesingh: The Arouca Primary School is not on the list here under the PSIP, but depending on what we see, we may have to probably go with a Cabinet Note to give the Member some assistance.

Mr. Chairman: What about the library?

Hon. Dr. Gopeesingh: The Arouca library—in fact, the board of NALIS would have met this week and it was tendered out. I think the cost is close to about $18 million or $19 million, and the work will start pretty shortly on the Arouca library.
Mrs. Thomas: Mr. Chair, I would just like to include, if you can check on the Las Cuevas Government School as well.

Hon. Dr. Gopeesingh: That is La Fillette Government Primary.

Mrs. Thomas: No, the Las Cuevas Government School.

Hon. Dr. Gopeesingh: I do not have that on the list here, Member. But we are building the one for you in La Fillette, and I think work has started in La Fillette already.

Mrs. Thomas: I am just asking about when—

Hon. Dr. Gopeesingh: La Fillette started, but we would have to look then at the Las Cuevas school as well.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 26 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Mr. Chairman: May I thank the hon. Minister of Education and your staff.

Hon. Dr. Gopeesingh: Mr. Chairman and colleagues, may I thank very kindly my colleagues here for bearing from since lunch time.

Mr. Chairman: Yes, yes; we want to thank you for bearing with us too. Thank you very much. We now go to the Minister of Tobago Development.

[Interruption and crosstalk]

Head 59.

Question proposed: That Head 59 stand part of the Schedule.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, Head 59, Ministry of Tobago Development. I now invite the hon. Minister of Tobago Development to make a few brief remarks on the priority areas of the Ministry of Tobago Development.

Hon. Dr. Baker: Chairman, let me thank the staff of the Ministry of Tobago Development for their forbearance with us for this very late hour. The Ministry’s team as you would see would have journeyed from the island of Tobago to ensure that we come to the Parliament to account for the moneys spent by us under 2014, and to give the Parliament a good idea as to what the Ministry of Tobago Development intends to do in 2015.

The Ministry’s overall function is the coordination of matters for which Tobago would be most interested. We are responsible for the Central
Appropriation Bill, 2014

[Hon. Dr. Baker]

Administrative Services of the island, and also administratively responsible for the Met Services Division, the Registrar General’s Office and, of course, we are looking at legislation regarding the THA Act and all matters relating to Tobago for which we can have an input in this Parliament at this level to ensure that service delivery in Tobago is improved.

Let me thank you and I would begin.

Mr. Chairman: All right, thank you very much. Let us go on.

Hon. Members, the sum of $126,234,800 for Head 59, the Ministry of Tobago 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 and the Draft Estimates of Development Programme, Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure; Item 001, General Administration. I recognize the hon. Member for Diego Martin North/East.

Mr. Imbert: I have no questions for this Minister.

Mr. Rambachan: Mr. Chairman, you just mentioned the $126 million.

Mr. Chairman: Yes.

Dr. Rambachan: Just for the sake of clarification of the records, is this $126 million in addition to the two point whatever billion that was given to the Tobago House of Assembly? Are they two separate amounts? So in other words, in addition to the two point whatever billion we discussed for Tobago House of Assembly, is this additional money this Ministry now has to spend in Tobago?

Hon. Dr. Baker: That is correct.

Mr. Chairman: We go to Item 002, Trade and Industry; Item 005, Meteorological Services; Item 007, Registrar General. We go to Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services; Item 001, General Administration; Item 002, Trade and Industry; Item 005, Meteorological Services; Item 007, Registrar General; Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases; Item 001, General Administration; Item 005, Meteorological Services; Item 007, Registrar General. We go to Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies; Item 005, Non-Profit Institutions; Item 011, Transfers to State Enterprises. We go to the Draft Estimates of Development Programme, Sub-Head 09, Development Programme; Item 003, Economic Infrastructure; Item 005, Multi-sectoral and Other Services.
Question put and agreed to.

Head 59 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much, hon. Minister and your team.

Hon. Dr. Baker: Thank you, Chair. Let me just thank the Parliament for the confidence it has espoused in the Ministry of Tobago Development. [Laughter]

Mr. Chairman: Head 63, the Ministry of the Arts and Multiculturalism. After this Ministry we go to the Ministry of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development.

Hon. Members, we are at Head 63, Ministry of the Arts and Multiculturalism, $464,117,692. I now invite the hon. Minister, if he wishes to say a few opening remarks, giving us a little idea of your priority areas, you can do so now for a few moments.

Hon. Dr. Douglas: Mr. Chairman, let me say thank you to the Members of Government and—

Mr. Chairman: No, Members of the Standing Finance Committee.

Hon. Dr. Douglas: Members of the Standing Finance Committee. I am here with my Permanent Secretary, Mr. Maurice Suite; the Deputy Permanent Secretary, Miss Patricia Boyce-Diaz, and other members of my staff here.

The Ministry of the Arts and Multiculturalism, as you are aware, is responsible for the development of the arts and the harmonious running of our society as it relates to culture in Trinidad and Tobago. We have outlined five specific areas in which we have embarked in order to make this happen, and that has to do with the development of a Ministry that could really carry the responsibility of the development of arts and culture as you know.

In the past, this Ministry has been fairly abused and used as a way station, but we are at the moment developing a strong Ministry. We are providing a lot of support for artistes and the development of the artistic products; outreach in terms of reaching out to communities through the arts; the cultural industry, monetizing the arts and culture, moving not only the development of festivals but development of culture as an industry that could make a contribution to the economy of Trinidad and Tobago and the livelihood of artistes. Finally, the development of cultural spaces, what we call “festival villages”.

As you know, in our manifesto, pages 46, 47 and 48 we have promised the development of additional spaces for the performance of the art, and we are in the
process of developing about five of these. We have the Arouca facility; the Arima festival centre. We have the Ramleela Cultural Festival Village. We are working also with the Laventille Rhythm Section and the development of their yard. We are working on developing and regularizing a lot of the pan yards in Trinidad and Tobago, and also the Panberi pan tent; so these we continue to do. We have the Ramleela Festival Village which we are working on—

**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you very much. [*Laughter*]

**Head 63.**

*Question proposed:* That Head 63 stand part of the Schedule.

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Members, the sum of $464,117,692 for Head 63, the Ministry of the Arts and Multiculturalism 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*.

Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure; Item 001, General Administration; Item 002, Culture Division. Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services; Item 001, General Administration; Item 002, Culture Division. Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, Item 001, General Administration; Item 002, Culture Division. Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies; Item 005, Non-Profit Institutions; Item 009, Other Transfers. Sub-Head 06, Current Transfers to Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies. Item 004, Statutory Boards.

We go to the *Draft Estimates of Development Programme*: Sub-Head 09, Development Programme; Item 004, Social Infrastructure; Item 005; Multi-sectoral and Other Services; Infrastructure Development Fund.

*Question put and agreed to.*

**Head 63 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.** [*Crosstalk*]

**10.20 p.m.**

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Minister, we would like to thank you and your team. Thank you very much.

**Hon. Dr. Douglas:** Yes, I want to thank you. Also my staff for working very hard at preparing for this event, and I thank you all for coming.

**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you very much. We go to Head 30, the Ministry of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development. Okay. While we are awaiting the arrival of the technocrats and the accounting officers, the PS is here.
Hon. Members, we are now examining Head 30, the Ministry of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development. This Ministry has an allocation of $202,171,070.

I will now invite the hon. Minister of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development to make a few brief opening remarks giving us what he considers to be his priority areas for 2014/2015. Hon. Minister of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development, the floor is yours.

Hon. Mc Leod: Thank you, Chair, Members. Let me first of all introduce the members of my team, the Permanent Secretary Cecilia Greaves-Smith; Manager/CEO of the NEDCO, Mr. Julien Henry; Deputy PS in the Ministry, Mr. Dalkeith Ali; Director of Research and Planning, Mrs. Shanmatee Singh Ng Sang and the Director of Cipriani College of Labour and Cooperatives, Dr. Denise Thompson. I wish to put on the record, indeed, my appreciation for the contributions that they have been making, as we tried to fully establish what I identify as the four or five major flagships of the Ministry of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development. And what we did over the past 48 months or so was identify our responsibility under the portfolio of the Ministry of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development. And we sought to categorize and prioritize our work programme for the five-year period of our involvement. And we spent the first 24 months clearing the backlog of outstanding wage and salary collective agreements, and then we pounced on the development of our small business enterprises and so on, wherein we sought to transform NEDCO from being an institution which we were not proud of, into an institution which today is extending quite a hand at establishing entrepreneurship and the development of small and micro enterprises.

We are concentrating, at this time, on transforming the Cipriani College of Labour and Cooperative Studies, and also to develop fully our approach to the legislative agenda that will deal with transforming the IRA, and so many other laws that affect labour in a very, very direct way. I think we are doing quite well, except that we would have liked to see a lot more allocations so that we can more fully represent the work that we have to do. Thank you very much.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you, hon. Minister.

Head 30.

Question proposed: That Head 30 stand part of the Schedule.
Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, the sum $202,171.070 for Head 30 the Ministry of Labour and Small and Micro 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 and the Draft Estimates of Development Programme. Sub-Head 01 Personnel Expenditure; Item 001, General Administration; Item 002, Cooperatives—I recognize the Member for La Brea—Item 003, Friendly Societies. Hon. Member for La Brea.

Mr. Jeffrey: Under 02, Goods and Services. I will wait for that.

Mr. Chairman: All right. Good. Item 004, Occupational Health Authority. We go to Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services; Item 001, General Administration. I recognize the Member for La Brea and the Member for Laventille East/Morvant.

Mr. Jeffrey: Under Rent/Lease for Office Accommodation, we see $10 million for 2013; for 2014—$10.3 million; for 2015—$10.5 million. My question has do with how many of the buildings that are occupied by the Ministry of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development is under lease? How many are under rent and what is the total cost? That is the first question.

The second is, in Point Fortin there is a Ministry of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development office building. Is that building under lease arrangement or rental arrangement, and what is the cost of the annual money paid to the landlord? That is first question.

Mr. Chairman: That is your second question.

Mr. Jeffrey: Second question. Yeah, for 08.

Mr. Chairman: Do you have any further questions?

Mr. Jeffrey: I have other questions down the road.

Mr. Chairman: Okay.

Mr. Jeffrey: Under that same section.

Mr. Chairman: All right. Hon. Minister of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development.

Hon. Mc Leod: Currently we rent 11 offices. We have some of them on particular lease arrangements. We are at 50—54 Duke Street, Port of Spain, wherein we house our conciliation department, our library, our trade unions division, our HIV/AIDS, and this is AIDS—how we call it again?—HASC—yes—and this is to deal with work place activities and so on, policies; friendly societies,
national employment service, labour inspectorate, and the farm programme which you might have seen advertised in the newspapers. We are currently inviting people to participate in the programme. If I might just give a little idea on that, although the question has not yet been asked. This time, up to a month ago, we had 1,100 participants in that programme which has seen remittances of 12 million or so Canadian dollars coming annually.

At the International Waterfront Centre, where we have our head office. Okay. We are at 40—42 St. James Street in San Fernando, and we are at the corner John and Lance Street in Montrose, Chaguanas. We are at Siparia and we are in Point Fortin.

**Mr. Jeffrey:** Mr. Chairman, I am asking about the number of buildings under rental arrangement. The number of buildings under lease arrangement.

**Mr. Chairman:** Yes. The hon. Member, you all would be able to supply that in writing?

**Hon. Mc Leod:** All of these that I have mentioned are rental.

**Mr. Chairman:** Rental.

**Hon. Mc Leod:** We are at Brierley Street in Sangre Grande; Eastern Main Road, Tunapuna; corner Mota and Elie Streets, Rio Claro; Gulf City, Lowlands Mall, Scarborough, Tobago. We are all over the country.

**Mr. Chairman:** What about Point Fortin? He asked about Point Fortin.

**Hon. Mc Leod:** Yes, we are at Point Fortin.

**Mr. Chairman:** Whether we are leased.

**Hon. Mc Leod:** The cost at Point Fortin, I will have to furnish that later on.

**Mr. Chairman:** We will furnish that to you. I recognize the Member for Laventille East/Morvant.

**Miss Cox:** Mr. Chairman, Sub-Item 16, Contract Employment. I see an increase of $3 million for Contract Employment in the Ministry of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development. I would like to know what accounts for this.

**Mr. Chairman:** Yes. The hon. Minister.

**Hon. Mc Leod:** We have a number of new positions to be filled. In our establishment there are some 47 vacancies at this time, and that is just the
Ministry of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development main offices. At the OSH Authority and Agency there are many vacancies there, and that would account for the allocation that is seen in Item 16, Contract Employment.

**Miss Cox:** What accounted for these vacancies, these posts? Are they public service posts or contract positions?

**Hon. Mc Leod:** They are contract positions.

**Miss Cox:** What accounted for the vacancies?

**Hon. Mc Leod:** Well some of them are new positions. A number of people have left. I mean, we have a difficulty, I think, in almost every Ministry with terms and conditions of employment. Yes? And I say that strongly as a former trade unionist myself. We have as a result of those positions, 160 vacancies—81, a total vacancy of 81. Yeah? We have 160 contract positions in the Ministry. Yes.

**Miss Cox:** One hundred and sixty?

**Hon. Mc Leod:** One hundred and sixty. Yeah.

**Mr. Chairman:** I recognize the Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann’s West and then the Member for La Brea.

**Mrs. Mcintosh:** Minister, I refer to Sub-Item 22, Short-Term Employment.

**Hon. Mc Leod:** Sub-Item 22.

**Mrs. Mcintosh:** Yes. How many people are employed under this Sub-Item, Short-Term Employment? And in what areas do you have short-term employment?

**Mr. Chairman:** The number and the areas—short-term employment.

**Hon. Mc Leod:** Well that number swings, eh, swings. [Minister confers with advisor] Where do we have such short term people? Oh, yes. It is one story. When contract positions end, and while we are awaiting the decisions of the CPO, is it?—and PMCD, we retain people on short-term contracts, three-month contracts and so on. Yeah.

**Mr. Chairman:** I recognize the Member for La Brea.

**Mr. Jeffrey:** Yes. Mr. Chairman. I come back to Item 10.

**Hon. Mc Leod:** Item 10.
Mr. Jeffrey: Yes, Office Stationery and Supplies. We noticed that it is a kind of see-saw 2013—$1.1 million; 2014—$681,000; 2015—$1 million. What is the policy for the distribution of office stationery and supplies?

Hon. Mc Leod: The policy of the distribution of stationery and supplies?

I do not understand the question.

10.35 p.m.

Mr. Jeffrey: Okay, let me explain to you. What normally happens in a lot of those offices sometimes, one office has a large supply of stationery whereas another one is in short supply. What happens is that one that is in short supply goes and orders more stationery. What I am saying is, in some offices there is an arrangement whereby you try to make sure that the level is distributed apportionately in the different offices and so on.

Hon. Mc Leod: Well, we would have to look at the activity of each of these offices. And I would be worried if we had an office that did not have stationery rather than having some offices with more stationery than others.

Mr. Jeffrey: Well, I think you need to check that.

Mr. Chairman: All right, could we go on to Item 002, Co-operatives?

Mr. Jeffrey: No, Mr. Chairman—

Mr. Chairman: Yes.

Mr. Jeffrey: I have not yet finished—

Mr. Chairman: Yes.

Mr. Jeffrey: Sub-Item 19, Official Entertainment.

Mr. Chairman: Yes.

Mr. Jeffrey: From $45,000 in 2013 to $12,000 in 2014 and $130,000 in 2015. The question is, what events are planned for 2015 that will trigger a 1,100 per cent increase in Official Entertainment?

Hon. Mc Leod: I will have to look into that one because I do not know that I have ever entertained any official entertainment. All right?

Mr. Chairman: All right, you will get something in writing. We go to Port of Spain South.

Miss Mc Donald: Mr. Chair, through you—
Mr. Chairman: Yes.

Miss Mc Donald: Minister, Co-operatives, I am looking at page 196.

Hon. Mc Leod: 196.

Miss Mc Donald: 002. Exactly what bodies are under this heading, Co-operatives? That is the first question. The second one, because I am not seeing it anywhere in the accounts, perhaps I should ask you at this point. With respect to the new legislation for the Co-operatives, could you give us an update as to what is happening? I am talking about the financial co-operatives this time.

Hon. Mc Leod: Okay, at this time, we are before the Legislative Review Committee, with draft legislation for the financial co-operatives to come under the aegis of the Central Bank and for the non-financial co-operatives to remain with the Commissioner of Co-operative Development (CCD). It is essentially just separating the financial co-operatives from the non-financial co-operatives.

Mr. Chairman: The hon. Member for La Brea.

Miss Mc Donald: No, he is not finished with my question.

Hon. Mc Leod: Okay, what else?

Miss Mc Donald: I asked, under that rubric—Co-operatives—what comprises, you know, who are the people under there, what bodies?

Mr. Chairman: Do you want the organizational structure and the people who make up that—

Miss Mc Donald: The co-operatives—because you have a number of co-operatives. You may have financial, you have agricultural, you have fishing—

Hon. Mc Leod: All co-operatives.

Miss Mc Donald: That is what I am saying, all co-operatives.

Hon. Mc Leod: All co-operatives.

Mr. Chairman: All right. The hon. Member for La Brea.

Mr. Jeffrey: Mr. Chairman, Sub-Item 28, Other Contracted Services—2013, $1.4 million; 2014, $841,000 and 2015, $1 million. Can you tell us specifically what are the other contracted services and the amount for each service that constitutes the $841,000 in 2014? Secondly, could you provide us with a list of the service providers expected to receive this payment?
Mr. Chairman: The hon. Minister.
Hon. Mc Leod: You are at Sub-Item 28, you said?
Mr. Chairman: You are on Sub-Item, what?
Miss Mc Donald: 28, Other Contracted Services.
Mr. Chairman: Yeah, that is on page 195?
Miss Mc Donald: 196.
Mr. Chairman: Oh, yes.
Mr. Chairman: Yes. Other Contracted Services, right?
Hon. Member: Um hmm.
Mr. Chairman: Yes. What was the next question?
Mr. Jeffrey: And the third part of that same question is if he could provide us with the selection process for the selection of each provider.
Mr. Chairman: For what provider?
Mr. Jeffrey: The selection process of the providers.
Mr. Chairman: Okay.
Hon. Mc Leod: Okay, right now we have engaged Other Contracted Services to deal with our website, security access systems, Rentokil, cable, plant rentals and so on. I could give you a more elaborate list later.
Mr. Chairman: I recognize the Member for St. Joseph.
Mr. Deyalsingh: Thank you, Chair. Chair, the hon. Minister mentioned, just recently, the financial co-operatives, he is expecting legislation and making provisions under 002. Is the Minister aware that the negotiations to the Central Bank and the co-operatives were abruptly ended on September 17, 2013 with no further input from the credit union movement and they are not willing to support the draft legislation that you spoke about because of the abrupt stoppage of negotiations with the Central Bank on September 17, 2013?
Hon. Mc Leod: You said the co-operative movement and the Central Bank?
Mr. Deyalsingh: Yes, sir. The financial co-operatives that you said will go under the Central Bank.
Miss Mc Donald: The credit unions.

Hon. Mc Leod: Um hmm.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Are you aware that those negotiations were stopped abruptly by the Governor of the Central Bank on September 17, 2013?

Hon. Mc Leod: No, I am not aware that it was stopped abruptly.

Mr. Chairman: All right, the hon. Minister is not aware of that. So let us go on. Item 003, Friendly Societies; Item 004, Occupational Safety and Health Authority.

Miss Mc Donald: Friendly Societies, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: Yes.

Miss Mc Donald: One question. Minister, what is really the work of the Friendly Societies, tell me “nah”. Are they still relevant in this society?

Hon. Mc Leod: I was saying to some colleagues—if you would allow me Chair—that Friendly Societies happened when our communities were friendlier—

Miss Mc Donald: All right.

Hon. Mc Leod: —and when we did not have any provisions for people whenever they got sick, when they got old and so on. Today, we have—unlike those times when I would have gone to the lodge to pay my old lady’s 12-cent card, in the friendly society—national insurance, you have banking accounts, you have all of these, you know, and, essentially, people have stopped subscribing to friendly societies but there are friendly societies, and some of them with a lot of rich and important assets. We hear too that there are some smart persons who are jibbing legitimate members of these friendly societies.

What we are attempting to do now is to evaluate exactly what exists and determine how we are going to help those persons who have interests in these friendly societies. Now, there are some of them who do not want to release their ownership and control of these friendly societies and you have a co-operative sector that can do a lot more than what it is now doing and one would want to determine whether these friendly societies should not be incorporated into the co-operative sector so that good business can be done that will benefit people in a more fundamental way.

Mr. Chairman: We go on to Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases. Item 001, General Administration.
Mr. Jeffrey: Mr. Chairman, please do not go so fast. I want to look at Sub-Items 23 and 27.

Hon. McLeod: 23.

Mr. Chairman: Under what?

Mr. Jeffrey: Goods and Services, I am looking at Fees, page—

Mr. Chairman: No, no, we passed that long time.

Mr. Jeffrey: Mr. Chairman, my hand was up.

Mr. Chairman: Your hand was up?

Mr. Jeffrey: Yeah.

Mr. Chairman: All right, okay. Let us go back to the hon. Member. Which Sub-Item under Goods and Services you want us to go at?

Mr. Jeffrey: Yeah.

Mr. Chairman: Which Sub-Item?

Mr. Jeffrey: Page 198.

Mr. Chairman: Which Sub-Item on the page?

Mr. Jeffrey: Fees and Official Overseas Travel.

Mr. Chairman: All right.

Mr. Jeffrey: Could you provide us with a breakdown of the Fees that are expected to be paid in 2015? That is one. As far as Official Overseas Travel, Mr. Chairman, we notice that in 2013 and 2014, there was no money spent but in 2015, $96,500 is budgeted. How are these events selected and prioritized in terms of attendance?

Mr. Chairman: Yeah. Hon. Minister, could you supply that?

Hon. McLeod: Did he say that in 2015—we spent how much?

Mr. Jeffrey: No, no. I am saying that you budgeted $500,000.

Hon. McLeod: $500,000?

Mr. Jeffrey: Um hmm. In Fees. We want to get a breakdown.
Hon. Mc Leod: Now, we have some outstanding moneys that are owed and that relate to the investigation into the HCU and the issues surrounding the liquidation of non-functioning co-operatives. Okay?

Mr. Chairman: Okay?

Mr. Jeffrey: All right.

Mr. Chairman: So we go to Sub-Head 03—

Mr. Jeffrey: No, no, wait, wait, one more, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: One more?

Mr. Jeffrey: Official Overseas Travel.

Hon. Mc Leod: Aha.

Mr. Chairman: Yes.

Mr. Jeffrey: What is responsible for 2015’s $96,500, when 2013 and 2014 you had a nil figure.

Hon. Member: What is the nil figure?

Mr. Chairman: You have no figure.

Hon. Mc Leod: Okay. Mr. Chairman—

Mr. Chairman: Yes.

Hon. Mc Leod:—in 2011/2012, Trinidad and Tobago was elected to the governing body of the International Labour Organization and not just to represent Trinidad and Tobago but also the other 14 members of Caricom. So we are now at the level of policymaking and guiding the International Labour Organization and that involves quite a bit of travel, at least twice per year. We take with us, to these meetings, the social partners, representatives of the employers and representatives of the trade unions.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, thank you very much. We go to Minor Equipment Purchases: Item 001, General Administration; Item 002, Co-operatives; Item 003, Friendly Societies and Item 004, Occupational Safety and Health Authority. Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies: Item 001, Regional Bodies; Item 003, United Nations Bodies; Item 004, International Bodies; Item 005, Non-Profit Institutions—I recognize the Member for La Brea.
Mr. Jeffery: 05, National Association Co-operative Society. I was kind of taken aback—

Hon. Mc Leod: Tell me the page, please.

Mr. Jeffrey: Page—

Mr. Chairman: 201.

Mr. Jeffrey:—201.

Hon. Mc Leod: Um hmm.

Mr. Jeffrey: In 2013, you had a nil figure—

Mr. Chairman: I recognize you.

Mr. Jeffrey:—all right, and again in 2014. I am heartened that you have a figure of $7,000 in 2015. But given the situation with the intended legislation with the co-operative—with the credit union movement and so on, I thought that $7,000 seemed rather inadequate for the work at hand.

Mr. Chairman: Minister, would you like to—all right, I will go to the Member for Port of Spain South.

Hon. Mc Leod: Are you okay?

Mr. Jeffrey: No. I did not get the information.

Mr. Chairman: I go to the Member for Port of Spain South, then the Member for Laventille—

Hon. Mc Leod: About $7,000?

Mr. Jeffrey: $7,000—“that is chicken feed for dem people man”.

Mr. Chairman: The Member for Port of Spain South, then Laventille East/Morvant and then Laventille West.

Mr. Jeffrey: The man—

Hon. Mc Leod: I will come to you.

Miss Mc Donald: Under 005: Sub-Item 02—Minister, are you listening?

Hon. Mc Leod: Yeah, I am listening.

Miss Mc Donald: Good. Under 005: Sub-Item 02, Grants to Friendly Societies to cover deficits arising out of Free Card Privileges—
Hon. Mc Leod: Um hmm.

Miss Mc Donald:—$198,000 in 2015 up from $92,000.

Hon. Mc Leod: Um hmm.

Miss Mc Donald: Tell me something, a dying institution, what is this Free Card Privileges that has incurred this $198,000?

Hon. Mc Leod: A number of things we have inherited. Cabinet, in Minute No. 202 of 1982 approved a Free Card subsidy to friendly society members. Those are persons with over 30 continuous years of membership in any friendly society or lodge.

Miss Mc Donald: That is good.

Hon. Mc Leod: Yeah, but hear—

Mr. Chairman: I think you have answered the question. We go on to the Member for Laventille East/Morvant. [Interruption] That is very good. Let us go. [Interruption] Yeah, let us go to the Member for Laventille East/Morvant.

Miss Cox: Under Other Transfers.

Mr. Chairman: Yes.

Miss Cox: National Entrepreneurship Development Company.

Hon. Mc Leod: Um hmm.

Miss Cox: I am surprised to see a decrease in allocation—

Hon. Mc Leod: Where are you?

Miss Cox:—$6.6 million.

10.50 p.m.

Mr. Chairman: We are now under, Other Transfers, page 201—

Hon. Members: The last item.

Miss Cox: I am surprised to see a decrease in NEDCO.

Hon. Mc Leod: You are surprised to see a decrease.

Miss Cox: In NEDCO, and I want to know what accounts for that decrease?
Hon. Mc Leod: Okay, we would have liked, really, to have a bigger allocation than is put here, but NEDCO is really coming into its own. It is on a transformative path, so that where as we would have, up to 2010, we would have had a delinquency ratio of 89 per cent, nonperforming loans, because loans were just given to people. I mean, there were some people on behalf of NEDCO appointed by certain other people, right, who were looking for persons who wanted loans. They had no business plan, no nothing. We have been able to reduce that, significantly, to about 39 per cent, and we are still drilling down into that, because if people have loans, if they have business plans, they are going into business, the only excuse that they must have is if the business crashes. They must pay their loans, and we are not giving any handouts to anybody, we are not going to continue the operation of any slush fund.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much, hon. Minister. We are going to Development Programme now. We go on to Item 003, Economic Infrastructure; Item 004—[ Interruption ]

Miss Mc Donald: Mr. Chair, 003.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, 003.

Miss Mc Donald: Under 011, Minister, Establishment of Community-Based Business Incubators, I noted that you have spent in 2013 $6.9 million; 2014 seems like $9.4 million, and there is an estimate of $12 million for 2015. I am wondering, for Port of Spain South, I have not heard about this Community-Based Incubator in Port of Spain South, especially East Port of Spain. We would like to get some business initiatives in there.

Hon. Mc Leod: Now, this is something that is growing, yeah. And— [ Interruption ]

Miss Mc Donald: We could help you grow it.

Hon. Mc Leod: And we have established incubators in Penal, Siparia, in Sangre Grande, in Barataria/San Juan. We have gone to Diego Martin, we are in Point Fortin. I do not have any in Pointe-a-Pierre and I do not have any in La Romaine. [ Crosstalk ]

Miss Mc Donald: So what does it involve?

Hon. Mc Leod: We are looking at almost every area where there is need for such “Enterprises”. So we are going bit by bit. This is something that we established in 2012, and it is growing, it is doing very well, and I want again to complement the people.
Mr. Chairman: Item 05, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services.

Mr. Jeffrey: Mr. Chairman, “meh hand up again”.

Mr. Chairman: Infrastructure Development Fund—okay, final question before we close up. Final question.

Mr. Jeffrey: Mr. Chairman, Item 003, Implementation of the Fair Share Programme, $1.5 million in 2013, it went down to $500,000 in 2014 and nil for 2015. Why is there no allocation for 2015? Is it that the FairShare Programme has failed?

Hon. Mc Leod: No, the FairShare Programme as a matter of fact has begun to get wings and it is beginning to fly. And it is accounted for in the recurrent budget.

Mr. Chairman: All right.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 30 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Miss Mc Donald: Mr. Chair, you are ignoring me. When did we do IDF?

Mr. Chairman: You can speak with me after. [Laughter] Thank you very much hon. Minister and your team.

Hon. Mc Leod: I thank you very much.

Mr. Chairman: We now go on to the next item; that is the Ministry of Public Administration. You will talk to me after.

Miss Mc Donald: He did not call IDF.

Mr. Chairman: I called IDF. You were not listening. [Laughter] Let us go to the Ministry of Public Administration.

Hon. Members, we have before us, Head 31, the Ministry of Public Administration. Head 31, Ministry of Public Administration, $430,305,500. I now invite the hon. Minister of Public Administration, if she so desires, to make a brief opening statement as it concerns the Ministry’s overall priorities for 2014/2015. Hon. Minister.

Hon. Mrs. Seepersad-Bachan: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, given the lateness of the time, I will not spend more than two minutes by just saying first of all, just to re-establish that the Ministry of Public Administration is responsible for Human Resource Management Policy, training and development of public
officers. We all know, and we have been saying this for quite some time now, that the HR function in the public service is fragmented. As you know we have these institutions, such as the Public Service Commission, Teaching Service Commission, Police Service Commission, Judicial and Legal Service Commission, all supported administratively by the Service Commissions Department.

These institutions are independent, constitutionally, and they are responsible for the appointment, promotion, transfers and discipline of public officers. The Personnel Department is responsible for terms and conditions of public officers and contract officers. Sometimes even we would talk about classification of jobs; we speak sometimes of job evaluation as we have heard here today. And I say this because they are also named, the Chief Personnel Officer is named in the Constitution with this responsibility. The framers of our Constitution in their wisdom, designed our Constitution as such with these institutions to ensure that the political directorate cannot influence appointments, promotions, et cetera.

Today, it is well established as we have heard throughout, how many times we have looked at the deficiencies in our HRM, Human Resource Management, of the public service. We know that these institutions are not meeting the requirements of a modern 21st Century, citizen centric, public service.

Mr. Chairman, I say this because our focus here, since we have started over the last two years, is that we have established our Gold to Diamond, our journey, which is a 10-year programme. But very much in this particular budget we have focused on our development programme in reforming these institutions, the Service Commissions Department, the Personnel Department, the Ministry of Public Administration. And therefore, I hope Members will support the development programme. We recognize that in order to meet the needs of a 21st Century public service there is much urgent reform required of these Service Commissions and the Service Commissions Department, among other public service transformation initiatives designed to take our public service into the 21st Century.

Mr. Speaker, I welcome my Permanent Secretary, Gillian McIntyre; Deputy Permanent Secretary, Prabha Maharaj and other Members of the public service. We are ready for our questions.

Head 31.

_Question proposed:_ That Head 31 stand part of the Schedule.
Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, the question is $430,305,500 for Head 31, the Ministry of Public Administration is comprised of moneys proposed for its 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. Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure; Item 001, General Administration. I recognize the Member for Point Fortin.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Thank you, Chairman. I want to go to Sub-Item 08, and also at the same time I am posing this question as well to a number of items in terms of Salaries and Cost Of Living Allowance as well, where it is indicated that there are a number of vacant positions. I juxtapose this on the fact that I am not sure that this Ministry has what it takes to fulfil its objectives, especially given the fact that with the last Global Competitiveness Index, 2014, the most problematic factors for doing business in Trinidad was the inefficient government bureaucracy.

So my concern is Sub-Item 08 and further items down the road which I do not then have to detail—do you have the personnel to even transform the public service—

Hon. Mrs. Seepersad-Bachan: I just want to say—[Interruption]

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon:—to have the citizen centric public service that you want to have.

Hon. Mrs. Seepersad-Bachan: First of all, I want to say that the public service transformation is not just the job of the Ministry of Public Administration.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: That is right.

Hon. Mrs. Seepersad-Bachan: The Ministry of Public Administration does not have direct control over other Ministries, and I think sometimes that is erroneously communicated to the public. I mean, sometimes I think, even at the last meeting here on Tuesday evening that, you know, Members felt that probably the Ministry of Public Administration is responsible for vacancies and appointing people into vacant contract positions. That is indeed not so. What the Ministry does is prepare these initiatives, policies, measures, programmes, procedures, training which other Ministries must now adopt in order to implement.

But Member, I just wanted to go to what you are talking about in Sub-Item 08, and I noticed that that was something that kept coming up over and over, and I just wanted to really raise this issue. This is a book that I noticed no one was reading from, but it identifies all the posts for every head—[Interruption]
Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: I am just concerned about yours.

Hon. Mrs. Seepersad-Bachan:—all the public service positions. And if you note in there, we will find, for example, I will tell you from my Ministry, so I do not want you to be confused with the whole public service. As detailed here under 01, Personnel Expenditure, Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance, you will find it under every Head, whether it is Public Service Academy, PMCD, et cetera, every division.

In addition to that, you will have vacant posts without incumbents. I think a lot of people were confusing it. Salaries and cost of living allowances include all posts that are established positions that are current and may have acting in them as well. But the vacant post, what we call—sometimes we call them vacant, vacant, meaning there is no one in it, but there are several reasons for having this vacant, vacant with no one in it. Most of the times and I had mentioned this in my contribution in the debate, a lot of the times these positions are no longer relevant. They are obsolete. As I had indicated, we are talking about a number of positions—[Interruption]

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: My question. My direct question is, is this hampering your delivery of excellent public service?

Hon. Mrs. Seepersad-Bachan: Member, so coming back to just this point, what you will find throughout the public service is that you have a proliferation of contract positions to make up for the skill sets that are not available on the establishment. So, if I just give you an example of my own Ministry, we will note that I have 252 positions. If you look in this book you will see that there are 252 established positions appointed by the Service Commissions. And in there you will find that we have 83 are substantive holders, 75 of these positions are vacant posts with bodies in them, some of them acting but you have 94 positions without bodies. And these 94 if you look at it you will see that there are several of these that need to be abolished.

So when Members were telling you here about when you are referring to vacant posts a lot of the times it is because these posts have to be abolished. How is it dealt with, if you go now to Goods and Services and look under Contract Employment you will see that is where we have been able to bring in the skill sets required.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: I will question you on the Contract Employment when we get there.
Mr. Chairman: Okay, let us go.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: But I still did not find out whether or not, I just want to get a yes or no answering from you, is the fact of these vacant positions affecting the modernization of the public service?

Hon. Mrs. Seepersad-Bachan: Well, again too, we are continuing to build the capacity within the public service, and that is not only in the Ministry of Public Administration. And if we want transformation we would like to have it throughout all the Ministries. And you will see that is why we have designed new positions, new job specifications, we have been going through a lot of training and development, including the Ministry of Public Administration.

Mr. Chairman: We go to Item 006, Public Management Consulting Division; Item 007, Public Service Academy; Item 009 Public Service Transformation Division; Item 010, Scholarships and Advanced Training Division. I recognize the Member for Point Fortin.

11.05 p.m.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Item 010, under Scholarships and Advanced Training Division, I note a substantial increase from $2 million to $3.5 million in salaries and appointment of persons to particular positions. What positions are these, and to achieve what objective?

Hon. Mrs. Seepersad-Bachan: Again, there are what we call established positions. We have had 16 additional public service positions approved through the reorganization of the Scholarships Division. As you noted, I also mentioned about the Scholarships Division going through a major modernization programme in order to allow for the e-platform that we have implemented—STATIS—and, therefore, because of wanting to improve our customer service—because as well as the number of scholars that we are now dealing with, it has doubled—tripled—over the last couple of years—over the last decade, we have to now step up in this—

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Right. So that means you have a number of vacant positions.

Hon. Mrs. Seepersad-Bachan: Well, we have just filled 16.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Out of?

Hon. Mrs. Seepersad-Bachan: But this was a reorganization. It was not there that it was vacant all the time. We organized, put in a new structure and identified 16 new positions.
Mr. Chairman: Item 015—

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Okay. Under 010 as well. Is there a new Cabinet-appointed committee under this Scholarships Division? I am concerned because that is a division that has not always worked to the best. So what is that new committee?

Hon. Mrs. Seepersad-Bachan: Well, you will find it under Goods and Services, I think, under Remuneration.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Under Item 14, Scholarships and Advanced Training.

Hon. Mrs. Seepersad-Bachan: Remuneration. Yes, there is a Scholarships and Advanced—Scholarships committee. It is a selection committee. As I had explained, you know, they carry out the interviews after you have gone through a process of eligibility of the candidates, determining if they are eligible based on specified criteria, then determining if they have a pass mark based on their academic qualifications, experience, likelihood to come back and make a contribution to the development based on their study plan. And then if they are shortlisted, they are interviewed by this committee.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Okay.

Hon. Mrs. Seepersad-Bachan: And if you notice, it has gone up as well because we have been holding more selection committee meetings based on—

Mr. Chairman: All right, let us go. We are going to Item 015. Thank you very much. Item 015 is Strategic Services and Information Technology. We go to Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services. 001, General Administration.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Chair.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member?

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Chair, line 05, Telephones. This is increasing from an actual of $2.8 million to $5 million for telephone expenses. Are you opening a call centre or something? What is this about? It is an increase of $2.2 million in telephone expenses.

Hon. Mrs. Seepersad-Bachan: We have a number of divisions like PMCD which is located in Chaguanas. A number of these divisions had their own PBX. We have moved towards centralizing. So you will see stationery and supplies and telephones would have gone up, and you will see that there is a—

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Substantial.
Hon. Mrs. Seepersad-Bachan: You will see that there is like a $450,000 decrease in PMCD for PBX for telephones because it is now consolidated in this section under Goods and Services, General Administration. In addition to that, as you know, we are putting a number of new digital data SIMS in smartphones etcetera, and Flagstaff, where we have a number of units available for consultants and so on, when they are visiting Trinidad and Tobago, we have just installed Internet services. So you will find that is why the cost has gone up.

Mrs. Goppe-Scoon: 16, Contract Employment has gone up to $11 million. I am concerned about Contract Employment. Correct me, please. I am understanding that some contracts are for six years.

Hon. Mrs. Seepersad-Bachan: No, there are no contracts for six years, and I am just saying that. That is a standard policy across the public service. Contracts are for three years.

Mrs. Goppe-Scoon: Yeah. Well, I have asked you to correct me.

Hon. Mrs. Seepersad-Bachan: What we are moving to, we have suggested that instead of these—because the time—did you just hear many Ministers today speak about how long it takes to get renewals? We have moved to what is called six-year contract plans, and that is where Ministries now can say, “All right, I have a six-year plan and I would need this contract position for six years”, but it does not mean that a person gets a contract for six years. It could be two, three-year contracts, the maximum.

Mrs. Goppe-Scoon: The maximum is three years.

Hon. Mrs. Seepersad-Bachan: Three years, yes.

Mrs. Goppe-Scoon: Do you have a number of—do you intend to hire many more people under this line 16? Because you are going up to $11 million.

Hon. Mrs. Seepersad-Bachan: Okay. This here is where we have hired, what you call public management analysts. You mentioned how are we getting the cadre of skills. This is how we are doing it. We are using a lot of the associate professionals who are returning scholars, transitioning them into the public management analyst positions so that we can develop a cadre of skills of change management expertise who can go through the public service to help with transformation.

Mrs. Goppe-Scoon: Change management experts, new persons?
**Hon. Mrs. Seepersad-Bachan:** Yeah. Well, you know, we find young people. You know, they are very excited; they are very enthusiastic and they tend to support projects.

**Mr. Chairman:** Item 006, Public Management Consulting Division; Item 007, Public Service Academy; Item 009, the Public Service Transformation Division; Item 010, Scholarships and Advanced Training Division; Item 015, Strategic Services and Information Technology.

**Miss Hospedales:** Mr. Chair, you are not looking down this way.

**Mr. Chairman:** Would you like to raise a matter?

**Miss Hospedales:** Yes, Mr. Chair.

**Mr. Chairman:** Okay, I recognize you.

**Miss Hospedales:** Item 010, Sub-Item 16, Contract Employment. Could the Minister indicate the number of persons that are on contract and if there are any vacancies and in what unit?

**Hon. Mrs. Seepersad-Bachan:** This is Scholarships and Advanced Training Division? In fact, I can pass to you, Member, all the contract positions we have in each of the divisions, who are employed. And just to give you an overall, we have—

**Mr. Chairman:** Right. I think that you can pass that in writing.

**Hon. Mrs. Seepersad-Bachan:** Yes, but—

**Mr. Chairman:** We go on to Item 015—

**Hon. Mrs. Seepersad-Bachan:** But, Mr. Chairman, just to let her know, yes, we have engaged under the contracted services—because you did say on contract positions. We have been, because we have had to beef up the Scholarships and Advanced Training Division.

**Mr. Chairman:** Item 015, Strategic Services and Information Technology; Item 018, Strategic Human Resource and Management Division (ICT) Secretariat; Item 019, Diamond Division. We go to Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases. Item 001, General Administration; Item 006, Public Management Consulting Division; Item 007, Public Service Academy; Item 010, Scholarships and Advanced Training Division; Item 015, Strategic Services and Information Technology; Item 018, Strategic Human Resource and Management Division (ICT) Secretariat; Sub-Head 04: Current Transfers and Subsidies; Item 001,
Regional Bodies; Item 002, Commonwealth Bodies; Item 003, United Nations Organizations; Item 011, Transfers to State Enterprises.

We go now to the Estimates of the Development Programme Sub-Head 09, Development Programme. Item 004, Social Infrastructure. Yes I recognize the Member for Point Fortin.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: 019 and 020, Programme of Development Scholarships and Post Graduate Scholarship. Could you provide in writing for me, the details of the particular disciplines that are covered here, and whether or not—please indicate whether these are in line with the country’s needs. But you can put that in writing to us.

Mr. Chairman: All right, thank you. We go to Item 005, Multi-sectoral and Other Services; we go to Infrastructure Development Fund. I recognize the Member for Point Fortin.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Again, this E-Government and Knowledge Brokering Programme on 046, what is the measurement of success? You have spent $40 million in 2014 and you are asking for another $50 million. What is your measurement of success of this?

Hon. Mrs. Seepersad-Bachan: Well, we can also provide you in writing. I had named some of the projects that we were involved in, you know, in terms of this particular programme.

Mr. Chairman: And you want to provide those in writing?

Hon. Mrs. Seepersad-Bachan: You want it in writing, or you want it—

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Please do. Put it in writing.

Mr. Chairman: Yes, put it in writing. Thank you.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Chair, one other item. Chair, maybe she can provide in writing for me as well, 053, this Productivity Improvement Programme, which, again, I am concerned about because I think we have a poor reflection in terms of the Global Competitiveness Index. So I am concerned about our productivity levels and so on. What was that increase of the $7 million for?

Hon. Mrs. Seepersad-Bachan: Chairman, this is the programme that we call the Diamond Certification Programme. It was designed according to the Global Competitiveness Index. It was designed in accordance with the Ease of Doing Business Report and our own local surveys that were done here; the MORI polls, et cetera. We have about 32 pilots on board right now, which are actual Government
services that are going for diamond certification. That is the programme that we are running right now. It includes schools; it includes—

**Mrs. Gopee-Scoon:** And this is the Productivity Improvement Programme?

**Hon. Mrs. Seepersad-Bachan:** Yes. This is part of the Productivity Improvement Programme.

**Mrs. Gopee-Scoon:** Okay. Send me the details about the increase in $7 million. Let us see exactly the details of that.

**Hon. Mrs. Seepersad-Bachan:** It is to pay for independent assessors to assess these institutions. It pays for the training—

**Mrs. Gopee-Scoon:** Put it in writing.

**Hon. Mrs. Seepersad-Bachan:** Okay, sure.

**Mrs. Gopee-Scoon:** Thank you.

*Question put and agreed to.*

**Head 31 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.**

**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you very much, hon. Minister, and your team.

**Hon. Mrs. Seepersad-Bachan:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you to the members of our team from the Ministry of Public Administration.

**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you very much. Head 34, the Ministry of Transport. And we ask the Ministry of Public Utilities to stand by.

Hon. Members, we are on Head 34 right now, the Ministry of Transport, $1,157,755,500. I will now invite the hon. Minister to make a few opening remarks, if he so desires, on his priority areas of his Ministry for 2014/2015. Hon. Minister?

**Hon. Cadiz:** Thank you, Chairman. It is 11.16 and, therefore, I will pass on that. But thank you very much and let us go right into it.

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

*Head 34.*

*Question proposed,* That Head 34 stand part of the Schedule.

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Members, this sum for Head 34 for the Ministry of 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*
and the Draft Estimates of Development Programme. Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure; Item 001, General Administration; Item 002, Transport; Item 003, Maritime Services.

We go to Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services; Item 001, General Administration; Item 002, Transport Division; Item 003, Maritime Services. We go to Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases; Item 001, General Administration; Item 002, Transport; Item 003, Maritime Services. We go to Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies; Item 001, Regional Bodies; Item 003, United Nations Organizations; Item 005, Non-Profit Institutions; Item 006, Households; Item 008, Subsidies; Item 009, Other Transfers; Item 011, Transfers—

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Chairman—

Mr. Chairman: Which one you—

Mr. Imbert: Page 222, 008.

Mr. Chairman: And which Item are you under?

Mr. Imbert: It is only one.

Mr. Chairman: Subsidies, okay. Thank you. The hon. Member for Diego Martin North/East.

Mr. Imbert: Could the Minister explain why the subsidy on the coastal steamers has increased from $180 million in 2013 to $240 million in 2015?

Mr. Chairman: The hon. Minister of Transport.

Mr. Imbert: By $60 million.

Hon. Cadiz: Mr. Chairman, the Government provides a ferry service between Trinidad and Tobago comprising two passenger vehicle ferries and one cargo ferry. In December of last year—of 2013—we had a major failure on the current freight ferry known as the Warrior Spirit. We lost an engine on it and the owners of the ferry, or the agents, took in excess of two months before they could repair the engine. That vessel has become very, very unreliable and, therefore, it was felt that the responsibility that we have in providing a reliable and, in addition to that, a safe service to and from Tobago, we would have to engage another ferry, which we have, in fact, done.

11.20 p.m.

And therefore, we will see the increase there of roughly just over $50 million for that, and those funds are mobilization, the charter hire, some infrastructure works and that is where we are with that.
Mr. Imbert: Could the Minister clarify, you said that line item include some infrastructure works? Is that true?

Hon. Cadiz: Yeah, there are some works that have to be done because the ferry that we have, which is—the name of the ferry is the Superfast Galicia and she is a larger vessel than what was currently being used. In fact, the Warrior Spirit, the size of the Warrior Spirit had actually outlived its usefulness with Tobago, especially with the Tobago distributors and other people who use the ferry to move vehicles up and down. It became a major problem with the size and there was a waiting list, et cetera, et cetera.

So it was felt that if we were going to charter a new ferry, that we should, in fact, be looking for a larger ferry considering that the Warrior Spirit had already reached its maximum years ago. Hence the reason, in going out for the larger ferry, we had some infrastructural works that we had to do.

Mr. Imbert: All right. Are these infrastructure works at the Port of Port of Spain? And if the answer is yes, when did the work start; is it finished or is it still in progress?

Hon. Cadiz: All right. The infrastructural works, we had already started prior to the replacement ferry coming in, we had actually started to do work in what is known as the old rum bond. The old rum bond area on the port, which is the loading area for the freight ferry for Tobago, was in a bad state of disrepair. It had not been properly done from the inception. Part of the jetty was still wooden—imagine that, after all these years—and therefore, a contract was actually issued, I think, in September or October or it was tendered in September, 2013.

Mr. Imbert: This is before you bought the boat?

Hon. Cadiz: Long before.

Mr. Imbert: So how are you tendering works for a boat that you had not yet acquired? I am dealing with the infrastructure work in this line item.

Hon. Cadiz: No, I think the Member should listen to what I am saying before he makes a comment.

Mr. Imbert: You are not making sense.

Hon. Cadiz: What I am saying is that the loading area for the Warrior Spirit, up to September 2013, had started to collapse and therefore, the replacement ferry for the Warrior Spirit was not even contemplated in September 2013 but the work had to be done anyhow. When we went out for the larger ferry, we determined
then the repair work on the Tobago ferry loading area had already started. When the larger ferry was contracted, it was felt that we would go ahead and expand the works one time on the Tobago ferry loading area because any future ferry that had to come to do the run would obviously have to be a larger ferry, and therefore we decided to take the bull by the horns and to go ahead and do that one time.

   Mr. Imbert: But you are not answering the question. Is the work in Port of Spain?

   Hon. Cadiz: The work in Port of Spain is in progress.

   Mr. Imbert: Has it started? Is it finished or is it in progress?

   Hon. Cadiz: The work is in progress and has been in progress. Okay.

   Mr. Imbert: Fine. Is this the same work that the Prime Minister came into this Parliament months ago and said would be finished in a couple of weeks so that this Galicia vessel could berth properly? Are you saying that the Galicia vessel cannot berth properly because the infrastructure work is not done?

   Hon. Cadiz: The Galicia is being berthed at the berth—shed three on the—

   Mr. Imbert: I am talking about the location for the loading of cargo that it is supposed to be loaded at. Has the work been done or not?

   Hon. Cadiz: The Galicia has a very safe berth off of shed three on the Port of Port of Spain. Okay? There were minor works that had to be done in order to utilize the ferry properly and those works were started and those works have been completed, Chairman. Okay? So the works that the Prime Minister spoke of when she did, however long ago, those works were started and completed and the Galicia is operating in a very safe manner at the Port of Port of Spain.

   Mr. Chairman: I recognize the Member for Diego Martin Central.

   Mr. Imbert: No, Mr. Chairman, I am not finished, I am still on this item because the Minister is not dealing with my question. Are you telling me that the permanent berth for the Galicia which would allow containerized cargo to be loaded on this vessel efficiently and quickly has been completed or is it not completed? And is it not a fact that it is berthing down close to the Cruise Ship Complex and because it does not have a proper berth, the boat is not being used efficiently, and only two or three containers can be loaded per day on this vessel which could carry much more cargo, and therefore, the expenditure on this vessel is a complete waste of time? Could you answer that, please?
Hon. Cadiz: All right. I will try my best to try to explain to the Member what is happening here, again.

Mr. Imbert: He is not speaking the truth.

Mr. Chairman: No, you cannot say that.

Hon. Cadiz: No, no, excuse me, excuse me. I ask him to retract that, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: Member, please, you know better than that.

Mr. Imbert: I am waiting for my answer.

Hon. Cadiz: I am waiting to hear the retraction.

Mr. Imbert: Retract what?

Mr. Chairman: Yeah, you cannot say the Member is not speaking the truth. You know that is unparliamentary.

Mr. Imbert: Okay, I retract that.

Hon. Cadiz: If he does not want to retract that, I will not answer him.

Mr. Chairman: Yeah, he has withdrawn it, let us move on.

Hon. Cadiz: Very simple.

Mr. Imbert: Get to the point; answer the question.

Mr. Chairman: He has withdrawn it.

Hon. Cadiz: The berth—[Crosstalk]

Mr. Chairman: Yes, but let us—

Mr. Imbert: Answer the question. Is the boat loading properly or not?

Mr. Chairman: All right, listen—Member for Diego Martin Central—because it seems like—the hon. Minister is trying to answer as best he can and he is not satisfying the Member for Diego Martin North/East.

Mr. Imbert: No, he is not.

Mr. Chairman: So I have to move on. The Member for Diego Martin Central.

Mr. Imbert: He is speak inaccurately. [Continuous crosstalk]

Mr. Chairman: Yes, let us have one meeting, please.
Mr. Imbert: Not saying the whole truth; not speaking the whole truth.

Mr. Chairman: Please, please.

Dr. Browne: Same Sub-Item, Chairman and Minister, during this fiscal year, you indicated that you were evaluating two LNG fast ferries. What fuel does the Galicia use? That is the first question.

Hon. Cadiz: You want the answer now? Diesel.

Mr. Chairman: The next question.

Dr. Browne: That is not LNG.

Hon. Cadiz: Not that I am aware of. No, I think there is a major difference between LNG and diesel.

Dr. Browne: Exactly. What is the status of the evaluation of those two LNG fast ferries?

Hon. Cadiz: I think the Member is jumping the gun here. There are ferries—

Dr. Browne: It is a question. You could call it jumping the gun. You cannot characterize my question as jumping the gun. Answer the question.

Dr. Moonilal: Who you think you talking to?

Dr. Browne: I am talking to him.

Mr. Chairman: No, this matter—

Hon. Cadiz: This has nothing to do with LNG.

Dr. Browne: Yes, the fast ferries, the coastal steamers.

Mr. Chairman: No, I think you are jumping the gun. I think you better cool it. We will come to that area. You are going too fast.

Dr. Browne: No, I am not jumping the gun.

Mr. Chairman: No, well you are going too fast.

Dr. Browne: Okay, fair enough.

Mr. Chairman: We will come to that particular matter of the LNG fast ferry. But let me look at the Member for St. Joseph and then come back to the Member for Diego Martin North-East.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Hon. Minister, going back to what you have just recently said on the Superfast Galicia, could you tell us what is the container capacity of that ferry and how many containers per trip does that ferry currently carry?
Hon. Cadiz: The *Superfast Galicia*, she has a capacity of 7,320 tonnes.

Mr. Deyalsingh: How many containers would that—

Hon. Cadiz: Well, it all depends on how many containers—

Mr. Deyalsingh: Average, average.

Hon. Cadiz: Well, you cannot average it because if all your load is containers, she will take only containers but if she is taking containers, she is taking trucks, she is taking cars, she is taking—all kinds of other loads, it does not matter.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Mr. Chairman, let me just rephrase it then. Of the 100 per cent cargo capacity of the *Superfast Galicia*, what percentage of that is currently used on a trip by trip basis?

Mr. Chairman: Could you supply that information now or you could—

Hon. Cadiz: Yes, I could supply that information to him.

Mr. Chairman: You could supply it now.

Hon. Cadiz: No, I will give it to him.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Thank you.

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Chairman, on the same item, could the Minister tell me how long the *TT Express* has been operating on three engines or not operating on all engines? Does this include the acquisition of spare parts that will allow the ferry to go back to full operations or are we going to have another year with the ferry taking four hours to get to Tobago instead of two? Could the Minister answer that?

Hon. Cadiz: Chair, which line item is that?

Mr. Chairman: We are on Subsidies, hon. Member.

Mr. Imbert: Yes, yes, this is for coastal steamers. So could the Minister tell us how much of the $240 million is for repairs, critical repairs to the fast ferry; how long has this fast ferry been running on three engines or inadequately and how long does Trinidad and Tobago have to wait to get the Express running back on four engines properly so it makes the trip in two and a half hours instead of the current four hours which it has been doing for the last year under this Minister?

Hon. Cadiz: That vessel will be going on dry dock very shortly. In fact, we are making arrangements now to take her out of service to go on dry dock. She has a major engine repair that has to be done and she has to be out of the water to do it, so that will be done as soon as she gets up on the dry dock, we will fix it.
Mr. Imbert: Not answering the question.

Mr. Chairman: We go to Sub-Head 06, Current Transfers to Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies; Item 004 Statutory Boards. Hon. Member for Diego Martin North/East.

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Chairman, does this $108 million for the Port Authority, could the Minister explain to me why for 2014, you had to contribute this amount of money to the Port Authority? Why is the Port Authority running at a loss under this administration?

Hon. Cadiz: I seem to remember the hon. Member was at one time also in charge of the—

Mr. Imbert: I am talking in 2014. Mr. Chairman—

Hon. Cadiz: And he fully understands that the service—

Mr. Imbert:—I am speaking about 2014.

Hon. Cadiz: That the service is subsidized.

Mr. Imbert: Why is the port running at a loss in 2014?

Mr. Chairman: Yeah, but allow him to answer the question, please.

Mr. Imbert: But he is talking about 2010.

Mr. Chairman: Yeah, but let him answer the question. You cannot ask a question and then tell him how to answer it.

Mr. Imbert: But he is not answering it properly.

Mr. Chairman: Yeah, but let him answer it.

Mr. Imbert: “He ducking, he dodging.”

Mr. Chairman: Please, please, Minister, you have my protection.

Hon. Cadiz: The Port Authority, as the Member is very very well aware, has the—the efficiency at the Port of Port of Spain is not what it is supposed to be and successive administrations have failed—okay?

Mr. Imbert: We are talking about 2014.

Hon. Cadiz:—have failed to do certain things on the port and I will give you one instance. The big ship-to-shore cranes that you see lifting containers off vessels and to put them on land, the lifespan of those cranes is roughly 20 years.
We are running 35-year-old cranes. So the previous administration failed miserably to actually change out the equipment and the answer to the question to the Member—

**Mr. Imbert:** Answer the question, I am talking about 2014.

**Hon. Cadiz:** Two of us cannot speak at the same time.

**Mr. Chairman:** Well, he has answered the question to the best of his ability and he is answering the question. If you do not want to hear it, I will go to Sub-Head 09 Development Programme. [Crosstalk] The hon. Minister is—

**Mr. Imbert:** No, no, Mr. Chairman, there is another Sub-Item here, Public Transport Service Corporation. Does this $290 million include the acquisition of any buses?

**Hon. Cadiz:** Which heading is that—sorry?

**Mr. Imbert:** Same page.

**Mr. Chairman:** Public Transportation Service Corporation, page 223, Sub-Item 52.

**Mr. Imbert:** And the question is: Does the $290 million for the PTSC include the acquisition of any new buses?

**Hon. Cadiz:** Not under that Head, no.

**Mr. Imbert:** So this whole $290 million is a subsidy?

**Hon. Cadiz:** Yes.

**Mr. Imbert:** Three hundred million dollars subsidy of the PTSC?

**Hon. Cadiz:** That is where we had recent negotiations.

**Mr. Imbert:** All right. Okay.

**Hon. Cadiz:** Again, labour negotiations that a previous administration failed to do.

**Mr. Imbert:** Okay. Let us go to another item.

**Mr. Chairman:** Yes, let us deal with Sub-Head 09, Development Programme.

**Dr. Browne:** Mr. Chairman, further questions under 06, with respect to the Port Authority of Trinidad and Tobago, can the Minister inform if there is currently Chairman at the Port Authority—substantive Chairman?
Hon. Cadiz: There is an acting Chairman that we have already proposed that the acting chairman be confirmed as the Chairman.

Dr. Browne: With respect to the Item 52, Public Transport Service Corporation, is there currently an HR manager at the PTSC since the dismissal of the last HR manager under this item?

Hon. Cadiz: There is a person in an acting position.

Dr. Browne: There is no HR Manager?

Hon. Cadiz: There is a person acting as HR manager, so there is.

Mr. Chairman: There is a person acting as HR manager.

Dr. Browne: Is there a manager of security, manager of operations, manager of estate planning and business development, manager of legal services, manager of financial—[Crosstalk] We were informed that there are none.

11.35 p.m.

Mr. Chairman: We are going on to Sub-Head 09, Development Programme; Item 003—[Interruption]

Dr. Browne: We are informed that there are none.

Mr. Chairman:—Economic Infrastructure, Item 005. Hon. Member for Diego Martin North/East, please, you have the floor.

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Speaker, tell the Member for Oropouche East to stop attempting to usurp your role. Page 105.

Hon. Cadiz: Page what number?

Mr. Imbert: Page 105, Estimates of Development Programme, 050: Purchase of 100 New Buses. Now, Mr. Speaker, I am going to ask a number of questions in one go.

Mr. Chairman: Yes.

Mr. Imbert: I notice an expenditure in 2013 of $12 million. I notice an allocation in 2014 of $20 million but no money spent in 2014, and I notice an allocation in 2015, of $30 million. First part of the question, could the Minister tell us whether all of this expenditure is for the same 100 buses? That is part A.

Part B, if $12 million spent in 2013 was on some buses, how many buses were acquired? Who were they acquired from? What is the procurement procedure and was the supplier of these buses a world-ranked supplier?
And going forward now, the $30 million in 2015, could the Minister indicate whether arrangements have been finalized to procure buses in 2015? If so, where are the buses coming from and what was the procurement procedure or what is the intended procurement procedure? And is a world-ranked supplier identified?

Mr. Chairman: I propose that you put everything in writing for the hon. Member.

Mr. Imbert: “Yuh ducking fuh de man?”

Mr. Chairman: Yes, yes, I will ask him to put it in writing for you.

Hon. Cadiz: I will take—[Interruption and crosstalk]

Mr. Chairman: I recognize the Member for Arouca/Maloney. That is a very long—he cannot say all those things tonight. He would have to put it in writing.

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Chairman, can I just get one part of the question answered?

Mr. Chairman: Could you answer one part of the question tonight?

Hon. Cadiz: No, because it is better we do a comprehensive answer.

Mr. Imbert: “Yuh doh want tuh answer.”

Mr. Chairman: All right, Member for Arouca/Maloney and then the Member for Diego Martin Central. He would put it in writing for you. Member for Diego Martin North/East, you would get it in writing.

Mr. Imbert: “I never hear more!”

Miss Hospedales: Mr. Chair, under the same Item: 050, I would like to find out whether those buses are CNG buses.

Dr. Moonilal: “Yuh go geh de answer tuh dat.”

Mr. Chairman: All right, you would get the answer to that. Hon. Member for Diego Martin Central.

Hon. Cadiz: I can answer that immediately, yes.

Mr. Chairman: The answer is yes, Member for Arouca/Maloney.

Dr. Browne: Item 050, is the decision to purchase these buses part of the—has it benefited from a bus rationalization committee within the Ministry as announced by the Minister during this fiscal year? Is that committee in place?
Hon. Cadiz: The bus rationalization committee is meeting and will present their first draft of their report in about a month’s time and then we will work from that.

Dr. Browne: Who are the members on that committee, Minister?

Mr. Chairman: Final question for the Member for St. Joseph and then we close off.

Dr. Browne: Who are the Members of that committee, Minister?

Mr. Chairman: He will provide that for you in writing. Let us proceed.

Dr. Browne: Thank you.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Chair, same Item 050: 100 buses for $300 million. Could the hon. Minister state in writing or orally now, the country of origin of these buses, whether the procurement process is via a government-to-government arrangement, or if it is through a local agent and who is the local agent?

Mr. Chairman: All right, all right, very good. So we go to Item 005, Multi-sectoral and Other Services, Infrastructure Development Fund.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 34 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, I wish to thank you and your team. Thank you very much.

Hon. Cadiz: I would also like to thank my very hard-working team at the Ministry of Transport.

Mr. Chairman: We now call on the Ministry of Public Utilities to appear before this Standing Finance Committee.

May I advise hon. Members that after the Ministry of Public Utilities, we have the Ministry of Community Development, the Ministry of Legal Affairs and the Ministry of National Diversity and Social Integration and that is the end of our proceedings for this evening and we return at 10.00 a.m. sharp tomorrow morning.

Miss Mc Donald: 10?

Mr. Chairman: Yeah, we have a lot of work to do tomorrow.

Miss Mc Donald: I thought it was 11.
Mr. Chairman: No, no, no. I am the Chairman of this committee and I have work to do. Yeah, I have work to do. I have to complete 50 Heads by at least 4 o’clock tomorrow and I am coming at 10 and if I have a quorum of 12, I am doing the people’s business. Okay, let us go.

Head 39:

We are now on Head 39: Ministry of Public Utilities $805,113,400. I would invite the hon. Minster of Public Utilities, if he so desires, to make a brief statement given the period that we are now at 11.41. If you wish to make a brief statement you are welcome. Would you like to make a statement?

Hon. Baksh: No.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, we go straight ahead.

Question proposed: That Head 39 stand part of the Schedule.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, the sum of $805,113,400 for Head 39: The 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 and the Draft Estimates of Development Programme. Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure; Item 001, General Administration; Item 005, Electrical Inspectorate; Item 006, Government Printery. We go to Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services; Item 001, General Administration. I recognize the hon. Member for Arouca/Maloney.

Miss Hospedales: Mr. Chair, Sub-Item 42 under the street lighting, could the Minister indicate what has accounted for the gradual increase of the allocation from $88.9 million in 2013, to $93 million in 2014 and now $100 million in 2015?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister of Public Utilities, would you be able to respond to that question?

Hon. Baksh: Chairman, yes. You would be aware that a number of construction of new roads have been done in the country, also we have recognized that a number of other areas like side roads, streets under local government, and so on, that need street lights and as such we are increasing the programme to deliver these lights for this year.

Mr. Chairman: We go to Item 005, Electrical Inspectorate. We go to Item 006, Government Printery; Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases; Item 001, General Administration; Item 005, Electrical Inspectorate; Item 006, Government
Appropriation Bill, 2014  Thursday, September 25, 2014

[MR. CHAIRMAN]

Printery; Sub-Head 04, Current Transfer and Subsidies; Item 001, Regional Bodies; Item 003, United Nations Organizations; Item 004, International Bodies; Item 006, Educational Institutions; Item 007, Households; Item 009, Other Transfers. I recognize the hon. Members for Diego Martin North/East and Arouca/Maloney.

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Chair, page 245, 009: Other Transfers, 13, I do not know if it is a misprint, it says “Repayment of Loan to the National Gas Company”. T&TEC is lending money to NGC?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, the hon. Member wants some clarification.

Hon. Baksh: We would submit this in writing.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, they would commit that to writing.

Mr. Imbert: Could you tell me why it says “loan to NGC”?

Hon. Baksh: Okay, what has happened there, is really a book transaction where it goes from the NGC to the Ministry and then the Ministry to T&TEC.

Mr. Imbert: But it says “loan to”.

Mr. Chairman: Well, he would explain in writing what that means.

Hon. Baksh: It goes a certain route.

Mr. Chairman: So we deal with the Member for Arouca/Maloney and then the Member for Point Fortin.

Mr. Imbert: “How you lending money to NGC? That ain making no sense.”

Miss Hospedales: Mr. Chairman, I am referring to 04, Trinidad and Tobago Postal Corporation. I would like the Minister to indicate to us whether there is a shortage in the postal workers at the TTPost and if they have an assessment of the needs with reference to the staffing for postal workers in that particular organization? The reason I am asking is that there are instances—there are a number of complaints particularly from my constituency—where the mail is being delivered a week, two weeks, and sometimes one month late.

Hon. Baksh: We have a problem where people are going out by attrition and we are now taking on some additional on a temporary basis to fill that requirement. Also, there has been a problem with regard to the transportation mode for some of those officers, in that we had a problem where motorbikes were purchased and were the wrong motorbikes and they now have to dispose of them and are now in the process of tendering for scooters, as against motorbikes. Those motorbikes were like trail bikes, which were not appropriate for the trail.
Appropriation Bill, 2014

Thursday, September 25, 2014

Mr. Chairman: No, I recognize the Member for Point Fortin first and then the Member for St. Joseph.

Mrs. Gopiee-Scoon: What is your rationalization for an increase of $5 million when in fact all signs are that entity is an unprofitable one?

Hon. Baksh: I am advised that we have to provide additional funding so that they could provide the extended services that we require at this point in time and in the future as well.

Mrs. Gopiee-Scoon: Extended services?

Hon. Baksh: Yes, because you are extending. You have growth poles in different areas. You would understand that we are just doing the $42 new numbering, postal code for different areas.

Mrs. Gopiee-Scoon: Yes, yes.

Hon. Baksh: We started in your constituency.

Mrs. Gopiee-Scoon: That is right.

Hon. Baksh: And it is moving across the country. We have completed two others. We are now going further with it.

Mr. Chairman: The hon. Member for St. Joseph.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Hon. Minister, in response to your question about the motorcycles, which you volunteered, could you tell me the approximate cost of those mis-purchased motorcycles?

Mr. Chairman: No, you cannot say mis-purchased. You know about the purchase of the motorcycles.

Mr. Deyalsingh: The purchase that was then found not to be appropriate.

Hon. Baksh: Five hundred and fifty thousand dollars.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Has anybody been held accountable for that purchase of half a million dollars and what was—[Interrupted]

Hon. Baksh: It is being addressed at this point in time.

Mr. Deyalsingh:—and what was the sanction?

Hon. Baksh: It is being addressed. I could not say the outcome of it as yet.

Mr. Chairman: It is being addressed at this time. Let us go to Sub-Head 09, Development Programme.
Miss Hospedales: Mr. Chairman, I have a question.

Mr. Chairman: Are you on Development Programme?

Miss Hospedales: Sir, I am on Other Transfers.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, I go back to facilitate the hon. Member for Arouca/Maloney. We go back to Item 09, Other Transfers.

Miss Hospedales: Mr. Chair, under 04, again, Trinidad and Tobago Postal Corporation, I would like to find out from the Minister whether or not the allocation of $50 million is adequate for the operationalization of TTPost and if there are any plans, with respect to restructuring that particular organization?

Hon. Baksh: Mr. Chairman, I think at this point in time that funding is adequate.

Mr. Chairman: We go to Development Programme Head 09, Item 003, Economic Infrastructure. I recognize the Members for La Brea and Diego Martin Central.

11.50 p.m.

Mr. Jeffrey: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, 586 and 591.

Mr. Chairman: Oh, the Member for Diego Martin North/East too, sorry, Sir. [Laughter]

Mr. Jeffrey: In that estimate for 2015 of $12 million, I will like to know whether the lighting of the following recreation grounds: Erin Recreation Ground; Lot 10 recreation ground; Vance River recreation ground; Palo Seco Settlement recreation ground; La Brea community recreation ground and No. 8 Road recreation ground, whether or not any provision is made for any of these grounds. That is the first question, and my second question, 591, how much power— [Interruption]

Mr. Chairman: Please! Please! Please!

Mr. Jeffrey:—591, how much power will be made available from the TGU Power Plant for the industrial development of the Union and Labidco Industrial Estates?

Hon. Baksh: Chairman, with regard to 586, Lighting of Parks and Recreation Grounds, the Member gave me a long list. I could tell him that we are dealing with some of those. What I am actually doing is bringing some equity to this programme to ensure that every constituency gets a fair share of this programme. [Desk thumping]
Mr. Chairman: So you are being considered a little more. What is the second part?

Hon. Baksh: The national transmission to—we have the full capacity, there is 720 from the TGU Plant. Right now we are trying to bring the—right now it is not on stream, on the national grid, and we are trying to bring some of this by the end of the year, in December 2014. I could not—

Mr. Chairman: No, I think he asked specifically what is going to happen with Union Estate, in terms of the amount of power required there.

Hon. Baksh: Okay. I am advised that the capacity of 400 megawatts will be available for the estate.

Mr. Chairman: Four hundred megawatts would be available for the estate. I recognize the Member for Diego Martin Central.

Dr. Browne: Minister, Sub-Item 581, National Street Lighting Programme, the extended Diego Martin Highway is still in darkness, and the Ministry of Works and Infrastructure is blaming T&TEC. This receives $6 million in 2014 and you are getting $17 million requested for 2015. Does this $17 million specifically include provision for the lighting of the extended Diego Martin Highway which remains in darkness?

Hon. Baksh: This is part of the programme that we are embarking upon.

Mr. Chairman: It is part of the programme they are embarking upon. So hopefully, the Diego Martin Highway will be lit very shortly. I recognize the Member for Diego Martin North/East.

Mr. Imbert: Yes, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: And the Member for Fyzabad.

Mr. Imbert: There is an allocation for the bulk power, $40 million. Could the Minister explain what that is please?

Hon. Baksh: This is a new item, and it is carded here for the Piarco/San Rafael substation.

Mr. Imbert: It is for the construction of the Piarco [Interruption]

Mr. Chairman: Member for Fyzabad!

Mr. Imbert: Could you just answer—

Mr. Chairman: Wait, wait. Just hold one second for me.
Mr. Imbert: The $40 million for bulk power.

Hon. Baksh: 4-0?

Mr. Imbert: $40 million for bulk power. Are you not seeing that?

Hon. Baksh: Okay. You have one, the $40 million is for Westmoorings and the 140 is for the Piarco/San Rafael substation.

Mr. Chairman: The $40 million is for Westmoorings. I recognize the Member for Fyzabad, please.

Mr. Sharma: Thank you, Chairman. With respect to street lighting as referred to in 586 and 591 and elsewhere, would this include solar lighting?

Hon. Baksh: Not from this programme.

Mr. Chairman: Not? All right. We go on to Item 04, Social Infrastructure; we go to Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services. Hon. Members, the question is that the sum of $805,113,400 for Head 39, the Ministry of Public Utilities stand part of the Schedule.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 39 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, the sum of $805,113,400 for Head 39, the Ministry of Public Utilities now stands part of the Schedule.

Thank you very much. I understand you have to remain for the Ministry of Community Development. I thank your officers for being with you.

Let us go to the Ministry of Community Development now, please.

Head 62.

Question proposed: That Head 62 stand part of the Schedule.

Mr. Chairman: Head 62, the Ministry of Community Development, the officers can now come forward, and the Minister remains where he is.

Then we go to the Ministry of Legal Affairs and then the last one would be the Ministry of National Diversity and Social Integration.

Hon. Members, Head 62, the Ministry of Community Development, $182,916,762. I will go to the question. Hon. Members, the question is that the sum of $182,916,762 for Head 62, the Ministry of Community Development stand part of the Schedule. Hon. Members, this particular sum is comprised of
moneys proposed for the expenditure under—for expenditure rather, under the following Sub-Heads and Items to be found in the Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure, and the Draft Estimates of Development Programme.

Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure; Item 001, General Administration; Item 002, Community Development; Item 006, Best Village. We go to Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services; Item 001, General Administration; Item 002, Community Development Division; Item 005, Mediation Centres; Item 06, Best Village.

Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases; Item 001, General Administration; Item 002, Community Development Division; Item 005, Mediation Centres; Item 006, Best Village; Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies. Item 005—I recognize the Member for Point Fortin.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Just 01, 005/01, Point Fortin Civic Centre. Why was there no allotment for 2014, sorry, or no funds expended at all?

Hon. Baksh: I understand there is a problem there with the contractor and, of course, they have to replace that one; they have a new one now. I am sorting out some difficulties with the contractor and the project manager. So as soon as that is settled, we are going to resume construction on that job.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Is this Head to deal with actual construction or is this to keep the institution going in the meantime?

Hon. Baksh: No, no, this is for construction.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: For construction. Okay, so it will resume.

Hon. Baksh: Yeah.

Mr. Chairman: All right. Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies; Item 005, Non-Profit Institutions; Item 006, Educational Institutions; Item 007, Households; Item 009, Other Transfers; Sub-Head—I recognize the hon. Member for Arouca/Maloney.

Miss Hospedales: Mr. Chair, on behalf of my constituents, all who are senior citizens, who require the GAPP service. I will like to find out exactly what is the problem in terms of the actual assignment of geriatric nurses to the elderly who have applied. Some people are actually on the waiting list for as long as a year, and are still waiting.

Hon. Baksh: There is a limited number of caregivers and there is a very high demand for this service at this point in time. It will take a little longer time to reach out to some of those persons.
Mr. Chairman: Okay. We go on to Development Programme, Sub-Head 009, Item 004, Social Infrastructure; Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services. I recognize the hon. Member for Diego Martin North/East.

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Chairman, could the Minister confirm that the long awaited Bagatelle Community Centre will be constructed in fiscal 2015? That is 003, Construction of Community Centres. Do you have any money in there for the Bagatelle Community Centre, and if you do, do you anticipate it will be completed in this fiscal 2015?

Hon. Baksh: Mr. Chairman, I am just trying to get the information. I am advised that work has started since July 2014, and it is scheduled to be completed by the second quarter of fiscal 2015.

Mr. Imbert: So there is money in there to complete this centre?

Hon. Baksh: Yes, yes.

Mr. Imbert: Okay, right.

Mr. Chairman: Okay. We go to the Member for La Brea and then the Member for Arouca/Maloney.

Mr. Jeffrey: Still under the same item. In the case of the Palo Seco Settlement and Los Charos community centres, are those two community centres catered for in your allocation? And also, what is the position with respect to the Rancho Quemado Community Centre?

Hon. Baksh: Chair, one, the Palo Seco Settlement, the current status there is that the centre is 89 per cent completed, and the original contractor is unable to continue with the construction work. A new contractor has been contracted to complete the remaining works.

Mr. Jeffrey: And Los Charos?

Hon. Baksh: Palo Seco, Los Charos, work is—the centre is almost completed, 95 per cent completed. So that I think, by year end or early 2015, this should be completed.

Mr. Chairman: What was the other one?

Mr. Jeffrey: Rancho Quemado.

Hon. Baksh: I am advised that this should start in the next fiscal year, 2015.

Mr. Chairman: Next fiscal year. I recognize the Member for Arouca/Maloney.
Miss Hospedales: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Through you, I would like to find out from the Minister, why were the contracts for the Bon Air Gardens Community Centre and Trincity Community Centre cancelled, and exactly when would these two community facilities be constructed?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister of Community Development, do you have that available or do you want to put that in writing?

Hon. Baksh: Okay. I am advised here that it was reprioritized because of the lack of funding and so on, and it will be on the 2015/2016 programme.

Mr. Chairman: I recognize the Member for Point Fortin.

Miss Hospedales: Mr. Chair, I just want to state that I was told in 2011 that those facilities would have been constructed in 2013. So now I am hearing that they are going to be constructed in 2015.

Mr. Chairman: Well, okay. Well, let us hope that the Minister keeps his word. Hon. Member?

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Through you, to the hon. Minister, are there plans for the Granville Community Centre.

Hon. Baksh: It is due for construction in 2015.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, the question is that the sum of $182,916,766 for Head 62, Ministry of Community Development stand part of the Schedule.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 62 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much hon. Minister. Thank you to the team.

Head 24.

Question proposed: That Head 24 stand part of the Schedule.

Mr. Chairman: We now go to the Ministry of Legal Affairs, and thank you, I know you have waited a long time, but thanks for your patience.

Hon. Member: Seven hours.
Mr. Chairman: Seven hours, thanks for your patience.

We go to the Ministry of Legal Affairs. We have—that is Head 24, the sum is $191,847,900. Hon. Members, the question is that the sum of $191,847,900 for Head 24, the Ministry of Legal Affairs stand part of the Schedule. Hon. Members, this sum of money is 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, Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure; Item 001, General Administration; Item 002, Law Revision Commission; Item 007, Intellectual Property; under Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services.

Miss Mc Donald: Mr. Chair, through you. AG, could you tell me what could have triggered the removal of the transfer of Consumer Affairs Division, Research and Planning, Consumer Outreach and Protection away from the Ministry of Legal Affairs?

12.05 a.m.

Hon. Ramlogan SC: That is a matter of prime ministerial prerogative. I would not be able to answer that.

Mr. Chairman: Let us go to Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services: Item 001, General Administration; Item 002, Law Revision Commission; Item 007, Intellectual Property Office.

We go to Head 03, Minor Equipment.

Miss Mc Donald: I am at Goods and Services.

Mr. Chairman: You are under Goods and Services. I recognize the Member for Arouca/Maloney and then you, the Member for Port of Spain South.

Miss Hospedales: Sir, I almost thought I was invisible at one point.

Mr. Chairman: No, no, no. You are seen.

Miss Hospedales: Mr. Chair, Sub-Item 16, under Contract Employment, could the Minister indicate exactly how many persons are on contract in this particular Ministry and the number of vacant contract positions as well?

Hon. Ramlogan SC: Chair, there are approximately 300 persons on contract.

Mr. Chairman: You want to put that in writing for us?

Hon. Ramlogan SC: I think we can—
Mr. Chairman: I do not want you to give her the wrong information because it is on the record, you know.

Hon. Ramlogan SC: You will get that in writing.

Mr. Chairman: Let us deal with the Member for Port of Spain South’s question.

Miss Mc Donald: I am just interested in the contract employment under 16. I am also looking at Promotion, Publicity and Printing, that is 62. I do not know if the AG has any answers for those—what could have sent it up from approximately $1.6 million to $6 million.

Mr. Chairman: Sure, the hon. Attorney General.

Hon. Ramlogan SC: Chair, much of this funding actually was approved in the last mid-year review to settle outstanding bills and it is transferred over. The bills were incurred as part of a campaign, which was launched by the then Consumer Affairs Division, which was, at the material time, part of the Ministry of Legal Affairs during the fiscal year. That campaign was intended to influence consumers, to modify consumer behaviour so that they could exercise more responsible spending to demand a higher quality of service from providers of goods and services.

It was also used to promote the initiatives of the Registrar General’s Department where a lot of work has been going on with respect to the Land Registry and changes in terms of our birth certificates where we had a massive nationwide programme to allow people, who had one name on their birth certificate, or none at all, to rectify that. That was the explanation for that.

Mr. Chairman: So we now go to:

Sub-Head 02: Goods and Services
   Item 001: General Administration
   Item 002: Law Revision Commission
   Item 007: Intellectual Property Office

Sub-Head 03: Minor Equipment Purchases
   Item 001: General Administration
   Item 002: Law Revision Commission
Miss Mc Donald: I have a question there, under Police Complaints Authority. AG, I know this has been transferred from the Ministry of Justice and there is an allocation of $14 million for the PCA, but I am wondering: how much did the PCA request from the Minister of Finance and the Economy? I know they always talk about the fact that they are strapped for funds.

Mr. Chairman: The hon. Attorney General.

Hon. Ramlogan SC: What I can tell you is that you will see, from the estimates, the allocation for the PCA has been increased by $3 million, so that it has gone up. I do not know what the PCA requested. The request was $27 million.

Miss Mc Donald: Twenty-seven?

Mr. Chairman: Okay, we go to Current Transfers and Subsidies; Item 005, Non-Profit Institutions. Are you on non-profit?

Miss Hospedales: I am on Other Transfers.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, “we coming”.

Item 007: Households

Item 009: Other Transfers

Hon. Member for Arouca/Maloney.

Miss Hospedales: Mr. Chair, I would like to find out the number of approved applications under the Criminal Injuries Compensation and if they can indicate the amount given to each applicant?

Mr. Chairman: Could you put that in writing and make it available?

Hon. Ramlogan SC: We most certainly can, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: We go to Item 010, Other Transfers Abroad; Development Programme, Sub-Head 09; Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services.

Miss Mc Donald: Sir, I have two questions.
Mr. Chairman: Yes, hon. Member.

Miss Mc Donald: 016, National Consultation on Constitutional Reform. I am seeing an actual for $8.2 million then a revised estimate in 2014 to $9.5 million. I recall that the Minister of Legal Affairs had said in this Parliament that the total for this constitutional reform amounted to some $13.5 million. So I am wondering, when I look at this figure, I am getting to a total of something like $18.7 million, exactly what is happening here. We got a definitive figure from the substantive Minister, not the AG, of $13.5 million, but now these figures are throwing up something different. We just had the budget debate and it was very clear, $13.5 million.

Hon. Ramlogan SC: Chair, I can give the actual expenditure on the national consultations for the Constitution reform exercise for 2013. The actual expenditure was $8,205,322. The actual expenditure for 2014, as at September 23, is $2,694,724 and that brings the total expenditure to date to $10,900,046. Outstanding commitment in the Vote Book is $19,025.

Miss Mc Donald: I would like to get something in writing from the Minister, please.

Mr. Chairman: On what?

Miss Mc Donald: On exactly how much is this breakdown because I am getting different figures there.

Hon. Ramlogan SC: Sure.

Mr. Chairman: Could you provide a breakdown?

Miss Mc Donald: I am getting different figures there.

Mr. Chairman: All right. Okay, you will get it in writing.

Hon. Members, the question is—

Miss McDonald: I have another question. I said I had two.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, I am awaiting your second question.

Miss Mc Donald: This National Smart Card System, I notice a new project. What is it about?

Mr. Chairman: What Sub-Item are you referring to?

Miss Mc Donald: 019.
Mr. Chairman: Thank you.

Miss Mc Donald: And a million dollars have been budgeted for this project. It is a new project. Exactly what that million dollars is about, this Smart Card System?

Mr. Chairman: AG.

Hon. Ramlogan SC: Well, Chair, I would put that in writing so that we can explain to the Member what this matter consists of.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 24 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much AG. We shall see you first thing in the morning at 11.00 a.m. We now come to the Ministry of National Diversity and Social Integration.

Head 74.

Question proposed: That Head 74 stand part of the Schedule.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, we are now at Head 74, the Ministry of National Diversity and Social Integration, $101,043,772. This sum 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.

Sub-Head 01: Personnel Expenditure
   Item 001: General Administration

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Speaker, could we go straight to Development Programme?

Mr. Chairman: Okay no, I have to announce all.

Sub-Head 02: Goods and Services
   Item 001: General Administration
   Item 002: National Archives

Sub-Head 03: Minor Equipment Purchases
   Item 001: General Administration
   Item 002: National Archives
Appropriation Bill, 2014

Sub-Head 04: Current Transfer and Subsidies
- Item 001: Regional Bodies
- Item 004: International Bodies
- Item 005: Non-profit Institutions
- Item 009: Other Transfers

Estimates of the Development Programme
Sub-Head 09: Development Programme
- Item 004: Social Infrastructure

The hon. Member for Diego Martin North/East.

Mr. Imbert: Yes, Mr. Speaker. Sometime previously in this committee, I was told an untruth, because I was told that the deletion of the restoration of Stollmeyer’s Castle and Whitehall, from the Office of the Prime Minister, would be accommodated with an appropriate allocation in the Ministry of National Diversity and Social Integration. But when I go to page 309, where I see Public Buildings, I do not see any allocation for the restoration of Whitehall and Stollmeyer’s Castle.

Mr. Chairman, if you drive around the savannah, trees are growing out of the windows in Whitehall. Cows are grazing on the roof. There has been a rusty galvanize fence in front of Stollmeyer’s Castle now for months.

Mr. Chairman: Yes, I think that you have made your point.

Mr. Imbert: Could the Minister tell us—

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, could you tell us whether any allocation has been made?

Mr. Imbert: I have to phrase my question. Why has the Government abandoned the restoration of Whitehall and they have no allocation for it?

Mr. Chairman: The hon. Minister.

Dr. Gopeesingh: [Inaudible]

Mr. Imbert: Not you; I am not asking you.

Mr. Chairman: Allow the Minister to respond, please.
Hon. Samuel: Chair, to answer the hon. Member, the Government has not abandoned the restoration of any of the heritage buildings. Thus far, under the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development, through UDeCOTT, UDeCOTT has been working on Stollmeyer’s Castle, first of all. Stollmeyer’s Castle is about 85 to 90 per cent complete and that Whitehall, likewise, is still under the jurisdiction presently of UDeCOTT as we work in tandem with UDeCOTT to do the completion of it. I just want to—

Mr. Imbert: Minister, there is no allocation for Whitehall in the estimates.

Mr. Chairman: Allow him to complete his statement.

Mr. Imbert: Where is the allocation? Where is the money for it?

Mr. Speaker: Let him complete his statement. The hon. Minister, continue please.

Hon. Samuel: Mr. Chairman, when the Minister of Housing and Urban Development takes this seat, he will be able to clearly define all of the work that he is continuing to do and surely he will address the fact that UDeCOTT has been working on the facilities and the work will continue as we go along.

Mr. Imbert: So could the Minister then explain why you have an allocation for public buildings and all you have is Mille Fleurs? What about the other buildings?

Hon. Samuel: Because on the other buildings work has been continued and continues to take place on both Stollmeyer’s Castle—

Mr. Imbert: You look at Whitehall today? There is no work taking place on Whitehall. It is abandoned.

Hon. Samuel: Both buildings are being taken care of by Housing Development Corporation.

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Chairman, I cannot handle this. They are in denial. The Government is in denial.

Mr. Chairman: Item 05, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services; Infrastructure Development Fund.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 74 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

12.20 a.m.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much hon. Minister and your staff.
Hon. Samuel: Thank you Chairman and thank you to the PS, Deputy PS.

Mr. Chairman: I know that you have been waiting very long, but we are very gracious and thankful for your patience. Right?

Hon. Members, tomorrow which is in the morning—because it is 12.20 now—we are dealing with:

1. The Ministry of the Attorney General
2. The Ministry of Local Government.
3. The Ministry of the Environment and Water Resources
4. Ministry of Housing and Urban Development
5. Ministry of Foreign Affairs
6. Office of the President
7. Elections and Boundaries Commission
8. The Public Service Appeal Board
9. The Parliament
10 The Auditor General

We will conclude tomorrow, given what we have here. Hon. Members—

[Interruption]

Dr. Rambachan: Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: Yes, Sir.

Dr. Rambachan: I just want to put on record—I mean, I am sure on behalf of all the Members of the committee—our deepest admiration for the fact [Desk thumping] that you have sat there from exactly 5.20—seven hours, one minute and 16 seconds thus far. I mean, really [Desk thumping] we ought to congratulate you. [Desk thumping] Tremendous stamina, Mr. Chairman. [Crosstalk and laughter]

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, at this time, we will adjourn our Standing Finance Committee to 11.00 a.m. in the morning of Friday 26th—well that is today—at 11.00 a.m.

12.22 a.m.: Standing Finance Committee suspended.
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, September 26, 2014

APPROPRIATION (FINANCIAL YEAR 2015) BILL, 2014

[Tenth Day]

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

[Chairman: Mr. Mark]

11.00 a.m.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, this meeting of the Standing Finance Committee is called to order. Today, this morning we will be examining Head 23, Ministry of the Attorney General. Head 23, Ministry of the Attorney General is $260,198,105.

Head 23.

I will now invite the hon. Attorney General if he so desires to make a brief opening statement for no more than five minutes at this time. The hon. Attorney General.

Hon. Ramlogan SC: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, and to Members of staff, my Permanent Secretary and heads of departments. The Ministry of the Attorney General is the law firm of the Government, and the individual clients would be the Ministries and each and every single public officer that serve the State of Trinidad and Tobago. This is the approach I have brought to the Office of the Attorney General in that we look at our legal problems in a solutions oriented manner with a dedicated focus to providing quality professional service to our end user who we see as the client and customer.

We adopt a very aggressive and very formal defence to all claims launched against the State whilst remaining compassionate to the ordinary man on the street who does litigate and sometimes require a certain amount of mercy and justice, beyond and outside the normal legal remit. Of particular significance in the past financial year and in the coming financial year, is the management of international legal disputes and, in particular, international commercial arbitrations in which the Ministry of the Attorney General has taken an abiding interest and role. We have been successful, thus far, Mr. Chairman, in all of the international commercial arbitrations that we have been involved in, starting with
the offshore patrol vessels, the OPVs, continuing with the World GTL arbitration, the Fluor arbitration, and now pending before an arbitral tribunal in Miami, the Sural arbitration.

These arbitrations, any of them, if the State was unsuccessful, it could have had a direct hit and adverse impact on the Treasury and economy of Trinidad and Tobago to the tune of billions of dollars. We have also been collaborating with, many state-sector companies to deal with the avalanche of litigation that came in the wake of several mega projects that saw claims in excess of $2.5 billion from the construction sector arising out of unpaid contractual sums that were due and owing.

Outside of that, we have established a very important unit called the Civil Child Abduction Authority, consistent with the Harare Convention on the International Rights of the Child. That Civil Abduction Authority has been extremely busy in the Family Court where we seek to protect the interest and welfare of children who find themselves in the middle of a thug of war that crosses borders, and they sometimes can fall into a crack, we seek their interest in the courts in that regard.

The compliance with the Financial Action Task Force, I am the Chairman of the Cabinet sub-committee and I will be leading the Government delegation to Paris in November to present our final report to that international Financial Action Task Force. We have passed several amendments to the Financial Intelligence Unit to make that Unit more effective to deal with the issue of count-financing of terrorism and terrorists’ enterprise on the whole. We have also passed several pieces of legislation to deal with the issue of crime as it relates to fingerprinting and DNA.

So the Ministry of the Attorney General will continue to play a critical role in the justice system and, in particular, in the litigation against the State.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much.

Question proposed: That Head 23 stand part of the Schedule.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, that sum 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 Estimate of Development Programme: Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure, Item 001, General Administration. I recognize the hon. Member for Diego Martin West.
Dr. Rowley: Good morning, Mr. Chairman, morning, Members. I have a few small questions with respect to Salaries and Vacant Posts under 01, 001, Sub-Head 001, 08; I am taking Sub-Item 01, and Sub-Item 08 together. It is the same question.

Hon. Ramlogan SC: Sure.

Dr. Rowley: Are the salaries and vacant posts for the Office of the Director of Public Prosecution included in your administration?

Hon. Ramlogan SC: Yes.

Dr. Rowley: So the provisions here for dealing with vacant posts and so on would be dealt with in the context in here?


Dr. Rowley: We understand that there are a number of vacant posts to be filled, will this allocation suffice to ensure that the Office of the Director of Public Prosecution is properly staffed as per public commitment?

Hon. Ramlogan SC: Sure. Well, the Office of the DPP, Cabinet had passed a Note to increase the staffing for the Office of the DPP by some additional 35 lawyers and consequential administrative support staff. That is a matter, however, for the Judicial and Legal Service Commission, so I cannot speak to the issue of how fast and how quickly, and if and when that will be done, but what I can say is that the minute the JLCS hires someone for the Office of the DPP funds are made available so that person can assume duty. The Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions is given top priority in the administrative and financial arrangements of the Ministry of the Attorney General, because of the obvious critical constitutional role and function it performs. So rest assured that insofar as there are vacancies, once the Judicial and Legal Service Commission over which I have no control appoints someone, funds are made immediately available.

Dr. Rowley: So these vacant posts referred to here are posts on the current establishment?

Hon. Ramlogan SC: They will include some on the current establish and they will include a lot on my own establishment from the Ministry of the Attorney General itself. There is a difficulty in terms of attracting persons to come into the State because of the remuneration packages we offer, and that is an open secret in the legal profession. Attorneys, you know, if you compare what the private law firms pay and what one can obtain practising on their own, it really is a labour love and a sacrifice to come and serve the State. I salute all public officers and legal officers who make that sacrifice for the service of our country.
Dr. Rowley: So given that we now have vacant posts on the current establishment, it is possible that even if we increase the establishment by 35 or any similar number of posts, that we could still have a shortage of personnel as a result of our inability of fill those posts for whatever reason?

Hon. Ramlogan SC: No, I do not think so. I think if we filled those 35 positions in the context of the legislative framework that the Government policy has been fleshing out, I do not think we will have a problem once there is proper training. There is a tripod of legislation that we have been working—

Dr. Rowley: But you just told me the problem—

Hon. Ramlogan SC: No. No. Can I just complete the answer, please?

Dr. Rowley: But before you go off and you answer, I am staying with the question that I asked, you just told me that the difficulty you are having with the current vacant posts is that you cannot attract people to them because of the remuneration level. So if you add more posts how is that going to make it easier to attract people?

Hon. Ramlogan SC: I made a general statement of fact and that applies not just, I am sure, to the Ministry of the Attorney General, but to the Engineering Department of the Ministry of Works and Infrastructure to the Accounts Department in the Ministry of Finance and the Economy. Across the board, not just in Trinidad and Tobago, but the world over, the remuneration package offered in the civil service, in Great Britain, Trinidad and Tobago, the United States of America and elsewhere, it is not as competitive as what one would obtain in the private sector. That is a general statement of fact.

The Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions, I cannot fill those vacancies because they have to be filled by the Judicial and Legal Service Commission. Insofar as you asked about funding, funding is available to fill those vacancies and it is given priority. With respect to whether or not, when those vacancies are filled, there will still be a problem with human resource in the Office of the DPP, I think not because of the legislation we have passed.

In the United States of America, Mr. Chairman, 90 to 95 per cent of criminal cases do not go to trial. Only 5 to 7 per cent of criminal cases actually go before a judge and jury, and that is because they have an effective plea-bargaining system. I am in the process in collaboration with the United States of America Government and its experts, in drafting a plea-bargaining law which I will bring to this Parliament, and once that comes—
**Appropriation Bill, 2014**  
**Friday, September 26, 2014**

**Dr. Rowley:** Mr. Chairman, which question is he answering?

**Hon. Ramlogan SC:** No, but I am answering your question, about whether or not it would result in a shortage of manpower.

**Dr. Rowley:** Mr. Chairman, I am not aware that I asked that question.

**Mr. Chairman:** All right, you want to rephrase?

**Dr. Rowley:** No, because I was going to move on when I asked, you know, in the context of what vacant posts he had and he said there were going to be 34 more added by the JLSC. I heard that. And then I asked, since there are difficulties with filling what we have now, when we increase the establishment, would that not also be possible that we can have vacancies, and I moved on from there.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Chairman?

**Mr. Chairman:** Yes, Member for Oropouche East.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Chairman, as I understand it, the hon. Attorney General is giving some reflections on the manpower requirement and how that may change over time, given proposed legislation and policy. I am very curious to hear what may be the manpower requirement over time given other policy changes and the Attorney General is on this line. Now, I do not know if you want to trip him now and then we can ask it later.

**Dr. Rowley:** Well, you can ask you own questions.

**Dr. Moonilal:** I do not want to be repeating, you know, question lines that that the Opposition Leader may—.

**Mr. Chairman:** All right. Allow our AG to—

**Hon. Ramlogan SC:** If I may. Look, it is a legitimate question and permit me to answer it. You have asked a very important question, in the public interest—

**Dr. Rowley:** You answered it as far as I am concerned, you know.

**Hon. Ramlogan SC:** No, I would prefer—

**Mr. Chairman:** All right, listen, the hon. Leader has said you have answered it, so let us go to the next question.

**Hon. Ramlogan SC:** All right, if you are happy with the answer, that is fine.

**Mr. Chairman:** Let us go. Let us go.

**Dr. Moonilal:** “And doh get upset nah man, we now start.”
Dr. Rowley: I am fine. [Laughter]

Mr. Chairman: Let us go. Let us go.

Dr. Rowley: I did not ask about plea-bargaining and I did not ask about the DPP office—

Mr. Chairman: Let us go.

Dr. Rowley:—except whether we have vacancies there on this allocation, and I move on, Mr. Chairman. You have the floor.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, we go to Item 002 Law Commission. We go to Item 003, Equal Opportunity Commission. We go to Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, Item 001, General Administration. The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Dr. Rowley: Under General Administration, 02, 16, Contract Employment—

Dr. Moonilal: What page are you on?

Dr. Rowley: I am on page 135.

Mr. Chairman: Page 135 under General Administration.

Dr. Rowley: Again, Mr. Chairman, I would want to ask whether the consideration for contract officers here, whether that includes staff at the DPPs office?

Hon. Ramlogan SC: Yes it does actually, Mr. Chairman. It includes the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions and it includes a number of the areas in the Ministry where we have various projects that are ongoing and you have to have contracted officers.

Dr. Rowley: How many of these—well, of course, it will have contract officers at the AG’s office, what proportion of these contracted employees catered for in subsection 16 are attorneys-at-law?

Hon. Ramlogan SC: The establishment is 281 at the moment, positions, the contract positions are 156. It has always had a very significant contract portfolio in the Ministry of the Attorney General by reason of the nature of the job itself. The second thing I want to note is that Cabinet, on May 23, 2013, agreed to create for the DPP, 100 permanent positions of legal offices, and 100 permanent positions of civil offices. Now that is part of PMCD’s plan that the Minister of Public Administration spoke about, to phase out some of the contract positions and to bring them on the establishment of the JLSC jurisdiction.
11.15 a.m.

Dr. Rowley: Roughly what proportion of those would be lawyers as against non-lawyers?

Hon. Ramlogan SC: I gave you that; it would be about 50 per cent.

Dr. Rowley: Including the proposed expansion as well?

Hon. Ramlogan SC: Yes.

Dr. Rowley: Are you able to say what other skills might be required besides legal skills in the contract?

Hon. Ramlogan SC: You would require administrative support skills; you would require paralegals, legal secretaries and matters of the kind; legal research officers and the like.

Mr. Warner: What is the policy for selecting these contract officers?

Hon. Ramlogan SC: Contract officers, normally the positions would be advertised; there would be an interview process and they will be selected.

Mr. Warner: And this has been the policy throughout?

Hon. Ramlogan SC: It has not been the policy throughout, no. Prior to my assumption of office, there were no advertisements for several contract positions. People were simply arbitrarily and capriciously handpicked.

Mr. Warner: I am talking about your term.

Hon. Ramlogan SC: You need to be specific. In my term yes, we normally would advertise, and there are instances where you do not advertise depending on the requirements.

Mr. Warner: If I may go on, Mr. Chairman, to 23. How do you do it for short-term employment?

Hon. Ramlogan SC: Short-term employment likewise; it would depend on the nature of the job. In some cases you do not advertise because you are given a pool of persons to choose from. My Ministry is a little different. In other cases you would have a specific requirement that you cannot get, so that after you advertise and you get no response, you literally have to head-hunt persons and see if they would come on the establishment.
We do have a shortage of officers, for example, in legislative drafting, not just in Trinidad and Tobago but in the wider Commonwealth region, and we have been asking for assistance to try to fill some of the vacancies. At the highest level, there are several senior legal executive and advisor positions that remain open as I speak, because we have advertised them about three or four times and we cannot seem to attract people to apply for them, or the persons that have applied they were not shortlisted by the Human Resources Department.

The short-term allocation, when I say we are presented with a pool of persons, the Hugh Wooding Law School, for example, we are committed to take on graduates—not graduates from the period of year one to year two—then the six-month students who have completed. Then we have a World of Work Programme that I have initiated, where we take students on during the summer vacation from various schools, to give them their first taste of the world of work. We have had students from St. Francois Girls’, Bishops Anstey, Shiva Boys, Lakshmi Girls’, across the length and breadth of the country.

The Ministry of the Attorney General has taken a socio-economic perspective with its employment as well. So we assist the law school; we assist the Ministry of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development and we have our summer vacation programme, which is an extremely successful one.

Dr. Rowley: Is there a Cabinet-approved structure or plan for the staffing of the Office of the Attorney General?

Hon. Ramlogan SC: Yes. In fact, PMCD has only just given it the refurbished and revised, if I may use that term, organogram and organizational chart, which is the establishment for the Ministry of the Attorney General. Previously something existed, but the problem is what I met when I came into office was an organizational chart that was not structured in any way and badly in need of rationalization from a human resource perspective.

We have been working with the Ministry of Public Administration and the PMCD Department to bring about some rational plan for the Ministry that is in keeping with Government’s policy.

Dr. Rowley: Mr. Chairman, I would like to ask whether the Ministry could give us a listing, not now, as we have been going along, sometime hopefully in the not too distant future, of all the contract positions which are currently available and filled, under 16 and 22.

Hon. Ramlogan SC: Certainly.
Dr. Rowley: Indicating when the hiring took place and what their terms are. I will also like to ask: Who initiates the recruitment in that Ministry?

Hon. Ramlogan SC: It would be the human resources department in most cases. In other cases as I indicated, depending on the nature of the job or the function or the task that has to be done, it may very well be that I might select some of the persons. It may very well be they may come as recommendations from members of staff.

Dr. Rowley: Is it possible to identify the persons that you have selected as against who were the public servants selected?

Hon. Ramlogan SC: We can certainly go through the list; I have no difficulty in trying to do that.

Mr. Warner: Mr. Chairman, under 23, Fees, I see you have Forensic Investigation, $58 million; Retention for Local Attorneys, $27 million, and then you have Retainer for Foreign Attorneys, $22.8 million.

Hon. Ramlogan SC: Yes.

Mr. Warner: Can I get a breakdown of these attorneys and who received what?

Hon. Ramlogan SC: Certainly. Mr. Chairman, as you are aware—[Interruption]

Mr. Warner: How do you explain what is No. (viii) for Foreign Witnesses, $14 million?

Hon. Ramlogan SC: As Attorney General, I have answered every single question that has been put on the Order Paper with respect to legal fees, and the information the hon. Member seeks has already been answered in this Parliament. But to the extent he wishes to have it disclosed again, I have no difficulty in taking the Hansard and giving it to him. If he wishes, I can retype it and give it to him. But with respect to a listing of attorneys who have been paid by the Ministry of the Attorney General, I have no difficulty in providing that whatsoever.

Mr. Chairman: Any further question, hon. Member?

Mr. Warner: No, except that this is for fees—no, Mr. Chairman.

Dr. Rowley: Mr. Chairman, I observe this particular Item—if one is to appreciate the service of the department, this Item has grown exponentially since 2010, when the figure under this Head under 23 was in the order of $30 million thereabouts—[Interruption] it was $39 million, and that was in the context of a
significant payment—I think it was about $15 million or thereabouts—for the Uff Enquiry, which we understood to be a one-off thing.

So let us assume that the figure then was about $40 million, and then, of course, by 2013—in fact, I think 2012, if we take 2012 into account, while 2010 is not listed here in this document, it is in the previous document—we started out with about $100 million, it ended up $109 million. Then the budgeted and the actual out-turn is $103 million under Fees. Then we budgeted $113 million for 2014, and out of that the Revised Estimates are now indicating that the out-turn could be $111.6 million for Fees, and then we are budgeting $130 million for Fees in 2015.

So my question to the Attorney General is whether he would be disposed to providing to this House a breakdown for the payments of that $111 million of 2014, telling us exactly how that moneys was spent; which individuals or agencies were paid; what they were hired for and what they produced, to account for the total expenditure of $111 million, and on the same subject, as we look forward to 2015, whether he could give us a breakdown as to the anticipated expenditure profile of the $130 million going forward?

While he is on that, Mr. Chairman, I would like to ask the Attorney General whether—the Sub-Heads under (i) to (iv) are there, I would like a similar breakdown under (iii), (iv), (v), (vii), and (viii); exactly who we paid, what they were paid for, when they were paid and what services they provided for the payments. Under Explanation there are Roman subsets there, and I am just asking for a few of that, the details.

Mr. Chairman: But these are estimates for 2015.

Dr. Rowley: But if you go back to 2014, you would find that these same Sub-Heads have been funded, so it should be easy to give me that information in that form.

Mr. Chairman: Right, I hear you.

Dr. Rowley: While the Attorney General has the floor, I will like to ask him when he is providing this information—Let me put the question differently: whether any of the lawyers being funded under this Heading are acting for him in a personal capacity and, if so, identify those lawyers—the lawyers who are acting for him in his personal capacity, who have been paid under Sub-Head 16 on the State’s payroll, whether he is prepared to identify those lawyers, please.
Hon. Ramlogan SC: Sure. Mr. Chairman, if I may, let me deal with the last question first. The answer is obviously, yes. Lawyers who are working for the State are, in fact—it is a matter of public record—they act for me. That precedent was, in fact, set by the Member for Diego Martin West, so I am surprised by the question. The Member for Diego Martin West, when he sued the Integrity Commission was represented by lawyers who at the time were also receiving work from the State. That precedent having been set, I thought that the Member’s integrity, being impeccable as it is, would be a good precedent that I could safely follow, without having any problems or concerns expressed. [Desk thumping]

If the hon. Member wishes me to remind him of the names of those attorneys who, when the PNM was in power, received lucrative State briefs, who represented him whilst they were in power and continue to represent him whilst they are out of power, I shall be happy to name them and provide the amounts they received as well. But having set that precedent, I have no difficulty in disclosing, as I have disclosed before, those attorneys, and I will also include as an important footnote, the gentle but powerful reminder to your good self, as to the precedent you set.

Dr. Rowley: Mr. Chairman, just for the record of the Hansard and the Parliament, I have never hired a lawyer for the State of Trinidad and Tobago, and I am not here raising any issue about a lawyer acting for the State and acting for my good friend. I am simply asking him to identify the persons who are so described. I have raised no issue with the principle.

Hon. Ramlogan SC: I see; you do not have a problem with the principle?

Dr. Rowley: I am simply asking for the information. Again, let me repeat it, because I do not want anybody to go away with the impression—

Hon. Ramlogan SC: That you have a problem with the principle?

Mr. Chairman: Allow him to speak.

Dr. Rowley: I do not want anyone to go away with the impression, having heard what the Attorney General has said, that I have had anything to do with the hiring of State lawyers for the State, who may then come and work for me; never had that position. I am asking about lawyers who are hired by the Attorney General’s Office, being paid by the State to the tune of $111 million, and I simply asked if any of those lawyers are also hired by the Attorney General to prosecute his private lawsuits, please let us know who they are. That is all.

Hon. Ramlogan SC: And, Chairman, I have indicated that the answer to that is yes under the previous regime, yes under this regime and yes in 2015 when we
resume office. The point is this, that principle has always been there, and I want to correct the Member for Diego Martin West, for the record. It is incorrect for a former Minister and Member of Cabinet to say that they have never in their life hired an attorney for the State. Every single Minister in Cabinet comprises the State of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, and as Minister of Housing you would have hired, no doubt, attorneys through the Ministry, through HDC and other places. In fact, had proper legal advice been sought, competent legal advice been sought, we would not have the fiasco of Las Alturas and collapsing building today. So that sometimes competent, professional legal advice is necessary. So that every Minister with a Ministry would have hired lawyers, and that is incorrect.

Dr. Rowley: Mr. Chairman, are we having a debate or are we having a Finance Committee meeting? Because the Attorney General is here trying to generate a debate, and I will be willing to join him if he wishes.

Mr. Chairman: He has an entitlement to five minutes to speak. He can make a statement, he can ask questions. You are also entitled to five minutes. You can make a statement, you can ask questions. Each Member is entitled to his rights.

Mr. Warner: I have two questions. Based on what the AG has said, have previous Attorneys General retained lawyers to assist them from the State?

Hon. Ramlogan SC: Yes, they have; I am glad you have asked the question. In fact, former Senior Counsel, Mr. John Jeremie SC, when he was Attorney General, he did retain counsel to represent him in several libel matters. His firm of Alexander, Jeremie & Co also received several lucrative State briefs while he was serving in the office of Attorney General from the Airports Authority, the HDC and many other state enterprises. So in this case, I am the only Attorney General perhaps in the country’s history, not to have sent a single state brief to his former law firm; not one.

Mr. Warner: Okay, congratulations.

Hon. Ramlogan SC: Thank you very much.

11.30 a.m.

Mr. Warner: Second question.

Hon. Ramlogan SC: Thank you very much.

Mr. Warner: Forensic investigation, the amount we spent for that, mammoth amount, what successes have we had so far?

Mr. Chairman: The hon. Attorney General.
Hon. Ramlogan SC: Well, Mr. Chairman, we have before the courts right now claims that exceed $2 billion against Calder Hart, Mr. Malcom Jones for $1.2 billion for the failed gas to liquids project in Petrotrin which is now being sold as scrap iron after a loss of $2.4 billion to Petrotrin on its book. Thirty billion dollars against the former board of eTecK over the failed Bamboo investments deal. A further $12 million against the former board of the University of Trinidad and Tobago.

And of course, the successful resolution of the PHI pan matter against Professor Copeland and others who took state, public funds of over $35 million to finance research to develop the PHI pan in which the people of this country had no proprietary interest. That matter moved from a position where they claimed sole intellectual property rights after the matter was filed in court to a situation where the intellectual property rights now vest in the people of this country one-third, the University of the West Indies one-third, and Professor Copeland, one-third. So those are the successful outcomes. But, Mr. Chairman—

Mr. Chairman: Any further questions?

Mr. Warner: No.

Mr. Chairman: I think that that is adequate for the time being. Let us move on to Item 002 Law Commission; Item 003 Equal Opportunity Commission.

Hon. Ramlogan SC: Mr. Chairman, may I just crave your indulgence before you move on. There is a question—part of the question asked by the hon. Leader of the Opposition that I did not respond to that I just want to make sure that I put on the record. With respect to the query about the fees and—I just want to say this, Mr. Chairman. We must bear in mind that the Office of the DPP falls under the Ministry of the Attorney General. A large percentage of the fees would be also for the Office of the DPP.

The question asked by the Member for Chaguanas West just now about the large fees for auditing, for example, we have spent to date in the last financial year alone, on auditing, we have spent over $43 million on just auditing with respect to the Clico criminal investigation. So those fees are reflected in the fees that you are looking at. We have also spent for lawyers who were hired to prosecute matters by the office of the DPP, we have also spent significant sums in that regard; as we must. And it is perfectly legitimate and justifiable.

Furthermore, the Privy Council agents, the standing Privy Council agents for the State, Charles Russell and Co, what I have inherited is an accounting system
that was in such a mess that today I am paying Charles Russell and Co. for matters I did in the Privy Council when the PNM was in power and won for discrimination. And we have just only had to approve in Cabinet the sum of $5.74 million to pay a backlog and arrears for unpaid legal fees to Charles Russell and Co. dating back to 10 years to when I did cases like the Maha Sabha radio licence and others, Feroza Ramjohn and Ganga-Persad Kissoon and so on. So, we are cleaning up the mess that we inherited, whilst at the same time trying to instil some transparency and integrity in the process.

Mr. Chairman: May I suggest [Crosstalk] Attorney General, that you will provide the committee with a breakdown.

Hon. Ramlogan SC: I have it here, Mr. Chairman, and they will have it.

Mr. Chairman: One hundred and eleven million for 2014.

Hon. Ramlogan SC: Indeed.

Mr. Chairman: A breakdown.

Dr. Rowley: Mr. Chairman, just for clarity against the exuberance of the Attorney General. It is my expectation that the question that I had put is that the payment would be broken down into all these components indicating who was hired, what they were paid, when they were paid, and what was the matter being dealt with? So, I think that will clarify all who were owed from 10 years ago and 20 years ago, who were hired last week. So this will be very simple.

Hon. Ramlogan SC: And I have that information and I will make it readily available within the shortest possible time.

Mr. Chairman: We go to Item 002 Law Commission; Item 003 Equal Opportunity Commission; Sub-Head 03 Minor Equipment Purchases; Item 001 General Administration. [Crosstalk] I am under 03 now.

Dr. Rowley: Well there are a number of 03s. Which page are you on?

Dr. Moonilal: Which page are you looking at?


Dr. Rowley: I am sorry, Mr. Chairman. I was wondering too—I crave your indulgence to go back to 02/43.

Hon. Ramlogan SC: On what page?

Dr. Rowley: On page 136.
Hon. Ramlogan SC: 136, thanks.

Mr. Chairman: So you are still on Goods and Services. Okay.

Dr. Rowley: Security Services.

Hon. Ramlogan SC: Oh, yes. Yes.

Mr. Chairman: Security Services. Okay.

Dr. Rowley: What does that represent?

Hon. Ramlogan SC: That represents what it says, security services. I do not know what—it means the security services that are provided for the Ministry of the Attorney General.

Dr. Rowley: Is that contracted security? Is that an in-house security body?

Hon. Ramlogan SC: Both.

Dr. Rowley: Could you just cool it. Let me ask the question, and if you understand the question and you have an answer—

Hon. Ramlogan SC: I am very cool. You take your time. [Crosstalk]

Dr. Rowley: Mr. Chairman, please. Could you control the Attorney General?

Mr. Chairman: Yeah. Please. All right. Allow the hon. Member to raise his questions, and then pause and respond.

Dr. Rowley: Thanks.

Mr. Chairman: The floor is yours.

Dr. Rowley: What I am asking is, other than what it represents, is it the security staff at the Ministry or is it contracted security? In other words, who is this money paid to?

Mr. Chairman: The Attorney General.

Hon. Ramlogan SC: Yes. Well, I answered the first part already by saying, both, because I anticipated the question. We do have in-house security that we provide, and we do have external security, as with all Ministries. As to whom the money is paid, I will let you know now. The first would be, when I assumed office the contract for security for the Ministry was Innovative Security Technology Limited. That contract had expired, and it was on a month-to-month basis for, I think, approximately two years, after which I was advised that I should not have allowed that position to continue, which I inherited. So then we asked for
the assistance of the Central Tenders Board. The matter was publicly advertised, tenders came in, and I was informed by the Central Tenders Board that Executive Bodyguard Services Limited won the bid process and they were awarded a contract for two years.

**Dr. Rowley:** An external contract.

**Hon. Ramlogan SC:** Well I have answered that for the fourth time, internal and external. Cool it.

**Dr. Rowley:** With respect to the figure of $4.2 million anticipated for 2015, could you give us a breakout as to how much of that would be internal and the external?

**Hon. Ramlogan SC:** No. I believe that—well I can give you that in writing because I will have to check because the contract—

**Dr. Rowley:** That is all I am asking. I do not expect that you will have everything now.

**Hon. Ramlogan SC:** Okay.

**Dr. Rowley:** We have a system here, where if you do not have it now, you can give the undertaking to provide it later on.

**Mr. Chairman:** I recognize the Member for Oropouche East.

**Dr. Moonilal:** On a matter of clarity to ask the hon. Attorney General—because the matter comes up almost in every examination—since entering office did the Attorney General change, or cause, to be changed, the meaning of Security Services”? And any other heading, did we take to change the meaning of any other heading or sub-heading? I am getting the impression that these things may be new because my colleagues opposite are asking, what is this, what is that?—when many have been in Cabinet for over 10 years. I do not know if it was changed, the meaning.

**Hon. Ramlogan SC:** It has not been changed. It remains the same.

**Mr. Chairman:** Let us go. Let us go. Let us go to—

**Dr. Rowley:** I want to go to Sub-Head 60 on page—

**Hon. Ramlogan SC:** On page 136?

**Mr. Chairman:** On which page?

**Dr. Rowley:** On the same 01/02 on page 136 Travelling—Direct Charges.

**Hon. Ramlogan SC:** Sure.
Dr. Rowley: I observe that in 2014 we had appropriated $3.2 million under this Sub-Head, and the Revised Estimates indicate that we spent approximately $8 million. Could we have an explanation for that please?

Mr. Chairman: The hon. Attorney General.

Hon. Ramlogan SC: Yeah. Travelling—Direct Charges, this one here. Now, I did ask that question and I am advised that that relates to the travel allowances for the officers—the public and legal officers—and because of the SRC increases in the remuneration package, that is the explanation for the jump in the figure. It is to meet the recommendations of the SRC.

Dr. Rowley: But then, I presume, they still have the same staff going through in 2015—


Dr. Rowley:—that will beg a question as to why we are then budgeting $5.6 million for 2015—

Hon. Ramlogan SC: I think that there may have been some arrears. That is why.

Dr. Rowley: Okay.

Mr. Chairman: All right. We are going to—

Dr. Rowley: We move on.

Mr. Chairman:—to Sub-Head 03 Minor Equipment Purchases; Item 001 General Administration; Item 002 Law Commission; Item 003 Equal Opportunity Commission.

Dr. Rowley: Question.

Mr. Chairman: Yes, hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Dr. Rowley: Under Item 03/003/16 Contract Employment at the Equal Opportunity Commission, what does that represent in terms of staffing at the commission?

Hon. Ramlogan SC: Well I have the CEO of the Equal Opportunity Commission here with me, but I can—

Dr. Rowley: There is an establishment that he could—

Mr. Chairman: Sure. Sure.

Dr. Rowley: And what does this represent against that? Is it that the commission has temporary staff, contract staff or what positions are—
Hon. Ramlogan SC: These represent full contract staff, it is not temporary, and the percentages would be—and it is consistent with what has obtained before.

Dr. Rowley: What portion of the EOC’s staff is contract against non-contracted?

Hon. Ramlogan SC: Sixty per cent is contract, 40 per cent is permanent establishment.

Dr. Rowley: Okay.

Mr. Chairman: All right. We go to Sub-Head 04 Current Transfers and Subsidies; Item 007 Households; we go to the Development—

Dr. Rowley: Under Households, Mr. Chairman—

Hon. Ramlogan SC: What page?

Dr. Rowley: I am at 139—

Hon. Ramlogan SC: Oh 139, sorry.

Dr. Rowley: 04/003—

Hon. Ramlogan SC: I am with you.

Dr. Rowley:—contribution to the Secretariat of the Council of Legal Education. I notice that there was no provision recorded here for the prior years, but you are making a provision for $4.3 million for 2015.

Hon. Ramlogan SC: Yes.

Dr. Rowley: What is happening here?

Mr. Chairman: The hon. Attorney General.

Hon. Ramlogan SC: I think Cabinet has agreed to provide this annual contribution. Three million was provided in 2013, but was not requested. No allocation as you rightly point out has been made in 2014. Now, I believe that could be, but I want to double-check it. I believe that could be because we are in fact the only Caribbean country that is up to date with our payments for the Council of Legal Education, and we could very well be in credit. But I will have to check that, so I will want to provide that answer in writing. But rest assured, when the payment arises in the mid-year review, you can seek to ask for that funding. But we are the only Caribbean nation that is up to date, and I think in credit. At the last Council of Legal Education meeting, I know I attended, we were certainly in credit. So that could be the explanation for that, but I will check it.

Dr. Rowley: But I am a little confused because I am not looking beyond the payment of the Ministry, I am looking at the allocation of the Ministry of Finance
and the Economy. And you mentioned Cabinet approved the $3 million. In what year?


Dr. Rowley: And therefore, what I was asking is whether in fact any payment was made or allocation was made? Because according to these records, no allocation was there, and therefore, there ought to have been no payment. So, we need a clarification there. So according to these records, this payment would be the first payment in a three-year period.

Mr. Chairman: You will provide that in writing?

Hon. Ramlogan SC: I am advised that there was no need to utilize the funds in 2013. Yeah. Because we had already paid our dues.

Dr. Rowley: How would you have done that? Where would the money have come from to pay the dues?

Hon. Ramlogan SC: Because we were probably in credit as I indicated. We are the only Caribbean country that has been in credit, our account is in credit, when your account is in credit it means that “dem owing you, you not owing them”.

Mr. Chairman: Is it possible that we can provide that in writing?

Hon. Ramlogan SC: Yes. Yes. I want to check it and I will put it in writing—[Crosstalk]

Dr. Rowley: If the Attorney General tries to assist me, I would appreciate that because these are the records of appropriation of allocation, and if I am hearing that a payment has been made, what I am trying to get at is how it is going to be recorded in the allocation. And if it is not coming from these allocations, there might be a question as to where it came from. Because these are the records—

Hon. Ramlogan SC: Sure. [Crosstalk]

Mr. Chairman: Could you provide that in writing? [Crosstalk]

Hon. Ramlogan SC: Chairman, I will certainly provide that in writing. I have no difficulty.

Dr. Rowley:—being in credit or not being in credit at the university.

Mr. Chairman: He will provide it in writing.

Dr. Rowley: Sure.

Mr. Chairman: We go to Sub-Head 09 Development Programme; Item 004
Social Infrastructure; Item 005 Multi-Sectoral and Other Services; Infrastructure Development Fund.

Miss Mc Donald: Nah, nah, nah. No.

Mr. Chairman: Sorry. Hon. Member.

Miss Mc Donald: We now get to Development Fund. Mr. Chairman—

Mr. Chairman: Sorry. Sorry. Yes.

Dr. Rowley: Mr. Chairman—

Mr. Chairman: Yes?

Dr. Rowley:—I think if you could allow me—I would not ask any more questions, but at the end there are a couple of questions I may ask to wrap up because if we go line by line, it may take longer, and I know you have been working with time. So, I do not have any more questions, except a couple of general questions.

Hon. Ramlogan SC: This pertains to the IDF? Mr. Chairman, if I may, as a matter of procedural regularity, I do not wish to curtail the Leader of the Opposition, and I would prefer that he not have a catalogue of questions coming at the end. I think it is in the public interest that we do this in a transparent and effective manner. If you have questions, let us go through them under the relevant Heads so I could respond on the record to each question as it relates to a Head.

11.45 p.m.

Mr. Chairman: But the questions you are referring to, Leader of the Opposition, will all fall under the Development Programme?

Dr. Rowley: Mr. Chairman, you may proceed.

Mr. Chairman: All right. Let us go to Item 004: Social Infrastructure. I recognize the Member for Port of Spain South. [Interruption] All right, could we go on to Item 005: Multi-Sectoral and Other Services?

Miss Mc Donald: Under Public Buildings.

Mr. Chairman: Under Public Buildings?

Miss Mc Donald: Yes, Construction of a new south office.

Mr. Chairman: What page are you on, hon. Member?

Miss Mc Donald: I am on page 244, am I not?
Mr. Chairman: Okay, we are on the IDF. Hon. Attorney General, we are under IDF.

Hon. Ramlogan SC: Yes, certainly. What page?

Miss Mc Donald: Page 244.

Hon. Members: 244.

Miss Mc Donald: At 007.

Hon. Ramlogan SC: Right, I am with you.

Miss Mc Donald: Construction of a new south office of the Ministry of the Attorney General.

Hon. Ramlogan SC: Yes.

Miss Mc Donald: Through you, Mr. Chair, I note a figure for $3.6 million in 2013; $4 million in 2014; $2 million in 2015. What is happening there? Is it being constructed or just allocations being made and not being utilized? What is happening?

Hon. Ramlogan SC: Mr. Chairman, I had proposed to the Cabinet that the Ministry of the Attorney General have a south office because we already have certain offices under the Ministry, such as the DPP and so on in south, and it was felt that we should have a presence in south Trinidad because the other branch of the Supreme Court of Justice is in San Fernando. We had made provision for that but of course before you get to actual turning of sod, you have to do the design and soil testing or else you could have a building that could collapse because of negligence based on the wrong soil testing, the wrong kind of structural work that has to be done. So, before you cast that foundation you have to make sure.

So the moneys that were, in fact allocated were utilized, in part, to do the design and soil testing and that kind of work but we have not embarked on construction. That is, in fact, going to take place, under my tenure perhaps, to start in 2016.

Miss Mc Donald: Let us go to 008: Construction of Central Office Complex for Commissions and Tribunals. I note again this is a new project. What is this about and is $4 million allocated in 2015 really sufficient to do what you are saying?

Hon. Ramlogan SC: Yeah. Chair, I have been looking at the rental bill for the Ministry and I think, as a whole, the Government must monitor its rental bill.
There are several judicial and quasi-judicial bodies that fall under the purview of the Ministry of the Attorney General. They include the Industrial Court, the Tax Appeal Board, the Environmental Commission, the Equal Opportunity Commission and matters of the like. What I found is that each entity, once you put someone in charge and you have a separate entity, it sort of begins to flesh out and mushroom and everyone wants the same thing.

You would have seen the Chairman of the Tax Appeal Board recently, he wants a full law library and everyone wants that and my—as a matter policy was to say look, let us construct one judicial complex to house all these judicial bodies and quasi-judicial bodies that operate outside of the Hall of Justice structure and you can put them there. Each one can be allocated one or two floors, with courtrooms and all the frills but you can have one centralized library and other services that are all conducive and necessary to service a court or a judicatory-type body. That is the proposal.

The funds there are for, again, to avoid any structural defects, to avoid any kind of shifting soil that cannot withstand the weight of a building; to have that kind of basic elementary geotechnical and engineering work done before you dig a post hole, so that the building will actually stand up and not collapse and disintegrate. We have been spending money to do that kind of preparatory work. So that allocation is sufficient for that purpose and we have, in fact, located—

Miss Mc Donald: Could you tell us where the location is?

Hon. Ramlogan SC: It is in Couva, next to the hospital.

Miss Mc Donald: The new hospital that is being built?

Hon. Ramlogan SC: No, the existing hospital. The State has been the owner of that, a five-acre parcel there, for quite some time. So, my intention is for us to construct, commencing in 2016, a judicial complex to house several of the judicial bodies and quasi-judicial bodies so as to streamline and harmonize the resources that are spent; save the rent that we are paying now and have a more efficient run organization.

Mr. Chairman: The hon. Member for Chaguanas West.

Mr. Warner: When did you say, 2016?

Hon. Ramlogan SC: I intend to turn the sod in 2016, yes.

Mr. Warner: Good luck, good luck.
Question put and agreed to.

Head 23 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Mr. Chairman: We will like to thank you for being here with your staff, hon. Attorney General.

Hon. Ramlogan SC: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much. We now deal with Head 42: the Ministry of Local Government.

Head 42.

Hon. Members, we are now dealing with Head 42: Ministry of Local Government, $2,469,899,125. I now invite the hon. Minister of Local Government, if she is so desirous of making a brief opening statement giving this Committee an overview of your Ministry’s priority areas for fiscal 2014/2015. The hon. Minister of Local Government.

Hon. Coudray: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Good morning, I move the opportunity.

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

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, the sum that I have mentioned is comprised of moneys proposed for expenditure under the following Sub-Heads and Items to be found in the Draft Estimates of the Recurrent Expenditure and the Draft Estimates of the Development Programme. Sub-Head 01: Personnel Expenditure; Item 001: General Administration. I recognize the hon. Member for Laventille West.

Mr. Hypolite: Sub-Item 08: Vacant Posts – Salaries and COLA (without incumbents), I am seeing in 2014, $2 million was allocated. Under Revised Estimates, zero, but in 2015 we are looking at $1 million. Can the Minister indicate exactly what would have happened there?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister.

Mr. Hypolite: Also—

Mr. Chairman: Yes.

Mr. Hypolite: Under Sub-Item 14, can the Minister indicate the various committees that come under Cabinet-appointed committees?

Mr. Chairman: The hon. Minister of Local Government.
Hon. Coudray: Mr. Chairman, in terms of the difference of $1 million, in terms of Vacant Positions, there is no explanation for this reduction. I know positions were filled but not to the extent of $1 million, so I guess we were short-changed there.

Mr. Hypolite: Can you indicate therefore, or send for us, a list of those positions that were filled, a breakdown?

Hon. Coudray: Sure.

Mr. Chairman: And then your second question.

Hon. Coudray: Your second question was Sub-Item what?

Mr. Hypolite: Sub-Item 14, to identify the committees.

Hon. Coudray: Do you want to know what are the committees?

Mr. Hypolite: The Cabinet-appointed committees.

Hon. Coudray: Cabinet-appointed committees at the Ministry would have been—we had one committee for the implementation of the Dog Control Bill, 2014 and I think in terms of the modernization of local government, the reform they were asked to propose, there is one committee for the Planning and Facilitation of Development Bill, 2013 and we have anticipated—this is really an estimate of the committees we will require during the year so we do not have approval for all of them yet but just about three.

Mr. Hypolite: So you have approval for one thus far.

Hon. Coudray: Two, thus far.

Mr. Hypolite: And you are hoping to get approval for how many more?

Hon. Coudray: Maybe about three more based on the provisions we have.

Mr. Chairman: We go to Sub-Head 02: Goods and Services; Item 001: General Administration. I recognize the hon. Member for Port of Spain South.

Miss Mc Donald: To the hon. Minister, through you, Mr. Chair, 08: Rent/Lease – Office Accommodation and Storage.

Mr. Chairman: 08.

Miss Mc Donald: Yes. That figure there, you started in 2013 with $9.4 million but I note for 2015—you even had a revise of $9.4 million in 2014 and now you are down to $1 million. What would have caused that decrease by $8.4 million please?
Hon. Coudray: Chairman, the Ministry has given up One Alexandra so that we are no longer required to pay rent on those premises.

Mr. Chairman: Yes, I recognize the hon. Member for Laventille West.

Mr. Hypolite: Under the same Sub-Item 08, can the Minister indicate how many properties are leased or rented? You would have given up One Alexandra, can you identify how many properties are leased or rented? And has the Ministry sat down and determined whether or not it is feasible to purchase properties to accommodate services coming out of that particular Ministry?

Hon. Coudray: Chairman, there is one more property that has come to my attention that the Ministry is renting. There is a property next door to Kent House that was rented for the decentralization unit in terms of dealing with the modernization and transformation of local government. In terms of the feasibility for rental, vis à vis leasing, or purchasing, the Ministry owns Kent House; its headquarters are at Kent House and we have taken a decision to refurbish Kent House and stay there. Another form—

Mr. Hypolite: Sub-Item 16.

Mr. Chairman: Sub-Item 16.

Mr. Hypolite: Contract Employment. How many contract vacancies are expected to be filled within this year ahead seeing that we are looking at some $23 million? And if the Minister can provide us with a detailed breakdown of those positions. In addition, can the Minister indicate whether or not litter wardens are included in that figure?

Hon. Coudray: The contract positions, yes, they do include litter wardens.

Mr. Chairman: Can you provide the honourable Committee with—

Hon. Coudray: I shall provide that in—sorry. The amount?

Mr. Chairman: Yeah, we will like to have a breakdown.

Hon. Coudray: Okay, there are 147 litter wardens hired.

Mr. Hypolite: Are they spread among all the municipalities?

Hon. Coudray: All 14 corporations, yes.

Mr. Hypolite: Can I have a breakdown as to how much in each one?

Hon. Coudray: Yes, sure you can get—the assignment of the—yes, you can—
Mr. Chairman: I recognize the hon. Member for Arouca/Maloney.

Miss Hospedales: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Sub-Item 22, could the Minister indicate the number of staff they have on short-term employment and if you can indicate the direct positions that the staff members fill?

Hon. Coudray: Short-term, I can provide that information; I can tell you, Mr. Chairman, that there are 44 persons under short-term employment.

Mr. Chairman: Yes, I recognize the hon. Member for Laventille West.

Mr. Hypolite: Sub-Item 58: Medical Expenses. Can the Minister provide a list of persons who would have sought that medical assistance and possibly include if there would have been any international cost associated with any of the medical assistance provided? Also, Chair, under Sub-Item 62: Promotions, Publicity and Printing, can the Minister indicate what types of promotions and publicity are expected to be conducted over the year ahead and provide a breakdown of the sum to be spent on promotions, publicity and printing?

Hon. Coudray: The Medical Expenses—there was no expenditure during the course of the current fiscal in terms of Medical Expenses. There was no expenditure at the Ministry. In terms of Promotions, Publicity and Printing, you said you wanted a breakdown of—

Mr. Hypolite: How has that money been spent?

Hon. Coudray: That shall be provided. That will be provided, Mr.—

Mr. Chairman: All right, we go to Sub-Head 03: Minor Equipment Purchases; Item 001 General Administration. We go to Sub-Head 04: Current Transfers and Subsidies; Item 001: Regional Bodies; Item 002: Commonwealth Bodies; Item 007: Households; Item 009: Other Transfers; Item 011: Transfers to State Enterprises. I recognize the Members for Laventille West, Laventille East/Morvant and Point Fortin respectively. [Interruption?] The Member for Laventille West.

Mr. Hypolite: Sub-Item 04: National Commission for Self-Help Limited, can the Minister indicate exactly how many grants would have been distributed over the last year? We are looking at $76 million? And also whether or not an organizational structure can be provided with respect to—

Mr. Chairman: I am seeing $10 million. I am not seeing what you are seeing.

Mr. Hypolite: Sorry, $10 million—$10.5 million, that is correct, sorry.
Mr. Chairman: Yes, okay.

Mr. Hypolite:—an organizational structure of that agency?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister of Local Government, would you be in a position to provide that?

Hon. Coudray: Mr. Chairman, yes, the Ministry would provide that information in writing.

Mr. Chairman: I recognize the hon. Member for Arouca/Maloney.

Miss Hospedales: Thank you, Mr. Chair, on the same Sub-Item 04, I will like to find out from the Minister, in providing the allocation of $11 million, whether consideration was given to the staffing needs at the National Commission for Self-Help Limited because I know that there are severe shortages particularly with reference to the field workers, those who have to go out on the field and do assessments and make recommendations with respect to the granting of approval for the grants.

Mr. Chairman: The hon. Minister.

Hon. Coudray: Yes, Mr. Chairman, this would have been based on the current approved establishment, this allocation, and I recently took a note to Cabinet that was approved to increase the establishment based on the said reasons so that I suppose that during the midterm review, or some time later, funding will be provided to deal with the increase in the establishment.

Mr. Chairman: The hon. Member for Laventille East/Morvant. Are you on the same Item?

Miss Cox: No, I am on the next Item.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, well I am going to Diego Martin Central now.

Dr. Browne: Sub-Item 04: National Commission for Self-Help Limited, I would like the Committee to be provided with a breakdown of all grants provided by this Commission for 2014 and 2013 by quantum and constituency for each grant.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister?

Hon. Coudray: Sure, it is noted.

Mr. Chairman: I recognize the hon. Member for Port of Spain South and the Member for Laventille West.
Miss Mc Donald: Minister, the same point that my colleague from Diego Martin Central raised but just a step further. I am wondering whether that $500,000 increase to $11 million, is it sufficient to service the entire Trinidad and even perhaps Tobago inside of there? Just $11 million in grants, I do not know whether it is $10,000 or $15,000 because I know even in my constituency the need is great and there are lots of people outside there who would like to access this and many times you will hear “we do not have sufficient funds”. So, do you think, given a budget of some $64.6 billion and where the Government is virtually increasing lots—giving a lot of goodies out to citizens—I am wondering whether this grant should not be, you know, take a second look again at this particular grant.

Mr. Chairman: The hon. Minister of Local Government.

Hon. Coudray: Yes, Mr. Chairman, I believe that there is another provision under Development Programme that would address those issues. The IDF, it is under IDF.

Miss Mc Donald: Okay.

Mr. Chairman: The Member for Laventille West.

Hon. Coudray: And this is recurrent that deals mainly with the staffing and those issues.

Mr. Chairman: So when we come to Infrastructure, you can come back.

Miss Mc Donald: Yes, okay.

Mr. Chairman: I recognize the Member for Laventille West.

Mr. Hypolite: Sub-Item 05, I am seeing a loan repayment of $3 million for a loan comprising $115 million. Can the Minister give some more information, probably disclose exactly what that loan is about, please?

Mr. Chairman: The hon. Minister of Local Government.

Hon. Coudray: Mr. Chairman, this loan is to construct the Princes Town Regional Corporation’s administrative building and this is the interest that will accrue during fiscal 2015 that has to be provided.

Mr. Hypolite: This is just the interest alone.

Hon. Coudray: Just the interest, yes.

Mr. Chairman: The hon. Member for Diego Martin West.
Dr. Rowley: As you mentioned, Minister, the construction of the Princes Town Regional Corporation’s office, what is happening with the Diego Martin Corporation’s head office for which the sod had been turned, I think it was in 1999—oh no, 2000 and—anyway we had a sod turning on a site for the Diego Martin Regional Corporation and the drawings were finished, the artist’s rendition was available, there was a function; what is happening with that?

Mr. Chairman: The hon. Minister.

Hon. Coudray: Yes, Mr. Chairman, there were several of these administrative buildings that are in the works and Diego Martin is one, Arima, Penal/Debe and I shall provide the Parliament with a status report on those buildings.

Mr. Chairman: All right, so could we go on now to Sub-Head 06? I recognize the hon. Member for Laventille East/Morvant, Member for Chaguanas West, Member for Point Fortin, Member for Laventille West. Member for Laventille East/Morvant.

Miss Cox: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Through you, Mr. Chairman, I note that there is a big reduction in almost all of the allocations to corporations. For example, Port of Spain Corporation, a reduction of $27 million; San Juan/Laventille Regional Corporation, $23.8 million and Sangre Grande Regional Corporation, $55.9 million. I see here though that under 37, I see an increase of $91.4 million and it says Regional Corporation Services - General. I would like an explanation of what is Regional Corporation Services – General that caused this increase of $91.4 million. I would also like to know why we have these large decreases in allocation to the regional corporations because we are all aware that the corporations need money to effectively perform their functions. We have been having problems not having enough work done through the corporation. So, could you explain?

Mr. Chairman: The hon. Minister of Local Government.

Hon. Coudray: Chairman, the corporations, they are not decreases in effect. If you would look at the 2014 Estimates, the original provision was $221 million, for example under—let me look at the main Items—1,658,505 revised to 2,083,563 and this was to pay increased wages and salaries, the back pay. So now that the back pay was paid it would appear as a decrease in the columns. In terms
of the other part of the question, for Regional Corporation Services – General, these allocations are put under the Ministry of Local Government and then applied to corporations as required for services.

Miss Cox: Could I get a breakdown of that, how this money would be spent in the different corporations? Can I get a list?

Hon. Coudray: Well, I do not think we would have the list up front. It is according to need, on a needs basis.

Mr. Hypolite: When you speak about services, what type of services?

Hon. Coudray: Water-trucking, for instance, you have miscellaneous services that the corporations will need and they are assessed by the technical unit and recommendations made in terms of how these funds are to be allocated.

Miss Cox: I will like to see how this was used in the past, 2014—

Hon. Coudray: Sure.

Miss Cox:—2013 and could I get a listing with regard to the corporations? Thanks.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister? Hon. Minister, in response to the Member for Laventille East/Morvant, would this book help give our Members a detailed breakdown of each category or each corporation? Or would you want to provide—

Hon. Coudray: This book ought to help, Mr. Chairman. I was saying, if you look at the Decrease column, this is what each corporation got for the arrears of wages.

Miss Cox: I understand that.

Hon. Coudray: So this is all this money was spent on in 2014.

Miss Cox: Yes, I understand but this here under Sub-Item 37.

Hon. Coudray: Yes, sure, well that is a block provision.

Miss Cox: But you understand my question, eh? I need to get the list of where that money, how that money is spent per corporation.

Hon. Coudray: Okay, but for 2014, I am saying under the Decrease column you will find that for 2014.

Miss Cox: Yes, I know. Thanks.
Mr. Chairman: Member for Laventille East/Morvant, we need to be very clear as to what you want a breakdown on. Is it on 37: Regional—

Miss Cox: The Minister mentioned that this money is spent, 37—I understand. I have the information on the other one.

Mr. Chairman: I recognize the hon. Member for Chaguanas West.

Mr. Warner: Madam Minister, I see in 2013, Chaguanas Borough Corporation got $98.2 million. For 2014 you said the increase was $112 million but that was for back pay and so on but then in 2015 back to $98.6 million. I read somewhere that there is an aggressive move to make that into a city. If that is the case, would that money be adequate for Chaguanas Borough Corporation?

Mr. Chairman: The hon. Minister of Local Government.

Hon Coudray: Mr. Chairman, should Chaguanas be made a city, then different allocations would be made in keeping with city status and that would be addressed by the Cabinet and brought back to the Parliament.

Mr. Chairman: The hon. Member for Point Fortin.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: I just wanted to query the $13 million decrease for Point Fortin Borough Corporation but I think the explanation given has been reasonable.

Mr. Chairman: The hon. Member for Laventille West.

Mr. Hypolite: Mr. Chairman, the Minister would have answered my question.

Mr. Chairman: The Member for Arouca/Maloney.

Miss Hospedales: Mr. Chair, I would just like to make reference to Sub-Item 30 with reference to the Tunapuna/Piarco Regional Corporation and to ask, based on the fact that the Tunapuna/Piarco Regional Corporation is considered to be one of the biggest regional corporations in terms of geographic spread and population density, I want to know whether or not the $201 million allocated is sufficient for that particular regional corporation?

Mr. Chairman: The hon. Minister of Local Government.

12.15 p.m.

Hon. Coudray: Chairman, the allocations are based on the approved establishment of each Corporation and what you call the regular establishment, so these funds are provided for that. The Corporations are required to generate...
savings from within their operations if they need to employ more workers, and this is how they operate, generally.

**Mr. Chairman:** We are going to Sub-Head 09, Development Programme, Item 003, Economic Infrastructure; Item 005, Multi-Sectorial and Other Services. I recognize the hon. Member for Laventille West and the Member for Port of Spain South.

**Mr. Hypolite:** Mr. Chair, we are looking Item 053 and 055—

**Hon. Member:** What page?

**Mr. Chairman:** Page 127 of the Development Programme.

**Mr. Hypolite:** 055 and 053.

**Hon. Coudray:** Page?

**Mr. Hypolite:** 127.

**Hon. Coudray:** 055, yes—

**Mr. Hypolite:** 053. Chair, these two buildings would have been under some kind of upgrade/renovation and some works have been taking place on these two buildings for quite a while and it is also making the occupants, the tenants very uncomfortable. In fact, at the Eastside Plaza there is no proper ventilation, air condition inside there. Can the Minister indicate exactly when these two buildings would be completed, in terms of the renovation and upgrade, as well as give a status report as to how far and what else is needed?

**Hon. Coudray:** Yes, Chairman, these works are ongoing and this is to do—the allocation here is to do another phase. The information requested would be provided to the Parliament.

**Mr. Chairman:** The hon. Member for Port of Spain South.

**Miss Mc Donald:** Item 09, page 128, Item 038, Latrine Eradication Programme. This is under the Port of Spain Corporation. I recall the Minister of Planning and Sustainable Development had come to this Parliament and boasted about his projects via his Ministry, and that included the Eradication of Latrine Pits in East Port of Spain. But I am looking here and I am seeing nothing for 2013, nothing for 2014 and then $1 million suddenly appeared for 2015. So tell me what has happened over the last two years, whether it was not done under your Ministry, whether it was done under the Ministry of Planning and Sustainable Development and whether $1 million is sufficient. Have you done an evaluation
and assessment of how many latrine pits you need to eradicate in East Port of Spain, whether that $1 million is sufficient? Thank you.

Hon. Coudray: Yes, Chairman, the East Port of Spain Development Company is handling that area of Port of Spain about which you enquired, and the $1 million was requested by the Port of Spain Corporation to deal with similar facilities at St. James.

Miss Mc Donald: So there are latrine facilities in St. James. So this $1 million is to eradicate latrine pits in St. James.

Hon. Coudray: Yes.

Miss Mc Donald: All right, Minister, are you aware that in the 2015 accounts absolutely nothing, not one cent in allocation was made for the East Port of Spain Development Company because it is under the Ministry of Planning and Sustainable Development, not one cent in allocation.

Hon. Coudray: I am not aware, Ma’am.

Miss Mc Donald: But you are aware now.

Mr. Chairman: The hon. Member for Laventille West.

Mr. Hypolite: Chair, I am on page 131, San Juan/Laventille Regional Corporation. Mr. Chair, the San Juan/Laventille Regional Corporation is extended all the way up to Maracas—it is a very wide area, very, very wide. It takes up—

Hon. Coudray: What number are you?

Mr. Hypolite: We are looking at N on page 131. We are looking at constituencies such as Laventille East/Morvant and Laventille West; San Juan/Barataria; St. Ann's East, when you look at Item 184, Local Roads and Bridges and we all know, Mr. Chairman, that the regional corporations are responsible for local roads and drains and bridges. But here we have for 2015, just $6 million being allocated for the electoral district or the San Juan/Laventille Corporation, $6 million.

Mr. Chairman, in Laventille West alone we probably need to add on two more zeros on to that figure to fix some of the roads and drains and retaining walls. Can the Minister indicate whether or not she believes that this $6 million is adequate to take care of the entire San Juan/Laventille Regional Corporation?

Hon. Coudray: Mr. Chairman, my opinion, you know, if I as a sitting Minister I would say none of the allocations are sufficient, but we must understand the size of the pie and how it is allocated. But I want to add that, under
Appropriation Bill, 2014
Friday, September 26, 2014

[SEN. THE HON. M. Coudray]

the special purpose companies there are allocations to do roads, and some roads are done through the PURE and there are other arrangements to supplement these.

**Mr. Hypolite:** Mr. Chairman, am I hearing the Minister saying that PURE will also be responsible for doing local roads and drains and—

**Hon. Coudray:** Chairman, the Member is trying to put words in my mouth, but I am saying that there are other opportunities and avenues where funding is made available to assist with similar items and requests are made by the corporations from time to time through—[Interruption]

**Mr. Hypolite:** Then, can the Minister indicate those special purpose companies that we can turn to for that kind of help and assistance.

**Hon. Coudray:** Which is the company? [Minister confers with advisor] CISL, Community Improvement Service Limited. A list was submitted to that company, National Commission for Self Help.

**Mr. Hypolite:** What exactly was submitted to that company?

**Hon. Coudray:** The Corporation will have that list on their record, and perhaps all 14 CEOs are here and the CEO of each corporation is here and they can provide that information.

**Mr. Hypolite:** Yeah, but for my record—[Interruption]

**Hon. Coudray:** Yes, I can get that and submit to the Parliament so that you will have a list of what was submitted by that Corporation.

**Mr. Chairman:** I recognize the hon. Member for Diego Martin Central and then the Constituency for Chaguanas West.

**Dr. Browne:** Thank you, Chairman. Diego Martin has been very flood prone in the last three to four years. I observed $7 million—this is on page 130, Line Item 159, $7 million allocated for 2015 for a drainage and irrigation programme. Can I ask the Ministry to indicate, what quantum was requested by that Corporation for the drainage and irrigation programme?

Secondly, I am unable to find an item under this Corporation for the establishment of play grounds. I am seeing it under—so maybe you could just—[Interruption]

**Hon. Coudray:** Sorry, I am not hearing you.
Dr. Browne: I am unable to find any Sub-Item under this Corporation for the establishment of playgrounds. Such was not requested, maybe you can just explain that. And finally, with respect to the construction of, the implementation of retaining walls, which is always a very high demand in those hilly constituencies, again, can you indicate which Line Item under Development Programme a corporation would draw for such—

Hon. Coudray: For retaining walls?

Dr. Browne: Yes.

Hon. Coudray: Yes, Chairman, in terms of the—well I cannot explain the allocations provided by the Ministry of Finance and the Economy, and let me make that as a very broad statement, because I think Diego Martin requested $15.8 million under its development programme, and the sum allocated is $7 million. So that is—

Dr. Browne: Is that for drainage and irrigation you are referring to?

Hon. Coudray: Beg your pardon.

Dr. Browne: You are referring specifically to drainage—[Interruption]

Hon. Coudray: Yes, drainage and irrigation programme. That is the one you mentioned, yeah?

Dr. Browne: Yes, okay, the playgrounds.

Hon. Coudray: The playgrounds will be found under 160 Recreational Facilities. The play parks, playgrounds.

Dr. Browne: Well, I am seeing in some corporations Line Item, for example, let me take you, well I do not want to use Point Fortin, let me take you to Point Fortin, there is a line for Development of Recreational Facilities, 117 and there is a line for establishment of playgrounds, 125. So how it is rectified in that manner.

Hon. Coudray: One is establishment and one is development. So like, you have the fairly new Corporations at the time, they got an Item to develop new playgrounds as against establishing, to look for land to establish—that was a different Item, and it remained so I guess.

Dr. Browne: Interesting, and retaining walls?

Hon. Coudray: Retaining walls will be under Local Roads and Bridges Programme.

Mr. Chairman: The hon. Member for Chaguanas West.
Mr. Warner: Madam Minister, I will ask you two questions in one. Under L., 156/157, Chaguanas Borough Corporation—

Hon. Coudray: Yes.

Mr. Warner: As you are aware Chaguanas Borough Corporation is supposed to have a strength of 54 Municipal Police Officers. They presently have six and they have no uniforms. I see you have here $500,000 for the police uniforms and equipment. They have five motorcycles and only three people would ride it. How do you plan to correct that situation?

Hon. Coudray: Mr. Chairman, the issue of uniforms will come under the recurrent expenditure of the Chaguanas Borough Corporation. There is a difficulty on the whole in terms of the recruiting, attracting and retaining Municipal Police Officers.

Mr. Warner: Can I help you?

Hon. Coudray: Mr. Chairman, out of the 100 positions on the establishment there are 80 vacancies and this is being addressed right now at the Ministry of Local Government.

Mr. Chairman: I recognize the hon. Member for La Brea.

Mr. Jeffrey: Mr. Chairman, under the Siparia Regional Corporation 296 and 301, Drainage and Irrigation Programme, Local Roads and Bridges Programme. I cannot understand that under drainage and irrigation, in 2014 we had $10 million and in 2015 it has been reduced to $7 million. And likewise for Local Roads and Bridges Programme, $10 million in 2014, $8 million in 2015. When the conditions of our bridges, of our drains and our roads are at the lowest ebb at this point in time, I cannot understand why we have a reduced allocation at this point in time.

Hon. Coudray: Chairman, I am in similar position to that Member.

Mr. Jeffrey: Repeat that for me, please

Hon. Coudray: I am in a similar position as you are, Sir, so we are addressing these issues with the Ministry of Finance and the Economy.

Mr. Jeffrey: Thank you.

Mr. Chairman: The hon. Member for Point Fortin.
Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Thank you, Chair. In the Siparia Regional Corporation as well, I share the sentiments on that. The reduction, of course, highlights the fact that places like Cedros and Bonasse and Icacos and so on, will not be properly serviced at this time. But I really want to go to the Point Fortin Borough Corporation where there has been an overall increase, but however, under this disaster preparedness there is a small decrease. My concern is not about the quantum but the fact of readiness for disaster preparedness. As you would know this is an industrial town and with the expansion of the highway facility as well, there is expected to be further industry expansion and therefore, I do not think enough attention is being placed on the whole question of disaster preparedness in an energy and industrial town.

Hon. Coudray: Chairman, the issue of disaster preparedness a disaster manager coordinator was just appointed at the Ministry of Local Government and that office is responsible for the 14 corporations and these issues are being addressed in terms of—

Mr. Chairman: I recognize the hon. Member for Laventille West.

Mr. Hypolite: Chair, through you, what exactly is Local Government Tourism Programme?

Mr. Chairman: What Item, can you give us the Item?

Mr. Hypolite: On page 134, Item 332, as well as 408, because there are some corporations that carry this Item and then the others do not.

Hon. Coudray: Yes, Chairman, the 14 Corporations have been engaged in their municipal plans, and the development focus for each Corporation is different and certain corporations identified tourism development as part of their request to develop and this is why you will see differences in terms of some of the items.

12.30 p.m.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, I go to the Infrastructure Development Fund. I recognize the Members for Point Fortin and Port of Spain South.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Chair—and this is with regard to community development, I note some substantial increases. 001, Community Improvement Services, $30 million. 003, Development of Rural Communities—

Hon. Member: What page?

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: I am on page 268—$30 million. Upgrade of Community Infrastructure in South and Southeast Trinidad, $30 million. Then I also notice
some new line items for new projects, including: Construction of Pavilions, Activity Centres, Play Parks, et cetera; Installation of Exercise and Sporting Equipment. With regard to the first three, are there specific projects that are planned under these Heads? That is 001, 003 and 007. And if not specific projects, how does one access these? Is it through the local government, or can the offices of the Members of Parliament apply for these activity centres and play parks, pavilions and also access projects under the development of rural communities?

**Mr. Chairman:** The hon. Minister of Local Government.

**Hon. Coudray:** Chairman, in terms of 001, 003, 007, I alluded to that just now. These companies have been established to work with groups of corporations and the corporations make submissions to these entities. In terms of the 009 onwards, the Ministry of Local Government invited all Members of Parliament in Trinidad to send submissions with respect to construction of pavilions, activity centres, play parks. It is a new item and this is the funding requested to service those facilities.

**Mrs. Gopee-Scoon:** So you already have these planned projects based on requests made? Can we access that? If you have planned projects, can we have a list of those that have been approved?

**Hon. Coudray:** All MPs were written to, and submissions have been made, not from all of them, but the Ministry is working on a list of these items, based on submissions already made.

**Mrs. Gopee-Scoon:** And when it is approved, can we please have the list?

**Mr. Chairman:** Are you going to submit your list?

**Mrs. Gopee-Scoon:** No, what the Minister has said is that some lists have been submitted by MPs and the Ministry is working on approval of these, and I am asking, as soon as that comprehensive list has been prepared—an approved list—we would all like to have a list, and then, of course, we would want to continue to make submissions, as some of us would not remember whether or not these requests were, in fact, made.

**Mr. Chairman:** Okay. I recognize the hon. Member for Port of Spain South.

**Miss Mc Donald:** I am looking at 008 item, Implementation of Self-Help Programme, and I have noted $72 million being set aside, or allocated for 2015. Minister, I would like to get a—
Dr. Moonilal: No.

Miss McDonald: What is it?

Dr. Moonilal: 2015?

Hon. Coudray: 2015, $40 million.

Miss McDonald: Sorry, sorry, sorry, 2015, $40 million. I would like to get a list of all the projects which were completed for 2013 and 2014. I would like to get a listing because it is the first time I am seeing this, so I would like to know whether Port of Spain South is included and whether we are included in that $40 million allocation for 2015. But I would like to see what 2013 and 2014--I would like to see the list for those two periods, please.

Mr. Chairman: The hon. Minister of Local Government.

Hon. Coudray: Yes, Chairman, noted.

Mr. Chairman: I recognize the hon. Member for Arouca/Maloney, then the Member for Diego Martin North/East.

Miss Hospedales: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I am referring to Sub-Item 007. With reference to—

Mr. Chairman: And the Member for Chaguanas West is after.

Miss Hospedales: With reference to the upgrade of community infrastructure in south and south-east Trinidad, I would like to indicate, based on my observation, that $205 million-plus was allocated in 2013; $90 million in the Revised Estimate and this year, $30 million? Why specific focus on these areas when all areas in Trinidad need attention?

Mr. Chairman: The hon. Minister of Local Government?

Hon. Coudray: Chairman, the Member is looking at 007 and this particular company is assigned to do work in south and south-east Trinidad. You have CISL that is designated different areas, as well as the Rural Development Company, and this is one I mentioned earlier. These companies were set up to do work within the various communities.

Miss Hospedales: No, but is that accurate?—because I know CISL does work in all—even on the East-West corridor as well.

Hon. Coudray: Some of the areas may overlap, in terms of corporations.

Mr. Chairman: I recognize the hon. Member for Diego Martin North/East, then the Member for Chaguanas West; and the Member for La Brea is after.

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Chairman, I have looked through the Goods and Services allocation and then the Consolidated Fund Development Programme allocation,
and now the Infrastructure Development Fund allocation. I cannot see any allocation for the acquisition of aerial spraying equipment to deal with insect vector control in corporations, to deal with the Chikungunya virus and Dengue virus. Is it that the Local Government Ministry is no longer seeking or providing an allocation to corporations to buy aerial sprayers to deal with this mosquito infestation that pervades all of Trinidad?

Hon. Coudray: Aerials?

Mr. Imbert: Aerial spraying. In the past, corporations had aerial foggers that were mounted on trucks and they will go around communities and spray to deal with the Aedes Egypti mosquito. I have not seen this in a while and I was wondering whether the Ministry of Local Government---because looking through this whole Development Programme, I cannot see an allocation for the acquisition of aerial foggers and spraying equipment to deal with this mosquito infestation. As a Member of Parliament, Mr. Chairman, I get calls all the time, asking me to get in touch with various corporations to do spraying, because the population is of the view that this is a local government responsibility. So could the Minister indicate whether there is an allocation? And if not, why not?

Mr. Chairman: The hon. Minister.

Hon. Coudray: Chairman, the corporations make their requests for—it is not aerial. Aerial, to me, is the airplanes.

Mr. Imbert: No, no, it is the mounted—the truck-mounted aerial—

Hon. Coudray: The mounted is dyna-foggers that are being used and—

Mr. Imbert: It is in the air—

Hon. Coudray: It is from a vehicle, they mount equipment.

Mr. Imbert: It is mounted aerial spray.

Hon. Coudray: But these allocations are made under Minor Equipment Purchase, or under their public health vote.

Mr. Imbert: Have you allocated any funds to any of the corporations for the acquisition of fogging machines to deal with this mosquito infestation in Trinidad?

Hon. Coudray: Chairman, let me repeat myself. Individual corporations make their requests based on their needs, under Minor Equipment.

Mr. Imbert: So there are funds there for that?
Hon. Coudray: Had they so requested, the allocations would be made to some extent.

Mr. Imbert: All right. But you are not giving me a straight answer, Minister. You are saying, “Had they so requested”. Did anybody request and receive?

Hon. Coudray: The 14 CEOs are here.

Mr. Imbert: No, Mr. Chairman—

Mr. Chairman: Yes.

Mr. Imbert: This is a serious thing. “People getting bite from mosquito every day, yuh know.”

Mr. Chairman: Yes, I know. But the Minister has answered to the best of her ability.

Mr. Imbert: No. Did they request and did they receive?

Dr. Moonilal: In Minor Equipment vote they will ask.

Hon. Coudray: I will not have the detail of each.

Mr. Imbert: Could you research that?

Hon. Coudray: Yes, we can request—

Mr. Imbert: And let us know. Thank you very much.

Mr. Warner: Mr. Chairman, are we under 005?

Mr. Chairman: Yes. We are under Infrastructure Development Fund.

Mr. Warner: Yes, but page 269, 005.

Hon. Coudray: Where are we? I am lost.

Mr. Chairman: Yes, you can ask that.

Mr. Warner: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Under 005, Minister—

Hon. Coudray: Chairman, 00---

Mr. Chairman: 005 on page 269.

Mr. Warner: 056, Customizing and Outfitting of the New Administration Complex, Chaguanas Borough Corporation. You had $9 million you say you spent in 2014, nothing for 2015, so am I to assume that the building is fully functional and it is paid for?

Mr. Chairman: The hon. Minister.
Hon. Coudray: Yes. From the information, yes, it has been customized and outfitted from—

Mr. Warner: And fully functional.

Hon. Coudray: I am not in a position. We can find out whether it is fully functional, Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: All right, we recognize the hon. Member for La Brea.

Mr. Jeffrey: Mr. Chairman, 012, Upgrade of Community Sporting Infrastructure. Again, I had raised a question in the Parliament—Question for Oral Answers—and the Minister of Sport then had said that Lot 10 Village and Dalley Village, the communities were too small for them to develop the sporting facilities. I am very excited by this $9 million that is being allocated, and I am wondering if small communities like Lot 10 and Dalley Village will factor in, in that $9 million, in the first instance. And secondly, in Aripero, there is allocation for a recreation ground and what I have been told is that they are waiting for some letter from the regional corporation for the land to be transferred to the regional corporation. Again, I want to find out if in that $9 million, if it is factored inside there.

Mr. Chairman: The hon. Minister of Local Government.

Hon. Coudray: Mr. Chairman, if it is a ground to be developed, the $9 million will not take care—this is upgrade, so this will not be for establishing any new ground. The $9 million is to be spread among the 14 corporations, so the maths can be done in terms of what is available. And of course, the technical people do their evaluations, then a decision is made as to which grounds would be done.

Mr. Chairman: The hon. Member for Laventille West.

Mr. Hypolite: Mr. Chairman, on page 269, Item 052, Construction of Administrative Buildings for Regional Corporations? Chair, if I am correct, I heard the Minister indicate that there are three regional corporation administrative buildings that would be erected over—well, some kind of work will commence.

Hon. Coudray: That are proposed, yes.

Mr. Hypolite: All right. But I am not seeing any allocation for construction of administrative buildings. Can the Minister indicate exactly what is happening or where that money will be coming from?

Mr. Chairman: The hon. Minister.
Hon. Coudray: Chairman, the money will come from a bond issue, and you would notice that the $3.1 million referred to before, was for payment of the interest on the loan for the PTRC building.

Mr. Hypolite: That is Princes Town.

Hon. Coudray: Princes Town, yes.

Mr. Hypolite: But you also made mention of three other—specifically Arima.

Miss Coudray: Yes. Bond issues will fund them. They are not being funded through this medium.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 42 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Mr. Chairman: I wish to thank you, hon. Minister of Local Government and your team for being here with us.

Hon. Coudray: Yes, thank you, Chairman, and I want to take this opportunity to thank the PS, technical staff, CEOs and key staff of the 14 corporations who have been here since 8.30 this morning.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much. We now go to Head 71, Ministry of the Environment and Water Resources?

12.45 p.m.

Head 71.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, we are dealing with Head 71, Ministry of the Environment and Water Resources, $2,772,378,700. I will now invite the Minister of the Environment and Water Resources, if he so desires, to make a brief opening statement giving this Standing Finance Committee an overview of your priority areas for the period 2014/2015. I now invite the hon. Minister to do so.

Hon. Singh: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, Members of the Standing Finance Committee. There is no substance more critical to life than water. Water is not only a vital pre-requisite of all life, in fact, the ancient Chinese call it the blood of the earth. And whilst Government is a continuum, we must take note of the fact that we inherited a virtual water bankruptcy in 2010 precipitated by weather conditions but also by certain inaction on the part of the powers that be.

Today, Mr. Chairman, we are in a better place and we are well on our way to achieve the right to access water for all and therefore meeting our millennium
goal. From the right to water, we move now to the right to sanitation. So we have to establish the sustainability of our water supply to ensure the security of that water supply and we now move to the right to sanitation and you will see as we proceed, Mr. Chairman, that there is significant investment in that area.

Whilst we do so and we deal with that environmental nightmare that is in the waste water sector, we are paying attention to the environmental degradation that is taking place in this country and we are also dealing with the predatory culture in which we have to protect our flora and fauna our biodiversity in this country. So it is in that kind of context that I now engage the Standing Finance Committee.

Question proposed: That Head 71 stand part of the Schedule.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, that said sum 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. I go to Sub-head 01, Personal Expenditure; item 01 General Administration. I go to Item 02, Environmental Policy and Planning Division: Item 03, Green Fund Executing Unit; Item 04, Forestry 005.

Miss Hospedales: Chair, under item 401.

Mr. Chairman: I recognize the hon. Member for Arouca/Maloney.

Miss Hospedales: Could the Minister indicate the number of staff members on the establishment?

Mr. Chairman: Could you indicate what item you are on?

Miss Hospedales: 03, 001, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: The hon. Member is seeking to know what is the staff size of your establishment.

Hon. Singh: Under the General Administration, we have 597 positions. On the Forestry Division—no, we will provide you with that establishment.

Mr. Chairman: I recognize the Member for Diego Martin Central.

Dr. Browne: 05, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: We are now on to item 05 Drainage, I recognize the Member for Diego Martin Central.

Dr. Browne: Thank you, Chairman. This is a very important division to the people of Diego Martin. I am looking at a decrease in your wages and COLA bill
by a sum of $17 million for 2015 and that worries me. I would like an explanation. I have received reports that the Drainage Division is severely under-resourced and it is depleted of maintenance teams at this time. I would like you to verify if this is correct and contribute to the decreased wage bill and if so, what is being done about it in terms of those maintenance teams and bringing them up to strength. I would also request a complete breakdown of staffing in the Drainage Division inclusive of establishment and contract position.

**Hon. Singh:** Mr. Chairman, I share the point of view with the Member for Diego Martin Central that the $17 million was, in fact, it represents arrears of backpay paid to employees as a result of the collective agreement.

The second issue with respect to the depletion of staff, in the transition from the drainage department from the Ministry of Works, you had a situation where several of the employees remained within the Ministry of Works because the Ministry of Works was the Ministry at that time and you did not have that level of complement coming across to drainage.

In addition to that, under the loan—the flood alleviation loan for Port of Spain under the IDB, there is the institutional change that will take place where you move the drainage department from a department of Government into Water Management and Flood Alleviation Authority. And that also makes it unenviable for members of staff to move from the public service at this point in time so that we have a problem with respect to getting persons accredited to the drainage department.

With respect to the maintenance gangs, I can provide you with the information for that.

**Dr. Browne:** Chairman, just a clarification—thank the Minister for his information so far—I just want to be clear in terms of some of the drainage staff not moving over when the Division moved to your Ministry. How are they being paid because from what I am seeing here the allocation has moved? So how are they being retained in the Ministry? Can you give us some insight on that issue?

**Hon. Singh:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. There are, in fact, several persons who currently work in the drainage department. They are, in fact, under the establishment of the Ministry of Works. So that they are paid—those positions, I am advised, were not transferred, so they are paid in the current position they hold but they function in the drainage department.

**Dr. Browne:** Why were not those positions transferred, Minister?
Mr. Chairman: Why they were not transferred?

Dr. Browne: Yes.

Hon. Singh: I think that is a matter for the department of public administration.

Mr. Chairman: All right, let us deal with Item 006, Meteorological Services, I go to Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services; Item 001, General Administration. I recognize the Member for Arouca/Maloney.

Miss Hospedales: Sub-item 16, could the Minister—

Mr. Chairman: Sub-item 16, page 402, hon. Minister.

Miss Hospedales: There has been an observation of a gradual increase of the allocation for contract employment, could the Minister indicate the number of persons on contract and whether or not there are vacancies?

Hon. Singh: Okay, the number of contract positions in the—this is General Administration, right?

Miss Hospedales: Yes.

Hon. Singh: Yeah, Goods and Services, General Administration. We are on the same line. Right? There is a total of 218 contract positions in the Ministry of the Environment and Water Resources; 117 have been filled and there are vacancies for 101.

Mr. Chairman: Let us go on to Item 002, Environmental—I will come to you, Member for Diego Martin Central. I recognize the Member for Port of Spain South.

Miss McDonald: Minister, item 53, page 402.

Hon. Singh: Refunds to WASA. Yes, I know that the hon. Member will recall that under the water improvement—the designation of an area as a water improvement area under the Water Works and Conservation Act allows the Water and Sewerage Authority to increase rates in that particular area. So this water improvement rate is a water improvement rate increase confined to Point Lisas Industrial Estate as a result of the Water Works and Conservation Act.

What happens, when these moneys are paid, it is paid into the Consolidated Fund and then the Ministry of Finance and the Economy provides a kind of a pass through for the money back to the Water and Sewerage Authority?

Miss McDonald: So this is confined only to Point Lisas?
Hon. Singh: It is confined to Point Lisas which is currently designated as a water improvement area.

Mr. Chairman: I recognize the Member for Diego Martin West and then the Member for Diego Martin Central.

Dr. Rowley: With respect to this particular matter, I am drawing to the Minister’s attention that there is a very serious query with respect to Auditor General’s Report on this matter where three of those payments, WASA failed to provide supporting documentation. I am just drawing that to your attention and the figures involved were quite substantial and, in fact, this is a very breach of the requirements vis-à-vis the Auditor General's functioning and WASA.

Hon. Singh: I thank the Leader of the Opposition, the hon. Member for Diego Martin West for his concern. I am advised by my Permanent Secretary that this documentation was provided, in fact, albeit late.

Dr. Rowley: So it has been provided?

Hon. Singh: It has been provided.

Mr. Chairman: I recognize the hon. Member for Diego Martin Central.

Dr. Browne: That was my same concern. Thank you.

Mr. Chairman: Okay. Let us go on Item 002, Environmental Policy and Planning Division; Item 003, Green Fund Executing Unit—

Dr. Browne: Chairman, just under—sorry—Environmental Policy and Planning Division, line 66, Hosting of Conferences, Seminars and Other Functions, I just want to know, does this include stakeholder sessions with citizens in various districts? The reason I am asking that is because we continue getting feedback about the colour of water and the taste of water, especially the brown one—nothing is wrong with brown in and of itself, but brown water, people continue complaining about that. I am wondering if there is funding for stakeholder sessions with citizens to get that kind of feedback.

Hon. Singh: Yeah, well first, let me answer the question and indicate that, yes, it provides for that, but this is confined—this particular Head is confined to the Environmental Policy and Planning Division and that therefore, there are consultations with respect to policy formulation. Operative issues as to that will fall under the purview of either the IRC or the Water and Sewerage Authority.

But I am familiar also with those kinds of concerns and what we are doing in several instances, it is because of the flushing of the lines is required and therefore, we indicate to WASA that this is the complaint and they see about it.
But I want to indicate that we have a brand new laboratory at WASA so that therefore the issue is not only on quantity provided but also in quality.

**Mr. Chairman:** We deal with Item 004 Forestry, 005 Drainage. I recognize the hon. Member for Chaguanas West.

**Mr. Warner:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Under Rent/Lease Office Accommodation, 08, I am advised that the reforestation programme office was closed yesterday. Is that correct?

**Hon. Singh:** Well, just to answer this particular Head before I get to that point, this particular Head of 08 under Drainage—

**Mr. Warner:** Forestry.

1.00 p.m.

**Mr. Chairman:** We are dealing with page 404.

**Hon. Singh:** Okay, all right. I am ahead of myself.

**Mr. Chairman:** And we are dealing with Forestry, Item 004.

**Hon. Singh:** 004, okay and you are dealing with?

**Mr. Chairman:** Rent 08.

**Hon. Singh:** Okay, good, I got it. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. To the hon. Member for Chaguanas West, the National Reafforestation Programme was started by the previous administration. It had a 10-year cycle and that 10-year cycle comes to an end this month. However, it is the intention of this administration to continue that, but the 10-year cycle is coming to an end and, therefore, there will be renewal of that.

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

**Mr. Chairman:** Member for Arouca/Maloney.

**Miss Hospedales:** Mr. Chairman, I will pass for now.

**Mr. Chairman:** All right, so we go to Item 006: Meteorological Services.

**Dr. Browne:** Mr. Chairman, sorry, I did not realize you passed Drainage already.

**Mr. Chairman:** Yes, Item 005.

**Dr. Browne:** Line Item 28: Other Contracted Services, again, especially given the Minister’s earlier response to my question on the Drainage Division. I
am seeing a decrease of $69 million for 2015, with respect to Other Contracted Services and I am again very concerned, especially if their staff is somewhat depleted and the provision of service through these other contracted services appears to be going down. Can the Minister explain that? And I have a follow-up question.

Hon. Singh: Mr. Chairman, I am certain that the hon. Member for Diego Martin North/East would be very familiar with this Head 28, because this is where the various regions utilize the private sector and equipment from the private sector to clean, and so on. So that is what it is, Head 28 and Head 09, they normally utilize.

Dr. Browne: And why has it gone down by $69 million?

Mr. Imbert: Why the huge reduction?

Hon. Singh: The normal practice, I am told, is that in the midterm review they raise the amount when they have exhausted and which generally they do, that sum of money. The midterm review, as happened previously in the previous year. That is what transpired.

Dr. Browne: I hear you but if you look at the estimate for 2014, Minister, and you look at the estimate for 2015, it has actually gone down so I am not sure if your rationale, in terms of the midterm review, holds any water, so to speak.

Hon. Singh: Well that has been the practice.

Dr. Browne: What is provided for these important contracted services? But further—[Interruption]

Mr. Imbert: You are expecting to get more funding? Is that what you are saying?

Hon. Singh: What is that?

Mr. Imbert: You are expecting, during the fiscal year, to get additional funds in this Head?

Hon. Singh: Yes, that has been the practice and it transpired, certainly, last year.

Dr. Browne: All right. Minister, further to that issue, under “Other Contracted Services”, I am wondering what degree of monitoring of these services occurs from within the head office of the Ministry. I ask that because I have observed and reported a practice of slash and burn clearing of drainage
areas, where these contractors would actually light fires in the river or watercourse and which appears to make it easier for them to clean it. It does not happen in all cases but I have seen it myself. I see that as very dangerous to the environment. Has that been monitored and is the Ministry in a position to sanction or take action?

**Hon. Singh:** Mr. Chairman, there is a systemic problem and it goes beyond the existing staff, in terms of capacity and numbers. Within the drainage department there are monitoring mechanisms but systemically and institutionally it is hard to determine whether or not in fact the monitoring takes place, because unless you go on the ground, as you and I toured certain areas and we saw for ourselves that we were told that work was done, the work appeared on the books as being done but we saw for ourselves. So there are systemic issues and institutional issues associated with a government department and that is why we are very, very aggressive about bringing change in that area and institutional change required to exactly provide the value for money, provide a greater deal of monitoring and supervision and it is being driven by the IDB loan.

**Miss Hospedales:** Mr. Chair, I would like to go to Sub-Item 09: Rent/Lease - Vehicles and Equipment and I would like the Minister to indicate the number of vehicles that are leased or rented and the same for the equipment as well, the duration of time of the rental or lease of each, and if he can provide a breakdown of the cost of renting the vehicles and equipment.

**Hon. Singh:** The Rent/Lease - Vehicles and Equipment, that is under Meteorological Services?

**Mr. Chairman:** Yes.

**Miss Hospedales:** Drainage, 005

**Hon. Singh:** It does not have that.

**Mr. Chairman:** On page 405? Are you on page 405, hon. Member?

**Miss Hospedales:** Yes, Mr. Chair, 005: Sub-Item 09.

**Miss Ramdial:** Yes, we found it.

**Mr. Chairman:** Yeah, okay.

**Hon. Singh:** This significant sum is really the rental of heavy equipment: 09: Vehicles and Equipment is the rental of heavy equipment to do work as they proceed. The Rent/Lease - Office Accommodation and Storage, that is 08, we
have the lease/rental of a new building in El Socorro South for the headquarters of drainage. It has a capacity of 160 persons.

Mr. Hypolite: On that same Sub-Head, Mr. Chairman. To the Minister, would it not be more feasible to purchase those heavy equipment, seeing that the Ministry is a crucial Ministry that looks after desilting of drains and all those different things?

Hon. Singh: I think that there is need for a critical mass of equipment to mobilize and I think that they are in possession of about five or six backhoes, but the significant equipment is located with the Ministry of Works and Infrastructure and they are deployed accordingly. But we have a problem and I would share it with you. The problem is the maintenance of that equipment. You would find that in the public sector, maintenance is not something that you get easily done, because the moneys are allocated elsewhere and, therefore, you would have equipment breaking down for simple reasons. Therefore, what has happened over the years is that they have found it much more efficient to engage the private sector.

Mr. Hypolite: But is there not a mechanical division within, either the Ministry of Works and Infrastructure or the ministry of drainage that can fix those?

Hon. Singh: There is a mechanical division in the Ministry of Works and Infrastructure and they have certain equipment and it is shared with the drainage department as need be, it is not a great deal.

Mr. Chairman: All right, we go on to Item 006: Meteorological Services. We go to Sub-Head 03.

Mr. Warner: Thank you, Sir. Under 02: 17 Training, can you tell me how much money was spent to train WASA employees in equipment maintenance and how many new vehicles were bought by WASA?

Hon. Singh: Are we under Drainage?

Mr. Warner: Under 17: Goods and Services: Drainage.

Mr. Chairman: You are dealing with drainage right?

Mr. Warner: Yes.

Hon. Singh: Well, I am a bit lost, but the point is that this is training under the Head of Training. I can provide that information for you.
Mr. Warner: Good, that is what I want.

Hon. Singh: I can provide that information. But what I do know, the number of vehicles WASA has is minimal in relation to how much they rent, but we would provide the number of vehicles that are owned by WASA and purchased by WASA.

Mr. Chairman: We go to Sub-Head 03: Minor Equipment Purchases, Item 001: General Administration; Item 002: Environmental Policy and Planning; Item 003: Green Fund, Executing Unit; Item 004: Forestry; Item 005: Drainage; Item 006: Meteorological Services.

We go to Sub-Head 04: Current Transfers and Subsides, Item 001: Regional Bodies; Item 002: Commonwealth Bodies; Item 003: United Nations Organizations; Item 007: Households; Item 008: Subsidies; Item 009: Other Transfers. I recognize the hon. Member for Arouca/Maloney.

Miss Hospedales: Mr. Chairman, Sub-Item 06: Could the Minister indicate to us exactly what the Tourism Development Facilities are?

Mr. Chairman: Yes, I recognize you after and hon. Minister. [Crosstalk] No, I am seeing you through my eyes.

Hon. Singh: At what page, Mr. Chairman?

Mr. Chairman: We are on page 411, Sub-Item 06.

Hon. Singh: The Tourism Development Facilities, these are four historical sites maintained by the Forestry Department: Fort George, Lopinot, River Estate and Fort Picton.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, let us go to the hon. Member for Port of Spain South.

Miss Hospedales: Mr. Chair, I would just—[Interruption]

Mr. Chairman: You are still there, okay.

Miss Hospedales: Yes, Sir. I would like to find out why is the Ministry of the Environment and Water Resources maintaining these sites when there are other Ministries responsible for the development of tourism sites.

Hon. Singh: These sites fall within forested areas and they fall within the jurisdiction of the Forestry Department and, therefore, that is an inheritance and it does not preclude the Ministry of Tourism having access or having any kind of a tour guide system associated with these sites.
Miss Mc Donald: Let us go back up Minister under 008: Subsidies; 01: Forestry Incentive Programme. Is this figure there, that $500,000 estimate for 2015, linked to the reafforestation programme?

Hon. Singh: No. You would find that in both the reafforestation programme and the forestry department, they all plant seedlings. For example, cumulatively they planted since 2010, 1.6 million trees in Trinidad. So that this Forest Incentive Programme is for farmers who have cocoa and coffee estates and they plant forest cover to protect their crops.

Mr. Hypolite: Chair, I am hearing that the Ministry of the Environment and Water Resources maintains the Fort Picton site, can the Minister submit, you do not need to say it now, to me exactly what that team of persons does, when last they went up there, when they go up there exactly what they do, and for how long? Because as far as I am aware, I have never seen or heard of any.

Hon. Singh: Well I am happy the hon. Member asked that question because it really reflects a question I asked myself. There are four persons employed looking after that site and I can provide a report as to what they do. I am told that they clean up the site, they make sure grass does not grow and so on. But I am familiar with the Fort Picton site because that is where the WASA tanks are.

Mr. Hypolite: And we need them now because the cable cars are coming.

Hon. Singh: Let us not interfere with the water taxi.

Mr. Chairman: We go to Item 010: Other Transfers Abroad. We go to Sub-Head 06: Current Transfers to Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies; Item 004: Statutory Boards. I recognize the hon. Member for Diego Martin West.

Dr. Rowley: Mr. Chairman, this is quite a large transfer and ought to attract our attention, especially I am particularly pleased to be directing this question to my former parliamentary colleague who was a Minister, who I distinctly recall one particular year, I am not sure which year it was when he reported that WASA had turned a profit, albeit a small one. I am not sure if his memory would be jogged to that. But that being so, Mr. Chairman, only for historical perspective, what is the basis for this $2 billion transfer in 2013? Because in 2013, the records here show that WASA got basically a cheque, I presume, for $2.052 billion. In 2014, we appropriated $1.8 billion and the revised estimates show—I am under 06: 51.
1.15 p.m.

The revised estimates show that WASA will more than likely—the revised estimates are the same as the original estimates. So we are committed to spending $1.8 billion there, and we are appropriating another $1.7 billion for 2015. Could the Minister tell us two things, one, how does that money get transferred to WASA, and what is it used for?

Hon. Singh: Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I want to thank the Member for recalling that in 1999, there was a “kinda” neutral position that the revenue equalled the expenditure. There was a marginal increase in revenue, and we declared a profit as politicians will do in a situation like that, [Laughter] but there was a nominal increase at that time in 1999—[Interruption]

Dr. Rowley: Mr. Chairman, my colleague is still a man of great humour, right? [Laughter]

Hon. Singh:—because revenue was greater than expenditure. This allocation and this transfer is the normal transfer to the Water and Sewerage Authority within the last 10 years, and it deals with the subventions for recurrent expenditure. WASA does the application and the Ministry of Finance and the Economy provides it, provided that there is the appropriate justification, and the justification is done at the point of the planning of the budget, but it is done in various tranches throughout the year.

Dr. Rowley: Now, this supports—well, we are under recurrent, so maybe I should—I wonder if this is the correct time to ask this question because we are dealing with recurrent, and we will come to the development programme, but since this is a transfer, where WASA gets a cheque and then proceeds to spend that as it sees fit within the organization, I suspect that a substantial amount of this money is paid towards contracting, and that is why I would like to ask the Minister to provide us with a list of all the contracts that WASA has entertained, funded, got involved in, over a million dollars, with respect to this period of 2014, so we can have an idea as to how this money is—or the breakout of this money, because we do hear from time to time, and we know that there is a certain amount of laxity, and liberties taken with respect to the award of contracts, and we will like to have an—just have an overview as to how this money enters contracts. Because the Ministry of Finance and the Economy passes money on to WASA, and then the accounting officer in the Ministry of Finance and the Economy would lose sight of it, it becomes a WASA issue. We want also to ask for some sort of a summary and policy position, with respect to contracting of small, medium and
large contractors at WASA, so as to determine how this large transfer is exposed.

And while I am at it, Mr. Chairman, I also understand that WASA’s financial statements have not been submitted since 2009. So we are transferring these large sums of money from the Treasury to an agency, but the oversight and the reporting is lagging behind. I do not know whether they are at the Auditor General, whether it has been done, whether it has not been done, but with respect to complete compliance, my understanding is that the last time WASA submitted financial statements were for 2009. We need to get some position on that as to where the statements are in terms of preparation, location and how the agency intends to proceed, to make this unacceptable situation acceptable, because we do not want to find out in 10 years’ time that something has gone tremendously wrong while we are waiting for the statements. And maybe you might want to tell us, what is the difficulty that WASA is experiencing, why these financial statements are not where they are supposed to be at this time.

Hon. Singh: Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am advised by the acting CEO, WASA, Mr. York, that the 2010 audited financial statements are completed, and that the 2011, 2012 and 2013 financial statements, audited financial statements will be completed by February 2015. I will wait and get advice as to what kind of challenges they face in that area.

The list of all contracts over a million dollars. I will undertake to provide that. With respect to the policy, what I do know from my own experience is that, there is a process, the process you go before the—there is—you go, well, at the stage of the Tenders Committee and then you go before the board, and then decisions are taken. There are prequalifications, there is a whole prequalification process, but we will provide the policy together with the listing.

Dr. Rowley: Well, the list that I would like to ask, Mr. Chairman, the list should include: the contract name, date, contractor, sum and purpose.

Mr. Chairman: Yeah. I recognize the hon. Member for Diego Martin Central.

Dr. Browne: Chairman, WASA is getting $1.7 million for 2015 which is a decrease of $75 million. My constituents have asked me to raise the issue of road resurfacing being done by WASA. I am hoping that aspect of the Authority will not further deteriorate with this decrease in transfer. As you know, Minister, I am sure you get the complaints as well, that is one of the weakest areas, and people continue to complain, despite how much taxpayers dollars go into the Authority,
about delays and very poor quality of resurfacing after WASA digs up the roads. So I am just wondering what aspect of this transfer is focused on road resurfacing and what steps you might be taking in this area to improve this service. As I speak I am thinking about Jasper Avenue, which just a few days ago was very poorly patched and resurfaced.

Hon. Singh: Mr. Chairman, road restoration remains a challenge at the Water and Sewerage Authority, and notwithstanding significant investment in that area, it has to do with the practice in the initial laying of the pipelines. However, in some instances, there is temporary restoration because the lines have to be pressure checked in order for the permanent restoration to be done, and I know that the Director of Operations at WASA has indicated to the—and engaged in activity for training and otherwise, to deal with this whole issue of road restoration and appropriate road restoration, especially in the areas in which there is high traffic. Jasper Avenue, I am familiar with it. I was also sent a picture which I forwarded to the CEO of the Water and Sewerage Authority.

Mr. Chairman: I recognize the hon. Member for Arouca/Maloney and then the Member for Chaguanas West.

Miss Hospedales: Mr. Chair, under the same item, Sub-Item 51, I just want to ask the Minister whether there are any plans with reference to a greater level of collaboration between WASA and the Ministry of Works and Infrastructure. I am asking this particularly in the context that between 2012 to 2013 part of the Priority Bus Route in the east of Trinidad, a significant portion of it was paved, and immediately after it was paved, it was dug up for a pipeline laying programme. So you know, that is wastage really in terms of the resources.

Hon. Singh: There is a coordinating committee which includes the Director of Highways, and senior personnel at the Water and Sewerage Authority. However, it is ultimately easier to pave, than to engage in the execution of major pipeline replacement. And the Hollis pipeline which runs along the Priority Bus Route, well, which ran along the train line, and then the Priority Bus Route took over, that 80-year-old pipeline has been replaced, and you would see that the road restoration on the priority, is very good in relation to what transpired before.

Mr. Warner: Mr. Minister, on the very same point, I cannot—I mean, I used to be a Minister of Works and Infrastructure at one time, and there was collaboration. I cannot understand why it is Coosal will pave the Eastern Main Road last week Monday and WASA dig it up on Tuesday.
Hon. Singh: All right. Now, it is not a sinister or deliberate plot on the part of WASA to do so. What happens is when you put heavy equipment on the area, the infrastructure that is not new infrastructure, it creates the conditions for significant leakages to take place, and then in order to cure those leakages, the Water and Sewerage Authority has to go and dig up the road.

Now, it will be nice if we have a utility corridor but, unfortunately, as we see throughout the roads and the pipelines, especially over a period of time have to co-exist, and we have to find the formula. That is why there is collaboration, but until there is significant change out, as we have engaged in, the Hollis, the Navet, the Caroni Dualling pipeline, until that is done, you will have the heavy equipment further damaging the porous infrastructure.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, we go to Development Programme, Item 01, Pre-Investments; the hon. Member for Port of Spain South.

Miss Mc Donald: Yes, Sir. Development Programme. Oh, yes, Minister, under 17, Environmental Protection and Rehabilitation, that is at page 197.

Hon. Singh: Just give me chance to get my bearings. You are ahead of me, whilst I was dealing with that. Okay. I am here.

Miss Mc Donald: Yeah, 197, right under Head 17 there, 001, Development of a Carbon Dioxide Emission Strategy for Trinidad and Tobago, and I note in 2013 there was an actual figure of $2.5 million, but nothing for 2014 and then no allocation for 2015. Are you saying that you have, in fact, developed this strategy to eradicate carbon dioxide emissions? Why no allocation has been made for this item?

Hon. Singh: Okay. I think that, you know, I mean, that it would be inappropriate for me to say that we have, in fact, fashioned a strategy. However, this programme for the elaboration of a strategy for the reduction of carbon emissions in Trinidad and Tobago was a UNDP-funded project. The total funds for the project was US $579 million plus. It includes the Government of Trinidad and Tobago and—

Miss Mc Donald: $575 million?

Hon. Singh: Yeah, 579, no thousand, thousand, thousand dollars, US dollars. The UNDP contributed US $100,000, and the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, US $479,000. This project, the—and I will give you the elements of the project that the—there is a draft carbon emission reduction strategy report, detailing the strategic framework, sectoral diagnosis, objectives and strategy, evaluation,
monitoring and financing options. So there is a report which gives you basic options, and that is due next month, October 2014.

There is going to be subsequent to that, a stakeholder consultation to obtain feedback on the draft action plans and policy framework, and the final report, incorporating the results of the key findings to consolidate the recommendations, for the three sectors in December 2014, and the execution of seven capacity building/training sessions in 2014, the development of an implementation framework for carbon reduction emission strategy by sector. There are three sectors, they are: transportation, industry and power generation. So that the implementation framework will be in January 2015 to August 2015.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, we go to Item 003, Economic Infrastructure. I recognize the hon. Member for Diego Martin West, then the Member for Port of Spain South, then we go to the Member for Arouca/Maloney, the Member for Diego Martin Central and the Member for La Brea.

1.30 p.m.

Dr. Rowley: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman: 003, 037, National Forest Inventory. This is a very small allocation, but it is continuous. Where? Page 199, 037. What is the scope of this project and when is it due to come to an end? Are we expecting a report or is there an ongoing reporting arrangement? What is the story with this?

Hon. Singh: Mr. Chairman, I want to thank the hon. Member for Diego Martin West. The National Forest Inventory of Trinidad and Tobago is a field verification of new forest cover. There is a new forest cover map, the purpose of which provides for data entry and analysis and so on—the field data collection for verification of new forest cover map. This is what it entails, this National Forest Inventory of Trinidad and Tobago.

Dr. Rowley: What I am getting at: I am seeing that the sum is a small sum, but it is recurring every year. Is it that we are counting the trees on foot or are we using proper technology and looking down from an aircraft or something, which means that you can finish this kind of assignment in a year or in six months? Why is this ongoing with such small sums being allocated every year? How is it being done?

Hon. Singh: It is being done by, first, an aerial map and then there is the verification process of the species on the ground.

Dr. Rowley: So this is the verification of a larger project.
**Hon. Singh:** This is the verification of the species on the ground.

**Dr. Rowley:** But we would have done the aerial—

**Hon. Singh:** The aerial map, and we have an appreciation of the forest cover on an aerial map, but now we are doing species-by-species inventory analysis.

**Dr. Rowley:** 039, the Caroni Swamp Management Project. I presume this is the Thematic Centre in Caroni. Well, I was there about three weeks ago, and I am surprised to see here that we are claiming that we spent $1.2 million on the place. Because while it is very commendable, the museum, the structure and the surroundings left a lot to be desired. All of the piers were collapsed and appeared to be abandoned. The site seemed not to have proper maintenance and so on. So what did we spend this $1.2 million on? And I am now seeing a $500,000 allocation for 2015. Is there a work programme to restore that place to some level of activity?

**Mr. Chairman:** The hon. Minister.

**Hon. Singh:** Mr. Chairman, the Caroni Swamp Project—and, in fact, I am quite familiar with it because I have had several consultations on that location in dealing with the saw millers, the furniture manufacturers, the Hunters Association. The roof is leaking; there are significant infrastructure issues; so this money is to repair the roof and continue the construction of a boat house at the Caroni Swamp Centre. I can undertake to provide us with what moneys were spent in the last fiscal year and how it was spent.

**Dr. Rowley:** What this is telling me—we had a budget of $500,000 and we spent $1.2 million, so something ought to have been going on. We spent $1.2 million. Actually, we spent more than the budgeted amount. Is it that—

**Hon. Singh:** I know what you are trying to find out. Where was this money spent? Did we get value for money?

**Dr. Rowley:** I am asking: is there a project ongoing there because the money is flowing? The money has moved from $500,000 to $1.2 million.

**Hon. Singh:** There is an ongoing project to build a jetty for the boats.

**Dr. Rowley:** Well, that is not included in this money because nothing has gone on on the jetty and, therefore, I am saying—because I am seeing the movement of the allocation from $500,000 to $1.2 million—I am holding the point that it tells me that there ought to be a project under way.

**Hon. Singh:** There is work taking place with respect to repairing and construction of a new jetty. There is ongoing work.
Dr. Rowley: All I will say to you, Mr. Minister: look into it.

Mr. Chairman: I recognize the hon. Member for Port of Spain South.

Miss Mc Donald: 019, Minister, Community-based Forestry and Agro-Forestry. I know that you are allocating $200,000 for 2015, but you had spent similar amounts in both 2013 and 2014. Now this is community based. Could you tell me what allocation would be made for Port of Spain South and, whilst you are at it, I want to see a list of where these projects have been allotted, for both 2013 and 2014.

Hon. Singh: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Perhaps I may guide you by indicating first, that the community-based forestry and agro-forestry project is for seedling production and to conduct training and workshop seminars for community groups and private landowners. It is also for the publishing of forestry bulletins and the provision of support services. I am certain that if you make a request that the Forestry Department will engage the constituents of Port of Spain South.

Miss Mc Donald: You might be surprised that we have spaces—when you say Port of Spain, it is not talking about just East Port of Spain, you know. I also have west—Woodbrook, St. James. Do not worry, you have open spaces there too, green spaces.

Hon. Singh: You will be facilitated.

Mr. Chairman: We are going to the Member for Diego Martin Central, then the Member for Arouca/Maloney, then the Member for La Brea and then the Member for Chaguanaas West.

Dr. Browne: Sub-Item 013, Re-afforestation of Denuded Northern Range Hillside. I guess that is “hillsides”. I am only seeing $750,000, which is a nominal increase from last “year’s provision,” and I am a little bit concerned.

Mr. Chairman: What item are you on, Sir?

Dr. Browne: 013, Re-afforestation of Denuded Northern Range Hillsides. So I am expressing concern about the quantum of the allocation, but further to that, Minister, I am interested in hearing from you on the philosophy of this reafforestation. I do not want to get nostalgic but, in growing up, I remember the Northern Range. We used to be able to go in there as children and find get mamee sipote, tonka bean, balata and so on.
To what extent does your reforestation programme integrate strategic fruit-bearing trees that might have a soil retention potential at their roots. I am interested in hearing from you. I am not saying to become a ministry of production but, at the same time, there could be ways—[Interruption] yes, exactly, to cover certain basics.

Mr. Chairman: The hon. Minister.

Hon. Singh: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I think the hon. Member for Diego Martin Central is pushing an open door. The practice has been over the last two decades to deal with hard trees, the timber species, rather than fruit that can feed the wildlife. I share your point of view in that area and there will be a change in the approach especially by the reforestation programme. They are much more flexible and very, very proactive. Therefore, you will be able to access the laylay, the mamee sipote, the pommerac, the jamoon, the tonka bean and so on.

Mr. Chairman: I recognize the Member for Arouca/Maloney.

Miss Hospedales: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I just want to refer to Sub-Item 015, Improvement of Forest Fire Protection Capability and I am asking the Minister whether or not the $1 million that is allocated here is to support the Forestry Division in their fire prevention programme and if he can indicate to us the number of forest fires that were recorded for the period 2013, and also indicate whether or not additional staff have been hired at the Forestry Division to support the Fire Prevention Programme? If yes, indicate the number of persons that have been employed—additional staff that is—and to also indicate whether there is a comprehensive communication strategy, particularly during the dry season to reduce the number of forest fires that occur.

Mr. Chairman: The hon. Minister

Hon. Singh: First, I will deal with the last question. Thank you, hon. Member, for the interest in this area. The forest fires that take place on an annual basis during the dry season: in March of every calendar year, the Forestry Department launches a fire prevention programme and the normal routine is for the Chief Fire Officer to participate in that process. Therefore, there exists a communication component associated with that.

What we instituted was a hotline for fires linked to the National Operations Centre this year, with a view to the utilization of the helicopters and the bambi buckets of the National Operations Centre under the Air Guard and
under the protective services to support the gangs that deal with fire tracing and fighting the fires. So that there is that communication component. Much more is required to be done. In our discussions with the fire service, the fire service only go and extinguish fires where they have access with their vehicular equipment and, therefore, forest fires do not fall really within their purview.

We have had discussions with them. because we were making significant investments in the forest-significant investments in the protection of the watersheds, which generate and filter our water supply. Therefore, we have to view forest fires as an act of treason in a sense because it impacts negatively on the environment or water supply. So there will be further investment through the Fire Service Department in getting appropriate equipment. They may have to, whether it is aircraft or helicopter, but certainly we cannot continue the same old way of doing things and expecting.

I will give you an appreciation of the number of fires we have had since 2008. In 2008, 226 fires, hectares burnt 1,534; 2009, 133 fires, 544 hectares burnt; 2010, 754 fires, 12,477 hectares burnt. So you can recall, in 2010, we had a very harsh dry season, so you see the correlation.

In 2011, 42 fires, 101 hectares burnt; 2012, 58 fires, 205 hectares burnt; 2013, 533 fires, 2,786 hectares burnt; 2014, 313 fires, 2,374 hectares burnt. So over the period 2008—2014, over 20,000 hectares burnt as a result of fires.

The fires at Fondes Amandes in this dry season were set by somebody gathering leaves and trying to burn them. So significant education is really required to build awareness and there has to be the other part of enforcement. As you educate, you have to enforce. People have to feel the brunt also. We have to increase the fines.

**Mr. Chairman:** The hon. Member for La Brea and the Member for Chaguanaus West.

**Mr. Jeffrey:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. 009, Forestry Regeneration, South West Conservancy. In 2014, $300,000 was spent. Question: how many persons were employed in that regeneration in the south-west in 2014 and what was the recruiting process?

**Mr. Chairman:** The hon. Minister.

**Hon. Singh:** I just want to indicate that the forestry regeneration in the south-west conservancy, there was the tending and supplying of 40 hectares for the 2014 coops. The site preparation for 40 hectares for the 2015 coops and it entails
planting seedlings for the 40 hectares of 2015 coops and for the purchasing of chemicals, tools and fuel. I do not know the mix for the employment in short term for this, but I can provide that.

Mr. Jeffrey: The second question, Mr. Chairman, 021, Wetlands Management Project: Our mangrove swamps are under threat. We lost the mangrove swamp next to the stadium to MovieTowne and PriceSmart and right now in La Brea, the Rousillac Swamp is under threat with some proposed industrial development. I would like to know what role this Wetlands Management Project has in this scheme of things as far as protecting our wetlands.

1:45 p.m.

Hon. Singh: The articulated policy position with respect to mangroves is no net loss, so that therefore if there is any development that impacts upon the mangroves, then you have to have rehabilitation if necessary and replanting. So no net loss is the articulated policy position and implementation.

Mr. Jeffrey: In the case of the area outside the stadium there, when last did regeneration take place?

Hon. Singh: The Jean Pierre Stadium?

Mr. Jeffrey: Outside there, yeah. Price Smart and MovieTowne area there.

Hon. Singh: I do not have the information but I can access that information and be guided appropriately. I am not familiar with it.

Mr. Chairman: The hon. Member for Chaguanas West.

Mr. Warner: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, my question was answered, number 015.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, so we go to Item 04, Social Infrastructure; Item 05 Multi-sectoral—

Miss Mc Donald: I just want to go back on the same page. I am at page 200 under Drainage and Irrigation, 011.

Mr. Chairman: Yes, you can proceed.

Miss Mc Donald: Okay, I will give way to the—

Mr. Chairman: Yes, the hon. Member.

Dr. Rowley: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, I just have a little concern here because I, under 001, Drainage and Irrigation Major River Clearing Programme/Flood Mitigation Programme, Flood Alleviation and Drainage Programme, I see where in 2014 which is the financial year that is ending now in a couple of weeks or in a week or two, we had allocated $45 million for an area of
Public expenditure which seems to have an insatiable appetite. I was not aware that we had so effectually dealt with this flood mitigation and drainage clearing that we only spent approximately 50 per cent of what was allocated, because we had an approval for $45 million and the revised estimate is now saying that we only spent $20 million. How could this be? Because this is one area—in my own constituency, I have constituents who are dreading the clouds getting dark because the watercourses around them on the hillside are such that they have been experiencing floods for the last five years, virtually on an annual basis.

And the whole of Diego Martin—east, central, west—and elsewhere in the country, I thought we would have very quickly used up whatever money was allocated and that we always would have the need for more. How could we not have spent the full allocation of the small amount of $45 million for this specific Heading, and then we are now appropriating $58 million for 2015? What assurances do we have that the same thing would not happen again?

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Minister, are you with us?

**Hon. Singh:** Yeah. I am with you. Mr. Chairman, I am not up to date as to why the moneys were not spent, and I certainly will be able to provide that for the—

**Dr. Rowley:** But would you agree that this is a serious shortcoming?

**Hon. Singh:** I am seeing the figure, yeah, it slipped me to ask the Director of Drainage as to why, but, certainly, I know that significant work was done on the Diego Martin River. I know that work was done on the Maraval River, but I cannot fathom as to why the allocation has not been spent.

**Dr. Rowley:** Well the fact that they are determining that the revised estimates are going to fall so way below the allocation tells me or allows me to draw the conclusion that the work had not been completed to the full extent of the allocation. To me that is a very serious shortcoming because I have, on many occasions, sought from the various agencies, assistance with respect to drainage problems and the answer is always, “We do not have the money. We would love to do it. We know it. We have been there. We have seen it. We do not have the money.” And now I am seeing here $25 million that somebody did not spend.

**Hon. Singh:** Yeah. I think, that I like you, have sometimes met with that same answer, but I am advised that this is not the recurrent, it is the recurrent that they utilize to do the work that we request. This is the Development Programme.

**Dr. Rowley:** Well, this is even easier to spend. This is project oriented. That brings me to the point: I would like, Minister, since we are now talking about
appropriating $58 million for 2015, could the Ministry give us a work programme for this $58, identifying the projects to be undertaken? And while you are doing that, remember Diego Martin West has first call. We were last in the queue and so, therefore, in 2015 we should be first.

**Hon. Singh:** But you know, Mr. Chairman, I paid particular attention to Diego Martin West. That is why he has a measure of comfort in the potable water sector. [*Laughter*]

**Dr. Rowley:** So we want to work on all problems at once; it is not either/or, it is not water or drainage.

**Hon. Singh:** I take your point and we will provide that work—

**Mr. Chairman:** I recognize the hon. Member for Port of Spain South.

**Miss Mc Donald:** Minister, like Diego Martin West, I would like to find out in that major river clearing programme, I do not know if you have the answer there, but whether the East Dry River is included in the list, please. If not, why not?

**Hon. Singh:** Okay. Well, I am not in a position to indicate that but, certainly, we have a programme for the St. Ann’s catchment and, certainly, when we provide the work programme we would incorporate. Look what the sentiments—I have been working closely with the Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann’s West and we work closely in that area. The Member for Diego Martin North/East and the Member for Diego Martin Central will tell you that once matters are brought to our attention we deal with it in a manner which is appropriate for the Member of Parliament. So you fall in that category, together with the Member for Diego Martin West.

**Mr. Chairman:** The hon. Member for St. Joseph, then La Brea.

**Mr. Deyalsingh:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, on the same line Item on Major River Clearing, I recently did a tour of the constituency of St. Joseph with the Minister of State, Member of Parliament for Couva North to address flooding issues throughout the constituency, from St. Joseph proper, down to Farm Road, down to Mount Lambert, and down to Aranguez. The Minister herself was shocked to see trees, mature trees growing in the San Juan River, which has not been cleared for about three or four years now. We are talking about full-blown blooming trees with branches, the only thing missing is wide life, and she was shocked to see it.
But my other question is, hon. Minister, you would remember when I was first elected Member of Parliament for St. Joseph, I came to you on this same flooding issue and asking for relief by the use of WASA’s equipment—let us say your big vacuum cleaner, for want of a better term, and I was told I had to pay for it, either out of my own pocket or get the San Juan/Laventille Regional Corporation or the Tunapuna/Piarco Regional Corporation to pay for it. Can you guide me as to what is the protocol for using a piece of equipment, bought and paid for by the taxpayers to be used to bring flood relief from St. Joseph, Abercrombie Street, Farm Road, Mount Lambert, some parts of Champ Fleur and major parts of Aranguez, because since we have had that tour I do not think anything has been done, so I look forward to some—

**Hon. Singh:** My colleague, the Minister of State in the Ministry of the Environment and Water Resources, since she undertook the tour with the hon. Member for St. Joseph, she will respond.

**Miss Ramdial:** Thank you, Chair. To the Member for St. Joseph, first of all, let me say it was a very good tour and I only toured because that seat is coming back to us next year. In addition to that, however—

**Mr. Deyalsingh:** That is the only reason—

**Miss Ramdial:** Give me a chance to answer. Give me a chance to answer. Give me a chance to answer, please. [Crosstalk] Chair, I need a chance to answer. It is a little bit of humour, come on.

**Mr. Chairman:** “Listen, that is picong, you have to be thick skin, doh worry with that.” Continue. Continue. “That is picong, doh worry with that.”

**Miss Ramdial:** Mr. Chair, with respect to the question asked by the Member for St. Joseph, we did tour, we looked at all of the problems, especially the San Juan River. We toured with drainage officials and we have agreed for this new fiscal year to allocate funding to clear the river, and it will be cleared, I want to assure you that.

**Mr. Deyalsingh:** What about the policy for the use of equipment which I was told I would have to pay for or the corporations would have to pay for?

**Hon. Singh:** I want to indicate to the hon. Member for St. Joseph, that there is a cost associated with utilization of any machinery. The Ministry of the Environment and Water Resources does not have machinery like vacuum masters that they can deploy without a cost being incurred and that, therefore, whenever
the vacuum masters are utilized by the drainage department WASA bills the drainage department. So somebody has to pay for the work being done. The local area drainage falls within the ambit of the regional corporation with responsibility for that particular region. Therefore, any attempt to engage in that requires the approval of the local area authority, which is the regional corporation.

So, in the first instance, your proper protocol, which I advised you to adopt, is to go to the regional corporation, indicate that this is what you want done, and for the local area drainage—For the rivers, for the large watercourses, that is what the Drainage Department in the Ministry of Works and Infrastructure will take care of. You will notice that we have a very collaborative approach. We are working with the Port of Spain City Corporation in clearing the underground drains throughout South Quay into the Cove area, and we have engaged, and, together with the Mayor, who is working very collaboratively with us, we are dealing with the flooding in South Quay from that end, in addition to the larger issue under the IDB loan, major infrastructure—

Mr. Deyalsingh: Minister, I conducted a tour already with members of the corporation, members of drainage, members of highways on those same issues. We had a coordinated approach to it, but to date, because of inter-agency communications and processes we have not been able to get the kind of relief. Now, the fact of paying for the use of equipment, prevention is better than cure. We are going to quibble over who should pay for a piece of equipment, but then when the floods come we are all prepared to go into total emergency mode to undo millions of dollars of damage, and then use more equipment on an emergency basis which could have been prevented by some simple preventative measures.

Mr. Chairman: Well, I think I understand that matter. You all have cleared that up, as far as I am concerned. Listen, we have five final contributors before I put this question to the House. The Members for La Brea, Arouca/Maloney, Fyzabad, Diego Martin Central, Laventille West, in that order—and the Members for Point Fortin and Port of Spain South, in that order. So, I recognize La Brea now.

Mr. Jeffrey: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. When we are talking about poor drainage and serious flooding, La Brea constituency is the whipping child. The Santa Flora/Erin River, the Brea River, Vance River, the Salazar Trace River, the Paria River in Aripero and the Coffee Canal in La Brea: can you tell us, Mr. Minister, whatever in that $30 million that is budgeted for 2015, whether due attention will be given to those rivers I indicated to you.
2.00 p.m.

Hon. Singh: Mr. Chairman, I have listened to the hon. Member for La Brea and he too will know that we take a very collaborative approach to getting things done, in particular, for elected Members of Parliament and that, therefore, given the funding we have, anticipating further funding in the midterm review we will prioritize and certainly he would receive an equitable share of the drainage pie.

Miss Hospedales: Mr. Chairman, under the same Sub-Item, I can say that since 2010 I have appealed to every Minister of the Government with responsibility for clearing of rivers, and last year I would have sent correspondence to the current Minister before us for the clearing of the Arouca River, south of Bacaday Junction that borders on the Nicholas Gardens community as well as the Bon Air Gardens community. Minister, I am not sure if you have visited; a forest is actually growing in that river.

Hon. Singh: If the hon. Member were to invite me, I certainly, as I have done with her colleagues, would visit the forest with her.

[Laughter]

Mr. Sharma: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I think it is instructive that I pay compliments to the Ministry for the significant reduction in flooding throughout the island. I wanted to remind the hon. Minister of the work that is taking place at the Rio Negro River which empties into the Godineau River, which empties into the Mosquito Creek, and there is some outstanding work. I trust that in this year the constituencies of Fyzabad, La Brea and Oropouche East and West will benefit from the completion of that work.

Hon. Singh: I think that the hon. Member has also made his request and certainly it will be put into the pot.

Dr. Browne: Mr. Chairman, I do not want us to get distracted from the very important intervention by the Member for Diego Martin West in requesting that schedule for 2015 of proposed work. I would just want to add, for the $9 million and the $8 million spent on these projects for 2014, I would also like to see a detailed listing of all watercourses, drains and rivers on which this expenditure was focussed for 2014, the fiscal year past—all of those drains and watercourses. Of course in my area, but nationally as well.

Hon. Singh: You want a listing of all the national watercourses on which work was done.

Mr. Hypolite: Chair, the Minister made mention of a protocol with respect to going to the regional corporations to get that kind of assistance for the maintenance of drains, and stuff like that, but the corporations would normally
have an allocation of about $6 million to see about their entire corporation, whereby when you look at page 2 Item 11, we are seeing where some $25 million would not have been utilized. I am wondering whether or not the Minister would want to reconsider probably a change in his policy approach, and probably request from various Members of Parliament a list of 10 drains or so, so as to assist in utilizing that $25 million and also assisting the corporations.

The second question: with respect to decommissioned water tanks in the constituency of Laventille West—and I want to pay attention to one specific tank up in the Mapp Lands area that harbours criminal activities, I would like to know—

Dr. Moonilal: “In de tank?”

Mr. Hypolite:—whether or not, through you, Minister, if you can get WASA to look at either removing that tank and probably creating a nice recreation area for the residents up there, because the tank is not working.

Hon. Singh: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Under the new institutional mechanism we envisage, all watercourses, whether it is a minor drain or a large watercourse, will fall under the ambit of the Water Management and Flood Alleviation Authority. So it will not be this kind of fictional, impractical division that takes place between minor drains and large watercourses. All water and all drainage will be under one entity, and it will be part of management.

But in the interim, and as we are implementing the Constituency Fund, which will allow for a prioritization of the demands of the Members of Parliament, certainly we can incorporate your demand by utilizing the vac-masters for the areas that you would want clean, and if we have the necessary payment through the Constituency Fund.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Chairman, I take it that I can go to Sub-Head 09, Sanitary Services.

Mr. Chairman: Yes, we are closing off after you.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Sanitary Services, Minister. I saw no notation at all for the introduction of sewer lines to replace the aged sewer infrastructure in the Techier Village, Point Fortin area.

Hon. Singh: The Techier Village—you will recall, Member, that I answered a question—and the Techier Village in a pick from my memory is a peculiar problem, in that, it was built so many years ago and people have built over the sewer lines, so we, in fact, will be running new sewer lines in order to
accommodate the people in Techier Village to remove that environmental hazard, and it will be done in this new fiscal year.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: I just saw no provision for it; this is my concern.

Hon. Singh: It is not a large sum of money, and we intend to undertake that.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Thank you.

Miss Mc Donald: Yes, Mr. Minister, 005 under the same heading, Construction Supervision Services for the Supply and Installation of Water and Sewer Lines in downtown Port of Spain. I notice a paltry $2 million allocation for it. Could you tell me if this project is undergoing?

Hon. Singh: I will undertake to provide you with the factual thing, but my recollection is that this project, that is only a nominal sum but it is a significant amount of money to the tune of $70 to $80—

Miss Mc Donald: So what are you doing; you are doing an allocation each year?

Hon. Singh: No, this is for the design phase for it to be completed. We have to keep in mind that we are trying to do both at the same time also. The Port of Spain area will be the subject of significant infrastructure improvement in drainage, and what we are seeking to do is that whilst people within Port of Spain will be discommoded as a result of that investment taking place under the IADB loan, we will try to do the sewer lines in the particular areas, so there will be one inconvenience suffered by the burgesses and by the people frequenting Port of Spain.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 71 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, I think it is a good time for us to take a 30-minute suspension. But before I do so, let me on behalf of the Standing Finance Committee extend our thanks to the hon. Minister and the staff and his team for being here.

Hon. Singh: I too would like to say thanks for the opportunity of coming before the Finance Committee, and I would also like to thank my staff, together with my colleague, for the hard work they have put in, in order for us to make a proper presentation before the Finance Committee.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, I am suggesting that we take—[Crosstalk and interruption]
Hon. Members, this sitting of the Standing Finance Committee is suspended until 2.45 p.m.

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

**2.45 p.m.: Standing Finance Committee resumed.**

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Members, the meeting of the Standing Finance Committee will be resumed.

*Head 61.*

We have with us Head 61, the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development. Head 61, is $2,143,321,000 billion. I will now invite the Minister of Housing and Urban Development, if he so desires, to make a brief opening statement, giving us an overview of his priority areas for the fiscal period 2014/2015.

**Hon. Dr. Moonilal:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman and colleagues.

I would just like to welcome the Permanent Secretary, Mrs. Sarah Briggs who has joined us. The HDC Managing Director and Chairman of UDeCOTT, Miss Jearlean John; Miss Shelly Sultanti-Maharaj, the head of the Property Division and we have from our agencies the CEO of CEPEP, Mr. Carl Jagdeo; Mr. Kamal Sant, CEO of the EMBDC and Mr. Kurt Ramlal, the CEO of UDeCOTT are with us. We also have several other members of our Ministry and senior officials to the back of me. I want to welcome all of them and thank them for coming. We are prepared to respond to questions.

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

*Question proposed:* That Head 61 stand part of the Schedule.

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Members, the sum that I have just mentioned 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*.

Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure; Item 001, General Administration; Item 005, Property and Real Estate Management; Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services; Item 001, General Administration.

**Mr. Hypolite:** Chair, through you, I am looking at 08 on page 302. I am looking at Rent, Lease, Office Accommodation and Storage. My question to the Minister: Can the Minister indicate how many properties are presently being leased or rented by the Ministry?
Mr. Chairman: Do you have a follow-up question?

Mr. Hypolite: Yes: Whether or not the Minister would have considered purchasing property instead of renting same.

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: To indicate that at present we have 260 rentals for government offices, and there are cases where the Cabinet has approved that the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development explore the possibility to purchase certain private sector offices, but those are really few.

Mr. Hypolite: In what area may I ask?

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: I can get a list, but we are exploring in a couple places. But I want to say that might just be one or two.

2.50 p.m.

Mr. Hypolite: Item 16, Contract Employment. Can the Minister indicate how many contract positions exist and how many contract vacancies also exist?

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: Are you asking for the entire Ministry?

Mr. Hypolite: The Ministry.

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: We have 148 contract positions, of which 42 are vacant.

Mr. Hypolite: Forty-two?

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: Yes.

Mr. Hypolite: What about Short-Term Employment? How Many? We are looking at item 22.

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: Item 22?

Mr. Chairman: Yes.

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: Short-term Employment.

Mr. Chairman: Yeah.

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: We can get that figure for you.

Mr. Hypolite: All right. Item 23 with respect to Fees, can the Minister give a breakdown of the Fees? What those Fees were expected to be paid for?

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: Sure.
Mr. Chairman: Could you make that available in writing?

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: I can just indicate to the Member. Item 23, Fees, these are generally IT contractual obligations and licences. On the recommendation of the Ministry of Planning and Sustainable Development, the Ministry has started paying fees, certain IT fees, from the Ministry’s recurrent vote instead of the DP vote.

Mr. Hopolite: Item 62, Promotions, Publicity and Printing, can the Minister give a breakdown of the sum to be spent on Promotions, Publicity and Printing?

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: You are focusing on 62, $1.2 Million?

Mr. Hypolite: I suppose—on 62, $1.2 million.

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: I want to indicate that this is, of course, the projection for 2015. So we will not have a detailed account of what we will be doing but this is generally meant for doing a range of publications in the newspapers and so on concerning the work of the Ministry and the divisions of the Ministry and so on including the Grants Unit and other units of the ministry. Also, for several national holidays and so on we do newspaper ads, et cetera. So that this sum would be used for that but if you want for 2014, which, as you noticed, had the exact figure, we can probably give you an account of what it was used for in 2014. Okay?

Mr. Hypolite: While that is so, Item 66—can you also give a breakdown of some of the conferences and seminars that took place and what you intend to participate in?

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: Sure. Item 66. It was the same figure last year.

Mr. Chairman: The hon. Member for Chaguanas West. Okay? All right, we go to Item 005, Property and Real Estate Management Services. I recognize the hon. Member for St. Ann’s East.

Mrs. Thomas: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I look at Item 43 and I see expenses for security for this year is $7.5 million, a reduction of $1.5 million. Is there any particular reason for that reduction?

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: We can provide that for you.

Mr. Chairman: The hon. Member for Arouca/Maloney.
Miss Hospedales: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Sub-Item 08, Rent/Lease – Office Accommodation and Storage, could the Minister indicate exactly where they are renting office space and storage and if he can provide for us the actual rental fee for each of these locations?

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: Yes. The rental would include the rent/lease accommodation and storage. Item 08 is what you are on, is it?

Mr. Chairman: Yes.

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: Yeah. This would include reimbursement to UDeCOTT for construction and outfitting the state building at 15 St. Clair Avenue. That is $11.4 million annually. Wells Fargo Bank, New York—outfitting cost for Hyatt $93.3 million annually. Wells Fargo Bank, New York, US $375 million loan for construction of the International Waterfront Centre, $265 million annually. Wells Fargo Bank, New York, loan for the Ministry of Education tower US $88 million, there is an annual payment of $81.8 million; and a rental of CIC building for Property Management Division of $1.2 million annually.

Dr. Gopeesingh: That same line item where you spoke about Wells Fargo Bank paying for the Waterfront project, is it—

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: $265 million annually.

Dr. Gopeesingh: For how long and when would be the completion date for that?

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: I am getting the data. It is the Wells Fargo Bank of New York. It was a loan arrangement of—well US $375 million. How much TT$ is that?

Dr. Gopeesingh: That is about TT $2.6 billion.

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: TT $2.6 billion loan for the construction of the International Waterfront Centre. You are getting data on that now.

Dr. Gopeesingh: And when you add interest to that, Minister, what is it coming up to?

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: In February 2007 the loan was taken for $2.6 billion. It is over 15 years, from 2007. We are paying $265 million annually.
Dr. Gopeesingh: So you are saying that you are paying approximately $4.5 billion in interest in total for the Waterfront project from 2007 to the end? Is in TT $4.5 billion?

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: You may be correct, Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: That is astonishing

Mr. Chairman: Or if you wish, the hon. Minister could supply and circulate—

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: It is over $4 billion to be repaid on the Waterfront project.

Mr. Chairman: We go to Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services; Item 001, General Administration; Item 005, Property and Real Estate Management Services.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Chair?

Mr. Chairman: Yes.

Dr. Gopeesingh: I believe you might have lost me a little bit. I do not know what page you are on.

Mr. Chairman: I am on Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services. I have passed General Administration.

Dr. Gopeesingh: All right. I have not reached there.

Mr. Chairman: Item 005, Property and Real Estate Management Services. [Interruption] What? Page 303. Then we go to Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases.

Miss Hospedales: Chair, I have a question under 005.

Mr. Chairman: Item 005, under what, Minor Equipment Purchases?

Miss Hospedales: No. Item 005, Property and Real Estate Management Services, under Goods and Services.

Mr. Chairman: Okay. All Right, I have to go back.
Miss Hospedales: I would like to get information on Sub-Item 61. Could the Minister indicate exactly what the insurance item is used to pay, what type of insurance?

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: They are paying for the insurance on the government buildings including the Campus Plaza.

Mr. Chairman: We go to Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases; Item 001, General Administration; Item 005, Property and Real Estate Management Services; Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies; Item 009, Other Transfers. I recognize the Member for Laventille West and the hon. Member for Arouca/Maloney.

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: What page, please?

Mr. Hypolite: 307.

Mr. Chairman: We are on page 307, Current Transfers and Subsidies.

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: Sure.

Dr. Gopeesingh: We are moving fast and I appreciate it. Chair?

Mr. Chairman: Yes.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Can I just refer you to 305? I just want to ask a question on—no, sorry, 307. When you are finished, I would like to ask a question on 307.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, I recognize the Member for Laventille West.

Mr. Hypolite: I have a question on 01 and one on 05. The question on 01, Chair, is in 2014 the Trinidad and Tobago Housing Development Corporation would have received $335.5 million and in 2015 we are looking at $400 million. Can the Minister indicate exactly what are the reasons for that increase? Where would that money be going?

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: The increase of $38 million, this is for recurrent operations under the headings of Salary and Wages, including Goods and Services but at the HDC as well there was an increase in salaries pursuant to a collective agreement that has been entered into and a portion of that will be included there, in the increase.

Mr. Hypolite: And under 05, my understanding is that some 2,500 persons would have been dismissed from the reafforestation programme. Will the CEPEP,
environmental protection company—seeing that they will have an increase of $58 million—pick up those 2,500 workers who would have been dismissed from the reafforestation programme yesterday?

**Hon. Dr. Moonilal:** Firstly, I want to indicate that the reafforestation programme, I am not aware that 2,500 persons have been dismissed or that anyone has been dismissed. The Minister who came before me, preceded me, would have been the Minister ideally placed to address that matter had you raised it, but this increase is really to ensure the expansion of some of the CEPEP operations to bring on new contractors in specific areas, including marine clean-up, including new works that we are embarking on with the support of the Ministry of Health and Ministry of—and the Judiciary.

**Mr. Hypolite:** Can you state how many contractors presently, how many—say, about the core of the programme, how many marine, how many air?

**Hon. Dr. Moonilal:** Sure. We have a total of 256 contractors at this time. We have five marine contractors and 102 garbage disposal contractors.

**Mr. Chairman:** I recognize the hon. Member for Arouca/Maloney.

**Miss Hospedales:** Mr. Chair, under Sub-Item 05, I would like the Minister to provide us with information regarding the total number of CEPEP teams and if he can provide the names of the contractors, where they are assigned, by constituency.

**Hon. Dr. Moonilal:** You want to get a list of the CEPEP contractors by constituency and what else?

**Miss Hospedales:** The total number of teams, the names of the contractors, where they are assigned and if you can give us that information by constituency. Thank you.

**Mr. Chairman:** I recognize the hon. Member for Caroni East.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Chair, through you, can I ask the Minister, under 009, Other Transfers; Sub-Item 01, Trinidad and Tobago Housing Development Corporation, would he be kind enough to give us a status of the Real Spring Estate Development in Valsayn?

**Hon. Dr. Moonilal:** The Real Spring Development, I can just say quickly, Chairman, because there is a lot of information on that—as on several estates.
That was originally an estate, a housing site under UDeCOTT. It was started under UDeCOTT on or around 2006. It was funded by a loan arrangement with the Home Mortgage Bank for $170 million, I believe. The project has had some problems, it is one of our troubled sites with UDeCOTT over claims and counterclaims between the UDeCOTT and the main contractor there. It has been suspended due to that type of problem. The UDeCOTT, I believe, had borrowed the money from the Home Mortgage Bank, Mr. Calder Hart. He had borrowed money from that organization for that project but they had some problems with the contractor and we have been trying to have negotiations with the contractor to sort it out.

We are now at the point where we are asking the HDC to assist with that project, to bring some type of resolution, by negotiations, so that we can complete the project at Real Spring but it was originally a UDeCOTT project.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** So you are saying, in 2007, $130-plus million was spent and seven years later we have not been able to get anything for it?

**Hon. Dr. Moonilal:** Yes, and here is some more information on it but I do not know if I want to take all the time now but it is one of the troubled sites that—

**Miss Mc Donald:** You could talk to him; he is you Cabinet colleague; “all yuh” could talk to each other.

**Mr. Chairman:** No, No. You are telling the Chairman to move on?

**Miss Mc Donald:** Too cantankerous.

**Mr. Chairman:** No, no, no. Listen, Member for Port of Spain South, May I put—I would like both the Member for Lopinot/Bon Air West and Member for Port of Spain South, you all have this love relationship. [Interrupt] It appears. I recognize the Member for Chaguanas West.

**3.05 p.m.**

**Mr. Warner:** Mr. Chairman, thank you. I go back to—[Crosstalk]

**Mr. Chairman:** Could we have one meeting? Order! Order! Order! I want to hear the Member for Chaguanas West.

**Mr. Warner:**—05 Other Transfers. I would like to get also that same list, but I want to get those “CEPEPers” or contractors who were terminated in 2013, 2014 and where?—especially the Corridor.

**Hon. Dr. Moonilal:** Especially the—?
Mr. Warner: The Corridor.

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: The East-West Corridor.

Mr. Warner: Yeah.

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: Okay, well we can also make the list available. The list will be for Members—

Mr. Warner: Fine. No problem.

Hon. Dr. Moonilal:—but also the Member for Chaguanas West is asking the additional information—

Mr. Warner: Yes.

Hon. Dr. Moonilal:—of where CEPEP contractors have been terminated, and I imagine the reason for that—

Mr. Warner: Yeah. Yes.

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: Sure.

Mr. Chairman: All right. Who is next? The next person is the Member for Fyzabad, and then the Member for Laventille West, and then the Member for Diego Martin North/East after. Yes, Member for Fyzabad, you are on the floor.

Mr. Sharma: Thank you.

Mr. Chairman: Yes. You are on the floor.

Mr. Sharma: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Chairman, to the hon. Minister—the announcement by the Minister of Finance and the Economy of $850,000 for first-time homeowners at 2 per cent which, of course, makes it the cheapest loan. At page 307, under the increase of $38 million for Goods and Services, could the Minister of Housing and Urban Development give an undertaking to make house plans available, approved house plans, so that first-time homeowners wishing to borrow this money can access those house plans?

Secondly, the Minister also indicated loans of up to $1.2 million at, I think, 5 per cent. That will be very useful; it will speed up the process of first-time homeowners accessing it under this increase—[Crosstalk] that can be made available.

Mr. Imbert: What line item is this?
Hon. Dr. Moonilal: Okay. Thank you. I take the recommendations, Member. [Crosstalk] He means, if I can accept the recommendation; that was the question.

Mr. Chairman: All right. We go on to the Member for Laventille West, and then the Member for Diego Martin North/East.

Mr. Hypolite: Chair, going back to 009/01, okay, [Crosstalk] and based—on the same page 37—[Crosstalk]

Mr. Chairman: Please. Please.

Mr. Hypolite:—can the Minister indicate how many new housing development sites you would have started over the year 2014? Also, what is the true housing stock throughout the country?

Mr. Chairman: The hon. Minister.

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: We have the information available, Chairman, from the Housing Development Corporation. You are interested in the new—how many new sites, and a breakdown of the housing stock, I believe? So, we can indicate that our new sites include sites in Union Hall, San Fernando, Princes Town, on the East-West Corridor, Trestrail, Eden Gardens in Couva, and these are some of the new sites. But the closing out of the new sites that have started before is also a significant part of our operations now, including sites in Diego Martin—

Mr. Hypolite: Is it possible if you can give a comprehensive detail later on?

Mr. Chairman: Yes.

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: Yes, we can just give a listing to you of the information that you ask for.

Mr. Chairman: Yes. Let us go. The Member for Diego Martin North/East.

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Chairman, page 307, 009/01, is any of this $400 million intended for expenditure, in any form or fashion, on the Las Alturas project?

Mr. Chairman: The hon. Minister.

Mr. Imbert: So, the Ministry of Housing and the Urban Development nor the HDC does not enter into, engage anybody, consultants, attorneys, geotechnical experts?

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: It is under IDF. It also come under the—

Mr. Imbert: It would come up—Okay.
Mr. Chairman: We recognize the Member for Port of Spain South. Member for Port of Spain South, you had a question?

Miss Mc Donald: No. No. No. Somebody else has a question.

Mr. Chairman: Member for Arouca/Maloney, then the Member for St. Ann’s East and then the Member for Diego Martin Central.

Miss Hospedales: Okay. Mr. Chair, thank you. Again, focussing on Sub-Item 01, could the Minister indicate exactly how many of the houses that were constructed are actually reserved for rental housing accommodation—particularly since the rental housing stock basically has been fully utilized?

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: As a general rule, 40 per cent of the housing stock is usually reserved for rental.

Mr. Chairman: We recognize the hon. Member for St. Ann’s East.

Mrs. Thomas: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Minister, could you give me a listing please of the number of unoccupied houses in the Sam Boucaud area in Santa Cruz?—because I have noticed in my walkabouts a lot of houses unoccupied. If I could get that listing, please? [Crosstalk] They are not occupied and people—

Mr. Chairman: The hon. Minister.

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: Yes. In that area we have had some problems. I will give you a written response to this, but to indicate that, the housing units they were apparently distributed to persons, and then they would have had some problem with the HDC before, and the persons either had not moved in or their keys were taken back from them. So that there are some problems associated with that, but I would prefer to put that in writing, to explain that to you in writing.

Mr. Chairman: The hon. Member for Diego Martin Central.

Dr. Browne: Thank you. With respect to CEPEP; CEPEP is now involved with infrastructural works such as box drains and so on, and the award of civil works contracts, I would like details from the Ministry with respect to the procedure for the award of such civil works contracts under the CEPEP.

Secondly, this sum of $594 million estimated for 2015, does that include the purchase of vehicles by that company? If so, I would like details on the sale of existing vehicles by CEPEP during the fiscal 2014, including details—which I was told was done without any open tender or procedure. I would like details on each
vehicle sold, the dates sold, who purchased and the procedure used to execute said sale.

And finally, how is remuneration determined for the management, staff of CEPEP especially—yes—with respect to management? I was told that some received two increases since being retained and others have received no increases. What is the policy with respect to how remuneration is determined, and who makes that determination?

Mr. Chairman: The hon. Minister.

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: First, I am informed that the CEPEP did auction publicly 14 vehicles—was done through a public auction. The figure here includes purchase of vehicles. Just for your information, I have in my hand a newspaper ad of Saturday, January 04, 2014. It is the Guardian newspaper, Saturday, January 04, 2014 and there is an ad here: the CEPEP Company Limited intends to auction vehicles and so on, and you are to attend some place and indicate your information, name, address and contact number and so on. So this was placed in the newspaper as an ad for the auctioning of the public—

Dr. Browne: Chairman, I maintain the request for that schedule, the details of all vehicles sold during the fiscal year 2014.

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: Yeah. You will get the details of all the vehicles sold, but this is just telling you—we can give you a copy of this as well, the public ad that went out pursuant to that.

Mr. Chairman: Okay. We are at—

Dr. Browne: Another question—[Crosstalk] the management policy, I think it is.

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: I think the Member is asking for the policy as it relates to salary and salary of the management and so on. We will provide you with that in writing. I would prefer to provide that in writing.

Mr. Chairman: We go to Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies; Item 9, Other Transfers; Item 11, Transfers to State Enterprises. We go to Sub-Head 06. The hon. Member for Chaguanas West.

Mr. Warner: Sub-Head 02, Other Transfers to State Enterprises. Is that where we are?

Mr. Chairman: Yes.
Mr. Warner: EMBD—I see they get—

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: What page, Sir?

Mr. Chairman: Transfers to State—308

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: Sure.

Mr. Warner: Estate Management and Business Development Company Limited. In 2013 they got $32.7 million; 2014 they got $30.5 million; 2015 they are budgeted here for $30.6 million. When last was there an audit of EMBD?

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: An audit was undertaken by the Ministry of Finance and the Economy about two years ago, by the Ministry of Finance and the Economy.

Mr. Warner: Thank you.

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: Could I just indicate while I have the mike, that the Member for Diego Martin Central also raised an issue concerning CEPEP’s involvement in some civil works, and this is done at the request of community organizations or regional corporations, particularly in the aftermath of any disaster that is threatening the environment. CEPEP can undertake minor and small-scale civil works, more for flood relief, and they have been doing that. So that it is done on the request of community organizations, regional corporations.

Dr. Browne: But that was not the specific question. It was, what was the procedure used to execute those works—to execute the contracts? Could you provide that as well in writing?

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: Well I can tell you because I do not know how useful writing up will—in those areas, for example, when we receive a request, the contractors of the area, the CEPEP contractors who may have that particular skill, we also do a—we include them as well, the several contractors, and we invite them to do estimates and proposals. And based upon a technical evaluation and their capacity, CEPEP contractors may also do that, if they have the capacity to do it.

Dr. Browne: Who does that evaluation?

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: The CEPEP management will undertake that. There is an evaluation team who does that.

Mr. Chairman: I am coming back to the Member for Caroni East. I think the hon. Member did not finish.
Mr. Warner: Two more questions.

Mr. Chairman: Go ahead.

Mr. Warner: First, I want to know whether I can get a copy of the last audit of the EMBD? And secondly too, what oversight policy does the Ministry have over that particular state enterprise?

Mr. Chairman: The hon. Minister.

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: What I can indicate is that the Ministry of Finance and the Economy has concluded their audit. At the EMBDC they operate within a very strict management structure. There is an approved structure. The board’s, committees have all been filled, tenders committee, evaluation committee and so on, and there is a process that they undertake. For any particular issue they can produce reports. There is also oversight at the Ministry through the Permanent Secretary and other officers with the responsibility for overseeing all state enterprises including the EMBDC. This is not unlike what happens in other Ministries. Apart from that the Ministry of Finance and the Economy is, of course, a supervising agent because every time the EMBDC has to get a draw down on moneys, for anything, they have to satisfy requirements of the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development, plus they have to satisfy the requirements of the Ministry of Finance and the Economy. So there are actually two oversight agencies, the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development and the Ministry of Finance and the Economy when they bring in their bills to ensure that everything is done properly, you know, all the processes have been followed, both technical evaluations, certification.

The EMBDC also uses external consultants to certify works because a major area of earth works and infrastructure work is proper independent certification of work, and quantity surveying and so on. Independent groups do that. It goes to the company for their evaluation, it goes to a subcommittee of the board, then it is approved by the board, and then the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development and the Ministry of Finance and the Economy will check through to ensure that all is above board.

Mr. Warner: Thank you.

Mr. Chairman: The hon. Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Chair, through you, can I ask a question on 011, Transfers to State Enterprises? And it goes from Sub-Item 01 to Sub-Item 15; 13 of the Sub-
Items are related to UDeCOTT. I see a lot of funding for expenses, fees and loans having to be paid by UDeCOTT. Would the Minister be kind enough to give an indication of what outstanding debts are with UDeCOTT for loans that UDeCOTT have obtained? What are the outstanding debts, at the moment, that UDeCOTT may have incurred over a period of time?

**Hon. Dr. Moonilal:** Well there are several issues. You would recall we spoke earlier about the $2.6 billion arrangement with the bank in New York for the Port of Spain International Waterfront building. [Crosstalk]

**Mr. Chairman:** Please.

**Hon. Dr. Moonilal:** We also have, Member, a $320 million facility—[Crosstalk] for the roll out of projects in the PSIP; this was taken in 2009. We have another facility—it is carried by the Ministry of Sport, I think that came out before, but it is also part of UDeCOTT’s operations—$497 million on the Brian Lara.

3.20 p.m.

We also have for the education tower, $563 million. That was issued in September 2008 for the education tower. We are continuing to pay that, of course. And some other arrangements we have with the Home Mortgage Bank, I indicated earlier for the Real Spring facility, it was taken out in 2007, and another facility—we have two facilities with the Home Mortgage Bank, one for $170 million and $40 million. I will be happy to make available, Chairman, the full listing of UDeCOTT loans portfolio as soon as—so that the Minister may—

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** To summarize, you give a lot of figures, just bear with me half a minute. If you just summarize, what I am getting, you probably have close to about $5 billion in loans prior to 2010 that are outstanding now?

**Hon. Dr. Moonilal:** Yes, it could well add up to $5 billion in loans—I have the exact figure—outstanding loans will be $8.8 billion.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** And how much of that is prior to 2010?

**Hon. Dr. Moonilal:** One point three is current and the prior loans pre-2010 projects of UDeCOTT, the outstanding money on loans is $8.8 billion incurred.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Wow, $8.8 billion before 2010.

**Hon. Dr. Moonilal:** Yes, and after 2010, 1.3.

**Mr. Chairman:** I recognize the Member for Point Fortin.
Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Just a follow-up to the very same question. The Member for Caroni East asked of the hon. Minister of Housing and Urban Development, about the debts incurred by UDeCOTT. I am now asking if the Minister can tell us the assets now owned by the Government and the people of Trinidad and Tobago on account of the work done by UDeCOTT?

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: Yeah, well, that will be an exhaustive list, we can get that to you. [Laughter and crosstalk] We have to get the value of it, I cannot—Mr. Chairman, I do not want to guess the value of assets.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: But, Chairman, could he please provide us with a list? If he does not want to speak to the exhaustive list, could you please provide us with a list in writing? Thank you.

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: Chairman, please, I do not want to mislead the finance committee by guessing on values of property. It is not my intention to do that.

Mr. Chairman: I understand, I understand, so you will reply. [Crosstalk] Yes, the same Item, okay, Transfers to State Enterprises.

Mr. Imbert: Yes, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, having—[Interruption and crosstalk]

Mr. Chairman: Member for Port of Spain South, I seek your cooperation.

Miss Mc Donald: I want to cooperate with you but they are wicked.

Mr. Chairman: No, well, if you continue, I will have to bring you here.

Miss Mc Donald: Where?

Mr. Chairman: Right, here.

Miss Mc Donald: No, no, no.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, the hon. Member.

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Chairman, this duo behind, one in front and one behind. Mr. Minister, could you tell me whether UDeCOTT is financed through these loans or you have other sources of financing for UDeCOTT?

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: UDeCOTT is financed through the Government and through payments by clients for project management.

Mr. Imbert: I have been looking through the estimates and apart from, on this page, I see payment of expenses and fees for High Court judgments, and then a payment to Hill International re: Consultancy Services.
Hon. Dr. Moonilal: What page are you on?

Mr. Imbert: Same 308, 011, Transfers to State Enterprises. Apart from 13, everything else seems to be an interest or principal payment on a bond or a loan. I am not seeing any other transfers to UDeCOTT in these estimates. So what I am trying to find out from you, does UDeCOTT conduct its business based on funds raised in these loans here, yes or no?

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: The UDeCOTT is a project manager. It funds itself through project management fees collected from clients.

Mr. Imbert: All right, let us go to number 15, the Fit-Out, Government Campus Fit-Out. Surely, that is being financed from this loan of $496 million, not so?

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: The 2015 provision of $166.2 million is to meet loan instalment to Republic Bank Limited due on November 01, 2014 and May 01, 2015.

Mr. Imbert: No, no, I understand that you have allocations to deal with the repayment of principal and interest on loans, bonds, et cetera, I understand that. But where are the proceeds of these loans and bonds, are they in an account somewhere? Does UDeCOTT have access to them, because I am seeing number 15, Government Campus Plaza Fit-Out, $496 million, surely you have not spent all of that already. Where is the money held?

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: The Ministry of Finance and the Economy pays direct to the financing agencies.

Mr. Imbert: All right, so these, it is quite possible in a lot of these loans there are still funds that you can drawdown on.

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: There may be, yes.

Mr. Imbert: May be? Let us deal specifically with 15. How much of that $496 million have you spent so far?

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: We will get the exact figure for you.

Mr. Imbert: You do not know.

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: The Minister of Finance and the Economy may have—

Hon. Howai: I do not have the exact figure, but it is not fully drawn. It is not fully drawn.
Mr. Imbert: How could it be? It just start. And coming to that now, Mr. Chairman, I am seeing this, let us say, $500 million to fit-out the campus which according to statements made by the Minister had just began recently. Could the Minister explain why you took so long to start this exercise?

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: To start what?

Mr. Imbert: You left those buildings there for four years without commencing fit-out?

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: Chairman, I have more details on the financing facilities, but just to get to his question quickly, as the Member would recall, upon entering office we met several very serious constraints to the Government and to the Ministry of Finance and the Economy. The Ministry of Finance and the Economy, we have been working with the Ministry of Finance and the Economy since 2010. They had, I believe, $25 billion to deal with the Clico/HCU matter, then contractors were owed another $10 billion or so. Then they had a few billion dollars on what—[Interruption and crosstalk]

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Chairman, I do not need any assistance from the people on that side. I just want to hear the Minister.

Mr. Chairman: I too.

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: The former Government was owing on the fuel subsidy about $5 billion, owing contractors $10 billion, had a debt of $25 billion outstanding that the People’s Partnership Government had to deal with.

When we were concluding, dealing with some of those big ticket items, we then embarked upon a process and it takes a process to seek financing for such a huge massive outfitting programme. That was done by the Ministry of Finance and the Economy. It took some time, but we have concluded that and work has started and in some cases continued throughout the Government campus. I made a statement in Parliament recently on the outfitting schedule and I can repeat that or get the statement available to the Member.

Mr. Imbert: So what you are saying effectively, Minister, is that you had other things to do, there were other liabilities, other obligations—

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: There were economic priorities due to the severe constraints and challenges we faced from competing priorities upon entering office.

Mr. Imbert: Fine, and therefore, the $500 million UWI Campus in South Trinidad; the $1.5 billion Couva children’s hospital; the $500 million conversion
of Chancery Lane from an administrative building to hospital, all of those things were of greater priority because you had the same problem, where you had all these bills to pay but you managed somehow to do those billion-dollar projects, but you had to defer this one. This was of lower priority, obviously.

**Hon. Dr. Moonilal:** Chairman, I would just respond to the Member, he knows the answer but I think he wants me to remind him. Those are government to government arrangements. It is a separate type of financing than financing through borrowing this way. The Member knew that they took a loan for $497 million for construction, there is another half-billion dollars for outfitting. Whereas—I like his recital of all the projects we are dealing with, the South Campus; the Aquatic Centre; the Children Hospital; the San Fernando—those were through government to government arrangements with several governments, whereas managing or borrowing at this level—[Interruption]

**Mr. Imbert:** No, problem, I understand. You have answered the question.

**Hon. Dr. Moonilal:**—and for the central Ministry of Finance and the Economy. It is not a question of priority, it is a question of various financial arrangements, which he is aware of.

**Mr. Chairman:** All right, I am going to Sub-Head 006, Current Transfers to Statutory Bodies and Similar Bodies Item 04, Statutory Bodies. I am going to Sub-Head 09, Development Programme, and under Development Programme I go to Item 04, Social Infrastructure. I recognize the hon. Member for Diego Martin North/East, the Member for Port of Spain South and the Member for Diego Martin Central. Page 152, Development Programme.

**Mr. Imbert:** Mr. Chairman, I had asked a question earlier with respect to expenditure on the engagement of consultants, soil experts, forensic experts, whatever you want to call them, with respect to the Las Alturas project by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development or the HDC. And I was told previously that it was not in the line item that I was looking at which was the transfers of money to the HDC, and I was told I will find it in Development Programme or the IDF.

So having looked at the Development Programme and the IDF, I am seeing funding allocated for housing, estates, but it is all comingled. So could the Minister just confirm that it is the Government’s intention to engage attorneys, engineering consultants, and other experts, geotechnical experts with respect to the investigation of what occurred at the Las Alturas Project, and if he can confirm that, I assume that is going to happen somewhere inside of this
Appropriation Bill, 2014

Friday, September 26, 2014

[MR. IMBERT]

Development Programme they are spending the money? Because that is what they said.

Could the Minister also indicate when the Housing Development Corporation first got wind that there was a problem at the Las Alturas project? Could the Minister also confirm whether the Las Alturas project is a design and construct or a design and build contract as it is commonly known, where China Jiangzu has responsibility for both design and construction? And if that is all so—and you have money here to deal with that project—could the Minister say how close the HDC or the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development is to the four-year limitation period and or limitation laws with respect to taking action against the contractor or the consultants associated with the Las Alturas project?

**Hon. Dr. Moonilal:** Chairman, to confirm, it is a design and construct project. The Chinese company and geotechnical consultants, Geotech and Associates, have been involved. I can indicate, Mr. Chairman, that we have looked at the limitation period and we are—I understand we are very close to the end of that period, and the Housing Development Corporation is now in these hours considering litigation on the advice of both independent counsel and, of course, the Office of the Attorney General. It is being considered in this hour so that we are at the doorstep of the clock.

Mr. Chairman, I would want to refrain from adding more information on this matter. This matter is also the subject of a Commission of Enquiry and I would prefer to leave it there.

**Mr. Imbert:** No problem. You have confirmed you are close to the limitation period and you are actively looking at litigation. I hope you are also looking at arbitration because there may be an arbitration clause in that contract which would prohibit litigation.

**Hon. Dr. Moonilal:** Yes, you are correct.

**Mr. Imbert:** You are engaging consultants, experts to advise you on exactly when the limitation period will run out and you are actively considering your options with respect to litigation and or arbitration with respect to enforcing your rights as employer against the contractor.

**Hon. Dr. Moonilal:** I can confirm, Mr. Chairman, I know where he is running up and going—

**Mr. Imbert:** Just say yes or no. [Crosstalk]
Hon. Dr. Moonilal: Mr. Chairman, I could confirm that we have enlisted the technical and legal advice of a leading law firm in the United Kingdom to advise on this matter, and in collaboration with the Office of the Attorney General and an independent legal consultant in the United Kingdom, we are now preparing, and as I say, we may be within hours of litigating.

Mr. Chairman: I recognize the Member for Port of Spain South. [Crosstalk] Please, the Member for Caroni—let us focus. Please, the Member for Diego Martin North/East, I want to hear the Member for Port of Spain South.

3.35 p.m.

Miss Mc Donald: Mr. Chairman, I have two questions.

Mr. Chairman: What page?

Miss Mc Donald: Page 153, under 08, Housing and Settlements.

Mr. Chairman: 08?

Miss Mc Donald: 080, my first question is there. What is the Picton Housing Development? I note there was a $4.6 million in 2013, then a revised estimate of $11.8 million and then nothing, no allocation in 2015. What is that Picton Housing Development? What does it refer to?

Mr. Chairman: And do you have a second question?

Miss Mc Donald: And whilst they ponder on what is the Picton Housing Development, I want to find out—because I have been searching these figures here, and the plans here, and under Housing Estates, Sir, I am not seeing any development—I am not talking about refurbishment and remedial work, I am talking about development in the East Port of Spain area. The Minister is well aware that I am talking about the whole South Quay area where land has been obtained by the former administration for the second phase of the redevelopment, and I have been speaking ad nauseam in this Parliament—

Mr. Chairman: Yes, I think you have made your point. Two questions to you, hon. Minister?

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: Chairman, I am informed that the Picton Housing Development project is a project that involves some civil works and we have, Mr. Chairman, the redevelopment and regeneration of the Port of Spain East area. Pursuant to the decision of the Board of Directors in 2014, approval was granted for the provision of urban planning services for Port of Spain East. It has started.
The concept is to engage in planning for the area and to create a neighbourhood unit of approximately 250 to 300 housing units, which will accommodate a full range of facilities and would support and create a high quality living environment for city residents.

Each area would include a mix of housing, proper parking, landscaping, retail, civic, education and other social facilities consistent with quality living. It is to develop 3.5 acres in this particular neighbourhood. These blocks which will be interconnected both through the existing street pattern, as well as through a series of pedestrian pathways and lanes which allow both the resident and the visitor to a retail, dining, recreational and other experience while in the city—this is also on the agenda. I think my colleague opposite is aware.

Additionally, it is intended to create an open area adjacent to the St. Ann's River on the site adjacent to the Mosque and Riverside Park and community service area, which will give access to the proposed Riverside Parkway to be created along Piccadilly Street.

A pilot project is also envisaged. It is contained in the original proposal. In general terms, with reference to Port of Spain East, an initial pilot project area was chosen for the purpose of developing plans, for the purpose of planning, for the implementation of this area, originally called Riverside Place. This has been revised to include that area south of the site to include three blocks south of the developing area to Independence Square, namely called Cathedral Place.

The general area has been defined as follows: It is now expanded to include the following in the initial structure plan. That area we are talking about in East Port of Spain is bounded by Park Street to the north, Independence Square to the south, Charlotte Street to the west, the St. Ann's River to the east. It will also include a parcel of land between the eastern end of Independence Square and the Flyover between Old St. Joseph Road and South Quay, as well as Besson Street/St. Paul Street area, where the Riverside Plaza is now; a total of nine city blocks.

The project area will be bounded by Prince Street to the north, Independence Square to the south, George Street to the west and the St. Ann's River. These are some of the plans, Mr. Chairman. It also includes the development of a business development hub to be located within the old Workers’ Bank Limited at the corner of Duncan Street and Independence Square, That is currently owned by HDC and is vacant. It is intended that the establishment of a hub for business development at this building will provide appropriate services to facilitate the
redevelopment of Port of Spain East.

The services will facilitate, among other things, the showcasing of the proposed development of the central business district, to include the wider Port of Spain area; the set-up of a human capital element and a social plan; training programmes and necessary skills for which the demand will arise as a result of this construction, joint venture and private/public partnership arrangements. It is proposed that a design brief will be developed for the renovation and retrofitting of this building for the purposes to allow construction to commence within the next six months.

Mr. Chairman, I will end by saying that the design is to create a sustainable high-quality environment within Port of Spain East which can fully contribute to the fundamental life of the capital city while at the same time providing the highest quality of life to its residents, city users and the national community.

Miss Mc Donald: Mr. Chair—

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: Mr. Chair, could I just add, it is under SILWC—the Picton Housing Development site. It includes box drain rehabilitation, sewer works, infrastructure projects and other areas. That is the Picton Housing Development site.

Miss Mc Donald: Nothing has been allocated for 2015.

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: Member, nothing has been done?

Miss Mc Donald: No, no, I am not saying, “nothing has been done”. I am saying no allocation has been made for 2015.

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: Have you been there?

Miss Mc Donald: What is that?

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: Have you been there?

Miss Mc Donald: Yes.

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: This is part of my constituency. Do you go there?

Miss Mc Donald: Picton Housing Development?

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: Picton Housing Development is a housing development in the constituency of Oropouche East.

Miss Mc Donald: Well, I do have a Picton development in East Port of Spain.
Hon. Dr. Moonilal: Well then, we will try to help your Picton as well.

Miss Mc Donald: I do have one.

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: But this is my Picton. [Laughter]

Miss Mc Donald: Well, I was thinking this is my Picton.

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: No, is not your Picton, is my Picton.

Miss Mc Donald: I do have Picton. I do.

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: I will try to help your Picton, but this is my Picton.

[Cross talk]

Mr. Chairman: Okay. Yes, yes.

Miss Mc Donald: No, no, no. I have another question and a—

Mr. Chairman: Yes, yes. Go ahead.

Miss Mc Donald: —serious question to the Minister.

Mr. Chairman: Ask your question.

Miss Mc Donald: And he “didn” even aware that it was his Picton. He was trying to answer my Picton. [Laughter] Anyway, Minister, I heard all that you said there about your plans for East Port of Spain, the area I am talking about, but could you point me in this Development Programme here, where I can see an allocation for that programme that you have just elucidated on?

Mr. Chairman: The hon. Minister?

Miss Mc Donald: Where is the allocation?

Mr. Chairman: Please.

Miss Mc Donald: Mr. Chairman, “like yuh doh want meh tuh talk, yuh know.”

Mr. Chairman: No, I am saying allow him to speak. You asked a question.

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: Member, I am advised that the IDF subvention to the Housing Development Corporation can also be used for that project, and that is where they intend to use the funds from.

Mr. Chairman: I recognize the Member for Chaguanas West.

Mr. Warner: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.
Miss Mc Donald: There is none? There is no allocation!

Mr. Warner: Under 08—[Interruption]

Mr. Chairman: Chaguanas West.

Hon. Member: “Shush.”

Miss Mc Donald: “Doh shoo me!”

Mr. Chairman: Please, please.

Miss Mc Donald: “You farse!”

Mr. Chairman: Yes, but why are you behaving like this?

Miss Mc Donald: “No, but is him, and he left his seat tuh come here tuh torment me!”

Mr. Chairman: Yeah, but why are you allowing him to torment you? [Laughter? Is there something special?]

Miss Mc Donald: With him?

Mr. Chairman: I do not know. Let me recognize the Member for Chaguanas West. Please, Chaguanas West.

Mr. Warner: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Under 086, Road Rehabilitation Works in Fence-line Communities, one question with three parts. Is this a project under the EMBD? And if yes, how are contracts awarded? And the third part is: once the projects have been awarded, how are they certified?

Mr. Chairman: The hon. Minister.

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: Chairman, these are the fence-line projects under the Sugar Industry Labour Welfare Committee?

Mr. Warner: Yes.

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: And not the EMBD or not the HDC. It is the Sugar Welfare Labour Committee.

Mr. Warner: Sugar Welfare.

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: This is done in the communities that are under the legal authority of the Sugar Industry Labour Welfare Committee. As you know, the Sugar Industry Labour Welfare Committee has a jurisdiction over about 20 communities of the former sugar plantation, and we do fence-line work in those
communities as well. They are selected through a tendering process with the Sugar Labour Welfare Committee and awarded by that committee with the supervision of their own internal auditing department and supervision of the Ministry of Housing.

**Mr. Warner:** Thank you.

**Mr. Chairman:** The hon. Member for Diego Martin Central.

**Dr. Browne:** Chairman, I am under Apartment Complexes in Port of Spain and Surrounding Areas, Remedial Works, and to acknowledge that some upliftment has been done on apartment complexes, such as in Waterhole, Cocorite and Powder Magazine. But the Minister would be aware that there has been no provision for fire safety infrastructure yet again, and I am wondering if this is on the cards at the Ministry, and where would such funds be drawn from. I am very concerned about fire safety infrastructure.

**Mr. Chairman:** The hon. Minister?

**Dr. Browne:** And the second question—

**Hon. Dr. Moonilal:** Could I answer the first? Because you are asking some big questions, you know.

**Dr. Browne:** Yes.

**Hon. Dr. Moonilal:** The Powder Magazine, just to inform you, is in Port of Spain West. [Crosstalk]

**Mr. Chairman:** Please, please.

**Hon. Dr. Moonilal:** There are three phases of work involved in Powder Magazine? There are contracts to the value of about $25 million in Powder Magazine, Phase One, Phase Two, and on the Western Main Road, Harding Place, Cocorite. So that it is about $25 million in work to be done in Powder Magazine, Western Main Road, Harding Place, Cocorite.

**Dr. Browne:** Fire safety.

**Hon. Dr. Moonilal:** But to focus on your fire—issue with fire—the HDC—

**Dr. Browne:** Not my issue, the people’s issue.

**Hon. Dr. Moonilal:** The issue you have raised on behalf of the good people. The HDC has embarked upon an aggressive multi-faceted approach to life safety within its tenanted communities. It includes HDC fire prevention and life safety
awareness programmes, installation of fire prevention, fire protection and life safety equipment, public health and safety awareness campaigns, the HDC and T&TEC joint electrical inspections, assessment of design and retrofitting of fire staircases in HDC multi-storey communities.

On each of these headings I can give you some details but you would be happy to know that the fire prevention and life safety awareness programme, as of August 2014, has been completed in all of the corporation’s tenanted multi-storey communities: St. Francois Valley Road, Charford Court and Harpe Place, Bart Street, Jackson Street, Duke Street, Piccadilly, Duncan Street, Independence Square, George Street, Trou Macaque, Ramdial Mahabir, Las Alturas as well, Almond Court, Leon and Dorata Streets, Paradise Heights, Clifton Towers, John John, Piccadilly Street, Marcano Quarry, Harding Place, Powder Magazine, Phases One and Two, Maloney Gardens, Oropune—two projects in Oropune—Sunrise Drive and Breezy Heights, Mountain View, East Grove Fidelis Heights, La Goya and Peas Tree.

**Dr. Browne:** Mr. Chairman—

**Hon. Dr. Moonilal:** The installation of fire prevention, fire protection systems, the Housing Development Corporation has embarked on an initiative to implement fire protection systems to its multi-storey estates; full compliance with the international fire and life safety codes and the requirement of the Fire Service in Trinidad and Tobago. This has been an initiative designed to begin implementation of fire protection systems.

**Dr. Browne:** Chairman—

**Hon. Dr. Moonilal:** The first phase consists of the installation of fire prevention and protection systems, such as standpipe, fire hose reels in buildings of three or more storeys, smoke detectors and fire extinguishers within each apartment. Construction work on this programme started in May and is ongoing.

The second phase involves the assessment and life safety upgrades to all HDC multi-storey buildings to ensure compliance with applicable building codes and the T&T fire department regulations. Design proposals for this work have been received and are currently being undertaken.

Mr. Chairman, I could really go on, but I trust my friend heard enough. I can circulate a full brief on the---the important matter here as well, Sir, as you will recall, a lot of these buildings are very old buildings with suspect electrical systems over time, and we have embarked with the cooperation of Minister
Nizam Baksh and T&TEC, we have embarked upon a joint inspection procedure where we partner with T&TEC in executing joint inspections. We carry out this with the cooperation of Health, Safety and Environment Department and the engineering department, Health and Safety of T&TEC. This has brought an immediate outcome, in that we are now very clear and very stringent on the use of proper equipment and first-class electrical installation systems.

**Dr. Browne:** Chairman?

**Mr. Chairman:** A follow-up?

**Dr. Browne:** Yes. Well, my last question, and it was a question posed to the hon. Minister of Sport, and at that time there was an indication that this Minister would be able to respond. It has to do with, well, plans for infrastructure works on the HDC property that falls between Victoria Keys and Powder Magazine, Phase Two, which has been, I would say, idle for some years now, and the question is with regard to plans by the HDC or any other state entity that the Minister would be aware of, for that particular property, and I think it was due for a swimming pool at some point. What is the current status of that property and what plans—

3.50 p.m.

**Mr. Chairman:** He wants to know the current status and then after the Member for Chaguanas East.

**Hon. Dr. Moonilal:** What I can indicate, Mr. Chairman, is that the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development is now in discussions with the new Minister of Sport and the private interest in this matter to bring an early resolution. As you know, it is not the property owned by HDC. So that myself and Minister Rupert Griffith, we are in discussions with the private interest in this matter to resolve it.

**Mr. Chairman:** The Member for Chaguanas East and then the Member for Arouca/Maloney.

**Mr. Cadiz:** Chairman, I would just like to ask the Minister, the issue of the fire protection on the HDC housing, is it then that the housing developments were never designed with these systems or is it that they were designed but it was never installed?

**Hon. Dr. Moonilal:** Yes, I want to say yes. A lot of the housing stock we have inherited, housing stock from between 20 to, in some cases 40 years and in some cases, as in that place in Laventille, Trou Macaque and nearby, there were apartments there. We had to relocate persons because it is simply not feasible to
install new electrical systems in some of these buildings and so on. Many of the buildings have never been outfitted properly with electrical infrastructure.

I might add, Member for Chaguanas East, that even in new housing sites that were started in 2007—in Wellington for example—we have found that inferior materials have been used in the electrical system and now we are working with T&TEC to do a review and we may have to do over electrical systems for a housing site that was constructed in 2007. One house already burnt down, another house caught fire and then we moved in to take some type of precaution. But the problem is that you cannot just go overnight and change electrical systems in 200 housing units.

**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you very much. I recognize the Member for Arouca/Maloney and then last question before I go on, the Member for Chaguanas West.

**Miss Hospedales:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I have three specific items that I would like to highlight. One is 073 with respect to Refurbishment to Basketball Courts in Residential Communities in Trinidad and Tobago. I would like to find out exactly why there is no allocation under this particular item.

**Mr. Chairman:** That is one.

**Miss Hospedales:** That is one. The second thing is Item 075, Rehabilitation and Maintenance at HDC Rental Apartments and Housing Units. I would like to find out whether or not—

**Mr. Chairman:** That is 075.

**Miss Hospedales:** Mr. Chairman, I have not asked my question as yet.

**Mr. Chairman:** No, I am advising the Minister that you are concerned about 075, sub-item.

**Miss Hospedales:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

**Mr. Chairman:** I am helping you.

**Miss Hospedales:** I would like to find out from the Minister whether or not a structural assessment has been done on the 21 high-rise buildings in Maloney and if the answer to that question is no, when exactly will it be done.

The third specific issue I have is where under all of these items can I find the need for paving of car parks in HDC developments? The Maloney Housing Development is in dire need of having the car parks paved. I sent a request to the
Minister/Managing Director numerous times and I really need to know exactly when these car parks would be paved.

Mr. Chairman: All right, those points will be responded to by the hon. Minister.

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: All right. Thank you very much. Your car park will be paved by November so let us begin there. Under 075, you will get your car park. So 075 will take care of that. But I want to remind you, the matter of the basketball courts upgrading and so on, you will recall that under the Hoop of Life Programme inspired by the Member for Chaguanas West a lot of work was done in the development of basketball courts throughout the country. [Crosstalk] It was a good project. I got a shirt out of it I think. But “they cyah fit meh no more, yuh see”. But the Hoop of Life had captured a lot of the renovation of basketball courts in HDC sites and so on.

But, Member for Arouca/Maloney, we had a suspicion you would ask these questions so I have a note to read for you. The Maloney Gardens Development, one of the corporation’s oldest traditional tenanted housing development, is comprised of 21 four storey buildings housing 1,344 units. This development has been housing all these residents in excess of 30 years. Over the past four years, the HDC thought it prudent to assess the condition of these buildings and their related infrastructure and have found some major deterioration of the infrastructure, particularly with stair case, roof, railing, external floor slabs, external painting, road and car parks.

The total cost of the refurbishment programme to this development over the last three years was $24,988,629.15. This includes scope of work for 42 staircases, railings, roofs, car park, painting. So that we have completed work in your constituency in 2012, 2013, 2014 to the tune of $25 million for Arouca/Maloney. [Crosstalk] You did not know that.

This project was one of the first in the HDC aggressive programme of rehabilitation to bring our facilities up to world class standard. This programme is meant to enhance the quality of HDC’s rental housing stock and by extension the quality of life. Projects such as these have affected the building space and the rehabilitating of HDC’s image within our communities. Projects of this nature do not only provide much needed infrastructure but also provides employment opportunity and restores a general sense of caring and pride in these communities. [Crosstalk] I am responding.
The staircases—[Crosstalk] “Well, yuh want meh go down—I have the breakdown on the staircase but yuh doh wah me breakdown the staircases”. I have rails that they have done, I have the roof work that has been done in those areas, the painting that has been done, the exact buildings and so on that were done. But the long and short, it is about $25 million we have expended in two years in the Arouca/Maloney area. You can thank me later. I just wanted to remind—but they asked other questions.

Mr. Chairman: Yes, I recognize the Member—

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: No, but I did not finish my—

Mr. Chairman: Go ahead.

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: I will just want to say in passing because I really do not want to dwell on it too much unless a colleague would want to ask me further detail, but we have also been doing work in Dundonald Street, St. Francis Valley, in Port of Spain Central, Port of Spain East, Morvant and, of course, in San Fernando, Orchid Gardens, Pleasantville—which incidentally is in the constituency of San Fernando East.

If I am asked, I will give the figures and so on that we have expended in these areas but—[Crosstalk] Somebody may want to ask me, for example, how much money we have spent in Port of Spain, Morvant, San Fernando. You had asked how much money, okay, let me give you the figures for it.

Mr. Chairman: I recognize the Member for Chaguanas West.

Mr. Warner: I am under H. Mr. Chairman, under H—

Mr. Chairman: Yes, you go ahead.

Mr. Warner: Please, gentlemen, please.

Mr. Chairman: Members, I want to hear the hon. Member for Chaguanas West, please.

Mr. Warner: Under H, 002.

Mr. Chairman: Page 154.

Mr. Warner: Yes, you got $4.8 million in 2013, you get $10 million in 2014, you are getting $40 million 2015. I would want to know what this is about and how is this different from F, 358. Also, 005, what is that? 005 Home Improvement and New Housing Subsidies Programme.
Hon. Dr. Moonilal: What is 005?

Mr. Warner: I am asking you what is that? I am asking you three questions: 002, 005 and to explain the difference between 002 and 358.

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: Okay, 358 is no longer existing in our Ministry. That is why we do not have anything for it. That is now under the Ministry of Land and Marine Affairs.

Mr. Warner: Okay, so they will deal with it.

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: Squatter regularization, the 005 you are asking about—that is the subvention that we put together with the IDB. It is a contribution we make with the IDB towards a subsidy programme for home improvement.

Mr. Warner: How is that done?

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: This is the Government contribution.

Mr. Warner: How is that done? How do people access that fund?

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: There are regular ads in the newspaper—I will get an ad for you just now—where we advertise, people apply. We have a lot of people applying for grants, for house but also to help yourself, a matching subsidy, I think of $50,000; matching subsidy. If you are building a house and you have $50,000, we match with a subsidy of $50,000.

Mr. Warner: News to me, boy.

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: These things have been in the newspapers. We distributed grants already—but it also includes grants. The thing is that this is our counterpart funding for the IDB support.

Mr. Warner: And 002, $40 million.

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: Item 002, yeah, it is a part of a squatter regularization programme also part of the IDB programme. As you know, a couple of years ago—well, when you were elsewhere—we did sign a loan agreement with the IDB over squatter regularization and part of it is the provision for loans.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, two final questions before I conclude on this part. I recognize the member for Laventille East/Morvant.

Miss Cox: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I would like to know concerning the painting of buildings in Laventille East/Morvant and other areas, is this money coming from, 075, this $10 million? Is it from this vote? Yes, it is?
Hon. Dr. Moonilal: It is 075 Rehabilitation and Maintenance.

Miss Cox: 075, okay.

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: Some funding is coming from the—the HDC also executes this programme and remember the HDC raises money from rentals and so on. So they also fund a significant amount of this upgrade programme.

Miss Cox: Okay, well I know there is some upgrading going on, I would like to get a list of the contractors please who are—

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: A list of the contractors for upgrade?

Miss Cox: Upgrade and painting of the buildings.

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: Where? Which part?

Miss Cox: All, Trinidad.

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: The whole country.

Miss Cox: Yes.

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: Okay, no problem. The whole country.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, Infrastructure Development Fund. Hon. Members, the question is that the sum of $2,143,321,000 for Head 61 Ministry of Housing and Urban Development stand part of the Schedule.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 61 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Mr. Chairman: May I on behalf of the team, the Standing Finance Committee, thank you, hon. Minister and your team for being here.

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: Mr. Chairman, may I also be permitted to use the opportunity to thank the Permanent Secretary, Mrs. Sarah Briggs and the many members of this delegation coming out today from the various institutions and agencies of the Ministry who have come here and done a lot of preparatory work as is evident to prepare us for this committee. I want to thank them for their commitment and their work and to thank you for your chairmanship.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you. We now go to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Head 65.
Hon. Members, we are into Head 65: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, $414,428,660. I do not know if the hon. Minister, having made an earlier statement, whether he would like to share with us the priority areas of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs or whether you would like us to move immediately to other matters.

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: Mr. Chairman, it is the second half of my double-header. This time I am acting on behalf of the very distinguished Member for Tunapuna, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Winston Chanderban Dookeran and all I would like to do is introduce—we have our Permanent Secretary with us and other high-level officials of the Ministry. I would not want to delay Members any further, unless they would like me to make an opening statement. So that we can take some questions.

Question proposed: That Head 65 should stand part of the Schedule.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, that same sum that I have just mentioned 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. Sub-Head 01: Personnel Expenditure; Item 001: General Administration. Hon. Member for Point Fortin.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Thank you, Chair. To the hon. Minister, my major concern with the Ministry would be its personnel considerations. As I do believe, and I have seen here, there are a number of vacant positions both at head office and at the overseas missions and I am concerned as this is a service Ministry that this is impacting the performance of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and also it is affecting the ability to do the work that it is meant to do.

So I go to 01: Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance and also Vacant Posts, Salaries and COLA but head office and I enquire whether or not there are significant levels of professional vacancies, how long these have been existing and what are you doing to fill these?

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: What page are you on, page 334 is it?

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Page 335, 01 and 08 at the same time.

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: Mr. Chairman, I am instructed that we have a total number of staff within the Ministry of 619 and the number of staff at headquarters total 354. The total overseas missions, total 265. But you were
concerned with the vacant positions?

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: In head office first.

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: In head office first. We do not have it now. I would get that for you.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Okay, could you get that for me?

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: Sure.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Then my concern extends to the overseas missions, particularly at the head of the overseas missions. There are a number of missions aboard that are without heads of missions, Ambassadors and High Commissioners as well. What are you doing to ensure that these Ministries are properly manned?

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: You mean the missions?

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Yes, and that is with regard to overseas missions. And, further, I want to say that I note there is a decrease in the figure by $2 million for salaries and cost of living allowances as well and I am concerned that you are showing a decrease, yet there is known to be a number of vacancies and also you are projecting this period to put on three new missions. So, I find it hard to believe that you have a deficiency yet you are saying you are establishing three new missions in this year.

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: The brief response of course, as the Member would be aware, is that in the absence of an Ambassador or High Commissioner at any particular mission, the mission is headed by the senior Foreign Service Officer at this time. The Government, of course, is mindful of this and would be taking steps urgently to ensure that those positions are filled in the quickest possible time.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: But you have some missions where there are Foreign Service Officers II, at level II and III, manning the missions and that, to my mind, is inadequate. What are you doing about that? Are you sending senior persons out?

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: Yes, the short answer is yes that senior persons are heading out to ensure that senior people are in charge of these missions in the absence of a substantive High Commissioner.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Could you pass that list of those persons on to me as well?
Hon. Dr. Moonilal: Sure.

Mr. Chairman: All right, we go to Item 002: Overseas Mission, which is what you were dealing with. So we go to Sub-Head 02: Goods and Services; Item 001: General Administration.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Yes, Chair.

Mr. Chairman: I recognize the hon. Member for Point Fortin.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Contract employment, there is a substantial figure of—[Interruption]

Mr. Chairman: What page?

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Page 336. There is a substantial figure of $9.3 million under Contract Employment and I take it that those are for International Relations Officers. Yes? What I want to find out is whether or not a system has been put in place for these persons to be transferred to the Foreign Service Officers positions to ensure that these persons who are hard to find with a specialty in international relations that they in fact remain in the Ministry. I understand that there is high turnover and the Ministry is suffering from this. What are we doing to ensure that, number one, professional allowances are paid in the meantime, and number two, that they are in fact transferred to the more meaningful positions where there is a future ahead for those persons who have an interest in international relations?

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: Well, I am told that the figure is not only for those international relations officers but others as well. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is working with the Ministry of Public Administration to ensure that a proper policy framework is in place, to ensure that we have the right expertise in those positions and can not only recruit but retain those services.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Chair, I crave your indulgence. There are a number of issues that I wish to raise, with regard to several Heads and I will cite the Heads. It speaks to the last Auditor General’s Report but they relate as well to several Heads here and I will raise the Heads and I can do so briefly.

Under Contract Employment, the payment vouchers were not provided for 40 vouchers. That is for Head 16 and the related expenditure to those 40 vouchers.

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: Mr. Chairman, just on a point of clarification now. The Member is asking a question on contract employment before us—[Interruption]

Mr. Chairman: Yes.
Hon. Dr. Moonilal:—but is alleging to quote from documents that are not before us and what I would like is if the Member can ask a pointed question on the contract employment, without referencing a document that is not before us so we cannot see it or follow it. It probably is better if you have the question, which you have. Just say the Heading is this, is this the case and we can respond. I prefer if you do not quote extensively from a document that is not before us properly.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: But it is the Auditor General’s Report.

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: But we are not here with the Auditor General's Report for its examination.

Mr. Chairman: Yes, yes, but—

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Okay, fine. Let me try to help you, as you do not have the document. With regard to Head—[Interruption]

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: But the document is not before us. It is not on the table

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: That is fine.

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: We are helping you by telling you how you could ask the question.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: All right, there is precedent in this room for what I am doing.

With regard to Head 16: Contract Employment, there are a number of vouchers which were not produced, 40 in number, for related expenditure of $6.1 million. Can you account for that, because documents were not provided?

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: Okay, you see Chairman, the problem we would have here, if we continue this line, there is a problem that will emerge, the Member is attempting to quote from an Auditor General’s Report but in that may also have responses from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Now, without the report before us, for our consideration, we cannot give the response of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which would be in that document. So that, if, on another occasion, you can use the document when we all have it before us and we can give—because I am instructed that there are substantial responses to those issues in the document itself, but in the absence of examining the document we would go nowhere. So I would ask if the Member could get on to something that you are not quoting from somewhere else where committee Members are not in a position to look at the document and the national community and the Standing Finance Committee
cannot read offhand and look at the substantial response from the Ministry in question. I do not know if you follow me, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: Yes, I understand the point that you are making but may I ask, through you, whether the Permanent Secretary is aware of that report and whether action has been taken? You see, once action has been taken, once the Member is aware that action has been taken on the matter then she would probably just deal with the line Item.

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: Okay, on the first issue and again there is a danger of this approach because I will now tell the Member for Point Fortin that vouchers were presented there and documents were presented and provided to the Auditor General’s Department. So you say they were not presented, I am telling you they were presented. Vouchers and other outstanding documents were provided but there is a danger of this approach because I just do not want to have an empty hearing with “he say, she say”.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, all right. Well, hon. Member, if you could deal with the line Items and then let us go on. Okay?

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Okay. So is that the answer you are prepared to give me with regard to the contract employment and the $6.1 million for which vouchers were not presented?

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: Your information is incomplete. That is my answer.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: But that is not how I have it.

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: Well, that is not how I have it.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Can we move on? I think we should move on.

Mr. Chairman: Yes, I think so too.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: With regard to line Item 66: Hosting of Conferences Seminars and Other Functions, perhaps I can be provided with a written list. Yes?

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: Of course. A written list of what?

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Conferences, seminars that you intend to hold to the extent of $7 million for the year 2015, line 66.

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: Okay, you want a list of what we intend to do in the next year.

Mr. Chairman: In terms of conferences and so on.
Hon. Dr. Moonilal: In terms of $7.1 million.

Mr. Chairman: Yes. Are you continuing hon. Member?

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Yes, and with regard to $7 million. Just for the record of Parliament, the $16 million incurred in 2013 includes meetings of the Consular for Foreign and Community Relations, the Caricom Heads of Government—

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: Just for the noting, in 16, colleagues would see under 2013, actual $16 million. I am shocked that the Member did not ask to explain the $16 million but want the explanation for $7 million. Just for the record of Parliament, the $16 million incurred in 2013 includes meetings of the Consular for Foreign and Community Relations, the Caricom Heads of Government—

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: I did not ask for this. I do not need this.

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: The Caricom Heads of Government Meeting, the State Visit of the President of China.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: I did not ask for this. I did not ask for this.

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: The official visit of the Vice-President of the United States of America.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: I did not ask for this.

Mr. Chairman: Okay. Continue, please, hon. Member for Point Fortin.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: And I would go to Overseas Missions now, Contract Employment, as well. I would assume that this is for locally-recruited persons.

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: Page 337, I believe you are on.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Page 337, that is right, number 16: Contract Employment, $9 million.

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: Yes, you are correct.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: And I am asking whether or not this is for the locally-recruited members of staff that are overseas?

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: Also IROs.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: And also IROs. Well I wish to raise a question here as to a number of persons whose contracts were terminated and I understand that a matter was brought before the Industrial Court in Trinidad and Tobago. Has that matter been concluded? Yes? And what are the results of the matter?

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: The matter is currently before the court.
Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Still before the court? Thank you. Chair, you have the floor.

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: We are moving speedily.

Mr. Chairman: All right, we are going. We are going to Sub-Head 03: Minor Equipment Purchases; Item 001: General Administration; Item 002: Overseas Missions. We go to Sub-Head 04: Current Transfers and Subsidies.

Mr. Cadiz: Chair.

Mr. Chairman: Yes. Where are you?

Mr. Cadiz: On the same 04.

Mr. Chairman: 04? Right, I am dealing with Item 001: Regional Bodies. Are you under Regional Bodies?

Mr. Cadiz: Yes.

Mr. Chairman: Yes?

Mr. Cadiz: Chair, I understand the Caricom, I understand the ACS. What exactly is 03?

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: Just tell me where you are.

Mr. Cadiz: Page 338, under 04,001: Regional Bodies.

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: Or 03: Grenada.

Mr. Cadiz: I understand Caricom, I understand the ACS. What is 03, which is that Grenada Consular and Trade Office?

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: One minute. Chairman, in response to the Member for Chaguanas East, in 2003, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago made available office space in Port of Spain for the establishment of the Grenadian Trade and Consular Office in Port of Spain. The decision was made by the Government, in recognition of economic ties and other commonalities and acknowledging the need to deepen the process of integration between Grenada and Trinidad and Tobago. It was signed for a period of five years in the first instance and the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, in having the office in Port of Spain—there is an office on New Street, Port of Spain.

Mr. Cadiz: So is it still functional?

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: Functional now. It is a Trade and Consular Office in Port of Spain of the Government of Grenada where the cost of that office is being carried by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago. It is the cost of electricity,
water and other utilities that the Government of Trinidad and Tobago is carrying.

4.20 p.m.

This was established by Cabinet Minute 1843 of August 29, 2002, where the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago then gave support to the establishment in Port of Spain of a consular office of Grenada and undertook to pay the bills. So that explanations it.

Mr. Cadiz: So we are working with Grenada then?

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: Yes.

Mr. Cadiz: And supporting Grenada?

Mr. Chairman: Item 003, United Nations Organizations; Item 007, Households; Item 009, Other Transfers—yes?

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Thank you, Chair. I just want to find out whether or not the Ministry has met the requirements of CSME, in fact, well, then fulfilled all of its mandates? And whether there are any outstanding matters, and that is apart from the Fair Trading Commission, which I know after five years, your Government is now appearing to have a kick-start.

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: The Caricom Single Market and Economy, I think you are on 02, page 340?

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Yes.

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: And problem is what, the estimates?

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: No. I am just asking whether or not you have met all the requirements of the CSME, and that is, fulfil all of its mandates apart from that which I know is already outstanding, the Fair Trading Commission—

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: Mr. Chairman, I really do not need the inference and observations. The question is if we have met the requirements.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: No, no, I just—

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: And the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is actively pursuing—

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: I said apart for the Fair Trading Commission, which you are now starting.

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is actively pursuing this matter to meet all outstanding obligations.
Mr. Chairman: We go to Item 009, Other Transfers; Item 010, Other Transfers Abroad; Sub-Head 06, Current Transfers to Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies; Item 004, Statutory Boards. We are on the estimate of the Development Programme, Sub-Head 09, Development Programme; Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services.

Hon. Members, the question is that the sum of 4—yes?

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Mr. Chair, Item 34, Refurbishment—

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: What page are you on, Madam?

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Page 168, a simple question, are you sure this is—034, an expenditure of $12.2 million in 2014, with another million to be spent in 2015. It is equivalent of more than US $2 million. Are you sure this is refurbishment?

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: Just for me please, are you on 168?

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Sorry, 3-4, last item.

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: 034, Refurbishment of Residence in Geneva, is it?

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Yes.

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: Okay, sure.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: All I am asking because it seems quite a tall figure $13 million, but it is for refurbishment not purchase. So I was wondering—I want a clarification on that.

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: I am instructed, Chairman, the refurbishment of the residence in Geneva is a revised estimate of $12.2 million. Refurbishment works are being finalized at this time. As the works have commenced it was noted that the issues were deeper than anticipated. Work is required in the following areas: heating system, plumbing system, electrical system, the roof, ventilation system, asbestos remediation, windows and doors. The works include light demolition and clearance of the interior and heavy demolition. The projected expenditure for 2014 took—

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: It would be better to buy.

Hon. Dr. Moonilal:—into account the rate of exchange.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Okay, and final question, on 48, 50 and 52. The establishment of new Consulates Panama, Colombia and Saudi Arabia. I want to find out whether or not feasibility studies have been done or some kind of due
diligence as to whether or not these offices will serve the best interest of Trinidad and Tobago, and having in mind as well, whether or not we have gotten maximum gain from the offices over the last four years in Washington, Nigeria, London, Ottawa, Jamaica, India and here we are moving on to establish three more offices.

**Hon. Dr. Moonilal:** Chairman, in terms of establishing a new consulate in Panama, $1 million provided. The establishment of the consulate in Panama is strategically and geopolitically important for this country, and it is in keeping with our foreign policy initiative to enhance and expand commercial and economic trade activities in Latin America. The following bilateral agreements have already been signed: agreements of enhancing economic cooperation, visa waiver agreement, the agreement for cooperation in the area of energy and energy affairs.

Chairman, the expansion of the Panama Canal will also provide new business and investment opportunities. On May 14, 2012—

**Mrs. Gopee-Scoon:** Could you send it in writing?

**Hon. Dr. Moonilal:**—a memorandum of understanding was signed between Petrotrin and Melones Oil Terminal limited, a private Panamanian firm, in order to explore bunkering opportunities in the Panama Canal. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs plans to lease an appropriate building for the consulate, and equip and outfit same, as well as assign staff.

In Colombia, Chairman, Trinidad and Tobago and Colombia have had strong bilateral relations in the areas of trade, security and energy and by Cabinet Note in July 2012 agreed to the establishment of a Consulate General in Colombia, noting that Colombia could provide a viable market for Trinidad and Tobago, and is significantly larger than any of the Caricom member states combined. The Ministry plans to lease appropriate building and so on.

Finally, Trinidad and Tobago is seeking to strengthen bilateral contacts with Saudi Arabia through the establishment of a presence in that country. To that end, the Minister of Foreign Affairs is preparing at this moment a Note to take to Cabinet, concerning the establishment of a Mission in Saudi Arabia. As you know, Chairman, a significant population of Trinidad and Tobago is of Islamic origin, and each year we work very closely with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia concerning visa requirements and travel for citizens of Trinidad and Tobago. We have been working through the Caracas Mission of Saudi Arabia at this time. So
quite clearly apart from cultural and religious ties, there is also significant business and commercial interests in that region, and Saudi Arabia we believe is an ideal place to look at now.

Mrs. Gopee-Scoon: Do you think you have the staffing for this? Do you have a staffing problem?

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: And I like to remind the Member for Point Fortin, she just raised it, but as she said staffing, we have now established The Diplomatic Academy, and the Academy would be training persons. We are working with the Ministry of Public Administration concerning recruitment and retention of adequate expertise staff. So I am convinced we will.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much. Hon. Members, the question is that sum of $414,428,660 for Heads 65, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs stand part of the Schedule.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 65 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much hon. Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Minister of Housing and Urban Development, and the members of staff of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for your support and assistance.

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: Chairman, may I also take the opportunity to thank very sincerely and deeply, Permanent Secretary, Miss Frances Seignoret and her staff who had worked diligently over the past few weeks preparing various briefs and documents for the Standing Finance Committee. This is not my daytime job. I work with them off and on and I would like to thank them for their cooperation and coming to the Parliament, and spending a considerable amount of time with us today, not necessarily in the meeting in the Hall, but in being in attendance and their contribution. Thank you very much.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much. Thank you very much.

Head 01.

The next Head is Head 01, Office of the President.

We invited someone who is the accounting officer from the President’s Office, we are yet to see that person, but we have work to do. We are proceeding. We have asked the hon. Minister of Finance and the Economy to just assist us in this exercise. I understand the sensitivity of these offices.

Question proposed: That Head 01 stand part of the Schedule.
Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, the sum of $34,272,200 for Head 01, the Office of the 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. Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure; Item 001, General Administration; Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services; Item 001, General Administration; Item 002, Tobago Services, Sub-Head—the Member for Arouca/Maloney.

Miss Hospedales: Mr. Chairman, under Goods and Services, 001, Sub-Item 99, there is only $1,000 allocated under the Employee Assistance Programme. I would like to ask the Minister whether that is adequate.

Hon. Howai: What had happened was that the same amount had been allocated in 2014 and it had not been used. In fact, it was felt there was no need to increase it. Consequently, if there is need to do so, I suppose they will make some kind of appropriate transfer or virement within the different Heads during the course of the year.

Mr. Chairman: Do you follow that Member? Okay.

We go to Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases; Item 001. General Administration.

Hon. Members, the question is that the sum of $34,272,200 for Head 01, the Office of the President stand part of the Schedule

Question put and agreed to.

Head 01 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Head 08.

Mr. Chairman: We now go to Head 08, Elections and Boundaries Commission.

Hon. Members, the next Head of expenditure for consideration is the Elections and Boundaries Commission. The Minister of Finance and the Economy has kindly agreed to assist our Committee in consideration of this Head, which as you know is an independent body. He will assist in obtaining clarification from the accounting officer, in relation to expenditure proposed by the Elections and Boundaries Commission, and he will answer those questions that directly relate to his portfolio as Minister of Finance and the Economy.

Question proposed: That Head 08 stand part of the Schedule.
Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, the sum that I have just mentioned 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. Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure; Item 001, General Administration; Item 002, Election Expenses; Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services; Item 01, General Administration; Item 02, Election Expenses. I recognize the hon. Member for Arouca/Maloney.

Miss Hospedales: Yes, Mr. Chair, under Goods and Services, General Administration—

Mr. Chairman: The Member for Diego Martin/North East as well. Sorry, Sir.

Miss Hospedales:—Item Sub-Item 16, with reference to Contract Employment, I am not sure if the question I am asking really falls under that area, but there have always been concerns expressed by officials of the EBC with reference to insufficient staff to conduct verification exercises. I would like to find out whether or not any allowance has been made under Contract Employment to hire additional staff who will conduct these verification exercises.

Hon. Howai: This increase is precisely for that, the field investigation officers, as well as various officers to assist in checking the status of the electorate and so on.

Mr. Imbert: Yes, Mr. Chairman, could the Minister tell me whether the increases in allocation under Personnel Expenditure, are sufficient for the conduct of the next general election which we assume will come in fiscal 2015?

4.35 p.m.

Could the Minister also tell us, under 02, Goods and Services, whether—because I am not certain that what was just said is correct; the last time a national house-to-house survey was done was about 12 or 13 years ago—in preparation for this next general election, the EBC has been given funds to do a national house-to-house survey of all one million electors?

Mr. Chairman: The hon. Minister of Finance and the Economy.

Hon. Howai: Mr. Chairman, with respect to the staffing, we have made, for the election, allowances for that as well as for the possibility of run-offs. In discussions with the Elections and Boundaries Commission, the amounts that have been allocated appear, based on their evaluations, to be appropriate.
Mr. Imbert: Minister, I am talking about a national house-to-house survey.

Hon. Howai: No, no, no, I was—

Mr. Chairman: He was dealing with one and he is coming—

Hon. Howai: There were three questions you asked.

Mr. Chairman: Continue, please.

Hon. Howai: Let me come to that issue. With respect to a national house-to-house, the EBC did not ask for that to be included this year. What they did ask is that the allowance be made for selected field investigations to be carried out based on their determination of where they would like to have these verifications take place and we have made allowances for the ones that were requested.

Mr. Imbert: Have you given them everything they have asked for?

Hon. Howai: I think it is more or less what they asked for. I mean, there may have been—

Mr. Imbert: It is close.

Mr. Chairman: Yes, it is fairly close to what they asked for.

Mr. Imbert: All right.

Mr. Chairman: All right. We go on to:
Sub-Head 03: Minor Equipment Purchases
Item 001: General Administration
Sub-Head 09: Development Programme
Item 005: Multi-Sectorial and Other Services
Infrastructure Development Fund

Question put and agreed to.

Head 8 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Head 12.

Mr. Chairman: We go to Head 12, Public Service Appeal Board. Hon. Members, we also invited someone from the Public Service Appeal Board. They are yet to arrive. We cannot wait any longer. We are moving.

Question proposed: That Head 12 stand part of the Schedule.
Mr. Chairman: Head 12, Public Service Appeal Board, $4,197,086. Hon. Members, that sum 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
Item 001: General Administration
Sub-Head 02: Goods and Services
Item 001: General Administration
Sub-Head 03: Minor Equipment Purchases
Item 001: General Administration

Question put and agreed to.

Head 12 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Head 05.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, the next Head of expenditure up for your consideration is the Parliament. The Minister of Finance and the Economy has kindly agreed to assist the committee in its consideration of this Head, which is an independent arm of the State. He will assist in obtaining clarification from the accounting officer in relation to expenditure proposed by the Parliament and will answer those questions that directly relate to his portfolio as the Minister of Finance and the Economy.

Question proposed: That Head 05 stand part of the Schedule.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, the sum of $144,063,200 comprised of moneys proposed for expenditure under the following Sub-Heads and Items are to be found in the Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure and the Draft Estimates of the Development Programme.

Sub-Head 01: Personnel Expenditure
Item 001: General Administration
Item 002: Office of the Ombudsman

We go to:
Sub-Head 02: Goods and Services
Item 001: General Administration

I recognize the hon. Member for Diego Martin North/East.

**Mr. Imbert:** Yes, Mr. Chairman, the House Committee has been looking at the Operations of Constituency Offices, which is 02/64. These allowances for staff and so on have not been increased for, I would say, about 10 years. I have scrutinized these estimates and I am satisfied that Sub-Item 64 is short by about $12 million. It is my understanding that each constituency will require about $900,000 for staff, NIS, COLA, rental of offices and all the other expenses associated with the operation of a constituency office.

My understanding is that the Parliament requires $39 million for operation of constituency offices and then we have some constituency offices in hot spots where security—some of the Members of Parliament are under threat from the criminal elements. My understanding is that the Parliament has agreed to provide security, armed security and so on, at these offices. So I am told this Sub-Item requires $42 million. Only $28 million has been allocated and, if the Parliament is to properly cater for Members of Parliament and their constituency offices and their staff, they will have to take money from other areas, such as medical expenses and things like that, which I would think would be a tragedy.

So I would like the Minister of Finance and the Economy to give this Parliament an undertaking that any supplementary funds required for Sub-Item 64 be provided at the mid-year review so that the Parliament does not have to scratch and scramble and bleed other essential services to facilitate Sub-Item 64.

**Mr. Chairman:** You are talking about Item—

**Mr. Imbert:** I am talking about 02/001.

**Mr. Chairman:** The Sub-Item?

**Mr. Imbert:** The Sub—Mr. Chairman, what I do not want to happen, since I know the Parliament will need to spend about $40-odd million to properly provide for constituency offices in fiscal 2015, is that the Parliament goes scrambling around, taking money from medical expenses, other contracted services and other essential—I do not want this to happen. I do not want the Parliament under pressure, so I would like the Minister to give an undertaking that he will provide supplementary funds under Sub-Item 64, if required.

**Mr. Chairman:** Yes, the hon. Minister of Finance and the Economy.
Hon. Howai: Mr. Chairman, the increases which have been approved by Cabinet actually came in a bit later than the time in which we prepared this and, therefore, we have no difficulty, recognizing the fact that the Member is correct, there will have to be an increase. We can do so in the mid-year review.

Mr. Chairman: I recognize the Members for Laventille East/Morvant and St. Joseph.

Miss Cox: Thank you. Mr. Chair, I have two questions.

Mr. Chairman: Two questions?

Miss Cox: One is a spill-off from the Member for Diego Martin North/East. I am one of those constituencies that requested security and I am still awaiting that security. I know that it was promised some time ago and the office was called and said they were coming and that is about some months ago and no security ever turned up. So I would like to know if it is a financial problem.

Mr. Chairman: The hon. Minister of Finance and the Economy.

Hon. Howai: Mr. Chairman, no, it is not really a financial problem. We think we have sufficient allocation here, plus what we do in the mid-year. What has happened is that the Parliament asked the police to do a survey and to confirm what are indeed the hot spots, so that when we make the decision it is on the basis of something that has been properly evaluated. So I do not have the date for the completion of that, but we will communicate that as soon as we have it.

Miss Cox: The police has to do a survey to find out if that is a hot spot?

Hon. Howai: The police are doing the survey now, as I understand it.

Mr. Chairman: Yes, they are doing the survey, based on what the police—

Miss Cox: You know, by the time you wait for that to happen, something could happen in the office. We had an incident at my office already. I do not think we still have to wait on the police.

Hon. Howai: We will ask that the matter be accelerated and expedited and we will seek to have this in the shortest possible time. The point is well taken.

Miss Cox: All right. I have another question concerning promotions, publicity and so on. I feel that there should be a greater increase—I see there is an increase of $500,000—Mr. Chair, given the talk about recall of Members of Parliament and so on. I made the point before—I would need the Minister of Finance and the Economy to hear me, when he is—
Mr. Chairman: Minister.

Miss Cox: Ready?

Hon. Minister: Yeah, uh-huh.

Miss Cox: Okay, good. There is a lot of talk about recall and so on, Minister, of Members of Parliament and so on—and I am dealing with the Sub-Item 62, Promotions, Publicity and Printing. I think that in this area there should be an increase in funding because I believe that the Parliament also has a responsibility to educate the public on the work of the Members of Parliament.

For me, I always talk about the fact that I know a lot of constituents are really not aware. They have in their minds what they think the role of the Member of Parliament should be, which may not be. So they will judge you based on what they think and not really what is right and what is the real situation. So, I feel that the Parliament should undertake to increase that information to the public about the role of Members of Parliament.

Mr. Chairman: The hon. Minister of Finance and the Economy.

Hon. Howai: Chairman, we have no difficulty in considering an increase, but we would need to see it in the context of a programme of work that we intend to use the funds for and what the estimates are of that. Certainly, again, I presume, if such a matter came up and was completed and submitted by the mid-year review, we would be in a position to consider it at that time.

Mr. Chairman: I recognize the Member for Oropouche East. You wanted to raise a point? Hon. Member for St. Joseph?

Mr. Deyalsingh: Thank you, Chair. Under the same heading, Goods and Services, especially as it relates to constituency offices: Minister, in a constituency like St. Joseph, which is very big, I have three offices: one in St. Joseph; one in Mount Lambert and one in Aranguez.

Now, the words “constituency office” in my case, is a misnomer because two of those offices are actually houses—buildings—and I get the same allowance to maintain “buildings” as opposed to somebody who just has an office, like an anteroom, an office, a pantry. I have expenses in two of these offices, which are actually homes converted into constituency offices, where out of the $5,800 allowance we get per month to cover things like telephone and electricity, I now have to dip into my pocket to maintain these offices, especially when these “houses” need minor repairs.
For example, in my St. Joseph office, the gate fell into the road. I phoned the Parliament. “Well, get a quote.” But, Minister, the gate is in the road. I had to call my welder on the same day—it was an emergency—to weld the gate; spend my money. Very often when you have plumbing issues, I cannot wait on the Parliament to send a plumber. I have yards to clean, trees to trim, bush to cut because these are houses with yards and $5,800 a month just does not cut it and I have to spend my own money to get these things done. It is just not right.

4.50 p.m.

Mr. Chairman: All right, well, the Minister will address that. Let us go to Laventille East/Morvant.

Miss Cox: I just want to agree with the Member for St. Joseph, because according to where you are renting or so, you have a lot of other expenses. Like, you know, now people have to pay their WASA bill also which was not, I do not think that that was counted when the Parliament was doing the allowance. So some landlords you have to pay the WASA bill, okay. And even where you are located, like in my constituency it is very difficult, so even if you want to move, it is very difficult to even get the space that you need for a constituency office. But my question is 58, Medical Expenses, I see there is an increase for medical expenses and does that cover the long-awaited medical that the parliamentarians so desparatly need, Members of Parliament.

Hon. Howai: Well, in terms of the first question, it is just a policy issue which was mentioned by the MP for St. Joseph and I think we will have to make a policy decision on that. It is not really a line Item to say, right.

Mr. Chairman: Yes.

Hon. Howai: With respect to the $500,000 going to $5.5 million, yes, we anticipate that the Government would have made a decision to approve the medical plan for parliamentarians so we made an allowance to pay the fees, as a result of that.

Mr. Chairman: All right, I recognize the Member for La Brea.

Mr. Jeffrey: Minister, if I get you right, it means that those parliamentarians who had acted upon the circular we had last year and went and do the medical, will we be getting a reimbursement?

Hon. Howai: Mr. Chairman, I cannot answer that. I do not think that it would be retroactive, but I am not sure. I would need to find out.
Mr. Jeffrey: What? But we got—
Mr. Deyalsingh: Hold on! Hold on! I am coming back.
Mr. Chairman: The Member for La Brea. [Crosstalk]
Mr. Deyalsingh: “You have to be kiddin me”. [Laughter]
Mr. Jeffrey: We got a circular, right, that told us—
Miss Cox: Just take it to the lawyers.
Mr. Jeffrey: We got a circular to the effect, all right, and we went and used the circular, acted upon the circular and we went and do the medical, so I cannot understand why we cannot get the reimbursement.
Hon. Howai: Okay. Okay. I would need to get clarification on that, Mr. Chairman.
Mr. Chairman: We will need clarification and we will get back to Members okay.
Mr. Deyalsingh: I cannot believe this contempt for parliamentarians.
Mr. Chairman: No. No. No. Do not get too worried and so on, we will look at it.
Hon. Howai: We will deal with it. Okay.
Mr. Deyalsingh: But we acted in good faith on a circular, we submitted our claims and now I am hearing it is not retroactive to the date of the circular.
Mr. Chairman: We will get back to you. Let us go on.
Mr. Deyalsingh: This is contempt of parliamentarians
Mr. Chairman: No, it is not contempt, we will get back to you. Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases; Item 001, General Administration; Item 02, Office of the Ombudsman; Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies, Item 02, Commonwealth Bodies, Item 04, International Bodies. We go to the estimates of Development Programme. Sub-Head 09, Development Programme, Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services; Infrastructural Development Fund.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 05 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much, hon. Minister of Finance and the Economy and the team. We now go to Head 02, The Auditor General. Hon.
Members, we are at Head 02, Auditor General, $41,324,300.

Head 02.

Question proposed: That Head 02 stand part of the Schedule.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, the sum that I have mentioned 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. Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure; Item 01, General Administration, Item 002, Tobago Services. I recognize the hon. Member for Tobago West.

Dr. Baker: I saw an increase under Contract Employment, 02, for Tobago Services of $110,800. Is the Tobago unit adequately staffed at the moment? That is my first question.

Hon. Howai: It is a challenge that we face in Tobago. We are trying to get contract staff to fill the positions and what we try to do is to move some people from Trinidad from time to time to assist with the audits in Tobago, but it is a challenge that we face.

Mr. Chairman: Yes, hon. Member.

Dr. Baker: In that regard, is that the reason we have not gotten the last five audited statements on the THA—seven, sorry. Seven.

Hon. Howai: It is two parts, part is that we did receive the information late, but also a big challenge remains, a challenge of getting people to do the audits in Tobago and that has kept back the Auditor General.

Mr. Chairman: The hon. Member for Tobago West, you understand?

Dr. Baker: Yes, but I still have two subsequent questions.

Mr. Chairman: Yes, proceed.

Dr. Baker: With each audit there is supposed to be a management letter sent to the THA, can I get the undertaking from the Auditor General to have copies for the last five years of those management letters sent to the THA and the responses to date for the last five years?

Hon. Howai: Well, it can only be done when the audit is completed.

Mr. Chairman: That can only be done when the audit is completed. Next question.
Dr. Baker: The last question from me, when are we likely to receive any of those reports, or can we get the undertaking that we may get one or two before the end of this calendar year?

Hon. Member: What line Item again?

Dr. Baker: In relation to the staff complement that they have—

Mr. Chairman: The staff complement, he is dealing with Tobago Services.

Dr. Baker:—do they have enough manpower to give me at least one or two audit reports?

Hon. Howai: The Auditor General has indicated that she would give it her best effort, but given her constraint she cannot say that she can commit to getting it done by the end of this year.

Dr. Baker: Because I received a management letter from my Ministry, which is only a year and a half old, or two years old—the THA has been there for quite a long time, I think it is a very interesting picture that I can get my own but not for the THA.

Mr. Chairman: Yes, so we recognize the Member for Diego Martin North/East and the Member for Tobago East.

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Chairman, with respect to 001, could the Minister tell me what is the total establishment, approved establishment in terms of public service positions and contract officers for the Auditor General’s Department, and when you tell me that, how many vacancies you have in terms of public service positions and contract positions.

Hon. Howai: We have 299 posts which are established positions and these would be permanent positions, and we have 199 persons on staff, so we have 100 vacancies.

Mr. Imbert: A hundred vacancies in terms of establishment positions, what about contract positions?

Hon. Howai: We only have two contract positions right now.

Mr. Imbert: All right. Could the Minister of Finance and the Economy explain, since there are 100 vacancies in the Auditor General’s Department as you
have just confirmed, why have you not allocated them with the necessary funds to fill those vacancies?

**Hon. Howai:** The Auditor General confirms that she has the funds.

**Mr. Imbert:** Come on, I am seeing $800,000 here for vacant posts, be serious. Minister of Finance and the Economy, I am talking to you. Do not bring the public servant into this. Do not try and shift the blame on them. I am asking the Minister of Finance and the Economy, the Minister, why have you not provided for 100 positions?

**Mr. Chairman:** Yes, he is answering you.

**Mr. Imbert:** That should be about $15 million not $800,000. “Doh try and throw the blame on dem.”

**Hon. Howai:** The Auditor General is an independent position and we are guided by the requests and the responses and so on that they have given us and my understanding from the responses is that they think they have been adequately supplied with funding to ensure that they could achieve what they need to achieve.

**Mr. Imbert:** With a 100 vacancies? You are trying to tell this Parliament that, Minister? You are not providing money to them?

**Hon. Howai:** No, we are not.

**Mr. Chairman:** The Auditor General has advised the Minister—

**Mr. Imbert:** How come? This is a serious thing.

**Hon. Howai:** We take it very seriously.

**Mr. Imbert:** There are 100 vacancies—

**Mr. Chairman:** Let us go to the hon. Member for Tobago East.

**Hon. Howai:** Chairman, if I could also add—

**Mr. Chairman:** Yes.

**Hon. Howai:**—just to make sure because there is also a very significant increase in contract employment—

**Mr. Chairman:** Yes, you want to just outline that for us?

**Hon. Howai:** Yeah. In Head 16, we have also increased contract employment quite significantly, and the reason we have done that is again to bring additional contract people on to fill the vacancies.
Mr. Chairman: The hon. Member for Tobago East.

Mrs. Alleyne-Toppin: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, may I ask through you, how soon can we expect to have some kind of redress, address to the vacancies problem in Tobago so that we can expect an Auditor General’s Report for 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, as early as possible? I feel as if that there must be some kind of legal requirement here that the assembly is audited and I do not think a staffing problem should be something that we should use as an excuse for this not to happen. I think it is too long. So how can we address the staffing problem? And my second question, if I may add to that question, is: why is it that the Auditor General’s Department in Tobago is so separate from the one in Trinidad, that the Trinidad auditors cannot be used to do the Tobago audit? Although you have less than you need to have, but it is untenable for us to digest.

Hon. Howai: First of all, the Auditor General has indicated that she expects to bring on staff, 5 Public Audit Examiner I, who will be assigned to Tobago to help to deal with this particular backlog, so they expect that the process should be speeded up once that is in place. So I think they should start to see some progress being made, but she was a little hesitant to commit to the date that they had indicated.

Mr. Chairman: The hon. Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Minister, would the Auditor General, through you, be able to state—I am looking at page 8, 002, Tobago Services, and there is a line Item, Contract Employment, $110,000, an increase, can I ask whether that increase comes from the unspent balance that Tobago House of Assembly has on a yearly basis? And if so, what happens to the unspent balance at the end of the year, if the Auditor General has ever looked into that at any time?

Hon. Howai: No. The funds that are here will not come from the unspent balances which are held to the account of the Tobago House of Assembly. As we had indicated, that is usually capital expenditure. I think the last part was capital expenditure.

Mr. Chairman: I recognize the Member for Tobago West.

Dr. Baker: Just one question, under 02, Sub-Item 28, Other Contracted Services; does the Auditor General’s Department have the capacity to outsource the auditing function under this vote?
5.05 p.m.

**Hon. Howai:** Mr. Chairman, the Auditor General may contract out audits. With respect to the THA, the Auditor General indicates that she has an opinion which says that because the THA is a public account body that such an audit cannot be contracted out.

**Dr. Baker:** Chair, one last question from me. I find it hard to believe that after the expenditure of over $20 billion allocated by this Parliament, that the Auditor General of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago can think this function is not one that is of such significant importance that we cannot assign auditors to treat with the matter or at least outsource that function—TT $20 billion.

**Mr. Imbert:** What line item is this? [Crosstalk]

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Just going a little further to the answer given by the hon. Minister of Finance and the Economy, that the Auditor General has indicated that based on the opinion of probably a legal counsel, one person, whether the question of the Tobago House of Assembly spending $20 billion can go on just that one opinion. Have they sought to get another opinion to see whether that second opinion corroborates with the first, because lawyers differ in their thinking?

**Hon. Howai:** Chairman, the Auditor General has indicated that she is prepared to take another look at this particular matter.

**Mr. Chairman:** The Auditor General is prepared to take another look at the matter.

Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases; Item 01, General Administration; Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies; Item 01, Regional Bodies; Item 002, Commonwealth Bodies; Item 04, International Bodies. *Estimates of the Development Programme*, Sub-Head 09, Development Programme, Item 005, Multisectoral and Other Services.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Head 2 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.*

**Mr. Chairman:** I wish to thank the Auditor General and her staff and her team and, of course, the hon. Minister of Finance and the Economy for helping us this afternoon. Thank you very much, Auditor General and your team.

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Members, we have come to the end of the various Heads so we are now going to consider the Schedule.
Question put and agreed to.
Schedule ordered to stand part of the Bill.
Clauses 1 to 3 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Question put and agreed to: That the Bill be reported to the House.

House resumed.

Bill reported, read the third time and passed.

ADJOURNMENT

The Minister of Housing and Urban Development (Hon. Dr. Roodal Moonilal): Mr. Speaker, before moving the adjournment, I just want to take one minute to record the historic week we have had at the Parliament; first to congratulate the Minister of Finance and the Economy and his staff on the passage of the Appropriation Bill. [Desk thumping]

This has been an historic week in the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, and I wanted to congratulate all Members of the Parliament, both on the Government and Opposition Benches, for their participation in this historic Finance Committee, where the work of the Government and all the independent institutions have been exposed to a very laborious process of transparency, accountability and scrutiny, unparalleled in the history of Trinidad and Tobago. [Desk thumping] The Government stands committed to this process. It has been inspired by our governance approach, led by the hon. Kamla Persad-Bissessar, the Member of Parliament for Siparia, who also extends her appreciation to all Members of the Parliament on this sitting.

Mr. Speaker, may I also take the opportunity to congratulate you on the wonderful job you have done as Chairman of the Finance Committee in this historic sitting. May I also congratulate and thank all the hard-working members of staff of the Parliament, [Desk thumping] the Clerk of the House, the members of the Hansard team, the security, the kitchen personnel, the support services, the orderlies, everyone at the Parliament who has contributed for this entire week. It was a test match this week, and I want to congratulate all members of staff of the Parliament for their support and commitment beyond the call of duty. [Desk thumping]

I am informed that during the course of this week, 400 high-level public officers attended the Parliament to present themselves for accountability and transparency—400. [Desk thumping] I want to also thank all those Members who came for every different Ministry and participated, and the very long hours of
work and diligence put in by all public officers who supported the various Ministers during this process.

It is a process that has been a learning experience for all of us. If it was at the beginning that some people were anxious about it and suspicious about it, it has proven to be extremely successful. The closet was opened and there were no skeletons, there were only good and clean linens. [Desk thumping] So we are extremely grateful.

We are aware, Members of the Government, that serious commitment and assurances have been given to the House and to the Finance Committee, and Members of the Government in particular, since it relates to them, are committed to ensuring that the commitments and assurances made will be delivered in a timely manner, notwithstanding in some cases the comprehensive responses that are required.

On this very historic day and during this historic period in the evolution of our parliamentary democracy, I want to congratulate all parties for the wonderful job we have done in this country.

Mr. Speaker, with those very few words, I beg to move that this House now adjourn to a date to be fixed.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, before putting the question, I too would like to take the opportunity to extend my gratitude to you Members at the conclusion of the budget debate held in this honourable House for this Fifth Session of the Tenth Parliament.

This debate which commenced on Monday, September 08, 2014, was indeed laborious, but necessary to the budget process. As you all know, our revised Standing Orders have given us the opportunity to strengthen the budget approval process via the first ever publicly broadcast scrutiny of the budget estimates in the Standing Finance Committee, of which it is my pleasure to report, has been a resounding success. [Desk thumping]

I noted that the Opposition was thoroughly prepared to pose distinct questions to Ministers on the Estimates of Expenditure, and equally so, Ministers came prepared to clearly answer those questions which made for decisive committee deliberations. In turn, the people of Trinidad and Tobago were given better insight into this year’s proposed budget.
As Speaker of this honourable House, I can sincerely say that despite the rigours of the debate, you have endeavoured to observe protocol and procedure and have shown regard for the authority of the Chair. Therefore, I thank you, hon. Members, for your display of discipline, decorum and patience in the performance of your oversight duty as parliamentarians. As a result, you have, indeed, upheld this House’s core principles of transparency and accountability.

Also, I am certain that I speak on behalf of all the hon. Members of this House, as I take the opportunity to extend utmost gratitude to the staff of the Parliament, who have given their unwavering support to us throughout the debate. Particularly, I would like to mention the reporters and editors of the Hansard Unit, the Food and Beverage management and team, the Broadcasting Unit, the Marshal’s Office, the Parliamentary Police Unit and the Secretariat, whose labour continues to be invaluable to both Houses of Parliament.

Finally, I would like to note the critical support provided to this debate by all the technocrats of the Government Ministries and departments brought before the committee and, in particular, the staff of the Budget Division of the Ministry of Finance and the Economy and the staff of the Government Printery. [Desk thumping]

I once again extend thanks to you for your dedication in service, and extend a very warm invitation to you to join me in the Members dining room for the usual post-budget debate gathering.

Hon. Members, I want to ask Members, both the Leader of Government Business and the Chief Whip, to provide us with the names of your Members to populate the 12 committees that we have established in our Standing Orders. So at the next sitting of the House, I would be able to have the pleasure of announcing the Members of those 12 committees, so we can begin the work of the people in the Parliament. So I ask Members of the Opposition to convey to the Chief Whip the need to submit the names of their Members, and the Leader of the House to submit the names of the Government Members so we can begin the people’s work.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*House adjourned accordingly.*

*Adjourned at 5.21 p.m.*