Madam Speaker: Hon. Members, the period for the appointment of certain joint select committees pursuant to section 66A of the Constitution will expire on October 22, 2015. In light of the fact that Parliament would likely still be engaged in the budget process by that date, I propose that at the appropriate time before the conclusion of the budget process in this House, the necessary procedural step be taken to invoke the constitutional provision that allows for the appointment of such committees at a later date.

I wish to suggest that the appointments to the joint select committees take place no later than Friday, November 13, 2015. I do hope that all Members are amenable to this arrangement.

APPROPRIATION (FINANCIAL YEAR 2016) BILL, 2015

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on question [October 09, 2015]:
That the Bill be now read a second time.

Question again proposed.

Madam Speaker: I now call upon the Minister of Finance who has 10 minutes extended speaking time within which I expect him to wrap up. [Desk thumping]

Hon. C. Imbert: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, you would have noticed a certain level of outrage on my part last night in the first part of my
winding up. This, Madam Speaker, was as a result of my astonishment at the boldfaced denial on the part of the former Prime Minister and the Members opposite with respect to their knowledge of the true state of the country’s finances; that the Member for Siparia could come into this House and claim to be unaware of the $7 billion deficit that they incurred in 2015—not $7, Madam Speaker, not $700, Madam Speaker, but a deficit of $7 billion;

that they could claim to be unaware that they had maxed out the overdraft at the Central Bank to such an extent that funds in the Green Fund and the Unemployment Fund are no longer available to the citizens of this country; that the former Prime Minister could claim to be unaware that they took our cash balances from $6.5 billion in credit in May 2010, to $8.5 billion in deficit in September 2015, thereby squandering $15 billion in cash reserves; that they could claim not to know that they paid $1 billion in legal fees to friends and supporters when the whole country knew of this disgrace; that they could claim to be unaware that in addition to squandering $15 billion in cash balances, they also increased the public debt by over $30 billion during their tenure, when the public just had to turn on the television during the run-up to the election and see with their own eyes, millions of dollars of taxpayers’ money wasted almost every day on government propaganda, when the whole country knew that they were engaging in reckless and irresponsible spending.

That they could so easily try to throw a public servant under the bus in order to shift the blame for their decision to spend over $500 million on five more helicopters of dubious value when in reality, the records show it was the National Security Council, headed by the former Prime Minister, who authorized this questionable purchase; that they could tell such blatant untruths so easily about the use by the new Prime Minister of the Government’s helicopter in an effort to
deflect justified criticisms of the fact that the previous Prime Minister used the helicopters like a private taxi, when it is a matter of public record that Prime Minister, Dr. The Hon. Keith Rowley has not travelled to Tobago since the general election, whether by air or by sea and has not set foot in a Government helicopter since assuming office; that they could so easily accuse us of trying to bribe the trade unions with our allocation of $15 million for institutional strengthening and training for the entire labour movement which currently comprises over 500 registered trade unions, with almost 100 of these trade unions being active, when they secretly gave a single trade union, the PSA, $10 million in 2014, and when caught with their pants down, all they can say is “So what?”.

That is what I had to listen to last night, Madam Speaker. When they are caught telling untruths, all they can say is, “So what?” . When their extravagance, waste, deception and mismanagement is revealed, all they can say is, “So what?” . When the fact is revealed that they have committed this country to billions of dollars in questionable contracts of dubious value, without any source of funds, without any proper financing in place, without Cabinet approval, all they could tell us is, “So what?”.

So you will forgive me for my outrage, Madam Speaker. [Desk thumping] I just could not believe that the Members opposite could be so divorced from reality and so willing to mislead the population.

Now, Madam Speaker, in the five minutes and 21 seconds that I have left, let me look forward. Madam Speaker, I have in my possession a crude oil price forecast, long-term 2015 to 2025—forecast done by the World Bank, the IMF and the Economic Intelligence Unit, also the OECD. And the World Bank projects that oil will reach approximately $61 in 2016 and $64 in 2017. The IMF projects that oil would reach $60 in 2016 and $63 in 2017. The Economic Intelligence Unit

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So that assuming that all of these analysts—these are the world experts in oil forecasting, and these are current forecasts. So assuming that these world analysts are correct, we should expect to see a recovery of oil prices by 2017, of somewhere in the vicinity of $65 a barrel for West Texas Intermediate. And $65 a barrel is quite similar to the average price received—I think they actually got approximately $60 a barrel for the fiscal year 2015 because it started at $80 and it went to $45. And with a $65 barrel of oil, our revenues should be significantly enhanced. We should earn at least another $10 billion when the multiplier effect comes into play.

So in addition to the improvements in revenue collection—and as I said last night, Pricewaterhouse—not me—has estimated—and quite correctly so, in my opinion—that with proper revenue collection in Trinidad and Tobago, with a revenue authority, with proper information-sharing between the Customs, between the Board of Inland Revenue, between the persons who collect VAT, proper communication, coordination, collaboration, streamlining, and institutional strengthening, that we should be able in Trinidad and Tobago to collect an additional $5 billion in revenue, Madam Speaker. [Desk thumping]

So looking forward, if oil prices recover and we get that additional $10 billion, and if we can reach our targets in terms of revenue collection of another five, we should have enhanced revenues by 2017, of $15 billion which should be able to allow us to continue on our path to growth and recovery.

So this is the plan going forward. Of course, we will have to monitor it. If, in fact, oil prices continue to be in a slump, we will have to look at other fiscal measures. We will have to look at other policy. But we are reasonably confident, in terms of revenue collection reform, in terms of having a national dialogue with the country...
on the fuel subsidy and so on, in terms of efficiency in the VAT administration, that we will be able to bring this country back onto a sustainable path by the year 2017.

Why do I say the year 2017, Madam Speaker? Because it is in that year that if it becomes necessary, we would have to avail ourselves of the last significant asset from the repayment of advances made to the CL group with respect to the Government’s bailout of the CL group.

So, Madam Speaker, as I close, again I must express my astonishment at the behaviour of Members opposite. One would think they were not living in this country in 2015. They are certainly in denial, and I am proud to be given the responsibility on behalf of our team, on behalf of the PNM Government, to be able to level with the population, to bring the population into our confidence, to let them know what is happening in this country and to let them know that there is a future, there is growth, there is recovery. We will rebuild confidence under the People’s National Movement Government.

I beg to move, Madam Speaker. [Desk thumping]

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a second time.

Hon. C. Imbert: Madam Speaker, in accordance with Standing Order 81(8), I beg to move that a Bill entitled an Act to provide for the service of Trinidad and Tobago for the financial year ending on the 30th day of September 2016, be referred to the Standing Finance Committee for the consideration of the Bill together with the estimates.

Question proposed.

Question put and agreed to.

House resolved itself into Standing Finance Committee.
1.45 p.m.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Madam Chairman: Hon. Members, the Prime Minister has requested to be excused from today’s sitting due to ill health.

APPROPRIATION (FINANCIAL YEAR 2016) BILL, 2015

Madam Chairman: The documents referred. Hon. Members, in accordance with Standing Order 81(2) and (8), the estimates containing the details of the financial requirements along with the Appropriation Bill have been referred to this committee for consideration. The documents before the committee therefore include the Draft Estimates, details of Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure, the Draft Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure of the Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies and of the Tobago House of Assembly, the Draft Estimates of Development Programme.

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

Hon. Members, there are 41 Heads of Expenditure to be considered over a five-day period, and I propose that the committee sit on each allotted day until 8.00 p.m. The speaking time will be as follows: hon. Members, in accordance with Standing Order 45(1), the speaking time in Standing Finance Committee shall not exceed five minutes on each intervention. Each Minister will be given the option to make an opening statement on the Ministry’s priority areas for the upcoming year for no more than five minutes, and the procedure for the consideration of each Head I propose shall be as follows. Hon. Members the procedure for each Head of
Expenditure will be as follows:

1. The Head and the amount to be appropriated will be announced by me as Chairman;
2. The Minister will then be given the option to make a brief opening statement not exceeding five minutes;
3. The Chairman will then propose the question that the sum proposed stand part of the Schedule;
4. For each Head of Expenditure, the Chairman will call the Sub-Head followed by the item. The Sub-Items will not be called. Members will be allow to seek clarification on the item called and its Sub-Items. The Chairman will then repeat the procedure for the development programme;
5. Once this is concluded, the Chairman will then put the question that the sum stand part of the Schedule;
6. The procedure will be repeated for each Head of Expenditure.

Members will note we have invited the accounting officers and technocrats to arrive at specific times during the day, so we have to try to stick to the Schedule. I wish now to give notice of certain additional agenda items. Firstly, the deferral of the Office of the Prime Minister. Due to unavoidable absence of the Prime Minister, has there been any agreement to take the Office of the Prime Minister tomorrow?

Dr. Moonilal: Chairman, bearing in mind that the Prime Minister is unwell, we wish him, of course, a speedy recovery and we will be prepared to defer that item to tomorrow if he is feeling better depending on his own health.

Madam Chairman: Thank you, hon. Member for Oropouche East.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: Madam Chairman, we did indicate that we were
requesting the deferral given the situation, and I am happy we asked for it to be deferred until tomorrow. So I am happy that the Member has agreed.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Could I for the record indicate that when this was asked of us we were unaware that the Prime Minister was indeed ill. We were not aware of the reason for his absence, but in the context of his illness we would be happy to defer and wish him a speedy recovery.

**Madam Chairman:** I thank you, Members.

Secondly, the consideration of the Tobago House of Assembly. Hon. Members, I crave your indulgence to have the committee agree on the time for examination of the Tobago House of Assembly in order to allow the representatives of the Assembly to make arrangements to come to Trinidad. May I suggest that given the order submitted by the Leader of the Opposition, the Tobago House of Assembly be examined first tomorrow?

**Mrs. Robinson-Regis:** We certainly have no difficulty with that, Madam.

**Madam Chairman:** I am grateful to you both.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** Madam Chair, in the circumstances where two Heads are being deferred for tomorrow and there are other items starting from one going down, are we to also agree that should Heads be moved up to make up the spaces for where the Prime Minister is ill and cannot come, where the THA cannot come today, so that we proceed to other Heads that are lower down in the order of business to be dealt with?

**Madam Chairman:** Hon. Member for Siparia, I am guided by your suggestion. It was my understanding though that the Tobago House of Assembly would have been making their presence here tomorrow in any event. The only matter that is really being asked to be considered under the announcement that I made was rather than leaving Tobago House of Assembly at-risk at later in the evening tomorrow,
that they be taken first to allow for them to plan for their coming and allow their departure tomorrow.

As regards your observation with respect to the Office of the Prime Minister, even though it may not have been expressed, I think what the Chair intended is that we would proceed with the order as had been indicated, except that three would be substituted by four and we just continue with the order as set out by the hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Thank you very much.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Members, at this time the sitting of the Standing Finance Committee will be suspended for five minutes just for us to make the physical arrangements for the technocrats and the accounting officers.

1.54 p.m.: Standing Finance Committee suspended.

2.02 p.m.: Standing Finance Committee resumed.

Madam Chairman: Members, the meeting of the Standing Finance Committee will now resume. The first Head to be considered is Head 22, the Ministry of National Security.

Head 22.

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

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Thank you very much, Madam Chairman. Let me first of all express my sincerest thanks and appreciation for giving me the opportunity to be part of this Standing Finance Committee to deal with the issues pertinent to the Ministry of National Security.

Madam Chairman, it is recognized that in order for a sustainable development to take place, it must be done in an environment that is facilitated by security. It is important for us to recognize that security environment must be so positioned, that
not only economic development can take place, but we can create an environment where our citizens can live peacefully, enjoy a good standard of life. And so, in recognition of this, the Ministry of National Security also recognizes that we are in trying economic times and we understand that there is a gap between strategy and resources.

We want to also compliment the Minister of Finance for the budgetary allocation that he has provided to the national security, because I believe it is an understanding that for Trinidad and Tobago to treat with the many issues in the national security environment, there must be some kind of allocation. And so, Madam Chairman, I want to assure this House, once again, that as the Minister of National Security the allocation would be done with astute financial management to ensure that the allocated budget would redound to the benefit of the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago.

I thank you very much.

Question proposed: That Head 22 stand part of the Schedule.

2.05 p.m.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Members, the sum of $4,656,513,910 for Head 22, the Ministry of National Security, is comprised of moneys proposed for expenditure under six Sub-Heads to be found in the Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure and the Draft Estimates of Development Programme.

I would like to suggest and for the purposes of order and arranging for the free flow of this process that we consider all items under the particular Sub-Head or entertain all questions under the particular Sub-Head and Head before we move on to another Head. [Interruption] Yes, but we are starting with the Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure.

So we are at page 120 and we are calling Sub-Head 01, Personnel
Expenditure, which is on page 121, Item 001, General Administration.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Madam Chairman, thank you. On page 120, under Head 22, Sub-Head 01, we are given the total for recurrent and at the very start which is Personnel Expenditure 01, we are shown on page 120 that there has been an increase in Personnel Expenditure as shown under the column under Net Increase/Decrease of $2.542 billion, and I would like to address the total before I get into the specific Items, if I may, please.

Madam Chairman: You may.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: And to ask the question to the hon. Minister of what is this increase of 2.542? What is it composed of? Does it mean more staff? More salaries? How is it composed? The 2.542 increase in Personnel Expenditure under Head 22, Sub-Head 01.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: The increase is due to a number of factors, one being there has been merger of different Ministries. They have returned prisons, for instance, forensics and others, back to the Ministry of National Security. There is also an increase in responsibilities; there is an increase in salaries and there are also arrears that are due to be paid off.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Thank you, Minister. Would you kindly share with us when you say an increase in responsibilities, what do we mean by that?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: The increase in responsibilities to the Ministry of National Security has come about because of the return of prisons, for instance and forensics, for instance, and we now have the NOC under the Ministry of National Security. So based on that, we have increased responsibilities in the Ministry of National Security.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Thank you, hon. Minister. But you said it was due to three factors—
Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: No, I said several factors, I only named three.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Merger of several and you named three. So you named a merger of heads, salary increases and responsibilities.


Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: But you are now saying the responsibilities fall under the mergers of bringing other items of expenditure, like NOC, prison services and so on.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: I said the arrears also. I said there is increased responsibilities based on the return of other departments, institutions, to the Ministry of National Security and of course, the arrears.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: So that is a subset of the merger of the heads?


Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Okay. Under that item, if we go to that same page 120 under Personnel Expenditure, there are two Sub-Items, well, Salaries, it says Direct Charges. Have you found that line on page 120 under Personnel Expenditure: Salaries, Direct Charges and Allowances, Direct Charges? Would you be so kind as to share with us what these are, these direct charges?

Mr. Imbert: I will respond on behalf of the Minister of National Security. If you look at the Appropriation Bill in toto, you will see the total appropriation is $54 billion and with respect to Head 22, the Ministry of National Security, the appropriation is $4.6 billion. However, when you look in the estimates that we are perusing, you will see the 2016 estimate for recurrent for national security is 5.7.

The reason being there are a number of direct charges under the Consolidated Fund that do not need to be appropriated. Okay? So that Direct Charges, in this particular case, do not need to be appropriated. So they will not form part of the appropriation of $4.6 billion. That is what it is. There is about
$11 billion in Direct Charges within this year’s budget which is typical for any budget. It is normally 9, 10, 11, 12 billion. These are things that are paid first, you know, salaries of judges and so on. These are all paid first. They are not appropriated, they are a first charge on the Consolidated Fund. The rest of us get paid afterwards. After all these direct charges are paid, then the rest of the allocation is the appropriation. So this direct charge is something that is not required to be appropriated.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** Minister, I appreciate your attempt at an explanation, but we are seeing in the estimates here—you are saying it is not in the Appropriation Bill, but we are seeing in the estimates, an increase of $633.965 million for Direct Charges and my question was what are Direct Charges composed of? What are these Direct Charges where we have an increase of $633.965 million and then $324.729 million? We are looking at six and three, nine; almost a billion dollars increases on Direct Charges and I am asking: what are these Direct Charges? You said they would not be appropriated, but I did not get from you what do we mean when we say Direct Charges.

**Mr. Imbert:** Salaries and Allowances. If you wish further details, I would refer to the Director of Budgets who is here with us and get further details for you in a short while, but these are salaries and allowances as you can see.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** You are saying in the estimates, they do say Salaries and Allowances and then they say—Direct Charges. What are the charges? And if you can get it—

**Mr. Imbert:** If you require that level of detail, I will get it from the Director of Budgets for you.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** I think that is the purpose of this committee, Sir.

**Mr. Imbert:** No problem.
Standing Finance Committee

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Thank you. And you see, it is repeated throughout on page 120. You have Remuneration to Members, Direct Charges; Vacant Posts, Salaries, COLA, Direct Charges. So you have at least one, two, three—four Items of these—

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Can I provide you with another example?

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Please.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: In terms of, let us say, the Regiment, for instance, you have both Salaries and Allowances; Coast Guard, Salaries and Allowances. I can give you some figures if you wish.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Sir, I would appreciate, but if you look at it, again, page 120, Sub-Head 01, the first Item is Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance, then you have it broken down. Give us some examples of these Direct Charges if you can.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: The Salaries, Direct Charges, for instance, with respect to the Regiment, you have, for 2015/2016, you have $758,479,000; Allowances for the Regiment, for the same period, $354,790,000 and I can go on: Coast Guard, Air Guard, the public service—

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: All the protective services?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: All of them. A combination of those would—

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: And how then do we explain the first Item under Sub-Head 01, Personnel, Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: What you have is the first would be civilians basically—the civil servants or civilians—and the second one is the defence force and others.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Okay. Anybody else?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Madam Chairman, may I be privileged to ask the hon. Minister of National Security, the Overtime Allowance for Monthly Paid Officers moved

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from 2015 Revised Estimates of $18,860,000 now to 2016 Estimates $112,919,000, with an increase of $94 million for Overtime for Monthly Paid Officers. Is there a new strategy or have you increased the amount of monthly paid officers or are you anticipating increased overtime to account for $94 million increase in Overtime for Monthly Paid Officers?

Then, also under Vacant Posts, you have a large increase of $367 million from 2015 to $469 million in estimates for 2016 of Monthly Paid Officers—again, but these are under Vacant Posts. Are you intending to fill these positions? And if these are vacant posts, how many posts are vacant that will account for an increase of $367 million? Because you will take some time to fill those positions.

And also, I would like to ask, the Remuneration to Auxiliary Fire Unit increased by $23 million—I am asking about three questions there because I used my five minutes to ask that. And Settlement of Arrears to Public Officers under Sub-Head 01, you have no amount for Settlement of Arrears to Public Officers. It means then that the public officers have been paid all their arrears already?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: They have been paid last year. They were paid last year.

Dr. Gopeesingh: So that answers the last question. Could you answer the first three if it is possible? Not all.

Mr. Imbert: Madam Chairman, I have some information for the Leader of the Opposition with respect to the question asked earlier. With your permission, could I elucidate?

Madam Chairman: May I just suggest then that we allow the hon. Minister to answer the questions of the Member of Caroni East and then we will take.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: With respect to the first question, all the arrears have not been paid and there are still some arrears to be paid in this fiscal year.

Dr. Gopeesingh: But the estimates has $10,000. That is arrears to public officers.

Dr. Gopeesingh: So it means the public officers have been paid with the exception of you needing $10,000 to pay the rest.


Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: But the arrears would be paid.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Could you give us an idea what was paid already? Could you tell us what arrears?

Madam Chairman: The last item on 01, page 120.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Madam Chairman: In an effort to make the best use of time, could I just ask then that the hon. Member for Diego Martin North/East responds because he has his information while the hon. Minister of National Security—you may proceed.

Mr. Imbert: Thank you very much, Madam Chairman. As the Leader of the Opposition would note, if you go to the other book which says Draft Estimates of Expenditure for the Financial Year 2016—this book—and you go in that book to Roman 20.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Roman what?

2.20 p.m.

Mr. Imbert:

Roman 20—XX—and you will see, and this follows for every single Ministry, which you should know.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: No, I do not know everything like you, you know. You know everything.

Mr. Imbert: You assume they would know, having done this at least five times already when you were Prime Minister. Under Ministry of National Security you would see:
“Direct charges
Personnel Expenditure
Remuneration to Members
Regiment
Salaries –
Officers and Other Ranks
Coast Guard
Salaries and Other Ranks”

It goes down.

“Air Guard
Allowances - Direct Charges
Coast Guard
Air Guard
Regiment
Vacant Posts
Air Guard”

and it comes all the way around:

“…Contribution to NIS”.

So all of the direct charges in the Ministry of National Security are listed there and the total is $1.86 billion. And as I pointed out, this expenditure is charged on the Consolidated Fund and does not require to be appropriated. So that is the explanation for the various increases and the statement about direct charges, and that would apply to every single Ministry. It is all in here.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: I appreciate you sharing this with us hon. Minister. But, again, what this does is to give us the same thing. It says: “Salaries Direct – Charges”, “Salaries Direct – Charges”. What it does is to give us the amounts for
each of these direct charges but still does not say what exactly these direct charges are composed of.

**Mr. Imbert:** It is very clear, regiment salaries, allowances, national insurance and similarly air guard, coast guard. It is all there.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** No.

**Mr. Imbert:** It is very clear.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** No., we could come back. If you want to cross back to page 120, we have salaries direct charges, allowances direct charges. What this does on page 120 is to bring all the regiment, bring all the police, “blah, blah”, which is the ones you are showing us, coast guard and so on, into a total for this Head 22. Yes?

On page XX, which you have now asked me to look at, what this does is to itemize each of these direct charges, in terms of the quantity, but it still does not say what a direct charge is.

**Mr. Imbert:** I do not understand what more explanation you want. A salary is a salary, an allowance is an allowance and national insurance is national insurance, travelling is travelling. What more do you want? You want to know how much the travelling is for each rank?

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** No, no it is here. That is on page XX and XXI.

**Mr. Imbert:** What do you want to know?

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** The quantities are there.

**Mr. Imbert:** I mean, you have in this book a breakdown for every unit in national security, the head office, the regiment, the coast guard, the air guard, their salary, their wages, their NIS, their travelling, their allowances. They are all direct charges and as I said, direct charges are charged to the Consolidated Fund without the need for an appropriation. What more do you want to know? There is no more
to know. These are facts.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Are they salaries? You said that the direct charges do not—

Mr. Imbert: They are not appropriated. They do not form part of the Appropriation Bill. You only appropriate the items that are not direct charges on the Consolidated Fund.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: That is not the issue.

Mr. Imbert: What is the issue Member for Siparia?

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Direct charge for the regiment. Look, they are here, direct charge for the coast guard. They are here, they would tell me, through you.

Mr. Imbert: It says salaries. What more do you want to know about salaries?

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Yes, but you have salaries and cost of living as item 02 under “personnel expenditure.” What is the difference, where you have salaries and direct charges? There must be an answer.

Mr. Imbert: Salaries - direct charges, the total is $1.18 billion.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: We are not asking the amounts. It is $1.4 billion.

Mr. Imbert: $1.18 billion in salaries and there is a breakdown here: Regiment, $758 million; coast guard, $338 million, air guard, $89 million. It adds up to $1.18 billion. Madam Chairman, I do not know what more to say.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Minister of Finance, if I understand the question from the Member for Siparia, I think it may assist if one explains how, under, say, the regiment there can be salaries and there can be salaries - direct charges.

Mr. Imbert: No, Madam Chairman, when you go to XX it is crystal clear. The wording is salaries - direct charges. In other words, the salaries are the direct charges. So what more is there to say? I mean in this book it says salaries - direct charges. In this book it says salaries direct - charges. This is a breakdown.
an aggregate. What more is there to say? Do you want to know the salaries of every single rank in the regiment?

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: No, no we have the quantities.

Mr. Imbert: So what do you want to know?

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Again, on page 120:

    “01 Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance”

You have salaries there. Then you come lower down and you have salaries - direct charges. Madam Chair, I think your explanation—I think we would move on. The Minister does not appear to see that there is a difference.

Mr. Imbert: I think you know exactly what is going on. You know exactly what is going on.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: He is not prepared to answer further.

Madam Chairman: You vacate this question?

Mr. Imbert: Yes. The Member knows exactly what is going on.

Madam Chairman: Therefore, is the hon. Minister of National Security available to answer the questions of the Member for Caroni East?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: The question, with respect to the monthly daily- paid, based on increase in salaries and overtime. We have the additional people such as the life guards, probation services, daily-rated monthly-paid officers. You asked a question pertaining to the monthly-paid.

Dr. Gopeesingh: What part of the question are you answering for us?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: The one that you referred to with respect to the charges, in relation to the monthly-paid officers.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Is that overtime?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Overtime, yes. It has to be the overtime. It has to do with the additional entities that came to the Ministry of National Security such as
the life guard and so on, and, therefore, we do have overtime based on that.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Could you just help us a little bit in determining what are the areas that came in that would necessitate the overtime?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** I can provide you with those details later on.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** And the increases?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** Yes, sure.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Could you help us with that?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** I can do that. I can provide you with that.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** If you can, get the answer meanwhile. And then the allowance for monthly-paid officers. You have it under vacant posts. If these are vacant posts you would have to fill them to be able to pay the allowances for these monthly-paid officers because you have an increase of $367 million here, but it comes under vacant posts allowances—allowances monthly-paid officers. Could you help us with that, for the massive increase from $100 million to $469 million?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** Sorry, could you repeat the question?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** You have an increase of about $367 million for allowances for monthly-paid officers, could you help us to indicate who are these to be paid and how many monthly-paid officers?

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** What is that item comprised of? We are not asking you to give us names of these officers, but what is it comprised of, monthly-paid officers? Like whom? Give us some examples and about how many persons? Is it that there is going to be an increase in those numbers to bring up this increase in the allocation?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Of $367 million.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** We have monthly-paid officers in the general administration in the Ministry. We have those who came back from the probation
services and we have also in life guard also and the probation services, messengers and those kind of people. So it makes up a number of different people.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** So that increase, if I am to understand correctly, does not mean that there will be more staff, more monthly-paid persons employed? It is just a question of the transfer of more officers from another Ministry, which was a former Ministry into your present Ministry.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** Yes, it means that somewhat. Yes it does.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** So we are not getting any new monthly-paid officers, am I to understand correctly?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** Well, if there are vacant posts we would have to fill them. But what we are talking about is a combination of whether those who have come back to the Ministry and the new ones that came into the Ministry.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** This increase would account for their increases?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** That is right.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** And the last one, hon. Minister. The arrears to public officers, in 2015 nothing was paid and in 2016, you only have a $10,000 estimate, does it mean then that the public officers—what is the issue now, in terms of arrears for the public officers? Were they not paid last year? Are they not going to be paid this year? Because nothing is in the estimates for last year and only $10,000 in it for this year. Those are the public officers of the Ministry of National Security.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** They would be paid from salaries and COLA and not from that particular vote.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** Minister, does it then mean that, in terms of arrears to public officers, that you have not inherited any in this Head 22? You remember the Minister of Finance said the Government inherited a $5 billion bill from the previous year, 2015? So if there is only a $10,000—[*Interruption*]
Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: No, it is not the $10,000 it is under the salaries and COLA. That is where the figure is.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Sure.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: It is under salaries and COLA.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Am I to understand that settlement of arrears to public officers, there is only $10,000 outstanding to be paid in 2016?


Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: But that is what the estimates are showing. Is it wrong here?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: The arrears is—[Interruption]

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Is that wrong here, Sir?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: That arrears is being paid from salaries and COLA.

Mr. Imbert: Madam Chairman, may I come in here?

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: So is this wrong?

Mr. Imbert: May I come in here, Madam Chairman? Thank you very much.

Madam Chairman: To assist on the same question.

Mr. Imbert: Certainly. As the Leader of the Opposition will know, arrears are included in the line item for salaries. This has been the case in this country for 30 years, including the five years of the Partnership.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Thank you very much, hon. Minister. So what is “settlement of arrears to public officers”, which is a separate line item of $10,000, to pay whom? How is this different from the arrears you are saying you have included up on top under salaries? That is two items.

Madam Chairman: I recognize the hon. Member for Tabaquite.

Dr. Rambachan: Thank you, Madam Chairman. I just wanted clarification for my own interest and the interest of the public who is viewing this. In the
Appropriation (Financial Year 2016) Bill, 2015

Standing Finance Committee

Appropriation Bill the amount that is being appropriated is $4,656,513,910. But in the Draft Estimates of Expenditure document the amount that was referred to by the hon. Minister of Finance as stated here under item 22 is $5,704,747,960. What the hon. Minister tried to explain is that the difference between what was being appropriated what was in this document is the direct charges.

I just want something to be made clear, that while this entire document, the Appropriation Bill says $54,762,000,000 being appropriated, the real expenditure is really what is given here as $62,990,037,305, compared to what might be mistaken by the population to believe that it is only $54.7 billion. But the total expenditure given in this document, Draft Estimates of Expenditure, where the $5.7 billion is referred to and not the $4.656 billion is really $62,990,000,000. So is this the real expenditure in total, which includes the $5.7 billion, compared to the $4.6 billion? In other words, this gives the impression that what is being appropriated is the expenditure, but in reality it seems that this is not the expenditure. The expenditure is really $62.9 billion and not $54.7 billion. Am I right to say that the real expenditure is $62.990 billion?

2.35 p.m.

Mr. Imbert: Madam Chairman, as the Member knows, direct charges are not part of the appropriation, and I have made it crystal clear on a number of occasions that the expenditure for this year is $63 billion.

Dr. Rambachan: So that the real expenditure is $63 billion?

Mr. Imbert: But I have said that about 10 times.

Dr. Rambachan: Not 54.

Mr. Imbert: Would you like me to say it an 11th time? But let us deal with this matter of settlement—

Madam Chairman: Do you have the response?
Mr. Imbert: Yes. What this means, and the reason why it is so small, is that this has nothing to do with collective agreements settled in 2015. There are a few public servants, a handful, who would have benefited from collective agreements settled many, many, many years ago and this small number is intended to deal with them.

The inclusion of arrears, back pay within the salaries head, has been the practice for many, many years. This refers to past years going back many, many years ago. There have been one of two public servants who still have not received their arrears from say, 20 years ago, and this what this is for. It has nothing to do with 2015. The arrears, just for the record, in each head, the arrears will be under the salaries item, okay?

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Madam Chair, can I just then ask if the arrears are not included under that item we just looked at, and I am to understand it is under Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance, how much out of that $1 billion or $2.5 billion constitutes arrears to public servants or public officers?

Mr. Imbert: In order to assist the Parliament and Members opposite, what I will do is get the breakdown for you for all, rather than the question being asked for every, single Ministry. You will get the breakdown, to see how we came up with the—it is actually $4.95 billion. We will get the breakdown for you, okay?

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Sure.

Mr. Imbert: And provide that information to you. I would not want to put a time frame on it, but within a reasonable time you will get it.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Minister of Finance, we will have to put a time frame on it. I would say, if before the end of the budget debate, if that could be done?

Mr. Imbert: I will try my best.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.
Dr. Moonilal: Thank you very much, Madam Chairman. Hon. Minister of National Security, I am at Remuneration to Board Members. There is an increase here to $1.677 million, a $777,000 increase, and I wanted you to just explain for us briefly what would constitute this increase for the board members?

Madam Chairman: We are on page 120 and it is the third to last item in 001.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: This has to do with new boards that would come to the Ministry of National Security, from the Ministry of Justice such as the Mercy Committee and so on.

Dr. Moonilal: What?


Dr. Moonilal: Not a board?


Dr. Moonilal: Mr. Minister, in the budget we heard of the joint patrol initiative and border patrol and so on, is that also factored in here as a board that you will be appointing? And what would be the nature of that vis-a-vis boards, agency and so on?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: That would not be included in this. It would come out of the Development Programme as a new project. I believe that is correct.

Dr. Moonilal: As a new project?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Yes. It would not be under this—

Dr. Moonilal: Would that establishment require legislative change?


Dr. Moonilal: It might, and do you—okay, you are not sure at this time.


Dr. Moonilal: Is there a time frame within which—because it is a very interesting proposition you made in the budget and in your contribution. Is there a time frame
on the establishment of this joint-patrol enterprise of some kind?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** It is based on consultation to determine the time frame—

**Dr. Moonilal:** So the consultation that would take place would determine a time frame and whether or not legislation is required.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** Of course, that is correct.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Yes, Madam Chair, thank you very much. I just have one question. Based on the responses by hon. Minister of National Security, as well as the Minister of Finance, under Personnel Expenditure, I am understanding the Ministers to mean that the only additional cost that might accrue under Personnel Expenditure for new recruitment, that is to say new employees, is if the vacant posts are filled to the tune of $19.4 million. Is that correct? And that everything else covers existing employees in the system, and the increase is simply because of the amalgamation of institutions under the Ministry of National Security? I just want to have that clear.

**Mr. Imbert:** I am know sure what Head the Member is on.

**Dr. Tewarie:** I am looking at page 120, 01, Personnel Expenditure. I am seeing the increases under various Heads and Sub-Heads, right?—and the explanation given is that these relate to existing employees and have to do with certain things, whether it is back pay, whether it is the rate of salary or whatever, but there is one item here which is $19,440,000 under Vacant Posts, under 01. So I am asking if the only additional, new employees that we can expect, based on this expenditure estimate, are those that might be recruited under that vacant post Sub-Head?

**Mr. Imbert:** And that was why I asked, I was not sure what Head the Member was on, because the Member has been a Minister in two different administrations and will know—and I am certain the Member knows that the employment of personnel is catered for under at least two Heads under Personnel Expenditure,
Head 01. But if you also go to page 127, under Goods and Services 02, 16 as the Member knows, you also have a provision for Contract Employment. So if you want the answer to that question, you would have to look at both the provision for contract employment and the provision for vacant posts, and therein you get your answer.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Well, that makes it clear.

**Mr. Imbert:** Good. Thank you very much.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Thank you, Madam Chair, and I have really a follow-up in terms of how many vacant posts exist within the—or what led to—in terms of numbers, this allocation of $19,440,000? And how many vacant posts this catered for and could we get a breakdown in relation to the various areas within the Ministry of National security?

**Madam Chairman:** Hon. Member, it appears that that information, the detail of that information is not available today, but the Government has given an assurance that we will get it before the end of the budget debate.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

**Mr. Charles:** I would just like to find out, under Remuneration to the Auxiliary Fire Unit. I see it is almost double; the proposed expenditures are almost doubled.

**Madam Chairman:** Member, are we still on page 121?

**Mr. Charles:** Oh, we are on 121? I think it is 120.

**Mr. Imbert:** We are on 121.

**Madam Chairman:** Oh, you are on 120, 01. You are under the big head? Yes, sorry.

**Mr. Charles:** Remuneration to the Auxiliary Fire Unit and it moved for $18 million 2015, the revised estimates, to almost double, $41.4 million. Does this represent an increase in remuneration? Or an increase in the numbers and
therefore an increase? And if you could just, perhaps not now, but give us an idea of the numbers that exist and the numbers proposed?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** I cannot give you the numbers now, but—the increase due on remuneration, and also a restructuring of auxiliary services at this point in time. There is an additional strength in the auxiliary service at this point in time, but I cannot give you the exact numbers; that can be provided at a later date.

**Mr. Charles:** I anticipate this.

**Madam Chairman:** And again, hon. Minister, if it could be provided by the end of the budget debate.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** Yes, Madam Chair.

**Mr. Paray:** Thank you, Madam Chairman. It is just a follow-up question to the Member for Naparima. It was a similar query in terms of the fact that there has been a 100 per cent increase in terms of the remuneration to the auxiliary fire officers. Again, I think you have answered part of it. The context that I was phrasing that question would have been the fact that in my constituency there are quite a few auxiliary fire officers, who have not been given postings for quite some time.

So my question would have been, is this increase going to mean that a lot of those auxiliary officers who are now at home, will be posted at fire stations more so in our new fire station in Mayaro? Perhaps you can give me some indication if that increase will mean those auxiliary officers can look forward to some postings very soon. Thank you.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** There is an examination process being conducted by the Acting Chief Fire Officer, and I am sure he would take that into consideration in terms of staffing throughout Trinidad and Tobago wherever that is required.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** The question was asked about the auxiliary fire fighters. I
note that there is a concern on the ground for persons who wish to be made permanent, because there are a lot of openings and if at all they will considered. So thank you.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Just to take us back to the questions raised by my colleague from Oropouche East on the joint border patrol. It is not mentioned either in the recurrent estimates nor is it mentioned in the DP. I know we are not at the Development Programme yet, but just suffice it to say from my reading of it, there is no allocation being made whatsoever for the joint patrols.

Now, I have hear the hon. Minister say, that you have to have review, consultation, develop a policy and then come to the Parliament. So if I am to understand that, is it that this new entity that the hon. Minister plans to put into place to fight crime, is it that there is no allocation for it in these estimates, because I have found none, whether in recurrent or in development programme?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** We are in the planning stage and therefore we are looking at conceptual clarification at this point in time. Therefore we will come up possibly by the mid-term review. So it is no cost right now in terms of the planning stage.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** So by the mid-term review we would be seeing a further increase in this allocation?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** Perhaps or probably a reallocation.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** The other item which I have searched diligently—mentioned, and again, I see nothing under recurrent for Personnel Expenditure, Goods and Services, transfers and so on, which come under recurrent. Again, I am sorry I have to go also to the DP to look at an initiative mentioned in the budget statement and, I think by your good self and in the run-up to where we now, about
the local constabularies. What exactly does this entail? And again, is any allocation made here for local constabularies in the recurrent or the DP? Or is that also for review and consultation and so on?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** The concept is actually to have police at the local and municipality areas, but that is under the Commissioner of Police. So you will see that line item under Commissioner of Police.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Thank you, Madam Chairman. I just wanted to go back to something the hon. Minister of National Security said, that they were restructuring the auxiliary fire officers, division or what have you. In restructuring is it that you are going to be recruiting new auxiliary fire officers? And if so, what is the process you are going to be using for recruitment, because I cannot recall seeing an advertising out for auxiliary fire officers.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** The restructuring may lead to an increase or may need a different kind of organizational structure. So that you may not have seen an advertisement as yet, because it may not have reached that stage as yet, but there is a—

**Dr. Rambachan:** But what is the process normally for recruiting auxiliary fire officers? Are there advertisements that are put out for these fire officers?

2.50 p.m.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** To the best of my knowledge there are advertisements, but I can confirm and provide accurate information for you at a later stage.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Thank You.

**Madam Chairman:** May I call upon the hon. Member for Caroni East?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Thank you very much, Madam Chairman. Hon. Minister and probably this is for the Minister of Finance as well—

**Madam Chairman:** Hon. Member, I am sorry, could you kindly talk into the
microphone? Thank you.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Sorry.

**Madam Chairman:** That is all right.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** I thought I usually have a loud voice, but all right. We noticed under this book, the draft estimates of the expenditure, but it is under Personnel Expenditure which is related to—page 120. We have the Personnel Expenditure as $3.937 billion and the total head for national security is $6.62 billion at the bottom. That is page 92, the one on Personnel Expenditure.

**Madam Chairman:** On page 92?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Page 92, Head 22.

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

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** That is the total.

**Mr. Imbert:** Member, that would include the charges, direct charges, so that is how you get the total. Okay? Since we are having trouble with the charges, you have to add the two.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** I just wanted to confirm, hon. Minister and Minister of Finance that the Personnel Expenditure of close to $3.9 billion out of the $6.6 billion allocated for national security is possibly more than about 55, 60 per cent of the total expenditure for national security. So, Personnel Expenditure is about roughly approximately 60 per cent, and so therefore it would seem across—I do not know if I can extrapolate, but I know from the Ministry of Education as well, Ministry of Education Personnel Expenditure was about 60 per cent as well. So can we say across the board—hon. Minister of Finance, you may enlighten us more on it—that out of the budgets generally, nationally, for Personnel Expenditure and personnel emoluments we would be looking at about 55, 60 per cent of the expenditure, because this is national security, and I could speak firsthand from education, and
these are two large Ministries.

So if we are looking at 60 per cent Personnel Expenditure in national security and 60 per cent in education, which are the two largest budgets of $20 billion over a period of time per year, we are looking at approximately $12 billion per year in just these two Ministries alone. So for five years we would have probably looked at $60 billion in expenditure for the Ministries in Personnel Expenditure. Am I on the right track, hon. Minister of Finance?

**Mr. Imbert:** Okay, the percentage between Personnel Expenditure, Goods and Services, Transfers and Subsidies and other Heads of expenditure would vary from Ministry to Ministry, but there is absolutely no doubt that Personnel Expenditure is a large proportion of the budget, and that would explain whenever you increase salaries that is why you get such a large hit on the budget in terms of increased emoluments and also back pay. So it is a very significant component of expenditure, no two ways about it.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Thank you.

**Madam Chairman:** Seeing that we have taken the entire Sub-Head of 01 as a whole, can I then suggest we move on to Sub-Head 02, which is, Goods and Services?

**Mr. Imbert:** I believe so, that is a good move.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Madam Chairman, I am not sure if we have exhausted the entire ambit.

**Madam Chairman:** Well, hon. Member for Oropouche East, I waited a while, there were no further questions. So, that is why I—I may have been erroneous in my assumption.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** Madam Chair, you were not erroneous, perhaps we did not fully appreciate what you were trying to tell us. We have dealt with items
under page 120 which deals with the totals for each of these Sub-Heads, but that does not stop us, with due respect, from going on to 121 and page 122, which drills down into each of these items.

So, we may want to, as you are suggesting, go to 02, which is gpGoods and Services, we can talk generally, minor equipment and the current transfers. So we will deal with all on page 120 and then we proceed with your leave to page 121.

**Madam Chairman:** All right. So might I ask for my own clarification, hon. Member for Siparia, therefore now we are going in to the Sub-Items, Items, Items 01, 02 and 04 as outlined? Yes?

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** Yes, Ma’am.

**Madam Chairman:** All right. So can I call then Item 001, General Administration?

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** Okay, which is on page 121, yes?

**Madam Chairman:** Yes, please.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** Having dealt with it under page 120 with the main Heads, we come now under Personnel Expenditure, general admin, overtime, monthly-paid officers for general admin. We see an increase of $6,000 which is not much in the scheme of this large budget, but I would still like to know with respect to that, how many persons would this money be used to service, to pay? How many persons under monthly-paid officers? Do we know?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** This is made up of messengers and drivers.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** Do we know how many persons?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** I do not have the number, but it is made up of messengers and drivers.

**Madam Chairman:** Hon. Minister of Finance, might I suggest that you may be able to assist? I do not know if page 93 may assist.
Mr. Imbert: Could I get some clarity on the question please? This is just in one department, general administration. One would assume there would not be much overtime there, there might be. You are talking about overtime to monthly-paid officers.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Yeah, monthly-paid.

Mr. Imbert: You want to know who they are?

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: No, I did not ask who they are, I said how many.

Mr. Imbert: Now, listen, you should not just look at the increase, you should look at the allocation.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:—706, I am looking at it.

Mr. Imbert: Yes, but the allocation in 2015 was $700,000.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Sure.

Mr. Imbert: So the budget analysts have estimated that the overtime paid in 2015 and what will be paid in 2016 will be more or less the same. If you want further details you want to know the categories of persons who would have taken overtime?

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: No, no, I did not ask for the categories. I am looking at the numbers.

Mr. Imbert: What I am saying is that they have simply indicated that they expect overtime to be approximately the same in 2016. Do you want to know the total number of persons who will be receiving these payments? What exactly do you want to know?

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: The number of officers.

Mr. Imbert: The number of people.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: The number of officers.

Mr. Imbert: Yeah, the number of officers in GA, in general admin.
Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Whether the officers would be the same, whether it would be more, would it be less.

Mr. Imbert: Right. Whether it is the same number of people, because it could be a combination of more people, less overtime, less people more overtime. So I would get the information for you.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Thank you very much.

Dr. Rambachan: Following on the question of the Member for Siparia, Madam Chair, if you look at overtime as a whole, overtime for daily-rated and monthly-paid and you add the two, you get about $121 million for 2016, which is an increase.

Mr. Imbert: What line are you on?

Dr. Rambachan: Sorry, sorry. I am looking at page 120, overtime, daily-rated and overtime monthly-paid, and the total amount of overtime for 2016 is $121 million if you add it up.

Mr. Imbert: I thought we had gone on to general admin.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member, in setting our procedure we had asked that we exhaust the particular—

Dr. Rambachan: But you see the question was raised, Madam Chair, with due respect, because now we are looking at overtime and the Minister of Finance talked about prudent management, about efficient management, about cost savings and my question is: has the Ministry decided upon doing an analysis of whether this level of overtime is justified and whether efficiencies in terms of administration can be implemented to cut down on this level of overtime and save the country money?

Mr. Imbert: Yes.

Dr. Rambachan: Well, I will come next year and ask you why it is you did not
save or save.

Mr. Imbert: Well, you are speculating.

Dr. Rambachan: I have the right to ask.

Mr. Imbert: We would take your advice very seriously. You are asking us to try and contain and reduce overtime, and we will take your advice very seriously. It is a large item of expenditure, and we will try our best to reduce and contain overtime. Your suggestion is well noted. Thank you much. That is why I said, yes.

Madam Chairman: The hon. Member for Oropouche East.

Dr. Moonilal: Just a quick clarification from the hon. Minister. Remuneration for members of the Cabinet-appointed committees, would you be in a position to just state the Cabinet-appointed committees that are functioning now at the Ministry?

Madam Chairman: That is Sub-Item 14?

Dr. Moonilal:—14, yes.

Madam Chairman: On page 121, Sub-Item 14.

Mr. Imbert: In the interest of time, Madam Chairman, they will get the list for you. It is a series of committees within the Ministry of National Security.

Dr. Moonilal: Could I ask, in the interest of time as well, if the Minister could give an undertaking that before the completion of the budget exercise that you could furnish the Finance Standing Committee with a list of all those Cabinet-appointed committees and the membership of those committees.

Mr. Imbert: The membership as well?

Dr. Moonilal: Yes.

Mr. Imbert: Well, I am sure we can get a list of the committees, but we will try our best to also get the membership for you. We would try our best. There should be no problem.

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Dr. Moonilal: Would that be difficulty to get the members of the committee?

Mr. Imbert: There should be no problem.

Dr. Moonilal: Could you give an undertaking to do that?

Mr. Imbert: We will try our best.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: I can do that, but these are committees that have been in existence not today, but for some time. There have been there for some time. Like the Emblems Committee, for instance.

Dr. Moonilal: We would like to refresh our minds with the members.


Madam Chairman: I would just like to remind all Members that all assurances given here will be followed up by the Committee on Government Assurances. So, have we exhausted Item 01?

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Anything on 122?

Madam Chairman: So, we are on page 122, so that we are going on to Item Head 002, yes, which is Fire Services. Hon. Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Madam Chairman, thank you. Under salaries and cost of living allowance for the fire service, we have an increase from the revised estimate in 2015 of $220 million now to $545 million in the fire service, an increase of $325 million. Would the team be kind enough to explain what occasioned this massive increase of more than possibly 150 per cent or 130 per cent around there, from 220 to 545 for salaries and cost of living in Fire Services. Are you increasing staff exponentially or what is happening?

Mr. Imbert: It is a combination of arrears, increased salaries and vacant posts. A combination of arrears—

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: No, the vacant posts are listed elsewhere.

Mr. Imbert: No, Member for Siparia. If you look at the explanation, it states
clearly, includes provisions for vacant posts. So, this is a combination of vacant posts, arrears and increased salaries.

3.05 p.m.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** So if that increase is more than 120 per cent, approximately, are you saying that there are so many vacant posts that you intend to fill? So the Fire Service has been running—

**Mr. Imbert:** The arrears would be a significant component.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** If you will allow me—

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Go ahead. Yeah, sure.

**Mr. Imbert:** And, as I indicated, we can do this for—as I said, we will give you a breakdown for all.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** Minister, it is not accurate to say that—if you can show me which line item says Vacant Posts under Fire Service—

**Mr. Imbert:** Go straight across. Go straight across.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:**—includes provision of posts with incumbents.

**Mr. Imbert:** Go straight across.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:**—with incumbents.

**Mr. Imbert:** Still vacant posts.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** If you look at Prison Service you actually have a separate head for line items.

**Mr. Imbert:** But we are not on Prison Service.

**Madam Chairman:** May I ask, are we moving on to item 004?

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** I am asking, why is there a difference under the Vacant Posts?

**Madam Chairman:** So, may I suggest then, hon. Member for Siparia, you await Prison Service for when we reach there and maybe you can make the analogy.
Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Well, you continue—the MP was not finished.

Madam Chairman: Thank you very much.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Thank you, Madam.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Well, Minister of Finance, provision for Vacant Posts with incumbents, that means people are in the position and they are being paid now, so therefore there should be no increase if they are being paid already. If there are vacant posts and they are paid from their old salary in 2015, they are incumbents so they are being paid in 2015 already, so 2016 should not occasion an increase, probably a minimal thing, but not to the extent. You need to explain really why we jumped from $220 million to $545 million—

Mr. Imbert: I thought I did.

Dr. Gopeesingh: No. “Come clear nah”.

Mr. Imbert: This includes vacant posts with incumbents, arrears of salary and increased salaries.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Yeah, well, you know, we will end this budget, the Finance Committee, and we would not get a clear appreciation of how much money we are really owing in arrears of salaries which you have now for 2016 across the board. So we are just dealing with National Security now, so I am sure when we come to other Ministries we will have the same situation.

Mr. Imbert: I said I would do it for all Ministries. I said that, Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: All right. Okay.

Mr. Imbert: I was very clear. Let me repeat myself again, in the interest of time, since this is obviously an issue, I will do it for all Heads. I have said that, this is now the fourth time. I really do not want to say it a fifth time because next thing you will say that, you know, I am getting on bad or something like that, but I really
do not want to say it five times. Please do not ask me for a sixth time.

Dr. Gopeesingh: No, no, no, we hear you. We hear you and we appreciate that.

Mr. Imbert: Okay? I have given an undertaking, I will try my best to give you the breakdown for all Ministries. Okay?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Okay. All right.

Madam Chairman: May I call now the hon. Member for Barataria/San Juan.

Dr. Khan: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. To the hon. Minister of Finance, two things right? Item 01, the Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance, since it has jumped $325 million, is that for contract workers? Now, what kind of workers are you going to put there?—contract, non-contract, or what are you—

Mr. Imbert: No.

Dr. Khan: No. Well then clarify, please.

Mr. Imbert: But contract workers are under Goods and Services, other contracted services.

Dr. Khan: No, incumbents, I am saying salaries and cost of living allowance for who?

Mr. Imbert: Establishment posts.

Dr. Khan: All right. On Sub-Item 04, the Allowances—I am going to Sub-Item 04 now—

Mr. Imbert: The acting.

Madam Chairman: Members, excuse me, I believe the Member for Barataria/San Juan is the one who—

Dr. Khan: Thanks, Madam Chairman. On Sub-Item 04, the allowances for the monthly-paid officers, it has jumped to $124 million, the increase, could I ask why?

Mr. Imbert: There were collective agreements that were settled, collective
agreements are in progress as we speak. You have no understanding of the $5 billion in emoluments—

**Dr. Khan:** Okay. Would it not have been wiser for you to enumerate that first prior to coming here so we can jump past these items?

**Mr. Imbert:** I do not quite understand.

**Dr. Khan:** If you had given us the breakdown of the $5 billion that you have indicated—

**Mr. Imbert:** I had to do that before we did the estimates.

**Mr. Khan:**—it would have been wise because then we would not have been even asking these questions now.

**Mr. Imbert:** That is very abnormal.

**Dr. Khan:** Is it?

**Mr. Imbert:** Yes.

**Dr. Khan:** Okay. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**Dr. Moonilal:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I dare not ask the Minister to repeat himself again for the twelfth time on salaries and cost of living—

**Mr. Imbert:** And we are only on the first Head.

**Dr. Moonilal:**—but I wanted to—well, I mean, the Minister, say for the interest of time; we have five days so you can get yourself comfortable.

**Mr. Imbert:** No problem.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Minister, could you give us, or make an undertaking—because I do not expect you to have it now in front of you—an undertaking to give us a breakdown of that increase from 220 to 545? What would be the provision for vacant posts with incumbents? What would be the provision for arrears? What would be the provision for salary increase in that $325 million jump? That is my
first request. And, secondly, you made reference a few moments ago to new collective agreements, and so on, just remind us when were those collective agreements settled?

**Mr. Imbert:** Well you should know.

**Dr. Moonilal:** I am new to the Eleventh Parliament.

**Mr. Imbert:** You were in the Government.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** That is not a proper answer.

**Madam Chairman:** Hon. Minister of Finance, could you kindly respond?

**Mr. Imbert:** Well, Madam Chairman, I am sorry, I was not in the last Government, I cannot give you the precise date. I will get the information, but some of these would have been settled already. Some of them would have been close to settlement, I will get the information, but it was something initiated by the past regime, but they are asking me what they did. No problem, I will get the information.

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

**Dr. Moonilal:** Madam Chairman, I just want to indicate to the hon. Member that I asked that for a specific question. I am aware, and I should be aware this was settled by the last administration with significant salary increase, and so on, but I wanted to know when so that we can calculate this increase to see if the calculation of the increase synchronized properly with when that increase took place. So that is why I am asking you to just give us that undertaking.

**Mr. Imbert:** But I had given an undertaking.

**Madam Chairman:** And, therefore, I think the undertaking—

**Dr. Moonilal:** I am aware our Government did that good job.

**Madam Chairman:** Members, please, the undertaking has therefore taken care of the issue and, therefore, may we proceed, and I would now call upon the
Dr. Tewarie: Actually, it is not really a question, it is—I think the thing that is eluding all of us here is that given the level of salary increases that we know, and the additional items that these take into account, the increase of way over 100 per cent seems somehow to elude us, and that is why we need the clarification.

Mr. Imbert: Madam Chairman, may I make a general statement, these numbers were prepared by the Budget Division based on information provided by the Chief Personnel Officer’s office by the various Ministries, by the Ministry of Public Administration, by the various departments, by the various units. I would be the happiest man if when we go through these things in due course we can make some savings if in fact some of the estimates are a bit lower than, or a bit higher than they should be. But this is based in the usual way on calculations done by the CPO, for example, with respect to the police. When we get to that you will see almost a $1 billion increase, $900 million increase in personnel expenditure for the police service, and this is based on the information that is given to the Budget Division by the responsible units within the public service.

I understand that some of the increases may appear astonishing, but this is why it has been calculated that there is this $5 billion problem in 2016. And, as I said, we on this side would be very happy if can save some expenditure if in fact when we get into the—we drill down into this and we find that it is not $325 million, for example, it is $320 million, we would be very happy because it would assist us with respect to the deficit and with respect to balancing the budget. So, I will give an undertaking, we will give the calculations as they have been given to us in the normal way by all of the units of government, and, as we go through the year, if we achieve savings I will most certainly let you know. Thank you very much.
Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Naparima.

Mr. Charles: Thank you, Madam Chairman. I agree with the undertaking given by the Minister of Finance but, just to be specific, our understanding is that the increases negotiated were in the range of 14 per cent and, if that is true, it explains the concern by my colleague from Caroni Central. When we look at the allowances and see almost 100 per cent increase it does not make sense, and that is the only reason for our concern.

Mr. Imbert: No problem, and I can give some clarity on that, and if the Chairman will allow, the Member for Naparima is new, but when you hear 14 per cent, that is multiplied, you know, you would have a certain percentage in year one, then COLA is then added to that and then it is multiplied in year two, and then multiplied in year three. It does not include the allowances so, actually, when you hear a number like 14 per cent sometimes it is really 25 per cent when you take the total wage and salary bill into account, so I can understand if you are just doing a rough calculation of 14 you could be misled. It is a combination of allowances plus COLA, plus—

Mr. Charles: But this is 100 per cent.

Mr. Imbert: No, I know—allowances, COLA, they all come together, they multiply each other, and so on. I understand what you are saying, so that, as I said, we will give you the breakdown as given to us by the various units and departments of the Government.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Siparia.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Thank you, Madam Chair. Perhaps when you are providing that breakdown for us you would want to note, we are looking at not a 14 per cent converted to 25 per cent and multiplied as you are speaking; we are looking at about 150 per cent, so we would appreciate. And based on what you
have already said, hon. Minister, are you saying that the $5 billion that you spoke of in your budget statement as being owed for salaries and wages, and so on, for matters negotiated during 2015, that is included in the deficit that you are recording of $7 billion? Or is it that we have a deficit of $7 billion plus this $5 billion to be paid to negotiated officers?

**Mr. Imbert:** No. The deficit of $7 billion is for actual expenditure in 2015. It is the actual expenditure up until September 30; the $5 billion is a carry-over into 2016. If in fact that had been paid, or attempts had been made to pay that—

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** The deficit would have been more.

**Mr. Imbert:**—it would have been $12 billion. Yes.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** Oh, some might have come in.

**Mr. Imbert:** Whatever. You know.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** Thank you, Minister.

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

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Madam Chair and honourable team for the Minister of National Security and the Minister of Finance, when we look at allowances in comparison to salaries, and we see allowances of $213 million and salaries with COLA of $545 million—I did a rough mathematical calculation, it is approximately 40 per cent—

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** This is for which one? Fire?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** On page 122 for Fire. So, are allowances approximately 40 per cent of the basic salary and COLA? Is that tenable? Is it such a situation that allowances come up—so if somebody is receiving a salary of $10,000 it means that they are getting an allowance of $4,000 so their salary and allowance will be $14,000; this is in fact indicating that, so could you give us an idea what constitutes that 40 per cent allowances of the salary?

**Mr. Imbert:** I think this is a generic question that would apply across the board,
so what I would do with respect to salaries, increases in the allocation for salaries, increases in the allocation for allowances, I will get an appropriate explanation from the Chief Personnel Officer and the Budget Division to explain these things to you.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** And the same thing will come up when we look at Fire Service—

**Mr. Imbert:** It will be right through. It will be right through.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Yeah. Two hundred and thirty-something million out of 664 for allowances. So is it something within the Ministry of National Security that allowances, or is it—give us some thinking and then we can look at the others.

**Mr. Imbert:** I will get the information for you, but each Ministry will be different, you know, some Ministries might be paid a particular type of allowance, maybe a hazard allowance, maybe a special commuted overtime allowance, I cannot explain—

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** I am amazed to see 40 per cent—

**Mr. Imbert:** No, I am just saying, I cannot explain today, but what I will do for you, since the numbers are huge—and, I must say, when we were grappling with the unfunded gap in the budget I asked these questions as well—

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** It is good.

**Mr. Imbert:**—is it so much, how can it be so much?—and I was told by Budgets, and, I mean, these are the same people in the Budget Division who have been working there for umpteen years, they are all dedicated public servants—

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Which we have great respect for.

**Mr. Imbert:** Yes. So, I am afraid that I had to go with the numbers given to me because you are using the same method of calculation; it is the same CPO; it is the same Budget Division, so that I will get the information for you because I myself
was a bit taken aback at the quantum of the increases.

Dr. Gopeesingh: You may need to look under your 43 Heads.

Mr. Imbert: I would most certainly, and, as I said, when we get to police you will see it is doubled, you know, it has gone from $900 to $1.8 billion, or something like that.

Dr. Gopeesingh: So you saw it yourself?

Mr. Imbert: I saw it myself.

3.20 p.m.

Dr. Gopeesingh: So the big increase really is the big increase in allowances and salaries?

Mr. Imbert: It could be. It is based on collective agreements. It is a combination of salaries and allowances. So I will get the information for you, because rather than every single Head you see 100 per cent increase, you ask the same question, I will break it down in terms of personnel expenditure, allowances and salaries. I would really implore Members, rather than asking that same question every time we get to a different Head—

Dr. Gopeesingh: We just draw it to your attention for your consideration.

Mr. Imbert: You can draw it to my attention, and we will get proper explanations for you. I want to say if, in fact, the numbers are slightly overstated, it will help us with our budgeting, our expenditure and our deficit. It will assist; it might even balance the budget, who knows.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: While the Minister is getting all this information for us, would he be so kind as to also tell us—you mentioned about generic items—so generic, under General Administration, under Fire Service, Prison, Regiment, as we go on under each of these, under Personnel Expenditure—if you would kindly also give us how many persons were employed in each of these Sub-Heads prior to
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election; how many are employed now and how many new persons have been brought in under General Administration, under Prison, under Fire and each of the Heads as we go through Personnel Expenditure.

**Mr. Imbert:** You are talking Head by Head?

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** We are talking Head 22.

**Mr. Imbert:** Yes, but Head by Head.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** No, I am speaking of Head 22, one Head. Sub-Heads within Head 22, Sub-Head, Personnel Expenditure and then under Personnel Expenditure, 001, General Administration, 002, Fire, 003, Prison, Regiment, blah, blah, blah—Sub-items.

**Mr. Imbert:** Madam Chairman, I think I understand the question being asked, but I want to make a point. I had said during my budget statement that these things are not wholly comparable, because Head 22 is not the same, National Security is not the same as it was last year. It now has additional—

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** I said that too; I totally agree.

**Mr. Imbert:** So that is why I said, rather than the Ministry, we can go to the Sub-Head which is Fire Service, Prison Service, Regiment, and we will get it that way. If we try to do it any other way we will be comparing apples and oranges.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** You see, I am not speaking here of the numbers. We are looking under General Administration, for example, which will not be Regiment, Fire, et cetera, et cetera. General Administration is the general administration of the Ministry of National Security. For Personnel Expenditure, page 1, 001, General Administration, we see that General Administration has moved from 32 to 40. This may well be as you say, because of the Heads and so on.

**Mr. Imbert:** That is exactly what it is.

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Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: So that in merging them, the point is you have not decreased your general administration expenses. You have, in fact, increased them, even though you have merged two and three Ministries together for National Security.

Mr. Imbert: No, no, no—

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: One moment, please. Can I finish my question, please? My question is, I am saying under General Administration, under police and fire, I am asking for the increase. I am asking for the numbers of persons who were there pre-election, who are there post-election and how many new persons have been brought in under General Admin, under Prison, under Regiment, under Fire and each of those subsets under the Ministry of National Security. So it is not a comparison from last year at all. We are asking for your estimates for 2016.

Mr. Imbert: Yes, Member for Siparia, but the point I was making to you is that when you merge Ministries and you add lifeguard services and you add prison services and other units that would have appeared elsewhere, you also would be increasing the general administration responsibilities of this Ministry, so they are not wholly comparable. You would have general administration that would deal with prisons, you would have general administration that would deal with lifeguards, and it is not wholly comparable.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Minister of Finance, might I suggest then, when you are giving that information if you could show where they were pre-budget, where they are now and the numbers what they were then and the numbers what they are now. It may be a little more detailed an exercise.

Mr. Imbert: That is exactly the point I was trying to make. Since the information is being asked in such detail, we will try our best, but I think it is unlikely that that information would be provided before the end of this examination of these
estimates, but we will try our best to get it in a reasonable time.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Madam Chair, if I may. Your guidance to the hon. Minister to say where it came from, that is contained in the estimates; it is contained here. You would see items transferring from Head whatever, Ministry of the People, transferring from Head Ministry of Justice, transferring from Ministry of Tourism. It is contained here. That is not, with due respect, what I am asking. We are talking about numbers of persons pre-September 07, post-September 07. How many are there, how many left, how many have been brought in since then; so it is not from which Heads. I am not asking for comparison.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: Madam Chairman, may I ask a question of the Member for Siparia, just for clarification? Is there a cut-off date, so you want it from pre-September 07 to when?

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: To the present date.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: To the date of the budget, the date of the printing of these documents?

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Estimates, yes; I did not say the printing, the presentation of budget estimates in the Parliament on October 05.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: If I could add; in the national security structure we have not sent home anyone so I believe it is the same figure before and—you want to know the exact figure?

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Say that; if that is the case say it.

Mr. Imbert: You will get the information.

Madam Chairman: Can we then go on to item—

Dr. Gopeesingh: Madam Chair, I crave your indulgence.

Madam Chairman: This is on 002?

Dr. Gopeesingh: No.
Madam Chairman: So can we go on to item 004, which is on the same page 122, Prison Service?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Yes. Madam Chair, a similar situation is here with Prison Service, which the hon. Minister of Finance has indicated that he will give the same figures related to the allowances of $236 million and the salaries of $664 million for salaries for Prison Service. It is a new item it would seem coming into National Security, because there is no estimate or actual for 2014, and no revised estimates for 2015. So Prison Service has been brought into National Security for the first time. It has a total expense of about $1.033 billion. So if the budget for National Security—how much did you say it was?—10-point-howmuch was the budget for National Security?

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: $10.8 billion.

Dr. Gopeesingh: So if you subtract this $1 billion from that, that would be—if it were just National Security without prison service, it would be $9.8 billion on your expenditure for National Security, without the prison service and others, lifeguard and so on? I just want to make the assertion, so that when you said you gave the largest allocation to National Security, whereas previously National Security did not have prison service and others like lifeguard and so on, really in fact, it became the largest because you included these two other areas, yes?

Mr. Imbert: That is the end of the question?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Yes. I just wanted to consolidate that point.

Mr. Imbert: Is it a question or a statement you are making?

Dr. Gopeesingh: I was asking you a question.

Mr. Imbert: Would you allow me to answer it then?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Sure, go ahead.

Mr. Imbert: When I made the statement in the budget statement that the
allocations to these various Heads, X, Y, Z, I made the statement—I was very clear—it is not wholly comparable to the previous year because of the merger of the Ministries.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** When you said that?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** I cannot remember hearing that.

**Mr. Imbert:** That is in the budget statement, that is not wholly comparable. [Interruption] I know you did not read it. So the fact of the matter is that it is obvious that if prisons was in the Ministry of Justice before and it is now in National Security, then the allocation for prisons has increased the allocation for National Security. That should be obvious. If lifeguard services were not there before, and it is there now, then it has increased the allocation for National Security, and so on, and so on, and so on.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** What I am trying to indicate to you, hon. Minister, I would say in inverted commas, that the “boast” that you gave the largest budgetary allocation to National Security, when you juxtaposed that versus 2014/2015, it is not in fact so.

**Mr. Imbert:** Are you making a statement or asking a question?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** I am responding to what you are stating, and I ask it as a question. Where is it?

**Mr. Imbert:** I would answer, Madam Chairman, because I would like to bring closure to this, because we are going around in circles.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** Madam Chair is in control, you know.

**Madam Chairman:** I think the hon. Member is trying to seek some clarification. Hon. Minister, I think that it may be very clear to you, but you may have to say until it becomes very clear to us all.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Thank you, Madam Chair.
Mr. Imbert: Is that it? Okay. Let me say it again. If you look in that budget statement you are not going to see anything written there that the allocation for National Security in this fiscal is the largest ever in the history of Trinidad and Tobago, or that it is more than 2015 or anything like that. Those statements are not in the budget statement, contrary to your belief. What is in the budget statement is that the items are not wholly comparable because we have merged Ministries, but in fiscal 2016 the largest allocation out of the total of $63 billion is to National Security. We never made any comparison with 2015. I have no idea where you got that from; it is not written inside of here.

Dr. Moonilal: I want to really thank the Member for Diego Martin North/East for clarifying that matter, because I was under the wrongful impression, Madam Chair, that the hon. Prime Minister did make a hue and a cry, and National Security did, indeed, make statements to the effect that it was the largest most supreme slice of the cake, and they were happy to get so much. I am happy that he clarified the matter finally.

Mr. Imbert: I am talking about the budget statement, you cannot bring in extraneous matters.

Dr. Moonilal: Having said that, the matter at prison, I want to ask the hon. Member to be kind enough as well, as it relates to salary and cost of living allowance, having regard to the fact that the increase in National Security has to do mainly, but not completely, with the increase in salaries and allowances and not with any other matter, for salaries and cost of living, from my estimate here it is under the Ministry of Justice for the closing up of the budget from Ministry of Justice page 354, that has moved from $288 million for salaries and cost of living for prison service, to $664 million. So from $288 million to $664 million is the jump.
I am asking that the hon. Minister, given this, also provide for us the breakdown between arrears in salary, increase in salary, because there is no reference here to provision for vacant post with incumbents, so that is out. There are only two elements that constitute this jump from $288 million to $664 million. They would be arrears and they would be new salary increases. I understand the Minister when he says a salary is not just 14 per cent, it would be more and those would be pursuant to collective agreements signed prior to September by the former administration.

So if you can give us that breakdown as well, we would appreciate if you can give an undertaking that you would do that, because what is now coming on us very dramatic is that the increase in National Security has to do primarily with the increases in wages and salaries to personnel within National Security, and not new programmes or policy, because the joint patrol programme, as we understood, will first have consultation, then policy law and implementation. Thank you. If you can do that.

3.35 p.m.

Mr. Imbert: Is that a question or a statement? Madam Chairman, was I asked a question?

Madam Chairman: I think what you are being asked is to account for the difference between the—

Dr. Moonilal: Could I repeat?

Madam Chairman:—the $288 million in 2015 under Salaries at the Ministry of Justice, and now on page 122, the Salaries—Prison Service $664 million. Well, what is the difference?—which is about $400-and-something million. I think that is the question.

Mr. Imbert: Madam Chairman, I will try my best to find out what the former
administration did to cause this increase in Personnel Expenditure. What I would say however, Madam Chairman, and I will say it for yet—

**Madam Chairman:** Could we have a little order?

**Mr. Imbert:**—another time. There are two points that need to be dealt with here. I have no idea where the Members opposite got this idea that contained within this budget statement or anything that the Minister of Finance said was even remotely close to a huge allocation in National Security comprised of new programmes and new projects. That is not written and that was not said. And the Members opposite keep putting it on the record as if it was written and if it was said. It was not written and it was not said. What we said was that within the $63 billion allocation for 2016, of the $63 billion the largest component is National Security at almost $11 billion. So, we simply highlighted the fact that the expenditure for 2016 is $63 billion of which the largest component is National Security at $11 billion. All of those other things that hon. Members are saying, I do not know where they got that from the budget statement because it is not in there. And in addition, Madam Chairman, I have given the undertaking and I did make a plea to hon. Members opposite, that please as we go from Head to Sub-Head to Sub-Head to Sub-Head, I have given an undertaking that with respect to all of these increases in Personnel Expenditure, all, whether it is comprised of merged Ministries, whether it is comprised of old Ministries, whether it is comprised of new Ministries, all items of Personnel Expenditure in every department of Government, we will give a breakdown, and explanation of the increase in Personnel Expenditure. And I am making an impassioned plea to the Members opposite. We have about 1,000 heads, please do not ask this question 1,000 times.

**Madam Chairman:** Might I, in an effort for us to progress this process, in terms
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of when we come up under the Heads—

**Mr. Imbert:** Salaries, Wages, Allowances.

**Madam Chairman:**—could we then just maybe say to the hon. Minister of Finance that we expect your assurance to cover this Head, unless there is some other question?

**Dr. Moonilal:** Madam Chairman, having worked with the Member for Diego Martin North/East for several years I would prefer to ask him the question at every opportunity—

**Mr. Imbert:** A thousand times?

**Dr. Moonilal:**—and go on record with his commitment.

**Madam Chairman:** What I am suggesting, hon. Member for Oropouche East—

**Mr. Imbert:** I never worked with you.

**Madam Chairman:**—it is not so much that the question is not being asked. It is an equivalent to saying—

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** It is not being answered.

**Madam Chairman:** That is all that I am suggesting. Okay? So that we say we would make reference that the same undertaking applies to this.

**Mr. Imbert:** Madam Chairman, I give the undertaking that with respect, let us go, let us deal with it as it is written. Page 120, Ministry of National Security 01 Personnel Expenditure broken down into various Heads, Fire Service, Prison Service, Regiment, et cetera, et cetera for every single Ministry and department with respect to Sub-Head 01 we will give a breakdown and an explanation of the increase in Personnel Expenditure. I cannot say it more clearly than that, Madam Chairman.

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

**Mr. Imbert:** Every single one. [Crosstalk] So “doh” ask me 1,000 times.

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Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Caroni East, are we moving on to another item?

Dr. Gopeesingh: I just want to ask a question in summary.

Mr. Imbert: In summary. [Laughter]

Dr. Gopeesingh: I just want to ask the Minister, is it true to state then that the increase for the Ministry of National Security in salaries and allowances over 2015, which was 1.395, has now been increased by $2.5 billion making the total of $3.9 million? So, I am asking whether you agree that the increase in salaries and allowances for the Ministry of National Security from 2015 to 2016 is in fact $2.5 billion?

Mr. Imbert: I do not quite understand. On page 121—sorry, Madam Chairman, I apologize if I appear to be a little frustrated and befuddled, but on page 121, Head 22, line 01 going across to the one, two, three, four, five column at the top is the word “increase”.

Dr Gopeesingh: Okay. I just wanted you to confirm.

Mr. Imbert: Increase means increase.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Whether you agree.

Mr. Imbert: It is written there.

Dr. Gopeesingh: The increase is $2.5 billion—[Crosstalk]

Madam Chairman: Members, please.

Mr. Imbert: It says increase.

Madam Chairman: Member for Caroni, are you asking if that is an error?

Dr. Gopeesingh: No. I am just asking him to confirm. [Crosstalk] I am just asking him to determine, to tell us whether that figure of $2.5 billion increase in salaries in the Ministry of National Security from 2015 to 2016 is in fact $2.5 billion?
Mr. Imbert: Is the increase an increase? All right, Madam Chairman, he is asking a question. I go again to page 121. I do not know how else to do this. Page 121, Head 22, 01 Personnel Expenditure, 2015 revised estimate written in the English language, $1,395,397,560; 2015 revised estimates. 2016, written again in the English language $3,373,905,850. When you subtract the two you get what is written in the fifth column under the heading Increase—$2,542,508,290. Are you asking whether it is a misprint? It is not a misprint.

Madam Chairman: Minister of Finance, I think you answered the question. Could we kindly move and can I suggest we move on to Item 5. Could I call upon the hon. Member for Fyzabad.

Dr. Bodoe: Thank you, Madam Chair. This question is directed to the Minister of National Security and at the risk of incurring the wrath of the Minister of Finance, but I am asking here about a decrease. It is not an increase.

Madam Chairman: We are at Item number—

Dr. Bodoe: It is a decrease I am asking about, Madam Chair, and is in regard to salaries and cost of living allowance together with wages and cost of living allowance there, those two decreases. I am just asking whether if there is an explanation for that decrease, and if so, whether this will have an impact in terms of the deployment of manpower in Regiment with regards to National Security.

Mr. Imbert: That is a very good question. I thank you for that question and I would ask the Minister to elucidate.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Arrears were paid last year and that is the balance of the arrears that have been paid. That is why there is a decrease.

Dr. Bodoe: No. No.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: The arrears were paid last year so that this is just the balance. That is why there is a decrease. That is the remainder.
Dr. Bodee: Oh. I see.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: That is in fact the civilian workers.

Dr. Bodee: Okay. I am to take it then—sorry. Sorry, Madam Chairman, may I take it then that there is no reference here in terms of decreased personnel in the regiment?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: This is payment for civilian workers.

Dr. Bodee: Okay. That is the clarification. Okay. Thank you.

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

Dr. Lee: Thank you, Madam Chairman. Just a quick question to the Minister of National Security or the hon. Minister of Finance. Under Probation Services 008 and also I will tie that into 009 Forensic Science Centre, as far as Sub-Head 01—

Madam Chairman: What? Hon. Member for Pointe-a-Pierre, could I ask that you defer your question for when we reach to those Heads?

Dr. Lee: I thought we were dealing with all 0—

Madam Chairman: No. We are still on Item—we are now on Item 05 which is Regiment and that is on page 123. Are we exhausted? Hon. Member for Barataria/San Juan.

Dr. Khan: Madam Chair, I just want to ask something based on the answer that was given about the arrears. Head 02 Wages and Cost of Living allowance, it has dropped, decreased by up to $5,299,000 [Crosstalk] 02. Same thing.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: Page 125?

Dr. Khan: Yeah.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: 123.

Dr. Khan: Yeah. 005/02.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: Wages and Cost of Living Allowance.

Dr. Khan: Yes. Number one, initially you indicated that it was arrears. Why has
that dropped like that? The actual Wages and Cost of Living Allowance.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** This is daily-paid workers that arrears were paid last year.

**Dr. Khan:** That is also arrears?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** That is right.

**Dr. Khan:** Okay.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** The decrease was paid. [Crosstalk] The decrease was paid. [Crosstalk]

**Dr. Khan:** No. I am just asking if 01, was what arrears? Who were the officers for those arrears and who were the officers for the 02 arrears?


**Dr. Khan:** So monthly paid was 01?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** Yes, 01.

**Dr. Khan:** And 02 is daily-paid? I know. I know. I am just asking. So therefore what you are saying, salaries for monthly-paid people are basically $2.2 million versus daily-paid $9.4?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** That is civilians working in the regiment.

**Dr. Khan:** So much?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** How you mean “so much”?

**Dr. Khan:** No. No. I am just looking at the discrepancy of both Salaries and Cost of Living.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** How you mean “so much”?

**Dr. Khan:** No. I am just asking because $2.2 million and $9.4 million is a lot.

**Mr. Imbert:** Could I explain?

**Dr. Khan:** Sure, please.

**Mr. Imbert:** Each department has a different configuration in terms of daily paid
and monthly paid. Some Ministries and departments would have more monthly paid than daily paid, others would have more daily paid than monthly paid. So the regiment, from what you are seeing here, had a significant complement of daily-paid workers and a smaller complement of monthly-paid workers.

Dr. Khan: Ok. Thank you.

Mr. Imbert: That is what is going on there.

Dr. Khan: Thanks.

Madam Chairman: Member for Oropouche East.

Dr. Moonilal: Hon. Minister, when we looked earlier at Prison we saw the increase, and the Regiment we are not seeing the increase, in fact there is a decrease. Is it that arrangements for increase in salaries and wages have not been undertaken? Is there any ongoing process now for revising salaries and wages of members of the regiment, both civilian and/or non-civilian? Because this has received a decrease and not an increase akin with other areas of National Security.

And my follow-up enquiry would be, the civilians that we refer to under Salaries and Cost of Living, are they not employed under a similar arrangement with other members in the public service to benefit from salary increases elsewhere? They are negotiating by themselves, and if so, what is the arrangement for any revision in salary increase and wage increase? Can they expect an increase in this fiscal or next fiscal or is it that they will get no increase while other members in the national security and protective services have benefited from generous increases?

Mr. Imbert: I am getting clarification as to whether the monthly-paid are in fact members of the PSA, and the daily-paid are in fact members of the NUGFW. Just give us one second?

Dr. Moonilal: Sure.
Mr. Imbert: So, they are members of the PSA and members of the NUGFW.

Dr. Moonilal: Then I ask the question, why is there a decrease in the estimate? Would they not have benefited from an increase?

Mr. Imbert: I will answer. I heard your question the first time. If you look at the revised—look at the original estimate for 2015, column two, $2.2 million and then the revised $3 million, so the expenditure was more than anticipated. Go to the wages and cost of living, the daily paid, original estimate 10.9, actual payment 14.7.

3.50 p.m.

Dr. Moonilal: That is not actual payment.

Mr. Imbert: You are not seeing $14,699,000?

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Estimates revised.

Mr. Imbert: Yes, yes, of course. The whole thing is estimates. So that if you look at what is happening here, what is being indicated is that the payments of salaries and wages and so on, for this particular unit were more in 2015 than originally anticipated. So, it indicates, and I would get clarification for you on this, that any arrears would have been paid in 2015 rather than 2016.

Dr. Moonilal: I mean, surely you would understand and I will say it once for you, that it is not the issue of arrears paid, it is: how can you have an increase in your wages and it goes up in 2015 and goes down in 2016?

Mr. Imbert: Because you do not have arrears to pay. You paid arrears in 2015.

Dr. Moonilal: But, this figure of 2016, 9.4 is even less than actual in 2014.

Mr. Imbert: Well, there may be some changes in the establishment, it is not—

Dr. Moonilal: Well, then say that or go and enquire into that. Do not jump to the conclusion that it is false.

Mr. Imbert: But, it is not significant, it is a small sum.
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Madam Chairman: Hon. Minister, I think in any event, the point that is being asked is if the estimate in 2015 was $10 million, and there was an increase in allowances, at least the estimate in 2016, which is less than what it was in the first estimate in 2015, needs to be answered. And I guess—

Mr. Imbert: You will get an explanation.

Madam Chairman: It is not that. That is what you are asking.

Mr. Imbert: Certainly.

Madam Chairman: Member for Naparima, sorry.

Mr. Charles: Thank you very much, Madam Chairman. I am looking at page 123 and I am told that Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance is $2.2 million, and last year $3 million was paid. So, the total for arrears for monthly paid in the regiment is $5.2 million. Last year and 2016.

Hon. Member: No.

Mr. Charles: What is it?

Mr. Imbert: It was 2.2 was the original estimate.

Mr. Charles: Right.

Mr. Imbert: The revised estimate is 3, and the estimate going forward goes back to the 2.2.

Madam Chairman: Because the difference is arrears.

Mr. Charles: All right. Okay.

Madam Chairman: The difference is the arrears.

Mr. Charles: All right. Just a follow-up question, if you go back to the fire services, you see it is significant, $325 million, does this have something to do with the proportion of—

Mr. Imbert: I will get you an explanation for it.

Mr. Charles: Okay.
Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Thank you, Madam Chair. In other words, will the Defence Force in 2016 have increased salaries, as the police force, as the prisons, as the other units of the protective services? Will they benefit or are they to benefit from increased salaries? All the other units are benefitting. Forget the arrears now, we are talking about an increase in your salaries. Is it that they will not benefit? The question will then be, why? Is it that it has not been settled for the Defence Force?

Mr. Imbert: We will get the explanation for you.

Hon. Member: These are civilians here.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Therefore, if it is not settled for the Defence Force, when do you intend to settle their increases? All the other units have got increases.

Mr. Imbert: Just one second, I am getting some clarity for you.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: They have not increased the salaries so that might be outstanding in the other protective services.

Mr. Imbert: All right, I have the explanation, Madam Chairman. These are for public—Member for Siparia, these numbers are for public servants. If you go down to 23 and 24, you will see where the real hit is coming in. Where the salaries are going from 341 to 758 and the allowances are going 155 to 354. So, that is the soldiers. The other things on top are the public servants. It would have a few, one or two public servants, maybe accountants or something like that. But the real expenditure for personnel in the Regiment is in 23 and 24. You would see the very large sums there, direct charges. [Interruption] Yes, we go back to the same direct charges thing. You see it in there, $758 million for salaries, 354—and this is all coming out of collective agreements that would have been the business of the former administration.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Could you explain direct charges?
Mr. Imbert: I explained what direct charges is. I have explained that four times. [Crosstalk]

Madam Chairman: Hon. Minister of Finance, I think there is a misunderstanding of what an Appropriation Bill does. Okay? And it appears that what appears in an Appropriation Bill was thought to be your total expenditure. I think you have explained that.

Mr. Imbert: Madam Chairman, with great respect, I think the hon. Members opposite know that what is appropriated does not include direct charges. I remember going over this issue and I remember going to this book which shows what the direct charges are. So, I think the hon. Members opposite are well aware that what is being appropriated and the direct charges are two completely different things. I think they know. I think they know.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: It is not true to say that we are not aware.

Madam Chairman: But I think we also have to remember that this is being televised live, and maybe some of our viewers may not be so aware.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you very much. Thank you. [Desk thumping] Very good, excellent.

Madam Chairman: Okay. So, can we therefore go on to Item 006, which is on page 124. This is Coast Guard. And can we look at the Sub-Items. Are there any matters to be raised on the Sub-Items?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Could you give us a break?

Madam Chairman: One minute, please. [Interruption] May we have some order, please! It is the same undertaking being sought with respect to Salaries and Wages and Cost of Living Allowance. Yes?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Increase.

Madam Chairman: Yes? Increase, decrease, all right, there is an undertaking.
Mr. Imbert: I would also like to, for the benefit of those watching, that if one looks at Item 23, Item 24, direct charges on the Consolidated Fund are amounting to $338 million in salaries for the Coast Guard, and $168 million in allowances for the Coast Guard, as compared to civilian salaries which are just $568,000.

So, it is really the officers of the Coast Guard that are getting the lion’s share of this allocation, and those are direct charges which are paid first, which is quite appropriate; they pay those who protect us first and then everybody else gets paid afterwards.

Madam Chairman: Okay, can we therefore go on to Item 007, which is Immigration. All right? So, for the record, same undertaking from the Minister of Finance with respect to Salaries and Cost of Living Allowances. And then may I therefore ask the Member for Tabaquite, please.

Dr. Rambachan: Thank you, Madam Chair. Under Immigration, monthly paid officers’ overtime is being increased by $3.5 million, and I am asking the question in light of the difficulties being experienced by members of the public, and the length of time it is now taking to get the passport, and even if you pay $350 to get an expedited passport it still takes you between seven to nine days. Can you, Minister, indicate that with this additional overtime that you are going to pay, whether there is any link and any strategy to reduce the inordinate delays that are being experienced by people to get their passports at the Immigration Department, and especially so, people who are applying for passports at overseas missions?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: The Immigration Officers are in fact working over the weekends right now to try and speed up the process, and they will continue to do so until just time as we can remedy the situation.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.

Dr. Lee: My question is related to Sub-Head 008, Probation Services, and I do not
think you have reached there as yet

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Come back to it.

Madam Chairman: Is it then, therefore, to defer your question to a “lil” later? I call on the hon. Member for Siparia.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Would the hon. Minister of National Security indicate under this 007 Immigration, whether 10-year passports have been issued to citizens, and if so, as of what date did such issuance take place?


Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: It is under Goods and Services?


Madam Chairman: Hon. Minister of Finance, would you answer the question, therefore?

Mr. Imbert: What is the question? [Laughter] What is the question?

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: To the hon. Minister of National Security—

Mr. Imbert: But I was being asked to answer.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: No—who has oversight of the Immigration Department? My question was whether 10-year passports have been issued to citizens of Trinidad and Tobago? When did such issuance take place, firstly? And when was the decision taken so to do by the Cabinet of Trinidad and Tobago?

Mr. Imbert: We will let you know by the end of the debate.

Dr. Moonilal: You do not know it, off hand?

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Through the Minister of National Security.

Mr. Imbert: We will get back to you at the end of the debate.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Well, will you check if it is in August of 2015 that such passports began?

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member, with all due respect, I do not think that is a
fair question under the items that we are considering.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** Really?

**Mr. Imbert:** This is salaries.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** I am guided, Madam.

**Madam Chairman:** All right, could we therefore move on? Member for Tabaquite.

**Dr. Rambachan:** I do not know if the question will be appropriate also, through you, I will ask it. With respect to, again, the overtime being incurred, there are a lot of persons who have applied for work permits—business people in Trinidad—and these work permits are taking an inordinate time to get it, and very long delays, and I would like to ask the hon. Minister what is being done to process these work permits? For example, there are many restaurants which the tourism sector depends on and they cannot get specialists cooks, because some of them it takes too long.

And the second part of my question has to do with also a number of people living in Trinidad for a very long time who have applied for resident status, and in a lot of cases they come to me as an MP and they cannot find their documents? What is being done to assist both of these situations?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** There is a process involved and a great deal of time, there is insufficient information, so a lot of research and background checking takes place and that—

**Dr. Rambachan:** Two years?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** Yes. Sometimes there is a lot of background vetting that must take place to ensure that the right procedure was carried out. Most of the time there is insufficient information provided and a lot of background checks must be done. And then for quite some time we were unable to get access to some
Dr. Rambachan: But what strategies do you intend to employ to reduce the time that it is taking to get these work permits approved? What strategies are you going to employ? You said they are working over weekends, but what other strategies are you going to employ? Because I have a very great concern with the operations and what is being said by people who are applying for work permits, as to how the work permit committee operates, and particularly demands that are being made of people who are applying for these work permits? What is being done to investigate all of this?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Part of the review will take into consideration system and processes, and we will see how best we could improve them as we go along.

Madam Chairman: Are there any other questions under this Item? If not, can we go on to Item 007, which is Probation on page—this is 008? Ok, so the Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Hon. Member: Item 007, Immigration.

Madam Speaker: Oh, Immigration.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you Chairman, just to the Minister of National Security, with regard to the time frame in which persons are able to get information on their travel whereabouts, especially for persons who are applying for pension, it is an inordinate delay and is there anything that would be done to reduce this time frame so that persons can in fact start receiving their pensions?

4.05 p.m.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: We are, in fact, reviewing the system and processes and trying to work as hard as possible to reduce the backlog even in that area at this point in time.

Madam Chairman: Okay, can we go on to Item 008, Probation Service, page
Dr. Lee: Madam Chair, my question is just a concern, Probation Service came from a transfer from the Ministry of the People and Social Development. In 2015 it appears to be a small unit. The salaries were estimated in 2015 to be $6.5 million, and I am seeing in 2016, $4.7 million. Given the nature of the important role that division plays, why would there be a drop in the salaries?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Probation Service, Sub-Item 01?

Madam Chairman: Item 008.


Madam Chairman: Can we again deal with this under the general undertaking with respect to salaries and cost of living allowances?

Dr. Lee: Yeah.

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

Dr. Lee: And also the number of persons employed in that division.

Madam Chairman: So that an undertaking by the hon. Minister of National Security will treat with respect to that.


Madam Chairman: Thank you. The hon. Member for Couva South.

Mr. Indarsingh: Thank you, Madam Chair. With respect to the Forensic Science Centre which has now been brought over from the Ministry of Justice into the Ministry of National Security—[ Interruption]

Madam Chairman: Might I ask, I believe you are going on to Item 009?

Mr. Indarsingh: Yes.

Madam Chairman: May I just ask if all questions under Item 008 have been exhausted? Then we can go on to Item 009. I am sorry, hon. Member for Couva South. You may proceed.
Mr. Indarsingh: Yes, Madam Chair. As it relates to the Forensic Science Centre now being brought into the Ministry of National Security and the Minister continues to indicate that he is reviewing the operations of entities under his Ministry’s control. When we look at salaries and cost of living it is $6.5 million, approximately, at the Forensic Science Centre. From time to time we always see a pile-up of bodies and families going through trauma and so on, in relation to the operations of the Forensic Science Centre. Will there be an increase in the number of pathologists and so on? And last year, I am told there was an allocation of over $9.1 million and there has been a decrease.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: We are in the process of hiring a pathologist. He should come on board very soon to treat with the issues as mentioned.

Mr. Indarsingh: One pathologist?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: More than one. I am informed it is more than one.

Mr. Indarsingh: Can you be a little more specific and clearer on this particular issue, Minister?

Mr. Imbert: Member for Couva South, if you look at page 353 and look at Item 003 Forensic Science Centre—

Mr. Indarsingh: Madam Chair, could the Minister of Finance raise his voice a little.

Mr. Imbert: Certainly. Page 353—

Mr. Indarsingh: Yes.

Mr. Imbert:—under the Ministry of Justice—

Mr. Indarsingh: Yes.

Mr. Imbert: Item 003, Sub-Item 01, Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance where 2015 revised estimate is $9.1 million. Because you said, you wanted to know why $9 million was the cost in 2015 whereas the allocation in 2016, when
we go to National Security you are seeing $6.5 million. Correct? That is the question you asked, right?

Mr. Indarsingh: Yeah.

Mr. Imbert: If you look at the original estimate for Forensic Science Centre, you would see the original estimate was $6.6 million. Are you seeing it?

Mr. Indarsingh: Um-hmm.

Mr. Imbert: Right? So that there, the original estimate for the forensic science salaries was $6.6 million, the actual revised estimate which will include all payments made, $9.1 million. So this would include an element of arrears which would not be applicable in 2016. So the allocation similar to the other Head we just discussed, the allocation goes back down to a lower level. But we will provide you with an explanation as to any variance, because $6.6 million was the original in 2015 and the allocation now in 2016 is $6.5 million. So we will provide you with the explanation of any variance, taking into account any increased salaries and any changes in personnel, and that sort of thing. Okay? So we will give you that information.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Just to add, there are two pathologists now and they are in the process of hiring two more on contract.

Mr. Imbert: Yeah, so it would appear in a different Head.

Dr. Moonilal: On this matter, Minister of National Security, you indicated that we are hiring more persons but the figure is going down in terms of salaries and cost of living. [Crosstalk] Okay, fine, I am trying to finish. You are hiring on contract. Now—[Interruption]

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: I thought they were against contract employees.

Dr. Moonilal: They were against it before. Could you undertake to give us a listing of the staff at the Forensic Science Centre and whether or not they have also
benefited from any salary increase in the recent past?—because given the figures, if you read across the figures from 2014 to 2016 you get the impression that they have not benefited from any salary increase, because although you will get the arrears in 2015, their salaries and cost of living dropped again in 2016. So is it that you are retrenching persons, you are removing persons in a critical centre that the public is very concerned about. Is there any intention to cut the staff at that centre given the reduction that you are estimating for 2016?

**Mr. Imbert:** We are getting some clarity that will answer all of the questions that were asked.

**Madam Chairman:** So could we in the meantime go on to another question?

**Hon. Member:** Yeah.

**Mr. Imbert:** Okay, I have the answer now. It is what I thought it was. In part of 2015 there were three forensic pathologists hired at the Forensic Science Centre under the establishment. So their expenditure would fall under salaries and cost of living, okay? There are now two, but the Minister has indicated they are going to recruit two more but they will be paid from a different Head. So what you are seeing is an original estimate of $6.6 million, a revised estimate of $9 million which will include arrears and a new allocation going forward $6.5 million but you have reduced the numbers of persons paid under this Head. So it appears that it is more than adequate to cater for the two pathologists who will be hired under the establishment and then if you go to Contracted Services which is under Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, page 127 you will see Contract Employment allocation of $44 million which involves an increase of $18 million. So it would appear from the figures, contract employment has gone up, the allocation—

**Dr. Moonilal:** By 18—

**Mr. Imbert:** Eighteen million increase in contract employment. Look at it there.
It is Sub-Head 02, Sub-Item 16, page 127 the revised estimate, $26 million for 2015, $44 million for 2016. So the pathologists will be well taken care of under that increased allocation for contracted employment. So there is nothing to worry about in terms of reducing the professional staff at the Forensic Science Centre.

Dr. Moonilal: That is understood. We are clear on that. The issue is whether or not the other staff that constitute salaries and cost of living allowance, whether or not they benefit from any increase. We understand one gone—[Interruption]

Mr. Imbert: If arrears were paid, certainly.

Dr. Moonilal: If arrears—so you have calculated that they benefited by arrears but would they also be recipients of increase in salaries and cost of living.

Mr. Imbert: Obviously, once they got arrears—

Dr. Moonilal: Even though it went down.

Madam Chairman: Member, would that be covered by the same ditto assurances?

Mr. Imbert: Ditto, yes.

Madam Chairman: And therefore, the Member for Oropouche East, may we go on?

Dr. Moonilal: Sure.

Madam Chairman: Thank you very much.

Dr. Gopeesingh: When I look at the establishment of the Forensic Science Centre, on this Draft Estimates of Expenditure for the Financial Year 2016, on page 100, could the Minister guide us, the two pathologists that you have on the establishment, I am not seeing any area within that, the government Forensic Science Centre, where they are on the establishment. I see a Director and one Scientific Officer III and so on, a number of scientific officers but I do not see any area there on the establishment for the forensic pathologist.
Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: They are also on contract.

Dr. Gopeesingh: All on contract. So the original statement that two are—

Mr. Imbert: All on contract.


Dr. Gopeesingh: So there are now four?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: There will be four on contract. [Crosstalk]

Dr. Gopeesingh: Plus two, four. Okay, right. I was finding it strange that I did not see it on the establishment.

Dr. Bodoe: Recruiting price—

Madam Chairman: Might I suggest that you speak into the mike? Thank you very much.

Dr. Bodoe: Thank you, Madam Chair. Sometimes there is difficulty in recruiting forensic pathologists because of the highly specialized nature of these particular doctors and I was wondering whether any consideration has been given to, perhaps, engaging these professionals who were currently there to work on, maybe weekends, if that is currently taking place in an attempt to decrease the backlog of work that is there.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: To answer your question, there is an assigned number of cases that each pathologist must do, during the year, and therefore they work according to that.

Dr. Bodoe: Thank you, Minister.

Dr. Khan: Thank you, Madam Chair. I would just like the Minister of National Security to give the undertaking that the forensic pathologist that is going to come on contract should be recognized, specialist of forensic pathology as per the directions of the Medical Board of Trinidad and Tobago. You see if that is not the case and these pathologists give evidence in a court of law it can be thrown out if
they are not recognized forensic pathologists from that specialty.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Thank you very. We will definitely look into it. Thank you, Sir.

Mr. Indarsingh: Hon. Minister, I could remember, since you have assumed the responsibility of being the Minister of National Security, you have made some public pronouncements as it relates to your Government’s priority, number one priority continues to be the focus on crime. And the Forensic Science Centre has now been brought into your Ministry, and I am trying to recollect your words as it relates to the role of forensics in relation to this crime-fighting strategy and so on. Could you share whether the establishment that the Forensic Science Centre, whether it is from a ballistic point of view, and so on, did the expertise that is required to fight crime, is it adequate? What are your plans from a forensic point of view and so on as you go forward?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: That is also part of the review of the whole apparatus. So I would not be able to give you that answer at this point in time. It was based on the results of that review in terms of the number to suit the particular jobs at the Forensic Science Centre. And, of course, it involves looking in depth as to the structure and the people to fit the purpose.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Minister of National Security, is that being given as an assurance?


Madam Chairman: Would you be able to provide that before the close of the budget debate?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: I will be able to, Madam Chair.

4.20 p.m.

Mr. Paray: Minister of National Security, knowing that we are entering crunch
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time economically, what provision is being put in place by the Ministry to, one, look at recruiting local nationals in terms of forensic pathology? I know there is a scarcity locally. What provisions are being made to liaise with the University of the West Indies or the other medical facilities throughout the Caribbean that maybe able to train our own nationals to be able to take up those roles over the next couple years, therefore reducing—I know when you bring foreign consultants there is an overhead cost that comes with a foreign consultant. Any word on that, Sir?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: I know that in terms of our own history it has been very difficult to get people to accept those—even that profession as a profession, and there have been a number of searches locally. There have even been offers of scholarship, and I am not quite sure even that has been enough incentive to invite, or to allow people—to encourage people to join. So we continue to offer incentives to get our locals involved in that field, but at the same time we have to also look at the international arena to see whether we can fill the void. But we will never give up trying to at least have locals involved. So if in any way you can help us we will appreciate that.

Mr. Ramadhar: Thank you, Madam Chairman. Minister of National Security, you indicated, quite curiously, that there are a number of autopsies that are appointed to each of the pathologists. What number is that, and what happens if they exceed or if there is a need to exceed that number?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: It is approximately about 300, I believe, per year, but let me come back again and verify and provide that information at a later date for you, please.

Mr. Ramadhar: And in so doing, with your leave, of course, Milady, if there is a sharp downfall in—for instance even if this is 100, and they were paid for like 300, is there any factor that is negotiable there? How does it work?
Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: I think it is based on the contract, you know. It is what they are contracted to do. But again, I can provide more detail for you.

Dr. Bodoe: Thank you, Madam Chair. This is just a follow-up to the question from the Member for Mayaro with regard to personnel available. I know you may not be able to provide the answer right away but if the Minister could indicate, are there any locals currently abroad on scholarships training in the area of forensic pathology? At what stage of their training they are, and when they are expected to return.


Dr. Bodoe: Would that be a priority area in terms of scholarships to be awarded going forward, Minister?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: In fact, we had offered two scholarships and no one came forward. So we will continue to try and offer it to the public.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Hon. Minister, I was looking to see if there is any relationship here in the establishment towards the fulfilment of the accreditation of the Forensic Science Centre. It has been long on the drawing board, that in terms of storing forensic material, it can be questioned whether it is an authenticated Forensic Science Centre. We needed some degree of accreditation. Has that come to your attention in your short time there so far? And is there any area inside here that you will put some emphasis, whether personnel—goods and services we could talk about that later—to quickly establishing the Forensic Science Centre as an accredited Forensic Science Centre, so that it cannot be questioned in the courts of law as not being accredited when a sample is taken there, and so on?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: It has not come to my attention but it will be done under Institutional Strengthening. Your point is well taken.

Dr. Khan: Thank you, Madam Chair. Could I just suggest something to the
Minister of National Security and his staff? In order to get a forensic pathologist it is going to be extremely difficult because there are not many programmes in the world that offer forensic pathology per se, but what I would recommend and suggest is that you do the scholarships for anatomical pathology and then we have a forensic pathologist in Trinidad and Tobago—if they work under that forensic pathologist under the guidance of the University of the West Indies and develop themselves there, they could be given the specialized status after a while. Because you are going to have a very hard time finding a forensic pathology degree externally.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** Thank you. We will look at that. Thank you very much.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** Through you, Madam Chair, to the Minister of National Security. Under this Forensic Science Centre would also fall—my colleague mentioned about ballistics and so on. From my understanding, there is a tremendous backlog. You are taking on pathologists to deal with autopsies and so on. What about persons to deal with these other specialized areas: ballistics and several other things to do with chemicals and poisons and all the things that fall under forensic sciences. Would we see increased staff there?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** There are currently five ballistic experts at the Forensic Science Centre and we will continue to build capacity as we go along. But there are currently five right now.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** And so nothing will be allocated here for any increase in that capacity for forensics. Am I correct to say that? At this time—you are saying you will continue to build capacity, but at this time there is no allocation being made for that capacity building.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** No, not at this time.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** Not yet. Okay.
Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: But we will look at it under Vacant Posts and see how best we can address the situation.

Madam Chairman: Members, we have three items left under Personnel Expenditure, which I would want to suggest that we complete before we take the tea break. So can we go on to Item 012, Lifeguard Service, which is on page 125, and that is 012.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: May I enquire, through you, whether there is any increase for the lifeguards in terms of their wages and salaries and so on. It comes out of the Ministry of Tourism so it is not immediately comparable on page 125.

Madam Chairman: And could that be dealt with under the general undertaking?

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Under the “ditto”.

Dr. Moonilal: Could I, through you, Madam Chair, to the Minister of National Security, request at a later time before the completion of our exercise, a list of the beaches and facilities that are currently now being manned/serviced by the lifeguards, and whether or not there are any plans to extend that list to other places in Trinidad and Tobago? I ask that because it does not appear as if the allocation would provide for increasing of staff.

We did see in other areas the massive increase in, if not staff, certainly in the amount of money to be paid due to salaries and wages, and I really wanted to repeat that in the aftermath of the budget, the Prime Minister did indicate that the largest portion would go to National Security because of the chronic and rampant criminal conduct in Trinidad and Tobago. We have discovered that the largest portion went to increased salaries and wages. So I would really want you tell us if you are going to expand the lifeguard facility. Because as Members of Parliament, we would like to make recommendations to you in terms of the expansion of that facility to domestic tourist sites that are unprotected at this moment and without
such a service.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** As a new entity coming to National Security, definitely we will look at it and see whether, how effective they are at this point in time, and whether there is a requirement for such an increase, and if there is, we will take the actions accordingly so to do.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Minister of National Security, under Lifeguard Service, is it that the lifeguard service alone has been transferred to you? Or is the Ministry also responsible for the upkeep and maintenance of the facilities?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** We are, in fact, responsible for the entire lifeguard mechanism. So they all belong to us.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** Madam Chair, just to wrap up on Personnel Expenditure. On page 126 there is the Cadet Force and the Air Guard.

**Madam Chairman:** Are we completed with 012, Lifeguard?

**Hon. Member:** Yes.

**Madam Chairman:** So can we go on to 015, which is Cadet Force?

**Mr. Paray:** No, Lifeguard.

**Madam Chairman:** 012, Lifeguard?

**Mr. Paray:** Yes. Thank you very much, Madam Chairman. Minister of National Security, in terms of the lifeguard services, one of the challenges that the lifeguards in Mayaro consistently complain about is the fact that when giving instructions to sea bathers, sometimes they do not take them seriously, in terms that they have no authority to tell them beyond—you know, force to get them out of the water. There are a lot of ATVs that are driving up and down the beaches in Mayaro disturbing the peace and sanctity of families coming with their children. Is there any—or can I suggest that at some point in time during your analysis, some way to,
perhaps, have these lifeguards get a bit more authority to issue instructions for safety of both the bathing public and the families seeking a little leisure and quiet time with their families? Thank you.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** It is something that we will look at going forward. As I said, it is a new entity into Ministry of National Security so we will look at all those parameters to see how best we could improve the entire environment.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Minister of National Security, if I may let you know, based on what the Member for Mayaro said, we were, in fact, establishing a lifeguard authority, so maybe you can look at that.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** Thank you very much.

**Madam Chairman:** Can we therefore go on to Item 016 on page 126 which is Air Guard? [Interruption]

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** 015, at the top of the same page.

**Madam Chairman:** 015, Cadet Force, I am sorry.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Hon. Minister, the first question is: where does Civilian Conservation Corps fall in, whether it is the Ministry of National Security, if it is there? And the second issue, in terms of personnel for the Cadet Force, there are a number of retired personnel who have served actively to give some support to the Cadet Force. I have been struggling while as Minister of Education to increase the Cadet Force to secondary schools and move it from 29 to 41, and we have 134 secondary schools. Is there any way in this that you can help, whether contractual or some other way—I know it is your desire as well, I heard you say that—that you can work within this area to help to bring about more Cadet Force within the schools, first of all?

But I know somewhere along the line the training for cadets, you seem to have a high percentage of personnel to train the cadet officers. May I suggest,
humbly, that you look at the number of trainers to the number of trainees? Because there is a disparity somewhere there. In fact, a preponderance of trainers which you may need to look at, and probably utilize their services in improving the cadet service in the schools.


Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Siparia? This is under Cadet Force?

Dr. Gopeesingh: And the Civilization Conservation Corps is under that.


Mr. Imbert: Under another head.

4.35 p.m.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Thank you very much. To save time, Cadet Force and Air Guard, Madam, if you may permit me? The same questions we have asked. The ditto questions.

Madam Chairman: The ditto questions?

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Yes, in terms of how much you say for salary increases and so on over 2015/2016. Now, I am looking—through you, Madam Chair, where do these programmes MILAT, MYPART, Civilian Conservation, OLEP, do they fall within this Ministry; and what will be the recurrent expenditure under Personnel? I have not seen it. We finished up to page 126 on Personnel. So would you kindly guide us, hon. Minister?

Mr. Imbert: May I come in there, please? Because I anticipate that this type of question will be asked on several occasions as we go forward. There are a number of programmes which would not appear under these Heads. With respect to the particular programmes identified by your good self and also by the Member for Caroni East, if you go to page 148, you look under Households, you are going to
see civilian—

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** Transfers and subsidies. Okay.

**Mr. Imbert:** Page 148 you will see Civilian Conservation Corps, MILAT, et cetera, et cetera. So we not reached there yet. We are far from there.

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

**Mr. Karim:** Madam Chair, when you get to page 127 under Air Guard, I do not know if you want me to raise anything there.

**Madam Chairman:** Well, let us just finish. I assume you are finished with Cadet Force, and therefore, we can go to Air Guard and I will permit you.

**Mr. Karim:** Okay. Thank you, Madam Chair. Under Air Guard 02, Item 16, Contract Employment—

**Mr. Imbert:** 02?

**Madam Chairman:** No, no. I am sorry.

**Mr. Karim:** We still on the left?

**Madam Chairman:** Yes, we are still under 01.

**Mr. Karim:** I did indicate when we get to that stage I would like to raise it.

**Madam Chairman:** All right. So, are there any Members wishing to ask any question under 016, that item under 001?

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** Madam Chair, we are closing up on Recurrent Expenditure, Personnel Expenditure. We are closing up on that. Just that I understand clearly, there have been assurances given that out of this increase in national security for Recurrent Expenditure of $2.8 billion, that out of that a substantial portion may be to the tune net—the net is 2.8, the gross is the 2.52 because of salaries, increases in salaries and wages, arrears payments and so on, and we look forward if that was the assurance given to provide the details under each of the units for Personnel Expenditure.
Mr. Imbert: I believe I have given that undertaking now nine times. I will give it for a 10th time and 11th time. I will find the patience and give it for 900 times.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: We look forward to getting it just once.

Mr. Imbert: I will find the patience.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Thank you.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Members, it is now 4.37 p.m. I propose we suspend the committee meeting for half an hour, at least till five, for us to have the tea break.

Mr. Hinds: 5.05 p.m. [Crosstalk]

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Five? How could we get back here at five?

Hon. Member: 5.10 p.m.

Madam Chairman: It is 4.38 p.m.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: It is 20 to five, then we go downstairs. To get up the steps is about seven minutes, to come down.

Madam Chairman: Members, I just thought with all the energy that I saw before now, that I may have been dealing with very—and I am sorry. Okay? So if we think that 10 minutes will help us, we will be back here at 5.10 p.m.

4.38 p.m.: Standing Finance Committee suspended.

5.10 p.m.: Standing Finance Committee resumed.

Madam Chairman: Members, if we could resume where we left off, and I think we are now at Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services. So that we are all on the same page I believe we are at page 127, and may I call Item 001, General Administration. I call on the hon. Member for Caroni Central.

Dr. Tewarie: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. When I raised the matter earlier of what new hirings were likely to take place given the allocation of $19.4 million earlier, under Item 01, the Minister of Finance referred me, as well, to 02, 16 Contract Employment, and he indicated then that that would also be another or
additional source of hiring. Now, I note here that the increase is $18.5 million and there is a note next to it which says, “Includes Provision for Graduate Employment”. Graduate employment if it is divided among the 23 Ministries, consisting of $55 million, would mean about $2.3 million here. So could I ask if the Minister knows—I am asking the Minister of National Security—what this provision is for in terms of new potential hiring by contract besides the graduate employment?

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

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Yes, Madam Chair, somewhat. We just had a six-year plan approved, and therefore, we are looking to fill some of the positions based on that six-year that was approved. It includes the Justice also.

Dr. Tewarie: It subsumes the other figures that now are—


Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Chaguanas East.

Mr. Karim: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. May I also elaborate because that was the question I had raised before we went to the break, whether the graduate employment—just to repeat because I wanted to get to the next stage—is the same as the Graduate Recruitment Programme as enunciated in the budget presentation by the hon. Minister of Finance on page 72? And if it is that, as my colleague has stated, then there is a $16.3 million increase. The question I wanted to take off from my colleague is, can we get a list, where possible, of those persons who have been so contracted but not yet engaged in the graduate programme? So two situations, number one: is this the same—the explanation is 16—as enunciated in the Graduate Recruitment Programme of page 72 of the budget speech? Because if it is, with approximately $55 million for 500 persons, it will total to $2.16 million per year, and after that I will have another question on the same
Mr. Imbert: The Member for Caroni Central has already done that calculation and he is correct, that the appropriation for each Ministry would be approximately $2 million for graduates. And the term “graduate employment” does in fact refer to the overall budgetary allocation of $55 million which works out at approximately $2 million per Ministry plus an appropriate allocation for Tobago. So that the balance would be other employment which the Minister can now answer you on that.

Madam Chairman: The hon. Member for Couva North.

Miss Ramdial: Thank you, Madam Chairman. To the Minister. I am seeing an increase under Goods and Services, 05 telephones, of $1.6 million, can you please account for such an increase? Also for the increases in rent, lease, vehicles, equipment received by $25.2 million under 09, and also increases in overseas travel under 27 by $475,000, can you account for those increases, please?

Mr. Imbert: There is a generic answer to that question, and all questions of a similar nature with respect to this Ministry. Because this Ministry involves a merger of elements of the Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Tourism and Ministry of National Security, the establishment of the Ministry has been increased, and therefore, what you are seeing there is the aggregate of telephones in all the constituent elements that make up this Ministry.

Dr. Moonilal: Madam Chair, I want to follow up on that.

Madam Chairman: One minute, please. Your question has been answered, Member for Couva North?

Miss Ramdial: Yes.

Madam Chairman: Member for Oropouche East.

Dr. Moonilal: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. To follow up on that you are
suggesting to us, Mr. Minister of Finance, that an increase for vehicles and equipment, and I suspect these vehicles now, could you confirm that these are also government vehicles to be painted with the coat of arms and the relevant Ministry would be painted on to the vehicle as your Prime Minister instructed? You are suggesting to us that because of the merger with Ministry of Justice, Tourism, where I believe the life guard services came from, that would have accounted for $25 million increase in the rental of vehicles and equipment?

Mr. Imbert: My good man—

Dr. Moonilal: Hon. Member.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Oropouche East.

Dr. Moonilal: I am not your good man.

Mr. Imbert: Hon. Member for Oropouche East, one of the areas of government service that places the greatest demands on vehicles is the prison service. You must have seen vehicles that have the marking “Justice on Time” on them. So that is a substantial increase to the vehicle requirements for the Ministry of National Security. You will recall that the prison service was under the Ministry of Justice before. So it is not just the lifeguard services that are being added, it is also the prison service which has a significant, I will say large complement of vehicles.

5.20 p.m.

Dr. Moonilal: Madam Chairman, I just want to engage the Minister on this matter.

Madam Chairman: Is it related to the particular question posed for the item?

Dr. Moonilal: It is related to what he said. Yes, yes. Minister, be very clear with me, you are saying that Justice On Time, which is the prison service contracted to a private provider, those vehicle rentals or your payment for that service provided by an independent contractor, Justice on Time, that is included in Rent/Lease,
Vehicles and Equipment?

**Mr. Imbert:** What I am telling you is that the prison service has been added to the Ministry of National Security and the vehicle requirements of the prison service are substantial and that is why you are seeing this substantial allocation for vehicles. I used Justice On Time so that you would zero in to the fact that the prison service has been added to—

**Dr. Moonilal:** Yeah, so you are not saying, really, it is that independent contractor providing prison transport that is included here.

**Mr. Imbert:** I am not telling you yea or nay.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Or no. “You doh know.”

**Mr. Imbert:** If you want a specific answer to that specific question as to whether the vehicles provided by Justice On Time or some similar provider are included in this—it is a large sum, it is $25 million. If you want a specific answer to that, you can get that within the next couple of minutes. Okay? And we will get it for you.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Yeah. Could I—?

**Madam Chairman:** If I may interject, I think in an effort to move the discussion further, I believe the hon. Minister of National Security may have the answer.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Please.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** If I can also add, the equipment part of the line item pertains to rental—camera; it is almost about $20 million—that is the CCTV—camera per month to TSTT, so that is included there.

**Dr. Moonilal:** And Minister, surely you could find out within a couple of seconds that this does not include contract service for provision of prison transport. Okay? Just confirm it.

**Mr. Imbert:** We said we would.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** Yeah, I can find out that.
Madam Chairman: Okay. So can I go now to the hon. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Madam Chairman. In light of the fact that you have identified, Minister of Finance, that the costing here is an aggregate of the various Ministries or services that have come under the Ministry of National Security, will you be therefore doing a cost-benefit analysis to determine the best option to get value for money between purchasing and renting/leasing? And what measures will be implemented to monitor and review these lease agreements from the Ministry?

Mr. Imbert: I will ask the Minister to answer that.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Yes, most definitely, we will be looking into that in terms of going forward because we understand that we have to do some cost-cutting measures, so that is, of course, part of the review going forward, to see how best we can manage that.

Mr. Charles: Thank you very much. Madam Chair, looking at Sub-Item 17, Training and in the context of the rebooting of our human resources to deal with crime, I see a reduction of $173,000, and I want to know if this training relates to all personnel in the Ministry of National Security or only to the administrative staff. And while you are doing that, could you explain the increase in overseas travel by $475,000? There seems to be a question of priority. Training, a reduction and a half of a million increase in overseas travel. That is Sub-Item 27.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Training is, in fact, reflected in terms of a decreased budget and I think for this fiscal year, we are accessing some more training in which there is assistance from our international partners that defrayed some of the cost.
Mr. Indarsingh: Thank you, Madam Chairman. Under Sub-Item 36, Extraordinary Expenditure, in 2015, there was an estimate of $127,868,780 and then when it was revised, it moved down to $65,490,000. In 2016, we are seeing an estimate of $119 million, an increase of $53,510,000. And just for the benefit of the national community in the context of transparency and so on, could we get an explanation of what Extraordinary Expenditure is and what has accounted for this astronomical increase of $53 million plus?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: This has to do with a return of the Witness Protection Programme to the Ministry and some of the covert agencies that have returned to us, so that explains some of the extraordinary. It has been placed under extraordinary because of the nature of the expenditure.

Madam Chairman: Can I then call on the hon. Member for Tabaquite?

Mr. Indarsingh: Just a minute, I am not totally satisfied with that explanation because I think that in other areas of the Ministry, there is this recurring theme of Extraordinary Expenditure.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Couva South, your question—your current question, is it confined to this?

Mr. Indarsingh: Madam Chairman, I wish to state for the record, I am not totally satisfied with the explanation which has been provided and I am entitled to say that.

Madam Chairman: Yes, but I took it that you asked another question.

Mr. Indarsingh: Chair, I say, again, for the record, that there is a recurring theme of Extraordinary Expenditure under respective agencies within the Ministry of National Security, for example, Fire Service and so on—Prison, and I am saying, based on the commitment to transparency in Government, I am not satisfied with the explanation which has been provided by the Minister of National Security.
Mr. Imbert: Just for clarity, Madam Chairman, through you, what the Minister has indicated is that the Extraordinary Expenditure of $119 million, which by the way is less than the original provision under your Government in 2015 of $127 million, is for covert operations. The Fire Service, Extraordinary Expenditure is only $20,000; and the Prison Service, the Extraordinary Expenditure is only $150,000.

But this large Item of $119 million is for covert operations and I suspect that the Minister does not want to go into any great deal on exactly what the items are. He has told me it includes witness protection and it includes other covert operations.

Mr. Indarsingh: Madam Chair, I hope covert operations do not trample on the rights of citizens of this country.

Dr. Rambachan: Thank you, Madam Chair. I want to go back to Sub-Item 09 Rent/Lease - Vehicles and Equipment and I want to find out from the Minister: how many vehicles, other than “just in time for justice”, are rented by the Ministry of National Security; how many are rented by the police service; how many are rented by the prison service; how many are rented by the fire service? And I would like to know also: from whom are these vehicles rented and how is the process of procurement of these vehicles done?

Because there is a complaint very often by officers when they are called to do investigations, “We do not have a vehicle”, and I am discovering that there are several vehicles—and I mean several, dozens of vehicles like this that are rented and placed in the hands of police officers who do not wear uniforms, and these vehicles are supposed to be doing overt or covert operations. I want to know who are they renting these vehicles from, what is the cost of renting these vehicles by the contractor and how is the procurement done in order to acquire these vehicles?
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Madam Chairman: One minute, please, hon. Minister. Hon. Member, are you asking this under the Head of National Security or under Police because my understanding is—

Dr. Rambachan: I am asking under National Security, because—I mean, I could ask it, again, if you wish, under Police.

Madam Chairman: I did not understand your question that way.

Dr. Rambachan: —but National Security, but I hope that the Minister will take it in the wider context.

Madam Chairman: Because there is a separate Head for Police where, I guess, a similar question may arise. So that if you are asking about police, I would ask if you wait until we reach there. Okay?

Dr. Rambachan: Well, I can come back and ask it under Police.

Madam Chairman: So you may want to ask this question under this particular Head.

Dr. Rambachan: Let me specify this part of the question for National Security.

Madam Chairman: Right.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: If I may? The mere fact that it is rental for covert operations, I will not disclose the rental agency. Because, again, if it is for covert operations and I tell you the name of the rental agency, I might as well make it an overt operation. I might as well paint it and say this is a vehicle that belongs to the Ministry of National Security but I cannot. It is all part of the covert process.

Dr. Rambachan: So we are not entitled even to know from whom you are procuring these vehicles?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: No, not if—in the interest of national security, I cannot. It means the whole thing will be compromised.

Dr. Rambachan: So how does the public know that you are not overpaying for
these vehicles? How does the public know that there is not competitive bidding for these contracts?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** How far do you want me to go back in terms of that?

**Dr. Rambachan:** Go back wherever you want, I am asking the question. I am entitled to ask the question, Minister.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** Sure, but I will say, in the interest of national security, it is not right for me to do so. I will be compromising the very operators themselves if I do that.

**Mr. Karim:** Thank you, Madam Chairman. When I attempted to raise the question on Sub-Item 16, the hon. Minister of Finance indicated that my colleague had already asked that question and he was correct. But I do not think that he understood that the question had two parts. I wanted to hear from the hon. Minister of National Security: what constitutes the Contract Employment for this significant increase of $16.3 million approximately?

**Madam Chairman:** Is 16 or 18? 18.5.

**Mr. Karim:** No, remember the Minister of Finance indicated that approximately $2 million would go for the graduate programme.

**Madam Chairman:** Yes.

**Mr. Karim:** My [Inaudible] saying that, says the difference.

**Madam Chairman:** Yes.

**Mr. Karim:** My [Inaudible] saying that, says the difference.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** The figure includes people who are contracted with the Ministry at this point in time and also the provision for the Graduate Employment.

**Mr. Karim:** Is it possible, through you, Madam Chairman, to ask the hon. Minister if he can give us an idea as to the categories of the Contract Employment? Because it might be useful for us to understand the categories and also a list if possible.

**UNREVISED**
Madam Chairman: So hon. Minister of National Security, would that be something you can give an undertaking to provide in writing before the end of—


Madam Chairman: Right. Hon. Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister of National Security, does this lease/rental of $150 million, is that by itself for National Security? Because I see you have lease/rental for Regiment, Fire Service, Prison Service separate, and Coast Guard, et cetera. Is this only for what area of National Security? And if you said that there are a number of vehicles rented for covert operations, what part of this $150 million is for lease/rental for these covert operations? That $150 million, what does it entail: Prison Service, Regiment, Coast Guard or what by itself? Because each of the others has their own vote. Police rental? So what does that cover, the $150 million? Who does that cover? What part of the National Security?

5.35 p.m.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Most of the expenditure under this line item really pertains to the CCTV cameras, which is about $10 million per month.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Caroni East, that was an answer.

Dr. Gopeesingh: I did not realize $10 million per month. That is $120 million.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: That is correct, to TSTT.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Okay. I have not seen any area here, if you probably, if we come to Police you might be able to find it, but the police service has a large fleet of vehicles and when they break down you would have to replace them whether by lease or—[Interruption]

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Caroni East, can I ask you to hold that for when we come under Police, please? Thank you.
Dr. Gopeesingh: Okay, all right.

Dr. Moonilal: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I have two questions. The Minister of Finance indicated in a generic response earlier that when we ask questions about particular sub-headings, and so on, we need to factor in that this would be in two Ministries in particular, National Security, Justice and he also said Tourism as well. So that accounts for increases.

I am wondering if the Minister is aware that in the question asked earlier, vehicle and equipment, the increase of $25.2 million, someone asked this question, but in the Ministry of Justice last year, the estimate for vehicles and equipment was a mere $295,000. So to say in these answers that you have to look at the two Ministries and add them up, if you take away $295,000 from $150 million, what accounts for this huge increase in vehicles and equipment? The Minister may not have the answer now, I know this, but I really would like the Minister to give us a bit more detail, where possible, given your national security concern. If you give us or make an undertaking to give us, once it is possible and it does not interfere with national security considerations, as to what constitutes this $25 million increase because it cannot, by definition, be the Ministry of Justice which had $295,000 last year. Do you want to respond to this?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: For clarification, you are talking about 09?

Dr. Moonilal: Yes.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: That is the same line item that the cameras come under.

Dr. Moonilal: But the cameras are $10 million a month you are saying, more or less, whatever, so you have a $25 million increase. You estimated at $150 million, $295,000 from the Ministry of Justice, more or less, would come there. There is still a significant increase. If you could just check it for us and indicate what may account for that. Okay?

Dr. Moonilal: The other point I want to make is that, Rent/lease of office accommodation and storage, I am noticing a decrease now of $5.3 million and I would ask you, you could answer now: what accounts for this? Because to my knowledge, there is no change in the rental arrangement for National Security throughout. What would account for that if I may ask? Is it the immigration?


Dr. Moonilal: But they have not moved into the immigration—in fact, we did work on the immigration building on Frederick Street. I am not sure that within the next fiscal year they would be prepared to move into the government campus as yet.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: General administration was paying for most of these items in 2015, and the cost has now moved back to the original entities.

Dr. Moonilal: So the cost of rent—so there is really no fundamental change in office and rental; it is that you are moving the cost to—

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: To the entities that would be—

Dr. Moonilal: To the entities, okay, thank you.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Madam Chair, I look further down the pages to determine whether there was an area for the police service. I might be mistaken but I am not seeing it.

Madam Chairman: I believe, hon. Member for Caroni East, there is a particular Head and I believe it comes after we have done National Security.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Good, good.

Madam Chairman: Therefore, can we then move on to Item 002: Fire Service? Could we have a little order and a little attention, please? Could we go on to Item 002: Fire Service? And this is page 128.
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Mr. Karim: Thank you Madam Chair. Item No. 13, which has a decrease of $17 million for maintenance of vehicles, might we get an explanation on that please?

Madam Chairman: Page 128 for all Members.

Mr. Karim: It is extremely important for this area of operation and I just want to get an idea. In fact, Madam Chair, let me make the point. I am noticing a trend in Fire Service, in Regiment; a decrease of $6.7 million and in Coast Guard of $8.5, a total of $22.2 million decrease. I just want to know, what was the reason for that significant decrease in the maintenance of vehicles?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: A new Item 96 has been created for fuel and lubricants so that has been removed from this figure.

Madam Chairman: Any other questions/clarifications sought under this item? So can we go on to Item 004: Prison Service, which is on page 129? Can we then go on to Item 005, which is Regiment on page 130?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Madam Chair, just going back to Prison Service 004, Item 43. What type of security services are being paid for under this Sub-Item of expenditure and is there a system for procurement of security services? And what determines the allocation for security services? Thank you.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: That is the Justice on Time transportation that carries prisoners to and from prisons to courthouses.

Madam Chairman: Okay, can we now go on to 005: Regiment, page 130? Can we then now go on to Item 006: Cost Guard, which is on page 131?

Mr. Indarsingh: Thank you, Madam Chair. Under Item 17: Training, I see an increase from $8 million to $20 million. Could we get some explanation, as it relates to this?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: That is based on the acquisition of the new vessels that were procured. We have to train the sailors to be able to man the new vessels, and,

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of course, to ensure that they do it competently. That is why the training has been increased. Remember we have just acquired—of course, you would know.

**Mr. Imbert:** On trust.


**Madam Chairman:** Are there any other questions on 006?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** I want to crave your indulgence just to go back, with due respect, to just one area of Food at Institutions under Prison Service.

**Madam Chairman:** Hon. Member, we have long passed the Prison Service if I remember.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** I know, but can I bring it under Food at Institutions under—

**Madam Chairman:** All right, you say this is Item 40, page 130? I am only allowing it because I see it is a significant sum.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Is this only for the material for the food, or is it the cost with labour and everything? How does it work? Do you have contracted officers providing the food or is it cooked within the prison, by whom and how is that taken care of?

**Mr. Imbert:** We asked you what this money was for and you did not answer us.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** But you are there. You could answer us.

**Mr. Imbert:** We just put the same allocation like you.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** It is the cost of raw material.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Raw material?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** Yes.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** So the prisoners prepare the meals?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** Yes.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** All the meals? Nobody is contracted from outside to prepare it?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** Prisoners are supervised by officers.
Dr. Gopeesingh: And they prepare the meals?


Dr. Gopeesingh: And they prepare all the meals for all the prisoners?


Dr. Gopeesingh: So you do not have to contract food from outside to come into the prison service?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: No, no, no you do not. That is a security risk if you do that.

Madam Chairman: So, can we continue with 006, please, which is on page 131?

Dr. Moonilal: Thank you. Minister, just some clarification. It might just be some clarification, but under Item 11: books and periodicals, that jumped from $11,000 in 2014 to $400,000 estimate in 2016. What would constitute that type of jump that you would be investing in more for the benefit of coast guard?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: The coast guard has in fact just completed a strategic plan, in terms of institutional strength, and so on, and in fact, it is a decrease but—

Dr. Moonilal: My issue is not the increase, but quantum, which moved from $11,000 to $400,000. Well what accounts for that? That is what I am asking. Is it, what, you completed a programme? [Interruption] Please, the Minister of Finance is disturbing me from listening to the Minister of National Security. I see books and periodicals, is it journals, is it an article, it is a newspaper?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: It covers a range of maritime documents and so on that they purchased; a number of maritime documents, training and otherwise.

Dr. Moonilal: Training and other materials.

Mr. Imbert: Madam Chairman, for the record, contrary to the statements made by the hon. Member, this Item has gone down from $489,000 to $400,000. There is
no fantastic increase; there is a decrease.

**Dr. Moonilal:** The issue was not that, what constitutes—

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** Additionally, with the new vessels, they have to purchase additional charts, maritime charts, and you know.

**Madam Chairman:** Please, can we kindly go on to medical expenses? This is under 006. Hon. Member for Caroni, East, we are now in 006. I just—so we are going on to—hon. Member for Coúva, Coúva South, are we in 006?

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Thank you, Madam Chair, I hope you are not changing the pronunciation of the constituency. *[Laughter]* With respect to Sub-Item 40: Food at Institutions, I see it has increased by—

**Madam Chairman:** Might I ask, hon. Member for Coúva South, are we in 006?

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Yes.

**Madam Chairman:** Could you just please tell me the Item?

**Mr. Indarsingh:** 132.

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

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Sub-Item 40: Food at Institutions. I see it has increased to $6,576,500. I hope that this is not the increase in VAT that is accountable for this rise.

**Mr. Imbert:** What is the question?

**Mr. Indarsingh:** What has caused the increase in Food at Institutions?

**Mr. Imbert:** It is not VAT.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** It has to do with the new vessels and the new vessels having to go to sea, a number of different times. It would increase in cost, in terms of operations and so on, because we expect that the vessels would be out there. They are very good vessels, as you well know, so we expect that they will be out there for extended periods, as much as they can. So the operational cost would go
up because each vessel has to be ritualized.

5.50 p.m.

Madam Chairman: One minute please, Member for Couva South, we are still on 006.

Mr. Indarsingh: Just on the vessels. What is the manpower on these vessels, Mr. Minister?

Madam Chairman: Would that be under Goods and Services?

Mr. Imbert: No.

Mr. Indarsingh: Well, in the context of the explanation that is being provided as it relates to food.

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

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: That is about 30 to 40 personnel on board on these vessels, and do not forget you have to get crew changes and so on. So there are crew changes in—additionally, the Coast Guard also has to build its strength. So there will be increase in strength in terms of recruitment and so on during the fiscal year. So there will be an increase in strength. So we have to cater for that also; additional food items.

Mr. Indarsingh: Madam Chair, if you would permit me as it relates to Item 96, under Fuel and Lubricants, there was no allocation in 2015 and in 2016 we are seeing an allocation of $30 million.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: As you have seen in the column as I mentioned a while ago, just go on to 96, Sub-Item. So there is a recent splitting of the vote, 30.

Mr. Imbert: 13.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: 13, Maintenance of Vehicles. So we have taken it and moved it across there.

Mr. Indarsingh: Okay.
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Dr. Gopeesingh: Madam Chair, Item No. 17 on Training. There is a $12 million increase in Training. Could you just identify for our information where does that training programme—what is that about? And while I am speaking—

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Caroni East, I believe we got an answer for that question.

Dr. Gopeesingh: No, no, no.

Mr. Imbert: Yes, asked and answered.

Madam Chairman: I have here, “based on acquisition of new vessels”.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Is that for training for the vessels alone?


Mr. Imbert: Asked and answered.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Well, I asked the question on food and at the institution because there is a recurring thing across the—so all these areas of the Regiment, the Coast Guard and the prisons, they prepare their own meals inside?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: No, no, no, they do not prepare their own meals. They are centrally prepared. There is a central area where they are prepared. You do not prepare your own meal.

Dr. Gopeesingh: In the Coast Guard area, where their meals are prepared there for the Coast Guard?


Dr. Gopeesingh: And then for the Regiment, a central area as well?


Dr. Gopeesingh: And the prisons, a central area as well?


Dr. Gopeesingh: Okay, the medical part now. There is—

Madam Chairman: That is Item 58, hon. Member?
Dr. Gopeesingh: Yeah, well, the medical part—to their medical expenses for both the Coast Guard and for the Regiment as well, but it will probably cover both. The Regiment as far as I remember had—

Madam Chairman: We are in 006.

Dr. Gopeesingh: No, I am going back to the medical expenses for both. It is medical expenses for all to them.

Madam Chairman: One minute please, Member. Are you asking Item 58, under 006?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Yes.

Madam Chairman: And that is Coast Guard?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Yes.

Madam Chairman: All right. Yes, please.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Yes. Do you have an in-house doctor or you have an in-house team that supplies the medical care? Or if somebody becomes ill from the Coast Guard or whether the Regiment or what happens, where do they go and what is this funding for in terms of the $6 million or $4 million for medical expenses?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: We have one in-house doctor. One doctor in uniform, if I remember well. I do not know if that has changed. One doctor in uniform.

Dr. Gopeesingh: In the Coast Guard?


Dr. Gopeesingh: So that is Regiment, Coast Guard—

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: And the Air Guard, and then we also have a doctor on contract that also assists that doctor. So there is what we call a medical facility. There is one at Tetron Barracks and then there are other smaller units in some of the out stations like Camp Ogden and Piarco and so on, but there are doctors.

Dr. Gopeesingh: If there is a problem with any person in the security services—
Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Additionally, there is also catering for medical treatment for soldiers, sailors and air guards in external facilities if the need arises.

Dr. Gopeesingh: At where?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Other facilities; if the need arises.

Dr. Gopeesingh: So you have facilities across servicing—


Dr. Gopeesingh: So they can go to—

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: They can depending on the situation; depending on referrals from the doctor.

Dr. Gopeesingh: And you all pay for the services?


Dr. Gopeesingh: At the private institutions?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: If necessary, we do. Yes, we do.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Is there—what causes you to send one to a private institution as opposed to a public institution?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: It is based on the situation at the time. Based on the situation the emergency nature of the situation, or based on referral from the doctor.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Do you think that one medical doctor to service the entire national security staff—

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: No, it is certainly not enough. We have been trying to recruit doctors more in uniform, which will be part of the establishment, but there is some discussion going with respect to the allowances and the salary to attract doctors in uniform at this point in time.

Dr. Gopeesingh: I want to proffer, Madam Chair, that it is something that you need to look at, because you have thousands of security officers across the country.
in all different areas: prisons, regiment, coast guard, whatever, and one doctor there cannot do the job to take care—you are short-changing your personnel. I would like to recommend that you look at that very critically, and this is where you need to pay some emphasis for the protection of our servicemen.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** Thank you.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Thank you, Madam Chair. It is just for a clarification I wanted. When the Minister was responding to the Member for Couva South, he said that the vessels have to go out there into the sea. Did I hear you correctly when you said that they are very good vessels? *[Laughter]*

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** I am a very kind-hearted person. So I said they are very good vessels.

**Madam Chairman:** Hon. Member, under what Item are we discussing?

**Dr. Rambachan:** I am responding to—*[Crosstalk]*

**Madam Chairman:** Members, please!

**Dr. Rambachan:**—something the Minister said, and I am just trying to confirm whether he said that.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** Yes, yes, yes.

**Madam Chairman:** I assure you, hon. Member for Tabaquite, if he made such a comment, it would be on the record. *[Laughter]*

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** That is right.

**Dr. Rambachan:** No, I just wanted to confirm it.

**Madam Chairman:** Can we go on to 007, Immigration?

**Dr. Moonilal:** Yes, Madam Speaker, 007 is the number. I wanted to ask the Minister of National Security, in light—and I am looking at No. 12, what could possibly be No. 12, Materials and Supplies and so on. Again, you can get the answer, in light of the decision taken—and could you please take a note to remind
us that the decision taken to do away with the immigration forms—when was that decision taken?

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

**Hon. Member:** Materials and Supplies.

**Dr. Moonilal:** 007, when was that decision taken to your knowledge? In light of that—

**Madam Chairman:** One minute please.

**Dr. Moonilal:** I was dealing with the passport—in light of that, would there be any cost implications of that, because the Immigration Division, of course will not have to have bulk and suppliers supplying that type of materials and so on as they did, of course, over the decades. Is there any significant cost implication to that as well in terms of supplies and in terms of, you know, the costing to that department?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** I do not believe there is any significant cost.

**Dr. Moonilal:** You do not think it would be a significant cost in—you do not?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** I do not.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Okay, and you will take a note that you could just remind us of when that decision was taken. Thank you.

**Mr. Imbert:** Forget the decision part, Madam Speaker. In the budget statement there is the date upon which this will become operational. At the present time if you arrive in Piarco, as we speak, you have to fill out an immigration form. I have put there January 1, if my memory serves me correctly, that this will be in place.

**Dr. Moonilal:** And when did you take the decision?

**Mr. Imbert:** Which decision?

**Dr. Moonilal:** To do away with immigration forms?

**Mr. Imbert:** This was taken prior—on the day of the budget itself.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Oh, on the day of the budget?
Mr. Imbert: As you very well know—

Dr. Moonilal: Okay. On the day of the budget you took that decision.

Mr. Imbert: —there is a Cabinet meeting on the day of the budget, as you know you have attended at least five on them.

Dr. Moonilal: Sure, sure.

Mr. Imbert: At which you decide on the budget measures.

Dr. Moonilal: On that day you took that decision? Thank you very much.

Mr. Imbert: Formally, as you know.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Minister of Finance, could we please have a little silence to proceed?

Dr. Gopeesingh: I just want to ask an open question here. The new Revenue Authority does it include at all Immigration?

Mr. Imbert: No.

Dr. Gopeesingh: No, fine.

Mr. Padarath: Madam Chairman, through you, to the hon. Minister. We see under Immigration, Travelling and Subsistence has been increased by $5 million. This is in relation to the Prime Minister’s statement last night to the Parliament where he indicated that the Government will be reviewing the cost of overseas travelling for Government Ministers. Is it that we are seeing an increase with respect to travelling for public officers, and can the Minister explain why a $5 million increase?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: This is not overseas travel. This is Terms and Conditions of Service; allowances.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Princes Town, just for guidance. If you went to your booklet, Draft Estimates, Details of Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure, at page x, there may be some guidance that will assist you in
understanding the breakdown of the Heads.

**Mr. Paray:** Thank you, Madam Chairman. This is a general question to the Minister of Finance. And again, I am new to the Parliament, and this is my first exercise, so some guidance might be welcomed from you. Does a government enjoy economies of scale when we purchase or we buy services in bulk? The reason I am asking, I am thinking from a business perspective if I am amalgamating a number of service lines so, for instance, telephone services, if I have 200 cell phones on one company’s account, and I amalgamate my other three companies, and I go to 600 cell phones, I should be able enjoy some economies of scale there. I am seeing more and more increases other than decreases. Now, if it is not being done right now, perhaps I would suggest sometime as we go forward in a very tightening economy, that we try to negotiate economies of scales in all these service lines as we bring Ministries together; just a comment, Sir.

**Mr. Imbert:** Duly noted, and thank you for that.

**Madam Chairman:** Any other questions under 007?

**Mr. Charles:** Thank you very much, Madam Chairman. It is just a small question. I am seeing under 57, Postage, it is the first time I am seeing it—

**Madam Chairman:** 57?

**Mr. Charles:** 57, 007, Immigration. Are we there?—133.

**Hon. Member:** 133.

**Madam Chairman:** Thank you.

**Mr. Charles:** 133, and I am just wondering what is unique about the Immigration Department to warrant $500,000, half a million in postage. Maybe it could be easily explained.

**Mr. Imbert:** Passports, courier services; that sort of services.

**Mr. Charles:** What?
Mr. Imbert: Courier, courier.

Mr. Charles: So passports are delivered to your homes?

Mr. Imbert: Well, passports that you might apply for abroad and that sort of thing.

Mr. Indarsingh: Yes, Madam Chair. Under Sub-Item 43, and I want to address 51 also. There is an increase in security services by $4.1 million. Is this as a result of more immigration offices, or…? And also with respect to the relocation of overseas staff, I see an increase of $3 million. How many persons have been involved in this particular exercise and so on?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: The security services have to do with the new building that the immigration has occupied and there is also a building in San Fernando at Lady Hailes Avenue, that they are about to occupy. So security services are being provided for those two areas.

Mr. Indarsingh: So, the office that is in San Fernando at the moment, there will be an additional office or—

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: We are actually moving into an office.

Mr. Indarsingh: So you are moving an office, so you are not transferring the security that—

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: It is a larger facility, so it needs additional security.

Mr. Indarsingh: A larger facility, interesting. No, I asked, Madam Chair, on the issue of Sub-Item 51, the relocation of overseas staff.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: That has to do with families and so on, being relocated.

Mr. Indarsingh: One family—


Mr. Indarsingh:—2, 3, 4, 5?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: It depends. It is the movement of families during the
fiscal year. Sometimes there are five or six families having to move in one particular year, depending on the movement of staff.

Mr. Indarsingh: No, I have no problem with looking after—


Mr. Indarsingh: I do not have any problem, Minister, with looking after the movement of persons who are serving Trinidad and Tobago. I have absolutely no problem with that.

6.10 p.m.

All I am trying to get from you is, we have increased this by $3 million, so is it one, two, three, four, five families?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: It is based on the movement of staff, and when one staff comes another one has to replace that person. So, it is roughly about six or so staff are there and then including family members. So, one staff may have five or six family members depending. Essentially, that is what it is all about, the movement of staff replacing one another and it could be as far as China, it could be as far as India, it could be far as you know, different places that we have missions, new embassies and so on.

Madam Chairman: So, if we are finished with Item 007, can we go on to Item 008, Probation Service which is on page 133? If there are no questions, can we go on to page 134, Item 009, Forensic Science Centre? Hon. Member for Fyzabad.

Dr. Bodoe: Thank you, Madam Chairman, just to come back to the allocation for forensic science, I raise this issue because I do believe that in view of the crime situation and the imperative to solve crime, I would want clarification, Minister, on the contract employment if the Minister can specify who are actually going to be paid under that allocation. The second question would be under Training. I noticed the allocation for Training seems to be a small sum, so I do not know if the
Minister can address those issues.

**Madam Chairman:** So we are looking at Items 16 and 17.

**Dr. Bodoe:** Yes. I know that we did state that the forensic pathologists are employed.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** And other professionals within the Forensic Science Centre.

**Dr. Bodoe:** So, would that cater for the expected increase that you are looking at?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** That is correct, yes, the vacancies.

**Dr. Bodoe:** It does seem to be a little small.


**Dr. Bodoe:** It looks like a small sum; that is why I am thinking whether you have the allocation to attract the required professionals, and with regard to training.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** The training is in fact additional training. Most of the people come already qualified, so it is just an enhanced training for them. Most of the people who are hired are already qualified, so it is more an enhanced training for them, hence the reason for the small amount.

**Dr. Bodoe:** Thank you.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Minister, through you Chair, I am interested in Items 15 and 21, Repairs and Maintenance—Equipment and Repairs and Maintenance—Buildings, but more so Repairs and Maintenance—Equipment, and there is a blanket million dollars put there. Is this million dollars based upon assessment, the detailed assessment of what is required at this point in time to bring the equipment and so on in the Forensic Science Centre up-to-date, because you keep hearing complaints and you read stories about the quality of the equipment that they have to work with, or is this just a figure put in there and we are going to read again that, you know, there are problems with the refrigerators and what have you and so on?
How is this done?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** Most of the equipment, it is a fact, based on service contract so that there is maintenance there.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Madam Chairman, just an observation really. Minister, under Item 99, now, I have looked at it in other areas of your Ministry and I see an allocation of $5,000 for an Employee Assistance Programme. I would like, I mean, that is totally inadequate and I think that the importance of human beings to all arms of operations and so on, we should really revisit that going forward, whether in the Ministry of National Security or outside of the Ministry of National Security, allocations to employee assistance programmes should be increased based on the stressful conditions of work, and the input that they make to the well-being of Trinidad and Tobago.

**Mr. Imbert:** Noted, with thanks. Thank you very much. That has been duly noted and will be taken care of. Thank you very much.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Madam Chairman, I want to come back to my 15 and 21, the same questions I asked, because the inability to deal effectively with the pile-up of bodies and other investigations at the Forensic Science Centre has to have some bearing on our ability to solve crime, which has a very low rate right now in terms of murders, in particular, you know, 11 or 12 per cent or what have you.

When I looked at the figures under the Ministry of Justice, under Item 58 in the budget—of course, that is no longer, that Ministry of Justice has been merged—it was higher in 2015 than now. While the Minister has said service contracts, something has to be terribly wrong with the service providers if we continue to have the level of breakdowns and the level of complaints that we are getting from the people who are working there and so on. If productivity is an issue, then the quality of the environment and the quality of the equipment is something we must
do something about. So what I would like to ask is: Does the Minister have an idea of who are these contractors? How often these contractors go in there? Do we have a record of what they go in and do, and how often they go back to do the same work over and over?—because that is what I understand.

I am questioning, one, the amount allocated and, secondly, I am questioning also the quality of supervision, whether we have a facilities manager in the Forensic Science Centre, a facilities manager who will be able to ensure that you have preventative approaches to the management of the quality of the equipment and so on.

**Mr. Imbert:** Five years you had to do that, you are asking him.

**Dr. Rambachan:** I was Minister of Works.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** Well, there is an arrangement with NIPDEC right now, but I would look into it. There is an arrangement with NIPDEC who handles most of the maintenance at the Forensic Science Centre.

**Dr. Rambachan:** I hope you appreciate what I am saying.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** Yes, sure, sure. I understand you, and I thank you for that.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Madam Chair, in keeping with what my colleague, the Member for Tabaquite, indicated, there are a lot of complaints now about the physical facilities at the Forensic Science Centre, and there seems to be the need for expansion and improvement. So, I think it would be worthwhile for you to take some special consideration to that and probably seek some support from the Minister of Finance in getting that centre going.

And, of course, I spoke about the accreditation process, because if the infrastructure is not sound, nobody will want to come to accredit the centre and when your equipment is not good as well. So it consolidates the point my
colleague, the Member for Tabaquite, on equipment and infrastructure needs to be upgraded to assist in making the Forensic Science Centre accredited and to help with the environment for work. You should give some more money.

Mr. Imbert: Madam Chairman, just let me say with regard to all these comments with respect to the allocations for the Forensic Science Centre and the expressions of concerns about maintenance of equipment and need for expansion and accreditation, I am very touched by this sudden concern for this institution. I wish it had been done over the last five years, but since they have now realized that these things need to be done, I would take into consideration all of the very welcome suggestions coming from the Members for Caroni East and Tabaquite and we would see what we can do to reallocate funds to develop and enhance and boost and upgrade the Forensic Science Centre in accordance with the suggestions made by the Members for Fyzabad, Caroni East and Tabaquite. I thank you very much for your very productive and constructive comments, notwithstanding the fact that we have only been here for three weeks, but I understand and we would follow your recommendations. I would respond to all.

Madam Chairman: Are we now completed with 009? Can we go on to 010 which is Fire Service (Tobago) which is at page 135? Can we then therefore go on to Item 011, which is Prison Service (Tobago), which is on page 136? Can we go on to Item 012, Lifeguard Service, which is page 137?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Madam Chair, I just want to ask a broad question for Tobago with the expenditure on Tobago here. All these areas that we have here, under which vote is that coming from? Is it the vote for two-point- something billion for Tobago, Minister of Finance, these areas here? You said part of the funding for Tobago will be 1.3 from the central government and two-point-something that will be given to Tobago—is this part of the 1.3 from central government, the
Mr. Imbert: Member for Caroni East, I see I will have to take some lessons in how to be patient. Obviously, if this allocation is not within the allocation of the Tobago House of Assembly, obviously—

Dr. Gopeesingh: I am asking.

Mr. Imbert: I am telling you, I am answering you. Obviously, since this is not within the allocation for the Tobago House of Assembly, obviously it would fall within the $1.3 billion—

Dr. Gopeesingh: That is what I wanted to confirm.

Mr. Imbert: That is obvious.

Dr. Gopeesingh: I wanted to have that confirmed by you.

Mr. Imbert: This is not a THA allocation.

Dr. Gopeesingh: This is part of your $1.3 billion from the central government.

Mr. Imbert: It could only be. It cannot be anything else.

Dr. Gopeesingh: It is a question I am asking for confirmation.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Minister of Finance, I think we should consider that we are also assisting the viewing public with some of these answers that you are so familiar with.

Mr. Imbert: But they know, it is five years they were in Government, they know.

Madam Chairman: As I said, hon. Minister of Finance, for the members of the public—

Mr. Imbert: They know, they know.

Madam Chairman:—I think this is a great exercise with respect to giving them answers. [Crosstalk]

Mr. Imbert: And you are meant for Opposition, you are not meant for Government.
Madam Chairman: Let us go on please. Members, please. Can we go on to Item 013, Immigration (Tobago)? Item 014, Defence Force Headquarters.

Dr. Moonilal: Yes, Ma’am.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Oropouche East, and this is at page 138.

Dr. Moonilal: I wanted to ask the Minister of National Security to just give some explanation on two points really. At 09, Rent/Lease—Vehicles and Equipment, I noticed there is a decrease in $2.2 million there—what would account for a decrease in vehicles and equipment for the Defence Force Headquarters? And repairs and maintenance, there is a further drop there by $10.3 million—what would explain that as well? [Crosstalk]

6.20 p.m.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Minister of Finance, could you kindly just make the cross-reference for the guidance of the committee, please?

Mr. Imbert: As the hon. Member for Chaguanas East has very helpfully pointed out to his colleague from Oropouche East, what has happened in National Security is that there are new items, new Sub-Heads, new items actually, that is what they are called, and Sub-Items, and they have created a Sub-Item called Fuel and Lubricants, which previously was contained within the overall item for maintenance, and so on.

Dr. Moonilal: Okay, good, but for the 2016 estimate there is $2 million under Repairs and Maintenance, correct? Why you still have something in 2016 for it if it is covered in 96 Fuel and Lubricants at $800,000?

Mr. Imbert: What is that?

Dr. Moonilal: What I am saying is that you have said before, I think 25 times, that Fuel and Lubricants is a new line item—

Mr. Imbert: Yes.
Dr. Moonilal: —and that would take the expenditure from Repairs and Maintenance - Buildings.

Mr. Imbert: No, they have split it. They have split it.

Dr. Moonilal: Oh, they have split it.

Mr. Imbert: Yes, they have split it into various Sub-Items.

Dr. Moonilal: Good, so you should have no difficulty with us asking a very simple question which is in the 2016 estimate, it is 2,000, which is $10. 3 million less—

Mr. Imbert: Where is this? What page are you on?

Dr. Moonilal: Just now, get a book, you have a book?

Mr. Imbert: I have it here. What page are you on?

Dr. Moonilal: I am on page 138 and, correspondingly, 139. Under Sub-Item 96, Fuel and Lubricants, you have $800,000 there; that is your new Sub-Item—

Mr. Imbert: Yes.

Dr. Moonilal: Right. You have a decrease of $10.3 million—

Mr. Imbert: Under which item has been decreased by $10 million?

Dr. Moonilal: Sub-Item 21 on page 138. Is there an English—at Sub-Item 21?

Mr. Imbert: That is Buildings.

Dr. Moonilal: I am asking the question to explain—

Mr. Imbert: Buildings do not have fuel and lubricant.

Dr. Moonilal: Well, you told me it was broken up and sent into that.

Mr. Imbert: No, repairs of vehicles.

Dr. Moonilal: But I am asking about Sub-Item 21, why are you talking about fuel and lubricant then?

Mr. Imbert: Because you asked about vehicles first.

Dr. Moonilal: If you would stop interrupting and allow the Minister of National
Security to answer, it would be fine.

**Mr. Imbert:** Lord of Mercy, have mercy.

**Madam Chairman:** Could we exercise some degree of restraint?

**Dr. Moonilal:** Ma’am, could I address you? Ma’am, there is an issue here, we are directing questions to the Minister of National Security who is more than cooperative, he has his technical support here and in good time, very quickly, they are generating either direct answers or a commitment to answer. The Minister of Finance is in the front row and is intervening at every moment and creating to me a disjunctive process. If the Minister of National Security is here and can answer the question please permit him to answer. If it is a matter dealing with strict financing, and so on, the Minister of Finance is here, but these are matters of operation in the Ministry, and the Minister is not asking for help. I am just making a comment to you, Ma’am.

**Mr. Imbert:** Madam Chairman, may I say something, please? I know it was not a question, but I would like to clarify. These estimates were prepared by the Ministry of Finance based on requests from the various Ministries. We were unable to give the Ministries everything that they asked for because the requests would exceed the appropriation. So the Ministry of Finance, the Budget Division, in consultation with the various departments would make an allocation, so in some situations you would see a simple allocation of $1 million that is a nominal allocation, or you might see a reduction, or you might see an increase. The Minister is new and the reason why the Ministry of Finance is getting involved is that these are generic issues and we were giving you generic answers.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Madam Chairman, am I permitted to ask the Minister of National Security a question?

**Madam Chairman:** And, therefore, Member for Oropouche East, you now have
your opportunity to ask the question you would like to ask.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Minister of National Security, there is a decrease in the heading of Repairs and Maintenance - Buildings, by $10.3 million; if there would be an explanation you could put forward now, or an undertaking, I would be very happy. And while I am on that, there is also the issue of Vehicules and Equipment which also decreased by $2.2 million, if that is related to the new subheading you can indicate that or not, but I am really asking you to give us some type of explanation as to those types of decreases. That is all.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** With respect to the Repairs and Maintenance - Buildings, there was an aggressive refurbishment of office accommodation, and so on, in 2015, right, and, therefore, in 2016 there is a decrease based on that.

**Dr. Moonilal:** So what you are saying is the work was done already?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** Right.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Okay.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** A substantive part of the work was done in 2015.

**Dr. Moonilal:** It was done in 2015?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** Yes, that is right.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Okay, very good.

**Madam Chairman:** Can we then go on to—

**Dr. Moonilal:** The Vehicles and Equipment—

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** Sub-Item 13? Which one is that?

**Dr. Moonilal:** Sub-Item 09.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** Rental?

**Dr. Moonilal:** Rental, Vehicles and Equipment.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** The rental of vehicles is based really on the operational tempo, sometimes it goes up, sometimes it decreases depending on the state of
operations, and so on.

Dr. Moonilal: Thank you.

Madam Chairman: Okay, can we therefore go on to Item 015, Cadet Force?

Dr. Lee: Madam Chairman—

Madam Chairman: Are we on to Item 015 Cadet Force.? Hon. Member for Point-a-Pierre.

Dr. Lee: Madam Chairman, I just want to ask, before you go on, in Item 014, line item 40—I was trying to get your attention—Food at Institutions at $2 million; first time a new item there, never before they had any expenses related that I—I just wanted to get some clarity why they would want to have a Food at Institutions in the Defence Force which they never had before—line item 40.

Madam Chairman: Page 138.

Dr. Lee: Page 138, correct.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Traditionally, the food at institutions would have come from the Coast Guard and Regiment, but in 2016 Defence Force Headquarters will be responsible for providing food at institutions.

Dr. Lee: Thank you. So I guess we would see a reduction in the other end, the Coast Guard and the other areas, respectively.


Dr. Lee: Thank you.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Naparima.

Mr. Charles: Thank you very much, Madam Chairman. I am looking at Item 014 under Training and I am seeing a reduction of $1.3 million., when we go to the Cadet Force shortly you would see a reduction of $1 million, and we will see later on an increase in the Air Guard; am I sensing that training is being reduced in the army and the cadet services, and emphasis from a training perspective, from a
human resource development perspective, is being accorded only to the Air Guard and to the Coast Guard.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** They are two different natures of training you are talking about, because training in the Air Guard is different to training in the Regiment—

**Mr. Charles:** Okay.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:**—and even far more different than what goes on in the Coast Guard. The cost of training in the Air Guard, for instance, is a different kind of cost because you are talking about pilot, and more technical related training, as opposed to the Regiment and opposed to the—so that would account to a large extent for the difference in the amount that is appropriated to the Air Guard compared to the Regiment, and so on.

**Mr. Charles:** But the decreases in the Regiment and the Defence Force Headquarters in no way reflects a diminished interest in training and operating the human resource.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** No, it does not.

**Madam Chairman:** Right, can we go to Item 015, Cadet Force, page 139. Can we then—

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** Madam Chairman, on page 139.

**Madam Chairman:** Is it one question, hon. Member for Siparia?

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** If you so guide me, hon. Madam Chair.

**Madam Chairman:** I will be grateful.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** Thank you very much, I noticed under the Defence Force there is no Head here under Goods and Services for stationery and office supplies, and so on, is it that this will be taken care of otherwise? The other Heads have it under their—

**Hon. Member:** Defence Force Headquarters, it is Sub-Item 10.
Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Well, the Headquarters, yes, I guess if it is not there.

Madam Chairman: Sub-Item 10.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Thank you, Sub-Item 10, it is there. Thank you.

Madam Chairman: So, can we move on, please, and we now go to Item 015, which is on page 139, Cadet Force. Can we then go on to—Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: No, that would have come under emoluments—that is all right, I am fine.

Madam Chairman: Can we then go on to Item 016, which is the Air Guard, page 140. Item 017, Member for Point-a-Pierre.

Dr. Lee: Sorry, Madam. Page 141, Sub-Item 61, this is under Air Guard, Item 016, Insurance, you have a massive increase of $8.5 million.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: That is the insurance for the helicopters. That moved from PSIP to recurrent expenditure, insurance for the helicopters.

Dr. Lee: New helicopters, I presume, if you are moving from PSIP to recurrent.


Mr. Imbert: Existing helicopters, the AgustaWestland helicopters above us.


Mr. Imbert: The ones you are using, AgustaWestland.

Madam Chairman: Member for Siparia.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: I am giving way.

Madam Chairman: Okay, Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Under page 140, Maintenance of Vehicles, the service contracts for maintaining the vessels, the Air Guard helicopters, and so on, AgustaWestland and so on, there is a certain amount of money that is paid to the international company for keeping these things in the proper fitness, where is that shown in this
under Air Guard, Item 016? Can you help direct us to where, or is that incorporated in the Maintenance of Vehicles?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** That is under the development programme.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** That is under development? All right. So we will look at it there, but should it not be under Maintenance of Vehicles, because you are maintaining the—

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** It is part of the contract, so it comes under—

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** All right, okay.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Siparia.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** Thank you, Madam. Under that same Maintenance of Vehicles—so this does not include the helicopters, and so on, and therefore I would want to think then it is like motor vehicles, I noticed that there is almost a 50 per cent, by half, decrease in Maintenance of Vehicles, is there a reason why? It has dropped from $15.5 million to $7.2 million. This is under line item 13 under the Air Guard. It is cut in half.

**Mr. Imbert:** It is not cut in half you know—yeah, but it was 22 before—well it is 22 gone down to 15.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** Sorry, 22, 15, yeah.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** They have taken out the lubricants, and so on, and put it in the Vote 96 from that Vote, so that is the decrease.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** And Fuel and Lubricants is a new item—

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** Sub-Item 96, yeah, throughout.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:**—has been removed from all of these?

**Mr. Imbert:** It will be $10 million if you look at it.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** For this Ministry?

**Mr. Imbert:** No, for this particular Item, Air Guard, $10 million.
Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Okay, so 10 and 7, 17.

Madam Chairman: The next Item 96.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Fuel and Lubricants, yeah. Well, it is throughout, under every one of the units you have Fuel and Lubricants.

Mr. Imbert:—identify fuel as a separate item, you know, that is an area where there is abuse, you know. It is not a bad thing. It is not a bad thing at all to monitor it.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Sure.

Madam Chairman: Okay, so can we go on to Item 017, which is Immigration Detention Centre on page 141?

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Before we get there, on page 141, still under Air Guard, line item 50, Housing Accommodation, we see here for 2016, there was nothing in 2015 and now we see a $400,000 in 2016. Hon. Minister, any explanation for that?

6.35 p.m.

Mr. Imbert: The explanation we are getting is that new people come in from time to time, their terms and conditions might be a little different, so that you would see there was an allocation of $840,000, actual expenditure in 2015 was nothing, zero. Now an allocation has been put for $400,000 that is probably to cater for contract negotiations with new staff coming in or settlement of a contract with a contract officer. You see, when the Ministry of Finance is doing these allocations, when you see a round number like that, $400,000, it is an estimate. It is just an allocation. The Ministry has the authority to vire, with the approval of the Ministry of Finance, if they would need to spend more than $400,000.

Dr. Rambachan: I was trying to get back to that. Just to ask a quick question. Yes he said maintenance of vehicles does not include the aircraft, and you said it
might be under the development; the fixed thing, sorry C26. I believe that we have a contract with a Canadian firm to maintain those aircraft.

Mr. Imbert: Could we wait until we get to that item, because this is just motor vehicles? Could we wait until we get to aircraft?

Dr. Rambachan: All right; I am not seeing it at all that is why I asked.

Mr. Imbert: I will try and find it for you in the meantime.

Madam Chairman: Item 017, Immigration Detention Centre on page 141.

Mr. Charles: Madam Chairman, I am looking at Food at Institutions, Item 40, and I see the allocation is $5 million. When I looked at Food at Institutions for the entire prison service it was $16 million. Am I to assume that the population at the Immigration Detention Centre is one-third? So, therefore, this seems to be inordinately high. At $5 million—and if you wish you can go back to page 130 and see the $16 million allocation for Food at Institutions at all prison institutions.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: The food there is contracted by a service provider by the IDC.

Mr. Charles: And that could explain the difference in cost? But it may be that you may wish to use—no, well, you cannot because people are there short-term.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: No, you cannot, it is two different facilities.

Mr. Padarath: Madam Chairman, through you, could the hon. Minister explain how we moved to $8 million for contract employment, and could he expand in terms of what this contract employment entails?

Madam Chairman: Item 16?

Mr. Padarath: Yes.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Member for Princes Town, this is the guards at the IDC. They were previously under Other Contracting Services and they have now been moved to Contract Employment.
Mr. Padarath: Hon. Minister, would you consider then that in order to cut cost that we may wish to use officers from within the regiment for this service, rather than—

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: No, no, no; the regiment cannot be used. The IDC is a special place, so you cannot use the soldiers for that.

Mr. Paray: Madam Chairman, through you to the Minister of National Security. I notice in terms of contract labour right through all your budget allocations, I have a question in terms of what are the standard durations for these contract positions. Are they spread across three months, six months, one year, two years? Secondly, how are these contract positions sourced, are they advertised on the newspapers or are they picked from existing contracting companies that you may have? What is the process involved? Thank you.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: It is normally one, two or three years and they advertise.

Madam Chairman: Item 018, Volunteer Defence Force (Reserves), page 142.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Madam Chair, there is a common thread running through all the areas of the different arms of the security services on Uniforms. You will see here on Volunteer Defence Force, Uniforms is $3 million. I do not want to take you back, but you have Uniforms of Air Guard for $6 million, and then you have Uniforms for Cadet, $2 million and so on. Could you enlighten us on the methodology of procurement of uniforms? Each one of the arms of the security services, how do they procure the uniforms? That is a question. Could you enlighten us on the procurement and the process for the procurement, because Uniforms across the security services seem to be close to—from my simple addition—about $15 million? That is a significant amount. Let us hear your process.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Let me first outline that there are different types of
uniforms, and the Cadet is outside of the defence force structure. The Coast Guard wears a different uniform to the army, a different uniform to the Air Guard. The procurement in some areas would be tendering, based on the material. Some might be unique only to one supplier for security reasons; so there are different kinds of processes depending on the nature of the uniform. Camouflage—you would not go and shop that outside.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** I am still not clear. Let us run a process for let us say the uniforms for the Volunteer Defence Force. You have $3 million there; you want to get your uniform for the reserves or for Coast Guard or so. How does that arm deal with it? Do they advertise it or you have had a supplier supplying it for years and they just continue to supply? If that is so, there is something wrong with that.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** In some cases we go back out to tender. For instance the camouflage pattern for the regiment is a pattern that is made especially for the Trinidad and Tobago Regiment.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Internationally or here locally? Manufactured here locally?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** No, it is not made locally.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** But you are not answering the question, hon. Minister. If you could enlighten us? You have $3 million to spend on uniforms, how do you go about that? You just have a supplier and you say, “All right, next year you provide X amount, next year you provide Y amount”? Is there not an annual tender for it or is that a tender continuing for five year or 10 years?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** There are, in fact, open tenders.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** On an annual basis?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** It depends; as required.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** That is an amorphous answer. Let us say, what process would you use for 2016?
Mr. Imbert: Can I assist? A uniform would have a certain life cycle; so some uniforms might last 18 months, some might last two years, some might last three years. So when you are doing procurement you may not have to do it every year. So the allocation is based on an estimate of the quantity of uniforms—let us say the volunteer reserves—that would be in need of replacement. So you may not tender for a complete set of uniforms every year.

Dr. Gopeesingh: The whole process of procurement is a big issue. You want to replace then—if you are saying replace the uniforms, do you not have to do a procurement process to replace it?

Mr. Imbert: What the Minister is telling you—

Dr. Gopeesingh: Let the Minister answer. He has the answer there.

Mr. Imbert: He has only been there for three weeks. When the need arises—

Dr. Gopeesingh: His Permanent Secretary is there.

Mr. Imbert: Allow me to speak, please.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister of Finance, one minute please. Could we ask whether the hon. Minister of National Security—[Interruption] One minute please. Is the hon. Minister of National Security in a position to answer?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: There are some open tenders for things like boots, helmets and socks and shoes, and there are some selective tenders for security items.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Is it a sole select tender?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Sole selective, only for arms and ammunition.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Sorry? [Crosstalk]

Madam Chairman: Have you got your answer, hon. Member?

Dr. Gopeesingh: No, no.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Minister of National Security, you are saying that there

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are— with respect to the tender process?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: That has been the way it has been done, but as we go forward we look to review those systems and procedures.

Madam Chairman: In terms of— that has been the way it is done. If you can just outline—[Interruption] Excuse me, please, hon. Member for Couva South—hon. Member for Couva South, please. Hon. Member for Couva South, please. It is unfortunate it is your voice that I am hearing.

Mr. Indarsingh: You must listen to all sides.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: The way it is done now is open tenders for items such as boots and helmets, socks and shoes. Selective tenders for security items, and sole selective for things like arms and ammunition. But as we go forward we are going to be reviewing it.

Mr. Imbert: Madam Chairman, may I come in here?

Madam Chairman: One minute, please. May I ask in terms of the uniforms, and I think it follows from a question that was asked. Are you asking about the actual making of the uniforms or the fabric of the uniforms?

Dr. Gopeesingh: The manufacturing of the uniform.

Mr. Chairman: Who does it or is it the process? I think that is what you are asking.

Dr. Gopeesingh: The process of having it done. Is it to a sole supplier all the time and say, “You make these for me”?

Madam Chairman: I believe he said it is an open tender. Hon. Member for Caroni East, he said it was an open tender.

Mr. Imbert: Madam Chairman, could I make a point?

Madam Chairman: By way of assistance?

Mr. Imbert: Very much assistance. Madam Chairman, we are looking at the
estimates of expenditure for the year 2016. As you are aware, there is a Procurement Bill, a Procurement Act as a matter of fact, which has been partially proclaimed. So whatever procurement systems were used in the past in 2015, when the hon. Minister was not the Minister, may not necessarily apply going forward into 2016. So, Madam Chairman, when Members opposite ask what was the system used before, that has very little application to the estimates for 2016, especially since there will be a new procurement regime in 2016.

Therefore, since procurement is a responsibility of the Ministry of Finance, and since the procurement regulation agency will report to the Ministry of Finance, and since it is the Minister of Finance’s responsibility to implement the new procurement system for general application or for general assistance, whatever was done in the past with respect to procurement, is going to change in 2016, and what will be done in 2016 will be transparent, will be equitable, will be cost-effective, will be honest, will be appropriate. So that we cannot go back into 2015 and see what you did. We are going forward, and we are putting a much better procurement system in place in 2016.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Madam Chair, the hon. Member is being disingenuous, to say what is the existing position which probably happened before, that is the situation now. What you are talking about—

Mr. Imbert: We are changing that.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: —is an intent to change. When it changes, fine, you come and tell us.

Mr. Imbert: It will change in 2016.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: But what is the process now? I do believe, without the intervention of the Member for Diego Martin North/East, the hon. Minister has answered the question.
Madam Chairman: I believe the question is answered.

Mr. Imbert: He cannot answer that question. I have answered the question.

Madam Chairman: One minute, please, Members. I know we are in committee, and we are a little more relaxed, but let us facilitate the process. I believe the question has been answered. Hon. Member for Caroni Central.

6.50 p.m.

Dr. Tewarie: Madam Chairman, I heard the Minister of Finance make a statement on the procurement Bill and he made one statement which I would like him to clarify. He said that under the procurement Bill which has been partially proclaimed, Act, that the procurement—I do not think he used the word regulator, but he said the—reporting will be to the Minister of Finance. Can I ask the Minister whether he simply said that, made a slip or intends to change it from what it is now which is reporting to the Parliament?

Mr. Imbert: Madam Chairman, in the first place I said no such thing. What I said and this was the responsibility of my predecessor, Minister Howai, was that the system of implementation of the new procurement legislation is a responsibility of the Ministry of Finance. You will recall that a committee was established, a task force as a matter of fact, with Mr. Hamel-Smith being chairman of that committee, to implement a new procurement regime in all government Ministries, agencies and departments. That the responsibility for the implementation of your procurement regime is a responsibility of the Ministry of Finance, and we do intend to go forward in 2016. We have said that we are going to amend the procurement legislation and we will move swiftly to fully operationalize the new procurement system and therefore, it is unfair to ask any Minister what is going to be the procurement system based on what occurred in the past under your administration. We are going to implement a completely new procurement system.
which is clean, honest and transparent.

**Madam Chairman:** Hon. Members, might I suggest that the discussion that we are entering into at this stage is not relevant to the process.

**Mr. Imbert:** Totally irrelevant.

**Madam Chairman:** Hon. Minister of Finance, please. The discussion is not—[Crosstalk] it is not relevant. Remember we are in committee so we are a little more relaxed, but still we cannot break down to pure anarchy. Okay? I would want to suggest that the discussion is going along the lines that is not relevant to this process. I would expect if there are to be changes, there will have to be legislative changes and they come about in a particular type of way. So that I would want to suggest that we resume to the exercise at hand. Okay? May I call again—as I said we are on Item—we are still under Goods and Services and we under 018 Volunteer Defence Force (Reserves) which is at page 142, and therefore, if we—hon. Member for Mayaro.

**Mr. Paray:** Thank you, Madam Chairman. Minister of National Security, again, looking at Uniforms here, and I just want to thread carefully on this question before I get sidelined. Is there an inherent security risk to sew or make our uniforms locally through our own young people in new industries that can be created in Trinidad and Tobago? My question is, rather than importing uniforms that are being made, we already have surplus human resources on the island. Is there an inherent security risk to make these uniforms locally here? Thank you.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** There is somewhat of a risk. Yes. I would say, yes, there is. And there is also certain kinds of specifications for the uniforms especially things like the camouflage and so on that must be taken into consideration.

**Mr. Paray:** So just to continue. So, because of the security risks the
consideration of making some of them, perhaps I would select the police uniforms, the fire uniforms to be sewn locally using our surplus human resources. That may be out the question?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** Something has been tried in the past, we are not ruling it out in the future, but it has been tried in the past and something that we could consider going forward. But at this point in time based on the security risk and so on, and especially in terms of quality control and so on, because remember these uniforms stand up to very rigid training and different kinds of environment and so on.

**Mr. Paray:** Just one follow-up, Madam Chairman. Knowing that we are in a position, again coming back to the tight economic conditions that we are heading in, perhaps some training, some collaboration would be necessary, training organizations, to raise the standard, raise the quality, and I think my main purpose here is how can we utilize our surplus human resource that we can use in a very productive way. That is all, Sir. Thank you.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** I think we have to build the capacity. Once we have the capacity and we could produce the necessary kind of quality and standards, we can work with that. Thank you.

**Madam Chairman:** Okay. Can we therefore go on to Sub-Head 03 Minor Equipment Purchases which is at page 143, 001 General Administration. Hon. Member for Siparia.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** Thank you. Under 03 a total for Minor Equipment Purchases. We see a major decrease of $20.3 million. Of course there will be—the other line items will be subsumed, but has there been a deliberate policy decision to decrease your Minor Equipment Purchases? Page 143, 03 Minor Equipment Purchases.

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Mr. Imbert: Twenty million?

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: From—yeah.

Madam Chairman: 001 General Administration.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Well, not General, I am looking at the total Minor Equipment Purchases. The very first line, Madam Chair.

Madam Chairman: Thank you very much.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Yeah. It has moved from $123 million to $103 million, a decrease of $20.3 million for Minor Equipment Purchases—the totals.

Mr. Imbert: The first Item is GA, the second one is Fire Service, the third one is Prison Service.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Well, I was not aware, Madam Chair, that we have to do the Item. I thought we were doing the Heads.

Mr. Imbert: That is how we have been doing it. [Crosstalk]

Madam Chairman: Well, I would suggest—

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: This is a total of all the line Items.

Madam Chairman: Hon, Member for Siparia, I would suggest that maybe if we went to the individual Sub-Items it may give you the answer for the ballpark figure that you are asking.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Ma’am, thank you and I thank you for the guidance. With due respect, when we go to each one, each of these line Items, it would tell us the specific Item that might have had a decrease. I am not saying that I want to know which vehicle—whether it was vehicles or whether it was a typewriter. I am saying, was there a policy decision to generally decrease your Minor Equipment Purchases as a whole?—policy decision to decrease because it is a $20 million decrease.

Mr. Imbert: If you look at Fire Service, for example, that has been decreased by
$4.5 million. If you look at—sorry—increase. If you go to General Administration, vehicles have been decreased by $1.3 million. If you go to Regiment, vehicles have been decreased by $1.8 million. Coast Guard has been decreased by $3 million and so on and so on. The only way you could get the answers to your questions is go into the actual Items and look at the actual decreases because it is an aggregate figure of a large number of Items and Sub-Items. So there is no policy. If you look you would see some have gone up and some have gone down and the net effect of all of that is a decrease. So, you would have to deal with each Item and Sub-Item individually to get the answer. [Crosstalk] Well okay.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: I disagree, with respect.

Mr. Imbert: You can disagree if you wish.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: I will leave it in the hands of Madam Chair—[Crosstalk] to decrease down to $20 million.

Mr. Imbert: There is no policy to decrease or increase anything.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Really!

Mr. Imbert: It is according to need. And that is your answer.

Madam Chairman: Item 001 General Administration. Yes, hon. Member for Tabaquite.

Dr. Rambachan: I thought we were going down to Item 002, Fire Service because that is—[Crosstalk]

Madam Chairman: Can we then go on to 002? Yes. Please hon. Member for Tabaquite.

Dr. Rambachan: Thank you. What I would like to ask is whether this $24.5 million, in terms of Minor Equipment, what are we talking about? Does this include any fire tenders and so on? I ask this because recently there was need to
respond to a fire and I heard the fire service people say that there were no fire tenders available in two of the fire stations and therefore, they could not respond. So is this about fire tenders or water trucks? What is this $24.5 million about? And if so, how does it meet the needs of the fire service? [Crosstalk]

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** New fire vehicles would come under the development programme and this figure here would be for the—

**Dr. Rambachan:** New fire vehicles in the development programme?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** This one is for replacement. Replacement of fire vehicles.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Do you know how many by chance?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** I—this is replacement.

**Dr. Moonilal:** It is a very simple question. You say vehicles $24.5 million. What vehicles are they replacing?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** I will get that. What type of vehicles?

**Dr. Moonilal:** A car, a van, a truck?

**Mr. Imbert:** One that fell down a ravine and you pulled out for $6 million.

**Madam Chairman:** Hon. Members, you will get this in writing. And would we get a breakdown of the vehicles to be replaced and the cost associated with each vehicle? Yes. Are we finished with 002? Can we go on to 004?

**Dr. Rambachan:** Madam Chair, on similarly number 04 Other Minor Equipment there is an $8 million. So that is significant also. What is the Other Minor Equipment that is involved there? All I am concerned about is that the fire service get what they have to get in order to protect the lives and property of the citizens.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** Other Minor Equipment will be in terms of breathing apparatus and so on, equipment for the firefighter. That is not listed under uniforms and those kind of things. Like breathing apparatus and equipment that is
neither uniforms nor otherwise that the firefighter uses in the performance of his duties.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Well, Chair, you know, I understand what the Minister is saying, eh, and I appreciate the general answer. But my experience has been that you get these general answers, Minister, and then you do not have a full detail of what is going to be bought, and you end up either buying or not buying or buying the wrong things, and therefore you have to have a match between what the technocrats in fire service, the people who want the equipment tell you, and what is bought. And I am just trying to make sure that we have a proper fit with what is requested, what is necessary, and not just buy things. I mean, fire hoses, for example, you know, have holes all over the place and the fire officers show you that all the time. Recently they had it in the newspapers when they roll out the fire hoses and you could see the water flipping all over the place. So, we need to do something about it. And I just want to make sure that if we do it now, let us do it right.


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

**Dr. Moonilal:** Minister, just add to that, and why I myself am concerned with this vehicle and the composition of that subheading is that, we really want to have some assurance from you and from your Ministry that the vehicles and fire appliances and so on would be available to occupy and work out of the Mayaro Fire Station that was recently constructed. Because when we asked that in budget during the debate, we said we will work it out in the Standing Finance Committee. So, we are—I am very clear now if this is the heading for $24.5 million, do we have to purchase new appliances, new equipment, new whatever, for Mayaro so that could be up and running. Because when I go later down, I do not want to
dwell on it, but when you go to Tobago fire service there is also an increase of about $3 million or so because I know you have some intention to do some work there as well.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** The intention is to outfit the Mayaro Fire Station.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Okay.

7.05 p.m.

**Madam Chairman:** Can we go on to 004? Can we go on to 005, which is Regiment on page 144? 006 Coast Guard? 007 Immigration?

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** Coast Guard again, Madam, 006. I note that there has been a decrease of $6.3 million for all the Items under 006, under Goods and Services, can the Minister indicate why it is we are decreasing every one of these Items? Under the Coast Guard— We are under Coast Guard or Regiment, Madam?

**Madam Chairman:** We are under Coast Guard.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** Ok, but the same under the Regiment by the way, a decrease of $13.3.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** It is based on patronizing the budget in terms of prioritizing what is required, what they can do in 2016 as opposed to what they have done in 2015. So, they have some areas that they had to do some adjustments.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Does minor equipment and vehicles here under Coast Guard include specifically any vehicles and equipment for the port of Cedros? Also does it include anything for Moruga and Orange Valley, Carli Bay area?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** These are more vehicles, not vessels. Vehicles you are talking about, yes. So, vehicles will be done where there is requirement for, they would outfit. If there is a requirement for a vehicle or a jeep as such for Cedros,
then that is based on the commander of the Coast Guard assigning that vehicle to that location, wherever the need is.

**Dr. Rambachan:** I am very concerned about Cedros.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** I, too, am also concerned. That is my constituency.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Because you are the Member. Very concerned, because what has been happening in Cedros, and there are a number of illegal immigrants coming through there, drugs in recent times, and what else have you, and I feel very strongly about what should be done down in Cedros there and Moruga.

Madam Chairman, maybe you could guide me on something immediately, please. In the Standing Orders, under 84, Procedural Examination of Estimates in Standing Finance Committee, there are amendments to the heads of expenditure to increase the sums allotted, is it that that can be done in this committee by the Minister, if the committee here is convinced and convinces the committee that you should have an increase in the particular head?

**Madam Chairman:** But, this would be under Standing Order 84(5).

**Dr. Rambachan:** Yes.

**Madam Chairman:** And this would require a Motion by a Minister, which must first have Cabinet approval for the increase. So, I do not know if I am getting your drift. I do not know if it were, that saying a Member on your side.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Yes, I know it is a Minister who has to move it.

**Madam Chairman:** A Minister has to move it.

**Dr. Rambachan:** But, bear with me a moment. Here we are debating the allocations of what have you, and here I am, and I think the Minister is convinced of what I am saying, that more needs to be done, for example, in Cedros, and maybe that sufficient has not been put in the budget to deal with Cedros which is a very porous area, and Moruga which is a porous area. And I am saying, maybe
something can be done here in the committee—and I am trying to figure out what is the process that allows us to amend this budget so we can have a change in the head? Maybe I am wrong, you know.

Madam Chairman: No, but I think hon. Member, the provisions of Standing Order 84(5) are clear—

Dr. Rambachan: I read it.

Madam Chairman:—and I believe there is also another Standing Order which says, and I think it comes with money Bills, that that could only be done by a Minister. It could not be a private member.

Dr. Rambachan: No, no, no, I am saying that if you have a Standing Order like this, it then does suggest that at this committee we have the possibility of convincing the Minister, that you may increase a head of expenditure. You cannot decrease but you can increase.

Madam Chairman: But, I would say that if you so convince the Minister then the Minister would have to do something by going to the other place. And I do not know that therefore the direct action that you would like to result from something that may be felt here can be effected here. Okay.

Dr. Rambachan: Well, I think that the Minister is convinced that something must be done. [Laughter]

Madam Chairman: Let us put it this way, hon. Member for Tabaquite. I think the only person who could tell us that he is convinced is the Minister.

Dr. Rambachan: Well, Madam, I am not being facetious or anything, I am very serious, because I happen to live in the south and know the circumstances there. Because not only there, but along that entire Mosquito Creek area going right into Otaheite, it is haven for people coming in there with illegal activities. And, therefore, I think that I want to prevail upon the Minister to look at the Standing
Order and to let us do something even more for that particular area.

**Madam Chairman:** Hon. Minister of National Security.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** Noted, Madam Chair.

**Madam Chairman:** All right. Hon. Minister of Finance, seeing that this comes under finance and the budget is your portfolio.

**Mr. Imbert:** Madam Chairman, for the benefit of hon. Members opposite, if a Head is increased and no other Head is decreased there would be an increase in the overall appropriation, which would affect the fiscal balance. And, therefore, any increase in any Head, notwithstanding that Standing Order, will require, firstly, the approval of the Ministry of Finance and then the approval of Cabinet, which is why Cabinet is mentioned there, and therefore it is unfair to ask a Minister to increase a Head, because that first has to be approved by the Ministry of Finance.

And I can assure you that unless it is absolutely necessary, because we have a mid-year review, we have the authority to vire between heads. As you know, that Ministers can vire between heads, that we would not be making any major adjustments to these estimates at this time, because that will disrupt the entire budgetary process. We would have to print new pages and so on. So, what I would tell you, is having listened to everything that is being said, if this Minister or any other Minister wants to make adjustments consequent on recommendations coming from the other side—from your good selves—then, certainly, once the increase is reasonable, and there is sufficient funds within the overall allocation for that Ministry, I would accommodate that request coming from the Minister, I would allow virements, and I would also allow expenditure that may go beyond the initial allocation, because you can always supplement at the mid-year review. But, to actually make an increase here on the floor during this five days, that is highly unlikely. I just wanted to let you know.
Madam Chairman: Thank you very much. Can we move on? We are at Item 007, page 144. Then can we move on to Item 008 at page 145, Probation Service. Can we, therefore, go on to Item 009, Forensic Science Centre, page 145; 010, Fire Service, Tobago.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Madam Chairman, under vehicles 010, under the fire service, I see here an increase of $3 million for the fire service, Tobago. If the Minister would be kind enough to tell us what that is for? I know it is for vehicles, but which vehicles? What type? Numbers? Cost per unit?


Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: What kind of vehicles, Sir?

Madam Chairman: Can we ask again—

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Fire tenders or other vehicles?

Madam Chairman: I think, hon. Member for Siparia, we had got an undertaking in an earlier head that what will be provided is a listing of the vehicles and the cost of the particular vehicles, and maybe we can deal with this—

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: For the record then we had given the assurance for the two?

Madam Chairman: I understand everything that is done here is considered an assurance.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: No, the assurance now, you see, on this specific.

Madam Chairman: All right? Okay.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Yes, so it is a given. It is just for us to record it.

Dr. Moonilal: We cannot record your nod. [Laughter]

Madam Chairman: All right. So, can we go on to 012, which is Life Guard Service on page 146; 014 Defence Force Headquarters, page 146; 015? Hon. Member for Naparima.
Mr. Charles: Thank you, Madam Chairman. In the context of the challenges we face with young males and the critical role that I think that institutions like the cadet force can play in ameliorating that problem that we have, I just want to record and to draw to the Minister’s attention—not necessarily for an answer—that it is a measure of some concern, the reduction in expenditure to the cadet force. I knew the Minister of Finance said that there may be a process involving him in the context of looking at the possibility of amendments, I would just ask that he bear that in mind as something worthy of consideration for support. Thank you.

Mr. Imbert: Let me just say, Madam Chairman, that would apply to all useful suggestions. That was a useful suggestion, and that the Ministry will consider all such requests coming from the Ministry of National Security, and any others, based on the very valuable contribution being made by Members opposite; like that one for example.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Siparia.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: You mentioned 014, 015, okay, so can I kindly?

Madam Chairman: I understand.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Thank you, Madam. 014, again, I see a $5.1—in fact, every Item under the Defence Force Headquarters has been reduced to the extent of $5.1 million. Now, when I had asked the question, it was a global question, I was told to come under the specific Items, which do not give the quantities, but, again, Minister, if you would be kind enough, is this, again, part of your prioritizing that you decreased under goods and services?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: This is done on prioritizing, but it is also done on the fact that some things were received in 2015 and therefore—

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: So, some good work was done.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Would you be kind enough to say which of these that work was done in 2015 so you could decrease everyone for 2016?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: No. We are looking at 2016.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: The Minister is saying that in 2016 every single line item has been decreased to zero.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: I said work was done—[Crosstalk]

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: So, there is no work under every line item here for 2016—yes—to be done? Is that what you are saying?


Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: You said, under 014 every line item there is no allocation. In other words, there has been a decrease of $5.1.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: There are decreases. There are line items in 2016, and you would see that—

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: There is a decrease of $5.1 million.


Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Overall, yes, for every item.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: There are still items to be received in 2016 going forward.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: You said this was because work was done in 2015?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: I said work was done in 2015 and work will be done in 2016 also.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Okay, Madam Chair. Thank you.

Madam Chairman: Can we go on to 016, Air Guard on page 147?

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: 016.

Madam Chairman: 016, Air Guard.
Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Hon. Minister, I see again a decrease of $3.3 million under the Air Guard for all these line items, which is like half of $3.3 million decrease. I just record it.

Dr. Moonilal: I want to ask—could I? Just a follow up question.

Madam Chairman: This is on 016?

Dr. Moonilal: Yes. Minister of National Security, I wanted to ask, is there some risk here that whether it was a deliberate policy or not, whether it is a result of prioritization or budgetary restraints, is there any risk to national security that throughout—and I am on 016, because that is where there is a big decrease here, minor equipment for the Air Guard and so on. Is there a risk that we are undermining the integrity of national security institutions by slashing across the board every single division in national security in this way? Because, while we look at the overall figure, as you would agree, wages and salaries pick it up, a big contribution there, and it is responsible in the main for the overall figure. But, this continues throughout, and I am just asking you whether there are serious risks involved with under budgeting for national security in this way? It is almost like slashing of the national security budget across the board.

7.20 p.m.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: I do not think there is any risk involved. I think it has been provided for in 2016. I do not think there is any risk involved.

Hon. Imbert: And we intend to be very prudent in 2016 and not waste money as happened in 2015.

Madam Chairman: Members can we go on to Item 017 which is the Immigration Detention Centre.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Likewise, Madam Chair, is there any risk here with a $1.5 million decrease across the board for Item 017.
Hon. Imbert: No, it is prudent.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Minister of National Security, through you, Madam Chair.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Minister of National Security, we are on Item 017, Immigration Detention Centre. And the hon. Member for Siparia is asking the question with respect to the decrease in $1.56 million. Would there be any threat—[ Interruption ]

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:—compromising of—

Madam Chairman:—compromising of the national security?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: There were some things that were required already and therefore we do need to acquire them in 2016.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Okay.

Madam Chairman: Can we go on to Item 018, Volunteer Defence Force (Reserves).

Dr. Moonilal: Mr. Minister of National Security, again, there is a $3.3 million decrease. You are certain that for the Volunteer Defence Force (Reserves) this will not again compromise the integrity of their performance at all that we are slashing their budget again.

Hon. Imbert: We are rooting out corruption.

Dr. Moonilal: You are rooting out corruption in the Volunteer Defence Force (Reserves).

Hon. Imbert: Yes, everywhere. That is what JTUM asked us to do.

Madam Chairman: Can we go on to Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies. This is on page 148.

Dr. Moonilal: Could I ask—is it that you are rooting out corruption in the Regional Associations as well? Because there is also a decrease here.

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Hon. Imbert: Everywhere there is waste, mismanagement and corruption, we are rooting it out.

Dr. Moonilal: In the Caribbean crime and security organization and the Regional Bodies, fine.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Thank you, Madam Chair, under Sub-Head 04 Current Transfers and Subsidies, Regional Bodies, I am looking at a decrease with respect to IMPACS of $1.5 million. What caused this decrease allocation to IMPACS, please?—through you, Madam Chair, to the Minister of National Security. IMPACS, a decrease of $1.5 million allocation for the purposes of that regional body, IMPACS.

Madam Chairman: Item 05.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Taking out corruption out of IMPACS. Looking at the Line Item 05, IMPACS.

Hon. Imbert: The 2015 estimate was $13 million, it went up $15 million. We have now allocated $14 million, it is an appropriate allocation. It is more than the original allocation of 2015.

Dr. Moonilal: Figures make sense.

Hon. Imbert: Yes, it is an appropriate prudent fiscally responsible allocation.

Dr. Moonilal: It just means he do not know.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Laughs.

Hon. Imbert: It said we are rooting out waste and mismanagement.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: In IMPACS.

Hon. Imbert: Everywhere.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: We will ask what that is when you come back.

Madam Chairman: Can we therefore go on to—[ Interruption ]

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: International Bodies.
Madam Chairman: Item 004.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Madam Chair, through you, if I may just pause for a cause for the moment. I know we have next, the TTPS, but given the time—you did say we will stop at 8.00 p.m., we may not get around to that and perhaps you may want to release some, please.

Madam Chairman: I am indeed—as the position of the Government. Are you in concurrence with the suggestion?

Hon. Robinson-Regis: Madam Chair, we did indicate as you did at the start of the proceedings that we will end at 8.00 p.m. today. And I certainly agree with the Leader of Opposition that we should release the Police Service, because at the rate we are going now, I doubt we will finish national security and get to them before 8.00 p.m. So, I would agree with that on behalf of the Government.

Madam Chairman: So, may I on behalf of the committee thank the representatives of the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service and maybe—the members of the technocrats from the Ministry of Trade and Industry are here also, and therefore we would like to thank you for your attendance. We would really like to relieve you at this time and would ask you to return tomorrow at 1.30 p.m.

[Crosstalk]

Members, in terms of, I believe we said that we are going to start with the THA tomorrow which will be 1.30 p.m. So do we want the police to come here for 1.30 p.m.?

Hon. Members: No, no.

Madam Chairman: So could we suggest a time. Could we say to them three o’clock, right? Alright, so as I say, could we then, therefore relieve the members of the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service who are here and the Ministry of Trade and Industry? We will ask you all to return tomorrow afternoon. I believe the staff
of the Parliament would liaise with you all with respect to the time of your attendance tomorrow. Thank you.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** Thank you, Madam Chair. We were at, which one, will you remind us?

**Madam Chairman:** So can we therefore continue, and I believe we are at Item 004, International Bodies. Can we go on to Item 007 which is Households? Hon. Member for Caroni East.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Madam Chair, earlier on I alluded to, let me have the attention of the Minister of National Security. Earlier on I alluded to the profession of the Civilian Conservation Corps, and I asked where it was incorporated and here it is, I have seen it. I have seen the allocation of $58 million. Could the Minister indicate to us how many trainers there are in the programme and how many trainees are trained on an annual basis in the Civilian Conservation Corps?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** I will have to provide you with that at a later date. I do not have those figures here but I can provide you at a later date. Let me repeat this, the amount of trainers and the amount of trainees in the Civilian Conservation Corps.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Madam Chair, if I can probably guide the hon. Minister, my information from the past being in Cabinet, we had raised this issue that they needed to look at the question of the cost factor. Because my colleague, Member of Parliament for Chaguanas East reminds me as well, that we believe that there were about 300 trainees per year and there were about 150 trainers to train these 300 trainees. And from our evaluation it was excessive to have one trainer to train two trainees in the Civilian Conservation Corps. I could be proven wrong.

And so, therefore, to train 300 trainees in the Civilian Conservation Corps for $58 million is an unpardonable sin. And therefore it is important for us to get a
clear picture from the Ministry of National Security on this programme. We would like to have that programme, of course, continued. It is doing a great job, but the excessive expenditure you need to look at that critically. So perhaps when we get the information—the ratio of trainers to trainees. It is jobs for the boys, Minister of National Security, and it is an excessive flood of people to do the training for these nice young students who are willing to do well and prevent crime.

Madam Chairman: I believe we have done Households unless the Member for Siparia your question is in Households because we are in Households.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Thank you very much Madam Chair. Through you, under Households we have Sub-Item 04 mentioned from my colleague, Civilian Conservation Corps. We have the MILAT, we have the National Youth Service, Mentoring Programme for Youth at Risk, the National Security Officers Foundation and so on, which would represent some substantial amounts of money. However, we have no idea of how these are to be disbursed. It is just giving us a transfer of $58 million, a transfer of $15 million and so on.

My colleague has already asked about trainers and trainees. We would appreciate for each of these special programmes, hon. Minister, if through the assurance that you can give because you may not have this. How much out of that is for recurrent personnel expenditure for each of these units? And how much out of that $58 million is for goods and services, minor equipment purchases?—all the Sub-Heads under Recurrent Expenditure. So for each of these, how much for salaries and wages and the other items of recurrent? For each of these programmes all we have is the block allocation for these various programmes under Households.

Madam Chairman: Page 147.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Thank you, Madam Chair.
Madam Chairman: We are at page 148.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Yes, we have the assurance from the Minister?

Madam Chairman: Yes, so we will get this in writing and detailed as asked by the hon. Member for Siparia. Can we go on to Sub-Head 009, at page 149. Hon. Member for Oropouche East.

Dr. Moonilal: Through you, Madam Chair, to the Minister of National Security, I just wanted to clarify one matter and ask a direct question. You will continue the Movant/Laventille Initiative, but I noticed there is an estimate of 11.3, down slightly. I just wanted some details as well, because there is a $2 million cut in that initiative. If you can explain that as to: what is the status of that programme? And what is the intention this year, 2016, given the decrease of $2 million in the Morvant/Laventille Initiative.

The Office of Law Enforcement Policy, Item 13, there is something dramatic here, in that 2015 there was a revised estimate of $60 million more or less, and in 2016 $8 million, a decrease of $52 million. You could probably remind us as to what would have caused that decrease as well. And what are the implications of that. I can ask a follow up question, but first I just wanted the answer on those two matters.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: The Movant/Laventille Initiative, the decrease is based on really an assessment that we had to cut out waste in the programme. So the reduction is based on that. [Crosstalk]

Hon. Imbert: You all were wasting this much.

Madam Chairman: And this is now Office of Law Enforcement Policy?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: IDC is now catered under OLEP.

Madam Chairman: IDC?

Madam Chairman: So the Office of Law Enforcement Policy runs—


Madam Chairman: Could we say what IDC is please?


Madam Chairman: “Oh!” So is it that this has been moved to another Sub-Item.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Yes. [Crosstalk]

Dr. Gopeesingh: Immigration Detention Centre. We just completed that.

Hon. Imbert: OLEP runs the detention centre. The detention centre expenditure has been moved to another Head.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: And the OLEP money has gone to IDC.

7.35 p.m.

Dr. Moonilal: Where the $53 million gone?

Mr. Imbert: Your comfort control people which we are looking at to make sure it is not wasteful, used to be run by the OLEP office. So your comfort patrols and the detention centre were catered under this head before. Those are being moved to their own subheads. If you look down below at Item 23—[Interruption] Look down below at Item 23—I know you do not want to look, you know, but look down at Item 23—and you will see a $20 million that used to be under the OLEP. Okay? And the detention centre now has its own—[Interruption] No, not there, elsewhere.

Madam Chairman: So could I ask, therefore, that the hon. Minister of National Security maybe can find that cross-reference and let us know later in the proceedings.

Mr. Imbert: We will.

Dr. Moonilal: Please, because Immigration Detention Centre, $400,000.

Mr. Imbert: No, no, it is much more than that.
Madam Chairman: So we will just defer the response to this during the course of these proceedings. Okay? Hon. Member for Mayaro.

Mr. Paray: Thank you very much, Madam Chairman. If I could just crave your indulgence for one minute to just go back to Sub-item 7, item 09, which is “School Discipline Initiative”. Minister of National Security, noting the fact that we have had such a high incidence lately of all these videos circulating on social media, with school children displaying some very unruly behaviour, I notice in the budget here that there have been no subventions in terms of that school discipline initiative. I was wondering if that is something that was prudent to take off. Or has it been transferred across to the Ministry of Education to deal with under that heading? Thank you.

Madam Chairman: This is page 148, Item 09.


Mr. Paray: Okay.

Madam Chairman: Okay. Can we then go to—

Mr. Imbert: Madam Chairman, with your leave, to answer a question raised before. Contrary to the assertion that the detention centre is only $400,000, if you go to page 142, “Goods and Services, Immigration Detention Centre", total is $22 million. So it is $22 million for that, and that is just one item of expenditure for Immigration Detention Centre because they also have personnel expenditure, they have minor equipment purchases for the Immigration Detention Centre. So that will come up to a considerable sum, plus the $20 million for the Community Comfort Police. That is where the $52 million reduction came from. It is all there in the documents.

Dr. Moonilal: Madam Chairman, given that that is so, I would like to ask the
Minister of National Security a direct question now. Is it that you are cutting the Community Comfort Patrol Programme? And if you are, could you tell us what was spent in 2015 on the Community Comfort Patrol Programme; which areas were serviced and what is the intention in 2016 whether it is to cut the programme and reduce the amount of patrols? And if you are reducing the amount of patrols, in which areas do you intend to reduce the amount of patrols? Because it may well be that you are cutting the budget for that programme.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** The intention is to make it more effective and efficient going forward, and whatever it takes to make it more efficient and effective, we will—

**Dr. Moonilal:** So if it is a reduction and a cut and so on, it is fine?

**Mr. Imbert:** It is not a reduction. It is a new item of $20 million.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar:** Madam Chair, on the explanation given by—

**Madam Chairman:** One moment, please.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar:** Sorry.

**Madam Chairman:** Hon. Member for Siparia.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar:** Thank you, Madam. On the explanation given by the hon. Minister of Finance, it does not add up to say that under the IDC at page 141, “Immigration Detention Centre Carried Forward”, the total there was $21 million, carried over to the other page to a total of $22.1 million allocated for 2016. Originally, this was under the OLEP and it is now taken out to go under IDC. Because you will see in 2014, you had actual expenditure under IDC, in 2015 you have revised expenditure under IDC, so it was not under the OLEP; it was under its own head or item. So it is not correct, in my respectful view, to say that $53 million has now been decreased because you take it out and send it to IDC. It does not make sense. It does not add up.
Mr. Imbert: That is the information we have been provided with.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar: Okay. Well, it is not accurate and therefore has to be—

[Interruption]

Madam Chairman: Could we get from the hon. Minister of National Security an undertaking to clarify this item?

Mr. Imbert: Maybe you were paying twice for the same item, who knows.

Madam Chairman: May we go on, please? Hon. Member for Couva South.

Mr. Indarsingh: Madam Chair, the issue of the reduction to the Morvant/Laventille initiative and OLEP was dealt with by the Member for Oropouche East.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Couva North.

Miss Ramdial: Madam Chair, the same. The question was previously answered, so thank you.

Madam Chairman: Okay. Hon. Member for Oropouche West.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: Thank you, Madam Chair. I am on Item 12 and I see there is an increase of $1 million for HIV/AIDS Coordinating Unit. To the hon. Minister of National Security, is it that that increase is for an anticipation of an increase in AIDS cases?

Hon. Member: What!

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: It is more for training and educational purposes.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: Okay. [Crosstalk] Do not think it is in any condescending way. It is a serious question I am asking.

Dr. Francis: Really?

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: I was not addressing you—the question.

Madam Chairman: Has the question been answered?

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: Yes. And another thing, please, Minister. Is it that
the predicate offences which will fall under the RICO offences—is it encompassed in your Anti-Money Laundering or Terrorism Compliance Unit?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** Repeat that question.

**Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh:** The RICO offences which are predicate offences, is that included in 18, which is your Anti-Money Laundering or Terrorism Compliance Unit? I need some clarification or perhaps you—

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** That is for the special unit.

**Mr. Al-Rawi:** If I may, the RICO offences—

**Madam Chairman:** Hon. Minister of National Security, have you finished your response?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** Yes, I have.

**Madam Chairman:** Hon. Attorney General.

**Mr. Al-Rawi:** Perhaps I may lend some assistance. The RICO offences and money laundering and terrorism are all separately managed in the architecture of Government. The Ministry of Finance has certain supervisory aspects, the Attorney General’s office and the Ministry of National Security. Counter terrorism is dealt with by the Ministry of National Security. The Ministry of Finance deals with the FIU and in particular, the money laundering aspect that may come out of that. The Proceeds of Crime Act is a mix between agencies. The DPP deals with some of those as well.

So insofar as the RICO may be a combination of events, it may be spread across Ministry of Finance, Ministry of the Attorney General and also Ministry of National Security, depending upon how it is arranged. So I do not think that we could get one clear-cut answer to a very good question, on that aspect. So perhaps we could look at that a little further.

**Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh:** Thank you kindly, AG.
Madam Chairman: May we have the Member for Caroni East?
Dr. Gopeesingh: Madam Chair, 009, Subhead 02, “Strategic Services Agency”, $100 million. Would it be possible for the Minister of National Security to give us—

Madam Chairman: Excuse me. Is it $100 million?
Dr. Gopeesingh: $100 million, yes. Would it be possible for you to give us an idea of the breakdown, cost of personnel, cost of the other sub-items, goods and services and minor equipment? And also, as I am on that, if you would take two questions. The second one is the Transit Police Unit, there is an increase. Is that the Transit Police Service Unit for the priority bus route?


Madam Chairman: That is Item 16?
Dr. Gopeesingh: Yes.

Madam Chairman: Thank you.

Dr. Gopeesingh: That answers the second question, but the first one I would wait for the answer.

Mr. Imbert: You are not getting that information.

Dr. Gopeesingh: I cannot get that today?

Mr. Imbert: National Security.

Madam Chairman: Do I understand the Minister of Finance to say because of public policy reasons of a national security nature—

Mr. Imbert: Yes, Ma’am.

Madam Chairman:—that information cannot be made available?

Mr. Imbert: Yes, Ma’am. That is the Strategic Services Agency, the agency that Resmi Ramnarine was put to head at one point in time.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Is that the same agency where a guy called Vincent Clement had
$5 million sitting aside to pay people to bring information?

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Caroni East, could we—[Interrupt] I believe the response is that it is because of public policy, this is a matter of national security and therefore cannot be made available. I believe that is the answer that we have got.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar:** You cannot say how much is being spent for salaries and wages? That is what the question is. How much out of that $100 million is for salaries and wages.

**Mr. Imbert:** National security.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar:** Is that for public policy to protect—[Interrupt] We are not asking whom or how many. How much is for salaries and wages.

**Mr. Imbert:** Did you ever provide that information when you—

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar:** Did you ever ask for it?

**Mr. Imbert:** Yes, we did. Did you?

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar:** You did not ask for it. Look, I am not speaking across the floor.

**Madam Chairman:** Hon. Minister of Finance, is the information going to be made—[Crosstalk] Hon. Minister of Finance, is the information going to be made available?

**Mr. Imbert:** No, Madam Chairman. This is a highly sensitive—

**Madam Chairman:** This is on the basis of public policy.

**Mr. Imbert:** This is a highly sensitive, probably the most sensitive intelligence agency in the country and to give that kind of information will compromise our national security system, and the Leader of the Opposition should know that.

**Mr. Al-Rawi:** And they answered that way when we asked them last year.

**Mr. Imbert:** And they answered just that way when we asked the same question
Dr. Gopeesingh: Madam Chair, they asked for salaries in the past of the different people in the Strategic Services Agency—

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar: Of individuals.

Dr. Gopeesingh:—of individuals in that area. They did not think it difficult to ask that question and they hammered us for year after year on that same question and the answer was forthcoming to them. Why is it that they are reluctant now to give the answer to us, particularly of salaries? Are they paying somebody $50 million per year, or are they paying somebody $10 million per year? We are not asking who is the person—

Mr. Imbert: We paying them the same way you were paying them.

Dr. Gopeesingh:—but it is important for the country to know how the money is spent.

Madam Chairman: But if I understood the question, hon. Member for Caroni East, you did not even ask, as you are saying now, for a person. You asked for the total category of salaries and wages.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Yes. Even that is easier for them to answer.

Madam Chairman: And therefore the Government has said that it is a matter, based on public policy, national security reasons.

Mr. Imbert: We are paying the same people you were paying.

Dr. Gopeesingh: I am not comforted by that, Madam Chair.

Mr. Imbert: We have not made any changes.

Dr. Gopeesingh: It is no comfort to me.

Mr. Imbert: You should know.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar: All right. Community Comfort Patrol. Can I move to Community Comfort Patrol?
Madam Chairman: So are we—I will take the Member for Oropouche East first before—

Dr. Moonilal: I will give way to the Member for Siparia.

Madam Chairman: So, Hon. Member for Siparia, we are at Item 23.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar: Thank you, Ma’am. If the Minister would kindly—
[Interruption] If the others could kindly allow me to hear what the Minister’s response would be with respect to the Community Comfort Patrol Programme of $20 million, the new sub-item, how is this to be worked? And how many patrols are we looking at; what personnel; what numbers are we looking at? How will it work? Because it is a new sub-item.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: This is going to be reviewed right now. The Community Comfort Patrol will be reviewed right now for its effectiveness and efficiency and going forward we would know what kind of adjustments could be made.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar: So whilst it is being reviewed, will it continue or will it be stopped.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: It will continue while it is being reviewed.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar: So whilst it is continuing, how is it working continuing?

Mr. Imbert: The same way you had it working.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: There are no changes in how it is working.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar: I have not asked if there is any change.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: That is why the examination is how it is doing right now—

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar: You have $20 million—

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:—and to see its effectiveness and efficiency, and based on that examination, adjustments will be made.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar: You may or may not change for the way forward,

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar: But at the present you say it is continuing. So do we have 10 patrols, 20 patrols—

Mr. Imbert: It is the same way you left it!

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar: Madam Chair, through you—not the same way I left it.

7.50 p.m.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Members, the question is how it is going to be run, and I understand the answer to be that it is going to be continued to be operated in the same way until policy. Can we therefore ask in writing that we say how it operates currently? And again, that will be dealt as an assurance.

Dr. Gopeesingh: That is one. Number 21, National Security Training Academy. Is this the academy for the training of police officers, or is it a training for whom? And where is that—[Interruption]

Mr. Imbert: You were in Government?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Yes, but we want to know what you are doing. We are asking.

Mr. Imbert: You were sleeping for the—

Dr. Gopeesingh: No, no, no.

Madam Chairman: Okay. Please, Members. The question is National Security Training Academy, for whom does that institution—

Dr. Gopeesingh: Who are being trained in the academy; and how many are being trained?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Provides training for Defence Force and the protected services. I do not have the numbers right now, but it provides training for both the Defence Force and the protected services.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Do they have one centre or many centres across the country?

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar: Madam Chair, through you, I must object. The hon. Member for Diego Martin West is insisting you know, you know. There are Members in this Parliament who are new and do not know. There are Members in this Parliament who do not know, and I am making my duty to certainly—

[Crosstalk]

Madam Chairman: Members, Members we are wasting precious time with respect to getting responses for this very important exercise. Hon. Minister of Finance, I share the view that while some Members here are extremely experienced and understand everything that is said, but even though the ones who are asking the questions may know the answer, it may also assist Members who do not even understand what the question is. So I will permit the question and I would ask if we could all be very respectful in giving the answers so that we can all benefit. Can we proceed?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Because the national population—

Madam Chairman: Thank you very much, hon. Member for Caroni East. So we were asking the question and I believe the—

Dr. Gopeesingh: The amount of personnel who are doing the training; how many trainees are being trained on an annual basis; and all the other areas under Goods and Services.

Madam Chairman: And this is with respect to the National Security Training Academy? And I believe the hon. Minister of National Security gave an assurance that the information will be forthcoming in writing and we know—hon. Member for Caroni East, please—this is an assurance and it will be dealt with in a particular way.

Dr. Gopeesingh: I just want to include one thing, how much of it for salaries,
Madam Chairman: I think he understands, with the greatest respect, all that.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar: Madam Chair, I see today, we are six minutes to the hour and we will want to stop at eight, so do we proceed to Developmental Programme or do we leave the eight minutes to start tomorrow?

Madam Chairman: I would want to suggest having regard to our rate of progress that every minute counts. So I would suggest that we end at eight. Even if we took three more items, it will be three items less.

Dr. Gopeesingh: I have just one answer. Madam Chair, I have one question on the Draft Estimates of Expenditure under Head 22.

Madam Chairman: And could you assist us by referring to the page?

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar: Page 149, it is cyber security?

Dr. Gopeesingh: No.

Madam Chairman: Page 149?

Dr. Gopeesingh: 149, yes.

Madam Chairman: We are not under Ministry of National Security?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Item 22.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar: Head 22.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Head 22.

Madam Chairman: 149—

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar: Page 92, Madam. Yes, page 92


Dr. Gopeesingh: Yes. Cyber Security. Are they for personnel? That is a major important issue now.
Madam Chairman: Can I just ask for a little further guidance. I am really not seeing Cyber Security on page 92, Head 22. So we are at page 149—

Dr. Gopeesingh: Under Cyber Security Programme, 22, just before we close.

Madam Chairman: Cyber Security Programme, Sub-Item 22. Thank you.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Is that a functional unit with legal capabilities? We need to answer that question from the Attorney General. The Cyber Security Unit, does it have a legal capacity; and under what department the Cyber Security Unit comes? Yes, but police, who?

Mr. Al-Rawi: Hon. Minister—through you, Madam Chair, Member for Caroni East—forgive me, Madam Chair, old habits. Member for Caroni East, cyber security is an area of law that is actually manned by several entities. There is a Cyber Security Unit in the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service and a Cyber Crime Unit that deals with some security aspects, but there is a Cyber Security Unit specifically in the Ministry of National Security.

In fact, that is something which is under review right now because we had been in default of some of our major international obligations. So that unit is the one that we are speaking about under national security as distinct from the Cyber Crime Unit and the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service.

Dr. Gopeesingh: So there is a differentiation. One looks at national security matters and one looks at police matters?

Mr. Al-Rawi: Crimes may be partly taken up by Cyber Security Unit, and as you would be aware there was a very large National Security Council, I believe some 17 Members in the past Government, wide association. But for the benefit of new Members, the National Security Council is in constant coordination and the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service report, as do the Ministry of National Security, to the National Security Council. So that if there is some degree of
confluence between the Cyber Crime and the Cyber Security Units, those things are picked up at the National Security Council level.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Where does this one lie?

**Mr. Al-Rawi:** This particular one that we are dealing with, under this Head, under this Sub-Item, is under the Ministry of National Security.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar:** And what does it do then?

**Mr. Al-Rawi:** What does it do? This was a unit which was constructed under previous Government and, insofar as the Item Head came forward from the previous years, and this being a division which is to be reviewed in the overall architecture, it was seen fit to maintain what was in existence under the previous Government, and then to conduct the review and to come back with the efficiency matrix that may need to be applied. But there are international obligations which the Ministry of National Security has specific conduct of, and for, and the Ministry of National Security cannot just give it up specifically.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Okay. Thank you.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Could I ask in the 15 seconds remaining, Madam? the Cyber Security Programme under National Security—and I am speaking to the Minister of National Security—is this also under review as everything else that you are reviewing? And if it is, why did you increase it to $177,000/$178,000?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** It is also being part of the review, but it is also an operational unit. In other words, there is the cyber security research team. So there are ongoing issues that they are dealing with. In fact, it is part of the International Telecommunication Union. There is a relationship there. We do have some equipment to purchase, even while we review; it is a functioning unit.

**Madam Chairman:** Members, I know it is eight o’clock and 42 seconds and we promised that we will be finished at eight o’clock, but we are not as yet finished.
We have to set the table for tomorrow because we are still in the midst of National Security. We have the Development Programme to do.

We have understood and I think Tobago has already been communicated with that they will be taken first tomorrow. So I think there needs to be some agreement with respect to how we proceed tomorrow. So is it that we will take Tobago and then continue with the Development Programme for National Security. Yes?

**Mrs. Robinson-Regis:** We agree.

**Madam Chairman:** Okay. So are we going to therefore invite the Tobago House of Assembly, Ministry of National Security and the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service. I would just wish to caution us, we have five days to get this done.

**Dr. Moonilal:** If the Member for Diego Martin North/East restrains himself, we will complete it.

**Madam Speaker:** Members, I think—

**Mr. Imbert:** You are referring to the Minister of Finance whose estimates these are?

**Madam Chairman:** While we all—[Interruption]

**Madam Chairman:** Excuse me, please.

**Mr. Imbert:** You got to be kidding.

**Madam Chairman:** Excuse me please. While we all need a little relief, I think good manners begets good manners; tolerance begets tolerance. On that note, it is 8.02 p.m. and I therefore suspend this Standing Finance Committee meeting for tomorrow, which is Thursday, October 15, 2015 at 1.30 p.m. Thank you very much.

**8.02 p.m.: Standing Finance Committee suspended.**
The Standing Finance Committee of the whole House resumed its deliberations on the Bill and Estimates.

[Chairman: Mrs. Annisette-George]

1.30 p.m.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Members, good afternoon and we are going to resume the Standing Finance Committee meeting. I believe we had determined we would start with the Tobago House of Assembly, and I would like to say that having regard to our pace yesterday, I would want to suggest that we determine up to seven on the order which is Head—so up to Head 02 today. In your order, we will complete up to number seven in your order which will carry us up to Head 02.

Dr. Moonilal: Madam Chair, to you, I did have a brief word with the Leader of Government Business on that matter and as I indicated, from our experience last year as well, where several of us participated, there are a few Ministries that would take much, much more time, but there are several agencies, Ministries and so on, that one can get over in 15 minutes, 20 minutes, as our experience last year showed.

So that if you give yourself a number per day, it may include Ministries that would not take a long time, also it may include the bigger ones where there will be much more query. So that instead of setting it up with numbers, I suspect that we can continue particularly with the big ones and then work out the others. But I would prefer not to mark it by number that way because then you may crush something that is big and you really want to focus an investigation on.
Madam Chairman: Well, I think, hon. Member of Oropouche East, you sort of anticipated me because I was going to say item seven or midnight, whichever is the later.

Dr. Moonilal: Madam, we also have an arrangement with the Government that we will finish at 8.00 so I do not know if you would also—

Madam Chairman: Well, the thing about it is, while I respect all arrangements and I believe it is “you all” House, we have a process to manage and with all due respect to everybody, I do not think we managed it very well yesterday and therefore, in light of that, with everything in life, sometimes we have to make some adjustments and the adjustments sometimes we have to make are harsh ones. But let us see—yes, Minister of Finance.

Mr. Imbert: Thank you very much, Madam Chairman. I am sorry to interrupt, thank you very much. Last year, as far as I can recall, was the first time we examined the estimates under the new system and your predecessor had made the point that we have five days to complete approximately 50 Heads and had said upfront that he was going to do 10 Heads a day in order to get through the 50. So that these issues, Madam Chairman, have already been well ventilated in this Chamber and your predecessor, I think, adopted the correct approach that we should try to get through 10 Heads a day.

Otherwise, we will reach the fifth day, we would have only done five out of 50 Heads, and then we reach the situation where the other 45 would have to be done in five minutes. So that I would suggest that—you are absolutely right, Madam Chairman, we need to be flexible of course, and we need to also be cognizant of the fact that if we spend too long on one Head, it will leave no time for other Heads which could be equally important. So we should really try to do 10 per day. And since we only did three-quarter of one yesterday, we now probably have to do 12 a
day between now and the end.

Madam Chairman: Okay, so I believe we can start. I believe the Head we are going to consider is the Tobago House of Assembly, Head 15.

Head 15.

Question proposed: That Head 15 stand part of the Schedule.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Members, the sum of $2,748,800,000 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.

So we move to Sub-Head 06, Current Transfers to Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies, division 01, Assembly Legislature, Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure.

Dr. Moonilal: Yes, Madam Chairman, thank you very much. On the Sub-Item 01, Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance, you have an estimate of $9.3 billion. The revised estimate for 2015—was it $8.6 billion?

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Oropouche East, might I ask? We are on page 11 of the Draft Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure of the Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies and the Tobago House of Assembly. We are at page 11.

Dr. Moonilal: You are not on recurrent expenditure? We started with that first yesterday.

Hon. Imbert: This is recurrent expenditure. Page 11.

Dr. Moonilal: Under recurrent expenditure, you have Tobago House of Assembly at page 58.

Hon. Imbert: No, no, you are looking at the wrong thing. Revenue and expenditure THA.

Dr. Moonilal: So it is not in the—

Madam Chairman: Hon. Members, the correct book is Statutory Boards and

UNREVISED
Similar Bodies of the Tobago House of Assembly. So we are at page 11, Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Madam Chair, we also have the Tobago House of Assembly on the Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure; the other book that we were using yesterday. So which one are we going to start with? This one? On page 11.

**Madam Chairman:** We are on Head 15, hon. Member for Caroni East, page 11.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** All right.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Yes, Madam Chairman. I just wanted to get an understanding on when I say the figure, we would be very clear on where we are. Page 11, you have for General Administration for Personnel Expenditure, an actual in 2014 of 3.9 and you have an estimate for 2016 of 5.2. What would account for that increase when the revised estimate in 2015 was 4? So you have an increase of $1.2 million for Personnel Expenditure.

**Hon. Imbert:** In similar fashion to the other Heads we examined yesterday, this would be a combination of arrears of salary, increase in salaries and other factors and I will provide that information to the Member. Similarly as to the undertaking I gave yesterday, in due course, it will be provided.

**Madam Chairman:** Can I just remind Members? And it may have escaped us. I believe the undertaking of the hon. Minister of Finance, when it came to Personnel Expenditure, is a blanket undertaking.

**Hon. Imbert:** Across the board for every single entity. So it would be provided for every single entity.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Madam Chairman, I just want to look at—I know we are going into the details of the expenditure here but the summary of it is on page 10 of the book which shows the Government’s subvention to the Tobago House of
Assembly, what was in 2014, 1.948; what was in 2015, the revised estimate, 2.102, and the estimate for 2016 which is 2.345, showing an increase of $242,384,000. I just want to get—are we going to see the details of that expenditure of $2.345 billion in the pages 11 to whatever in the Tobago House of Assembly?

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member, I think, in terms of adjusting, we have to learn from what we have done before. I would suggest that the decision be that we examine the details and not the summary.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Well, I just wanted to make mention of the summary of—there is an increase of $242 million.

Madam Chairman: Well, hon. Member for Caroni East, if we understand that, it means that when we come to the details, your point will be taken.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Well, as you said yesterday, it is important for the general public to know that. We see it in the book but remember we are speaking to the national audience as well and they would not see it in our book.

Madam Chairman: I understand that.

Dr. Gopeesingh: So it is important for us to mention that they have an increase of $242 million for the THA.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Caroni East, sorry to cut you off but I think we have made a decision on how we would proceed.

Dr. Gopeesingh: No, I am finished. I am finished with that.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Chaguanas West.

Hon. Imbert: Madam Chairman, can I just make a very brief intervention? In keeping with established practice, the details of the estimates will be published online on the Ministry’s website so the public will be able to avail themselves of every single document that is being submitted to hon. Members.

Dr. Gopeesingh: That does not negate and exclude.
Madam Chairman: Members, can I please proceed with this exercise?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Sure.

Mr. Singh: Thank you, Madam Chair, I just wanted to be reminded of the undertaking given by the Minister of Finance and whether it includes the number of employees, monthly paid and daily paid, because I would want a listing of that with respect to the Tobago House of Assembly.

Hon. Imbert: No problem at all. The undertaking given was with respect to an explanation for the increase in Personnel Expenditure, but if you are asking for the number of employees separated into monthly paid and daily paid, that information will be provided to you, as you have requested for the Tobago House of Assembly.

Mr. Singh: Thank you.

Hon. Imbert: Actually, to save time, the accounting officer has told me that there are 2,206 public servants, 8,922 daily-rated workers, 1,706 contract workers and 231 persons on short-term contracts in the Tobago House of Assembly. [Interruption] Two hundred and thirty-one persons on short-term contracts; 1,706 on long-term contracts; 8,922 daily-rated and 2,206 public servants.

Madam Chairman: Can we go on to Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services?

Dr. Moonilal: Just a quick query. I mean, I remember the injunction of the hon. Prime Minister as it relates to overseas travel and the new policy-thinking on restricting overseas travel. I am seeing here an increase by almost 40 per cent or more—could be more—for Official Overseas Travel at Sub-Item 27. Would the THA be also under the guidance of the hon. Prime Minister’s injunction?

Hon. Imbert: The answer is yes, and if you look at the original 2015 estimate, it was $500,000. And in fact, the THA, according to this document, exercised prudent fiscal management and only used up $100,000 of the $500,000 allocated to it. [Interruption] Hold on. Since it is the Ministry of Finance who has done these
estimates, we have put back a figure of 425 but I can assure you that during the fiscal year, we will monitor this and we will make—not make, we will ensure that only those trips that are necessary will be made in an attempt to save as much public funds as we can.

1.45 p.m.

Dr. Moonilal: Madam Chairman, just for the record, I want it to be very clear, as the Minister is, that the 2015 accounts have not been closed, so anything for 2015 is the revised estimates.

Hon. Imbert: Yes, of course.

Dr. Moonilal: So that when the Member speak about reduction and so on that is the revised, okay, for the record.

Hon. Imbert: Of course, that is what it says.

Dr. Moonilal: That is not what you said.

Mr. Singh: Madam Chair, a derivative of the policy statement made by the hon. Minister of Finance, how is that going to be working in light of the autonomy of the Tobago House of Assembly?

Dr. Tewarie: I would like to follow that up.

Hon. Imbert: We have an excellent relationship.

Dr. Tewarie: Madam Chair, I know that the procedure we are following in this instance of the Tobago House of Assembly is that the Minister of Finance answers and I know that, on the last occasion when we had the Finance Committee, the Chair of the Tobago House of Assembly was not present either. I wanted to know what was the relationship of accountability in financial matters, with regard to the Tobago House of Assembly and the Parliament of this country? I just wanted some clarification. I am not challenging any decisions that have been made or any course that we are pursuing.

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The second matter is really to reinforce the question asked by the Member for Chaguanas West, when the Minister of Finance indicates that he intends to control X or Y under the budget of the House of Assembly. I find these two things quite—I am disturbed by them really.

**Hon. Imbert:** With your permission, Madam Chairman, just let me offer some elucidation. There are number of Heads where there is no Minister. You would see Judiciary, Auditor General, THA, Parliament, et cetera, and in each one of those, I think there are about 15 of them, the Minister who would respond will be me, the Minister of Finance, and that is the established procedure in the Finance Committee now for about 40 years. So that this is why I would respond on behalf of the Tobago House of Assembly. I would also respond on behalf of the Parliament, et cetera, et cetera, because only Members of Parliament can speak in this House and I am the only Member of Parliament who can speak on behalf of these entities.

With respect to that other matter about the financial accountability between THA and Ministry of Finance, I will send you a response in writing.

**Madam Chairman:** Can we now move on to Head 03: Minor Equipment Purchases? Head 04: Current Transfers and Subsides.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Under minor equipment practices there is a drop in the office equipment, significant. I just wanted to take note of it. There is some strange decreasing and if there would be explanations you do not anticipate that in 2016, you will purchasing anything at all to maintain office and so on, equipment?

**Hon. Imbert:** Okay. If you look closely, you will see the original allocation in 2015, for office equipment was $42,000. That increased to $90,000, I guess because of the exigencies of the situation in the House of Assembly. So what we have done is simply restored the original allocation in 2015/2016. So you would
Madam Chairman: Can we go on to current?

Dr. Gopeesingh: No.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Caroni East, are we in Sub-Head 04 because that is where the committee is right now?

Dr. Gopeesingh: No, no, no, Madam Chair. I needed to speak to 02, which is the—

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for—[Interuption]

Dr. Gopeesingh: Madam Chair, you skipped that. That did not—[Interuption]

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Caroni East, I called 01, 02, 03. We are now in Head 04: Current Transfers and Subsides and I would like to remind Members, there are several other opportunities that we have, as Members of Parliament, with respect to these figures. There are several other opportunities.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Would you be kind enough to allow me the privilege of just asking one question on 02?

Madam Chairman: I would really ask, please, hon. Member for Caroni East, that we deal with Sub-Head 04: Current Transfers and Subsides. I would really like us to get on with that.

Dr. Gopeesingh: So, even though I have a question on 02?

Madam Chairman: And I am also saying that there are other opportunities for your questions to be ventilated and answered.

Dr. Gopeesingh: So we could come back to the end and refer back to that?

Madam Chairman: No. You know that there are other opportunities. Sub-Head 04: Current Transfers and Subsides. Division 2, Office of the Chief Secretary, Sub-Head 01: Personnel Expenditure. And I would say that the assurance given applies here of the Minister of Finance. Sub-Head 02: Goods and
Dr. Gopeesingh: No, no, 01: Personnel Expenditure on page 13. I have a question on that. The revised estimate in 2105 is $120,553,000 and the estimate in 2016 is $12 million, a decrease of $107 million. Could we have an explanation of Personnel Expenditure coming down from $120 million? It was estimated in 2015 to be $10.9 million. It went up to $120 million. We need some explanation from the THA. Is that a typographical error or did it really go up from $10 million to $120 million? And now this year the estimate is $12 million. So if it were $120 million, what would have caused this astronomical increase in the Personnel Expenditure by $110 million in 2015 and now decreasing back again in 2016, to $12 million?

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Caroni East, is your question simply if it is a typographical error?

Dr. Gopeesingh: No, I am asking if—I would expect no typographical errors here.

Madam Chairman: All right, and, therefore I would want to suggest that if you accept it is not a typographical error, it is covered by the blanket assurance to give reasons for the increase or decrease in salary and COLA.

Dr. Gopeesingh: No, no, no, Madam Chair. We are asking that question now. The Personnel Expenditure increase is $10 million in 2015 from what was the original estimate.

Hon. Imbert: Madam Chairman, I can answer the question rather than spend an hour on this one point.

Madam Chairman: Go ahead and answer, Minister of Finance.

Mr. Imbert: Previously arrears of salary was funded under this vote. Arrears of salary are no longer funded under this vote. So what you are seeing here is pure
Dr. Gopeesingh: Minister of Finance, the $120 million that was spent in 2015, included possibly about $110 million for arrears in salaries? If you subtract the $10 million, is that a back pay and a back pay for what negotiation or where?

Dr. Moonilal: Would you pay $110 million in back pay in a year?

Hon. Imbert: We would write you.

Dr. Moonilal: What?

Dr. Gopeesingh: You would what?

Hon. Imbert: I would put it in writing.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Members, and this is the suggestion. The details that a question like this requires, it would be best answered in writing, and the assurance, just for our recollection, is not just only for reasons for increase and decrease of salary and COLA, it is also the reasons for the increase in settlement of arrears, the number of persons who were employed prior to September 07, 2105 and the number of persons employed from September 08, 2015 to October 05. That is the assurance.

Dr. Moonilal: Madam Chairman, I just want to make an observation. Now, I understand the practice, which I support; that every time we see Personnel Expenditure, salaries, the Minister has an undertaking inherent that he will give an explanation.

Madam Chairman, this is a public Standing Finance Committee exercise, in which we raise certain questions for the benefit of ourselves but also for the national community. May I say that when we come across things like these, where you have a dramatic increase from $10 million to $120 million, we just cannot simply say: okay we will explain it in writing through the normal practice, which we adopt, but we may be allowed to just elaborate for a few moments on such
matters because it is not every headline we are seeing these type of increases. This is dramatic and I would just crave your indulgence to raise the matter publicly, knowing that it is also captured by our ditto rule.

Madam Chairman: Okay, so that if I understand all you are asking is that it be expressed?

Dr. Moonilal: Expressed.

Madam Chairman: All right and that it will be covered.

Dr. Moonilal: But it is very dramatic that increase of $110 million in one year.

Madam Chairman: So we accept that this will be covered by a written answer.

Dr. Moonilal: Yes, sure.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Madam Chair, this is an essential principled issue that I want to raise and the issue is that this is a Finance Committee that is aired by television to the general public. When that answer is brought to us in four days’ time from now or three days, whatever, in writing. The general public is robbed of that information as to what the issue is, what caused this $110 million increase. So it makes the effort of the Finance Committee null and void because we could have had a closed Finance Committee meeting, the general public would not have known about it. But this went through the European Bank Development Programme to give effort to make this thing very transparent and what we are doing here is a cover up, under the auspices of that it will be given—[Interruption]

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: No, no.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Caroni East.

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

Madam Chairman: I would suggest that you use another word.

Dr. Gopeesingh: All right.
Madam Chairman: All right? Because and may I?

Dr. Gopeesingh: It is less than transparent.

Madam Chairman: May I be permitted? We run the risk, while on the one hand we may not be in a position to delve in great detail with everyone, we also run the risk of reaching the five-day limit and having not examined many. So that is the balance we are trying to take. And maybe you might want to suggest that when the answers are circulated something else be done with them, which most probably can be entertained. But I would not sit here and allow us, all the tedious work that is being done by all Members here, to be termed “a cover up”.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Well Madam Chair, this is $110 million of expenditure by the THA in one year.

Hon. Imbert: Under the UNC Government.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Caroni East—

Dr. Gopeesingh: What under the UNC?

Madam Chairman: Excuse me, Members, Members, Members. I think we have dealt extensively enough with this point. We have an assurance that the—

[Interrupt]

Dr. Gopeesingh: As a Member of this Standing Finance Committee, I am not satisfied with the explanation.

Madam Chairman: And I understand.

Dr. Gopeesingh: I want to indicate that.

Madam Chairman: I understand that, hon. Member for Caroni East. Can I move on?

Mr. Al-Rawi: Madam Chair, just in terms of guidance, I just wish to put on the record, I tracked last year’s Finance Committee with great interest and detail. The then Government responded to the vast majority of enquiries in writing. It took

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them months to produce the information. Some is as yet outstanding. This, therefore, stands as a precedent established by the last UNC administration and it was deemed apposite to the efficient operation of the Finance Committee by ruling of the Speaker then that that was in fact the process. So I am very alarmed that my learned colleagues would now wish to put on to the record this opinion and view as to something which has been established by them. I just wanted to put that on the record.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Madam Chair, this is not an establishment.

**Madam Chairman:** Members, I would really want to suggest that we move on.

**Dr. Moonilal:** We cannot respond to that observation.

**Madam Chairman:** Hon. Member for Oropouche East, this is a new Parliament. I am not going back to 2015, outside of what we are dealing with in these books. Okay? Can we move on, please?

Division 2: Office of the Chief Secretary, Sub-Head 01: Personnel Expenditure and we determined how we are dealing with that. Sub-Head 02: Goods and Services.

**Mr. Singh:** Madam Chair, I just wanted to deal on Sub-Head 1: Vacant Posts, Salaries and COLA. I just want to have an appreciation of the number of vacant posts and, if they can be listed. Because having regard to the fact that, based on the numbers given by the hon. Minister of Finance, we have something close to 12,000 persons employed by the THA. I would like to really find out of what are the vacant posts.

**Hon. Imbert:** Certainly and it is actually just over 10,000. You would get that in writing.

2.00 p.m.

**Madam Chairman:** Okay. So we are in Sub-Head 02, Good and Services, Sub-
Mr. Singh: No, no, no, no, you are moving too fast, Madam Chair. I mean, I understand your need for speed. However, I want to look at 02 Goods and Services, No. 22, Short-Term Employment.

Madam Chairman: What I would like to advise—

Mr. Singh: Page 14.

Madam Chairman: Might I just say this to cover our deliberations. If Members could really, please to facilitate us going afford, mark ahead what they would like to raise, so that when we reach to it—because once I look around and I do not see anybody, I take it as an indication that we have passed it. So, and please, again, to ensure that we move ahead I would like that we will deal with finality with one Sub-Head before we go on to another. All right? So we are at, hon. Member for Chaguanas West.

Mr. Singh: Yes, Madam Chair. Sub-Item 22 on page 14, Short-Term Employment, there is an increase of $300,000. In light of the significant employment in—the Short-Term Employment I am dealing with, could the hon. Minister indicate what is the purpose of that Short-Term Employment? And how many persons would be provided with that opportunity for Short-Term Employment?

Hon. Imbert: Certainly, you will get that in writing. However, just to clarify a point. If you look at the original allocations for 2015 it was $800,000. So we had simply restored a similar allocation in 2016, but you will get the information about the purpose and details of the employment.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Madam Chair, 16 Contract Employment. We are dealing with the Office of the Chief Secretary. Is it possible they can give some elucidation on
the issues of the contracts that will amount to $10 million which is an increase of $1.3 million, in the Office of the Chief Secretary on contract employment?

**Madam Chairman:** So that is Item 16?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** 16.

**Hon. Imbert:** Same assurance, you will get it in writing.

**Mr. Charles:** Thank you very much, Madam Chairman. Sub-Item 17, I see a continuing reduction in human resource development, with a reduction in training; $275,000. At the same time I will like to raise at 62, in the context of alleged over expenditure in past promotions and publicity, I see an increase of $2.3 million in promotions and publicity.

**Hon. Imbert:** The first one, what was the item of the first one?

**Madam Chairman:** Sub-Item 17 Training.

**Hon. Imbert:** Okay. 17, okay. If you look closely you will see the original allocation in 2015 for Training was $200,000 which was then increased to $475,000 during the year, again, because of the demands during the year. We have restored the original allocation of $200,000. And 62, again, if you look at the original allocation in 2015, it was $2.5 million, and clearly through very prudent management THA only spent $200,000. So we have restored the $2.5 million allocation.

**Mr. Charles:** But, Chairman, in 2015 there were different economic circumstances, with the current straitened circumstances in which we are, it is in my view, not fair to compare apples and oranges.

**Hon. Imbert:** Point noted.

**Mr. Singh:** Madam Chair, I am looking at Sub-Item 28 Other Contracted Services. I see that there is a decrease of $1 million. I just wanted to know in light of the fact that the audited statements of the THA dates back to 2007, and we are in
2015/2016 budget, should not an allocation be made for those services to be contracted out in order to bring the transparent, value for money approach being taken by the policy position of the Government?

**Hon. Imbert:** I would just make two points here: that again, look at the original allocation. It was $1 million. It went up to $2 million and we have put it back to the original allocation. It is the Auditor General’s responsibility to audit the books of the THA; not the THA. It does not audit itself. So that point which is a very good suggestion really requires additional funding for the Auditor General’s Office. So I would certainly take note of that.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Just following on that note from the Minister of Finance. When was the last audited accounts of the THA?

**Hon. Imbert:** I do not know. I will get that in writing for you.

**Dr. Moonilal:** You do not know.

**Mr. Singh:** Perhaps I can lend some assistance.

**Hon. Imbert:** I was not there last year.

**Mr. Singh:** I can lend some assistance. The last audited statement of the Auditor General on the THA was 2007.

**Hon. Imbert:** That is a merely anecdotal statement. I will get the information. I will provide you with it.

**Mr. Singh:** No, no, no, that is fact.

**Madam Chairman:** Members, please? The response will come in writing.

**Dr. Moonilal:** I have not finished.

**Madam Chairman:** I will come back to you.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Madam Chair, we are looking here at General Administration, Goods and Services, and you had expenses for Promotions, Publicity and Printing, and then you have information here, you have Promotions, Publicity and Printing.
So each one of the areas it would seem has a line item for Promotions, Publicity and Printing.

Information has a line item, No. 62 on page 15 which we are dealing with of $4.5 million and similarly there was one in 62, under General Administration for promotions/publicity for $2.5 million. So it would seem as though each one of the various Sub-Heads carrying a promotions, publicity and advertising. Because when we look at page 14 and Item No. 62, we have $2.5 million there for General Administration, and then No. 62 again, under Information, which is $4.5 million. So where are we, each department having its own promotions, publicity and advertising?

**Hon. Imbert:** Yes. If you look in the estimates, you will see you approved that same procedure last year; for 2015. Look at what you did last year, it was same thing.

**Madam Chairman:** Hon. Minister of Finance, is the response that this is the standard way that the estimates—

**Hon. Imbert:** Yes Ma’am.

**Madam Chairman:** Can we move on? [Crosstalk]

**Dr. Moonilal:** Could the Minister, if he would stop his crosstalk. Could the Minister also undertake to give us an explanation as to the Office of Chief Secretary in 2016 is about to spend $4.5 million on promotions, publicity and printing—

**Hon. Imbert:** Tell me what line you think that is?

**Dr. Moonilal:**—that is the Office of the Chief Secretary.

**Hon. Imbert:** What line item, please?

**Dr. Moonilal:** 62, page 15. I would just like to have an idea of the Office of the Chief Secretary, what they do for Promotions, Publicity and Printing that would
Hon. Imbert: No, but that is the same point brought up by your hon. colleague, that there is a line item for promotions and publicity under Information, and it is all the Office of the Chief Secretary. There is a line item—[Crosstalk]—Madam Chairman, could I answer without a barrage of crosstalk? There is a line item on page 15 for promotions and publicity, and there is also a line term on page 14 for promotions and publicity. If you wish to know why that is so, and what it is for, I will provide that answer in writing.

Madam Chairman: Okay. Can we, therefore, go on to Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases? Moving on the Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies; Division 03.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Which page are you on now?

Madam Chairman: We are starting on page 17, that is where the Minor Equipment and Purchases—we have passed that, and we are now going to Current Transfers and Subsidies, which starts on page 18. And we are now moving to Division 03, Finance and Enterprise Development, which starts on page 20, Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure. Again, we remind the hon. Minister of Finance of his assurance.

Hon. Imbert: Actually, Madam Chairman, I think the whole thing was captured at the front, but I will certainly check that first, and make sure that that is so. If it is now, we will do it Item by Item, Sub-Head by Sub-Head.

Madam Chairman: Thank you very much. Can we therefore now go on to Head 02, Goods and Services which is at page 21? Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, which is at page 28.

Dr. Gopeesingh: You are moving from 21 to 28, Madam Chair?

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Caroni East, you know, I guess maybe
we might be all having a little challenge with the paper. I am calling the Sub-Heads. Some Sub-Heads take up half a page, some take up more, and that is why I asked if Members can flag their issues ahead, which will allow us to move with a little—

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** But with that alacrity from 21 to 28, Madam Chair?

*Crosstalk*

**Madam Chairman:** Please Members, we are going by the Sub-Heads and not page by page. So therefore, Member for Caroni East, if you had an issue at page 26, I will take it.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Okay.

**Mr. Charles:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Question on page 25.

**Madam Chairman:** We are at Minor—

**Mr. Charles:** We passed there, but you see there was a jump.

**Madam Chairman:** Excuse me, we are at Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases.

**Mr. Charles:** Okay.

**Madam Chairman:** Okay? Which is at page 28. It begins, and maybe I am misleading by saying “which is” and which I should say “which begins”. Can we then go on to Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies which begins at page 31?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Madam Chair, 009, Other Transfers, No. 16, Studley Park Escrow Account. An escrow account, the revised estimate—first of all, what is that escrow account about; Studley Park Escrow Account of 20—revised estimate in 2015 was $8.4 million; an estimate for 2016, an increase of $11.578 million. Could we get an understanding of what that the Studley Park account is about?

**Hon. Imbert:** We will try and find out in the next couple minutes. It may very
well be a loan. There was a loan from one of the commercials banks. We will find out for you and if we cannot find out in the next couple minutes, you will get it in writing.

**Madam Chairman:** So the response to this is, deferred.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** No, Madam Chair, I have another question. Is that part of the escrow account that the THA has in its bank from year to year that they draw down money from, and they do not account to the national Parliament? We understand that there are millions of dollars in an escrow account that the THA has which they do not account to Parliament for, for a number of years.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Caroni East, if we defer the question I am sure the hon. Minister as he said will come back with the answer. If not, we will get it in writing. Anything else on—

**Dr. Moonilal:** Thank you very much, Madam Chairman. Just a simple question, and they can supply the answer at a later time. The Eco Industrial Company of Tobago, could I have just a listing of the Members, the directors of the company?

**Hon. Imbert:** We will get that for you in writing.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Sure. Thank you.

**Mr. Singh:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I am just interested in Item 15, the Interest on Project Financing Repayment, what are those projects and what is the interest associated with those projects?

**Hon. Imbert:** You will get that in writing. I cannot give you that now.

**Madam Chairman:** Okay. Can we move on?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Everything is in writing?

**Madam Chairman:** Hon. Member for Caroni East, I really do not think that is a fair answer. I believe we got some answers yesterday and today.

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2.15 p.m.

**Dr. Moonilal:** With a second company, a Fishing Processing Company of Tobago, again, if I could just have the membership of this company directors and what it was established for. Also that would hold for the Eco Industrial Company of Tobago as well, what it was established for and who are the directors of the company.

**Hon. Imbert:** Well, I think your colleague asked for the directors, so I would do that in both cases. You want the purpose and the directors.

**Mr. Singh:** Thank you, Madam Chair. The Milford Road Esplanade, I know that is a very good project, but I saw there is a reduction in the allocation. Is there a reason why? Is it complete?

**Hon. Imbert:** It is almost finished.

**Madam Chairman:** Can we move on, Division 05—Tourism and Transportation. We are commencing at page 32.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** We are with you, Madam Chair.

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

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** No, no, I said we are with you.

**Madam Chairman:** You are with me? Okay. So can we go to Sub-Head 01, which is Personnel Expenditure, and bind the hon. Minister of Finance to his assurance.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** The increase of 1.5.

**Madam Chairman:** Yes. Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, page 33. It really starts at page 32.

**Dr. Moonilal:** It starts there but, Madam Chair, again, because as you clearly said, they would start but it takes several pages, and for interest of time, you are not going to go page by page.
Madam Chairman: Unless you direct me to a page.

Dr. Moonilal: Yeah, this is what I prefer to do, because it may well be I would ask a question and somebody will take you back, but I want to ask fast before you move on, because you are not going by page.

Madam Chairman: What I would say, hon. Member for Oropouche East, once it is within the Head that we are dealing with.

Dr. Moonilal: Then I ask.

Madam Chairman: Yes.

Dr. Moonilal: Okay. I am on page 34. There is a significant drop over the years here and it is very significant from 2014, Promotions, Publicity and Printing. There is a decrease of effectively $8.2 million. Now, it appears clearly, Madam Chairman, that 2015 was a very special year for the Tobago House of Assembly, because all the estimates went up, and then were revised down for 2016. So in 2015 you are seeing $26 million for what is called Promotion, Publicity and Printing. There may have been a lot of that in 2015, but this has been curtailed by $8.2 million. Could I have some explanation as to why this cut in Promotions, Publicity and Printing or why such a huge sum in the first place in 2015?

Hon. Imbert: Firstly, if you go back to the 2015 original estimate, it was $18 million, so you have simply restored the original estimate. Secondly, this is the Tourism Division of the Tobago House of Assembly, and if you do visit Tobago from time to time you would be aware that Tobago is a tourism economy and, therefore, Promotions, Publicity and Printing would have fundamental importance to the development of the Tobago economy and for the functioning of this division. That is why there is a substantial allocation for the Tourism Division.

Dr. Moonilal: I am asking why the decrease. Is it that you are not going to do—
Hon. Imbert: It is not a decrease. If you look at the 2015 estimates, the original allocation was $18 million and we have simply restored it. As you know Minister, former Minister, the Tobago House of Assembly gets its funds en bloc and it has the authority with the approval of the appropriate authority to move funds around. So if the Tobago House of Assembly in its wisdom felt because of airlines pulling out or whatever reason that they wanted to spend more money on promotion of tourism in 2015, I do not think we should begrudge them that. We have simply restored the original allocation, and if during the year the THA is of the view that they wish to spend more money on promotion, they would simply make the appropriate application to the appropriate authority which would be considered favourably.

Dr. Moonilal: Madam Chairman, just following up on it.

Madam Chairman: I know, but I believe we should lend way to the hon. Member for Naparima.

Dr. Moonilal: We would lose the point at hand that is hard to come back to.

Madam Chairman: Please.

Mr. Charles: Thank you very much, Madam Chairman. I am looking at Item 17 on page 35, Tourism and Transport, and I see again a continuing decrease in the allocation for training. I have learnt that the human resource development and human resources are the most critical resource that a nation could have. Is it possible we could get a sense of what the human resource development policy is in the THA so that we could contextualize the continuous decrease in allocation after allocation?

Hon. Imbert: The first answer to the second question is yes, and to correct the record there has not been a continuous decrease. Look at the 2014 expenditure. It was $510,000 and the allocation for 2016 is $600,000, so it is only in 2015 that
there was an increase. But if you look at it over the years, the 2016 allocation is, in fact, more than the 2014 allocation. I would get an answer to your question about the policy and we will put that in writing.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Madam Chairman, I was just following up on that same matter. You see, I took note that in 2014 the actual was about $22 million and it is now down to $18 million which is $4 million less—62 page 34. I took note that even the $18 million provided for now is less than the $22 million used in 2014. What would be the reason for that? Having said that, I leave it there.

**Hon. Imbert:** Are you asking the question?

**Dr. Moonilal:** I asked you: what was the reason why you drop this so suddenly?

**Hon. Imbert:** I am going to answer you. Do not ask a question and run.

**Madam Chairman:** Hon. Members, please. Do you have an answer, Minister of Finance?

**Hon. Imbert:** Yes, I have an answer and would really prefer if Members did not ask and answer questions themselves. I made the point that the original allocation in 2015 was $18 million. The THA decided that because of the demands being placed on tourism to increase the funding of that Item from $18 million to $26 million. We have restored the original allocation of $18 million and I said that if the THA is of the view that they need to spend more money promoting tourism in 2016, I will consider favourably a request from them to move funds around to increase that item in the same way that they did in 2015. Now, I cannot get clearer than that.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** I know you are trying to expedite this, Madam Chair, if my colleagues do not have any questions on page 35, I would move to page 36.

**Madam Chairman:** I really understand you are assisting me, I appreciate, in us
moving forward. So we are now on Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases. Yes, hon. Member for Caroni East.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** May I draw your attention to 009, Other Transfers, No. 13, Rolling Three-Year Tourism Plan.

**Madam Chairman:** So, there are no questions on Head 03, Minor Equipment and, therefore, we are on Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies. That is where you are hon. Member.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Yes. At Sub-Head 009, Other Transfers and Sub-Item 13, it is a Rolling Three-Year Tourism Plan. Of course, which is $100 million now. Well, of course, 2015 estimate was $100 million which I do not have any difficulty, but you are now putting back the $37 million addition. You have spent $62 million last year to the THA in the revised estimates, and it is back to $100 million. Just kindly give us a little explanation of your rationale for your three-year tourism plan.

Can I link a question on Item 17 which is the Tobago Tourism Festival, an expenditure estimate of $10 million? Is that part of the — what does the three-year tourism plan and how this item 17 links with that? Is it a plan that you are spending $100 million on or there are areas within the plan that you are implementing?

**Hon. Imbert:** I am advised, I really hate that phrase, but I am advised that the tourism plan includes the relationship between the THA and the airlines where you have to pay the airlines for airlift among other things, because if you do not have airlift well, of course, you will have no tourism. The tourism festivals are things like the Jazz Festival and so on. So, there would be a link, of course, that if you are trying to get tourists to come to Tobago, obviously you would have to have events on the island in addition to the natural fauna and flora and the beach and that sort of thing. You would also have events that you would want to attract the tourist to. So, there is a link of some kind, but this plan includes the payment for airlift.
Dr. Gopeesingh: Can we get an idea? Your colleague is there from Tobago. How much we paid out of that $100 million for airline?

Hon. Imbert: No problem, you will get that in writing.

Dr. Gopeesingh: You do not have that answer now.

Hon. Imbert: No.

Dr. Moonilal: Again, I just want to ask the question as it relates to page 36. I am at 17, Tobago Tourism Festivals. In 2014, $12.7 million spent; estimate 2015, $10 million, but the revised estimate was $18 million an $8 million increase over the provision in the estimates, but it returns now to $10 million. Is there a reduction in the amount of festivals with the scope of these festivals that were very big in 2015, but expected to be much smaller in scope in 2016?

Hon. Imbert: Madam Chairman, I am going to ask for your— I do not know what word to use—indulgence. The Member keeps asking the same question over and over in a different way, and the answer is the same. If you look at the original allocation for 2015, it was $10 million, so we have simply restored the original allocation for 2015 in 2016. If the THA, in consideration of all its needs and requirements is of the view that it needs to spend more money on festivals in 2016, then it will move funds around and make the appropriate adjustments with the approval of the relevant authority.

Dr. Moonilal: We know all of that, but why did it increase, we do not know.

Hon. Imbert: I am speaking. We are not prejudging.

Dr. Moonilal: Well just say you do not know.

Hon. Imbert: Madam Speaker, could I speak without being interrupted by the hon. Member? We are not prejudging what they wish to do, we are restoring the allocation of 2015. If they decide they wish to increase it, there is a procedure for
that. Please do not ask me the same question over and over.

**Madam Chairman:** Hon. Minister of Finance. [Crosstalk] One minute. Do I understand the information to be that there is a blanket figure given to the THA? It is allocated among different Heads and Sub-Heads and the THA by their constituent statute and documents has the ability to move this sum, this blanket sum, through the various Sub-Heads as at which and when they require.

**Hon. Imbert:** With the approval of the appropriate authority.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Madam Chairman, let me ask you the question. Why did it go up by $8 million revised in 2015? That is the question. I know that process, if they want they get and so on. My question is: why did it go up to 18 from $10 million?

**Madam Chairman:** Can I therefore suggest that we get that answer in writing. I do not believe that the Minister of Finance would be in a position to answer.

**Dr. Moonilal:** I have no problem.

**Hon. Imbert:** I would most certainly provide the answer, but the point is that is what was required.

**Dr. Khan:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I just would like to ask the Minister of Finance and the person who is from the Tobago House of Assembly with him, you have the Rolling Three-Year Tourism Plan. With the Rolling Three-Year Tourism Plan, you have an item on 2014, 2015 and we are now in 2016. Is that the end of the plan, because that is three years? And two, okay, could you enumerate exactly what this plan does and where? You said airlift is one and I cannot see a tourism plan being an airlift plan, but I would like you to enumerate what exactly this plan does and how much is given to each one, because this is the third year we are going into and we have a three-year tourism plan, so this is the end of the year, end of the plan.

**Hon. Imbert:** The word “rolling” should give you an indication that it keeps
rolling so that they develop three-year plans on a rolling basis. It is just like the medium-term economic framework for Trinidad and Tobago. It keeps rolling over every three years, every five years. So, it is a rolling plan and with respect to the details, I would provide that in writing.

Dr. Gopeesingh: So there would be a plan for 2017 as well, if it is a three-year?

Hon. Imbert: It would keep on rolling. It would roll.

Madam Chairman: Can we therefore, Members, go on to Division 06—Education Youth Affairs and Sports, Sub-Head 01. Again, the Government assurance would bind the hon. Minister of Finance. Sub-Head 02.

2.30 p.m.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Madam Chair, Primary, Secondary and Vocational Education on page 37, you have—well, I believe this might be for teachers, and so on, of $96 million in 2015, and in 2016 it is $115 million, which is an increase of $18.5 million.

Madam Chairman: Are we on Item 001?

Dr. Gopeesingh: You are under Education, Youth Affairs and Sports,

Hon. Imbert: What page?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Page 37.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member, the point we had made—

Dr. Gopeesingh: Madam Chairman, I am looking at this for over five minutes now waiting for this, to ask this.

Madam Chairman: But the point I had made is that when it came to Sub-Head 01—

Dr. Gopeesingh: You are swift like lightening.

Madam Chairman: You know, we want this to be at least an adequately
meaningful exercise, all right? So, could we just go on and stick to Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, and certainly Member for Caroni East, I will certainly give you every opportunity within the Sub-Head.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Madam Chair, you went very fast and I looking at this for the last five minutes and I am waiting for my time to ask it, and you just skipped and it gone.

**Madam Chairman:** One minute please, hon. Minister of Finance, the Standing Orders are in charge here and I administer them. All right. Okay—

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** The Speaker is the boss.

**Madam Chairman:** No, there is no boss here.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** The Speaker is in charge.

**Madam Chairman:** One minute, please, Members—Members, please, I need no one’s protection, we are at Sub-Head 02, Division 06.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Which page you are on now?

**Dr. Moonilal:** Page 41.

**Madam Chairman:** Thank you very much. Hon. Member for Oropouche East, thank you very much. I call on the hon. Member for St. Augustine.

**Mr. Ramadhar:** Madam Chair, repeatedly, we have had the issue of matters moving ahead when Members are still on another page, and you did make the profoundly correct statement that we need to, you know, do this thing right, would it be too much to ask then that as you proceed to go to another Sub-Head, you say—if it could be just announced that we are now moving on to page so and so, are there any other questions before we do so. I would be most grateful if you could do that. Thank you very much.

**Madam Chairman:** That is a small indulgence, I can. All right, so we are at page 41, Sub-Head 02, hon. Member for Chaguanas East.

**UNREVISED**
Mr. Karim: On page 41, Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, I noticed that there is a decrease in terms of Primary, Secondary and Vocational Education of $2.4 million, would the hon. Minister be kind enough to let us have the details of that?

Hon. Imbert: What is the line item, please?

Mr. Karim: It is Goods and Services, Sub-Head 02, page 41, the top. The heading is Goods and Services, Primary, Secondary and Vocational Education. I just wanted to get an idea as to what the $2.4 million decrease is by the sectors in terms of the primary, the secondary and the vocational so we would be able to see where that cut was.

Madam Chairman: That would be given in writing? [Crosstalk] One minute, please, that would be given in writing by the hon. Minister of Finance. Hon. Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Does that include the $40 million for contract employment?—that $60-something million there. Does that include the item of contract employment of $40 million?

Hon. Imbert: What item are you referring to?

Dr. Gopeesingh: There is an item of contract employment for Primary, Secondary—

Hon. Imbert: What page?

Mr. Karim: Page 41.

Dr. Gopeesingh:—I am not going back, but—

Hon. Imbert: No, well if it is not on this page I cannot answer you.

Dr. Gopeesingh:—number 16 under page 40 has Contract Employment of—

Madam Chairman: One minute, may I assist. I believe the hon. Member is on page 40, it is not that the hon. Member has gone back. He is still within the Sub-Head and he is asking, specifically, if the decrease includes the calculation for Item
Dr. Gopeesingh: Thank you, Madam Chair. Yeah.

Madam Chairman: If I may assist, though, I would think that the response to be given in writing to the Member for Chaguanas East will deal with that issue because the Member for Chaguanas East was dealing with the whole bulk. Yes?

Hon. Imbert: Yes, Madam Speaker, but one of the difficulties I am having, the Members opposite make statements which are inaccurate and then you are being asked to answer and inaccurate question. If you look at Item 16 there is no decrease.

Dr. Gopeesingh: I did not ask about a decrease. Does it include—the $64 million here—does it include the $40 million for contract employment?

Hon. Imbert: And that too I cannot understand the question, because if there is an item here and there is another item, they are two different items.

Madam Chairman: Maybe if I could assist, hon. Member for Caroni East, at the foot of page 40, I think, are the total figures which will include your Item 16—

Hon. Imbert: It is a running total—

Madam Chairman: One minute, please, Minister of Finance.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Okay, Madam Chair, you answered it and he could not answer it.

Hon. Imbert: It is obvious.

Madam Chairman: Okay, I think once we could assist each other we move on.

Hon. Member for Naparima.

Mr. Charles: Madam Chairman—

Hon. Imbert: If I said it was obvious you would say I rude.

Madam Chairman: Excuse me, please.

Mr. Charles:—are we still within Education, Youth Affairs and Sports, and if
so can I ask a question on page 38?

Madam Chairman: And may I therefore just elucidate, we are within Division 06 and we are at Sub-Head 02, and, therefore, I will entertain any question within Sub-Head 02, regardless of what page it is on once it is in Sub-Head 02, and I believe it starts on page 39.

Mr. Charles: Okay.

Madam Chairman: Okay? Thank you. If I may borrow from the guidance of the hon. Member for St. Augustine, and as we are moving on can we say that Sub-Head 02 is now exhausted and we now go to Sub-Head—

Dr. Gopeesingh: Madam Chairman, I crave your indulgence, under Library Services, with the new Tobago library, the new Scarborough Library, a magnificent library completed after so many years, is there an allocation inside this budget that deals with the management and the care and employment for that library?—because I see here only $5.1 million for Library Services, and I will carry it forward, it gone to 6.2. Now, where is the Tobago library—the nice new one—where is that included in the budgetary estimate?

Hon. Imbert: What are you asking about?—Travelling and Subsistence, Uniforms, Electricity?

Dr. Gopeesingh: No, no, no the 6.1. If that 6.1 incorporates all the library services, because there are smaller libraries, there are libraries based in schools, there are smaller libraries in areas, but the Scarborough library is a big issue and I am not seeing any sort of funding looking as though it could support that Scarborough library in Tobago.

Hon. Imbert: The reason why I asked the question, we are on Goods and Services. Are you asking about that or staff?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Both.
Hon. Imbert: You cannot ask about staff under Goods and Services.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Well, tell us about the goods then, the goods for the Scarborough Library.

Hon. Imbert: With respect to Goods and Services, the answer is yes.

Dr. Gopeesingh: It includes it?

Hon. Imbert: Well you asked the question, the answer is, yes.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Where? I am looking for it but I cannot find it. If you could help me to find it.

Dr. Moonilal: He cannot find it either.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Minister of Finance, could we just defer and you will—

Hon. Imbert: What is that?

Madam Chairman: To the response.

Hon. Imbert: I answered him. He asked me whether the Scarborough Library was included under this Sub-Head and I have said, yes. I have answered him.

Dr. Gopeesingh: How much? You are not telling us where.

Hon. Imbert: It is a global figure. It is a figure for library services, and you asked, whether within that global figure, was the Scarborough Library included in the global figure, and I said, yes. I have said yes four times.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Repairs and Maintenance—

Madam Chairman: One minute, please, Member for Caroni East. Hon. Minister of Finance, are you finished in your response. Yes, hon. Member—

Dr. Gopeesingh: I want to take him up on that, the repairs and maintenance for buildings is only $75,000, so that—

Madam Chairman: You are where? Where are you? What item?

Dr. Gopeesingh: No. 21, under Library Services, it is $75,000 for repairs and
maintenance for buildings, so all the buildings in Tobago, all the libraries, all the school libraries, all the Scarborough new libraries, for maintenance of that is $75,000? That is hardly likely—

**Hon. Imbert:** Is it a question or a statement?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** I am asking you.

**Hon. Imbert:** Are you finished?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Yeah.

**Hon. Imbert:** Other funding is provided under the Development Programme.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** All right, so you will draw our attention to that when the time comes and when we are looking at development.

**Hon. Imbert:** I am not going to draw your attention to that at all, you will draw my attention to it.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** I will remember it. [*Crosstalk*]

**Madam Chairman:** Excuse me, we are moving on to Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, page 45—it commences at page 45. Can we therefore move on to Sub-Head 04? Sub-Head 04—we are at Sub-Head 04, which commences at page 46.

**Mr. Charles:** My question is on page 47—thank you very much, Madam Chair—in the context of the global perspective that early childhood care is significant in ensuring an equality in society so that nobody has a head start over anyone else, I am seeing a half a million reduction, that is Item 09 on page 47, a half a million reduction in the allocation to the Early Childhood Care.

**Madam Chairman:** That is Special Education Resources Programme?

**Mr. Charles:** That is under Households—yes. Early Childhood Care, and the question is just the explanation for the reduction of $500,000.

**Madam Chairman:** That is Item 09 under Sub-Head 007.
Mr. Charles: Oh, there is an increase. Okay sorry, they are on the line.

Mr. Karim: Madam Chairperson—

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Chaguanas East.

Mr. Karim: Under Sub-Head 006, Educational Institutions, Item 03 there is an increase of $3 million, might we be able to get some details as to what the $3 million involves?

Hon. Imbert: It is for trade centres but you will get more information if you wish. We will get the information.

Mr. Karim: Yeah. Similarly, Madam Chairperson, Item 21, Tobago Science, Technology and Tertiary Education has increased by $8.5 million, may we also have some details of those?

Hon. Imbert: Certainly, we intend—

Madam Chairman: So that will also be in writing?

Hon. Imbert: Yeah, but I just want to give a verbal preliminary elucidation, that is for once and for all to reverse the discrimination of the previous government to allow a proper tertiary institute in Tobago under this PNM administration, something you refused to do.

Mr. Karim: Madam Chairperson, can we also have that in writing?

Madam Chairman: Yes, I believe—

Mr. Karim: That statement is now recorded?

Hon. Imbert: Yeah, you will get that statement—

Mr. Karim: We will respond to it accordingly.

Hon. Imbert: You will get that statement in writing too.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Naparima.

Mr. Charles: Madam Chair, I refer to my earlier question and I was correct, in that the allocation for Early Childhood Care was reduced by half a million dollars,
Madam Chairman: All right. Hon. Minister of Finance, we are at Sub-Head 007, Households, Item 09. That is where I am?

Mr. Charles: Yes. And there is a decrease and I am asking for an explanation for this decrease in the context of the fact that early childhood care is seen as pivotal to the development of an egalitarian society.

Hon. Imbert: Certainly. If you look at the 2014 allocation you would see $108,000, the original 2015 estimate was $2.5 million, the revised estimate was $1.5 million; we have given them an allocation in this fiscal of $1 million, and I am certain that if the THA requires more funding it will be approved.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Oropouche East.

Dr. Moonilal: I would ask a question on Sub-Head 007 on the School Feeding Programme; that has gone up by 100 per cent from 2014 to 2016, what accounts for the increase by 100 per cent in the School Feeding Programme? Is it more children, more schools, more—

2.45 p.m.

Hon. Imbert: I am told the preliminary answer is more schools have been brought into the system, but you will get it in writing. Feeding more children.

Miss Ramdial: Thank you, Madam Chair, the Member for Oropouche East asked the question, so thanks.

Madam Chairman: Moving on to Division 07, Community Development and Culture, which commences at page 49. Sub-Head 01, which is Personnel Expenditure. Can I ask if the details can be dealt with, with the Government’s assurance? Can we go on to Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, which starts on page 50?

Dr. Moonilal: Two matters I want to raise, Madam Chairman, under 02, Goods
and Services, page 51 I am on; 08 Rent/Lease. There is an increase in Office Accommodation and Storage. Again, from 2014 to 2016, 100 per cent increase. I wanted to get some explanation as to why 100 per cent increase between 2014 and 2016, for Office Accommodation and Storage. If I could just get a breakdown in writing at a later time, of what constitutes contract employment, the $6 million figure for this one division, Community Development and Culture—the list of persons on contract employment at this division, contract employment, $6 million.

Hon. Imbert: Those two Items the explanations will be given to you in writing.

Dr. Moonilal: For both questions?

Hon. Imbert: I just said that.

Dr. Gopeesingh: I just want him to include the contract employment for Culture of $3 million as well. That is item 003 on page 51. There is a slight increase of $800,000.

Madam Chairman: Can we, therefore, go on to Sub-Head 03 which begins at page 52? Can we, therefore, move on to Division 08, Infrastructure and Public Utilities? Sorry, I did not say Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies, which is at page 53.

Dr. Gopeesingh: And 54.

Madam Chairman: Therefore, can we go on to Division 08 which is infrastructure.

Dr. Rambachan: Madam Chairman, Assistance to Community Organizations, $1.5 million, that is 47—04, 07 Current Transfers and Subsidies.

Madam Chairman: We are on page 53.

Dr. Rambachan: Can we get a list of those organizations who get this assistance, those community organizations, and the amounts given out to them?

Madam Chairman: Could we have that in writing?
Dr. Rambachan: Also 17; I would like to get an understanding of what is the Special Community Programme that is being spoken of here, for which $2 million is being allocated with an increase of $500,000 for this year.

Hon. Imbert: You will certainly get details of that, but I just want to point out that the allocation is identical to the original allocation for 2015.

Madam Chairman: And it will be supplied in writing?

Hon. Imbert: Yes.

Dr. Gopeesingh: 02, same page 55.

Madam Chairman: So we have gone on to Division 08, Infrastructure and Public Utilities, which is at page 55.

Dr. Gopeesingh: 002, Maintenance of Roads, there is an increase of $21 million for wages and cost of living allowance, from $178 million to $200 million for maintenance of roads. That is wages. I hope the hon. Minister in his acceptance that he would provide the information. Is it that we are doing more roads and you need more personnel or the $21 million increase, does that include arrears from last year?

Hon. Imbert: My undertaking is for the overall Head of Personnel Expenditure which is a total of $325 million, so I will explain everything.

Dr. Gopeesingh: So that will be subsumed there?

Hon. Imbert: It is subsumed there.

Madam Chairman: Goods and Services, Sub-Head 02.

Dr. Moonilal: I am at page 58, Item 23. Madam, just bear with me here, because again I do not know if the figures are right. In 2014, the actual expenditure here is $360,000; an estimate in 2015 for $1 million, but in 2015 the revised estimates for fees was $17.8 million, where the estimate was $1 million. It now returns to the original 2015 estimate of $1 million, with a decrease therefore of
$16.8 million. That $16.8 million is out of that $20 million decrease. I am very curious to know why this revised itself from $1 million to almost $18 million in 2015. What in fees in 2015 you had to pay that was $18 million higher than your estimate, for one Division of Infrastructure and Public Utilities? What was it paid for? Clearly it is a one-off payment, fees, and then you return to the original $1 million. I will like to get an explanation, thank you.

Hon. Imbert: We are looking at the 2016 estimates, so if you want to know what you did in 2015, I am not sure I can assist you.

Dr. Moonilal: I want to know what the THA did in 2015, what the PNM THA did.

Hon. Imbert: We are looking at the 2016 estimates.

Madam Chairman: Minister of Finance, could that be provided in writing?

Hon. Imbert: How far are we going back? We have 2014 in this book too, you know.

Madam Chairman: I think they just asked for 2015.

Hon. Imbert: I would see if I could get the information in writing, but you should know, you paid it.

Dr. Moonilal: I was there in the THA?

Madam Chairman: Members, Members, let us proceed.

Dr. Gopeesingh: 002, Maintenance of Roads. You have Rent/Lease of Vehicles and Equipment. Is it possible the Minister could indicate whether that is—

Madam Chairman: You are at 09?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Yes, 09 and then on 12, a slight increase for materials and supplies. That is the budget of $44 million for Maintenance of Roads? Is it the lease of vehicles is $16 million? Well, of course, material and supply, $25 million,
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I have no difficulty with that. You leased vehicles for the Maintenance of Roads, yes?

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

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Is that a lease of vehicles, rent of vehicles that is coming up to the $16 million?

**Hon. Imbert:** I am struggling with the question, because it says Rent/Lease Vehicles and Equipment. So you are asking me—you want to know if it is a typographical error?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** No, I want to follow up—have you done a cost analysis to determine whether you purchase new vehicles as against renting and leasing, which is more cost effective, whether purchase of new vehicles, sale of old ones; whether you continue to lease or you could have a mix of rental, leasing and new vehicles? That is the question, which one is more cost effective?

**Hon. Imbert:** Certainly going forward for 2016, I will ask the THA to do that.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Madam Chairperson, I know it has been asked over and over, this matter of contract employment, and under almost every Head there are large amounts for contract employment, and the standard being given is, “We will provide an explanation”. But I would like to ask something: you have wages and salaries and so on, but on top and above that you have all this contract employment. Why is it necessary to have this amount of contract employment in the Tobago House of Assembly?

**Madam Chairman:** I will ask, Member for Tabaquite, if maybe you could point the hon. Minister to a particular Item, it might help.

**Dr. Rambachan:** I am pointing in this case to 02, Goods and Services, page 58 No. 16. I have been looking at the figures as we went along this afternoon, and there were several. Under every one there is Contract Employment, and there are
large amounts. I see, for example, in 2015, while we had estimated $7 million, it went up to $10.970 million, and in 2014 I do not know what the estimate was, but it was $12,042,000. So why is it, given that you have all the Salaries and Wages and so on, and you have an establishment, what is the need for this level of Contract Employment? And it is consistent, Minister, under every Head.

**Hon. Imbert:** I will get a response—[ Interruption] Member for Tabaquite, hello. I will get an answer for you with respect to the need for Contract Employment, but I see no difference between this and what the UNC Government did in 2015 in Trinidad. You had thousands of contract employees; maybe you could tell us why.

**Madam Chairman:** May I just ask for clarification, hon. Minister of Finance, is this a decrease here in this figure? Are we looking at the same figure?

**Hon. Imbert:** No, what has happened is that we have reverted to the original allocation for 2015. If you look at 16, on page 58, 02, 16, you would see the original estimate was $7 million, it went up to 10.97—they must have felt the need to hire some people on contract; more people than originally anticipated. We have put it back at $7 million, so that if during the year the THA is of the view they need to supplement this vote, they will do so using the established procedures.

**Dr. Moonilal:** I just wanted to ask the question, they could provide in writing—[ Interruption—cell phone rings]

**Madam Chairman:** Members, may I just remind about the protocols with our devices, please.

**Dr. Moonilal:** That awful music just distracted me.

**Madam Chairman:** I am sure your attention span is greater than that.

**Dr. Moonilal:** The fees—Madam Chairman, fees as defined in the classification of expenditure for Sub-Items Goods and Services, Legal Fees,
Appropriation (Financial Year 2016) Bill, 2015

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Antivirus Agreement, Slaughtering Fees, Jury Fees, the prison chaplain and so on. I would really like to get a breakdown of how $18 million is spent by a Division of Infrastructure and Public Utilities at page $58—$18 million spent by the a Division of Infrastructure and Public Utilities, on Legal Fees, Antivirus Agreements, Slaughtering and Funeral Expenses. I want that in some detail, please; a breakdown of fees paid and to whom; how much and to whom.

Hon. Imbert: There should be a prohibition on asking the same question twice. You already asked me this and I already said I would give you a breakdown of these fees. You have forgotten that. Please do not ask me the same question twice.

Madam Chairman: That is Item 23?

Dr. Moonilal: Item 23, we want the breakdown.

Madam Chairman: Minister of Finance, it might be difficult for us to keep track, because there are so many things, but I believe, hon. Member for Oropouche East, a question was asked on Item 23.

Dr. Moonilal: I did not get the answer.

Hon. Imbert: Of course I did.

Dr. Moonilal: In his arrogant way.

Hon. Imbert: Madam Chairman, I would ask him to withdraw that. What is this thing about arrogance? “Who more arrogant than you.” [Crosstalk]

Madam Chairman: Members, Members, Members! Can we proceed? I would like us really to proceed on the note we left off on yesterday. [Crosstalk] Minister of Finance, I am hearing, and I think we are all above being provoked. We are all above that. Let us move on, please.

We are at page 61, Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases. There being no questions, I move on to Sub-Head 04, which is Current Transfers and Subsidies, and it begins at page 62. There being no questions, I move on to Division 09,

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Agriculture, Marine Affairs, Marketing and the Environment, Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure. I again bind the hon. Minister of Finance to the assurance that he had given.

Page 65, Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, it begins there.

3.00 p.m.

Dr. Rambachan: Madam Chairman, again, Contract Employment. I flag it again, No. 16 under Good and Services $5 million, you know, under everyone in addition to the normal wages and salaries and so on we keep seeing Contract Employment, Contract Employment, Contract Employment. I think that the public deserves some understanding. I am not asking you for details, but I am asking you for some understanding.

Hon. Imbert: Yes. You will get it and I think the public deserves an explanation as to why you approved $6.8 million for this Head in 2014 as well.

Madam Chairman: So that this explanation will be given in writing?

Hon. Imbert: Yes.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Naparima.

Mr. Charles: Thank you very much. I refer to Item 27, Official Overseas Travel. I would have thought that Official Overseas Travel would not be a priority in the context of our circumstances. Sorry. Sorry. So could I just get an explanation for the increase in Official Overseas Travel?

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Naparima, I believe that we have had an explanation for this in all the other preceding Sub-Heads with respect to their being given a figure in 2016 that was representative of the same figure that was given in 2015, to give the Tobago House of Assembly the flexibility to move its big allocation to various areas as it sees fit providing it gets the necessary authority. I believe that was given in each division Sub-Head. I expect that—

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Hon. Imbert: And I also want to make the point, Madam Chairman, with your permission, that the statement I made with respect to Overseas Travel on the other Sub-Head, that we gave them the same allocation, but we will speak to them during the year and ask them to see what they can do to conserve expenditure will apply to every single time you see Overseas Travel. So what I said before applies throughout. So there is no need to ask me every time you see Overseas Travel, what is going on? It is the same situation.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Minister of Finance, I guess you can say the same explanation applies. All right? Because we are doing lots of things and some of us may not have the recording devise to assist us. Okay? We are in the Item of Minor Equipment Purchases which is on page 69, Sub-Head 03. And therefore can we go on to Sub-Head 04 Current Transfers and Subsidies which begins on page 70? Can we therefore go onto Division 10 which commences on page 72 Health and Social Services; Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure; Sub-Head 02? And I repeat, hon. Minister of Finance is bound by the undertaking, and we are in Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services. Hon. Member for Fyzabad.

Dr. Bodo: Under Hospitals, with regard—I am not asking about an explanation for the increase, but if I can have the staff by category and numbers in terms of this allocation? And that would apply to both hospitals and health centres which is 03?

Madam Chairman: So you just want to specifically identify what you want in that undertaking?

Dr. Bodo: That is correct and I can have that in writing, Minister.

Hon. Imbert: Repeat exactly what you want.

Dr. Bodo: Okay. I want the allocation for Salaries and Wages for both hospitals and health centres that would be 002, 003 by category and numbers.
Hon. Imbert: Okay.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Baratari/San Juan.

Dr. Khan: On 02: 43, the security services have decreased by $460,000.

Madam Chairman: At 02, we are into Goods and Services.

Dr. Khan: Goods and Services?

Madam Chairman: Yes.

Dr. Khan: Forty three, page 74.

Madam Chairman: And Good and Services commence on page 73 for the guidance of Members. Yes. Hon. Member for Baratari/San Juan.

Dr. Khan: I have noticed that you have decreased the security services.

Madam Chairman: Item 43.

Dr. Khan: Item 43, just an explanation.

Hon. Imbert: I am sure there is a reasonable explanation. I will get it for you. So if things go up, you are worried. If things go down, you are worried, but I will get the explanation for you.

Dr. Khan: Well security in Tobago necessary, Minister of Finance.

Hon. Imbert: Well for the benefit of your colleague to your left, Training went up.

Dr. Khan: No. No. I am serious, you know. I mean, [Crosstalk] I am not being facetious. There is a problem with security in Tobago.

Madam Chairman: So that the response will be given writing.

Dr. Khan: He will. He definitely will in writing.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: To pay attention, page 73 as we move forward, for wages. We are under the heading Public Health and the Environment. And I see the Wages and Cost of Living Allowance is $64 million.

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Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Caroni East, are we in 02 which commences on page 73? Because we on 02 which commences on page 73. We are not on page 73. We are on 02 which commences at page 73.

Dr. Gopeesingh: All right. I will wait my turn.

Madam Chairman: Yeah. Thank you very much. Hon. Member for Oropouche East.

Dr. Moonilal: You are on 02 which commences at page 73.

Madam Chairman: Thank you so much.

Dr. Moonilal: And I am on page 76.

Madam Chairman: Thank you.

Dr. Moonilal: Can I go there?

Madam Chairman: Once you are in 02.

Dr. Moonilal: I am in 02, Goods and Social Services. At 005, No. 16 Contract Employment. This was $6 million estimate in 2015 and this is social services. It is estimated at 2015 at $8.7 million and then it is reduced back to the $6 million. There is a decrease of $2.7 million which is almost three quarter of the $4 million of the overall decrease. I just wanted to get a listing of the persons who were employed on contract in 2015, but would not be employed on contract in 2016 since you have reduced by almost $3 million the Contract Employment figure, the numbers.

Hon. Imbert: Madam Chairman, I would get that information, but I want to make a point that when you look closely at what is being done, again with this Item the original 2015 estimate was $6 million. So, we have simply restored the original 2016—

Dr. Moonilal: We know that.

Hon. Imbert: I am making a point. We have simply restored the original 2015
estimate and the THA in governing the Assembly will make adjustments. I want to go back—still on 02—and that is identical to what occurred with security. The allocation although it appears to be a decrease is identical to the original allocation for security in 2015. So the identical formula will apply. We have simply restored the 2015 allocation and the THA in governing the Assembly will move funds around in accordance with the needs and requirements of the island of Tobago. So these things that you are seeing as decreases are not really decreases because the allocation in total has gone up. So, the THA has the ability to move funds around, and therefore I am craving your indulgence, Madam Chairman, this is a generic question coming at me every other page that, why has it gone up, why has it gone down?—but the Members are not looking at the 2015 original estimates and seeing that we have simply reverted to the original estimate of 2015.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Madam Chair, can I address you? Because I think you need to translate a question here. We are very much wary of the fact that the 2016 estimate have gone back to the original estimate of 2015. The Minister has to, in some instance, and he told us about 20 times. That is not the issue. The issue is why was it revised upward, not that it went backward, why was it revised upward? How much was spent and we want breakdown? That is the issue. It is not that it went back to the original estimate. We know that. We can read that. Why did it go the new estimate? What was spent and the composition of it?

**Madam Chairman:** So you really want to know what happened in 2015?

**Dr. Moonilal:** Correct. Please translate that in his language.

**Hon. Imbert:** Madam Chairman, I find it unconscionable that the Members opposite are asking me to explain what happened in 2015 under their watch, but if that is—[Crosstalk] Madam Chairman, I try my best when they are speaking not to interrupt them. So, I would ask when a question is posed to me, I would be allowed
to speak without a running commentary from the Member for Oropouche East. The fact of the matter is, these are the 2016 estimates, and we on this side keep being asked what happened in 2015 under their watch. I will try my best to provide the information. But it is unconscionable that we on this side who have only been in Government for a couple weeks are continuously asked what you did in 2015 and for details of it too, and for the reasons why.

Madam Chairman: All right. In terms of—can we address all similar questions that the information will be provided in writing because the Minister of Finance would not have available to him the information of the revised estimates in 2015? All right? Yes. Hon. Member for St. Augustine.

Mr. Ramadhar: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Curiously the Minister of Finance indicated earlier that they had an excellent relationship with the THA, but he omits saying publicly that they have an independent budget and therefore, the query that had been raised earlier, I think, is more germane now in terms of the Auditor General’s Report. It is a notorious fact that it had not been available since 2007, there has been no audit. And therefore now to banter back and forth as to who had control, who knew, really is wasting time until we really deal with that very, very important issue. And I would also ask before I stop, whether in fact there will be any connection between the failure to have audits done and future budgetary allocations.

Hon. Imbert: Can I ask what line Item are you on?

Mr. Ramadhar: All of them.

Hon. Imbert: Well, I am sorry I cannot deal with all. I could only deal with one.

Mr. Ramadhar: I beg your pardon.

Hon. Imbert: I can deal with the particular line Item that the hon. Chairman
has addressed our attention to. Could you please tell me which line Item you are on?

**Mr. Ramadhar:** Madam Chair, it is obvious to all those who wish to appreciate what I have said that the answers given by the Minister of Finance is really to avoid the reality of the difficulties that we have.

**Madam Chairman:** But I do not know that we can really say that. I understand, hon. Member for St. Augustine, to be making a statement which in terms of when last an audit was done by the Auditor General, and I think we had that information before being provided by the hon. Member for Chaguanas West, was 2007. And I think it has been said on this floor several times for the day that the Tobago House of Assembly has a certain amount of autonomy with respect to its budget subject to a particular type of approval. Okay? So, I take it that your statement reinforces that. All right.

**Mr. Ramadhar:** I make the point that the banter back and forth about when you were in Government now really is not assisting at all unless we truly appreciate that, and we need to fix that.

**Madam Chairman:** And I think that the assistance that we are going to get is, as I recollect, in each instance and I have been writing for myself is that as far as what happened in 2015 because of the inability of this present Government to give the information, it will be given in writing. And I propose, to save time, that I deal with that as one of our blanket ditto statements. Okay? So let us move on. Page 76.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Under 005 which is—

**Madam Chairman:** Have we gone back?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** No. No.

**Madam Chairman:** Okay. Well it is Goods and Services. Thank you.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Health and Social Services. I just want to draw back to what
my colleague the Member for Tabaquite indicated on Contract Employment. Across the board here, as is evident in social services line Item 16, Contract Employment is a preponderant issue.

**Madam Chairman:** Hon. Member, I have, and maybe might I suggest to keep track because I believe we all have rulers and markers and so on or maybe we mark off things. I have it marked off in my book. I might be mistaken. You will correct me, that this has already been asked, and there is an assurance to give us it in writing.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** It had been asked on a previous Item, but I just wanted to draw—

**Madam Chairman:** Page 76, Item 16, Contract Employment, it is underlined by me.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** All right. Can I just make—because we have not moved from page 76 yet.

3.15 p.m.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** It is quite evident that Contract Employment is the dominant method of employment across all the Sub-Heads in the THA. Whether you look at health and social services, whether you look at administration, whether you look at health centres, whether you look at public health and the environment, is there a reason why contract employment is the dominant method of employment in all these subsectors of the THA rather than normal employment from the public service or for the THA? Because everywhere we look is $6 million here, $6 million here, $6 million there for contract employment. Is there an explanation for it? Why only contract employment is going on in all the subsectors?

**Madam Chairman:** Hon. Member for Caroni East, my recollection is that question was asked in a slightly different form. I cannot say it was asked by you,
because I am not taking track of who is asking. But, I think I am seeing another Member ascribing the question to him.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** All right.

**Madam Chairman:** All right? And I believe that was asked by the hon. Member for Chaguanas East, and we would get that answer in writing. Can we proceed, please?

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

**Madam Chairman:** Can we proceed, please?

**Hon. Imbert:** Madam Chairman—

**Madam Chairman:** Hon. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Thank you, Chair. I just wanted to ask if the THA reps are here? Is it some way that they can probably provide some of the answers regarding just the audited accounts I am referring to? Thank you.

**Hon. Imbert:** I want to make two points. I want to repeat in response to a question from the Member for Tabaquite, who is the one who asked about, why so many contract officers. I did give an undertaking for the whole of the THA, every single division, Sub-Item, Sub-Head, to explain the recruitment of contract officers vis-à-vis public servants. So, it applies to all. With respect to the—behind the Member for Caroni Central there.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Toco/Manzanilla.

**Hon. Imbert:** The fact of matter is that I had indicated earlier, but I will indicate it again, because this may very well come up with other Heads for which I have the responsibility. Where there is no Minister or Member of Parliament in this House who can answer, the responsibility falls to the Minister of Finance. So that the technical staff of the THA advise the Minister of Finance. But it is the Minister of Finance who answers all question with respect to this Head, and that will also
occur with the Judiciary, with the Parliament, with the Auditor General, all of the other Heads where there is no Minister per se. You have to remember, these estimates were prepared by the Minister of Finance, so that I am in a position to either answer immediately or to obtain the answers to any question anybody may have.

Madam Chairman: Okay. Can we move on? We are now at Minor Equipment. Sub-Head 03 Minor Equipment Purchases, which begins at page 77. Hon. Member for Barataria/San Juan.

Dr. Khan: I would just like the Minister of Finance or Tobago House of Assembly people to indicate, at each level 003; 04, 05, 08, I have noticed that all the 01 vehicles have been removed. All, on each level.

Madam Chairman: The hon. Member is dealing with from page 77 Minor Equipment Purchases, and he is making a general comment with that Sub-Item 01—

Dr. Khan: Health centres, public health and the environment, social services, and litre eradication programme, every single one the vehicles are removed.

Mr. Imbert: I would get an explanation. I suspect it is covered under another Head, but I will get an explanation.

Dr. Khan: Sure.

Madam Chairman: Would that be provided today or in writing before this budgetary exercise?

Mr. Imbert: It can be provided today. It will be provided today. Because, for example, I have received information on the Escrow account for Studley Park which you brought up before. At your discretion, Madam Chairman, I will give that information whenever it is convenient, and if I get the information on this Item I will indicate to you, I have received the information, and at your discretion,
Madam Chairman, you will decide whether I should give the information.

Madam Chairman: So, what I would ask Members, before we go on to development programme I would ask the Minister of Finance if any of the information is available on questions which were either deferred or said to be given in writing and we will deal with them next. Hon. Member for Chaguanas East.

Mr. Karim: Madam Chairman, now that you have gone past the minor equipment purchases, may I go to Item 04 on page 79, Current Transfers and Subsidies, with your permission?

Madam Chairman: Yes, please. We are now on Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies commencing on page 79. Hon. Member for Chaguanas East.

Mr. Karim: May I now ask, through you, for some details of line Item 06, in terms of the disbursements and the breakdown of the special social programmes?

Madam Chairman: This is page 79, 04 Current Transfers and Subsidies, 06 Special Social Programmes, what are they? What did they comprise of and the details of disbursements?

Hon. Imbert: I would provide that to you in writing.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Through you, Madam Chair—

Madam Chairman: Yes, hon. Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh:—007 Emergency Cases Fund, of $3 million what are they about?

Hon. Imbert: I will provide that.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Barataria/San Juan.

Dr. Khan: Thank you, Madam Chair. 009, 05 grant towards necessitous patients, you have decreased it from $3 million to $2 million and I would like to ask why it has now gone back to the $3 million? And two, the Tobago Regional Health
Authority has now increased to $168 million, and could I get an explanation for that increase?

**Madam Chairman:** Page 80.

**Dr. Khan:** Plans towards necessitous patients. It was initially in 2015, $3 million and your 2016 estimate is $2 million, that is more or less like necessary items.

**Madam Chairman:** I would think that that would have the generic answer which we have said, that the Ministry of Finance has put back the same allocation.

**Dr. Khan:** They have not.

**Madam Chairman:** The only difference with this is they have put the revised estimate for 2015.

**Dr. Khan:** You see, Madam Chair, and from the discussions that have been occurring, when the Minister of Finance indicates that they have put the estimates for 2015, in this case they have not. So, I was going to ask him why he has not.

**Madam Chairman:** Well, if that is the question I would allow it.

**Dr. Khan:** That is the question, why have you done that? Yes, why have you not done that here mostly because it is necessary?

**Hon. Imbert:** I would most certainly answer that. Let me deal with TRHA.

**Dr. Khan:** TRHA increased to $165.

**Hon. Imbert:** I would get a detailed response for you, but this again would arise out of collective agreements and other factors that would have caused this increase, as the employment of new staff and so on, remember there is a new hospital which was commissioned recently and so on. So, I will get an explanation for you for the increase.

With respect to the fact that we have used the revised estimates for necessitous patients rather than the original estimate, in some cases the Ministry of Finance,
well the Minister of Finance, who had to look at, I do not know how many, 50,000 items in a three-week period. In some cases we were able to get a satisfactory response from the accounting officers with respect to their actual request 2016 vis-à-vis, the experience of 2015. So, in those cases, and this would be one of them, there was consensus that the allocation could be put at an initial figure of $2 million, because that was the actual expenditure in 2015.

Again, if the THA is of the view that they need to assist more necessitous patients during 2016, they would just follow the established procedure and do so. But, in some instances we were able to get harmony between the request and the appropriation. In other cases we simply put back the original allocation because of the time involved to deal with 50,000 line items. We did not get proper explanation for everything, but we got fairly reasonable explanations.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: My colleague for Barataria/San Juan indicated in the TRHA where there is an increase of $168 million, and for the THA as a whole the increase has been $242 million, so would you say that this increase of $168 million for the TRHA is a substantial part of what you consider to be the increase of $242 million for the TRHA? So, that is a dominant increase in the allocation for THA which is $168 million.

Hon. Imbert: Well, if you look at the Heads some have gone up and some have gone down. You have to take a holistic view.

Dr. Gopeesingh: No, but the TRHA is $168 million increase, and the whole of Tobago House of Assembly is $242 million increase.

Hon. Imbert: Yes.

Dr. Gopeesingh: So, therefore, are you comforted that most of your increase is from the TRHA?
Hon. Imbert: Madam Chairman, I will try my best. You cannot pluck out one Item and simply try to say that that is the bulk of the increase. You have to look at the decrease in all of the Heads and the increase in all of the Heads and do a balancing act and then you would get a better perspective. Even through the TRHA has gone up by $168 million, other Heads have been decreased. The increase is an overall aggregate.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Minister of Finance, so the answer to that is, no?

Hon. Imbert: Obviously.

Madam Chairman: Thank you very much. Hon. Member for Fyzabad.

Dr. Bodoee: Thank you, Madam Chair. May I, on page 79 under Current Transfers and Subsidies, 007 Households, 04 Emergency Cases Fund, just to get an explanation of what that would be covering?

Madam Chairman: Emergency Cases Fund?

Dr. Bodoee: Yes, just to have an idea of what that covers.

Madam Chairman: I am sorry, I believe that was dealt with and we have an assurance for it to be given in writing.

Hon. Imbert: Madam Chairman, I am not struggling, when Members ask the same question over and over again.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Minister of Finance, if I am not struggling I do not think anybody here should complain about struggling. Can we move on? Can we move on, please? And we are now going to division 11 commencing at page 81 Settlements and Labour, Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure, and we bind the hon. Minister of Finance to the assurance that he has already given. Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, and that commences on page 82. And therefore can we move on to page 84, Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases. Can we go on to Sub-Head 04?
Mr. Karim: Madam Chair—

Madam Chairman: Yes, please. May I call the Head, 04 Current Transfers and Subsidies, and for the benefit of all of us, page 84.

Mr. Karim: Okay, the question I want to raise transfers to page 85, line Item 01 Contribution to Non-profit Organizations, maybe it is possible for us to have a list of those, and, again, the sums that were disbursed to those Non-profit Organizations.

Hon. Imbert: I would put that in writing.

Madam Chairman: Can we therefore go on to Division 12, which commences on page 86, Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure. And, again, I take it as binding the assurance given by the Minister of Finance. And, therefore can we go on to Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, commencing on page 86? Can we therefore go on to Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, page 89? Hon. Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Something just caught my eye very quickly here. Something caught my eye very quickly on page 88 before you went to page 89, which is the social sector programme. Obviously, nothing was done for it in 14, 15 and 16.

Madam Chairman: Give me the Item number please, I am sorry, Sir.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Page 88. That is under Goods and Services, 003 Social Sector Programme. For 14, 15 and 16 there is no allocation there for Social Sector Programme, is there an explanation for that, under planning and development for the THA?

Madam Chairman: Page 88, 003.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Yes. There is a blank for 14, 15 and 16, so no expenditure for 14, 15 and 16 under Social Sector Programme, which comes under the planning and development. Is there an explanation or rationale why THA has not seen it fit
to bring in a Social Sector Programme?

**Hon. Imbert:** I am sure there is a reasonable explanation. I suspect it is covered under another Item. I will get the explanation for you.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** That is all right.

**Madam Chairman:** All right. Can we, therefore, go on to Minor Equipment Purchases, which is at page 89? Can we go on to Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies? And then, therefore, can we go on to the Development Programme? Just before we do that, as I indicated, hon. Minister of Finance, I believe there are two matters which have been deferred and you have indicated that you have the information for them.

**Hon. Imbert:** I have information on one of them.

**Madam Chairman:** Okay, please, and this is the Escrow account, Studley Park—Hon. Minister of Finance, I do not mean to hurry you, if you do not have it then we will take it in writing.

**Hon. Imbert:** No problem, I just know that the Chief Administrator had it a little while ago. I will pull from memory. I know what he told me. The Studley Park Escrow account is an account used to purchase equipment for the quarry, and it was necessary to establish this account because the sums of money required to purchase equipment for a quarry are quite large and would not have been available under ordinary releases. So, it is an account that accumulates over time until sufficient funds are available to buy a crusher or some other large piece of equipment. So, it is simply set up to deposit funds that would become available from time to time for the purchase of new equipment for the quarry. And when the amount reaches the level necessary to purchase a large piece of equipment they purchase the equipment and then they continue to deposit as they get funds from time to time into that Escrow account. So, that is what it is for.
Dr. Gopeesingh: Would you permit me to ask a question on this?

Hon. Imbert: Certainly.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Based on what we just looked at, was there purchase of new equipment under this Studley Park Escrow account?

Hon. Imbert: I do not have that information. I will get that for you.

Dr. Gopeesingh: You do not have the information?

Hon. Imbert: No, I cannot tell you what equipment was purchased, when, but I would get the information for you.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Thank you for the explanation.

Hon. Imbert: Thank you very much.

Madam Chairman: Can we now go on to the Development Programme Tobago House of Assembly, and we are looking at the Draft Estimates, Development Programme, this book [Holds up book] and can we start at page 20. And why I am suggesting 20, 19 are the aggregate figures, 20 goes into the details.

Dr. Moonilal: Madam Chairman, just an observation. While I support your approach in terms of the method of going into every specific, to ask a specific question on the beach and landing facility and so on. When we have the generic figures, like on page 19, there may be a couple questions of a general nature that Members may wish to make. But if we only look at the specifics, we cannot get the general questions. So, if you can permit a few questions on the general thing rather than just on every—the Pigeon Point Beach and the landing facility and so on.

Madam Chairman: What I would say, hon. Member, I will exercise my discretion with respect to that.

Dr. Gopeesingh: So, Madam Chair, on that first page 19—

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh:—what was estimated for development expenditure in 2015
was $384 million, but in fact the revised estimates show that they spent more than $209 million more. So, the estimate for 2015 was supposed to be $384 for expenditure, but $593 have been in fact spent, which is $209 million more on the development programme in 2015. Is there any area that the Minister of Finance or THA may want to answer that would have given rise to this $210 million increased expenditure? From a global perspective?

Hon. Imbert: This is in 2015 you are asking?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Is it because of elections?

Hon. Imbert: Are you asking something relating to 2015?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Yes.

Hon. Imbert: Well, I will get that in writing for you.

Dr. Gopeesingh: So you do not know whether it is for election?

Hon. Imbert: I was not in Government in 2015.

Dr. Gopeesingh: THA election was in 2015.

Hon. Imbert: I did not have access to the records of the THA. I was not the Minister of Finance in 2015.

Dr. Gopeesingh: But you are the Minister of Finance now.

Hon. Imbert: There is no way I could provide the information you are requesting.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Caroni East, I think that question and the response would be covered by one of our blanket answers. You would get that information in writing.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Oropouche East.

Dr. Moonilal: Thank you, Madam Chairman. Again, a general question before we go into the specifics. Could the Minister indicate whether we can look forward to audited accounts of the THA for 2006, 2007, 2008 coming, because it is almost
10 years now we have not had an audited account, where billions of dollars are being spent. Are you satisfied with that approach? And would you give some undertaking that we will get audited accounts to explain what were really billions of dollars over the last 10 years or so?

Hon. Imbert: What line Item are you on?

Dr. Moonilal: We are permitted to ask general questions on the area.

Hon. Imbert: You are? Madam Chairman?

Madam Chairman: We are permitted to ask general question as relates to the information in hope that it is here on the books. I might be mistaken, but I am only seeing actual 2014, estimate 2015, 2015 revised estimate, 2016 estimates. Okay, so that I would not allow that question. Can we therefore go to page 20? And we are now going to Item 002 Productive Sectors. It begins at page 20 and it ends at page 20. Hon. Member for Siparia.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: On page 20 please, Madam Chair, under 01 Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing; Item 470 Construction of Marketing Facilities, I see there is $3 million allocated, which just $400,000 was allocated previously, and through you, can we get a breakdown of which facilities these moneys are to be allocated to, the $3 million?

Hon. Imbert: That is for the Scarborough Market.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Three million dollars?

Hon. Imbert: Yes.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Thank you.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Tabaquite.

Dr. Rambachan: Thank you, Madam Chairperson. I would like to know what the status of these facilities is—467, processing facilities for coconut, bay leaf, oil and pigeon peas; 474, the establishment of agro processing facilities; 478,
development market research; 489, GIS GPS support system for livestock in Tobago? I would really like to know the status of those projects? Are those projects established? And if so, if they are established, who is setting up these projects? Is it the THA that is directly employing persons on these projects? Because, if they are THA-funded projects, I want to know whether THA is actually doing these projects as part of THA’s core business or whether THA has dissolved this to private enterprise? And if private enterprise is doing it, how are they identified and what is the process for granting the subventions, if there are subventions?

Madam Chairman: Hon. Minister of Finance.

Hon. Imbert: As you would realize these are ongoing projects, so that information would have been available to the previous Government. But, since you do not know what happened under your tenure, I would get the information for you and provide it in writing.

Dr. Rambachan: Madam Chairperson, I think it is really disrespectful for the Minister to keep saying about my tenure and my tenure.

Hon. Imbert: I am speaking the truth.

Madam Chairman: One minute, please, hon. Minister of Finance.

Dr. Rambachan: Madam Chairperson, I have a right as a Member of this House of Representatives and, on behalf of the public of Trinidad and Tobago, to ask questions that clarify how the money is being spent. And whether it happened under the term of the PP Government or what, today we are here to ask questions, and, Madam Chairperson, I just think I have that right to ask those questions. That is all.

Madam Chairman: Indeed, and hon. Minister of Finance, I understand you to be saying that the information for projects that preceded the fiscal year 2016 shall
be provided by you in writing.

Hon. Imbert: Within the limits of the information available to me, Madam Chairman.

Madam Chairman: And everything, hon. Minister of Finance, could only be done within the limits of what is available and we understand that. Please, can we move on?

Hon. Imbert: Madam Chairman, the Member made a speech.

Madam Chairman: Minister of Finance, please!

Dr. Gopeesingh: Madam Chair—

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh:—under Goods and Services on page 21, Head 15, there has been an increase from the estimate in 2016—

Madam Chairman: Am, excuse me, we are still—

Dr. Moonilal: Product sector. We are on Productive Sector.

Madam Chairman: Productive Sector, Okay. Yes.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: We are still on page 20.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Page 21.

Madam Chairman: Page 21, no, we have—I am sorry, I am sorry. Page 21 is Economic Infrastructure, Item 003. So, Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla, are you within Head 002 Productive Sector?


Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Yes.

Madam Chairman: Yes? Please.

Dr. Gopeesingh: All right, I will wait.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Madam Chair. Directed to the Minister of Finance, through you, Chair. If the projects referring to 480, the development of a
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GIS/GPS support system, if the projects are ongoing, how is there no allocation? Is it that the project has come to an end or has it been cancelled?

Madam Chairman: Please.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thanks.

Hon. Imbert: Madam Chairman, that question was asked and answered.

Madam Chairman: No, no, no.

Hon. Imbert: It was asked and answered. I said I would provide details of the status of these projects, the establishment of these projects, the purpose of these projects, et cetera. And I think in the rubric status we would get an explanation as to why there is no allocation in 2016. And, Madam Chairman, I simply want to say, Members opposite are perfectly entitled to ask me to explain what happened under their stewardship, and I am perfectly entitled to point out that they should know what they did when they were in Government.

Madam Chairman: And that you would provide the answer.

Hon. Imbert: There are some things that they did that I will not be able to explain, because they did a lot of strange things.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Minister of Finance, we understand that you could only provide what is available. All right, so can we go on to page 21, Item 003 Economic Infrastructure, it commences at page 21. Hon. Member for Siparia.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Thank you. Under 01 of that Economic Infrastructure; Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing, D. Fishing, line Item 143 deals with improvement to beaches and landing facilities. The revised 2015 estimates indicates that $17.3 million was spent, that now in 2016 has been reduced—the allocation has been reduced down to $5 million. Through you, if we can be provided with a list of the beaches and landing facilities on which that $17.3 million was spent, a list of those facilities, and a breakdown of the $17 million?
How much was spent? Where? And to whom were such payments made?

3.45 p.m.

Madam Chairman: Okay, and therefore this will be in writing, subject to whatever limitations of availability of information.

Hon. Imbert: Madam Chairman, again, this is 2015 so they should know.

Madam Chairman: We understand that, hon. Minister. Hon. Minister of Finance, we understand that and that is why we have the caveat. Can we go on, please, Member for Tabaquite.

Dr. Rambachan: Thank you, Madam Chairperson. Under Fishing, Sub-Item 165, has the THA set up any commercial Tilapia/Prawn Production facilities in Tobago? Are there any facilities set up by them?—because this is a continuing project, again. Has anything been set up? Is there visible evidence of anything being set up?

Hon. Imbert: I get the impression you were not living here last month, but I will provide the information for you. This has been going on for years.

Madam Chairman: So that this would be provided in writing.

Hon. Imbert: Impossible, I am being asked to explain things that were approved by the previous government, but I will.

Madam Chairman: Much obliged, and, therefore, hon. Member for Siparia.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, if you would allow me just a moment, the hon. Minister is repeating that these things were done by us, these things were done when the Partnership was in government; they were done by the THA. The point has been made, no audited statements from way back 2007, and in fact the numbers being brought here as the revised estimates are the numbers being brought by the hon. Minister of Finance. Therefore, to say that we were not there and we did it and we must know, there are new Members
here, they do not know; there are persons out in the public, they do not know, and nobody knows every single thing that is happening, and that is why the revised estimates that you brought we want to ask, further, at Item 463, on same page 21, Agriculture access roads, Tobago, in your revised 2015 estimates you indicate to this House that $53.6 million was spent, prior to that the estimate was $5 million, and now you have come with a 2016 allocation of $5 million. Again, Madam Chair, through you, we would like a breakdown of the agriculture access roads on which $53.6 million was spent and to whom the payments were made for improvements of these agriculture access roads.

Madam Chairman: So, this is a breakdown in writing for the estimates for the year 2015, so long as the information is available. Let us move on, please.

Hon. Imbert: Madam Chair, the Member for Siparia made a statement that is not accurate. The THA has advised me, they have submitted their accounts to the Auditor General’s Department up to the year 2013. So, it is incorrect, misleading and wrong to keep saying over and over that the THA has only submitted accounts for 2007. They have submitted accounts up to 2013, so, please, stop saying that.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Madam Chair, I made the statement that there are no audited accounts from since 2007. If it is that they feel there is something that they did or did not do that is a different point, I made it very clear there are no audited accounts of the THA since 2007. And, indeed, even the 2006 and 2007 were incomplete on one page because in it the Auditor General said that they had not received what they needed to receive from the THA. I am not going on that point, the point is that they did not include those. So, Madam Chairman, if there is no more on that page can we move to another page?

Madam Chairman: I am so happy Members are cooperating in expediting this process. All right, so can we go on, please, to Sub-Head 004, Social Infrastructure,
and that is at page 31. It commences at page 31.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** Madam Chairman, I am sorry. No, please, I asked if we were done with that particular page we were dealing with, with the beaches, I do have a question on page 23 at Item 538, I am still under Economic Infrastructure, Item 538, Facilities for Workers at Hope Farm. I note, again, in 2015 $2 million was spent. The allocation for 2016 is $200,000, again, we would like a breakdown—the numbers of workers at Hope Farm and the nature of the facilities on which $2 million was spent, and to whom was the $2 million given to in payment for the facilities at Hope Farm.

**Madam Chairman:** Can we get that in writing, please.

**Hon. Imbert:** I will try, Madam Chairman, I will see what the former Minister of Finance did with respect to this item when he gave them the money.

**Madam Chairman:** Are we finished, Members? Are we finished with Sub-Head 003, Economic Infrastructure?

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** No, Madam Chair.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Siparia.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** Thank you. On the same page 23, under line item 580, Urban Forestry Programme, I note an increased allocation of $1 million for 2016, it was $100,000, so $900,000 increase, again, through you, Madam Chair, a breakdown of what is this increase of $900,000.

**Hon. Imbert:** Since for the first time you are asking about 2016 I will oblige.

**Madam Chairman:** Are you in a position to give it today?

**Hon. Imbert:** No, it will be given in writing.

**Madam Chairman:** Thank you very much. Hon. Member for Tabaquite, please.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Thank you, Madam Chairman. Page 22, Item 468, new project,

**UNREVISED**
2016, $10.5 million, is this Goldsborough Agricultural Estate Irrigation Programme, is it owned by the THA or is this a private enterprise that is being irrigated? Who owns this Goldsborough Estate? THA?

**Hon. Imbert:** It is owned by the THA. The money is for an irrigation system and other agricultural infrastructure, and the land is leased to private farmers.

**Dr. Rambachan:** So the land is leased to private farmers but the infrastructure is being put in by the THA?

**Hon. Imbert:** But, clearly, it is part of the lease.

**Madam Chairman:** It is part of the terms of the lease? Well—

**Dr. Rambachan:** I am just asking. Nothing wrong in asking you know.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** Madam Chair, through you, we would be very happy to see a copy of that lease that the hon. Minister is referring too.

**Hon. Imbert:** Sure.

**Madam Chairman:** So that the terms of the lease would be provided in writing. Hon. Member for Mayaro.

**Mr. Paray:** Thank you, Madam Chairman. I really did not raise my hand but since you have called my name I will dare ask a question, and I am being very careful with this question here, and I know we are being pointed to items in the book, and I am asking this question—

**Madam Chairman:** Lest you ascribe a blame tome for putting you somewhere else, do you have a question within the item that we are dealing with?

**Mr. Paray:** Yes, I do. Thank you.

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

**Mr. Paray:** I am dealing with the heading, Details, Head 15 of the Tobago House of Assembly. I am listening, Madam Chairman, as a first-timer Member of Parliament in this exercise and—
Madam Chairman: You are at page—

Mr. Paray: On page 21.

Madam Chairman: Page 21—[Crosstalk] Excuse me, please. Okay at page 21, Item—hon. Member for Mayaro, Item?

Mr. Paray: No, the item that I want to ask the question on, Ma’am, is the answers that are coming in terms of—

Madam Chairman: May we ask item, if you could point us to the item so that—

Mr. Paray: I will withdraw for the meantime, Madam Chairman.

Madam Chairman: Yes, I realize I put you on a spot by forcing you to ask a question, I am sorry about that.

Mr. Paray: Yes, Ma’am. All right. No problem.

Madam Chairman: Okay. Hon. Member for Siparia.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: We are still on Economic Infrastructure, Madam?

Madam Chairman: We are still on Economic Infrastructure.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Thank you very much. I am looking at page 26, Item 748, Construction of Sea Defence Walls, which I am sure are very needed in Tobago, there is an increase allocation of $11.9 million, making a total for 2016 of $12.9 million, again, through you, a breakdown of where this money will be expended and for which works—Item 748.

Madam Chairman: The Construction of Sea Defence Walls.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Yes—a breakdown of where the $12.9 million would be spent.

Madam Chairman: Okay. Can we therefore move on to Social Infrastructure which begins at—

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: I am still on Economic Infrastructure.
Madam Chairman: Okay.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Thank you. On page 27, still on Sub-Head 003, Economic Infrastructure, Item 326, which is Pigeon Point Infrastructure Works, I note an $8 million increase, from $2 million it has gone now to $10 million, and, again, a breakdown as to what works are to be done there on which this $10 million would be expended. I am still on that page, if I may, I suppose in writing.

Madam Chairman: Yes.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Then on the same page, Enterprise Development, Item 002, under G, Business Services, under G, again—

Madam Chairman: Again, a breakdown of works?

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Yes, Ma’am, I see there $5 million allocation, 2016, so some details. Then on Item 009, Enterprise Development Company of Tobago, I see $8 million for the company, so I would like, how does Enterprise Development and Enterprise Development Company work together.

Madam Chairman: So you want a relationship of Items 002 and 009?

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Yes, Ma’am, because now you have, 8 and 5, $13 million, part going to the development and part going—$8 million, the larger part—to the company. And can we please get a list of the directors of the Enterprise Development Company of Tobago, please. Again, I guess all of that would be in writing.

Hon. Imbert: You are asking and answering the question.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: I said I guess, so Madam Chair will guide us.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Minister of Finance, please, do we have the list of the directors?

Hon. Imbert: The Member has asked what the reason is for all of this, in addition to the list of the directors, and so on, if—
Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: I did not ask the reason. Madam Chair, please—

Madam Chairman: Hon. Minister of Finance, what was asked is the relationship between the two sub-items.

Hon. Imbert: Yes. Yes. Yes. If you read the budget statement you will see on the section on Tobago we have decided to assist the THA in developing business activity in Tobago at the Cove Estate and other areas in Tobago, and this is all part of a new thrust to try to boost economic activity in Tobago. The details that you require will be provided, but I really wish I could have given Tobago more to stimulate business activity and economic activity in Tobago.

Madam Chairman: Okay, any other further—Member for Barataria/San Juan.

Dr. Khan: Just one question to the Minister of Finance, Item 465, Sub-Heading 003, page 22—Item 465.

Madam Chairman: Thank you very much. We are still on the same Head. All right. We are still on the same item of Economic Infrastructure.

Dr. Khan: Page 22, Item 465.

Hon. Imbert: What is your question?

Dr. Khan: All right, I know your attention span is decreasing as time goes on—

Hon. Imbert: No, do you want to know what a hyperbaric facility is? Do you want to know what it is?

Dr. Khan: No, I want to know if it is functioning and how many patients that was seen last year.

Hon. Imbert: Okay, certainly, I will let you know what is going on with the Roxborough Hyperbaric Facility. I know as a medical doctor you know what that is.

Dr. Khan: No.
Hon. Imbert: Yes you do.

Dr. Khan: Could you tell me what it is?

Hon. Imbert: I will put it in writing, but you do know what a hyperbaric facility is, oxygenation. You should know that. You know that.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Thank you, Madam Chair. I am still on Economic Infrastructure, at page 29 under D, Roads and Bridges, line 523, Major Improvement Works and Secondary Roads, again, we note that the estimates for 2015 was $8 million but the revised estimates for 2015, $26.8 million, and then back down in 2016 to $10 million. Again, through you, Madam Chair, a breakdown of which roads, secondary roads, this $26 million was spent on, and to whom were the payments made for the road works to the tune of $26.8 million in 2015. Madam Chairman, 2015 seems to have been a singular year in Tobago, all expenditures appear to have been increased and now in 2016 decreased.

Madam Chairman: All right, so that if the question only relates to the revised estimates in 2015, and, therefore, hon. Minister of Finance, I understand the same caveat—the same undertaking and the same caveat too apply.

Hon. Imbert: Madam Chairman, I want to make the point, the statement made by the Member of Siparia is inaccurate. The THA spent its allocation in 2015. The allocation given to it by the then government. It is wrong to say that it was a spectacular year and every item—there were decreases in other Heads, so we had increases and you had decreases. It is wrong to pick out increases and say it is a spectacular year and every Head has been increased—that is not true.

4.00 p.m.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Item 06, same page, 29, line 690, Resurfacing Programme. The estimates for 2015 was $5 million. The Revised Estimate to the close of the year brought here, is $25 million; an increase of $20 million. Now
allocated, 2016, $5 million. Again, through you, a breakdown of the Resurfacing Programme on which this $25 million was spent in 2015 and to whom were the payments made with respect to the Resurfacing Programme.

**Hon. Imbert:** Sure. I will provide that information in writing. But I want to point out, the general condition applies. If you look at the 2015 original estimate it was $5 million, the revised was $25. We have simply restored the original allocation in 2016. We are talking 2016 estimates here, and if the THA decides in consideration of its needs to reallocate funds within its overall allocation to pave roads in Tobago, I will happily approve it.

**Madam Chairman:** So, hon. Minister of Finance, do I understand that the statement made under recurrent, in terms of the THA being given a blanket sum as approved, applies for development programme that they can apply as they wish subject to the necessary approval.

**Hon. Imbert:** Following the established procedures, it applies to the DP as well as the recurrent.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** My question was, how was the $25 million— [Interruption]

**Hon. Imbert:** I said I will answer that.

**Madam Chairman:** Hon. Member for Siparia, Members, please. Hon. Member for Siparia, I think he has given the undertaking that it will be given in writing. The Chair just sought clarification for that other audience that we are all so mindful of. All right, so can we go ahead, please? Anything else under the Head that we are dealing with, which is Item 003. Then can we, therefore, go on to Item—

**Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh:** Madam Chair—

**Madam Chairman:** Yes, please. I am sorry.

**Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh:** I know we are still on Item 003, I am looking at
Madam Chairman: Could you guide me to the page, please?

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: Page 23. I just need an explanation for the Establishment of a Centralized Compositing Facility at Goldsborough. It is from $150,000 to $1 million. Just an explanation.

Madam Chairman: This is on page 22?

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: Page 23, please.

Madam Chairman: It is 576. I am sorry.

Hon. Imbert: Could I just ask the Member, what explanation do you require?

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: For the increase of $150,000 and what it entails.

Hon. Imbert: Okay, why did it go from $150,000 to $1 million? No problem.

Madam Chairman: And therefore, can we now go to page 31, Item 004, Social Infrastructure. And therefore I call upon the hon. Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Madam Chair, line Item 770 and 771. Line Item 771 has Reconstruction of Scarborough R.C, and line Item 770 has new construction of Scarborough R.C. There is a conundrum there. Is it a new construction or is it a reconstruction, what is happening? You cannot have a reconstruction and a construction—

Hon. Imbert: Are you asking and answering your own questions?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Go ahead, answer.

Hon. Imbert: You finish asking the question?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Yes.

Hon. Imbert: You are not satisfied with your own answer. [Laughter]

Madam Chairman: Hon. Minister of Finance, could we have the answer, please?

Mr. Imbert: He asked and answered himself.
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Dr. Gopeesingh: That is how he behaves when he does not have an answer.

Hon. Imbert: But let me answer you now, since it is my responsibility to answer your question.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Answer it. I am waiting for it.

Hon. Imbert: I will now correct your answer. There is an old school and as the former Minister of Education will know that when you are building the new school you have to maintain the old school. So that the reconstruction of Scarborough R.C. is to allow the students to at least learn in some sort of environment. So money has to be spent maintaining the old school until the new school is commissioned.

Dr. Gopeesingh: They are on the same site?

Hon. Imbert: That is a different question? You do not know where the Scarborough RC is? You were Minister of Education.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Where are you building the new one?

Hon. Imbert: You do not know that?

Dr. Gopeesingh: No, I do not know where you are building it.

Hon. Imbert: You never went to Tobago.

Madam Chairman: Minister of Finance, please.

Hon. Imbert: Madam Chair, I am just astonished that the former Minister of Education does not know where the Scarborough Roman Catholic School is. I am astonished.

Madam Chairman: Could you kindly answer that question?

Hon. Imbert: I find that—

Dr. Gopeesingh: Is it a new site?

Hon. Imbert: Am I being asked to tell him, who was Minister for five years, where the Scarborough RC is?
Madam Chairman: I think you are being asked to tell the committee. Could you kindly tell us, please?

Hon. Imbert: It is in Scarborough. [Desk thumping and laughter]

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Naparima.

Mr. Charles: Thank you. Item 814, on page 31.

Madam Chairman: Could we kindly proceed, please. Could you kindly repeat the question?

Mr. Charles: Item 814 on page 31, Teacher Training Programme. In 2014 it was $750,000 and actually $800,000 was spent, and it is now reduced to $100,000. The context of the challenges we face in education, again, in training, could you just give us an explanation for the significant reduction in teacher training?

Hon. Imbert: I will have to get that in writing for you, but your point you keep making is well noted, that training is important.

Madam Chairman: Any other questions?

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Item 004, page 40.

Dr. Gopeesingh: I want to know—

Madam Chairman: I have recognized the hon. Member for Siparia.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: You can come back.

Dr. Gopeesingh: I can come back?

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Yes, you can once it is under Item 004. Page 40, Housing and Settlements. I am looking at line Item 454, Courland Estate, Land Development. I note that in 2015, $18.6 million was spent on this land development project. So that the Revised Estimate is very low down at $900. Is it that most of the work has been completed, one?

Two, can we get a breakdown of the nature of the works that were done on which this $18.6 million was expended and to whom were the payments made out
of this $18.6 million in the revised 2015 estimates? Madam Chair, I have a few more on the same page. I do not know if you want me to continue or—

[Interruption]

Madam Chairman: Maybe if you can just give us all and then we would say that they would all be given in writing. Because the details, I suspect—

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Similar.

Madam Chairman: Yes.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: So line Item 476, Home Improvement Grant, Tobago. I note an increase of $5 million. It is now $7 million, from 2015 $2 million. I would like to ask how many Home Improvement Grants were given out in 2015 and the average value of each grant? In addition—so that was line Item 476. Then we have line Item 478 which is—one was the Home Improvement Grant, Tobago and one is the Home Improvement Subsidy, Tobago. Again, the amounts—the numbers given out and the average value of each. Continuing on that same page, line Item 486, Beneficiary-Owned Land Programme-New Home Construction, $1 million spend in 2015 revised, $2 million to be spent in 2016. Again the numbers?

Madam Chairman: So what you want is for 2015, eh.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: 2015 expenditures. Because we cannot say what will be done, yet. And there is also line Item 484, Home Completion Programme, Tobago. Again, $1 million expended. So the number of these home improvement, how many homes were completed and the average value for each of the homes to which the grant was given for completion?

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Caroni East.

Hon. Imbert: Before you go to the Member for Caroni East, you are talking about 2015?

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Revised Estimates, yes.
Hon. Imbert: So you do not know.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Of course, I do not know. That is why I am asking.

Hon. Imbert: Clearly, you were not here.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Thank you, Madam Chair. I want to now remind the hon. Minister of Finance of the Scarborough Library. It is on page 33. Could he explain the increase of $5 million? Remember when I asked whether it is for maintenance, what it is for. You said that it would be under development programme. I am seeing it here now, so I want to remind you to answer the question. [Crosstalk]

Madam Chairman: No, no, it is within the Head of Social Infrastructure.

Dr. Gopeesingh: When I ask you about the maintenance.

Hon. Imbert: What do you mean maintenance?

Dr. Gopeesingh: It is line Item 490, on page 33. I am just giving him a gentle reminder, Madam Chair.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Minister of Finance are you in a position to answer?

Mr. Imbert: I am told it is for the outfitting of the library.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Outfitting, so the structure is completed?

Mr. Imbert: The library is functional.

Dr. Gopeesingh: And you are still outfitting, you are continuing to outfit, $5 million more.

Mr. Imbert: Yes.

Dr. Gopeesingh: All right. So you have answered it now.

Mr. Imbert: Yes.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Chaguanas East.

Mr. Karim: Madam Chair, may I ask a few questions with respect to Social Infrastructure, on page 33, Item 764. We have had continuous allocations to the
Young Scholars Programme. If we could get some details on that. With respect to Item 782 on that same page, if we can have the status with respect to the Development of the Tobago Community College? On page 34, line Item 503, while we would of have a one-off in terms of 2014, the Establishment of a Consortium of Retired Educators and Specialist Teachers, what is the status of that currently? I noted in line Item 524—

Madam Chairman: Just a minute.

Mr. Karim: Sorry.

Madam Chairman: That is why I was asking, what really is the question.

Mr. Karim: The question with respect to the Young Scholars Programme—

Madam Chairman: Sorry, excuse me. This is with respect to the Establishment of a Consortium of Retired Educators and Specialist Teachers.

Mr. Karim: The question is, is it functional?

Hon. Imbert: There is no way I am going to go back to 2014. It is not happening.

Madam Chairman: But hon. Minister, the question is even with respect to now, there is no allocation in 2014.

Hon. Imbert: Correct.

Madam Chairman: So I understand the question to be a real time question.

Hon. Imbert: No, the Member is asking, whether it was completed?—and that goes back to 2014.

Mr. Karim: Well, the question could be asked, why are no funds allocated to the project?

Hon. Imbert: I will get an answer for you.

Mr. Karim: Right.

Hon. Imbert: But “doh” ask me what you did in 2014.
Madam Chairman: Hon. Minister of Finance, the question is, why no funds have been allocated in 2016 which I think is a legitimate question. Thank you.

Mr. Karim: May I ask another legitimate question?

Madam Chairman: Well I will determine if it is legitimate. [Laughter]

Mr. Karim: Madam Chair, line Item 524, on the same page, the Development of Library Facilities. Can we know what are these library facilities, where are they going to be located?—because there is an allocation in 2015 and 2016. It is reduced. So the question is, what are these and why have they been reduced?

Madam Chairman: Are you in a position to answer that hon. Minister of Finance?

Hon. Imbert: Madam Speaker, the 2015 estimate was $1 million and the Revised Estimate is $500,000. I will certainly get an explanation for this.

Mr. Karim: Finally, on page 36, Madam Chair, line Item 592, why has there been no allocation to the Establishment of Skill Based/Technical Vocational Programme in three secondary schools?

Hon. Imbert: That has been going on since your tenure. This has been going on since 2015.

Mr. Karim: I was just asking.

Hon. Imbert: Ask yourself.

Mr. Karim: This is the THA, you know.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Minister of Finance—

Hon. Imbert: Madam Chairman, I understand the concerns, but I wish to make a point. If a programme was not allocated any funds in 2015 when the UNC was in Government, it was not allocated any funds last year, why are you asking me now why we have not allocated any funds in 2016. They should have the answer.
4.15 p.m.

Madam Chairman: And, hon. Minister of Finance, I am certain that in writing you can provide a very adequate answer.

Hon. Imbert: So they do not know why they did not allocate funds?

Madam Chairman: Hon. Minister of Finance, remember we said that there are other people who are interested in these answers. I am sure you will give a very adequate answer. Can we now have hon. Member for Tabaquite? No? Hon. Member for Caroni Central.

Dr. Tewarie: I would really like to ask the Minister of Finance a general question.

Madam Chairman: I would like a question on an Item.

Dr. Tewarie: Well, Chair, you said at the beginning that you would allow some general questions and I was trying to get your—

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Caroni Central, I said that in a context, and that was with respect to the summary page which we passed a long time ago. While I may not see everything I do have assistant eyes here, and neither my assistant’s eyes nor mine had picked up any. And you see how sensitive we are, because we have picked up people who really have not tried to attract our attention on more than one occasion. Unless there is a line Item within which we are dealing with, I really cannot allow the question.

Dr. Tewarie: Could I then ask, Madam Chair, at the end of the examination of this development budget, if you would give me the opportunity to ask a general question?

Hon. Imbert: No.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Minister of Finance, the question was directed to the Chair. Hon. Member for Caroni Central, I would really like us to stick within the
agreed process. As I have said before, there are other mechanisms for questions to be put to Ministers and I would really ask Members, therefore, to utilize that. It means we will have an interesting Parliament with these other questions. Therefore, can I call on the Member for Siparia, please?

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Madam Chair, with respect to your ruling of no general questions, am I to understand no general questions can be asked in the Standing Finance Committee?

Madam Chairman: And, and—

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar: Am I to understand?

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Siparia, I cannot even begin to answer that question because that is not what I said. I know you came late so that you may have missed certain things. [Laughter] Please, please—and you may have missed certain things. We have allowed general questions in a particular context. I am sure the hon. Member for Oropouche East would be in a position to support what has occurred here in terms of general questions and the agreed procedure with respect to which we have taken general questions.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: I did hear you in response to the Member for Caroni Central who was attempting to ask a general question, which was disallowed, and that is why I wondered whether people can ask or not ask. Because, I mean, if we look at the Standing Orders, I do not think there is any prohibition on the nature of the questions once they are relevant to the budget documents that are before us.

Madam Chairman: One, I would say, I did not disallow general questions. The general questions were allowed in the context of the figures before us. And the general questions came with respect to the bulk categories. That was the agreement. The way I understand this process is that questions are allowed with
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respect to the Items that are before us.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: But we did not know what the question was that the Member of Caroni Central was going to ask. The question was disallowed before he asked it.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: He said it was a general question.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Yes, he said general.

Madam Chairman: I have ruled on this. Can we kindly proceed with the process, please?

Dr. Gopeesingh: I have a line item, 546.

Madam Chairman: One minute, please, Member for Caroni East, I am sorry. Because I said the four eyes here are quick, I think I recognize the Member for Barataria/San Juan.

Dr. Khan: Thank you, Madam Chair. On page 38, 07, 387 as well as 410. On 387 I have noticed that there is a decrease in the amount for dialysis. With the non-communicable diseases rising, you would think that that would also rise or remain the same. So in 2016 it has decreased. And also, the thrust of the Government in your budget debate, you have indicated that primary health care services is high on the agenda and so, too, dental services, but yet I see a decrease in dental services in 410. Both dialysis and dental services have decreased, and that is not in keeping with the thrust of the primary health care.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Minister of Finance, are you in a position to answer the question?

Hon. Imbert: Thank you. I just want to make a general point. This is the Development Programme. This does not deal with goods and services or personnel expenditure. So that this would relate to purchase of pieces of equipment, refurbishment of buildings and so on, and so on. The decreases are small. You are
talking about $100,000, and therefore, I am certain there is a rational explanation. The THA may, in 2015, have purchased a lot of equipment and they see no need in 2016 to continue with that level of expenditure. But since the Member has asked, I would most certainly try to get an answer as to why there is just $100,000 difference in the allocation.

Madam Chairman: And this would relate to Items 410 and 416.

Hon. Imbert: Well, it is the two Items the Member raised, dialysis service department, where there is a difference of $100,000, and district dental, where there is a difference of—but remember this is Development Programme we are dealing with, not PE or goods and services. So it could be that they have enough equipment or not, as the case may be. So I will get the information for you.

Madam Chairman: Anymore questions on Item 004? Yes, hon. Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Madam Chair, Item 546, which is operationalization of the new Scarborough Library.

Madam Chairman: Could you assist us with the page you are on?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Page 35.

Madam Chairman: Thank you.

Dr. Gopeesingh: There is a sum there for the operationalization, but I think the Minister of Finance consulted with his colleague from Tobago where he said previously in answer to the question, the money there was for equipping and the—

[Interruption]

Madam Chairman: Operationalization of new Scarborough Library.

Hon. Imbert: What is the number?

Madam Chairman: 546 on page 35.

Dr. Gopeesingh: But you said it was already opened. So what does the
operationalization mean for that?

Hon. Imbert: Obviously—well, obvious to me anyhow—operationalization is an ongoing process. We have provided $3 million in 2015. You will see there has been a reduction in $1 million which a reasonable person would conclude that it is almost fully operationalized. Clearly, there is a requirement to spend another $1 million in 2016 to complete the full operationalization of the Scarborough Library.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Thank you.

Mr. Imbert: And you know, if the former—

Dr. Gopeesingh: Oh, come on—

Mr. Imbert:—Prime Minister had met with the Chief Secretary—

Madam Chairman: Hon. Minister of Finance—

Hon. Imbert:—you would have got all the answers to all these questions.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Minister of Finance, have you finished the answer?

Therefore, I will call upon the Member for Siparia.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Page 42 still, under 004. “(c) Sports” I note that a general reduction from 2015—

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Siparia, sorry to disturb you. Could you kindly repeat the page?

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: I am sorry. Someone is disturbing us?

Madam Chairman: Yes. Can you repeat the page?

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Page 42. I am looking at line Items under “(c) Sports”, page 42. You have it? I note the global numbers under Sports that there has been a reduction. In 2015, $68.56 million on the Revised Estimates was spent and for 2016 that has now been reduced to $17.4, so quite a reduction there. One of these has to do with 659, the Shaw Park Recreation Ground and Cultural Complex, which was allocated $50 million on the Revised Estimates last year, down to $5
million. So, through you, if the Minister can give us an answer as to how complete is this Shaw Park Recreational Ground, and how much moneys have been expended thus far on the Shaw Park Recreational Ground.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Minister of Finance.

Hon. Imbert: Madam Chairman, first, I would like to say before you stop me, that if the hon. Member for Siparia had responded to the numerous requests by the Chief Secretary of the THA for a meeting, then she would not be asking these questions. [Desk thumping] That is a fact. You refused to meet with the Chief Secretary of the THA. And now to deal with the substantive Item. Since you refused to meet with the Secretary, I will tell you.

Madam Chairman: May we have an answer, please?

Hon. Imbert: I am answering.

Madam Chairman: Thank you very much.

Hon. Imbert: That the Shaw Park Recreational facility is over 90 per cent complete and, therefore, there is no need for large expenditure in 2016. And if you had met with him you would know that.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Madam Chair, the same Item, $50.1 million was spent, as shown in the Revised Estimates for 2015 and can we please have a breakdown—[Crosstalk]

Madam Chairman: Excuse me, Members.

Miss Mc Donald: Couva South.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Provoked by Port of Spain South. [Crosstalk]

Madam Chairman: Members, please. I think at this stage I suggest we take the tea break.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Can I just complete this question?

Madam Chairman: At this stage, I suggest we take the tea break. This meeting
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is suspended for—we return here at 5.00 p.m.

4.26 p.m.: Standing Finance Committee suspended.

5.00 p.m.: Standing Finance Committee resumed.

Madam Chairman: So can we resume? I think the meeting has resumed. Thank you very much.

Dr. Moonilal: May I have the privilege of continuing this matter? I just want to go to page 42.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Oropouche East, I just want you to guide me to the page.

Dr. Moonilal: Page 42, and back to this cost Item 659, the Shaw Park Recreational Ground and Cultural Complex. I wanted the Minister to give an undertaking to indicate to us: what is the overall cost of this complex? When did it start? When is it anticipated to be completed? And at what final cost they anticipate that that will be completed?

In 2015 we understand from the data that there was an enormous amount of activity on this project. So far the project is, I think, about $95 million but there was a lot of activity. We would like to get a list of the works done in 2015; the scope of works; the list of contractors and how much money was paid on this particular project 659 in 2015; and what is anticipated in 2016, the continuation of works, scope of works in particular?

Hon. Imbert: I will check Minister Howai’s records and revert to you.

Dr. Moonilal: Much obliged.

Madam Chairman: I think the break did you all well. So can we go on to Item—please, Members—005?

Dr. Moonilal: Hold on. I am still on that as well. There is an Item here on the Brian Lara Cricket Complex in Tobago. The same would apply.
Madam Chairman: 724?

Dr. Moonilal: Yes, 724. The same question would apply if we could get a list of works to be done in 2016; what is the overall cost of the project; when it is expected to be completed; and the list of works to be done in 2016. I am moving on, on the same Sub-Head.

Hon. Imbert: Just clarify. You are asking me about 2015 in that too?

Dr. Moonilal: No, for the Brian Lara Cricket Complex—

Hon. Imbert: You just want to know 2016?

Dr. Moonilal: 2016.

Hon. Imbert: Fine.

Dr. Moonilal: I think you should hope to be able to answer that.

Hon. Imbert: Any question under 2016 I could answer.

Dr. Moonilal: So I will move on the same Sub-Head. We have here—774 is on page 43—Elite Athlete Development Institute. I wanted to get from the Minister, in writing: when this Institute was established; what is the purpose of the Institute; a breakdown of this expenditure of $500,000 in the coming year 2016; and the list of athlete who have benefited from this programme in 2015 and to benefit in 2016.

Hon. Imbert: You are asking me to go back beyond 2014?

Dr. Moonilal: What I am saying is that I want to get an idea of the objective of the Institute, when it was established—just an historical data.

Hon. Imbert: It was clearly established before 2014. So you want me to tell you what happened in 2013 and 2012?

Dr. Moonilal: When was it established?

Hon. Imbert: Before 2014 because it is an expenditure of $750—

Dr. Moonilal: Well since both of us do not know when, maybe you can just find—

Dr. Moonilal: Yes, but you cannot say whether it is in 2009 or 1825.

Hon. Imbert: Madam Chairman, I want a ruling on this. How far back am I supposed to go?

Madam Chairman: Let me just ensure that I understand the question. What I understand the Member to be asking is the purpose and objective of the project; when it was started; and about the current expenditure. So you are not giving all the financials for the period.

Hon. Imbert: Yes, I got all that, Madam Chairman, but the point I am making is that when you look at the Estimates you would see that there is an Expenditure of $750,000 in 2014. So that obviously this thing began either in 2014 or before that. So how far am I supposed to go back, Madam Chairman?


Madam Chairman: Hon. Minister of Finance, I agree that the question does not say how far back you have to go, because how far you go back will determine by when the project was started. But that is just an historical fact, started in 2009, purpose this, current position that. So we are not going through any story.

Hon. Imbert: Madam Chairman, you realize that if that approach is adopted, then I will be asked to give explanations on matters that go all the way back to 10 years ago.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Minister of Finance, I hope you are not being anticipatory. I think if it is just a question with respect to when it was started, the objective, and what the current situation is, I think that it is reasonable—

Hon. Imbert: I understand.

Madam Chairman:—and that the Member is entitled.

Hon. Imbert: I will try my best to go back in time, but I can speak about the
Madam Chairman: Yes, and that is primarily what you have to speak on.

Hon. Imbert: I will have difficulty going back in time.

Dr. Moonilal: You are very clear.

Madam Chairman: Another? Yes, please.

Dr. Moonilal: Yes, I have another one apart from the Elite Development Institute. There is also the Youth Development Institute. Now, again I will ask the question, Madam Chairman whether it was started in 2014 or in 1920, I do not want annual reports on what was done and so on, just when it was established. I do not need a report on every year. But I am very concerned that for the Youth Development Institute, their programme for 2016, what that entails that their estimate $500,000 to be spent in 2016.

Hon. Imbert: Madam Chairman, can I intervene here, and I am being anticipatory if you do not mind. I have looked at the Standing Orders. We are supposed to be looking at the 2016 Estimates, any other matter of a general nature or otherwise is by resolution of the House, and there has been no resolution of this House to go back in time beyond the 2016 Estimates. So I am asking for an interpretation on this and I will refer you, Madam Chairman, to the relevant Standing Order before we get any further. We are still on the second Head—

Dr. Moonilal: He is wasting time.

Hon. Imbert: I am not wasting time. I am trying to make sure you do not waste time. So, can I go to the relevant Standing Order? Is it 83 and 84?

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: Yes, 84, Procedure on Examination—

Hon. Imbert: Yes, Procedure on Examination of Estimates, page 52, and, Madam Chairman, it speaks about the consideration of each Head and each provision. But I had also seen in another Standing Order that if we are to go
outside of the consideration of the Estimates, then there needs to be a resolution of
the House. I will find it, Madam Chairman. I will find it.

Yes, Madam Chairman, I do not know why the Member for Siparia is
mumbling like that. 82(3), and I think that is very clear:

“By resolution the House may, at in its discretion, refer to the Committee any
other matter or matters relating to Expenditure.”

But we are dealing with the 2016 Estimates, not the 2014 Estimates, and I would
ask for an interpretation on this Madam Chairman.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Madam Chair, the questions we are asking have nothing to do

**Hon. Imbert:** By resolution of the House for that.

**Dr. Moonilal:** It is simply to ask when a programme started.

**Hon. Imbert:** My interpretation of this is that a resolution of the House is
required.

[Discussion between Madam Chairman and the Procedural Clerk]

**Madam Chairman:** Members! Members, in terms of Standing Order 82(4), the
way I understand—even though the question is not coming in that sort of way and
may be Members on the other side need to be careful with respect to how they are
framing the question. If the intent of the question is really to question whether this
is DP or whether this is recurrent expenditure, I would allow that type of question.
Anything outside of what is presented in the details, I would think is not
permissible under the Standing Order. So that I think the information that the hon.
Member may be seeking to get, he may get if framed in a different way.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Okay, let us go now. The establishment of Tobago Youth
Development Institute, $500,000 in 2016, could we have a breakdown of how this
$500,000 in 2016 would be spent; and could you tell us how long that programme
Hon. Imbert: I can tell you that the allocation for 2016 is not for the start-up of this programme.

Madam Chairman: Are there any other questions or matters for clarification under this Item 004? If not, I suggest we go on to Item 005 which commences at page 47. Are there any questions on Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services?

Question put and agreed to.

Head 15 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Madam Chairman: I would like to thank the representatives from the Tobago House of Assembly for coming and assisting the committee. I wish you all a safe return journey to Tobago. So you all are relieved. We are going back to the Ministry of National Security to complete the exercise we started.

5.15 p.m.

Madam Chairman: So, hon. Members, while the technocrats find their seats, maybe we can just all get on the same page. We are at Head 22, Ministry of National Security. And I do not have mine in front of me but we are at Sub-Head 09. We are about to begin the Development Programme.

Hon. Members, we shall now proceed to continue the examination of Head 22, Ministry of National Security.

Head 22.

Question again proposed: That Head 22 stand part of the Schedule.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Oropouche East.

Dr. Moonilal: As per direction earlier, you would allow for a couple of general questions at the beginning?

Madam Chairman: Madam Chairman, we are at Sub-Head 09, Development Programme. If you would wait one minute, let me just get—
Dr. Moonilal: Sure.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Oropouche East, I believe what I had indicated from the start is that the general questions would be allowed under the general category and not within their estimates. Okay? So we are at page 60, Item 004, Social Infrastructure.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Thank you, Madam Chairman. Page 60, line Item 026, Establishment of a Marine Ship Safety and Port Facility Security Unit. I note that 2015, allocated $5 million, but in the revised, nothing was spent and now we see $8 million in 2016. My question, through you, what is the $8 million? I am saying that there is now an increase from what was estimated earlier, $5 million. What is the reason for a differential in cost? No work has been done but there now appears to be a cost increase and an explanation as to that cost increase.

Madam Chairman: Basically, it is what the $8 million is going to be spent on?

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Yes, Madam.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Minister of National Security.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: That is for the establishment of the Marine Ship Safety and Port Facility Security Unit. It is a new building, new construction; it is a purchase, in fact. Purchase of a building that is for the marine port security unit.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: It says Establishment of a Marine Ship Safety and Port Facility Security Unit, so that $8 million is to purchase a building?


Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: And can we ask then which building and from who?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: That I will have to provide in writing, I do not have that information.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Thank you, Minister.
Mr. Paray: Thank you very much, Madam Chairman. Hon. Minister, I am looking at Item 015, Construction of Coast Guard Facility at Galeota. Can you give me an indication of how far along that—I am assuming it is a new facility that is being built? And secondly, if any provisions for new vessels that will be stationed in Galeota in the new port, if you can speak to anything on that. Thank you.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Minister of National Security, do you have the information?


Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Thank you, Madam Chair. Page 60, 045, Establishment of Coast Guard Base at Charlotteville, Tobago, I note an allocation was made in 2015, but revised, none was spent and none has been allocated in 2016. Is it that this programme or this project is now stopped or scrapped? The Coast Guard base in Charlotteville.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: We are still pursuing land acquisition for that base and that is still in process. The acquisition of the land to construct the base.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: And again, whose land? You do not know. You have to identify—

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: I will have to give you that in writing, I cannot—

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Has the land been identified?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: The land has been identified—you will get it in writing. I can give you that in writing.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: But what will I get in writing? I am continuing my question.

Mr. Imbert: “Yuh gonna get ah lot ah stuff in writing.”

Madam Chairman: Hon. Minister of Finance, please. I think it is a valid question, Minister of National Security. Has the land been identified?
Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: I said the land has been identified, Madam Chair, but I—

Madam Chairman: It has been identified?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Yes, it has been identified. As for the owner, I will have to provide that in writing.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Thank you. That is the proper answer.

Madam Chairman: And the stage of the acquisition.


Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Thank you, Madam. Through you, again, is there any cost of this process for acquisition?

Madam Chairman: Well, that is why I asked him to say the whole process of the acquisition so that would say what stage they have reached and as an attorney-at-law, I am sure you understand the—

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: The process.

Madam Chairman:—of contract. Yes?

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Thank you.

Madam Chairman: Any other?

Dr. Moonilal: I want to go to—within the same Sub-Head on page 62, 165, Base Infrastructure for Camps at La Romain (South) Felicity and Forres Park. Is the Minister aware that at Felicity, those lands were diverted for other issues back to agriculture?

Mr. Imbert: Madam Chair, I would like a clarification. That has nothing to do with this provision in the 2016 estimates. I would ask that you make a ruling on that. Whether that is a fair question or not.

Dr. Moonilal: Madam Chairman, if the Minister is aware that the lands are not available in Felicity, then the estimates and allocations would have to be re-
adjusted. It is concerning the money because the money is for three items and I am asking the Minister if he is aware that the Felicity lands have been reverted to the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries. So that clearly you are looking at La Romain and Forres Park.

**Madam Chairman:** I think it is a fair question. Really, you are asking him: are the lands still available?

**Dr. Moonilal:** Are the lands at Felicity still available for use for that project, for the camp?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** I am unable to answer that right now. I can produce that in writing for you, the answer for you in writing.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Thank you.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** Thank you, Madam Chairman. Page 61, still under the same Item at line 049, Refit of two (2) Coastal Patrol Vessels. I see $8 million has been allocated and I would like to find out which coastal vessels are to be refitted from these moneys. Two vessels. Which two?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** These are CG21 and CG22, two coastal patrol vessels.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** And the cost for each one.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** There was a $25 million charge, this is the balance of payment at 2016 that is being made up for those vessels, to refit them.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** Okay.

**Dr. Moonilal:** I can move to page 65—or is it too far? Item 004, so I am looking at 191. In the budget debate, the Member for Point Fortin, of course, was very happy to announce the Point Fortin Fire Station construction project, $3 million is estimated for the 2016 expenditure. It is a new project, of course. Is the Minister aware that the total cost of that fire station is estimated without VAT at $95 million and very little would be done with $3 million for that project? And
what would be the Minister’s approach to funding that project in Point Fortin given that it would be in access of $100 million and you have provided $3 million in the estimate?

Mr. Imbert: I will answer that. This allocation was made by me and it is designed to get the project going; it is designed to do all of the necessary engineering, planning and tendering to get this project going. And if the implementation proceeds rapidly, then consideration would be given to providing additional funds to meet the needs of the project during 2016.

Mr. Karim: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. May I go to page 62? I did not realize we had gone quickly.

Madam Chairman: Once you are within the Sub-Head, you can move between the pages.

Mr. Karim: Okay, thank you. Air Guard, Item 030 and 046, will the hon. Minister indicate why no sums have been allocated, either for the refurbishment or upgrade of the Air Guard C26 and further to that, what plans do you have for this aircraft or at least two? I think it is two. These are the fixed-wing aircraft.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: I will provide the answer to you in writing.

Mr. Paray: Thank you, Madam Chairman. Minister of National Security, on page 65 under Item 156, can you tell me if any of that developmental allocation has been made for the purchase of fire appliances for the Mayaro Fire Station? Thank you.


5.30 p.m.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Siparia.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: It is okay, Madam, thank you.
Dr. Moonilal: I am at page 64, under Prison Service. The ongoing project, the fencing project at the prison, is that captured here Mr. Minister, and under what heading would you have that to complete that project?

Madam Chairman: Hon. Minister of National Security, would you want that answer deferred for a little later in the evening?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Madam Chair, this is under a different Sub-Head. I just want to find it.

Madam Chairman: So can we defer it while you get assistance and we can continue?


Madam Chairman: You have another question, Member for Oropouche?

Dr. Moonilal: Under 031: Acquisition of Closed Circuit Television System, there is an allocation here of $6.5 million at 031. I want to ask the Minister to tell us: what is the total cost of this project? My recollection is that this project was a bit more costly than this. And what scope of works you intend to undertake with $6.5 million when the project itself may be significantly more? If you can give some information on what exactly the $6.5 million would do in the context of a much wider scope of works.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: I would provide that in writing for you.

Dr. Moonilal: Sure.

Dr. Rambachan: Thank you, Madam Chairman. Page 64, under Immigration. I wondered why it is that no moneys have been allocated for the purchase of a launch for the Immigration Division, given the amount of human trafficking we are hearing about and illegal immigrants who are coming into the country for which the Immigration Division has some responsibility?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: A new security apparatus is being looked at to
incorporate the immigration and coast guard and so on, so that has not been done as yet. So there is no conceptual clarification to purchase the launch at this point in time.

**Mr. Karim:** Madam Chair, on page 67, I have two issues I would like to raise, 046: Upgrade of Machine Readable Passport to e-Passport, allocation of $4 million. We recognize this is a new project. If we can get some details as to—

**Madam Chairman:** I am sorry, we are still at Item 004.

**Mr. Karim:** Okay, all right. I will get back to that.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Could the Minister of National Security indicate, I am now looking at 006: Outfitting of PIC 9 buildings for Immigration Division.

**Madam Chairman:** Could you kindly refer us to page, please?

**Dr. Moonilal:** Page 64.

**Madam Chairman:** Thank you.

**Dr. Moonilal:** It is at 006 under Immigration. There is an allocation of $2 million. Mr. Minister, could you indicate whether that $2 million will complete the outfitting work? To my knowledge, much more is required for the completion. When do you expect that this project would get further funding?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** That is for IT infrastructure. That sum allocated there is for IT Infrastructure.

**Dr. Moonilal:** So this is only for the IT?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** IT infrastructure.

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

**Madam Chairman:** Can we then go on to Item 005: Multi-sectoral and Other Services?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Madam Chair, page 66, 002: Institutional Strengthening of the Forensic. We spoke about that yesterday and I see that there is no allocation for
Could the Government or the Minister make any statement as far as whether there is going to be any further need for allocation there?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** I will have to provide that for you in writing.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Do you intend to do some work on it?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** I would provide that in writing.

**Mr. Imbert:** I want to make the point that there is no allocation for the last three years, under you.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** You are in Government now. You are in Government now.

Madam Chairman, next question. There is an establishment of a DNA database for a new project on Item 012, can you just give us some information on what that database you are hoping to establish?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** Staff is being hired to do that right now and we are in the process of doing that; hiring staff to pursue that right now.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Could you go a little further and tell us what type of database you are trying to achieve; database of whom? It is not a hidden secret, but—

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** That, I would have to provide in writing. I do not have that at my hand today.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** We had passed some legislation requiring the consideration of providing database for employees of the security services at one time. Is that going to be a consideration of the present Government?

**Madam Chairman:** Hon. Member for Caroni East, you have directed it to the Minister of National Security.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** We are continuing to develop the database at the Forensic Science Centre.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** You do not want to be a little more clear?

Dr. Gopeesingh: You cannot be or you do not want to be?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: I have answered you on what we are doing right now.

Dr. Moonilal: On page 67, I am looking at 056. Now you have a new project called Joint Border Protection Agency, where you have allocated $3 million. Mr. Minister is this the $3 million to be spent on the consultation to kick in that process and other related preliminary discussions, or is this for a building? What is this $3 million for?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: For preliminary works and setting up the agency.

Dr. Moonilal: For preliminary works and setting up the agency. But you indicated to us earlier in the proceedings that you were going to embark on a consultation process before you begin anything. When is that process due to begin?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: There is ongoing discussion among the agencies right now.

Dr. Moonilal: So you have started it already.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: That is right, we have started that.

Dr. Moonilal: Okay.

Mr. Karim: Thank you, Madam Chair. I will now return to the question I was going to ask before, page 67, 046: the Upgrade of Machine Readable Passport to e-Passport, $4 million. I would like to get some details on this, please, in terms of commencement, completion. That is with respect to the e-passport.

The second Item is on 054: upgrade and expansion of the MyPART Programme. When I examined the schedule under the Ministry of National Security, no mention is made of the MyPART Programme. Mention is made of the MiLAT programme, so I was wondering whether there is some anomaly here. I notice that you have a new project and I am not sure because currently the MyPART Programme is
resident at the National Energy Skills Centre.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: With respect to your second question, I would have to put that in writing for you, some clarification. On your first question with respect to the machine readable passport, we are pursuing Cabinet approval at this point in time to proceed with that venture.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Madam Chairman, page 67, Item 032. Could the hon. Minister give us an idea of what are the programmes, if he wants, on the Citizen Security Programme that will constitute the $28 million in expenditure for this year?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: It is a continuation of the same programme that was run in 2015. It is the same programme. It has not changed. So it is the same programme that has been run in 2015. You would notice it is the same figure.

Dr. Gopeesingh: There are no new projects within the programme?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: No new projects. It is the same programme.

Dr. Gopeesingh: And part of it is funded by IDB? Has IDB done any review of it so far?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: I would provide that for you in writing.

Dr. Gopeesingh: We are getting everything in writing. We might as well go home and put everything in writing.

Hon. Member: Yes.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Minister of Finance, please. So that the response would be given in writing?


Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Thank you, Madam Chair. Page 68, line Item 008: Acquisition of Naval Assets. I note that the revised estimates 2015, $557.1 million would have been spent and I see 2016, $237.3 million projected to be spent for
naval assets. Would the hon. Minister be so kind as to tell us—

**Madam Chairman:** 008 on page 68?

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** Yes, Ma’am, the last line. This $273 million, would the hon. Minister tell us what it is he proposes to spend the $273 million on?

And further, in keeping with the words of the hon. Minister of Finance for locking down your borders and so on, do you have plans for additional naval assets, in addition to what these payments are for? Because I see no other Item for naval assets.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** I would be able to provide that for you in writing; provide the answers for you.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** And whilst you are doing so, would you also indicate whether any new naval assets would be acquired? These are assets that were ordered previously in 2015. Some have come and some are still on hold. Any other naval assets to help you with your border protection that you spoke of? Thank you.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Madam Chairman, page 67, Item 048. I am trying to understand the logistical support for helicopter and the meaning of the words MTH. I notice the allocation has fallen to $10 million. Can we get an explanation of what this is about?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** That is based on the insurance that has now gone to recurrent expenditure and we are supposed to purchase some inlet barrier filters.

**Mr. Imbert:** The other expenditure items associated with this item are elsewhere, under recurrent.

**Dr. Rambachan:** So the $10 million is for a specific part or something?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** Insurance has gone to recurrent.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Yeah, I know.

Dr. Rambachan: But your $10 million is for what?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: To purchase the inlet barrier filters for the aircrafts.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Caroni Central, did I observe that you tried to get my attention just now?

Dr. Tewarie: Just one question I had, which had to do with the Citizen Security Programme. That programme was a successful programme that was positively reviewed and I think that it was due for expansion. I just wanted to ask the Minister whether the expansion is going to be executed in 2016 or you might be considering it or whatever?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: There are plans to look at expanding the programme but that is based on discussions and so on going forward.

Madam Chairman: Any other matters on Item 005? If not, can we move on to the Infrastructure Development Fund? We can go to the back of our books. Thank you very much. Can we go to Item 004?

5.45 p.m.

Dr. Moonilal: Yes, Madam Chairman. I had asked a question before, the Minister was supposed to get back to us, but we found it. Minister, it is on page 284, the Prison Service and the IDF. You have allocated $8.7 million for the construction of the perimeter fence. I dare not ask when it started, [Laughter] but could I ask where is it in the sense that I suspect it is much more than $8.7 million to complete that project?

Mr. Imbert: It is no expenditure in 2015. This is 2014.

Dr. Moonilal: It was transferred from the Ministry of Justice.

Mr. Imbert: Okay, okay.

Dr. Moonilal: You would not know anything about that. So could I ask—
Mr. Imbert: You did it. I guess I was—

Madam Chairman: Yes, and therefore you should allow him to tell us.

Mr. Imbert: Sure.

Dr. Moonilal: Yes Ma’am. Through you, Ma’am, to the Minister of National Security. Could I have an indication of the amount of money required to complete this project? This project, I anticipate, was in excess of about $65 million. How much money is required to complete it? It had started some time ago, and whether this will complete the project, or you will have to get some other moneys by mid-year for it?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: I will have to provide that for you in writing. I do not have that.

Dr. Moonilal: You will provide that? Okay, sure.

Dr. Rambachan: Page 284, under Fire Service. I noticed in 2016 under Construction of Chaguaramas Fire Station and construction of Arouca Fire Station, and my emphasis on the word “construction”—why is it no funds have been allocated for 2016, and as well for the Tunapuna Fire Station, the Point Fortin Fire Station—the Penal has $3 million—Black Rock and the Wrightson Road Fire Station, why is it that no money has been allocated for those fire stations?

Madam Chairman: Hon. Minister, are you in a position to answer that question?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: The answer would be different for each one. So I will have to put that in writing for you.

Madam Chairman: And as we move on to—can we go now to Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services? This is at page 285.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Sorry, I should have asked first. Should I go ahead?

Madam Chairman: Yes, please, hon. Member for Caroni East.

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Dr. Gopeesingh: Under Public Buildings on page 285, 001, Construction of six Purpose Built Supreme Courts of Judicature Buildings. Would that be taken up now by the Judiciary, and is there a vote in the Judiciary for that because there is no vote here?

Mr. Imbert: We have given the Judiciary a global allocation. As I indicated in the Budget Statement, we are going to hold extensive consultations with the Judiciary, with a view to allowing them full control and responsibility of their procurement requirements and, therefore, if during 2016 we are able to settle the mechanism—but not if, when, during 2016 we settle the mechanism for the procurement by the Judiciary of contracts for its buildings, an appropriate allocation will be made.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Yeah, but are you thinking of seeking their support to construct these?

Mr. Imbert: What I would say is that I listened very carefully to the speech made by the hon. Chief Justice at the opening of the law term. One of the points he made or it might have been in an interview after that, one of the points he made was that—he complained that over the last five years none of these buildings has been built. So it is obviously important to the Judiciary that we build these multi-purpose buildings. So as one of the people who would be meeting with the Judiciary, I certainly would seek clarification on this, and if, in fact, it is a priority project, then I would most certainly make funds available within, of course, the constraints of the national budget. So we will be meeting with the Judiciary. We will work out the mechanism, and then we will start to make funds available to them for their buildings, including this one, okay?

Madam Chairman: Can I consider that Item 005 Multi-sectoral and Other
Services is now complete?

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Head 22 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.*

**Madam Chairman:** Therefore, can we relieve the technocrats from the Ministry of National Security? I thank them for their assistance.

Can we now move on to Head 64? The Trinidad and Tobago Police Service. I am sure there is need to do some infrastructural changes. Therefore, can we just suspend for two minutes to allow the accommodation? We will be back here at 5.55 p.m.

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

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

**Madam Chairman:** This meeting is resumed, and we are now at Head 64, the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service.

*Head 64.*

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

**Mr. Imbert:** Madam Chairman, what would ask—I would make a very brief opening statement, explaining the financial relationship between the police force and the Minister of Finance, and then I would ask the Minister of National Security to make an equally brief statement on whatever relationship there is between his Ministry and the police service.

Madam Chairman, the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service in recent times has been given its own allocation. The police service thereby applies directly to the Ministry of Finance for releases. So, therefore, there is no financial relationship between the Ministry of National Security and the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service. There would be an operational relationship with respect to the police...
operations.

So with respect to allocations, the allocations are made by the Ministry of Finance in consultation with the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service. So in terms of the estimates, it is the Ministry of Finance that would have received the request from the police service and made the allocations. I will now pass over to the Ministry of National Security.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I just want to emphasize that in terms of the relationship between the Minister of National Security and the Commissioner of Police with respect to operations, he reports directly to me; with respect to finance, as mentioned a while ago, he deals directly with the Ministry of Finance. However, he is here to give us that necessary support and we will proceed as required. I just want to put that on the table, Madam Chair.

*Question proposed:* That Head 64 stand part of the Schedule.

**Madam Chairman:** The sum $3,284,118,000 for Head 64, Trinidad and Tobago Police Service is comprised of money proposed for expenditure under the following Sub-Heads and Items to be found in the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure and the Draft Estimates of Development Programme*.

We are at page 399, *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure*. Might I call Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure?

*6.00p.m.*

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** We now understand the ruling you gave earlier, would we be allowed to ask any general questions on page 399?

**Madam Chairman:** Once they are related to what is here, certainly.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** Yes, thank you very much. Under Personnel Expenditure, page 399, I note the increase of $1.175 billion and, again, the question we have asked for all Personnel Expenditure is the breakdown, the ditto
Madam Chairman: So can we get a similar undertaking?

Mr. Imbert: Ditto.

Madam Chairman: And that would apply to Personnel Expenditure right through this Head?

Mr. Imbert: Ditto.

Madam Chairman: Thank you very much. Okay. So, can we then therefore go on to—I am sorry, the Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: I would just draw your attention to the Overtime-Monthly Paid Officers. If you look at the figures they keep increasing from 2014 from $290 million and the revised estimates in 2015 to $300 million and 2016 to $400 million. Would the Commissioner of Police who has responsibility for the operation or the National Security Minister—sorry, sorry—be able to give us an understanding of why this increase in allowances continue to move upward?

Madam Chairman: But hon. Member for Caroni East, is it not under Personnel Expenditure?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Those are allowances separate from salaries and remuneration and NIS contributions and so on.

Madam Chairman: Well, I thought it was salaries, COLA and everything under Personnel Expenditure.

Dr. Gopeesingh: I think they deserve some explanation.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Thank you, Madam Chair. The question with respect to overtime is based on the operational demand of the police service relative to the shortage of manpower.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Okay, so there is more demand for the increased activity and the increased work by the police service.

Dr. Gopeesingh: And would that go similarly for the Monthly-Paid Officers which have also been continuing to increase from $280 million in 2015 to $480 million in 2016? That is another $200 million. So, allowances in total have increased by about $300 million from 2015 to 2016 for officers. Is that the same explanation?

Mr. Imbert: Let me answer that. That is part of the overall Personnel Expenditure that would involve arrears, increases in allowances and so on. It is part of the ditto answer, and we will explain this increase in allowances under that rubric.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Okay.

Dr. Rambachan: Thank you, Madam Chairman. The hon. Minister of National Security just said that part of the need for this high level of overtime, the $100 million extra, was the shortage of the manpower, people have to work overtime. Can the hon. Minister let us know how many police officers therefore are currently employed? What is the number that reflects a shortage? Is it 1,000, 2000? By how many officers are you short or have you done an analysis to understand how many officers you have, you do not have that you should have? My final question. On any one shift, of the complement of officers you have now, how many officers are on duty?

Madam Chairman: Minister of National Security, are you in a position to answer that orally?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: There are 6,711 police officers and right now there is a shortage of 996 police officers. The remainder I can provide that in writing for you or that is good enough.

Dr. Rambachan: The other part of the question, you probably missed it. Of the
6,711 that are available, on any one shift, depending on eight-hour shift or 12-hour shift: how many officers are on duty in the country on any one shift?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** I would have to provide that for you in writing. It is not fixed, it varies based on situation, based on the operational tempo. So in any one day that could change, in any one month that could change. So, I would have to provide that in writing.

**Madam Chairman:** And, therefore, would we want some time period? Hon. Member for Tabaquite, in relation to that question is the time period for 2016?

**Mr. Imbert:** It would have to be for 2016 going forward. It would have to be based on an estimate of the numbers requested.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** The other 900 that are not within your establishment, could you just give some minimal explanation if it is at all possible of what are your plans to fill these 900 positions?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** I would provide that for you in writing.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** You see, that would link with one of the questions I was going to come with if I could ask it now, and that is the question of training. I see you have reduced the expenditure for training and, therefore, if training is concomitant with bringing new police officers—

**Mr. Imbert:** Madam Chairman, may I ask under what line item training has been reduced? Are you a “seer-man”?

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

**Madam Chairman:** Okay, so we have not reached Goods and Services yet. Members, please.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** I just wanted to bring it if it is interlinked.

**Madam Chairman:** Well, you see then, hon. Members, we would be all about the place.
Dr. Gopeesingh: So when we reach there ask the question related to—

Madam Chairman: Please. You see, then we would just be, we would not have a sense of organization, we would be all about the place.

Dr. Moonilal: Ma’am, could I ask the Minister of National Security, he just told us a few minutes ago that 900-plus police officers you have less than what you need. Could you tell us in 2016 alone, how many police officers you intend to recruit and train? What number, 100, 200, 300, no hundred? That is all I asked.


Dr. Moonilal: Could you put something else in writing too as you reduce that in writing to tell us how much you intend to recruit in 2016 and what is the estimated cost of that?

Madam Chairman: Can we therefore, Members, go on to 02, Goods and Services which begins at page 400. Item 001, Police Service (Trinidad).

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Thank you, Madam Chairman. On page 400, several items, basically the same question, so I would state the line item first. Line 01, Travelling and Subsistence, Uniforms, Electricity, down to 09, Rent/Lease—

Madam Chairman: So 01 to 09 inclusive?

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: No, Ma’am. I am sorry. May I repeat please?

Madam Chairman: Yes, please.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: 01, then 04—sorry, 01, 03 and 04. Then we are looking at 09, 10, 11 and 12. The question is all these items have been decreased, each line has been decreased by, in some cases, the second one, Uniforms, have been decreased by $20 million. In 2015 the estimates revised was $40 million. So, an explanation as to why the decreases in each of these line items. What exactly is being decreased? If we are talking about Uniforms, is it that you have enough and you do not need as many? When we come to Rent/Lease—Vehicles and
Equipment, we have a $4 million decrease again, why? Why are we having these decreases? Is it that we have enough of these things and less expenditure? So each of these items have been decreased.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** I would have to provide that for you in writing because it spans a number of different line items.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** If I may just finish the items.

**Madam Chairman:** I am sorry.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** I am sorry, Madam. Madam Chairman, page 401, a similar situation where we have 13, Maintenance of Vehicles also decreased by $21.8 million; Repairs and Maintenance—Equipment decreased by $500,000; 16, Contract Employment decreased by $16.5 million; line 17, Training also decreased by $12 million; 19, Official Entertainment decreased by $40,000; 21, Repairs and Maintenance decreased by $14 million and the other one is Short-Term Employment decreased by $7 million, all of these. Continuing, 28, Other Contracted Services, a decrease of $2 million, Extraordinary Expenditure, $3.2 million; 40, Food at Institutions, $1.5 million then Medical Expenses decreased by $15.8 million; thereafter promotions, $1.5 million a decrease; $5 million decrease in Hosting of Conferences. In fact, it goes on. Madam Chairman, in the global figure under Goods and Services there has been a dramatic reduction in the amounts being allocated and an explanation as to why for the reduction in each of these, and what is being left out as we go forward to put in writing.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** I would ask the Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Imbert:** I have some answers to some of the questions. What I am told—I would use “Uniforms” as an example—the award of contracts for Uniforms goes through a circle. So that you may be at the end of a procurement cycle in 2015, and thereby you would have a large expenditure and then you may commence a new
procurement cycle in 2016 and, therefore, the need for money would not be as significant as in 2015. So it has a lot to do with the procurement cycle in terms of the acquisition of these items. There are lots of different explanations here with respect to each item, but I would prefer rather telling you orally, I just picked out the Uniforms once.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** You said you would give us—

**Mr. Imbert:** I know that, but the fact is that these—I want to reinforce the point that this is an estimate, it is an allocation and this would have been an appropriation that is being proposed by the Ministry of Finance based on a request coming from the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service directly to the Minister of Finance. The Budgets Division would have looked at the procurement cycle and would have made an allocation that is consistent with a consideration of exactly when funds would be required. But in terms of all of the things you have asked for, I think it is best that we give further details in writing. I just picked out Uniforms to explain that to you.

**Madam Chairman:** Just for clarification, would it be that in terms of the details, Uniforms, some of them are coming from the Ministry of Finance and some coming from the Ministry?

**Mr. Imbert:** Some of the answers would come from the Ministry of Finance because it would be unfair to ask the Ministry of National Security to explain why the Ministry of Finance has reduced a certain allocation with respect to the police service, because the Minister would not be involved in those discussions, but some from me and some from him.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** If I may, are you saying that the Ministry of Finance will explain why the decreases? I think I asked a little more than just why. What is being cut? May I complete my question please?
Madam Chairman: One minute, please. Can we go on, Member for Siparia?

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: The other part of the question is what exactly is being cut within each of these lines?

Madam Chairman: Yes. That is why I think I sought the clarification that some answers would come or some parts will come from the Ministry of Finance and some answers and some parts thereof will come from the Ministry.

Mr. Imbert: That is what we said.

Madam Chairman: That is why I wanted to make it clear.

6.15 p.m.

Mr. Karim: Thank you, Madam Chair. I was just concerned—the question really is on page 401, Item 15. We would have seen it highlighted there as Repairs and Maintenance of Equipment. When we did the Ministry of National Security, that Item was really transferred—it was seen as Item 96, new Sub-Item, but we see it listed here on the same page under No. 96, Fuel and Lubricants. I was wondering whether there is any confusion in the accounting, or is it the appropriate line item. Let me just make sure that I am very clear what I am saying.

When you look at what we did before in the recurrent, you would have seen maintenance and repairs of equipment, but you would not have had an item, there are no allocations because it was a transfer to a new Sub-Item, No. 96. I am seeing it twice in here.

Mr. Imbert: I am really struggling a little bit. It is quite clear. Previously everything would have been subsumed under the heading “Maintenance of Vehicles, but in this year in a number of Ministries, particularly in National Security and its related agencies, fuel and lubricants have been given their own Item; that is all. I do not see the problem with that. Do you not want to look at fuel and lubricants separately as a specific item?
Mr. Karim: Madam Chair, that is not the issue I was raising.

Mr. Imbert: What is the issue?

Mr. Karim: What I was saying is that for the accounting purposes, when we did the Ministry of National Security, Minister of Finance, you would have noted when I made the comment we were saying that there were no allocations for equipment, repair and maintenance, and that was because that item was transferred to a new Sub-Item, No. 96. What I am pointing out to you is on page 401 both are represented with allocations, so I was just asking the question—

Mr. Imbert: I thought I made myself very clear. There was a total allocation for maintenance. The total allocation has now been split into two parts. Obviously, if you split into two, you will see two allocations where there was one before.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Chaguanas East, please, if I may assist. I do recall the question was why the sum was a smaller sum under the vehicles and the maintenance and so on. We were told that the lubricants and fuel were taken out and put into a new category. That is what I understood the explanation to have been.

Dr. Rambachan: I am looking under goods and services, page 41, Maintenance of Vehicles. Of course, the $10 million would have probably been taken off from there and put under lubricants, so that is how it got to 40. The question I want to ask: this allocation for maintenance of vehicles is it for maintenance of vehicles to be done by in-house personnel or does VMCOTT and other service providers come under this?

Madam Chairman: We have a question, are we getting an answer?

Mr. Imbert: I would answer that on behalf of the Minister. What I am told is that approximately 50 per cent of the vehicles are maintained by VMCOTT. There are a number of vehicles where they are supplied by companies and included in the
contract for supply is also a contract for maintenance, and that makes up the bulk of the remaining 50 per cent, and then there is a small percentage where there are other maintenance providers that maintain the vehicles.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Mr. Minister of National Security, given this violent slash, where $21,800 goes, but $10 million is in fuel and lubricants, where is the next $10 million that you took away from maintenance of vehicles? Is it that we will reach a stage now where when citizens call for police, the police would say they do not have vehicles or vehicles are not working or they are down, and they have not been properly maintained? Given that $10 million is missing, 2015, $61 million, we are down to $40 million from $20 million, only $10 million is in fuel and lubricants, do we have anything to be concerned about, from a national security perspective, not a finance perspective—to be concerned about from a national security perspective, not a finance perspective. From a national security perspective, could you give us a reassurance, Mr. Minister of National Security, that the citizens of this country can be assured that when they call for a police vehicle, the police would have vehicles up and running? Mr. Minister of National Security, as opposed to Mr. Minister of Finance.

**Hon. Maj. Brig. Dillon:** You are asking an operational answered based on the estimates. I cannot give you an operational answer. I can give you a financial answer.

**Madam Chairman:** Having regard to the answer from the Minister of National Security, apparently there is some assistance from the Minister of Finance.

**Dr. Moonilal:** I am satisfied with the answer.

**Mr. Imbert:** Madam Chairman, you have made the point that the public is watching.

**Madam Chairman:** Minister of Finance, if the Member does not want the
Mr. Imbert: But the public needs to know.

Madam Chairman: I am sure the question will come in another form and we will then deal with it. Can we proceed, please?

Mr. Imbert: That is not right.

Madam Chairman: Minister of Finance, please.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Madam Chair and hon. Minister, I am a little concerned about the reduction in the training estimates from $20 million to $8 million, bearing in mind that we need to recruit and train more police officers over the next period of time, to get the 900, plus those who would be leaving the service on a yearly basis. Is there a reason that you have reduced the training where we need to recruit more and train more? Is it compatible? Ask the Minister of Finance, that deals with finance.

Mr. Imbert: I will now use this opportunity to make a general statement on the one before and this one. The fact of the matter is that within the overall context of the $63 million budget—

Dr. Gopeesingh: What line Item you are going with?

Mr. Imbert: The same line item you just asked about training. You asked the Minister about training. You wanted to know why there was a decrease in the allocation for training. I will answer.

Within the context of the overall allocation given to the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service, it has to fall within the context of the $63 billion budget and, therefore, some Heads are being increased and some Heads have been reduced. I want to make a statement. The request for allocations for the police service come directly to the Minister of Finance. I want to put on the record—it has always been so—that this Minister of Finance will give the police whatever they require, within
the context of the national budget. So if there is a need for training and funds are available, this Minister of Finance will give the police service what they require, and that goes for maintenance of vehicles too and anything else that the police require.

**Dr. Rambachan:** I have a very simple question, two parts to it. The maintenance of vehicles—this $40 million that is allocated, how many vehicles are in there in the police service that this $40 million is supposed to cover, the number of vehicles for maintenance? How many vehicles do you have?

**Hon. Maj. Brig. Dillon:** We will provide that for you in writing.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Secondly, as at September 07, how many police vehicles are functional and how many police vehicles are non-functional? Thirdly, how many vehicles were there at VMCOTT to be repaired and over what time have they been at VMCOTT?

**Madam Chairman:** You are asking from September 07 coming forward?

**Dr. Rambachan:** Yes, September 07; just at September 07. Go into VMCOTT yard, how many police vehicles are there and how long have they been in there and not repaired and returned to the police?

**Madam Chairman:** So that answer will be given in writing?

**Hon. Maj. Brig. Dillon:** September 07 to date?

**Dr. Rambachan:** As at September 07, how many vehicles to be repaired on that date were in the possession of VMCOTT? How many vehicles were there in VMCOTT to be repaired, and for how long have they been there and not returned to you? Of that amount, what is the total number of vehicles that this $40 million covers in terms of maintenance, and how many vehicles were functional, actually on the road in the hands of officers, on September 07?

**Madam Chairman:** We have captured the question and that will be given in
Mr. Karim: Madam Chair, a similar question in terms of the decrease and the impact of that decrease; line item 21 Repairs and Maintenance, Buildings. We have had a substantial decrease. We have been hearing and seeing as well the request from the police to ensure that they have good—[Interruption]

Madam Chairman: Member for Chaguanas East, if I am not mistaken, the Member for Siparia—

Mr. Karim: Well, she had raised all of those items.

Madam Chairman: With respect to questions there are certain questions.

Mr. Karim: Decreases, and that will be answered?

Madam Chairman: She had just therefore identified the Sub-Items which were to be captured by those questions.

Dr. Rambachan: Under Item 16, Contract Employment, of course it has been decreased by $16.5 million. I want to take item 22 also, short-term employment. What is the nature of this contract employment in the police service? What categories of persons are employed here? Is it the SRPs? Who is employed under contract employment? What is the nature of the short-term employment also in the police service?

Hon. Maj. Brig. Dillon: It is made up, in the main, of civilian contracted officers, like some of the officers behind me, for instance—Civilian contracted officers that support the police administration.

Dr. Rambachan: So these positions as contract officers, they are not positions normally advertised, the police service can recruit these persons as necessary?

Hon. Maj. Brig. Dillon: They are advertised and go through a process. [Crosstalk]

Dr. Moonilal: National Security—if you could just give us an explanation, and
it must be simple. Medical expenses decreased by $15.8 million, what would explain such a decrease?

Madam Chairman: I think, hon. Member, for Oropouche East, I believe that is also captured by the Member for Siparia, Item 58.

Dr. Moonilal: And you have committed in writing to it?

Madam Chairman: Yes, yes. Can we go on to Sub-Item 002, Police Service Tobago, page 402.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: 402, once again we see the slashing of expenditures here under Minor Equipment Purchases, first, vehicles—

Madam Chairman: We are really at 002 Police Service Tobago.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: I thought that is where I was. I am sorry.

Madam Chairman: Yes I am there. On page 402.

Madam Chairman: 03 then Minor Equipment Services.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Are we on two or three?

Madam Chairman: Can we go on to 03 Minor Equipment Purchases, because that is where you are. Which item is it that you are referring to?

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Ma’am, I do not know if anybody had—

Madam Chairman: Well it seems that no one wanted to ask, so you can go ahead with your question.

6.30 p.m.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Minor Equipment Purchases. I note that Vehicles has been cut—there has been a cut of $15 million. The question will be why?—when it is that the revised estimates were $32 million. So, you have cut by $15 million. Again, the reasons why. Is it that the Tobago police do not need these vehicles? Sorry. Minor Equipment Police Service (Trinidad). Excuse me. So is it then that the police service does not need, you know, the same amount as last year?
Is it because they have acquired many vehicles last year and therefore will need less? So why the cut of $15 million?

Secondly, under Office Equipment which is a small—which we can pass, but under Furniture and Furnishing, again, a cut of $2.3 million and Other Minor Equipment a cut of $5 million. So what is it that we are cutting out under each of these Items, Madam Chairman, in that expenditure in the next year?

Madam Chairman: We need some level of detail.

Mr. Imbert: Madam Chairman, with your permission. [Crosstalk] No. No. No. We have given the police service an additional billion dollars in 2016.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: For salaries.

Mr. Imbert: That is not the point. The police can apply to the Ministry of Finance to transfer funds and vire funds. And I want to put on the record, again, it is wrong to say that things have been cut when they got an additional billion dollars, and I want to give the assurance, the police will get what they require in 2016. [Crosstalk] Yes. But another one went up by a billion. [Crosstalk]

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Siparia.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Madam Chairman, I need your guidance. Am I allowed to ask questions on the line Items that have been slashed? That is what I am speaking about.

Mr. Imbert: The Minister cannot answer you.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: We are dealing with the line Items. The Minister of Finance is saying an increase. That is not a line Item, if I am following your guidance. We are under 03 and the subs under the line Items there and they are all slashed. They have all been cut.

Madam Chairman: Therefore, the question is, to provide an answer for why they have been slashed.
Mr. Imbert: Yes, Madam Chairman, and I really would prefer we not use language like “slashed”, there have been decreases. And what I would say—[Crosstalk] No. She is simply repeating what you said. What I would say is that the equipment needs of the police will vary from year to year. It is based on discussions with the Ministry of Finance and in discussions with the Ministry of Finance in 2016, we will allocate whatever they require within the constraints of the national budget. [Crosstalk] I increased it by $1 billion. So can we go onto 002 Police Service (Tobago) and this on page 403. Can we go on now to 04 which is Current Transfers and Subsidies page 403? Hon. Member for Oropouche East.

Dr. Moonilal: Madam Chair, to the Minister of National Security.

Madam Chairman: We have Item 001?

Dr. Moonilal: We are on Item 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies.

Madam Chairman: Yes.

Dr. Moonilal: That is where you are.

Madam Chairman: Yes. Item 001, Regional Bodies.

Dr. Moonilal: Minister of National Security, I noticed—

Madam Chairman: Member for Oropouche East, are we on 001?

Dr. Moonilal: Yes, Ma’am. That is exactly where we are.

Madam Chairman: Thank you very much.

Dr. Moonilal: Association of Caribbean Commissioners of Police and so on.

Madam Chairman: Thank you.

Dr. Moonilal: I have noticed that unlike what obtained before where we had a slash in all the others, we have increases now for Regional Bodies, International Bodies and so on. We have an increase of $3 million for Current Transfers and Subsidies that deal with International Bodies, the (INTERPOL) and so on, could you just tell us the reason for these increases in light of the slashing of Minor
Equipment Purchases, Police Vehicles Maintenance and so on that has been violently slashed. We see increases here, the reason for the increases to the Regional Bodies, to the Association of Caribbean Commissioners of Police and to the (INTERPOL)?

**Madam Chairman:** So you are dealing with Item 001 and Item 004?

**Dr. Moonilal:** Yes.

**Madam Chairman:** Together?

**Dr. Moonilal:** Yes.

**Madam Chairman:** So, anybody who has any questions on these two Items we will take them then. Can the answer be provided now, Minister of National Security?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** Those are the fees payable to these regional bodies, Madam Chair. Those are the fees payable to them. [Crosstalk]

**Madam Chairman:** All right. Can we go onto Item 005, Non-Profit Institutions, 007 Households? Hon. Member for Tabaquite.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Non-Profit Institutions, Police Youth Clubs, I see and I totally agree with the increase of $1 million for police youth clubs, but I hope that under the development fund there would have been provisions for the construction of—

**Madam Chairman:** Hon. Member for Tabaquite, I guess we will come to the development fund.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Okay. Sure.

**Madam Chairman:**—and maybe your question would be better placed there. Okay.

**Dr. Rambachan:** I just think that $5 million is too low.

**Mr. Imbert:** Any other question?
Madam Chairman: Could we please move on? And we are now at 007. There was no question. It was withdrawn. The Member will ask his question under the development fund. 007 page 404. 009, Other Transfers. Hon. Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Chair, my concern is a question of training still. I notice that you have an allocation for the police academy of $23 million.

Madam Chairman: Are we at page 404, Other Transfers 009?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Yes. The Trinidad and Tobago Police Academy.

Madam Chairman: Thank you.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Twenty three million which has remained steady basically from around 2014 to 2016. Is that part of the training or where does training fit into the police academy? How do they link together? The allocation for training which is a certain amount, and you have the police academy which does training as well for $23 million. Can you give us a—where one is in relation to the other?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: I included in that estimate, recruit training which is done at the police academy, and expenses related to running the academy.

Dr. Gopeesingh: But how does that relate to the other training we were speaking about earlier on? How is that differentiated from this?

Mr. Imbert: This is for the recruits. The other training is for the other ranks.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Okay.

Mr. Imbert: Okay?

Dr. Gopeesingh: The other training is for the other ranks—

Mr. Imbert: And other staff—

Dr. Gopeesingh: Staff. Okay.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: This is for the recruits at the academy and the related cost.

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Mr. Imbert: —and the institution itself.

Dr. Gopeesingh: All right. You have cleared it up. Thank you.

Madam Chairman: So, we can now move to the Development Programme 09, and we now go to page 183 of the Draft Estimates of Development Programme. Item 004, Social Infrastructure.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Before we go to the line Items, can we ask the general questions at the start here?

Madam Chairman: Once it relates to what is presented here.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Sure it is. Madam, I note that the entire Development Programme has been slashed by $53.9 million. So there has been a decrease. Given that decrease in terms of allocations for 2016, I know when we go inside we will find these specific line Items were decreased. The question is whether there is anything—you see, I wanted to ask it under recurrent, I did not ask it on the general part, so I may not be able to at the end. I am taking it at the start there whether there is anything in the Development Programme that is new in the fight against crime for the police service as we go through?

Mr. Imbert: May I crave your indulgence. Before that question is answered, that question is wrong. There has been no cut by $53 million. That is the allocation for 2016—$53 million. There is no cut of $53 million.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: You are right. It is $7 million. A cut of $7 million.

Mr. Imbert: You are putting incorrect information out there.


Madam Chairman: All right. So can we—

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: There has been a decrease in allocations in 2016? And I am asking if there is anything new within the Development Programme to assist in the fight against crime?
Madam Chairman: Any new project?

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Yeah.

Madam Chairman: Any new initiative? I believe that is the question. Is the Minister in a position to answer or can we defer it and you find the answer and give it in the course of the proceedings? Okay? So can we to—

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Ma’am, a second general question?

Madam Chairman: Yes.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Is there provision in here for local constabularies. I know when I raised the question under national security I was told that was for the police to do, and I have looked at it and I have seen nothing here about local constabularies.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Imbert: That falls within the programme of local government reform which we hope to complete—[Crosstalk] which I said during my budget statement.

Madam Chairman: One minute, please, hon. Minister of Finance. It is my clear recollection that the response to that was local government. That is my clear recollection.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: I am so guided, Madam Chairman.

Madam Chairman: Okay? Can we therefore—

Mr. Imbert: I just want to make the point, there will be no allocation until the relevant amendments are made to the legislation, and a new system is implemented—

Madam Chairman: Hon. Minister of Finance—

Mr. Imbert:—which will be at the end of 2016.

Madam Chairman:—I would really ask if you would save that explanation to when the question is properly asked so we can save some time. Hon. Member for
Dr. Rambachan: 041, can the Minister say where this $3 million for the Establishment of Police Youth Club Facilities are going to be utilized. I ask that question because the Commissioner of Police had given his permission to break down the old Gran Couva station for the construction of a police youth club there. And I would like to see whether—

Madam Chairman: Could you guide me with respect to what—

Dr. Rambachan: Yes. Sub-Item 041 on page 185.


Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: There are several areas including Maraval, Cunupia, Gran Couva.

Dr. Rambachan: And would you please include the furniture for Motta Trace, Tabaquite. The commissioner knows the building up. The police youth club activity centre, but there is no furniture so it cannot be used.


Madam Chairman: Can we go on to—[Crosstalk] that is it? Right. Hon. Member for Oropouche East.

Dr. Moonilal: Well, we are on the Public Order and Safety, Social Infrastructure. Yes. Good. The allocation Improvement Works to Police Stations estimated at $3 million. I am asking whether or not that is sufficient for the quantum of work that must be done in police stations across the country? $3 million is estimated.

Madam Chairman: This is Item 001?

Dr. Moonilal: 001.

Madam Chairman: Page 184.

Dr. Moonilal: Correct. [Crosstalk] Three million. “We does spend that on two
police stations. That is why CEPEP have to fix police station.”

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** It is not adequate, but it is being worked on right now.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Minister of National Security, I notice that there is no estimate for the expansion of the Penal Police Station. Is this one of the Items that suffered from your prioritization exercise? I am asking the Minister of National Security.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** That would be the Minister of Finance.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Well then I withdraw the question because I know the answer. Thank you.

**Madam Chairman:** Hon. Member, [Crosstalk] the question has been withdrawn.

**Mr. Imbert:** That is really allowed? He put a pejorative statement—it is a pejorative statement he made.

**Madam Chairman:** In terms of?

**Mr. Imbert:** He said this thing suffered from my prioritization.

**Madam Chairman:** Hon. Minister of Finance, the question has been withdrawn.

**Mr. Imbert:** The pejorative statement he made?

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

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Madam Chair, you are on a general under Multi-Sectoral and Other Services, Administrative Services?

**Madam Chairman:** We are still on Item 004.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** “Yuh finish?” Yeah. I know, but—

**Madam Chairman:** So if you can—

**Mr. Indarsingh:** You are moving on?

**Madam Chairman:**—just hold and then when we come to 005. Hon. Member for Tabaquite.
Dr. Rambachan: Thank you. Under Social Infrastructure, 018, I notice that under the Expansion of the Homicide Prevention Unit there are no funds allocated for 2016, and this in the face of an increasing rate of murders in the country. Can the Minister explain why such an important unit has not been provided for in the estimates?

6.45 p.m.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: There has been a change in strategy and a change in the way in which the police do business, and therefore it is now the homicide bureau of investigation. So there was no request made under that Heading. The police has changed their strategy in terms of homicide.

Dr. Rambachan: And finally, Madam Chair, Item 019, the Expansion of the Mounted Branch Facility moved from $3 million to $2 million, but the $2 million that is allocated in 2016—can we have an understanding of how that $2 million is going to be used? Is it to buy horses or is it to train people? What it is about?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: It is used to refurbish the facilities.

Dr. Rambachan: Okay.

Madam Chairman: Okay, hon. Member for Siparia.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Thank you, Madam Chair, page 184, Item 002 Purchase of Vehicles and Equipment for the Police Service. I note there has been no allocation, zero allocation. In 2015 there was a $15 million. There is a zero allocation for the purchase of vehicles and equipment for the police. Why is this? Is it that they have all the vehicles they need; all the equipment they need?

Mr. Imbert: I would answer that question. They will be provided with adequate funds in accordance with their needs.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Why is it zero now, Madam Chair, through you?

Mr. Imbert: The police service is being—[Interruption]
Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Is it that they do not need these things.

Mr. Imbert: The police service, I am saying this now for the third time, has been provided with a global allocation of $3.2 billion. If the need arises to supplement a vote in the normal manner, the police service will make a request to the Minister of Finance for a virement and I am certain the Minister of Finance will approve any pressing requirement of the police service.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Madam Chair, the question again, if I am to interpret, I am trying to find out, why has there been no allocation for vehicles and equipment for the police? The Minister is saying if they need it in future. So if I am to interpret that, does it mean that they do not need it now?

Mr. Imbert: No, but Madam Chair, there is something else that needs to be—

[Interruption]

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Why now? Why now?

Mr. Imbert: There is something else that needs to be considered. You see, Madam Speaker, the Members opposite are putting pejorative statements on the record which are not based on fact. This is the development programme. There are other items within the overall police service such as goods and services. So do not say there is no allocation. There is no allocation under the development programme. There are other allocations within the police service. If it is required to put an allocation under the development programme for vehicles we will do so. And if it is you are required to put one in goods and services we will do so.

Madam Chairman: I think hon. Minister of Finance you have now clarified the issue.

Mr. Imbert: Again, for the fourth time.

Madam Chairman: You have now clarified the issue. May I call upon the Member for Mayaro?

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Mr. Paray: Thank you very much, Madam Chairman. Minister of National Security, Sir, I notice on Item 033 on page 185, Refurbishment of Biche Police Station. Could you let me know if the refurbishment has been completed since I see no allocations for 2016? Secondly, Item 039 Expansion of Facilities at Homicide Area, East. Exactly what facilities are being expanded? I do know Eastern Division is one of the best performing divisions in the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service, so I will be very interested to know what additional facilities they will be looking forward to this year. Thank you.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Repairs to the Biche Police Station has been completed. The second part of the question, is not Eastern Division, it is area East, looking at Arouca and such.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Oropouche East.

Dr. Moonilal: Yes, to the Minister of National Security. Item 038 Establishment of New Facilities for Traffic and Highway Patrol Branch, you have received an allocation of $2 million. Could I ask, where are these new facilities to be housed for the highway patrol branch? And what is the total cost?—because I doubt very much it is $2 million for new facilities for traffic and highway patrol branch. What is the total cost of the establishment of these new facilities?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: A request has been made to Property and Real Estate Division and they are waiting on the assignment of that property. This is to make the initial, to put it in writing when it soon provides.

Dr. Moonilal: So this estimate is just an estimate given to pay down on rent or something like that?


Dr. Moonilal: Could I ask if there is any consideration to follow-up on the
proposal to use part of the car park of the Brian Lara in south for the highway patrol?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Not that we have that plan so you will put that in writing.

Dr. Moonilal: Okay, sure.

Madam Chairman: Can we therefore go on to Item 005 and I call upon the Member for Couva South. I think I had you hold a question under Item 005.

Mr. Indarsingh: Thank you, Madam Chair. Within recent times, in the very tranquil community of Dow Village, four persons were gunned down, one died, one is still in the Intensive Care Unit and a person was kidnapped in Mc Bean and cremated on Wednesday. And I say that for the Transformation of the Police Service—

Madam Chairman: That is Item 003?

Mr. Indarsingh: Item 003—of allocated $3 million and then we speak about the Establishment of a Police Management Agency. I will like some further details in relation to the operation of this agency and Establishment of a Police Service Inspectorate, what it is designed to do, constitutionally, how it will operate? Will there be the need for legislative changes and with $1 million allocated to the Establishment of Community Safety Partnership, what this is, and could the residents of Dow Village and environs feel safer with this? Thank you, Madam Chair.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: You have asked a range of questions there and therefore I will have to produce that in writing for you and to give you all that you have asked for.

Madam Chairman: All right, can we now go to the hon. Member—[Crosstalk]

Mr. Indarsingh: Madam Chair, whilst I am hearing about the communication
in writing and so on, the nation has been told in the budget presentation of 2016 of a police management agency and a police service inspectorate and so on. Whilst I welcomed the fact that I would be communicated, I would like national community to hear what is being proposed. [Crosstalk]

This is not—Madam Chair, I wish to inform the Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann’s West, I am addressing you.

Madam Chairman: And I have heard your question. I think the hon. Minister of National Security said that, having regard to the range of issues, he will provide the answer in writing. As I indicated—[Interruption]

Mr. Indarsingh: I am hearing you, Madam Chair, but I am not satisfied in the context of crime being on the front burner.

Madam Chairman: Okay, so hon. Member for Caroni Central.

Dr. Tewarie: Madam Chair, my question was really about these same new agencies described as new projects, Item 004, 006. I thought the Minister might be willing to explain what the Police Management Agency would be, and what the Police Service Inspectorate would do, and what the Community Safety Partnership, you know, how it is conceived as being established and evolving. Because these are new institutions and we have a police service—we know how it functions now. We have other agencies that are connected with the process and the idea would really be if moneys are being allocated for these things. Do we have a clear concept of how they are going to be operationalized?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: It seems to me it is the same question and therefore I will provide that to you in writing to give you detailed answers to your questions.

Madam Chairman: Okay, so, are there any other questions under—[Interruption]

Dr. Moonilal: Yes, Madam Chairman, I am seeing here, Item 037, page 185,
Establishment of Divisional Interview Suites.

**Madam Chairman:** We are in Multi-Sectorial and Other Services.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Oh, you have gone past that already.

**Madam Chairman:** Yes, for some time.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Okay.

**Madam Chairman:** I am sorry.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Proceed, proceed.

**Madam Chairman:** Hon. Member for Siparia.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** Thank you, Madam Chair, on the same, with respect to the Police Management Agency, the Police Service Inspectorate and Community Safety Partnership, how would the police service inspectorate compare or work in tandem with something called the Police Complaints Authority? Are they two separate items? Would you require legislation for anyone of these new things to be set up?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** I will be able to provide that for you in writing. Some clarification in writing.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Madam Chair, my colleague asked about this Community Safety Partnership as well? [Crosstalk] But I wanted to know that in the context of the reduction in the budget for the Community Comfort Patrols. The Community Comfort Patrols, that budget was slashed to $20 million to $16 million. So I wanted to know the relationship to this Community Safety Partnership.

**Madam Chairman:** I think in terms of the question that was answered and the undertaking for the writing it will deal with the issue.

**Dr. Moonilal:** You can proceed, Ma’am.

**Madam Chairman:** And therefore can we go to the Infrastructure Development Fund, Item 004, Social Infrastructure, and it is on page 337 of the
Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Again, Madam Chair, under B, Police Service, the lines there will be Items 002, 003, 004, 005, 006, I think up to Item 007—

Madam Chairman: Yes.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: No allocations for—up to Item 008, sorry—

Madam Chairman: Yes.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: No allocations and we really appreciate an explanation as to why. And it continues on the same page, Madam Chair, so he could perhaps answer—Items 021, 022—

Madam Chairman: Okay, so that the hon. Member for Siparia is asking—

Mr. Imbert: I think I need to answer this question. All of these allocations under the Infrastructure Development Fund were done by the Minister of Finance. So what I would do, is provide an explanation from Item 01 all the way down—[Interruption]

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: No, it is just up to Item 009, I believe.

Dr. Rambachan: Yes, all the way down to Item 009 in terms of the ones that do not have allocation in 2016. I would provide an explanation.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Minister while you do that, could you check—because all the stations have been completed.

Dr. Rambachan: That is instinctively, that could be the answer.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Thank you.

Dr. Rambachan: Before I say that, I will check it and provide an answer in writing. [Crosstalk]

Madam Chairman: Therefore can I now—hon. Members, the sum of $3,284,180,000 for Head 64: the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service stand part of
the Schedule.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 64 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

7.00 p.m.

Madam Chairman: So that the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service is now relieved. I want to thank the Acting Commissioner of Police and all the other support staff for coming to assist the committee. We can now go on to the next Item, Head 48. That is the Ministry of Trade—

Dr. Moonilal: Hold on, hold on. Madam Chair, yesterday we were told that we deferred the Office of the Prime Minister to today because the Prime Minister was ill. This is a matter of public record now. Is the Prime Minister still ill? The record reflects that we were told that the Prime Minister is unwell. In fact, we wished him the best as well, and we will do this today. The Prime Minister is not here. Is the Prime Minister still unwell?

Madam Chairman: Minister of Finance.

Mr. Imbert: The Prime Minister had a dental appointment which is being highly publicized in the news, so let me clear up the record. He had a routine dental procedure.

Dr. Moonilal: So, but the Government—[Interruption] Hold on. Madam Chairman, the Government indicated to you that the Prime Minister was unwell; he was ill. Today, we are hearing it was a routine dental appointment.

Mr. Imbert: That was on the news last night.

Dr. Moonilal: So somebody misled this committee yesterday and misled the Chairman.

Madam Chairman: Well, I understand ill to—

Mr. Imbert: Mean anything. It could mean anything. [Crosstalk]
Madam Chairman: As I say, I understand ill, particularly in our parlance, to be a range of complaints. I think, from what the hon. Minister of Finance has just indicated, he has given the specifics of the nature of the illness. I cannot speak to that. I could only speak to what I have said. I do not think that I was misled. I did not have the specifics.

Now, Members, it is 7.02—

Mr. Imbert: Madam Chairman, we would prefer that you defer examination of the estimates of the Office of the Prime Minister until the Prime Minister can be contacted and asked to make himself available for examination of the estimates. We would prefer that. [Interruption] I am not finished, I am not finished. But if Members opposite insist, as Minister of Finance, I will answer the questions.

Dr. Moonilal: Madam Chairman, could I indicate that the Government ought to have the highest degree of respect for this committee? Is it that the Prime Minister is still unwell and they request us to defer further the examination of the Office of the Prime Minister? If that is the situation we can consider that. If the Prime Minister is well and much better, the Prime Minister, like any other Minister, ought to respect this committee and attend the committee to investigate and enquire into his allocation. Did the Prime Minister attend the Cabinet meeting this morning in this very building? Is the Prime Minister well in the morning and unwell in the evening? We ought to have respect for the Standing Finance Committee, all Ministers of Government, regardless of whether it is Prime Minister or another Cabinet Minister. Again, if the Prime Minister is unwell and you indicate that to us, we may be prepared to consider that.

Mr. Imbert: Did we not just answer that question?

Madam Chairman: Minister of Finance.

Mr. Imbert: As I said, if you insist, I have been authorized by the Prime
Minister to answer questions on the estimates relating to the Office of the Prime Minister. I think I have made myself very clear.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Madam Chair, did the Prime Minister request from you his apology to be excused from this meeting because he is unwell or for any other reason? Or is it just a disrespect for the committee?

**Madam Chairman:** Hon. Member for Oropouche East, what I understand the Minister of Finance to say is that we have a choice; either we can consider the Item of the Office of the Prime Minister on another day when the Prime Minister can make himself available. If not, and we insist on dealing with that matter today, the Minister of Finance can deal with it. Our third option is that we go on to another Head. I do not see the hon. Prime Minister here, and therefore, I think these are the choices we have available to us.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Ma’am, we would like to take one of those choices, and the choice you have indicated is that the Prime Minister is not present. That is the fact. We are not told why. Indeed, you yourself have not been informed why, and we would prefer to examine the Office of the Prime Minister whenever the Prime Minister may find it convenient to attend upon us. Whenever he would find it convenient, we will wait to deal with the Office of the Prime Minister. But for the record, I think it is gross disrespect that we are not informed of whether the Prime Minister is still ill, whether he is well, whether he is absent and he has not tendered an apology or an excuse to this very, very significant committee, and I am very concerned about that. Thank you.

**Madam Chairman:** And therefore, can I say that we will go on to Head 48, the Ministry of Trade and Industry, and if we can just allow the technocrats an opportunity to take—oh, the Minister is there, I am sorry—their spaces.

**Mr. Imbert:** You will give them two minutes?
Madam Chairman: Therefore, this meeting is suspended for two minutes just for everybody to get in place.

[Two-minute suspension]

6.57 p.m.: Standing Finance Committee suspended.

6.59 p.m.: Standing Finance Committee resumed.

[Mr. Forde in the Chair]

Mr. Chairman: Okay, Members, may we proceed, please? I would like to welcome the hon. Minister of Trade and Industry, also her technocrats, her permanent secretary and others. Welcome to this House.

Head 48.

I will now invite the Minister of Trade and Industry to make a brief opening statement for no more than five minutes. Kindly proceed, Madam Minister.

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: Thank you, Chair. Our nation at this time is facing serious economic challenges and the objective as a Government is to strengthen the economy as its ultimate goal is providing a decent, sustainable standard of living for all of the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago. Over the last few years our economy has not experienced any form of real growth, most notably in the energy sector. In fact, it is the non-energy sector that has remained the pillar of the economy insofar as recording 15 consecutive quarters by year on year growth until the fourth quarter of 2014.

The focus of the Ministry of Trade and Industry must now, more than ever, be on the non-energy sector vis-à-vis increased trading activity, diversification and investment activities. Thank you.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you.

Question proposed: That Head 48 stand part of the Schedule.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, the sum of $158,841,500 for Head 48, the
Ministry of Trade and Industry is comprised of moneys proposed for the expenditure under the following Subheads and Items to be found in the Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure and the Draft Estimates of the Development Programme. We will now proceed, Sub-Head Personnel Expenditure, Item 001, General Administration.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Hon. Deputy Chair, the substantive Chair of this committee had given a ruling, I understand, earlier today, that we can ask general questions before we go into the specific line items. Do I have your permission so to do?

Mr. Deputy Chairman: Sure. No more than five minutes.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: I would not be that long. Thank you. So we note here that all recurrent expenditure has been slashed by 86.2—I am sorry, page 327, decrease of $86.02 million. So there has been a decrease in all items of Personnel Expenditure, of all recurrent expenditure—$86.02 million. You had estimated in 2015, $260.7; you have gone down in 2016, $130.6. So my question is, why has there been this decrease when we have seen for Personnel Expenditure elsewhere—the Minister talked about this $5 billion carry forward to pay public officers and so on. Why is payment of these officers not included in that increase? And why do we have a decrease in expenditure across the board under Recurrent Expenditure?

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Deputy Chairman, this question has been asked in different forms on multiple occasions and I will give the same undertaking as I gave with every other item of Personnel Expenditure; that an explanation would be given for the adjustment to the allocation.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Mr. Deputy Chairman, I thank the hon. Minister for his answer, but like every other answer he prefices it with something, and in
this case it is wrong. This is the first time we are asking about a decrease in Personnel Expenditure.

Mr. Imbert: It does not matter.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: The “ditto” items that we—

Mr. Imbert: A change is a change.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Could I finish, please?

Mr. Chairman: Go ahead. Proceed, Member for Siparia.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: The “ditto” item that we agreed to in the last few Heads that we looked at was the increase in Personnel Expenditure and we want to get how much was arrears, how much was an increase and so on? This is the first time, as far as I can recall, we are asking for decreased personnel, and recurrent under a new Head of expenditure with the Ministry of Trade and the Items thereunder.

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Deputy Chairman, I gave an undertaking that I would give an explanation for the changes in Personnel Expenditure on all Items in Personnel Expenditure under every single Head. And if I am not—I will forgive the former Prime Minister because the Leader of the Opposition was not here all the time, so perhaps did not hear me when I said on multiple occasions that I will give an explanation on the changes in Personnel Expenditure, whether decrease or increase, for all Items of Personnel Expenditure—a written explanation.

Mr. Chairman: Okay. Could we then proceed? That undertaking was taken—[Interruption]

Dr. Gopeesingh: Hon. Chair, I do not think he is presenting correctly that statement he made. What was discussed and what we had agreed to was that he was going to give information on the increases. There was no discussion on the decreases.

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Mr. Imbert: Why are you repeating? You are being repetitious.

Dr. Gopeesingh: He is now doing that, so we will look at that.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: No, no, you cannot make a statement without fact.

Mr. Chairman: It was a general statement dealing with all Items under the Personnel Sub-Head.

7.15 p.m.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Hon. Chair, can I now ask a question?

Mr. Chairman: Understanding, Member for Caroni East, in terms of when we would have started earlier on this afternoon.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Based on the statement made by the hon. Minister of Trade and Industry, whereas the Government is now going to pay specific attention to the non-energy sector, and trade and industry forms an important part of this movement forward, and bearing in mind that there is a decrease in spending of the $86 million, is that in keeping with the trend or the thrust towards improvement of the non-energy sector when trade forms an important part of it and you are decreasing the expenditure of trade? It is just the opposite. It is a paradox. So could the Minister explain, or the Minister of Finance explain, a decrease in expenditure and you want to have an improvement in the trade and industry which will improve the non-energy.

Mr. Imbert: I would like to answer that. In addition to my undertaking to explain all changes in Personnel Expenditure, all variations, whether they are increases or decreases, in addition to that general undertaking, which would apply to this Ministry and every other one, please note that this Ministry no long contains Communications.

So, as I said in the budget statement, these Estimates are not wholly comparable. This Ministry no longer contains Communications, and therefore,
Communications is dealt with in a separate Ministry, the Ministry of Communications. So before statements are made about reductions, add in what is provided for the Ministry of Communications and see whether there is in fact a reduction or an increase.

Mr. Chairman: Members, let us move on to Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services; Item 001, General Administration. We are on page 327. Just at the bottom of the page 327. No 330, sorry. My apologies. Member for Naparima.

Mr. Charles: Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Chairman. Under Item 08, Rent/Lease - Office Accommodation and Storage, we see that it has increased from 10.2 to 11.7, and we would like to know which sub-units given the fact they have already lost Communications and others, which units will be occupying those—

Hon. Member: What page are you on?

Mr. Charles: I am on page 330, Item 08, under 02 and the question is: there is a $1.5 million increase in lease and rent property, and given the fact the Government has constructed significant offices close to this building, and in addition to the fact that you will be losing Communications and other divisions, what is the reason for this increase and, secondly, from whom will it be leased?

Mr. Chairman: Minister?

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: Thank you. The increase is largely due because we rented another floor which is Level 19 in Nicholas Towers from April of last year, and that is to accommodate the Consumer Affairs which came from Legal Affairs. So that is primarily it, and also that will include facilities where housing facilities, Trade Zone facilities at El Socorro, in Chaguanas, in the Fernandez Building in Laventille as well, Weights and Measures in Arima, in San Fernando, Consumer Affairs in Point Fortin and also the trade licensing office in Barataria.
Mr. Chairman: Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.

Dr. Lee: Chair, we are still under Goods and Services, Item 66, Hosting of Conferences, Seminars and Other Functions, there is a drastic decrease in that expenditure by $3 million. Just in keeping with the opening remarks of the hon. Minister of Trade and Industry, given her preamble, I am just asking, given where she wants to take the Ministry of Trade and Industry, why is there such a drastic decrease in hosting of conferences in this area?

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: Simply because large conferences are planned and there is nothing on the agenda planned, and therefore, the amount which is there is allocated towards hosting the TIC Conference and also to support Caricom and other little technical meetings. But if in fact we were having a large conference, that would be there but it would have been planned from long before. So, it takes more than a year.

Mr. Chairman: Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Hon. Chair, page 330, the same Goods and Services, Item 16. I want to refer the hon. Minister to this, Contract Employment on page 330. You will see that Contract Employment, the Estimates for 2016 is $11.5 million and the entire salaries and so on for the Ministry of Trade and Industry is $22 million, 22,746. It seems as though therefore—could you explain why Contract Employment in the Ministry is about 50 per cent of the entire personnel within the Ministry? $11.5 million here, out of a total of $22 million, which is basically 50 per cent of the emoluments for personnel. So therefore you have possibly about 50 per cent Contract Employment in the Ministry of Trade and Industry, could you explain that?

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: I think there was a plan by your good selves when in office for a six-year plan for contract employment, and I think this will form the
basis of it.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** So you are not moving the Ministry to have public officers within the Ministry of Trade and Industry? You have 50 per cent approximately now.

**Hon. Gopee-Scoon:** We do have public officers and you will notice that vacancies go out as well. So we are continuing to try to fill those vacancies. These are for 61 positions which are already on the establishment, which you would be familiar with.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** And basically how many employees you have, if you can?

**Hon. Gopee-Scoon:** In the Ministry?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Yes.

**Hon. Gopee-Scoon:** It is in excess of 200, but we have several vacancies as well, in excess of 100.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** So you have vacancies in public service and you have about 61 positions and you are going for six-year contracts?

**Hon. Gopee-Scoon:** No, no, no I did not say that.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** But two three-year contracts.

**Hon. Gopee-Scoon:** There are 61 positions under contract at this time. I cannot tell you duration of the contract.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** But bearing in mind we have heard comments from then Opposition, now Government, indicating that they did not want to see much contract employment, but you are moving to the position of keeping or probably increasing contract employment within that Ministry which we are speaking about now.

**Hon. Gopee-Scoon:** These are contracts that we have met and they are on our books at this time.

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Dr. Gopeesingh: All right. Okay. I just wanted to bring it to your attention in case you probably did not notice it.

Mr. Chairman: Member for Siparia.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Thank you, Deputy Chair. Page 331, line Item 65, Expenses of Cabinet Appointed Bodies. Through you, Sir, if we can get a list of the persons appointed to these various bodies that fall under the Ministry of Trade and Industry; a list of the persons appointed to those bodies, please.

Mr. Chairman: Right. Noted. Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.

Dr. Lee: Thank you, Chair. On page 332, staying still under Goods and Services, under Head Item Consumer Affairs Division, specifically 08 line Item and also line Item 21, maybe I misunderstood the hon. Minister when she said that Consumer Affairs was moved to a floor in Nicholas Towers. Is that correct, Minister? So I am seeing an increase in rent on 08—

Mr. Chairman: Member for Pointe-a-Pierre, is it that we have no other questions under General Administration? Because we have now gone on to Item 003. So let us call it one time. Item 002, Weights and Measures. Item 003, Consumer Affairs Division. You may proceed.

Dr. Lee: Thank you, Chair. Again, under Consumer Affairs Division, Item 08, there is a rental increase of $400,000 approximately, and also Item 21 an increase of $1 million where that line Item 21 has always budgeted for $50,000 and there is a steep increase of a million dollars now.

Mr. Imbert: We will get clarification and answer that in writing.

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: I can answer the second one. The line Item which you are querying is which one?

Dr. Lee: 08 and 21.

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: 21, remember we spoke about contracting Level 19 at
Nicholas Towers. Well that figure of 1,075 is for the outfitting of that floor, and that is to house, as I said before, Consumer Affairs as well which came up from Duncan Street.

**Dr. Lee:** Thank you.

**Mr. Charles:** Mr. Deputy Chairman, follow-up to the question from my colleague, the Member for Pointe-a-Pierre, and where Item 08, Rent/Lease - Office Accommodation, I am thankful to the Minister for elaborating in which region the Ministry will be renting properties. But has an analysis been done about rent/lease purchase before we expend taxpayers’ money in a situation where we have reduced revenues? Or is it that the first option is to rent or to lease?

**Hon. Gopee-Scoon:** A review is forthcoming and will be done in the coming year.

**Mr. Chairman:** Item 004, Research and Planning; Item 005, Consumer Outreach and Protection; Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases. We are now on page 335.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Hon. Chair, I wanted you to go to—oh, yes. Sorry. That is fine. You go ahead.

**Mr. Chairman:** Members please, I am looking up in order to see one of the mikes being lit and then I will proceed accordingly. So we are going now to Item 001, General Administration under Sub-Head, Minor Equipment Purchases. So we are on page 335.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** I was going on Goods and Services 007, which is the Freedom of Information Unit on the same page 48 which you are on now. Page 335, Head 48.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** Item 48.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** No. Item 007, Freedom of Information Unit. I see no
allocation for—

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: It has gone to Communications.

Dr. Gopieesingh: Oh, it has gone to Communications. All right.

Mr. Chairman: We now go Item 002, Consumer Affairs Division under Minor Equipment Purchases. We go on to Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies; Item 001, Regional Bodies; Item 003, United Nations Organizations; Item 004, International Bodies; Item 008, Subsidies; Item 009, Other Transfers.

Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.

Dr. Lee: Thank you, Chairman. When I looked at 01, Financial Assistance to ExporTT, and I refer also to the State Enterprise Investment Programme 2016, I am a little bit confused given what, again with the preamble of trying to diversify the economy, especially the manufacturing sector, why again there is a decrease of $1.3 million in this particular area?

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: Having regard to economic circumstances we expect to do much, but exercising greater efficiency and acting prudently in everything that we do.

7.30 p.m.

Dr. Tewarie: Mr. Deputy Chairman, thank you very much. Through you, to the—

Mr. Speaker: What number, please?

Dr. Tewarie: Under Other Transfers, 009. But before I do that, through you, I appreciated the presentation by the Minister of Trade and Industry in which she highlighted the consistent growth of the non-energy sector over the last four years and I thought that that was important.

In terms of the Other Transfers here and the institutions that are involved, these are going to be some of the key institutions that actually make further growth and
expansion possible. But I do not see one institution that was mentioned by the Minister of Finance as having a role in the process and those institutions have to do with the economic zones. Are those under your—they are under the Ministry?

**Hon. Gopee-Scoon:** Yes.

**Dr. Tewarie:** I do not see any allocations for them though.

**Hon. Gopee-Scoon:** But I believe that is within the Development Programme.

**Dr. Tewarie:** It will be there? I am just asking, I am not sure.

**Hon. Gopee-Scoon:** It is not under recurrent.

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

**Miss Ramdial:** Thank you, Mr Deputy Chairman. Under 009, 26, National Academy for the Performing Arts (NAPA) Hotel, I see it is a transfer from the Ministry of Tourism and there is an allocation for $2.5 million, can we get some clarification with respect to that?

**Hon. Gopee-Scoon:** Sure. That is a recent transfer to the Ministry of Trade and Industry. Now, an exercise had been done quite recently, I believe, a general review of NAPA, so we are awaiting that report—or I think it has been presented, but we are going to analyse that report and see where we can go forward with NAPA. But you would appreciate—I have not done that as well, but it will be done; it is going to be analyzed, so that is just a provision for the hotel.

**Mr. Imbert:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, I need to make a point. Just to make a general point, this is simply for the hotel. There are three elements in NAPA as you may know. You have the auditorium, you have the hotel and this is for the hotel which would fall under trade and industry.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Mr. Deputy Chairman, the creative industry; that is Sub-Item 23. Under Other Transfers 009, Sub-Item 23, Trinidad and Tobago Creative Industries Company. My understanding is that the Government had indicated that
they are paying special emphasis on a number of these areas in the diversification programme, but here it is we have a diminution or a lessening of the expenditure on the creative industries. If you are saying that you want to make it an important aspect of your diversification, why are you reducing the allocation to the creative industries rather than even maintaining or increasing it to some extent, so that you can achieve your—through that one area, some degree of improvement in the diversification programme?

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: As you would know, this is a recurrent expenditure.

Dr. Gopeesingh: You have somewhere on development.

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: There is money under the development fund as well for special projects as well and when we get there, you would see that there is a bit of an increase.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Thank you. This one last, the Betting Levy Board, is there a reason for removing the $10 million, taking it out altogether from the Betting Levy Board, Improvement of the Local Horse Racing Industry?

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: The $10 million, I am told, was an abnormal allocation. But in any event—

Dr. Gopeesingh: Abnormal—sorry?

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: Allocation. When—you would know about that.

Dr. Gopeesingh: We do not know about abnormal allocation.

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: But what I can tell you, it is—yeah.

Mr. Imbert: If you go back to the prior years, you will see there was no allocation. If you look in the original 2015—

Dr. Gopeesingh: Yes, 2015, there was.

Mr. Imbert: Original 2015, it was zero.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Well, no, I see here revised estimate for 2015 $10 million.
Mr. Imbert: I think I said original for 2015, it was zero. So it went up to $10 million. As the Minister is saying, it was a one-off extraordinary allocation. And all of these things, Betting Levy Board and so on, will now come within the rubric of the gaming and gambling sector, which would be under the purview of the Ministry of Finance. Okay? So it is going somewhere else.

Mr. Chairman: Item 010, Other Transfers Abroad; Item 011, Transfer to State Enterprises; Sub-Head 06, Current Transfers to Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies; Item 004, Statutory Boards. So, could we now proceed to Sub-Head 09 under Development Programme? Page 155, still under the Ministry of Trade and Industry. Sub-Head 09, Development Programme, Consolidated Fund, Item 003, Economic Infrastructure. We are now in Draft Estimates of Development Programme.

Dr. Lee: Yeah, thank you, Mr. Deputy Chairman. Line Item 014, Business Development of the Creative Industries. Again, in keeping with the hon. Member for Caroni East, in his question in recurrent, I noticed in the creative industries estimate, from 2015, it was $15 million, and on the revised estimate in 2015 it was $6 million and then now in 2016, it is $10 million. Given, again, in the budget statement on page 39 and what the Government is trying to do with diversifying the economy, do you feel that this is sufficient for that particular area that you talked highly about?

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: Well, as you would realize, the revised estimate is $6 million—for expenditure in 2015 is $6 million. So they are, in fact, getting an increase to $10 million; an increase of $4 million. So we are at the point where we are doing strategic plans for the film industry, music industry and also the fashion industry. Work is on the way.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Mr. Deputy Chairman, my colleague must have just gone
ahead slightly, but you remember we were saying that we might be permitted to make a general statement on the overall area. And so, therefore, I just want to comment on the question on page 155 which is the entire area on development programme. There is a reduction—

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member, please, let us ensure that when we go to the new Sub-Heads, you know, let us ensure that we make those general statements, not before rather than we go into the actual Items.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Right, but my colleague went too fast.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, well, proceed. I will give you the opportunity at this time.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Right. So the estimate for 2016 is $28 million and what was spent according to the revised estimate was $77 million, so we have a reduction of $49 million on the Development Programme in the Ministry of Trade and Industry. Again, it brings to me the question, if you want to expand the non-energy sector and move to diversification where trade and industry become an important aspect, here it is, when last year you had an allocation of $77 million, this year you have reduced that by $49 million out of the $77 million. So you have now only an allocation of $28 million.

How is that in keeping with your overall philosophical approach of saying that you want to diversify and Ministry of Trade and Industry, an important aspect of that which I drew analogy earlier on to it under the recurrent expenditure, and here it is under the development which is supposed to be a more important area for expansion, you have a massive reduction in your allocation. Could you explain that, in keeping with the Government’s philosophical approach of improvement in diversification? So it brings true to the fact that you are really not interested in diversification.
Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister of Finance, no more than five minutes, eh.

Mr. Imbert: Thank you. I just wanted clarity that I had a whole five minutes to respond. Thank you very much. I would not use the whole five minutes. Mr. Deputy Chairman, it would appear to me that the hon. Member for Caroni East was absent when we dealt with the recurrent expenditure for this Ministry because I distinctly said—and he must have been absent—that this Ministry used to have the Ministry of Communications in it. I said that, but I assuming, based on the hon. Member has asked, that he was not here when I said that. [Interrupt] You asked—you are making a statement that we have drastically reduced the capital programme, the development programme for the Ministry of Trade and Industry and this is such an important Ministry, and why we are doing that wickedness.

So, I am assuming that the hon. Member was absent when I gave the explanation for recurrent, because Communications has been removed. If the hon. Member will go to page 158—because I am assuming that you were absent when I was talking. [Interrupt] Well, you had to be absent, otherwise, you would not ask this question.

If one goes to page 158 under 06:016, you will see that under that the Ministry of Communications, you had a Communications Policy and Strategic Road Map, $40 million; and you also had a Digitization of Government Media Assets, $3 million, and there are several others. So that if you were present, you would have heard me say that recurrent has gone down because Communications has hived off into a separate Ministry development; also the Ministry no longer has responsibility for Communications. If you add up, you will get almost the $49 million that is bothering you. [Interrupt] So you were obviously absent.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you. Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chairman, I am not sure
we did page 156, Economic Infrastructure and I am looking at line Item 001, Investment Promotion Initiatives and Development of Collateral Investment Promotion Material. I note that this has been reduced from $8.4 million in revised 2015 now to $2 million. And I am asking through you, Sir, why the significant drop with respect to promotion investment? Are we going to find other ways or are we just reducing, promoting investment initiatives and development?

**Mr. Imbert:** I will answer that. In the Development Programme—the development programme is very different to the recurrent programme.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** I know that.

**Mr. Imbert:** No, you do not, because in the Development Programme—[**Interruption**] Mr. Deputy Chairman, why can I not be allowed to answer the question?

**Hon. Member:** Disrespectful.

**Mr. Imbert:** I am constantly interrupted. I am seeking your protection.

**Mr. Chairman:** The Minister of Finance is answering your question. Sir, please proceed.

**Mr. Imbert:** Thank you very much. In the development—[**Continuous interruption**] What is that commentary going on down there?

**Mr. Chairman:** Proceed, Mr. Minister.

**Mr. Imbert:** In the—[**Interruption**] Another one?

**Mr. Chairman:** Members, let us maintain the decorum of the House, please. Right. Let us respect each other. The Minister is on the floor at this time, kindly proceed.

**Mr. Imbert:** Thank you very much. [**Interruption**] I do not know how I am going to begin, you know, they keep talking.
7.45 p.m.

Mr. Chairman: Members, the Minister is responding to the question. Let us proceed.

Mr. Imbert: Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Chairman. The development programme is very different to the recurrent programme because the development programme is comprised of projects. So that projects come to an end and, therefore, when a project comes to an end there is no need for the same level of expenditure in one year as you had in another year. So that, throughout this document, when you see adjustments in the allocation for, it is comprised of projects. So that the projects that are going to be done in 2016, may not be the same projects that were done in 2015. Projects may have come to an end in 2015, which are not continuing in 2016. So throughout the development programme you are going to see variances in allocations because the life cycle of projects has come to an end. It is completely different to recurrent expenditure.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Thank you, through you Deputy Chair, for a general answer. I am asking specifically with respect to the line Item 001: Investment Promotion Initiatives and Development of Collateral Investment, where there has been a decrease in the allocation and I am asking why. I have been told that we would see that a project has come to an end. Am I to say that this project is then winding down? This project, not generally in the development programme. Why?

Mr. Chairman: Minister of Finance, with regard to this particular project?

Mr. Imbert: Actually I have been told something, that some of the people hired by the former administration were going on joyrides all over the world. So that the allocation has been cut to avoid that kind of extravagance, waste and mismanagement.
Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: No, no, please, please. Once again, through you Sir, given the response, how much out of the allocation in 2015, $8.4 on this project, was spent in the joyriding that the Minister is speaking about?

Mr. Imbert: We will provide that information in writing.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: How much of that was spent on joyriding and how much was spent on other matters of—[Interruption]

Mr. Imbert: We would providing it in writing.

Mr. Chairman: You would be provided the information in writing. Let us proceed.

Dr. Tewarie: Chair, you would appreciate that the concerns about this Ministry really have to do with the fact that the growth of the non-energy sector is absolutely critical to the development of the country. This is a position that the Minister articulated and this is a position that the Government articulated in the budget debate. The explanation given about the reduction in the development expenditure, I may be wrong, but based on the numbers I see here, I think we have a problem. Because you have a reduction from 77 to 28 and when I look at the communications development budget I see for 2014, 3.6 and nothing for 2015 and I see 2016—[Interruption]

Mr. Chairman: Member for Caroni Central, what page are you on and the line Item, just for clarity?

Dr. Tewarie: Sure. The line Item I am dealing with in the Ministry of Trade and Industry—[Interruption]

Mr. Chairman: And page number?

Dr. Tewarie: That is on page 158 and it has to do with 06: General Public Services and then the strengthening of the institutions below.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: The Minister of Finance said all those have been
moved to a different Ministry, transferred to the Ministry of Communications. They are all moved to communications.

**Mr. Imbert:** This is your Government working for you. This is the $40 million you squandered—*Interruption*

**Mr. Chairman:** Okay, Members.

**Mr. Imbert:**—on “Government working for you”.

**Mr. Chairman:** It has been answered. Let us proceed, Minister of Finance.

**Dr. Tewarie:** The point I am making, I do not think has been absorbed by the Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Chairman:** Let us get to the point, hon. Member.

**Dr. Tewarie:** First of all, I do not see any line Item in development for the economic development zones. So, if I am wrong just point it out to me. Okay?

**Hon. Gopee-Scoon:** I do not know what line Item he is looking at.

**Mr. Chairman:** Are you making reference, Member, to the economic development zone? Yes. Prior knowledge that you have and you are not seeing it identified?

**Dr. Tewarie:** No, it was mentioned specifically in the Budget Statement and I asked the Minister before if the economic zones were under her, I did not see it. She said it is not in the recurrent budget, it is in the development budget. Now, I did not remember seeing it in the development budget but I did not argue with her because the answer was logical, that it might be there, but I do not see it here and I am not trying to make a political point. I just want to understand it.

**Mr. Chairman:** Okay, hon. Member. The Ministers are conferring. Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Imbert:** Yes, I have received an explanation that there was a loan being negotiated with the Chinese Government, but because the previous administration
had maxed out the debt ceiling, that loan could not be consummated. So that the projects are being looked at but I am afraid that the Government of Trinidad and Tobago cannot borrow any more money because you maxed out the debt ceiling, like the overdraft.

**Mr. Chairman:** Okay, we now proceed to Sub-Head—[Interruption]

**Dr. Tewarie:** Maybe that explains something else but it does not explain the line Item not being here and mentioned that it was stated.

**Mr. Imbert:** The line Item cannot be there unless there is an allocation for it. There cannot be an allocation unless the loan is consummated. The loan cannot be consummated until we deal with our debt ceiling, which you maxed out.

**Mr. Chairman:** Let us proceed, Infrastructure Development Fund, Item 005, Multi-sectoral and Other Services, page 322, *Draft Estimates of Development Programme*.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** In the absence of eTecK, Evolving Technologies and developing the company, no allocation.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** Is it there as an Item? What is the line Item?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Item 295, page 157.

**Mr. Chairman:** Members, we are at the Infrastructure Development Fund, Item 005: Multi-sectoral and Other Services, page 322 of the *Draft Estimates of Development Programme*. That is the booklet that we are in. I would just give a couple seconds for us to just get to the page.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** There are three areas I want to ask about here: the Wallerfield Industrial and Technology Park, the estimate for that is $12 million, as opposed to $39 million that was spent in 2015. Is there any explanation for that? Why such a drastic decline in the expenditure for that Wallerfield Industrial and Technology Park? I thought you all were moving towards expansion of technology? Is it under
construction, if not, how long would it take to be completed?

**Mr. Imbert:** I am advised that the Wallerfield Industrial and Technology Park was just going on and on and on forever under the previous Government, so that the new Government has decided to put an end to this mismanagement and will be opening the Wallerfield Park on a phased basis, using funds from 293 and 276. In other words, we just would not be squandering money and just spending money, spending money and not opening these parks. So that is your answer.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Chair, the issues that are being raised, which basically suggest that on our side we feel that the development side of the Ministry of Trade is under-funded because of its importance to the diversification of the economy, the reason we are saying that is because when we look, for instance, at Ministry of National Security and we saw all the contract Items having to do with human resources, when we looked at the House of Assembly at the same time, and these are the productive sectors of the economy that really need to be funded and we have to see that in the context in which the development budget was reduced by $1 billion approximately, a little more than that, but it was reduced to $7 billion, yet the recurrent budget went up and we had the highest budget of $63 billion. So it is a very real issue that we are raising here about what are the priorities for funding, if two of the things that you must do is manage your fiscal space and manage your growth. That is what we are raising.

**Mr. Imbert:** As a general answer to the general statement just made, the former administration spent hundreds of millions of dollars on wasteful and extravagant projects. We do not— *[ Interruption] Mr. Deputy Chairman, I did not say a word when the hon. Member for Caroni Central was talking—not a word—and he said all sorts of things. I would like to be able to answer, please.

**Mr. Chairman:** Order Members, order. Kindly proceed.
Mr. Imbert: Because the question is, the Member is asking how come the allocations in particular areas are lower this year than last year and it is a simple answer, we are cutting out the corruption, the waste and the mismanagement. You spent billions of dollars and achieved nothing and we are now going to complete these projects using far less money, using proper procurement, with honesty and integrity, and we will do much more with much less.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, the question is that the sum—Member for Siparia. Okay, she gave way.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: I would give way and then I would come after.

Dr. Gopeesingh: In the Government's thrust for improved tourism.

Mr. Deputy Chairman: Which line Item?

Dr. Gopeesingh: I am just referring you now to the Vanguard Hotel, formerly Tobago Hilton.

Mr. Deputy Chairman: 299?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Yes. The Government's thrust towards improved tourism and particularly in Tobago where the Vanguard Hotel, formerly Hilton. is an important aspect of the improvement in tourism, I see no expenditure there and also in Trinidad for the Hilton Hotel. It there is a thrust for tourism, is there a consideration for improvement in these hotels and for assistance to these hotels?

8.00 p.m.

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: With regard to the Vanguard, what we have at this time is a one-year arrangement; year-to year-arrangement. So the focus is on really finding a long-term entity to, in fact, manage the Vanguard Hotel Limited. So that is where we are with it.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Thank you, Deputy Chair. Again, back to page 322, eTecK Development Works on Industrial Estates, Wallerfield Technology
Park, well, the Vanguard Hotel Limited, of course, was the Hilton Trinidad Conference Centre. You have answered on the Hilton, but the others, Sir, the decrease—I am dealing with 276, 293, 297, yeah—

**Hon. Gopee-Scoon:** I think the Minister of Finance answered 276 and 293, in that we are prioritizing at this stage. Much funds have been—

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** No, I have not even asked the question yet.

**Hon. Gopee-Scoon:** Oh, sorry, please?

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** I have not asked the question.

**Hon. Gopee-Scoon:** I am sorry. Go ahead.

**Mr. Chairman:** Proceed.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** Thank you very much. So I am looking at Development Institutions, eTecK, okay? We see $126 million, now down to $59 million, so the reduction, that was the question before, and the Minister gave the explanation that he was cutting out waste and corruption. So I will like to find out for 2015, the revised estimates brought, $126.4 million expended. On what was that $126.4 expended?—and it is broken down $32.5 million, $39 million, $5 million and $7 million. On what was it expended?—one. And what per cent, what part of that—how much of that was on corruption? And how much of it was spent on waste? Please identify those specific parts of the expenditure.

**Mr. Imbert:** I will be very happy to give you a detailed written report which we will also publish on the corruption, waste and mismanagement in your expenditure for 2015 on this item. I will be happy to do that. You will get in writing, all the corruption, all the waste, all the mismanagement of your administration; happy to do it.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Head 48 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.*

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Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much, Minister of Trade and Industry. Thanks to the technocrats and your senior members. Thank you for coming.

Right. We now move on to Head 68, the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs, page 441.

Dr. Moonilal: Mr. Deputy Chairman, earlier today and I believe yesterday too, the Leader of the House indicated that we will meet from 1.30 to 8.00 p.m. today. It is now past 8.00 p.m.

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Deputy Chairman, I am deputing for the Leader of the House.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, hold one second. Remember this morning the Chairman of the Committee said that we will either be doing seven Heads or 12 o’clock, that was made clear by her this morning, by the Chairman.

Dr. Moonilal: So, is it now that the Chairman of the Committee has decided, without the consensus of the House or even the Government, when the Committee will meet?

Mr. Chairman: Remember, there was no objection when the Chairman made that point this morning.

Dr. Moonilal: Yes, there was. I raised the point to her—

Mr. Chairman: But there was no question put.

Dr. Moonilal:—that we had an arrangement with the Government. [Crosstalk]

Mr. Imbert: I am deputing for the substantive Leader of Government Business, and I am saying for the record that we shall be going until midnight or we shall do seven Items, whichever one comes first; for the record.

Mr. Chairman: Yes. Members, we are now in Draft Estimates Details of Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure, and we are on page 441, and we are going to proceed with Head 68, Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs.

Hon. Minister of Sport and Youth Affairs, you and your team; I must say
welcome. Welcome to your senior members of staff at the Ministry. We welcome you all to this House. We will kindly proceed at this time.

Head 68.

Question proposed: That Head 68 stand part of the Schedule.

Mr. Chairman: I will now invite the Minister of Sport and Youth Affairs to make a brief opening statement, for no more than five minutes. Can you proceed?

Hon. Smith: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chairman. As you know in my budget contribution, and no secret to the country, the Ministry of Sport, now Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs, has some investigations with regard to a major programme there. Nevertheless, we will be focusing over the next year to ensure that we clean up the systems and policies with regard to internal aspects of the Ministry and our boards involved.

We will be working very closely with the National Governing Bodies to ensure that they are compliant, and that they also clean up their act with regard to their accounting processes and policies.

We are going to be ensuring that we are data driven when making decisions, which is something that has not occurred before. We want to gather data where we can make the right decisions, also encourage the NGBs, the National Governing Bodies, to do the same. So when they come to us we all will be aligned with regard to moving forward.

There have been issues with regard to the maintenance of what we have right now. We will be implementing a schedule of preventative maintenance and purchasing software to assist us with that. We want to ensure that we finally become OSH compliant. We will be working to cut the wastage, the corruption and the mismanagement that has been occurring. Our main focus as you know this fiscal year is the Olympics and, of course, the World Cup qualifying, and of course
working with the young people of Trinidad and Tobago.

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Members, the sum of $516,807,924 for Head 68: the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs is comprised of moneys proposed for expenditure under the following Sub-Heads and Items to be found in the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure* and the *Draft Estimates of Development Programme*.

Sub-Head 01: Personnel Expenditure. Member for Princes Town.

**Mr. Padarath:** Mr. Deputy Chairman, through you to the hon. Minister. In Sub-Item 08, Vacant Posts - Salaries and COLA (without incumbents), the allocation is $560,000. Could the hon. Minister indicate how many posts are presently vacant? Can he also list the vacant posts? How many are expected to be filled within the financial year? And if also he can give us a description of these positions and in what method they intend to fill these posts.

**Hon. Smith:** Yes, Mr. Deputy Chairman, I am just finding it here. With regard to the staffing of permanent—with the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs, we have currently 92 spots of which 31 are vacant, and 51 have acting incumbents.

**Mr. Padarath:** Mr. Deputy Chairman, through you to the hon. Minister. Can the hon. Minister give us some examples of which positions are currently vacant in the Ministry? And within the next financial year how he intends to fill these vacancies.

Now, with respect to the first question, if he can also give us an idea of the description of the positions within that Ministry. We understand that there are a number of positions that are vacant, but if he can give us a description of those positions, and what methods would they be using? Would it be thorough GHRS, would it be advertised? How do they intend to fill these positions? Is it within the Ministry itself or subsets of the Ministry?
Hon. Smith: Permanent positions are always through the service commission. However, the rest of your answers we will answer in writing.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Well, it is in keeping with the arrangement of ditto, where there is an increase in Personnel Expenditure, from 2015—2016 by $28 million. We would appreciate if the Minister of Sport and Youth Affairs will provide the same information, or the Minister of Finance will provide the information on that aspect of the personnel emoluments: salaries, cost of living, which have increased as well, which they agreed to originally.

Mr. Imbert: Yes, I repeat for now the 14th time that I will give an explanation of the variation in the Personnel Expenditure for all Items, but I wish to draw the former Minister’s attention to the fact, that this Ministry is now the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs, so youth has been added. So that would naturally cause an increase, but you will get your explanation in writing.

Mr. Chairman: Item 001, General Administration; Item 002, Physical Education and Sport Division; Item—

Dr. Gopeesingh: Yes. In the previous Government the Ministry of Sport gave assistance to the Ministry of Education.

Mr. Chairman: Which line item, hon. Member?

Dr. Gopeesingh: This is Salaries and Cost of Living Allowances. I wanted to just ask, the Ministry of Sport was being transferred—certain positions at the Ministry of Sport were going to be transferred to the Ministry of Education, particularly the areas of physical education. I want to know what is the arrangement now because that was going to be effected close to end of the last fiscal year, and if there is any arrangement now where the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs is going to be helping the Ministry of Education on that physical education aspect.
Hon. Smith: Mr. Deputy Chairman, we will put that in writing, right? Thank you.

Dr. Gopeesingh: You would put what in writing?

Hon. Smith: The answer to your question.

Dr. Gopeesingh: You all are “ah joke yes”. [Laughter]

Mr. Deputy Chairman: Item 005, Youth Affairs; Item 006, National Youth Development and Apprenticeship. We will then proceed to Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services.

Mr. Padarath: Mr. Deputy Chairman, through you to the hon. Minister. Item 16, Contract Employment, we see that there is an increase of $1.9 million. Could the hon. Minister indicate to us in the Ministry, what areas of contract employment are they looking at, and whether or not this is specifically with respect to the Ministry itself or any of the subsets within the Ministry?

8.15 p.m.

Hon. Smith: Mr. Chairman, we will answer in writing.

Mr. Charles: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Under Item 22, Short-Term Employment—

Mr. Imbert: We are not going to fall for your tricks.

Mr. Charles:—a decrease of $1.64 million. Could you give an indication of which jobs have been excluded which would result in this $1.6 million decrease?

Mr. Chairman: Which line Item is that again?

Mr. Charles: 22, Short-Term Employment.

Mr. Chairman: Page 444, line Item 22, Short-Term Employment.

Hon. Smith: That is several different—that is a lot of information there, Mr. Chairman, so yes, you will get that in writing as well.

Mr. Imbert: I would give you a general answer though. A lot of people were
hired on three-month contracts for the general election and, therefore, the incoming administration—this is an answer with respect to Contract Employment. Mr. Chairman—

Mr. Chairman: Members.

Mr. Imbert: I have five minutes to speak.

Mr. Chairman: Members, the Minister of Finance is answering the question. Kindly proceed.

Mr. Imbert: Thank you. Under the specific head of Contract Employment, the former administration—Short-Term Employment—had a number of people on very short contracts hired in the context of the general election, and we are not going to condone that sort of waste and mismanagement. So, we are doing a review and we are going to be reducing expenditure on Short-Term Employment.

Dr. Moonilal: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: Silence please, Members.

Dr. Moonilal: Mr. Chairman, I just wanted to ask a follow-up question to the Minister of Finance first, if he could provide us in writing with this policy of short-term contract for general election purposes, and whether there was an ad in the newspaper: “Please apply herewith for the general election for three months”. I want to see the ad in the newspaper to that effect.

Mr. Deyalsingh: It was on facebook.

Dr. Moonilal: My question to the Minister of Sport and Youth Affairs, I invite you at the beginning to put it in writing. The provision for graduate employment, if you could just give us a note of the policy objectives, the qualification, apart from just being graduate, and the number you intend to hire over the period of time.

Mr. Chairman: And the line Item is?

Dr. Moonilal: The line Item is 16. If you can indicate to us the policy
objective, the amount of people in fiscal 2016 you intend to hire, the overall criteria, apart from graduate alone, in writing. I would be very happy.

**Mr. Imbert:** I would answer that. We put a line item as indicated in budget statement of $55 million for graduate employment in Ministries and the Tobago House of Assembly. It works out to approximately $2 million per Ministry, give or take. The purpose of the graduate employment, there are a lot of graduates who are unemployed who are in highly specialized fields. I gave an example in a commentary that, for example, there are people with degrees in Petroleum Geo-Science who have been victims of the worldwide collapse in oil prices. So that we felt that we have these graduates outside there who have done very specialized programmes—you have people doing accountancy and so on—so we have decided in each Ministry related to its core functions—so that the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries would be hiring primarily persons who have a specialization in energy-related studies. So we would not be hiring people with a degree in English in the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries, for example. It is not a programme of apprenticeship, but it is a programme of development of these graduates to assist them to become leaders in their respective fields. So that is the answer.

**Dr. Moonilal:** I want to thank the Minister of Finance very much for that clarification, because what the Minister is saying is that the graduate programme, to use the Minister of National Security thing, the conceptual clarity, is that it is for graduates, meaning post-graduate with specialized—

**Mr. Imbert:** Those who have a first degree.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Okay, you see a first degree is a gateway degree if you are looking for the highly specialized, as you use the energy sector as an example.

**Mr. Imbert:** It is like an internship. A person with no experience who has

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qualified in a specialized field would be put into a special training programme to enhance their skills to become leaders in their field.

**Dr. Moonilal:** My two questions to follow up that, so you are looking at, our maths would tell us 100, 160?

**Mr. Imbert:** About 500 people.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Five hundred people divide it in how much Ministries?

**Mr. Imbert:** Twenty-three Ministries.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Twenty-three, it is how much, 500 into 23? That is how much persons you are looking at per Ministry.

**Mr. Imbert:** Yes, yes.

**Dr. Moonilal:** About 20.

**Mr. Imbert:** Approximately 20 per Ministry.

**Dr. Moonilal:** So, 20 persons per Ministry on this programme. So, it is not a mass of people. The question is this: how does that differ fundamentally, the graduate recruitment from the OJT?

**Mr. Imbert:** We will give you a detailed explanation with the underlying philosophy, but since you seem to want the answer now, it is very different, because the On-the-Job-Training Programme is not specifically designed to function as an in-service training programme in order to create leaders in their respective fields, but we would give you an underlying philosophy in writing so you will understand what we are see seeking to do. But I must tell you the unemployed graduates outside there are very, very, happy about this programme.

**Dr. Moonilal:** I am sure they are.

**Mr. Padarath:** Mr. Chairman, through you, to the hon. Minister. The hon. Minister of Finance is giving us an example with regard to the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries. We would like to have some clarity with respect to some of
these areas of study that we will be focusing on with respect to graduate training programme in that we are looking at approximately 20 positions in every Ministry; and if the hon. Minister can indicate if there are any further follow-up programmes that would create sustainable employment within the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs and also in the related field apart from those 20 jobs or if that is the primary focus you are looking at, at this point. So we are looking at specific specialized areas in the field of sport as the Minister of Finance has indicated in the area of energy, but we are looking at specialized areas in the Ministry of Sport where we want examples of. What sort of “remuneration” we are looking at with respect to that and any further follow-up programme within the Ministry that the hon. Minister has identified that will create further sustainable employment or is it that we are just sticking with 20 jobs per Ministry?

**Mr. Imbert:** Firstly, it is remuneration not “renumeration”.

**Mr. Chairman:** Answer the question please.

**Mr. Imbert:** I did answer the question, Mr. Chairman. The fact is that this is not going to be a one-off. This is intended to be a rolling programme and what we are hoping, there are so many vacancies in the public service and vacancies within the state enterprise sector for people with specialized skills. So what we expect to get out of this programme, as we take in the specialized graduates and we put them into an intensive training programme, a targeted training programme, they will be able to fill the vacancies within the public service, they will be able to work in the state enterprises and give us that critical mass of trained specialists that we so sorely need in this country. So, it is a rolling programme and I might tell you, to forestall any similar questions, the Ministry of Finance is going to give guidelines to each Ministry with respect to what is defined as a specialization and the kind of skill set the person should have in order to qualify for this graduate employment.
programme.

Mr. Charles: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Sub-Item 08, Rent/Lease - Office Accommodation and Storage. I note that there has been a decrease of $2.5 million, but $50 million of taxpayers’ money is still being spent for that expenditure. I would like to know how many properties are being leased or rented. Two, has there been an analysis of purchase option, lease option, rental option? I would like the address of each space being rented and/or leased and the monthly rental cost for each office.

Mr. Chairman: Item 08, page 444, Rent/Lease - Office Accommodation and Storage.

Hon. Smith: Right now, Mr. Chairman, we currently have a building at No. 12 Abercromby Street that has been the Ministry of Sport and now it is, of course, the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs, where we pay approximately $300,000 there a month. We also have eight Cuban coaches from the previous regime that rent apartments in Tunapuna to the cost of $32,000 a month.

The Ministry, as you would have known, Mr. Chairman, the former regime took youth away from the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs and formed the gender child and youth Ministry which is in this building which they do not pay any rent for here. Then there is the Sport Company, SPORTT, and their office is on Park and Henry Street and there rent is approximately, $250,000 of which, of course, as you know, Henry Street is in Port of Spain, they have to pay for parking for their staff and any visitors, which is approximately $10,000.

Hon. Member: Per month.

Hon. Smith: Yeah, per month. It is a lot here. The list goes on for several pages, Mr. Chairman, so that is just to give you an idea.

Mr. Chairman: Commit to it in writing, please.
Hon. Smith: Yes, yes.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Mr. Chair, the point that the Minister of Finance was making about the graduate programme, as far as I can recollect—

Mr. Imbert: Which line Item are you on? Which line Item are you on?

Dr. Gopeesingh: You were speaking, but my colleague went on to another point, but I had my hand up.

Mr. Imbert: I just want to ask what line Item are you on, 116?

Dr. Gopeesingh: And the graduate programme, you said approximately $2 million is going to be given per Ministry, and $2 million you said they want to employ at least, how much, 20 people at the beginning?

Mr. Chairman: Twenty persons per Ministry.

Dr. Gopeesingh: If it is 20 people at $2 million, it means that one person is going to be employed at, is it $250,000? The $2 million at a salary of $10,000 per person will give you 200 employees. So, where is the calculation that the Minister said that he wants to spend $2 million and employ 20 people? That is incongruous.

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Chairman, I know it is late. I know the Member is tired. I know he was apparently absent when I explained this many times before. He must have been absent, because it is approximately $2 million per year per Ministry, divided by 20 you get $100,000 per person. Divide that by 12, you are going to get—all right. I have said this four times. Like you are not here when I am talking.

Mr. Padarath: Mr. Chairman, through you, to the hon. Minister, we see a slight increase with respect to item No. 27 on Official Overseas Travel. Could the hon. Minister indicate to us that with respect to some of these upcoming international events whether or not this slight increase was because of that anticipation?

Hon. Smith: Mr. Chairman, again, this is an extensive list, but the Sport
Company with regard to the Olympic and internship at international stadia and the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs, the 10th Commonwealth Youth Forum in Malta in November this year and the Caricom UN and there are other meetings that are coming up. Again, this is an extensive list that I could send to you again, yes in writing. We spent all night doing it.

Mr. Padarath: Mr. Chairman, through you, could the hon. Minister indicate those persons who would be qualifying to attend on behalf of the Ministry? It has been the practice in the past where we have chosen persons from within the sporting fraternity, outside of Ministry officials, to attend and represent Trinidad and Tobago. Would a similar approach be adopted?

Hon. Smith: As I said, at the beginning when the Chairman asked me to give brief remarks, we are reviewing everything that happened in the past, and we are collecting data with regard to that. We only make decisions based on best practices internationally. What is best for the Ministry and for the country?

8.30 p.m.

Mr. Chairman: Member for Princes Town.

Mr. Padarath: So, Minister, in effect what you are saying, you can give no commitment at this time to members of the sport fraternity that they will be representing Trinidad and Tobago in some capacity even though if it is in addition to members of the Ministry or the SPORTT Company, there is no commitment.

Hon. Smith: Chairman, again, I said there is a commitment to review.

Mr. Chairman: Member for Naparima.

Mr. Charles: Thank you, Chairman, Item 17, Training, which has been increased by $36,000, and Official Entertainment which has been increased also by $36,000, is the Minister telling us that there is an equal priority towards official entertainment as it is to training? Thank you.
Mr. Imbert: I just want to point out that this is the merger of two Ministries so there would naturally be an increase in votes.

Mr. Charles: Yeah, that explains the increase, may explain the increase but not the prioritization.

Mr. Chairman: Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: There is a Division of National Youth Development and Apprenticeship and a Division of Youth Affairs—

Mr. Chairman: What line Item and what page, please?

Dr. Gopeesingh: As we moved along the different line items, the National Youth Development is Item 006 and the Youth Affairs is Item 005. Is it possible—

Mr. Imbert: What page?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Pages 444 and 443. What is the difference between one area and the other?—Youth Affairs and National Youth Development and Apprenticeship—National Youth Programme and Apprenticeship and Youth Affairs.

Mr. Imbert: This is under Personnel?

Hon. Smith: Mr. Deputy Chairman, I thought we passed that already.

Mr. Chairman: Hold on, the Member is making a comparison with regard to page 444 and making reference back to page 443.

Dr. Gopeesingh: No, they are two different sectors of the Ministry of Youth—

Mr. Imbert: They are still Personnel.

Hon. Smith: Okay, one is residential and one is not. That is what they boil down to.

Dr. Gopeesingh: One is the youth camp?

Hon. Smith: Yes, youth camp, one is residential and one is—

Mr. Karim: They call them the YDACs.
Hon. Smith: Yeah.

Dr. Gopeesingh: You see how easy it is to answer it?

Hon. Smith: But I thought we passed that.

Mr. Chairman: Item 001, Item 002, Physical Education and Sports Division, page 445, the bottom half of page 445. Item 003 Dwight Yorke Stadium.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Want to commit yourself in writing to letting us know what is—

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Deputy Chairman, may I ask on a point of clarification, we had already completed the examination of Personnel Expenditure, are we now setting a precedent that we can allow Members to go back to Personnel Expenditure?—we are on Goods and Services.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, the Member was making a clarification from the present item we were dealing with to a past item, so I gave him the opportunity to proceed. Right? We are now on—

Mr. Imbert: No, But, Mr. Deputy Chairman, both items were under Personnel Expenditure, both of them. They are both under PE.

Dr. Gopeesingh: We have not gone on to Goods and Services.

Mr. Imbert: What!?

Mr. Chairman: Members, let us proceed. We are now on Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, and we are on Item 003, Dwight Yorke Stadium. Member for Princes Town.

Mr. Padarath: Mr. Chairman, through you again to the hon. Minister, on line item 16 we see Contract Employment in the financial year 2016 being increased by over $60,000 at a tune of $337,500, could the hon. Minister indicate to us, through the Dwight Yorke Stadium, which areas of contract employment they are looking at, how many positions are we looking at as well, and in terms of if he can give us
an idea of what sort of skill sets we are looking at in terms of filling these vacancies.

**Hon. Smith:** Mr. Chairman, that is a lot of information again, so we would put that in writing.

**Mr. Chairman:** Okay. Item 004, Youth Centres. Item 005, Youth Affairs; Item 006, National Youth Development and Apprenticeship. We now move on to Sub-Head 03.

**Mr. Padarath:** Mr. Chairman, if we can return to National Youth Development and Apprenticeship—

**Mr. Chairman:** That is Item 006, well we are on that one, go ahead.

**Mr. Padarath:** Yes, Sub-Item 22, again, we see short-term employment, if the hon. Minister would indicate to us how many positions that they are looking at, what areas, where, in terms of Trinidad and Tobago, in terms of the sports facilities, whether or not this would be in Ministries, whether or not these would be in the SPORTT Company, whether or not it will be through any of the other facilities, whether it be the National Aquatic Centre, where is this Short-Term Employment going to be instituted, how many positions, and, also, if we could get a description of the remuneration packages for these persons.

**Mr. Imbert:** Mr. Chairman, I am advised that Short-Term Employment is not associated with the positions, it is employment that is for a period of six months or less for situations that arise from time to time as a result of unforeseen matters, and this actually has come from the Ministry of Youth, it is not in the Ministry of Sport. If you want a better explanation, I am sure we can provide that to you in writing. Okay?

**Mr. Padarath:** Mr. Chairman, I think that will be most useful if the hon. Minister can give us that in writing so that we can get a clear indication of where
Mr. Imbert: And what Short-Term Employment is, and so on. No problem.

Mr. Chairman: Member for Tabaquite.

Dr. Rambachan: I was trying to get your attention, Mr. Chairman, but I did not. The Dwight Yorke Stadium, there is a line Item for that here, are there similar line items anywhere for Ato Boldon and Manny Ramjohn, and so on? I did not see any of those and I am wondering how are those being maintained and, as we are on the question, there are a number of very good recreation facilities which were built recently across the country, and does the Sport Ministry have any inclination to providing financing in order to ensure that those do not get dilapidated very quickly also?

Hon. Smith: Mr. Chairman, the Dwight Yorke Stadium is under the Ministry of Sport, the other stadia that he is speaking about is under the SPORTT Company, so that is the difference there.

Dr. Rambachan: SPORTT Company? They need to do a better job.

Hon. Smith: We plan to improve from the past five years. Yes, correct. We are going to manage it much better.

Mr. Imbert: The company that you managed for the last five years, we will do a much better job than you.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, we move on to Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases; Item 001, General Administration. Member for Princes Town, you caught my eye.

Mr. Padarath: Chairman, through you again to the hon. Minister, with respect to Item 01, Vehicles, we see here that there has actually been a removal of this line item in terms of its expenditure and its allocation, could the hon. Minister indicate to us: how do they intend to operate and function without any allocation being
given with respect to these vehicles?

Hon. Smith: Chairman, I have been advised that four were purchased last year and we do not need any. We are trying to cut down on the wastage so we are good there with the four.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you. [Crosstalk]

Mr. Padarath: Mr. Chairman, could the hon. Minister indicate when these vehicles were bought? And was it—

Hon. Smith: In May.

Mr. Padarath:—and also the type of vehicles, and the cost of these vehicles, and whether or not they was bought specifically for the Ministry of Sport.

Hon. Smith: I am being told it is two Prados and two Wingroads, no Porsche.

Mr. Padarath: Okay, so that means that the Partnership Government would have provided for the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs, thank you.

Mr. Chairman: Item 002, Physical Education and Sport Division—

Mr. Imbert: You bought vehicles that they did not need, taxpayers paid for that.

Mr. Chairman: Members, page 449, Item 002, Physical Education and Sport Division.

Dr. Gopeesingh: That is the area that I was asking the Minister to clarify where are the physical education officers who were in the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs, and there was a decision to move some of them to the Ministry of Education, where is that? Is it in limbo? Has it been clarified?

Hon. Smith: They are still in Sport, but, again, as I said before, we are reviewing and we are having discussions with the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs.

Dr. Gopeesingh: They are still in Sport?
Hon. Smith: Yes, they are still in Sport, safe in Sport. Just to clarify, Mr. Chairman, the former regime did not purchase, the taxpayers’ money purchased the vehicles for the use of the people of Trinidad and Tobago. I just want to clear that statement.

Mr. Chairman: Item 003, Dwight Yorke Stadium. Item 004, Youth Centres. Item 005, Youth Affairs—

Mr. Indarsingh: Deputy Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: Yes, Couva South.

Mr. Indarsingh: Is there any allocation in terms of furniture and furnishings, and so on, for the California Youth Facility?

Hon. Smith: Chairman, I do not what to get into specifics because each constituency could ask that, you will get that in writing.

Mr. Chairman: Item 006, National Youth Development and Apprenticeship. We now move on to Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies. Item 002, Commonwealth Bodies. Item 005, Non-Profit Institutions.

Mr. Karim: Mr. Chairman, may I, under Item Non-Profit Institutions, line item 32, there is an increase of $2.5 million, would it be possible for us to get a listing of what constitutes those bodies—29 and 32.

Mr. Chairman: It is 29 and 32.

Hon. Smith: Sure, we will get a listing to you. That is grant funding so you have to wait until—

Dr. Gopeesingh: You can give us a few examples of what you consider non-profit organizations, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: Under Institutions, hon. Minister?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Sub-items 29, 32.

Hon. Smith: Like the NGBs, the National Governing Bodies, the Youth bodies,
and so on.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Okay.

Hon. Smith: Right? So when they come to us for the grant funding we will—

Dr. Gopeesingh: It is sporting bodies—national sporting bodies.

Hon. Smith: And youth as well.

Mr. Chairman: Member for Tabaquite.

Dr. Rambachan: Mr. Deputy Chairman, the regional complexes, nothing has been allocated to them, is it that items 12 and 20, for example, come under SPORTT Company also?

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Chairman, the Member is not reading properly, $10 million has been allocated.

Mr. Chairman: Line item 34.

Dr. Rambachan: Oh, it is down below?

Mr. Imbert: It is not down below, it is on the line.

Dr. Rambachan: Yeah, well, okay.

Mr. Chairman: Yeah Sub-Item 34, it is $10 million.

Dr. Rambachan: Yeah, well there was a 12 up on top also, Regional Complexes. You saw it? There is a Sub-Item 12, Regional Complexes and there is nothing allocated—

Mr. Chairman: Oh, the other one, okay you are at 12.

Dr. Rambachan: Yeah, well is the 12 and the 34 the same?

Mr. Chairman: Page 451, Sub-Item 12 is Regional Complexes, and then we have line item 34, Regional Complexes.

Dr. Rambachan: Community Development.

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Chairman, a number of things have been merged from other Ministries, if you look at the whole line item you will see there was never any
allocation there under Regional Complexes under this Ministry, the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs. This newly created Ministry now has an allocation of $10 million for regional complexes. It would not have had it before, it did not exist before.

**Dr. Rambachan:** So the Chaguanas Regional Complex will come under this?

**Hon. Smith:** Mr. Chairman, we will give you a list because, again, all the constituencies could start asking that.

**Mr. Chairman:** All right, point taken.

**Dr. Rambachan:** All right, but, Mr. Chairman, what about St. Paul Street Gymnasium, would that fall under that also?

**Hon. Smith:** Mr. Chairman, did I not just say we will give a list? We do not want to start nitpicking and—

**Dr. Rambachan:** We are not sure we will get the list, you know.

**Mr. Chairman:** Member for Tabaquite, assurances have been given that all information will be provided in writing, and I anticipate that it will be done.

**Mr. Imbert:** We will try to do it faster than them, they sometimes took years.

**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you. You have a question again, hon. Member for Tabaquite.

**Dr. Rambachan:** The Boxing Board of Control is getting almost $2.7 million and they are always saddled with all kinds of confusions it seems, that we read in the public, what is the approach of the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs towards ensuring that the Boxing Board of Control functions properly?

8.45 p.m.

**Hon. Smith:** Chairman, we are cutting out the waste, the corruption and the mismanagement and they probably would have a new board in there pretty soon, so it will stop by then.
Mr. Chairman: Item 007, Households.

Mr. Padarath: Mr. Chairman, through you to the hon. Minister, we are looking at Item No. 2.

Mr. Chairman: Silence, please.

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Chairman, could I just make a comment? The Member for Caroni East just told us across the floor that we have no moral authority. I do not know what line Item he is talking about. Could you control him, please? He should not say these things.

Mr. Chairman: Member for Princes Town.

Mr. Padarath: Mr. Chairman, through you to the hon. Minister, line Item No. 3 under Households. If we can get an idea, a sense from the hon. Minister, we know it is being transferred from the Minister of Gender, Youth and Child Development. Over the next year $2 million has been allocated for hosting of vacation camps. If we can have an idea, especially with the Government’s emphasis on rural development, how much of this will be allocated to constituencies that are considered to be rural, and how long it intends to be run and how many children do they intend to facilitate through these summer camps?

Hon. Smith: Very good question, Chairman, again it is only three weeks and we have a team working on that and they will be providing a list for us shortly.

Mr. Chairman: Item 009, Other Transfers.

Mr. Karim: Mr. Chairman, may we get an explanation to this significant decrease, line item 04, the Sport Company of Trinidad and Tobago?

Mr. Imbert: We are cutting out the corruption, the waste and the mismanagement, and it was particularly bad. That is the Ministry that had LifeSport in it. I think we could save a lot of money.

Mr. Padarath: Mr. Chairman, again through you to the hon. Minister. Under
Other Transfers, 009, I see we have the Sport Company of Trinidad and Tobago. Could the hon. Minister indicate to us how soon we will be seeing a new board in place, one, and also the vacancies that exist in the management of the Sport Company of Trinidad and Tobago, how soon could we see that being addressed in terms of finalizing persons within positions, one, or two, advertising for positions that are currently vacant or have persons acting within those positions?

**Hon. Smith:** Chairman, you would have seen the speed at which we have been accumulating our boards, unlike the former regime which took over a year, so I think he could be a little patient to wait on us. It will be done in the next few weeks with regard to the SporTT board.

**Mr. Chairman:** Item 011, Transfers.

**Mr. Padarath:** Mr. Chairman, so at this point we can say that we are without a board for the Sport Company?

**Hon. Smith:** Chair, we will put it in writing.

**Mr. Padarath:** Also with respect to the management and the positions that are currently vacant, one, or two, persons acting in those positions, could we have that in writing as well?

**Hon. Smith:** Sure.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Item 001, Transfers to State Enterprises; 01, First Citizens Bank Limited, repayment of loan on the Brian Lara Cricket Stadium. Could the hon. Minister tell us what is the outstanding balance on the loan for the Brian Lara Stadium? Number one. What is the total cost of the loan? I am going through slowly. What is the cost of the Brian Lara Stadium so far? [Interruption] What is the total cost of the loan? What is the amount?

**Mr. Chairman:** One Member at a time, please.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** What is the outstanding balance on the loan, and the present
Government, what are their plans for the Brian Lara Stadium for the future?

**Mr. Imbert:** I believe the cost of that project is somewhere around the amount of money stolen or wasted in the LifeSport programme, but we will give you the particulars that you have asked for in writing. I think it could be close to the amount of legal fees that you paid to lawyers; about the amount you paid to lawyers.

**Mr. Chairman:** Would you care to provide it in writing?

**Mr. Imbert:** We will put it in writing; just giving him an idea.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** You are ashamed to give the cost of the Brian Lara Stadium.

**Mr. Chairman:** Members!

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** You should be ashamed. [Crosstalk]

**Mr. Chairman:** Let us proceed to Sub-Head 09, Development Programme.

Member for Caroni East! Minister, I would like to proceed to Sub-Head—

**Dr. Moonilal:** Mr. Chairman, as the epitome of diplomacy here, let me gently speak, as someone who has always remained calm in this House. [Laughter and crosstalk]

**Mr. Chairman:** Members! Members!

**Dr. Moonilal:** If I respond to you, I will make three editorials, so could I ask the question. [Laughter]

**Mr. Chairman:** Member for Oropouche East, it is getting late, kindly proceed.

**Dr. Moonilal:** On that item, could I also ask the Minister, in writing of course—I do not want to ask the Minister—

**Mr. Chairman:** Which line item?

**Dr. Moonilal:**—on the line item of Pathway Programme, the loan repayment; there is nothing there. Could I ask the Minister if that loan payment has come to an end, and if it has, why have they not removed it as a line item in the first place?
Hon. Smith: I could answer that. That loan was paid off for obvious reasons.

Dr. Moonilal: So they could remove it as LifeSport?

Hon. Smith: Yes.

Mr. Imbert: You do not want to see LifeSport in the documents? I understand why you want it out.

Mr. Chairman: Sub-Head 09, Development Programme; Item No. 004, Social Infrastructure; and we proceed to the Draft Estimates of Development Programme 2016, and we are on page 209. You all are with me, Members? Nice, excellent.

Mr. Padarath: Mr. Chairman, through you to the hon. Minister, line item 122, Establishment of the Sport Institute of Trinidad and Tobago: $1 million has been allocated to this project, it being identified as a new project. Could the hon. Minister indicate to us exactly where they intend to function and operate this Sport Institute out of, would it be a new building or would it be a new facility being established? I wish to also suggest that if it is a new facility being established that we would also want to look at several of Trinidad and Tobago’s leading and premier sports personalities coming from south Trinidad, and seeing that this Government has placed so much focus on rural development, that they may wish to consider constituencies like Naparima and Princes Town, Oropouche East, et cetera, to establish a sports facility of Trinidad and Tobago; whether or not they have considered utilizing the Brian Lara Stadium or any other facility for this purpose.

Hon. Smith: Mr. Chairman, what is the question?

Mr. Padarath: Where, when, who and how of the establishment of the Sport Institute of Trinidad and Tobago, Item 122. They have identified $1 million for that, we are asking whether it is a new facility. Is it for the start-up, for the construction of a new facility? How do they intend to establish this? How do they
intend to run this? How do they intend to man this? What exactly is this Sport Institute of Trinidad and Tobago about? We are also making the recommendation that seeing they have focussed so much of their energies on rural development, they may wish to consider some of the southern constituencies where there is available land use and so on.

When you look at line item 124, you see the construction of Diego Martin Sporting Complex, but you see nothing in several of the southern and central constituencies.

[MRS. ANNISETTE-GEORGE in the Chair]

Hon. Smith: Chairman, clearly that question is very long, so obviously the answer will be very long; so we will put that in writing.

Mr. Padarath: Madam Chairman, we can clearly see again, that there is no planning.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Princes Town, I do not think that is a fair conclusion to the answer that you were given, please.

Mr. Imbert: Since we put this thing in the allocations, the Sport Institute of Trinidad and Tobago, we are talking about line item 122, Establishment of a Sport Institute of Trinidad and Tobago. Page 209, 09 Development Programme; 004, Social Infrastructure; 122, Establishment of a Sport Institute of Trinidad and Tobago. This is a brand new project. It was a manifesto commitment and it is in the budget statement, and the $1 million is the start-up funds to do the planning for this institute which is an entity. It is not a building; it is an entity like UWI. It is an institution; UTT is an institution. This is an entity; so the $1 million, is start-up funds to do the planning, because this is a brand new entity.

Mr. Charles: Madam Chairman, I would like, through you, to ask the Minister of Sport, Item 124, Construction of the Diego Martin Sporting Complex, $25
Standing Finance Committee

million, if he could give us an idea of who this would serve and what would be the facilities offered and when could the constituents of Naparima look forward to a similar facility?

Madam Chairman: Member for Naparima, in terms of who it will serve? As it is a line Item I will allow that, but I do not see anything for Naparima here, to allow that second part to your question.

Hon. Smith: It is clear in the line Item. It is a Diego Martin Sporting Complex, so I think it is clear as day that it will be serving the people of three constituencies of Diego Martin.

Dr. Moonilal: A small question. I am seeing here under Recreation/Culture, Mr. Minister, you have the upgrading of the swimming pools and so on. I am wondering if under this heading as well: is there any funding for the construction of the swimming pool in Laventille which the UDeCott is now pursuing as part of a budget commitment? Are you also involved in the construction of the swimming pool in Laventille that UDeCott is now designing? Because the client Ministry would do that.

Mr. Imbert: You will have to assist us here since you were the Minister for UDeCott. Would that not be under a UDeCott establishment? Would it not be under the UDeCott allocation?

Dr. Moonilal: Normally how it works is that the client Ministry would have the allocation, and they would work with Finance and send the funds to UDeCott. But if you are building a swimming pool anywhere, this is a matter of the Ministry of Sport.

Mr. Imbert: But the one that you referred to, was that under the Ministry of Sport previously?

Dr. Moonilal: It was an announcement made in the budget, and the UDeCott is
now moving—in the budget debate—

**Mr. Chairman:** Which budget?

**Dr. Moonilal:** In the recent debate I think the Member for Laventille West—

**Mr. Imbert:** I announced that?

**Dr. Moonilal:**—announced a swimming pool—mentioned it. UDeCott is now actually moving I think with good haste to look at construction of the swimming pool in Laventille. I am wondering if you are the client Ministry for it, or if there is another client Ministry? You are not?

**Hon. Smith:** Chairman, no we are not, but we are happy to hear that UDeCott is moving forward with that project.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** On the question of swimming pools, would that be upgrade of swimming pools for use of students from the Ministry of Education? Does that include swimming pools for education needs?

**Hon. Smith:** Chairman, yes it does.

**Madam Chairman:** Can we go on please? Can we go on to 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services, page 211?

**Mr. Padarath:** Madam Chairman, just to go back to 004—I was trying to get your attention earlier—if the hon. Minister would be kind enough to explain to us line item 005, the Development of a Youth Employment Policy, for $500,000. If he can give us a synopsis of what that entails, please.

**Madam Chairman:** That is at page 210.

**Hon. Smith:** Madam Chair, as I said, only three weeks, we met with the youth arm, and they are working on this as well. We will get this in writing to you as soon as possible.

**Mr. Padarath:** Madam Chair, through you, can the hon. Minister explain his words when he says the “youth arm”, what youth arm he refers to?
Hon. Smith: The Tobago Youth Council and the Trinidad Youth Council, I met with them. I am actually one of the few Ministers to meet with them, and I am planning to go their actual meetings next week with them at their different locations.

Madam Chairman: Can we go on to 005, page 211, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services.

9.00 p.m.

And therefore, can we go now to the Infrastructure Development Fund? And if we move to page 346—no 347. Social Infrastructure: 004.

Hon. Members, the sum of $516,807,924 for Head 68: the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs stand part of the Schedule.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 68 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Members, can we on behalf of the committee thank the members of Sport and Youth Affairs and relieve the technocrats who have attended. Thank you, please.

Members, can we just agree that as we have the hon. Minister of Finance in the Chair here, we shall go onto Head 20 and Head 02.

Hon. Imbert: Madam Chairman, when you were not present with us there was a discussion with the Deputy Chairman, and we had discussed a 30-minute break at this time. We crave your indulgence to have a 30-minute break. I think the Members opposite might be agreeable. [Crosstalk] No. No. Not with you. We spoke to the Deputy Chairman. [Crosstalk]

Madam Chairman: Excuse me. I would like to ask that if I give a 30-minute break, if we are going to 12.30 p.m. [Crosstalk]

Dr. Moonilal: These are small Items.
Madam Chairman: No. Well we will just continue, Member for Oropouche East, to reach to 12 Items. That is all. I can arrange for Members to stream out.

Hon. Imbert: You see, Madam Chairman, I cannot stream out. I have to stay. I cannot stream. [Crosstalk] I mean, you took a break. [Laughter]

Madam Chairman: Well we can skip Auditor General and—

Hon. Imbert: I still have to be here for all.

Madam Chairman: You still have to be here for all. So all right. I think to be humane to the hon. Minister of Finance, we will have a 20-minute break and return here. So we will resume here at 9.23 p.m.

Hon. Imbert: Thank you so much.

9.03 p.m.: Standing Finance Committee suspended.

9.23 p.m.: Standing Finance Committee resumed.

Madam Chairman: Members, the Standing Finance Committee meeting now resumes, and we are at Head 20: Pensions and Gratuities. This is at page 118. Yes? All right. So Head 20: Pensions and Gratuities - $50 million.

Head 20.

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

Hon. Imbert: Madam Chairman, this is the Head that provides for the payment of pensions and gratuities to public officers, widows and orphans, some teachers, naval and military pensions, judges’ pensions, prime ministers’ pensions, our pensions, and so on, fire service pensions et cetera. Actually, fire service is accounted for elsewhere. I would simply say that it is just a general principle that as salaries are increased, an increased allocation has to be made for pensions because quite often collective agreements go backward. So, you might reach agreement on the period 2011 to 2013, for example, in the year 2015. So it means
an increased pension payment for persons who would have been retired in those years. That is it basically.

*Question proposed:* That Head 20 stand part of the Schedule.

**Madam 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* and the *Draft Estimates of Development Programme*.

Sub-Head 04: Current Transfers and Subsidies. We are at page 118, Item 007: Households.

**Hon. Imbert:** Actually, Madam Chairman, I heard you referring to a figure of $50 million. I was a little surprised because I simply thought it was more than that. It is really $2,664,2—sorry—$2,664,000 under Households alone. Then you have other Items which it is more like $3.1 billion. Okay. I am now being told that this is a direct charge, so that all we have to appropriate is $50 million.

**Madam Chairman:** It is Item 10.

**Hon. Imbert:** It is just that the way it is done in the estimates, even though we are appropriating a certain amount, we have been, throughout this examination, have been examining everything whether it is appropriated or not. So, I just wanted to make the point that the allocation for Pensions and Gratuities is, in fact, $3,112,500,000. The Item that we are appropriating is for Gratuities to Technical and Professional Contract Officers, but the total is $3.1 billion.

9.30 p.m.

**Madam Chairman:** The Item under consideration is just that Sub-Item 10.

**Hon. Imbert:** Page 118.

**Madam Chairman:** We will consider all the Items.

**Hon. Imbert:** Yes, this is what we have been doing as we are going through.

**UNREVISED**
We have been looking at everything, so I have no problem with that.

Madam Chairman: So, under 007, Households.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 20 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Madam Chairman: Can we now go on to Head 02: Auditor General? And if you give me one moment, please. Page 5. Head 02: Auditor General, $43,944,260.

Head 02.

Question proposed: That Head 02 stand part of the Schedule.

Madam Chairman: The sum of $43,944,260 for Head 02: Auditor General is comprised of moneys proposed for expenditure under the following Sub-Heads and Items to be found in the Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure and the Draft Estimates of Development Programme.

Sub-Head 01: Personnel Expenditure. Hon. Member for Siparia.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Thank you very much. Madam Chair, in accordance with your ruling, just to remind us of the ditto rule under Personnel Expenditure, there is a decrease here of about $26 million, the ditto rule.

Hon. Imbert: Madam Chair, I thought I would be allowed to make a brief introductory statement, just for certain clarification that needs to be made.

Madam Chairman: All right, and we have really followed that procedure, I am sorry.

Hon. Imbert: Just very, very brief. The Auditor General’s Department is responsible for auditing Ministries, departments and statutory bodies, not state enterprises.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: And the THA.

Hon. Imbert: Yes, and the Tobago House of Assembly, but not state enterprises. You know, there is a belief that the Auditor General could audit
anybody, that is not so. They do not audit state enterprises. The state enterprises audits are sent to the Ministry of Finance for laying in Parliament, and referenced to statutory authorities like Port Authority, Airports Authority and so on, and the audits of state enterprises are laid in the Parliament and sent to the Public Accounts (Enterprises) Committee. I just wanted the make that clarification.

Madam Chairman: Thank you very much. The Member for Siparia.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Yes, general statements income—question, sorry.

Madam Chairman: We are at page 5, under 01. That is where we are.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: So, no general statements?

Madam Chairman: No general statements. I am sure you could rephrase your statement to fit into here.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: I thank you for the confidence, I hope I can live up to it, Madam.

Madam Chairman: I am sure you can.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: I am looking at Personnel Expenditure, 01, General Administration, and I asked about the ditto rule to account for the decrease of $4.1 million. That is the first question. And the second will be, are there any public service posts vacant for this fiscal year? Thirdly, does the Auditor General’s Department have sufficient staff to conduct the required audits of the numerous Ministries and departments? And, what attempts, if any have been made to recruit qualified staff at this department? All under General Administration.

Madam Chairman: All right. Hon. Minister of Finance.

Hon. Imbert: Fortunately, as the former Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee, I have some understanding of the tremendous challenges facing the Auditor General’s Department, which currently has approximately 100 vacancies out of a staff establishment of approximately 300. And I want to say at the outset,
again as a result of my stint as Chairman of Public Accounts Committee, and also the visits we made abroad to have interaction with other Public Accounts Committees and Auditors General overseas, during this fiscal year I would be in consultation with the Auditor General’s Department, because we need to fill these vacancies and we also need to give the Auditor General’s Department the wherewithal to do value-for-money audits. Because, the number of staff that can be allocated to do value-for-money audits at this time is quite small, and that has come up at various times over the last five years.

So, I want to say I am making a commitment. No, they do not have enough bodies. They need the staff. We are going to make every effort to fill those vacancies and use whatever mechanism that is appropriate to do that to assist them. We would be bringing in people on contract to help them, try to work with the Public Service Commission and so on to see if we can employ as many qualified people, auditors, forensic auditors and that sort of thing, and also do whatever we can to assist the Auditor General’s Department to fulfil its mandate. I just wanted to make that statement.

**Madam Chairman:** Can we go on to Item—

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Madam Chair—

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

**Dr. Gopeesingh:**—in keeping with what the Minister of Finance is saying, under line Item 26, the Vacant Posts - Salaries and COLA (without incumbents) Direct Charges, we see that you increased it to $64,000 only. So, would that be in consonance with what your thinking is? I mean, $64,000 is nothing. You are bringing in increased staff so you have to give more allocation here.

**Hon. Imbert:** What I am being told is that as far as the Auditor General’s staff is aware, they do not have any vacant posts that are direct charges. They do not
have any vacant posts that are direct charges, so this might in fact be a typographical error. I will check that, but what I want to say, I just want to make the point that I will be giving attention to this department, and if we have to vire funds and give them additional funds, we will do so.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Madam Chair, I think you will—just a little fast-forward, dealing with that same—

Madam Chairman: Therefore, can we go on to 002? Item 002 which is Tobago Services.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Yes, Madam, again 01 thereunder, speaks of a 24 per cent decrease with respect to Tobago. The issue of the audits for Tobago has come up consistently, and I think with the Auditor General’s Department now under scrutiny, we would want to ask, when was the last audited statements by the Auditor General for Tobago?

Hon. Imbert: What I have discovered is that because of the severe staff shortages and for other reasons, the complement of staff from the Auditor General’s Department—and this is historical—in Tobago, who have the responsibility to audit the THA and the Central Administrative Services, is extremely small and this is the reason—

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: How many people?

Hon. Imbert: Three. It is actually three people

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Three.

Hon. Imbert: Just three. I mean this has been happening for some time, so that now that I am in this seat as Minister of Finance and I have discovered that there are just three people to audit the THA, which is a multibillion-dollar allocation, that is again another area that I will be looking at very carefully to see how we can assist the Auditor General to beef up their staff in Tobago to expedite the auditing
of the THA accounts.

With respect to the last year, I prefer to give you that answer in writing. I prefer to get accurate information, the dates and everything, and when the accounts were submitted to the Auditor General’s Department, for which years, and I give an undertaking that you would get that very shortly.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** So, we do not know when was the last audited statement and for what year?

**Hon. Imbert:** I prefer not to make a statement. Because, when we were dealing with the THA Head, the Chief Administrator indicated to me that they had submitted accounts up to 2013.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** That is what they did. This is Auditor General.

**Hon. Imbert:** I know. I know. So, I want to double check that information, see how long those statements have been with the Auditor General’s Department and just find out what the true picture is. Because, with that limited staff they may have had accounts there in their possession for a long time, I do not know. I do not want to prejudice or prejudice the issue.

But, I give an undertaking, this is very important, and you will get in writing what is the last audited statement, and since then how many statements have been submitted. You see, let us say for example, hypothetically, if the THA submitted accounts all the way up to 2011, for example, and it has been there for years, who is really at fault? So, I would like to—and they are not at fault either because of the staff shortage—give a proper explanation of what is happening. I will give you in writing and I will give you full disclosure on what is happening. Okay?

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** I thank the hon. Minister for the undertaking and would ask him to include in that written report on this matter the last audited report, what were the constraints there apart from staff, because I know there were
difficulties in the—what was being submitted by the THA, so can we also get that in the report.

And if the Minister does discover, as he is indicating, that for subsequent years down to 2013, the THA has submitted statements, what are the constraints within those statements that the Auditor General is lacking in order to give a proper audited statement.

**Hon. Imbert:** No problem. I would find out what has happened, what are the constraints the Auditor General’s office suffers under—

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** Apart from staff.

**Hon. Imbert:** No, no, everything. What are the issues in terms of what prevented them from producing the audits in a timely fashion? Whether it is that they got them late, they did not get them at all or they are there and they just do not have enough staff to deal with them. I will answer everything, what are the problems, whether they just do not have the staff or whether there are other problems.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Mr. Minister of Finance, do you not find it unacceptable that you cannot in five seconds tell us when was the last Auditor General’s report on Tobago—

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** The Auditor General is next to you.

**Dr. Moonilal:**—with the Auditor General next to you?

**Hon. Imbert:** This is a live session and I would prefer to put it in writing. There is many a slip between the cup and lip, so I do not want to slip up on this. So, you will get it in writing.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** You do not want to slip up with the truth.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** Perhaps we should put all our questions in writing and go home.
Madam Chairman: All right, can we move on, sub—

Dr. Gopeesingh: Yes.

Madam Chairman: The Member for Caroni East. [Interruption]

Hon. Imbert: And you know you could have found that out over the last five years.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Minister of Finance. The Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Yes, in consonance with the—

Madam Chairman: No, I believe—are we on to 02?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Yes.

Madam Chairman: Okay.

Dr. Gopeesingh: No, no, 02—yes, Goods and Services.

Madam Chairman: All right, could you allow me to call the Head, because I thought you were still at Sub-Head 01. So, Sub-Head 02 Goods and Services. Hon. Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Thank you, Madam Chair. In consonance with what the hon. Minister of Finance was speaking about in terms of the deficiency of employees at the Auditor General’s Department, and we have an Item 16 for Contract Employment, but he is aware that there is a deficiency, but yet still he has only put in $24,000 increase for Contract Employment, and then for Short-Term Employment there is no increase whatsoever, and he has two line items which he could have used for this budgetary allocation cognizant of the fact that there is a deficiency of staff in the Auditor General’s Department.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: He has decreases Salaries and COLA and these have not been increased. There is no increase anywhere for staff.

Dr. Gopeesingh: No, no increase for Salaries.

Madam Chairman: But, this is under Contract Employment—
Dr. Gopeesingh: Contract and Short-Term Employment. I think this is an area he could have brought people in, knowing that there is a paucity of employees in the Auditor General’s Department.

9.45 p.m.

Hon. Imbert: I am advised that at present, in the Auditor General’s office, they have a legal officer and an IT Technician paid under Contract Employment. They also have auditors that they have brought in under Short-Term Employment which is Item 22. And the point I am making, this is something that have been subsisting for years and, with my experience in the Public Accounts Committee, I do intend, in consultation with the Auditor General’s Department, to give them the necessary resources to beef-up. So that this allocation, I am giving you the assurance as I said a little while ago, that I am going to work with them and if we need to supplement this appropriation we will.

Dr. Gopeesingh: So you would support the Auditor General in these two line Item areas: the Short-Term Employment—

Hon. Imbert: Among others.

Dr. Gopeesingh: And contracting development.

Hon. Imbert: Anything they require, within reason.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Siparia.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: We are still under Goods and Services, line Item 01, Travelling and Subsistence. Again there is a decreased allocation for Travelling and Subsistence, about 35 percent less than last year, $1.3 million. Again, what accounts for that decrease in allocation?

Hon. Imbert: I am told it is associated with collective agreements.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Secondly, how many officers are currently entitled to Travelling and Subsistence? What is the policy for the payment of Travelling
and Subsistence?

**Hon. Imbert:** Travelling officers are entitled to travelling, and certain categories of officers within the public service, and it would be in the establishment book, would be entitled to subsistence.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** Would you be kind enough to let us know who they are?

**Hon. Imbert:** Sure, I will provide that in writing for you. I do not want to tell you tonight—

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** Sure.

**Hon. Imbert:** I will provide it in writing for you. Well, I do not want to give you the names of the travelling officers—*[Interruption]*

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** No, no I am not asking for the names.

**Hon. Imbert:** I will tell you how many travelling officers, what positions and which positions are entitled to subsistence.

**Madam Chairman:** Can we move on to Item 002—*[Interruption]*

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** And, of course, why the drop?

**Hon. Imbert:** Well, it has to do with the collective agreements and part payment of arrears and so on. That is what I am told, it is collective agreement, part payment of arrears. But I will give you the detailed answer.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** I cannot see them decreasing their own travelling and subsistence.

**Hon. Imbert:** No, it is part of a collective agreement.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** Okay, accepted, Sir.

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

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Well, we heard the hon. Minister speak about the same paucity for the Auditor General’s Department in Tobago services. And we have the
same, line Item 16, Contract Employment, but there is no allocation for 2016, and even Short-Term employment. But he just a while said—[\textit{ Interruption }] 

\textbf{Madam Chairman:} The hon. Minister just a while ago—

\textbf{Dr. Gopeesingh:} The hon. Minister of Finance just a while ago said he is aware that there are only three officers for Tobago providing services for the Auditor General’s Department, but yet still does not put any funding for contract employment on Item 16 and Short-Term Employment on Item 22. What happened, they were not consulted—[\textit{ Interruption }] 

\textbf{Hon. Imbert:} The question is finished? You finish the question?

\textbf{Dr. Gopeesingh:} Yeah, yeah. 

\textbf{Hon. Imbert:} Okay, today is October 15. The estimates were sent to the printery about September 30. I was appointed Minister of Finance on September 11. I have only just discovered, tonight, that there are severe staff shortages in the Tobago section of the Auditor General’s Department. When these estimates were prepared that information was not available. Now that it has become available, I am giving you the assurance that—I have already said this about three times today, hon. Leader of the Opposition, I am giving you the assurance as we dig into this thing and we get more information, we will supplement the appropriation. Okay?

\textbf{Madam Chairman:} Hon. Member for Siparia.

\textbf{Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:} Thank you, Madam Chair. Item 17 on that same page, page 6 under the line Item 17, Training. Does the allocation for training include, capacity—

\textbf{Madam Chairman:} Hon. Member for Siparia, we are at Item 002, Tobago Services.

\textbf{Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:} So we finish with Goods and Services?

\textbf{Madam Chairman:} “Oh!” So you are under Training, Item 001. Yes, please
Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Just that allocation under Training, line Item 17, include capacity development for audits; one. Two, does it include training for value for money audits? Yes, Madam Chair, those two questions under the Training, line Item, capacity development for audits and training for value for money audits. We do not hear about value for money.

Hon. Imbert: Yeah, my understanding, this is for routine training and that we will come to it, but there is an allocation for institutional strengthening under the Draft Estimates of Development Programme for the Financial Year, 2016.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: DP?

Hon. Imbert: Yeah.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Thank you.

Hon. Imbert: And again we will supplement those votes as required.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Still on the same page, line Item 23, Fees. I notice that there is a significant increased allocation by $139.2 million for fiscal—

Madam Chairman: One hundred and thirty-nine—

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: One hundred and thirty-nine thousand, two hundred and thirty-five in fiscal 2016 as compared to 2015. The increased allocation, what is it intended to pay for? Further, can it be used for external auditors to be procured using fees allocated here and can a breakdown of fees expected to be provided under that Item?

Hon. Imbert: I am advised, when I answer this question you may not still require the breakdown but you can get it if you wish. I am told this is for licensing, for software and those are the fees. It is not legal—[Crosstalk] yes, in order to use proprietary software, auditing software, this is a very complex and very expensive software. I mean, it is right through the Government, the Microsoft system that the
Government uses, we have to pay millions of dollars in annual fees throughout the public service and this is specialized auditing software that require annual licence fees to be paid. If you want a breakdown of what the programmes are, how much the fees are, we will certainly provide that to you in writing. But it is for proprietary, complex accounting software that you have to have annual licensing fees for. So you still want the breakdown?

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** Yes, it sounds reasonable what you are saying, but it would be kind to still see it.

**Hon. Imbert:** No problem. If you want the breakdown we will give it to you.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** On the same page under 28, Other Contacted Services. Again, what accounts for the increased allocation for this line Item, Other Contracted Services from $359,000 in 2015 to $768,000 in fiscal 2016. What accounts for that increase?

**Hon. Imbert:** In recognition of the limited capacity of the department, this is to contract out audits to auditing firms who would conduct audits on behalf of the Auditor General’s Department under the supervision of the Auditor General’s Department. So it is an increase of allocation to allow them to improve their capacity and their rate of auditing.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** So it can be used to contract the external—

**Hon. Imbert:** No, it will be used to contract out external auditors and so on.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** Can we get a breakdown of the services expected to be provided? And can we get a list of the service providers if it is available?

**Hon. Imbert:** Well, this is a 2016—[Interruption]

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** Yeah, estimate.

**Hon. Imbert:** If it is available, we will make it available. [Crosstalk]

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** And the selection process used for each provider?
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Hon. Imbert: We are going forward, eh.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Yes, we are going forward, 2016. What is the selection process to select these providers?

Hon. Imbert: We will provide that information in writing.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Line Item 62 as well.

Madam Chairman: Can we go on to—

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Same page, Item 62, Promotions, Publicity and Printing. Again, what accounts for the allocation for promotions, et cetera, of $45,000 in 2016, which was nil in 2015. What are the individual projects and costs being undertaken or to be undertaken under this Item?

Hon. Imbert: Promotions, Publicity and Printing? That is the Item?

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Line Item 62. I have three questions, if I may. One, what accounts for the allocation of $45,000 for 2016 which was nil in 2015? What are the individual projects and costs being undertaken under this Item; and, thirdly, what types of promotion, publicity are expected to be conducted under this line Item?

Hon. Imbert: All right, as you can see the 2015 original estimate was $70,000. It was not utilized. We have given them $45,000. This is for the advertisement as part of the procurement process, the public procurement process for the engagement of external auditors. So this is to place advertisements in the newspaper, and so on, inviting proposals for persons to be contracted as external auditors.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Forty-five thousand dollars to place advertisements?

Hon. Imbert: Yes.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: That is the only project that this $45,000 is for, for
Hon. Imbert: Yes.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: To advertise—[ Interruption]

Hon. Imbert: Well, from time to time they would need—[ Interruption]

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: The need for contract —

Hon. Imbert: Well not need, they will want to engage the services of external auditors so they would advertise and invite proposals for the contracting of external auditors. This would happen from time to time over the fiscal year.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: So that is the only—[ Interruption]

Hon. Imbert: That is what I am advised.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Thank you, Sir.

Madam Chairman: Can we move on then to Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchase which we would find on page 8, Item 001, General Administration?

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: I am looking at Item 21, I am looking at—

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Siparia.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Madam Chair, give me one moment to find the page. Thank you. We are looking at Item 001, General Administration, page 8, yes. Page 8, Item 01 Vehicles, if I am not mistaken. Yes, Item 01, there, Madam Chair, on page 8, Vehicles. I note that there is an allocation for vehicles of $450,000 in fiscal 2016, there was nil fiscal 2015. So what accounts for that? How many vehicles are going to be purchased, if it is for purchase of vehicles? And what is the official use these vehicles are being purchased for? Three questions on that line Item 01, Vehicles.

Hon. Imbert: And since the former Government refused to purchase a vehicle for the Auditor General’s Department, thereby rendering them inefficient, this new Government, in recognition of the fact that you refused to buy a vehicle for them,
Appropriation (Financial Year 2016) Bill, 2015

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has allocated $450,000 for a fairly large vehicle for the Auditor General’s Department. Right now, they are scrambling, they begging, they borrowing vehicles from other people.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Very good.

Hon. Imbert: So we are doing what you did not do.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: And what is the official use—I congratulate you for that, eh.

Hon. Imbert: For field audits, for general administration, for deliveries, for all sorts of things.

Dr. Gopeseingh: I hope the Auditor General—make sure you live up to your promises.

Hon. Imbert: Yes, I am not a UNC. We deliver.

Madam Chairman: Can we move on to Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies?

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Madam Chair, before we get there, there is an Item, under Item 03, line Item 24, Furniture and Furnishings. Again increased allocation for that Ministry.

Madam Chairman: That is line Item 03?

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Yes, Ma’am.

Madam Chairman: Yes. Item 03, Furniture and Furnishing?

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Yes, Ma’am. Under Item 03, 03. What accounts for the increase of allocation here, fiscal 2015, $400,000 we have an increase, $356,9,000? Are there new office accommodations to be furnished or is this a replacement of existing furniture furnishes? I hope it is a nicer place for the Auditor General.

Hon. Imbert: This department has suffered from a paucity of appropriations

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over the last five years. So we are giving him a vehicle, we are giving him proper equipment, we giving him furniture and furnishings so they would not have to use the old furniture that you gave them and we are giving them other equipment so that we bring them up to the standard of a modern and efficient First-world auditing office. So it is just to improve their working conditions. They have old furniture; no vehicle. This is what you did to them. So we are trying to help them.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: I wish you very good luck and I am very happy for the Auditor General’s Department.

Madam Chairman: Members, have we exhausted Sub-Heads 03? Can we move on to Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies, still on page 8, Item 001, Regional Bodies?

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: I have no problems with that, nothing.

Madam Chairman: Item 002, Commonwealth Bodies. Item 004, International Bodies. And, therefore, can we go to the Draft Estimates of Development Programme for the Financial Year, 2016, Sub-Head 09, page 2, Development Programme. Sub-Head 09, Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services.

10.00 p.m.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Page 2, 005, Multi-Sectoral and other Services, General Public Services, Administrative Services. 001, therefore, thereunder Institutional Strengthening of the Auditor General’s Department, there is a decline of about 28 per cent from fiscal 2015 allocation to fiscal 2016. I know we are in the business of improving everything for the Auditor General’s Department, and why is there a decline in this institutional strengthening allocation? That is the first question. Secondly, in what ways will the department be strengthened with the allocation they are given? And thirdly, what is the expected time frame for completion of this project for institutional strengthening.
Hon. Imbert: I thought that the former administration would know that the auditors in the Auditor General’s Department have been trained by the National Audit Office of the Government of the United Kingdom, and that accounts for the expenditure in 2015. So I am advised that all of their auditors have been trained by the National Audit Office and the $500,000 will now allow those persons who have been trained to impart their knowledge in a mentoring programme with some of the new persons coming into the department. So it is adequate but, as I said, I give the commitment if the Auditor General needs more, he will get more, within the context of the national budget. [Interruption] Police getting more, Auditor General getting more, okay? Judiciary getting more.

Hon. Member: Cut out waste, corruption, mismanagement and you could pay the deficit.

Hon. Imbert: Once we cut out the corruption, we could balance the budget.

Madam Chairman: Are there any other questions on Item 005?

Question put and agreed to.

Head 02 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Madam Chairman: May I say thank you to the members of the Auditor General’s Department for coming and assisting the committee. Please reach home safely.

Head 12. [Crosstalk]

Excuse me, please. We are at page 52 of the Draft Estimates, Details of Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure for the Financial Year 2016—page 52.

Question proposed: That Head 12 stand part of the Schedule.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Minister, you are invited, but you may decline, to deliver a short statement of not less than five minutes. This is page 52, Head 12. This is the Public Service Appeal Board.

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Hon. Imbert: I will decline to make a statement on this.

Dr. Moonilal: You disappoint me.

Hon. Imbert: I am so sorry.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Members, the sum of $3,855,180 for Head 12, the Public Service Appeal Board is comprised of moneys proposed for expenditure under the following Subheads and Items to be found in the Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure: Subhead 01, Personnel Expenditure; Item 001, General Administration. Can I take this as a “ditto”, with the same general assurance—?

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Madam, we will take the Public Service—

Hon. Imbert: Madam Chairman, I actually can give detailed answers right now.

Madam Chairman: You have detailed answers?

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Well, you have no questions.

Hon. Imbert: I hate to waste time with any “ditto” here.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Madam Chair, can we indicate that we have no questions and we allow the Public Service Appeal Board to do their work?

Hon. Imbert: And no “ditto”.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: No, Madam Chairman, already put the “ditto” in.

Hon. Imbert: No, I have the answers. Because that is a question.

Dr. Moonilal: Put it in writing.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Put it in the “ditto” rule. Put it in writing.

Madam Chairman: Let me just ask this. Do I take it from the hon. Members on this side, just for my clarification, are there no questions under Subhead 02 and Subhead 03?

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Save and except the “ditto” rules.

Madam Chairman: Which is under Subhead 01.
Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Yes, Ma’am.

Madam Chairman: And seeing that that is the only Item, I therefore would allow the Minister of Finance to answer the questions on Item 001, General Administration.

Hon. Imbert: I wish to thank the public servant, the very diligent public servant, allocated to assist me with respect to this Head, who has advised me that the increase in expenditure is for the hiring of a court reporter and a driver/courier in fiscal 2016.

Hon. Member: Excellent.

Hon. Imbert: Very good person.

Dr. Moonilal: Progress is forthcoming.

Hon. Imbert: I have answers to every other Head too, in here.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 12 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Madam Chairman: Members, it is now 10.07 p.m.. I think we have two hours to 12 o’clock. Might I ask the Minister of Finance, do you have any other technocrats here under any other Head?

Mr. Imbert: No. And I had a discussion with the Opposition Chief Whip and we reached agreement that we would cease and desist after the Public Service Appeal Board for tonight.

Madam Chairman: Okay, thank you. This meeting shall be suspended—

Mr. Imbert: And there is another arrangement I sought and received agreement from the Opposition Chief Whip, that because the public servants from Tobago, who deal with the Central Administrative Services (CAST) they came over with the THA in anticipation that their matters would be held jointly—perhaps there was a miscommunication—they are still here, and they would like to return to
Tobago tomorrow, so I spoke to the Opposition Chief Whip who, very kindly, agreed that we would deal with the Central Administrative Services early in the morning and send them on their way, back to Tobago.

Madam Chairman: So that means we will take them first?

Mr. Imbert: We could take them first, yeah.

Madam Chairman: All right. And they have been notified that they will be taken first.

Mr. Imbert: I have been so advised.

Madam Chairman: Right. And therefore we start at 10.00 a.m. tomorrow?

Mr. Imbert: With the Central Administrative Services.

Dr. Moonilal: Tomorrow we will continue—[Interruption]

Mr. Imbert: With Finance and so on.

Dr. Moonilal: Tomorrow we will continue until what number? What are the Heads we are dealing with? We have a list here but we must be absolutely clear.

Madam Chairman: Yes.

Dr. Moonilal: We will do Central Administrative Services, Tobago; Ministry of Finance; Ministry of Works and Infrastructure; Equal Opportunity Tribunal—

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: And if the Prime Minister is available.

Dr. Moonilal: No, the Prime Minister may not be available. We cannot count on that. But we are not factoring in the Prime Minister at all.

Madam Chairman: Yes.

Dr. Moonilal: Equal Opportunity, I said.

Madam Chairman: Yes.

Dr. Moonilal: We also have carded the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries; and I think that would make seven, if I am not mistaken.

Madam Chairman: I only have five.
Dr. Moonilal: The Tax Appeal Board and the Industrial Court.

Madam Chairman: Can we not be ambitious and strive for a little more tomorrow?

Dr. Moonilal: The President.

Mr. Imbert: I just want to point out, Madam Speaker—sorry, go ahead.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: Thank you very much, Madam Chairman. Might I indicate that the Minister in the Office of the Prime Minister who has responsibility for CAST has indicated that they would like to start at 1.30, not 10.00 o’clock tomorrow?

Madam Chairman: So we would put Central Administrative Services—[Crosstalk]

Mr. Imbert: I was under the impression they would like to start first thing in the morning, but they want to do it at 1.30 p.m.

Madam Chairman: They want to reschedule.

Mr. Imbert: Yes, at 1.30 p.m. They want to reschedule at 1.30 p.m.

Madam Chairman: So therefore we are starting with the Ministry of Finance at 10.00 o’clock tomorrow morning.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: This has been fixed according to the Standing Orders.

Madam Chairman: Yes, but the Orders are not being changed, hon. Member.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Yes, Ma’am, because we will have to do other matters before we get to 1.30 p.m.

Madam Chairman: No, well, and therefore we start at 10.00 o’clock with order nine.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Which is Finance?

Madam Chairman: Which is the Ministry of Finance.

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Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: So we will go from that hour until 1.30 p.m.?

Madam Chairman: No, we will go with Ministry of Finance, and then the next schedule item is 11.00 a.m., Central Administration Services.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: So we expect to finish, to do them at 1.30 p.m. We expect that we will spend from 9.00 a.m. or 10.00 a.m. until 1.30 p.m. on Finance?

Madam Chairman: Well, I would expect that we would break for lunch sometime in between there.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: No, we did not break for dinner, so anything is possible in the haste to do these things.

Madam Chairman: But I think, though, dinner was provided.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: But we did not break. I am sure lunch, too, will be provided.

Madam Chairman: I would think that we would break for lunch tomorrow.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: No, no, we are—why not 10.00 o’clock?

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: Excuse me, may I say something, please? We had a discussion with the Opposition Bench to start proceedings tomorrow at 1.30 p.m. You would recall, 1.30 p.m. and start on Saturday at 10.00 a.m. You could recall? Thank you very much. Madam, we will be starting at 1.30 p.m. tomorrow. [Crosstalk]

Madam Chairman: We start at 1.30 p.m. tomorrow and we would start with the Central Administrative Services.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: We will start with CAST. Thank you.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Members, I want to say thank you for your cooperation today.

Dr. Moonilal: Ma’am, could I say something before you adjourn?

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

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Dr. Moonilal: Earlier, a few minutes before, we went through a list of Items we expect to complete tomorrow. That was on the mistaken information given by the Minister of Finance who, inadvertently, misled me an hour ago.

Hon. Member: Misspoke.

Dr. Moonilal: Misspoke, misled, misinterpreted, misunderstood—and we listed Items on the basis of starting at 10.00 a.m., but now we are being properly advised by the Leader of the House that we will start at 1.30 p.m. It cannot be that we are dealing with these 12 items tomorrow at the same time.

Madam Chairman: I do not have them as 12. We have Ministry of Finance, Central Administrative Services, Ministry of Works, Equal Opportunity, Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries, Tax Appeal Board, Industrial Court, President, which are eight. And having regard to the level of cooperation we had from Members today, I think it is attainable.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: May I just add to the discussion, very briefly—[Crosstalk]

Madam Chairman: Members, please.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: If I may just add to the discussion very briefly. The intention was CAST did think that they would be on today, and that is why they came today prepared, but given what happened today they are still going to be here. So it would have been seven tomorrow, Ma’am. So it is eight only because CAST has been carried over.

Madam Chairman: So it evens out.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: Yes. So it evens out as you rightly put it. So 1.30 p.m. and we will be doing eight.

Madam Chairman: This meeting is now suspended. We will resume tomorrow at 1.30 p.m. Thank you very much.

10.15 p.m.: Standing Finance Committee suspended.

UNREVISED
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, October 16, 2015

APPROPRIATION (FINANCIAL YEAR 2016) BILL, 2015

[Ninth Day]

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

[Chairman: Mrs. Annisette-George]

1.30 p.m.

Madam Chairman: The meeting of the Standing Finance Committee is now resumed. Good afternoon everybody.

Hon. Members: Good afternoon.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Members, before we proceed with today’s schedule, can we have some agreement on two issues. The first is: are we meeting tomorrow and the times of the tomorrow’s meeting?

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: Thank you very much for this opportunity, Madam Chairman. I had discussed with the Chief Whip that we would meet tomorrow from 10 o’clock to four o’clock and again on Monday. So, yes, we will be meeting tomorrow.

Madam Chairman: We will be meeting tomorrow?

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: Yes, Ma’am.

Madam Chairman: And as far as tomorrow, can I also ask if we can identify the Heads of Expenditure to be examined so that the proper notifications can go to the accounting officers?

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: Yes, Madam Chairman, and I know that the identification of the Heads is within the purview of the Opposition Benches. So I would leave that to them. Thank you very much.

UNREVISED
Dr. Moonilal: Well, first let me preface it by saying it depends on how much we can get today out of the way. But if we will end today with the Estimates for the President, we can continue tomorrow at No. 18 and look at six hours more or less, look at Service Commissions, the Ministry of Energy, the Ministry of Rural Development—

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: Sorry, hon. Member, you are going a little fast. I am just trying to make sure we have it.

Dr. Moonilal: Oh, you do not have it.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: I have the list, but I am just ticking off.

Dr. Moonilal: Items 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23 and 24.

Madam Chairman: So as we have agreed today, we are going to start with the Central Administrative Services, Tobago.

Head 16.

Madam Chairman: Head 16, Central Administrative Services, Tobago, $84,482,450. I will now invite the Minister of State in the Office of the Prime Minister to make a brief opening statement not exceeding five minutes. Hon. Minister.

Hon. Webster-Roy: Thank you, Madam Chairman. First of all let me thank the people of Tobago, and more specifically Tobago East for the overwhelming support. Over the last five years what should have worked as an arrangement to bring positive changes to the lives of Tobagonians, in fact acted as a yoke around the neck of our development agenda.

Madam Chair, I want to assure Tobago, and the Tobago public, that the days of playing with their development and the empowerment of our people for the sake of political mischief, those days are over. This administration and, in particular, the Office of the Prime Minister, Central Administrative Services, Tobago, is
committed to undertaking a collaborative approach in the delivery of service to the people of Tobago. We will work alongside all Ministries, state institutions and the Tobago House of Assembly to ensure that Tobagonians benefit fully from all that the country has to offer.

We are satisfied with the allocation for CAST in the 2016 Draft Estimates. The allocation will facilitate improvements in service delivery by way of completion of our file and registry tracking system, and our fixed assets and inventory tracking and monitoring. The allocation will allow us to complete the construction and commissioning of the Meteorological Services building at Crowne Point, a project which was started under the previous administration. In addition, we will be able to explore opportunities for the delivery of service in the Windward Tobago and answer an urgent call by our senior citizens for easier access to government services in Tobago East.

Madam Chair, I want to reassure the Tobago public that any action taken thus far has been for the public good. When I became Member of Parliament and Minister of State, I no longer saw colours of jerseys but people. My people who I took an oath to service without fair or favour. Madam Chair, I strive to always operate with my oath of office and the mandate of CAST as my guide.

In closing, I wish to reiterate to the public that CAST operates under the Sixth and Seventh Schedule of the Tobago House of Assembly Act. As such, our mandate as CAST will include the Prices, Weights and Measures Inspectorate; Meteorological Services; the Registrar General Department; the Sub-Treasury Department; and the Co-ordination of Matters relating to Tobago Affairs and the delivery of Central Government Services to Tobago in collaboration with the Tobago House of Assembly.

Thank you.
Question proposed: That Head 16 stand part of the Schedule.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Members, the sum of $84,482,450 for Head 16, Central Administrative Services, Tobago, is comprised of moneys proposed for Expenditure under the following Sub-Heads and Items to be found in the Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure and the Draft Estimates of Development Programme. Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure, we are at page 61, 001, General Administration. Hon Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: We have seen here the information in regard to what is the Estimate for 2016, and this is a transfer from the Ministry of Tobago Development, which is now CAST. Unfortunately, we do not have any comparison—[Interruption]—all right, I will find it under Tobago Development. It would have been nice to have it side by side, but we do not have it.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Caroni East, I think this is the standard form for the presentation. Over the years that is established practice, so I do not think it is anything unusual with respect to the format.

Dr. Gopeesingh: So we will find it under Tobago Development.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Tabaquite.

Dr. Rambachan: Madam Chair, I am just trying to get a clarification. There is $84 million on the Schedule, but you refer to page 60.

Madam Chairman: I referred to page 61—

Dr. Rambachan: Okay.

Madam Chairman:—and we are dealing with the Item 01.

Dr. Rambachan: But Head 16. If you look at the some of the expenditure there, you have $71,982,450, but on this document—

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Tabaquite, if I may be permitted? The Minister will tell me if I am mistaken, I believe the difference is, amounts to direct
Appropriation (Financial Year 2016) Bill, 2015

Standing Finance Committee

charges which we have been told are not appropriated. So they will not be within the Appropriation Bill.

Dr. Rambachan: I think the difference, Madam Chair, is the $12.5 million Development Programme that is added in here in this Draft Estimates of Expenditure.

Madam Chairman: Would the DP not be a direct charge?

Mr. Imbert: No. Madam Chairman, it is $12.5 million for DP and $71.982 million for recurrent, a total of $84.5 million.

Madam Chairman: Okay, but we examine the entire $84.482 in any event. Okay? So can we return Item 001, General Administration?

Moving on, Item 002, Trade and Industry.

Moving on we are at page 62, Item 005, Meteorological Services. Item 007, Registrar General. Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services. Item 01, hon. Member for Oropouche.

Dr. Moonilal: Thank you very much, Madam Chairman. I am on page 63 and I just want to make a query to the hon. Minister. At No. 16, I see Contract Employment $2.5 million. This division, of course, was transferred from the former Ministry of Tobago Development, where there was a provision for $5.5 million previously. I just wanted to get the comment from the Minister and to enquire really my question, whether this is a result of the reduction in Contract Employment; and for the Minister to confirm whether it is true that yesterday 92 employees of the former Ministry of Tobago Development were sent home.

Hon. Webster-Roy: I will give you your response in writing.

Dr. Moonilal: Sure.

Madam Chairman: Any other—Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Could the hon. Minister just give us some explanation of the
$3.5 million for Short-Term Employment, vis-a-vis, the Contract Employment. When you say short-term versus contract, what is the differentiation?

Mr. Imbert: Madam Chairman, I will answer that because that is throughout the Ministries across the board. Short-Term Employment is not attached to any position. It is employment for six months or less to meet the exigencies of the service. So from time to time you may need to take on somebody for three months, four months, five months, to deal with a particular pressing need. So that is what that allocation is for.

Dr. Gopeesingh: [Inaudible] envisages that you will need more short-term employment rather than contract employment because the budgetary allocation is larger than the Contract Employment figure.

Mr. Imbert: It is merely an allocation, and the Ministry is free to vire among Heads as the need arises. So if they feel they need more for Contract Employment, they will shift from Short-Term Employment.

Madam Chairman: Item 002, Trade and Industry on page 64. Item 005, Meteorological Services. Item 007, Registrar General, which is on page 67. On page 66, I am sorry. Moving on to Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases. Member for Siparia.

1.45 p.m.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Thank you very much, Madam Chairman. At line Item 001, under General Administration, I note there has been no allocation for Vehicles and therefore I would want to ask, at the present time, there being no allocation, how many vehicles are under this Head for CAST?

Similarly, under the Met Services, Vehicles, no allocation and under Registrar General—all on the same page, under 03 Minor Equipment Purchases. All three items, no allocations have been made for Vehicles. So for each of them,
how many vehicles are there present for each of these?

**Hon. Webster-Roy:** In terms of no allocation, we would have acquired new vehicles last year so we would not have a need. In terms of the quantity, I will give you that in writing.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** How many you acquired last year, fiscal 2015?

**Hon. Webster-Roy:** Actually, five new ones last year.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** Excellent, well equipped.

**Mr. Imbert:** Did not work.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** The vehicles did not work?

**Madam Chairman:** Can we move on then, therefore? [Crosstalk] Members, please. Can we move on, therefore, to Sub-Head 04?

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** I was hearing the hon. Minister of Finance saying that the vehicle—they did not work. And I am asking then, do you have an allocation if they are not working? Are the vehicles working or not working?

**Mr. Imbert:** No, the political ploy did not work.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** Very nice.

**Madam Chairman:** Sub-Head 04, Current—hon. Member for Siparia, please, let us carry on. Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies, Item 005.

**Mr. Singh:** Thank you, Madam Chairman. 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies, Human Capital Development Facilitation Company. What is the purpose of this company? Has it produced any public reports? What mechanisms are in place to ensure that there is value for money, transparency and accountability of this company?

**Mr. Imbert:** Apparently, this was a company set up under the former Minister for Tobago Affairs which was interfering with the statutory rights and responsibilities of the Tobago House of Assembly. Unfortunately, the former Government
committed the State to certain obligations, so this appropriation is to deal with outstanding liabilities from that ill-fated programme. And if savings are achieved, they will be transferred to other more deserving Heads.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Oropouche East.

Dr. Moonilal: No, it is okay.

Madam Chairman: So can we, therefore, go on to the Development Programme? 09 Development Programme and it is at page 52 of the Development Programme, Draft Estimates; Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Madam Chairman, this is directed to the hon. Minister of State in the Office of the Prime Minister. I noticed that the Development Programme consists mainly of the meteorological building which is a vote of about $10 million. Is that the only contemplated development plan you have for Tobago? If you do have others, where are they incorporated in this Development Programme? Out of $12.5 million, I see about $10 million for the meteorological building.

Hon. Webster-Roy: Madam Chairman, our programmes are actually in the allocation here. So number one would be the computerization and networking of CAST to improve our registry and filing tracking systems; and also the restoration of the Central Administrative Services building in Tobago, the restoration of it is as an historical building, and we want to have that restoration done, and it is allocated for in addition to the completion of the Met building.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Thank you.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Members, the question is that the sum of $84,482,450—[Interruption] I would like if all Members will direct their communication to me.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Sorry.

Madam Chairman: Thank you very much.
Question put and agreed to.

Head 16 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Madam Chairman: I would like to thank the members of staff from the Central Administrative Services for coming to assist the committee. I wish you all a safe return journey.

Head 13. I am sorry, Members, can we go to Head—Minister of Finance, are we ready to do Head 18?

Mr. Imbert: I am always ready.

Madam Chairman: Thank you very much.

Mr. Imbert: Could you just allow my staff to assemble?

Madam Chairman: Could we crave your indulgence for a little, while the technocrats assemble? Hon. Members, I propose that we suspend for five minutes while the technocrats get in place.

1.53 p.m.: Standing Finance Committee suspended.

2.02 p.m.: Standing Finance Committee resumed.

Madam Chairman: This meeting of the Standing Finance Committee is resumed.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: Thank you very much, Madam Chairman. I just wanted to indicate that the Minister of Finance has indicated that there is a little delay because his staff was here but upstairs. So we apologize for the delay.

I also want to indicate that the Chief Whip had indicated to us that whenever the Prime Minister came, that they would be ready to examine Office of the Prime Minister. The Prime Minister is here today, so I will like to know whether there will be the examination of the Office of the Prime today, or if you would like to do it on another occasion, given the fact that you had indicated previously that whenever he is here, you would be willing to do it.

Dr. Moonilal: Madam Chair, we did indicate that we would like to know when it
would be convenient, whenever it would be convenient him to attend on us. Last evening we fixed the agenda for today. We would like to stay with that agenda, and tonight when we are fixing the agenda for tomorrow, I would then ask the hon. Members if the hon. Prime Minister would be available, so we may consider him for tomorrow, but in the circumstances we have set our agenda, and as—

**Mr. Imbert:** You said you wanted to see him.

**Dr. Moonilal:**—and we would like to proceed with the agenda we agreed to last evening.

**Mr. Imbert:** That was not what you said. You said whenever he comes you want to examine him.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Madam Chair, we would like to proceed with the agenda that we agreed last evening before we suspended.

**Mrs. Robinson-Regis:** Madam, I would just like us to return to the original moorings of the discussion that we did have, and originally it was said that given what happened on the first day, the Prime Minister could not be here, and Office of the Prime Minister was to examined, he could not be here.

However, we were given the assurance by the other side that whenever he is here, they would be willing to examine Office of the Prime Minister. Madam Chairman, the Prime Minister is here. He is ready for Office of the Prime Minister to be examined. The staff of the Office of the Prime Minister is here, and I would think that my colleagues on the other side, being persons who I assume keep their word, would revert to what they said originally, which was, and I repeat, whenever the Prime Minister is here they would be willing to do Office of the Prime Minister, which would have indicated to anyone listening that they were ready at any time, even if it was not included in the stated agenda. Whenever the Prime Minister was here, Office of the Prime Minister would be examined. The Prime
Madam Chairman: My understanding, the statement was whenever the Prime Minister made himself available, he would have been taken. In fact, in my fixing for today, I had it as a possibility as if he came, we would have taken him. So I think if the hon. Prime Minister is here, I do not think it is a very big Item—

Dr. Moonilal: Ma’am, could I repeat please? I would like to see the words that were used.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: We could find it in the Hansard.

Dr. Moonilal: We can find it, but let me make the point very clear. Last evening we agreed; at no time did Members opposite ask us last evening when we were setting the agenda, that is it possible that the Prime Minister, if he is available, can be taken. We have set an agenda. I am just asking you please, could we follow our agenda?

Mr. Imbert: Madam Chairman, may I say something?

Dr. Moonilal: When we set our agenda, later in the evening, today at whatever time we are setting our agenda for tomorrow, I ask my hon. colleagues that they can raise that issue, but I think we are keeping back precious time now from a very critical Ministry. And please, I am asking that we proceed.

Mr. Imbert: Madam Chairman, if the Opposition is unable or unwilling, then I guess we have to move on.

Head 18.

Madam Chairman: Okay. So we are ready now with Head 18: Ministry of Finance, the sum of $7,386,691,220. I will now invite the hon. Minister of Finance to make a brief opening statement, not exceeding five minutes.

Hon. Imbert: Well, it will be very brief, Madam Chairman. The Ministry of Finance has the responsibility for providing funds to all government departments
and agencies. It has the responsibility to manage the economy, to manage the public debt, to manage the fiscal balances and to ensure that the fiscal targets are met and maintained.

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

**Madam Chairman:** Hon. Members, the sum of $7,386,691,220 for Head 18: the Ministry of Finance is comprised of moneys proposed for expenditure under the following Sub-Heads and Items to be found in the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure and the Draft Estimates of Development Programme*. We are at Page 74, 01 Personnel Expenditure; 001 General Administration.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** The Ministry of Finance, based on what the hon. Minister said, will also be responsible for aspects of revenue, and we do have draft estimates of revenue. I know we are now looking at recurrent expenditure and then we go to DP. For guidance from you, hon. Chair, the revenue estimates, we would want to raise some questions with respect to revenue estimates, which are under the collection drive of the Minister of Finance.

**Hon. Imbert:** Madam Chairman, I am told this was not done last year and it is not the practice.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** No, it is whether it is within the Standing Orders.

**Madam Chairman:** Hon. Members, if you would just permit me a minute to check the relevant Standing Order.

**Hon. Imbert:** Madam Chairman, if you go to Standing Order 81, it is estimates of expenditure.

**Madam Chairman:** Well, I think the combination of Standing Order 81 and 82 make that clear, because Standing Order 82 which deals with the Standing Finance Committee deals with the estimates and the Appropriation Bill. Then when we go back to Standing Order 81(1), it deals with the “financial requirements for
expenditure”. So that it is only expenditure that the Standing Finance Committee is entitled to examine.

**Hon. Imbert:** Thank you. That is my belief too.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Madam Chair, we are provided with the Standing Finance Committee Members’ Manual, a guide for the Members of the committee, published by the Parliament. At page five:

> The budget is presented in the form of an appropriation Bill. The corresponding draft estimates and other required budget documents are laid and automatically referred to the Standing Finance Committee.

Madam, if the documents are referred to us, they cannot be referred to us not to enquire, not to consider, not to approve. This is a relevant budget document laid and automatically referred to the Standing Finance Committee.

**Hon. Imbert:** Madam Chairman, if you will permit me. That cannot supersede the Standing Order which says:

> “(1) Any Bill containing the estimated financial requirements for expenditure on all the services of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago…shall be known as an ‘Appropriation Bill’.

> (2) Estimates containing the details of the financial requirements shall be presented at the same time as any such Bill and shall immediately stand referred to the Standing Finance Committee.”

So the estimates that we are to consider are the estimates of expenditure, that document cannot supersede this document.

**Dr. Moonilal:** They did not say that.

**Hon. Imbert:** It says estimates of expenditure.

**Madam Chairman:** Members! Members!

**Hon. Imbert:** It is clear.
Dr. Moonilal: “Why you hiding dat?”

Madam Chairman: We are guided by the Standing Orders. My ruling is the combination of Standing Order 81 and Standing Order 82, which governs only expenditure. What the hon. Member for Oropouche East read, which is the Guidance Manual, I do not think it is at variance with this, but if it is, it cannot override what is the Standing Order. Okay? So may we proceed, please? 01 Personnel Expenditure.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Madam, if I could please refer you to page 50 of the Standing Orders.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Siparia, I have already ruled, and we are moving forward.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Page 50 of the Standing Orders, Madam Chairman.

Madam Chairman: Might I proceed, please? Item 001 General Administration. [Interruption] This is—Members, this is at page 74.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Madam would you allow us some general questions. I do not know at what point we can raise those, whether at the start or during the process—

Dr. Gopeesingh: We would like to raise some questions at page 72.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:—general questions on this Head of recurrent expenditure.

Madam Chairman: Are the general questions based on what is contained in the estimates?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Yes, I might not—what is contained in the estimates.

Madam Chairman: Are the general questions based on what is contained in the estimates?

Dr. Gopeesingh: It is based on what we have on page 73.
Madam Chairman: All right, so we will hear what it is.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Madam Chair, I want to refer you to 04 Current Transfers and Subsidies and Goods and Services, 02. When we look at the estimates of 2015 of $7.381 billion for Current Transfers and Subsidies; and Goods and Services, $537 million, we have a total there of seven billion, approximately 800 million.

2.15 p.m.

And when we looked at the revised estimates for 2015, we saw that $4.88 billion was spent for Current Transfers and Subsidies and $318 million for Goods and Services. So, when we looked at the revised estimates for 2015, it means the past Government did not spend $2.7 billion as was in the estimates for 2015. So, the past Government, which is our Government, did not spend $2.712 billion based on when the price of oil and gas was reduced and when we met the economic difficulties in January 2015.

So, I want to draw to the attention of the present Government that the Government of 2010—2015, when the economic crunch came, we reduced expenditure by $2.712 billion based on the figures that we have for the revised estimates versus the estimates. That is the first important point I want to show, that we did not spend $2.712 billion that was supposed to have been spent, because we were prudent in our management of the economic situation in Trinidad.

Hon. Imbert: Where is this, Madam Chairman?

Madam Chairman: We are looking at the summary page, page 73. It is one of those general questions which I have allowed on the summary page.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Thank you.

Madam Chairman: What is the question please, hon. Member for Caroni East?

Dr. Gopeesingh: The question now is that I see with a decrease in the price of oil and a decrease in the price of gas, the present administration is expected to spend
an increase of $473 million plus $111 million which is $584 million in addition to what—$584 million.

Madam Chairman: Is it a question or a statement?

Dr. Gopeesingh: I want to know whether this is the intention of the Government to have an increased expenditure of $584 million over the revised estimates of 2015 despite the price of oil being down and the price of gas being down, particularly on Goods and Services and Current Transfers and Subsidies?

Hon. Imbert: The question is a bit confusing. Could you repeat? [Laughter]

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Caroni East, is that not a purely arithmetical exercise? Hon. Member for Caroni East, is it not purely an arithmetical exercise based on the figures that are here?

Dr. Gopeesingh: It is much more than that. What our mathematical calculation shows is that the present Government is spending $584 million—

Madam Chairman: And that is what I am asking. Is it a statement or a question?

Dr. Gopeesingh: It is a question I am asking, if that is the expenditure that you are going to be having for 2016, an increase of $584 million above 2015 revised estimates? Yes or no?

Hon. Imbert: Well, the first problem I am having, Madam Chairman, is that on page 73, the difference is $325 million, not $500 million. So that is the first bit of confusion. The second bit of confusion that befuddles me is: are you asking whether this number is a typographical error?

Dr. Gopeesingh: No, I am asking whether you can confirm that this is in fact so.

Hon. Imbert: You are asking me whether the numbers here are correct.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Yes, whether this is in fact so?

Hon. Imbert: So, you are asking me whether the estimates—

Dr. Gopeesingh: Whether you are spending $584 million more in 2016 on Goods
and Services and Current Transfers and Subsidies over 2015? That is the question.

Hon. Imbert: Madam Chairman, am I being asked whether the estimates laid in this honourable Chamber are correct?

Dr. Gopeesingh: No, I am not asking you that. Do not interpret it as that.

Madam Chairman: I think the figure that the hon. Member is asking appears to me to be a different figure from this figure here, so could you just answer the question as was asked please, so that we can go on?

Hon. Imbert: Well, I cannot answer the question.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Oh really?

Hon. Imbert: Where are you getting your figures from?

Dr. Gopeesingh: It is before you here.

Hon. Imbert: It says $325 million.

Dr. Gopeesingh: No, you are subtracting the decrease in debt servicing of $246 million, and that is how you are coming up with $325 million.

Hon. Imbert: Madam Chairman, I am on page 73, I have gone on to the bottom right-hand corner of page 73, it says: “Net Increase/(Decrease)”. I go to the bottom right-hand corner, it is not in brackets, so it means it is an increase and it says $325,578,660.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Madam Chair, I am asking about two specific items. As my colleague said, the Leader of Opposition said—

Madam Chairman: Member for Caronia East, while I might understand your intent that is not the question you have asked, and the question you have asked I think the Minister has answered you.

Dr. Gopeesingh: No, no, no.

Madam Chairman: You asked him whether it is $500-and-something million and he says no.
Dr. Gopeesingh: Madam Chair, I ask it again for clarification. Line item number 02, Goods and Services, there is an increase of $111 million over 2015 revised estimates, and item 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies, $473 million above the revised estimates of 2015; together they add up to approximately $584 million over those areas in 02 and 04 than the revised estimates of 2015. Is that in fact so?

Madam Chairman: Minister of Finance, would you kindly answer the question?

Hon. Imbert: There is no typographical error here.

Madam Chairman: I take it that the figures there are in fact the figures.

Hon. Imbert: This is what it is, it is in black and white. So, can we proceed, please?

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Siparia.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Would the Minister kindly point us to where in your expenditure here is the sum of the $5 billion allocation for wage hikes, and would he give us a breakdown of how this $5 billion is comprised?

Hon. Imbert: Are you on 01?

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: I am looking at page 73 which is the global amounts for the Head under recurrent expenditure.

Hon. Imbert: I know, but which line item are you on?

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: I am dealing with the global allocation for recurrent expenditure which deals with personnel and so on; I am asking, where is the $5 billion?

Hon. Imbert: It has gone up by $17 million, where did you get $5 billion from?

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: This is what you repeatedly told this honourable House.

Hon. Imbert: I have to deal with what is here. That is what is in your head. Madam Chairman, I am lost.
Madam Chairman: Hon. Minister of Finance, is it that it would not be shown on the sheet on this page?

Hon. Imbert: Madam Chairman, I am struggling. The former Prime Minister, now Leader of the Opposition, is referring to a figure which does not appear on this page. I cannot answer a question about an imaginary event. Could you please refer to the line item?

Madam Chairman: Therefore, I would answer that and say that the figure that is referred to is not on this page.

Hon. Imbert: But she knows that.

Madam Chairman: Can we move on please? Hon. Member for Caroni Central, and I am asking Members, please.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar: I want the truth.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Siparia, I think it would be much easier for all of us, Minister of Finance, if all questions be directed to me.

Dr. Tewarie: Item 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies, I just want to confirm that in the 2016 estimates that there is an increase of $473,102,850 under Transfers and Subsidies.

Madam Chairman: All right. Are these general questions?—because I am really very confused now because that is what I am seeing here. So I do not know if the question that is being asked of the hon. Minister of Finance is whether this is a correct figure or an incorrect figure, because I am seeing here $473,102,850. I think that is what I am seeing here. So Member for Caroni Central, if what you are asking is, “Is it an error?”—I would allow it. If that is not the question, I do not allow it because that is what is there in our faces. Okay? I have ruled. Hon. Member for Naparima.

Mr. Charles: Thank you very much, Madam Chairman. I am asking in the
context of Personnel Expenditure, 01, where there is an increase of $17 million and I am quoting from the budget speech, if I may, where the Minister of Finance said and I quote:

    However, we have managed through prudent fiscal discipline to contain most of this extraordinary expenditure in 2016, but regrettably because of this unprecedented $5 billion liability on the personnel expenditure side.

I am just asking if this is reflected anywhere.

**Hon. Imbert:** Madam Chairman, this is now the second Member of the Opposition that is referring to a figure that is not on this page. I cannot answer an imaginary question. I could only deal with the numbers that are here.

**Madam Chairman:** So, Members, can we go on to page 74, Item 001, General Administration?

**Dr. Tewarie:** Chair, I have a problem and I would like to raise the matter here. This is a budget debate.

**Hon. Imbert:** It is not.

**Dr. Tewarie:** The finance—

**Madam Chairman:** Members, could we allow the Member for Caroni Central to finish his question, and then as we indicate, you would be allowed the opportunity to respond? Thank you very much.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Thank you very much, Ma’am. We are involved in a budget debate and part of the budgetary arrangement is that we shall have a Finance Committee. The Finance Committee is a committee of the whole which examines the budget, line by line, within the context of budgetary allocations for expenditure. I cannot understand why we are being so circumscribed that we have to deal with item by item, line by line, without extrapolating any issues that are pertinent to the matter of the budget. [*Desk thumping*]
For instance, the budget articulates the position that Subsidies and Transfers are something that need to be curtailed. Here we have nearly half a billion dollars extra additional cost added on the expenditure side for Transfers and Subsidies. Is it not reasonable to confirm that that is in fact so, given the position of the Minister? [Desk thumping]

**Hon. Imbert:** Madam Chairman, it is not our fault if the Members opposite do not read the Standing Orders. Standing Orders 84(1) says:

“The Standing Finance Committee shall consider the Estimates of Expenditure in relation to the Heads of Expenditure in the order submitted by the Leader of the Opposition.”

We must go through each head one by one, and I just want to make—[ Interruption]—Madam Chairman, the Leader of the Opposition is interrupting me.

**Madam Chairman:** Continue please.

**Hon. Imbert:** I did not say a word.

**Madam Chairman:** Continue please, Minister.

**Hon. Imbert:** I just want to make the point, it is not our fault if the Members opposite are not aware that the budget debate is finished. It was completed several days ago when I did my winding-up and begged to move the question. We are now in the examination of the estimates, and if Members opposite do not read their Standing Orders, do not understand what we are doing here and try to revive something that has already been debated and concluded, that is your business, but we are guided by Standing Orders and these Standing Orders call for detailed examination of heads of expenditure, not something else that is in their mind.

**2.30 p.m.**

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** Thank you very much, and I totally agree with the hon. Member for Diego Martin North/East, the hon. Minister of Finance. The
Standing Finance Committee

Standing Order refers us to the Heads of Expenditure and the Heads of Expenditure are the 41 Heads—

Hon. Imbert: No.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:—and the Ministry of Finance is one, Head 18; that is why—the Heads are identified and we decide we are doing these Heads. The Head is, Head one down to 18, 25, 41. These are the Heads. We are now under Head 18: Ministry of Finance, and that is what we are dealing with.

Hon. Imbert: That is not so, you are trying to discuss things that are not here. It is not so.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Minister of Finance, one minute, please. Member for Caroni Central.

Dr. Tewarie: Thank you, Madam Chairman, I would not say anything.

Hon. Imbert: Good.

Madam Chairman: All right. So, as far as the point that we are in a budget debate, I would refer Members to Standing Order 81(6), right?—that says the debate, when resumed, all right, and that is dealing with—so we are not in a budget debate, and therefore—

Dr. Tewarie: Chair, you see—

Madam Chairman: Members, please, I am proceeding.

Hon. Imbert: No.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Minister of Finance, I would like when I speak that nobody else speaks, please.

Dr. Tewarie: Chair—

Madam Chairman: I would like when I speak nobody else speaks unless I recognize them, please.

Dr. Tewarie: I would like your permission to address you, Madam Chair.
Madam Chairman: I have said, I would like when I speak nobody else speaks unless I recognize them. I think I have allowed sufficient time for us to ventilate this issue and I now rule that we proceed with the examination of the Heads of Expenditure as we have been doing, as you all have always done in accordance with the estimates set out here. We are now at page 74, Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure; Item 001 General Administration. If there is no question I go on to Item 002 Budget Division. This is at page 75. Item 003, Customs and Excise Division.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: We see on Sub-Item 01 a reduction of salaries and cost of living allowance only of $1 million. We heard from the Government that there is the consideration of the revenue authority and Customs and Excise Division and the Board of Inland Revenue, which is on the next page are premised to be merged together to form the revenue authority, could the Minister explain the 2016 estimates of $67 million, first of all, for Customs and Excise? Where does it stand in relation to the proposed revenue authority if and when it is formed? Where does this expense go in terms of the proposed revenue authority? And when we come to the next page I will ask you, on the Inland Revenue Division, which has also an expenditure of $90 million, where do these two go, those expenditures for personnel—for Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance?

Madam Chairman: Hon. Minister of Finance.

Hon. Imbert: Thank you very much. The allocations for the Customs and Excise Division, well this allocation for Customs and Excise is in the context of the existing situation—

Dr. Gopeesingh: It is in the context of the existing—

Hon. Imbert:—of the existing situation.
Dr. Gopeesingh: Okay. Right, and with the proposed revenue authority where does this fit in?

Hon. Imbert: If and when the proposed revenue authority is implemented in fiscal 2016, which is the target, that by the end of September 2016 the revenue authority will be created and functional, then in 2017 the allocation that you now see under Customs and Excise would be subsumed within the revenue authority.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Okay, so if I am reading you correctly that this expenditure on salaries and COLA for 2015/2016 there will be no revenue authority during this year so there would be no need to transfer that money to any revenue authority?

Hon. Imbert: The target is that the new revenue authority would be operational by September 30, 2016; in other words, by the end of the fiscal year.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Thank you.

Hon. Imbert: If we are able to achieve an accelerated implementation then, obviously, an adjustment would be made prior to September 30, 2016, but the plan at this point in time is that this will be the allocation for all of 2016 unless the revenue authority is operational before that, but we do not expect that it would be operational before September 30.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Tabaquite.

Dr. Rambachan: Thank you, Madam Chair. Just to clarify then, the $20,738,000 that is due to be cut, decreased from Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance under Inland Revenue Division on page 76, plus the $1 million—

Hon. Imbert: You are moving on to another Sub-Head?

Madam Chairman: No, we are in Item 003, Customs and Excise.

Dr. Rambachan: All right, I will ask the question under Customs and Excise, does the $1 million represent any retrenchment of workers in the Customs and Excise Division?—because I will ask it for the bigger $20 million also.
Hon. Imbert: No.

Dr. Rambachan: Can the Minister say what that $1 million will represent?—because in 2015 you had an estimate of $58 million that went up to $68 million, $10 million more, and now you are keeping it at $67 million but you are cutting one, but, you know, well I cannot refer to it because the Chairman would not allow me to refer to the Inland Revenue Division, but I will come to it under Inland Revenue Division.

Hon. Imbert: It is just a $1 million variation in allocation of $67 million. It is neither here nor there.

Dr. Rambachan: You are cutting people—

Hon. Imbert: That is not true. It is neither here nor there. If this vote needs to be supplemented it will be, but it includes provisions for vacant posts, that is there in the explanation. So, clearly, if all the vacant posts are not filled then the entire $67 million would not be utilized. It is a small variation and it is really of little consequence.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Oropouche East.

Dr. Moonilal: No, Ma’am, I am on the next Item when you reach there.

Madam Chairman: All right. Okay. Hon. Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: The Minister might be free not to answer this question, but does he envisage, with the formation of the revenue authority, that the wages and salaries and COLA under Customs and Excise will be reduced in the next financial year 2016/2017? I am just asking him this, he might need to answer it or not.

Hon. Imbert: Which Head are you talking about?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Same under Customs and Excise, Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance.

Hon. Imbert: So you are asking me about 2017?

Hon. Imbert: No, well we are not looking at that.

Dr. Gopeesingh: All right. I just wanted to get the guarantee that no jobs are going to be lost.

Hon. Imbert: We are not looking at 2017.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Minister of Finance—I think, Member for Caroni East, I think that is an unfair question, none of us can really see in the future.

Dr. Gopeesingh: That is why I asked my question—

Madam Chairman: No, you asked a question he gave an answer. All right, can we go on now to Item 004.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Oropouche East.

Dr. Moonilal: Thank you very much, Madam Chairman. Hon. Minister, I am looking at Item 004, page 76, Inland Revenue Division, and I wanted to get an estimate from the Minister as to—given the fact that he has decreased VAT and will bring many products, many goods from the zero-rated list onto the VAT at 12.5 per cent, is this a proper estimation for staff requirements given that we have not yet received a list from the Ministry of Finance or the Minister of all those items expected to constitute the $6 billion more in collection from VAT? It is $12 billion, $6 billion more.

Is this staff requirement that we are seeing here under wages and salaries where there is a significant decrease of $20 million plus, would this staff requirement be sufficient for the expansive work that you intend to do by taking an unknown list of items from zero-rated, putting them onto the 12.5 per cent VAT? You estimate to collect $6 billion more, which we do not know how you will do that because you have not shared with us the items that will be removed from the zero-rated list. What are the staff requirements to do that work given the
Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Oropouche East, I am not sure I understand the question you are asking. Are you asking whether the estimate of $90,720,000 estimated for salaries and COLA, is that sufficient, meaning adequate per person, having regard to the cost of living? That is what you are asking?

Dr. Moonilal: No. What I am asking is that given the decrease in this area which is before us of $20 million plus, what are the implications for that on the staffing at that division given that you are now removing what could be thousands of items off the zero-rated list onto your 12.5 per cent new VAT figure? Would this staffing quantum be enough for that?—the appropriation. Would it be sufficient given that?

Mr. Imbert: If the hon. Member will look at page 76, Item 004 Inland Revenue Division, Sub-Item 01 Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance, 2015 original estimates, you will see the budgeted allocation for this division was $85 million. If you look now at the 2016 estimates you will see the budgeted allocation for this Division is $90,720,000 and, therefore, it is more than what was allocated originally in 2015.

The variation between—Madam Chairman, I am being disturbed by the Member for Siparia—the variation between the 2015 original estimate of $85 million and the 2015 revised estimate of $111,458,240 is reflective of the fact that in fiscal 2015 the former administration settled a number of collective agreements, specifically one with public servants, and in fiscal 2015 the Inland Revenue Division had arrears to pay to employees, all of which were paid; and, therefore, the difference of $20,738,240 reflects the fact that arrears of salary were paid in 2015, which are no longer required to be paid in 2016. And, therefore, it should be obvious that the $90 million is more than adequate to satisfy the staffing needs of
the Inland Revenue Division for fiscal 2016.

**Dr. Moonilal:** A follow-up question, please.

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

**Dr. Moonilal:** Yes, so the Minister is confirming that the $90 million is adequate given his expansive work in that area where he has told this House that there is $6 billion, which we believe to be the hoax of the century, that you will have $6 billion more collected by VAT—

**Hon. Imbert:** Madam Chairman, is this really appropriate?

**Dr. Moonilal:** I am asking whether the Minister can confirm.

**Hon. Imbert:** He keeps making a speech.

**Dr. Moonilal:** My question is, you are satisfied that you can collect the extra $6 billion with the staffing structure?

**Hon. Imbert:** Madam Chairman, I must object, the hon. Members opposite are using the question time to make political speeches. I would ask that they ask questions. I ask for you to intervene in this, Madam Chairman.

**Madam Chairman:** Can you put the question? It is whether the $6 million—

**Dr. Moonilal:** The $6 billion he anticipates, whether that can be properly collected with the same staffing quantum. That is the question.

**Madam Chairman:** If that is the question, I allow the question. Could we have—

**Hon. Imbert:** Madam Chairman, I cannot answer the question with this cacophony of noise over there. [Crosstalk]

**Madam Chairman:** Members, I think now we have had enough time to ventilate, let us get back to the business of the day, okay? Hon. Minister of Finance.

**2.45 p.m.**

**Hon. Imbert:** Madam Chairman, we intend to implement the adjustments in the VAT regime from January 01, 2016. That is clearly stated in the budget statement.

**UNREVISED**
Therefore, between today and December 31, 2015, we will be examining the requirements of the Inland Revenue Division. I did say during my winding-up, and also at post-budget forums, that we will be hiring an army of young people, graduates and others and training them to do VAT collections. It appears that the Members opposite do not listen, do not read, do not follow anything. So between now and December 31, 2015, we will be reviewing the staffing requirements required to enhance collections, and we will make appropriate adjustments to the allocation.

**Madam Chairman:** Members, before we proceed, I just want to remind us of Standing Order 45(1), which deals with the time limits, and that takes us to Appendix one, which is on page 71. I call these things tools; I hope everybody has their tools. Page 71:

In Committee

“All members—unlimited periods not exceeding 5 minutes each.”

That is with respect to asking the question and giving your answer. I would want to advise from here on it is going to be strictly enforced.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** My colleague asked the question which I was contemplating.

**Madam Chairman:** Thank you very much. Item 005 which is at page 77. Moving on, Item 008 Investment Division. Moving on, Item 009 Central Tenders Board.

**Dr. Tewarie:** I have one question on the Central Tenders Board, and that is that the allocation for the CTB is made for the entire year. I want to ask the question: Is anything having to do with the realization of the procurement legislation going to have a bearing on this allocation?

**Hon. Imbert:** Madam Chairman, I said in the budget statement and elsewhere that the Government is going to move swiftly to make the necessary amendments to the
Procurement Act and shortly thereafter move quickly to fully operationalize the new procurement system. One of the issues that has to be dealt with initially is the appointment of a procurement regulator. You may have heard His Excellency the President refer to this matter during his address to this honourable Chamber, where he said he is in the process of initiating the necessary mechanism for the engagement of a procurement regulator.

If all goes according to plan, before the end of the fiscal year the new procurement system should be operational. At that time, the Central Tenders Board would cease to exist and, therefore, whatever unused allocation is still remaining would be transferred to other more needy areas.

**Madam Chairman:** Can we move on then? We are at 010 Valuation Division, page 78.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Madam Chairman, through you, I want to ask the Minister of Finance: Would this be the division valuing the properties that he is contemplating to bring under the new property tax? If this is the department that is going to look after the valuations of the properties across Trinidad and Tobago, does he see this as adequate or he intends to bring on more personnel? He spoke about some young cadre of people doing things across the country. Would that be part of this exercise and the financing for this Valuation Division? Is this the division that is going to be looking after the valuation of properties under the property tax?

**Hon. Imbert:** In the first place, Madam Chairman, the property tax is not new. It has been in force since you were in government for the last five years. All that has occurred is that an amendment has been made each year waiving the implementation of that legislation, but that legislation is in force, so it is nothing new about this.

Secondly, we have made it clear, and I have said this in other places as well
as in this honourable Chamber, that what is required now is to identify the properties that would be the subject of valuations. My understanding is that approximately one-third of the properties in Trinidad and Tobago have been properly identified. We are going to use the local government system, and in each local government region we will hire another army of young people to go outside there and properly identify the properties that will become the subject of a valuation. And, yes, the Valuation Division is responsible at this time for the valuation of properties.

I must say that in this case once again, the sum of $16 million in 2015 revised, includes arrears which were fully paid off in 2015 and, as such, are no longer required in 2016. If you look at the estimate for 2016 for the Valuation Division it is more than $1 million in excess of the estimate for 2015. So we think this is appropriate at this time, and as soon as we organize the mechanism within the various municipal regions to hire temporary staff to go outside there and identify properties—it is a two-stage process.

First you have to identify the property in terms of its physical characteristics, in terms of its location, as to whether it is a residence or whether it is a commercial property. That has to be identified, so you need to map it. Now, there is a point of view that this has all been already done using aerial photography and GPS mapping and so on. This is something that has been told to me, and it is certainly something I am going to explore, because if, in fact, all of the properties in Trinidad and Tobago have been mapped already by aerial photography and GPS mapping, then it would make our life much easier. It would mean that the field agents that go out to identify the properties would have the benefit of aerial photographs and GPS mapping. But that is the first stage: identify the property, identify what type of property it is. Then the Valuation Division, based on that
identification, would assign a value to the property.

So for the time being, we consider this to be appropriate. It is when we begin the exercise of identification of properties, then we would see whether we need to supplement this vote or not.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Just a follow-up question to that. In the budget statement, the hon. Minister of Finance indicated the application of 2009 rates. Am I to understand that is going to be applied for this fiscal year, that is to say, land and building taxes rates of 2009, and that the valuation exercise would be something that then dovetails into a rate for the 2017 fiscal year?

**Hon. Imbert:** Thank you very much. At the present time, a number of properties are not on the register, not on the rolls, so that the rolls are incomplete. What we have decided to do is to start the process using the levels and rates. It is a combination of levels and rates that applied in 2009, which is the last time that land and building taxes were paid, and that would apply to the properties that are on the rolls, but there are a number of properties not on the rolls. So that as the field agents go out and identify and the Valuation Division comes in and puts an appropriate value, then we will start to add these properties into the system.

So what is going to happen in 2016 is a combination of existing—well, old levels and rates applied to properties already on the rolls, and then new properties as they come in, we will have to formulate how we are going to apply a rate and a level to those new properties so there is some sort of equity within the first year. Then as we go along and we get more information, and as we further refine the system and build the database properly, then we will have to look at amendments to the existing legislation.

In fact, an amendment may be required; that is the additional advice I have received, and I am getting a second opinion on that, as to whether we need to
amend the legislation immediately in order to allow ourselves to implement the old levels and the old rates. So this is going to an evolving process throughout 2016.

**Mr. Singh:** Just for purposes of follow-up for that question: when you increase the annual rateable value, then you effectively increase water rates and sewerage rates, and nothing is mentioned about that.

**Hon. Imbert:** One of the things we will be looking at is the percentage and the way in which the ATV and the ARV are applied. I welcome that piece of advice and we will take due note of that. Thank you very much.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Just a follow-up to the answer he gave. Would the personnel involved in the local or in the regional authorities become part of the Valuation Division? How are they going to be linked, from a governance perspective, as the employees doing the valuation from the local government bodies?

**Hon. Imbert:** I am lost. What line item is this? Local government?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** No, it is the same thing, the valuation. You remember you said the regional authorities—

**Hon. Imbert:** No, I did not say that. I said within the municipal regions. I was talking geography.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Municipal regions.

**Hon. Imbert:** Within the boundaries of the municipal regions.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** The employees within the municipal regions, emanating from the municipal regions, what is the governance structure that will link them to the Valuation Division? How are they going to do that, independently, without guidance from here?

**Hon. Imbert:** What I said, I will repeat because it is obvious that this is something that needs explanation over and over. So I will explain again that what we intend to do is to send field agents out to identify properties. The information
obtained from the field surveys will then be given to the Valuation Division who would assign the values. So the valuation itself is going to be done by the Valuation Division, but they will use a database created by the field agents.

Dr. Gopeesingh: I crave your indulgence to ask a short question. The valuations on properties which you said include commercial, in the commercial aspect of properties does that include plant and equipment of commercial properties?

Hon. Imbert: The Property Tax Act which has been in force since 2009, and has been the subject of amendments in this honourable House for all of the five years that you were in government, refers not only to buildings, but also to plant and equipment. I suggest you go and read the Property Tax Act.

Madam Chairman: Has the question been answered?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Yes, yes.

Madam Chairman: Can we go on, please, to 011 National Insurance Appeal Board Tribunal, which is on page 79. Moving on, Item 014 Financial Intelligence Unit which is on page 79. Moving on, Item 017 Office of the Supervisor of Insolvency, which is on page 80. [Interruption]

3.00 p.m.

[A Member’s glass falls to the floor]

Dr. Gopeesingh: The books pushing down the glasses. [Crosstalk]


Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Thank you, Madam Chair. Line Item Other Contracted Services, 28, at the end of the page. I note that this provision includes provision for Legal Counsel and Advisory Services. Now the total increase as shown on the line Item is $65 million. [Crosstalk]
Madam Chairman: Members. Members.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: And out of that, Legal Counsel and Advisory Services is $64 million. So really, you know, 99 per cent of that increase has to do with legal counsel. Much ado has been made in this House about legal fees. I would be very happy, given that there is a new administration who has indicated they want to make changes in procurement for legal services. How would this $65 million be comprised—$64 million for legal fees—and what would be the method for procurement in the new regime with respect to that?

Madam Chairman: Minister of Finance.

Hon. Imbert: I first must compliment the Member for Siparia for being au courant, finally, with a Head of expenditure. Now it is a fact that this Head—[Crosstalk] I complimented her.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Minister of Finance, could you just kindly answer the question without an introduction.

Hon. Imbert: This Head is for Legal Counsel and Advisory Services for World Bank advisory services and for consultants to the Ministry of Finance among other things. As the hon. Member would be aware the bulk of this is to deal with the Clico matter. That is the main item for which legal services are required. It has come to my attention that the method of selection of attorneys to deal with various matters relating to the bailout of the CL Financial Group and other related matters, that the method of procurement of legal services was inconsistent with best practice. And in fact there are a number of familiar names that crop up on the list of attorneys very similar to the list read out by the acting hon. Attorney General?—or the soon to be acting hon. Attorney General.

And therefore, we in the Ministry of Finance are going to review the procurement of attorneys that took place under the former regime and make
appropriate adjustments, using best practice, to make sure that we select persons who are competent, persons who are experienced and persons who have a good track record and can give dispassionate and professional advice.

**Madam Chairman:** So can we go on to 002 Budget Division? 003 Customs and Excise Division. 004 Inland Revenue Division. Hon. Member for Naparima.

**Mr. Charles:** Thank you very much, Madam Chairman. Item 08 Rent/Lease - Office Accommodation and Storage, and I will just ask the question in the context of a general expenditure in that area because we will see it as we move to Treasury Division and the Central Tenders Board. The question I would like to ask the hon. Minister is, could he give us a sense—not a sense—specific information on the total allocation for rent/lease by the Ministry of Finance?—the total allocation. And whether these leases or the rental options are, and I asked it yesterday, on the basis of an analysis of the lease, purchase or rent option. And finally, I would be grateful if we could get a list of the top 10 landlords who will be supplying space to the Ministry of Finance. Thank you very much.

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

**Hon. Imbert:** Madam Chairman, I would be very happy to oblige, but—

**Madam Chairman:** You need to do that in writing?

**Hon. Imbert:** No. No. It is not that. This Sub-Item relates to Inland Revenue, does it not? So why are you asking about all the other divisions?

**Mr. Charles:** I am making the general point because it is a standard increase, it would seem, as we go along. I do not wish to ask it under every Item.

**Madam Chairman:** I think best if you can find it here under Inland Revenue, and if it is that the response is the same, then the Minister will find a very succinct way to advise you.

**Hon. Imbert:** So you just deal with Rent/Lease, Inland Revenue.
Mr. Charles: Yes. Inland Revenue.

Hon. Imbert: So what is the question now with respect to Inland Revenue?

Mr. Charles: The question is, what accounts for the $4.4 million increase and then could we get a sense of who is the landlord? And secondly, has the option been done in the context of an informed analysis of the lease/purchase/rent option? Thank you.

Hon. Imbert: Okay. I am told that during fiscal 2015 the Inland Revenue Division or part of Inland Revenue Division was relocated, and as a result of relocation there are arrears of rent due under the contract. Well it is you that did it not me, and we are now stuck with this liability as a result of a decision taken by the former administration which has incurred a liability for arrears of rent.

Mr. Charles: Some of the $4 million?

Hon. Imbert: Yes. This is the advice I received, that the Inland Revenue was relocated by the former administration and this has incurred a liability for the new administration of $4 million.

Mr. Charles: My understanding is that they are still on St. Vincent Street.

Hon. Imbert: We are talking about the VAT Division. Okay?

Madam Chairman: Moving on, 005 Treasury Division. 008 Investments Division. Hon. Member for Siparia.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Eighty-six, under Treasury at line—I am sorry. Janitorial Services line 37. I note that there is an increase of about 264 per cent here from the $687,000 that was in 2015. I am looking at page 85, Madam, under line Item—[Crosstalk]

Madam Chairman: I thought you said 86.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Yeah. I switched back. My apologies. At page 85, 37, Janitorial Services revised 2015—$687,000, 2016—$2.5 million, $1.8 million
increase which is about $264 per cent. Can we get an explanation, a rationale as to why this large increase here under Janitorial Services, and what does Janitorial Services entail? The Security Services has also increased which is the line Sub-Item 43. So those two there are some increases, would you kindly explain why?

Hon. Imbert: Well Janitorial Services would be, the simple English meaning of janitorial services—cleaning and so on. Securities is the simple English meaning of security, which means securing things. And the reason for the increase is that there is a new responsibility, an IHRIS system. This is the Integrated Human Resource Information System offices, which were not catered for under this Head before. So it is simply increased responsibilities for Janitorial Services and Security Services to cater for the Integrated Human Resource Information System offices.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Thank you.

Hon. Imbert: You are welcome.

Madam Chairman: All right. So we are moving on. 008 Investments Division, this is at page 86. 009 Central Tenders Board.

Mr. Charles: I suppose, Madam Chairman, I will get the same answer for the rest.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Naparima, are you asking a question?

Mr. Charles: Yes. I am.

Madam Chairman: Yes, please.

Mr. Charles: Okay. That is why I was trying to ask a generic question. So I will ask it with respect to the Central Tenders Board, to explain the nearly $1 million rent allocation? It is on page 87.

Hon. Imbert: I am advised that this was the renegotiation of a rental contract by the former UNC administration resulting in an increased rental payment. You
increased the rent. Yes. Okay?

**Madam Chairman:** 010 Valuation Division. 011 National Insurance Appeal Board Tribunal.

**Madam Chairman:** Hon. Member for Naparima.

**Mr. Charles:** A similar question at 08 of rental increase $286,000.

**Hon. Imbert:** It has gone down. It has decreased.

**Mr. Charles:** No. No. Oh, yes. Sorry.

**Hon. Imbert:** You “doh” have a question anymore?

**Mr. Charles:** I was dealing with the Financial Intelligence Unit. Is that what we are dealing with?

**Madam Chairman:** No. No. No. We are now at 011 which is the National Insurance Appeal Board. 014 Financial Intelligence Unit. Hon. Member for Naparima.

**Mr. Charles:** The question arises again. The increase in rent—$286,000.

**Hon. Imbert:** Again, the former administration rented car parking facilities thereby causing an increase in rental payments for the FIU.

**Madam Chairman:** 017 Office of the Supervisor of Insolvency. 03 Minor Equipment Purchases. 001 General Administration. This is at page 91. 002 Budget Division. 003 Customs and Excise Division. 004 Inland Revenue Division. 005 Treasury Division. 008 Investments Division. 009 Central Tenders Board. 010—hon. Member for Naparima, can I proceed? 010 Valuation Division. 011 National Insurance Appeal Board Tribunal. 014 Financial Intelligence Unit. Hon. Member for Naparima, 014.

**Mr. Charles:** I want it on 011.

**Madam Chairman:** 014. 017 Office of the Supervisor of Insolvency. 04 Current Transfers and Subsidies. 001 Regional Bodies. 002 Commonwealth Bodies. Hon.
Dr. Tewarie: I have a question on 011, Item 23 Agricultural Development Bank. This is on page 99.

Madam Chairman: Ninety five. Thank you.

Dr. Tewarie: Oh, sorry I made an error.

Madam Chairman: Member for Siparia.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Households 007.

Madam Chairman: We have not reached there as yet.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Thank you. I note at line Sub-Item 06 Food Price Support Programme, there is a decrease of about $6 million from the previous year and I would like to understand how this would impact in the time of inflation with the increase in food prices? How would this impact on those in need of the Food Price Support Programme. There has been a decrease recorded here in the allocation.

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

Madam Chairman: 06 on page 97 under Item 007.

Hon. Imbert: It seems that this is for food cards?

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: I am asking why is it being decreased?

Hon. Imbert: From $294 million to $288 million, a decrease of $6 million.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Yeah.

3.15 p.m.

Hon. Imbert: Well, as you would know former Prime Minister, a lot of food cards were given out indiscriminately in the run-up to the general election,
including in my own constituency where the defeated UNC candidate just gave out food cards. So that we are bringing order, discipline, integrity, honesty and efficiency to the Food Price Support Programme, and we think a modest decrease of $6 million in a total sum of $288 million is not unachievable, since we are going to be cutting out corruption, waste and mismanagement.

Madam Chairman: Item 009 Other Transfers. Hon. Member for Caroni East.
Dr. Gopeesingh: I was looking at 007 Households still, because we have not finished. Just after the Leader of the Opposition asked about the 06, can I ask—

Madam Chairman: Yes, so you are carrying us back?
Dr. Gopeesingh: No, further down to Inland Revenue Division on the same page 97.

Madam Chairman: Page 97, where are you, Sir?
Dr. Gopeesingh: Item No. 15 Inland Revenue Division.

Madam Chairman: That is what I am saying, you are carrying us back. Right? Because that is under—[Interruption] No, I am in Other Transfers 009.
Dr. Gopeesingh: No, no, no.

Madam Chairman: So, I am just asking for clarification that the hon. Member is carrying us back, and I think I am correct. Page 97, and I am allowing it.
Dr. Gopeesingh: Yes, thank you.

Madam Chairman: And you are where, hon. Member?
Dr. Gopeesingh: Inland Revenue Division, Item No. 15 Government’s Contribution to the Children’s Life Fund. Are Members of Parliament or Members of Government going to be contributing to this life fund as well?
Hon. Imbert: We will put that in writing.
Dr. Gopeesingh: No, I asked you.
Hon. Imbert: I just answered you.

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Dr. Moonila: You will put in writing whether you will.

Dr. Gopeesingh: You will put your answer in writing whether you will contribute as Members of Government?

Hon. Imbert: I think I just said that.

Madam Chairman: Any other questions on 007 Households? The Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Chair. Yes, 007 under 16, Payment to Maxi Taxi Owners. Through you, Madam Chair, can the Minister indicate what exactly is this payment related to?

Madam Chairman: Hon. Minister of Finance, we are at page—

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Ninety-seven.

Madam Chairman: No, we are still in Households, 007, payment to maxi-taxis, line Item 16.

Hon. Imbert: That is payment in lieu of remission of taxes.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: What is it?

Hon. Imbert: It is what it is.

Madam Chairman: Maybe some explanation might assist, please, hon. Minister of Finance. This is a new Member. Please!

Hon. Imbert: Okay. It represents a refund on taxes paid on maxi-taxis.

Madam Chairman: And maybe hon. Minister of Finance, for the assistance of all of us, I think the Member for Chaguanas West may like to assist in the understanding of his colleague.

Mr. Singh: That was a commitment given some time in 2005 and it is a follow-through in the years ahead, and what you have there is a consequence of that.

Madam Chairman: Thank you.

Hon. Imbert: Madam Chairman, can I get a ruling on this, please? Is one
Opposition Member allowed to answer a question from another Opposition Member?

Madam Chairman: Well, the point about it, hon. Minister of Finance, I allowed it in that it gave some clarification for all who may be new here in an appreciation of a question that was asked. Okay?

Hon. Imbert: Well, I am very grateful for that, because I wish that they had been doing that for the last four days.

Madam Chairman: Member! Member, excuse me please. Member for Couva South.

Hon. Imbert: Explain to yourselves what you did.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Minister of Finance! Member for Couva South.

Mr. Indarsingh: Thank you very much. Just as a follow-up to that, I think this matter has been languishing for about 10 or more years, as the Member for Chaguanas West indicated, this allocation of $12,862,090, will this fully relinquish the debt that is owed to all the maxi-taxi owners who are entitled under this rebate?

Madam Chairman: Hon. Minister of Finance.

Hon. Imbert: Based on what has just happened, I am tempted to refer the question to the Member for Chaguanas West.

Madam Chairman: Is that the answer to the question, hon. Minister of Finance.

Hon. Imbert: Yes.

Mr. Indarsingh: That is arrogance on the part of—

Madam Chairman: Could we get that answer in writing? Please, let us go on.

Mr. Singh: I will put it in writing.

Madam Chairman: Member for Chaguanas West. Okay, so can we go on to the next Item, 011?

Dr. Tewarie: No, could I just—
Madam Chairman: Are we—one minute, please. I did not see any other hands go up.

Dr. Tewarie: I indicated, Ma’am.

Madam Chairman: All right. So, I am entertaining the Member for Caroni Central.

Dr. Tewarie: But the matter I want to raise is 007, 15, the life fund. I see that the amount has actually been increased for 2016, and I take that as confirmation that the Government and the Minister of Finance are going to sustain this fund, and I simply want to compliment the Minister of Finance on this matter.

Madam Chairman: Okay, thank you. Moving on, [Laughter] I will recognize the Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Would the hon. Minister of Finance give us some information on Item 23, Caricom Development Fund, which is a new item on the estimates of 2016.

Madam Chairman: Where are we?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Page 98.

Madam Chairman: Yes, but remember we are not going by pages. We are really going by Items, so we are still in 007. Hon. Member for Naparima, is yours in 007? Hon. Member for Siparia, is yours in 007?

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Item 008.

Madam Chairman: Item 009 Other Transfers and Subsidies, I recognize the Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Would the hon. Minister of Finance give some explanation of what is this $65 million for the Caricom Development Fund?

Madam Chairman: Line Item 23.

Dr. Gopeesingh: It is a new Item under the 2016 estimates. What are the details
related to this expenditure?

Hon. Imbert: This is number 23?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Yes.

Madam Chairman: Yes, please.

Hon. Imbert: Okay. The former Government, of which you were a part, agreed to fund the Caricom Development Fund starting in 2016.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Okay, thank you.

Madam Chairman: Member for Naparima.

Mr. Charles: No.

Madam Chairman: Member for Siparia.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Line Item 26 Colonial Life Insurance Company, Clico, I note a $20 million estimated allocation, and kindly ask: what is the purpose of this allocation for Clico? It was not there in 14, 15 and so on.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Minister of Finance.

Hon. Imbert: I am advised that this is really a financing item and should be properly included under debt servicing. It is part of the Clico bonds. The cost of the Clico bonds.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: So, it should not be here?

Hon. Imbert: It should be under debt servicing. But, it is the same item which is financing the Clico bailout. It is part of the cost of raising the Clico bonds.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Item 20 First Citizens Bank Limited indemnity calls, I see a $30 million increase again. Minister, kindly tell us why this has been increased to $30 million.

Hon. Imbert: Sure. In 2009 the Government signed an MOU with CL Financial, following that group’s inability to meet its liabilities to its depositors. The assistance of FCB was sought in the restructuring. It was agreed that FCB would
purchase Caribbean Money Market Brokers. In order to ensure that the capital adequacy ratio of First Citizens would not fall below 10 per cent of its international credit rating, the Government signed a liquidity support agreement with First Citizens. Included in that agreement is that the Republic shall, within 30 days of being notified of any indemnified claim, reimburse First Citizens accordingly. First Citizens has advised that claims for 2016 will amount to $195 million. Because of budgetary constraints, we have made a partial allocation of $60 million, and the Central Bank would advance any additional amounts as and when required.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Line Item 38 on the same page, please. I note what appears to be a new Item, it does indicate it is a new Sub-Item here, Community Improvement Programme. Would the Minister kindly indicate what this programme is about?

Hon. Imbert: It is brand new.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: And under which Ministry would it fall?

Hon. Imbert: It is under this Ministry.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Yes, your Ministry would give the money, like GATE, for example.

Hon. Imbert: Obviously.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: But another Ministry would implement it?

Hon. Imbert: The purpose of this, you would know as a long-standing elected parliamentary representative, as I am as well, that from time to time things arise within communities. You have emergencies, your bridge might collapse or some other emergency.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Contingency.

Hon. Imbert: Yes, this is simply a contingency fund to deal with extraordinary emergencies that may arise from time to time. Obviously, the Ministry involved
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would have to make a case, whether it is the Ministry of Works and Transport or another Ministry, and then the Ministry of Finance would disburse out of this amount. We just thought that, you know, rather than burden those Ministries, because sometimes things come up that could exhaust the entire allocation of a particular Head. So, we just thought we would put this sum inside of there to deal with unforeseen emergencies.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Barataria/San Juan.

**Dr. Khan:** No, the Member for Siparia asked the question.

**Madam Chairman:** All right, Member for Tabaquite.

**Dr. Rambachan:** I just want to ask, how does this relate to the emergency fund that exists?

**Hon. Imbert:** That is completely different. This is really infrastructure related. So, as I said, if an unforeseen event comes up and the particular Ministry is unable to manage that expenditure, because, as you know having been in a Ministry for some time, sometimes your vote would be exhausted and an emergency arises; you know, a land slip, a bridge collapse and so on, and we just felt we would have this here as a contingency fund to help those Ministries in the event of emergencies.

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

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Chair, number 32 and number 37, the G-Pan Patent, which is an increase. The 2016 estimates is $5 million. From $800,000 to $5 million, could you just give a short explanation on that?

**Madam Chairman:** This is line Item 32 G-Pan Patent.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Yes, G-Pan Patent.

**Hon. Imbert:** That is the cost of the patent.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** “Ah”?

**Hon. Imbert:** That is the cost of the patent.
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Dr. Gopeesingh: Is that a payment to Prof. Copeland for it?

Hon. Imbert: My understanding is an arrangement was reached with Prof. Copeland quite a while ago when you were in Government, and I think the Government has a role in the patent. This is for overseas fees for the patent. So, it is Government’s obligation or partial obligation with respect to payment of patent fees for the G-Pan.

Madam Chairman: I think you asked a two-pronged question.

Dr. Gopeesingh: No, I just wanted shortly, the Betting Levy Board, that is being transferred from the Ministry of Trade and Industry, $68 million there—

Madam Chairman: Line Item 37.

Dr. Gopeesingh: But I remember the Betting Levy Board had an Item of just $10 million, so I am seeing $68 million for the Betting Levy Board, and I think you may remember that as well, Madam Chair.

Hon. Imbert: We will get back to you in writing on that.

Dr. Gopeesingh: All right.

Madam Chairman: All right, can I then call on the hon. Member for Siparia.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Line Item 17 Government Assistance for Tuition Expenses Fund (GATE). For clarification, I note in the estimates here we have 2015 revised of $650 million, and, of course the identical sum being allocated for 2016. But in the Social Sector Investment Programme we have the revised estimates had been $712 million, so which one of these is the accurate number in this here?

Hon. Imbert: This is the allocation at this point in time. If we need to supplement or if there are savings—

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Sorry, Sir—

Hon. Imbert: No, I am just saying—
Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:—that is not the question.

Hon. Imbert: This is the allocation in this Head at this point in time. If we need to supplement, increase to $700-odd million, or if there is a reduction, we will make the appropriate adjustments. This is simply an allocation at this point in time.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Sure, Sir, through you, my question is, why is it in the Social Sector Investment Programme, why is it listed in the table at page 231? Why is the revised listed at $712 million, but in these estimates it is listed as $650 million? Which one is the correct one?

Hon. Imbert: I will have to get back to you in writing on that.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Please. Page 231 of the SSI.

Hon. Imbert: No, no, I will get back to you on it. Thank you very much.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Thank you.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Chaguanas East.

Mr. Karim: Thank you, Madam Chair. May I ask, through you, the hon. Minister of Finance, whether there is any—[Interruption] Yes, when he is finished.

Hon. Imbert: Okay, actually I got an explanation. Yes, Madam Chairman, for the 650, but let us deal with this question first. We could deal with that?

Mr. Karim: You can go ahead and then I will—

Hon. Imbert: Expenditure could be a roll-over from the previous year. This is simply the allocation for this year. The expenditure could be more than the allocation.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: My question is not about the allocation amount. The question is, that in 2015 in your SSIP, page 231, you said the revised 2015 is $712 million. In your draft estimates of expenditure, Head 18 under, under that same Item GATE, you said the revised estimate for 2015 is 650, and I am saying it is
two different numbers. Which is the correct one? You have two books with two things you gave us, two sets of numbers. They are inconsistent.

Hon. Imbert: This shows allocation. This shows the allocation. That shows the expenditure, and that expenditure includes a carry-over from the previous fiscal year.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Well they are both listed as revised 2015, eh.

Hon. Imbert: They are both correct.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: And each number is different.

Hon. Imbert: They are both correct.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: And they are both correct? Okay.

Hon. Imbert: I am advised by the Director of Budgets and the PS Finance, one is an allocation, one is expenditure, and they are both correct. If you want a written explanation as to that I would most certainly give it.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: That would be nice. Thank you.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla. Sorry, we were at Chaguanas East.

Mr. Karim: Thank you, Madam Chair. Again, to the hon. Minister of Finance. Hon. Minister of Finance, through the Chair, it is clear that the sum of 650 continues to be consistent in the allocation.

Hon. Imbert: Yes.

Mr. Karim: On page 35 of your budget presentation you indicated that you were going to expand the GATE programme, but this figure does not show any expansion. The question I want to also ask is, you had indicated, and through the Minister of Education in his contribution, that was an additional expense for 67 students pursuing medical education at Mona, I just want to know whether that increase that you just responded to the Member for Siparia, are those 67 persons
Hon. Imbert: All right, as you know being a former Minister of Tertiary Education, GATE is funded by a special fund, and there are transfers to that fund from time to time, usually at the time of the Appropriation Bill. So, this $650 million is a transfer into the GATE fund, which has a balance in it. Therefore, when you add this $650 to what is there you would have the required amount to pay for the expenditure of $700-odd million in 2016. So, we are comfortable at this point in time with the balance that already exists within the GATE fund, that this transfer of $650 million is adequate to meet all the demands of this fund in fiscal 2016, including the payment for the medical students who were denied GATE funding by you.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mr. Karim: Can I have a follow-up to—Madam Chair.

Madam Chairman: I will just take you after hon. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Chair. Under Sub-Head 009, line 19 Caricom Petroleum Fund, I understand, through you, Madam Chair, to the hon. Minister of Finance, that this fund was really established to provide relief to Caricom Member States experiencing economic hardship resulting from persistently high international prices for crude oil and petroleum products. I am just asking, if this fund is relevant in today’s oil and gas economy? Thank you.

Hon. Imbert: Again, this is a special fund, and you have to understand the difference between expenditure and a transfer. So, there was a transfer into the GATE fund of 650, but the expenditure could be more because of the balance in that fund. Currently, the petroleum fund has $239 million in it. We are appropriating $100 million so that would increase the balance in that fund, but
there are certain conditions by which Caricom Member States can draw down, and those conditions are related to the price of oil. So, they cannot draw down just so. There is a certain cut-off point below which they cannot draw down and a cut-off point above which they can draw down. Okay? Thank you.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Chaguanas East.

Mr. Karim: Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister of Finance line Item 14.

Madam Chairman: Which page?

Mr. Karim: Page 98, line Item 14—

Madam Chairman: That is Training Fund.

Mr. Karim:—could you just indicate as to why this is discontinued for daily rated workers?

Hon. Imbert: We will have to get back to you in writing on that.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Line Item 17. We heard that the hon. Prime Minister indicated that they are going to use a means test for the GATE Programme—

Hon. Imbert: No, no, no, I could answer you.

Dr. Gopeesingh:—and if they are using a means test for the GATE programme—

Madam Chairman: You went back to 17.

Dr. Gopeesingh:—how much are you reducing the GATE Programme, because obviously you would weed out some other students if you use a means test? So, could you give us an explanation on the means test and how it would affect your appropriation here?

Hon. Imbert: No, but if you were listening to your hon. colleague to your left, he said that we had said we are going to expand the GATE Programme.

Dr. Gopeesingh: But your Prime Minister said he is going to introduce a means test.
Hon. Imbert: So, therefore if you take a combination of expansion and the means test, it may be revenue neutral, you add and you subtract, and you might get the same figure.

Dr. Gopeesingh: So, you will expand the programme but do a means test to take away some other students, and therefore you may come to the same figure of 700?

Hon. Imbert: Obviously. But, this is something that we as a country need to talk about, as to whether somebody who is earning $100,000 a month should be given the privilege of free university education. We need to talk about it as a country, that whether the very rich, whether the wealthy should also be entitled to free education. We need to talk about it. We need to have a dialogue on this. I am sure you will agree we need to talk about this.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Time has expired.

Hon. Imbert: No, no, I only used two minutes out of the five. So, I would welcome your input as a former Minister of Education, to tell me whether somebody earning $100,000 a month, or $200,000 a month should continue, or their offspring should continue to be entitled to free higher education. We need to talk about these things as a country.

Dr. Gopeesingh: I know education is equitable, I give him my advice now, education should be equitable and accessible.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Members, please, I think the discussion—hon. Member for Caroni East—[Interruption]—hon. Member for Caroni East and hon. Minister of Finance, I do not think we are discussing policy here! Item 011 Transfers to State Enterprises, page 99. Member for Oropouche East.

Dr. Moonilal: Thank you very much, Madam Chairman. Today, the Minister of Finance, I will just remind him that in the budget there was this statement at page 24:
“The Agricultural Development Bank will be adequately resourced to allow farmers readily accessible credit.”

When I look at the Agricultural Development Bank there is violent slash in the funds, down by $60 million, the Agricultural Development Bank—

**Madam Chairman:** By how many million?

**Hon. Member:** $50 million.

**Dr, Moonilal:** Fifth million dollars—50—so, it has been brutally, savagely slashed by 66 per cent, while boasting about adequately resourcing the ADB to allow readily accessible credit.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Oropouche East, maybe you could assist me?

**Dr. Moonilal:** The question is, why did you violently cut/slash the ADB—

**Madam Chairman:** No, that is why I want assistance. I wonder how is violence done with the stroke of a pen or the print of a—

**Dr. Moonilal:** The pen is mightier than the sword, Ma’am.

**Madam Chairman:** I just wanted violently, you know. I wish you would remove that word.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Yes, I will withdraw that word.

**Madam Chairman:** Okay, thank you.

**Dr. Moonilal:** The Minister presided over the slashing of that ADB estimate, the allocation, by 66 per cent, $50 million, and yet, just a few days ago was boasting about the ADB being adequately resourced.

**Madam Chairman:** And the question is?

**Dr. Moonilal:** I have a second question.

**Madam Chairman:** And the question is?

**Dr. Moonilal:** The question is, I am asking the Minister to explain that contradiction between his words and his actions.

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Madam Chairman: Thank you.

Dr. Moonilal: That is the question. I have a second question.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Minister of Finance.

Hon. Imbert: Madam Chairman, you just made a ruling that we should not be discussing policy, so is any part of that question policy? Could you assist me?

Madam Chairman: Well, the question is, why the decrease of $50 million?

Hon. Imbert: So, therefore I am not obligated to answer the second part of that question?

Madam Chairman: The question is, why is there a decrease by $50 million?

Hon. Imbert: Very well. Madam Chairman, Member for Oropouche East, as you should know since you were a Member of the previous Government. The Agricultural Development Bank was given $75 million in 2015 to assist it with loans to farmers. As you should also know, since you are a Member of the previous Government—

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: They are in the estimates.

Hon. Imbert: Madam Chairman, I am being interrupted by the Member for Siparia.

Madam Chairman: I am hearing you.

Dr. Moonilal: I have a second question.

Hon. Imbert: I would have to repeat. As you should also know, the Agricultural Development Bank did not “un-lend” one cent under the previous UNC administration. So, the entire $75 million disbursed to the Agricultural Development Bank in 2015 under the former administration is still in its bank account. They did not disburse a single cent to farmers. And therefore with this $25 million, that is because it was given to them. So, let me just explain why it says $75 million revised. The policy was to give them $75 million, they got it.
Every single cent remains in their bank account. They did not “un-lend” a cent to farmers. So, we are now giving them another 25, which will take their balance up to $100 million, and we are hoping that in this year, with the reform of the ADB, with a new board in place, with a new Minister of Agriculture, with a new Government, we can finally initiate the process of “un-lending” to deserving farmers in Trinidad and Tobago. They will now have $100 million available to them.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Barataria/San Juan, please! I now recognize the hon. Member for Naparima.

Mr. Charles: I think the question was asked.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Oropouche East.

Dr. Moonilal: Question to the hon. Member, is that the adequate resource that they speak about for the ADB? Would that constitute adequate resource for the ADB?

Hon. Imbert: I would think that if they got $75 million from you and did not lend a cent, if they get now an aggregate total of $100 million, that should be enough for this year.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Barataria/San Juan.

Dr. Khan: No, no, no.

Dr. Moonilal: A next question.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Oropouche East.

Dr. Moonilal: No. 57 Caribbean Airlines. There is also a decrease of $107.8 million, and I want to ask the Minister of Finance, is this part of his strategy to reduce funding and support to Caribbean Airlines with the intention to privatize and sell out the assets of that airline as part of his sale of assets strategy announced in the budget? Is this one state enterprise that you would sell out?
Hon. Imbert: As the hon. Member will recall, when the PNM demitted office we left Caribbean Airlines with $1 billion in its bank account. You blew the entire billion and then incurred losses of another $2 billion. However, there has been a conscious effort at Caribbean Airlines over the last 12 months to try and turn away from the profligacy of the UNC years, so we have given them an allocation in 2016 that we believe is adequate. We do believe that in 2016 the support required for Caribbean Airlines would be far less than the billions of dollars that you managed to waste in the last five years, and we do think this airline will become efficient, and we have no intention of selling it.

[Dr. Moonilal raises hand]

Madam Chairman: Is this a follow-up question from Caribbean Airlines?

Dr. Moonilal: Yes. Would this slashing of the support for Caribbean Airlines result in any reduction in services, and job losses, and increase in airfares?

Hon. Imbert: Well, firstly I do not understand what you mean by slashing. We have given an allocation of $92 million. The revised estimate for 2015 was $200 million, as you can see previously, 2014, it was $452 million. We believe the $92 million is adequate. We believe the airline will continue its operations.

3.45 p.m.

Mr. Indarsingh: Thank you, Madam Chair. Under Item 40, Sugar Manufacturing Co. Ltd, I am seeing an increase of $2,412,230. Could the Minister of Finance indicate what this increase is being used for and also at Caroni (1975) Limited, $3,059,000.

Hon. Imbert: As the hon. Member will know, this allocation is for the winding-up of the company, something that you would have done.

Mr. Indarsingh: Madam Chair, I want to place on record, the PNM was the administration that took the political decision to close down Caroni (1975)
Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Couva South, is that a question?

Mr. Indarsingh: It is a statement, Madam Chair.

Madam Chairman: We are only allowing questions and responses. Hon. Member for Tabaquite.

Dr. Rambachan: Madam Chair, back to Item 57, Caribbean Airlines Limited. I note well that the hon. Minister of Finance had said that Caribbean Airlines over the last 12 months has been trying to decrease its dependence on the State, which was also a directive given to the company by the former Government. I would like to know whether the $92 million is that low because it has anything to do with a reduction in the fuel subsidy to Caribbean Airlines?

Hon. Imbert: You would realize that the oil price has been down now for some time. It started out about $80 in September 2015, and then started to drop and hit $45, maybe about four to five months ago. So that the requirement for the fuel subsidy, of course, is significantly reduced so that Caribbean Airline has been able to reduce its need for support on the Treasury because of lower fuel prices.

Dr. Rambachan: So that is reflected in this?

Hon. Imbert: Certainly. But we do, I have been told, I do not want to talk too soon, because you never know, that the airline is trying its best to achieve profitability, but we will wait and see how 2016 turns out if Caribbean Airlines can significantly reduce its losses and put itself on a path to profitability. I think everybody in Trinidad and Tobago will be very happy no matter what political persuasion we are.

Dr. Rambachan: One follow-up question.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Tabaquite, is it on the same airline?

Dr. Rambachan: Yes. Hon. Minister then, would it not be good for you to do or...
have you done an analysis to show how much is being saved as a result of the drop in fuel prices as against how much is being saved as a result of more efficient measures being implemented by Caribbean Airlines? So that we will know, really and truly, whether the management of Caribbean Airlines is really doing what it is supposed to do in order to bring down the losses.

Hon. Imbert: That all sounds very nice, but what does that have to do with this line Item? Because you expect me to present on each Head a detailed dossier? I am just asking.

Dr. Rambachan: I did not say that you would present, I said we would like to know—[Interrupt]

Hon. Imbert: But these are the estimates.

Dr. Rambachan: Yes, I know. But if the estimate is $92 million and you are agreeing that a portion of that, maybe a large portion, because it came down to that compared to the other years, it is due to fuel savings, subsidy savings. But you are arguing that they are also claiming that they are efficient and so on. Then how do you separate what has been gained from more efficient management compared to just the sectional fuel subsidy? That is all.

Madam Chairman: Member for Tabaquite, on the figures, I do not think that is a fair question that the Minister can answer.

Hon. Imbert: I do not understand. This has nothing to do with this line Item. You want a detailed explanation on everything.

Madam Chairman: May I move on, please. Hon. Member for Chaguanas East.

Mr. Karim: Madam Chair, I just want to stay on that line Item 57, please, Caribbean Airlines Limited. Will the hon. Minister indicate whether this significant slash will have any impact on staff, routes, aircraft equipment and service?
Hon. Imbert: Madam Chairman, I object to the word “slash”. If a group of individuals, management on board are making the best effort to reduce the dependence of a state enterprise on the Treasury and to return the enterprise to profitability, how could you call that a slash? This is a subvention that is given to a state enterprise in the event of losses, and if it is the mandate of the state enterprise to become profitable and the subvention given to them for their losses is reduced based on their business plan, based on their performance, based on their projection going forward, that is not a slash.

And with respect to routes, the decision was taken by the former administration, as you very well know, to cut the London route, and in fact, this was announced in the newspapers sometime in July or August. So the only route that I am aware of which you took a decision to cut, is the London route.

Madam Chairman: The Member for Oropouche East.

Dr. Moonilal: Madam Chairman, I just want to return to a matter, the Minister gave some information earlier and I would just ask the Minister to—

Madam Chairman: And we are still on Sub-Head 011, Transfers to State Enterprises.

Dr. Moonilal: Yes, Agricultural Development Bank. I just want the Minister to confirm, and you can do that in writing, because the Minister informed the committee that the $75 million allocated in 2015 to the ADB, not a cent was used. My understanding is that $35 million, indeed, that sum was used and at the ADB now would be more in the vicinity of about $40 million to $45 million. So, I am not saying that you would deliberately misinform the committee, but you should check that information, you can get back to us in writing. But what the implication of that is, are you correct or are you wrong? That is the issue.

Hon. Imbert: That is the question?
Dr. Moonilal: That is the question. But my follow-up question to that is, if you are incorrect then that is a much lower allocation in 2016 than in 2015?

Hon. Imbert: What is the question?

Dr. Moonilal: The question is, are you correct or not?

Hon. Imbert: This is the information provided to me by the PS of Finance and the Director of Budgets. That is why they are here.

Dr. Moonilal: I ask you to just check it.

Hon. Imbert: And since you have now cast doubt on the information provided to me, I will check it.

Madam Chairman: Members, in any event, this was said that it would be delivered in writing. Okay? So can we move on?

Dr. Gopeesingh: No, no, Madam Chair.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: On the question of Caribbean Airlines, I want to ask whether the decrease in subvention will result in an increase in airfare by the airline?

Madam Chairman: I believe that question was asked.

Dr. Gopeesingh: No, it was not answered. I was waiting for that answer.

Hon. Imbert: No, Madam Chairman, I am troubled. And you will have to forgive me from time to time. I am flabbergasted by some of the questions coming opposite and I am only human, and I have to express befuddlement from time to time. The airfares are set by the airlines. The Government does not set airfares. The airfares are set based on commercial conditions, based on business planning, based on competition on the route—

Madam Chairman: I think you have answered—it is set by the airline.

Dr. Gopeesingh: I did not ask you who is setting it.

Madam Chairman: Can we move on, please! I am moving on to Sub-Head 014,
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Loans to Other Governments. Then, can we move on to Sub-Head 07, Debt Servicing, Item 001, Interest—Local Loans. We have reached page 100. Item 009, Interest on Overdraft, page 101. Sub-Head 011, Principal Repayment—Local Loans.

I am now going on to Sub-Head 09, Development Programme, and that is at page 56 of the Draft Estimates of Development Programme for the Financial Year 2016. [Interruption]

Mr. Singh: Madam Chair, Debt Servicing.

Madam Chairman: Item 005—I have left Debt Services. Sub-Head 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services. Are we all there? Page 56. Hon. Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Would the hon. Minister be kind enough to give us some information with respect to the development? That is Item 017, Development of an Integrated Financial Management Information System where he estimates to spend $20 million under the Development Fund.

Madam Chairman: Line Item 017.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Item 017, and what are the objectives of it basically?

Hon. Imbert: This project is going to be partly funded by the IDB through a loan facility negotiated by you. This allocation will facilitate the implementation of a software solution that will monitor cash flows and assist with preparing forecasts so as to make dealing with public finances more efficient. I suggest you refer that matter to the Member for Caroni Central because he would have negotiated this IDB loan.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Thank you, you have answered it.

Hon. Imbert: You are welcome.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Chaguanas West.

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Mr. Singh: Madam Chair, I see that there is an allocation at Item 045 for Whistle Blowing Technologies. Could the Member enlighten Members of the committee as to what that represents?

Hon. Imbert: Well, you will—well, I hope, you know, that in our manifesto, which is now official government policy, which I referred to in the budget speech, the fact that it is official government policy, that one of the things we have promised to implement is whistle-blower legislation. And in order to do that one must get a sense of best practice. So this money is to get the best advice possible on whistle-blower legislation and whistle-blower methodologies so that we can move swiftly towards implementing, not just legislation, but the entire process of facilitating whistle-blowers.

Mr. Singh: The issue of technology, it is not technology—

Hon. Imbert: It is the whole thing. It is the technology, it is the legislation, it is everything associated with putting in place a proper whistle-blower regime. Protection for whistle-blowers—

Mr. Singh: Eavesdropping technologies.

Hon. Imbert: No, protection for whistle-blowers—not eavesdropping—when people want to squeal on some corrupt activity that they are protected. I wish we had this in place over the last five years.

Madam Chairman: Member for Tabaquite.

Dr. Rambachan: Madam Chair, Item 046, Facilitating the Process of the P.P.P. Development Model, and I noticed that no money has been allocated, although the Minister, I believe, made reference in the budget to the use of private/public partnerships in terms of the development process.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Minister of Finance.

Hon. Imbert: I am advised that it is now funded under recurrent, but I will find
the exact Head for you—

**Dr. Rambachan:** That is okay.

**Hon. Imbert:** That is what I am told.

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

**Hon. Imbert:** Twenty million dollars, okay?

**Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh:** Thank you Madam Chair. I am looking at line 043. And if the hon. Minister could explain the movement of—or the change from $500,000 to $5 million in fiscal year. Just some explanation for that.

**Hon. Imbert:** Sure. One of the problems that the last Government had and we also had is that it is not east to monitor the multitude of state enterprises that we have in this country. I am advised when you add all together, statutory authorities, state enterprises, subsidiaries, et cetera, the number crosses 100.

So that what this is designed to do is to use an electronic integrated information system so we could have real time reporting by state enterprises on whether they are meeting performance targets, what is their level of expenditure, whether they are incurring any debt, and so on. So this is really to bring the monitoring of state enterprises into the modern age. If we do not do this then we will continue in the situation where state enterprises are doing their own thing and Finance and the rest of the Government could be unaware of what is happening in the state enterprises until it is too late.

And as I said, this would have affected the former administration and even the administration before that. It is very difficult to monitor over 100 state enterprises using a manual system.

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

4.00 p.m.

*Question put and agreed to.*
Head 18 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Madam Chairman: Thank you so much to the representatives from the Ministry of Finance for attending and assisting us in the committee. Can we now call Head 43, the Ministry of Works and Transport? Members, I propose that we will break around 4.30, so let us see how we could make the best use of this 30 minutes. [Pause]

In the meantime, we are going to page 300, the Details of Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure. Members, while the technocrats from the Ministry of Works and Transport settle, we have some housekeeping for tomorrow. Hon. Leader of the Opposition, if you could just call out, so that the Parliament staff can notify—I am sorry, I just did it according to your order, but I think we need to call out—what we did was just the order numbers here, but I need to call it out so that the parliamentary staff can notify the Ministries we intend to have tomorrow.


Dr. Moonilal: Yes. Tomorrow we are sitting from 10.00 a.m. to 4.00 p.m.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Some of these, even though the numbers may seem the same—total numbers to be covered—some of them are very small ones.

Madam Chairman: Yes.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: So I am suggesting we add one in the event—

Madam Chairman: It is up to you. You want to put OPM then?

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: No.

Mr. Imbert: What it is with OPM? “All yuh fraid OPM?”

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Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Environmental Commission.

Dr. Moonilal: He has to go to the end of the line.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: So 18 to 26, inclusive.

Madam Chairman: Member for Siparia, what I have been advised is that the Parliament had already notified the Judiciary that they would be taken on Monday morning, and as far as Environmental Commission, the accounting officer is not in Trinidad today to be able to come before us tomorrow. Could you suggest some other Ministry here that you consider small?

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Well, we will go 18 to 24, Madam, if these people are not available tomorrow.

Madam Chairman: 18 to 24.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Yes, Ma’am, as per the agenda here.


Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Yes, Madam. Thank you.

Madam Chairman: You are welcome.

Head 43.

Madam Chairman: I will now invite the hon. Minister of Works and Transport to make a brief opening statement, not exceeding five minutes.

Hon. Hinds: Thank you very warmly, Madam Chairman. I must begin, as I must, by thanking God for his divine intervention a few weeks ago. It is that intervention that caused my colleagues and me to assume this part of the House, and to thank the people of Trinidad and Tobago for their collective wisdom in defence of
Over the past few days, Madam Chair, serious examples of wastage have been put before us in the course of the debate. I want to say to this Parliament, which, of course, has the responsibility of being a check and balance on the Government of Trinidad and Tobago—I want to give the assurance that under my watch in respect of the Ministry of Works and Transport, those matters must never be heard of again.

I believe—and this is the thought that will underpin all that we would do in the Ministry of Works and Transport—that with the little money that we have, once we cut out waste and cut out deliberate waste or corruption, we could do, with the little we have, as much as the past Government has done, and possibly more, since we propose in this Ministry to spend once, and efficiently, and fairly on what has to be done.

Finally, Madam Chairman, I have in my possession the 2014 Report of the Auditor General which identified certain issues in respect of the matters that are now in front of us: expenditure control; register of contracts and such like. I give the Auditor General and the people of Trinidad and Tobago, and, more importantly, this Parliament, the assurance as well, that I should do all within my power, along with my Permanent Secretary, Madam Verna Johnson, and the team, to ensure that the Auditor General is not so troubled in the next fiscal year and in the other fiscal years in the foreseeable future, at least the next five.

I thank you very much and we are open to discussions on these matters.

Dr. Moonilal: I just wanted to raise a matter—

Madam Chairman: The Minister was invited to make a brief statement which he has made, and, therefore—

Dr. Moonilal: Ma’am—
Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Oropouche East—and therefore we go on now to the examination of the document.

Dr. Moonilal: I seek your guidance on a matter.

Madam Chairman: I am saying at this stage I am proceeding to the examination of the details.

Dr. Moonilal: So I cannot seek your guidance on a matter?

Head 43:

Question proposed: That Head 43 stand part of the Schedule.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Members, the sum of $2,832,290,592 for Head 43, the Ministry of Works and Transport, is comprised of moneys proposed for expenditure under the following Sub-Heads and Items, to be found in the Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure and the Draft Estimates of Development Programme: Subhead 01, Personnel Expenditure, Item 001, General Administration. Hon. Member for Tabaquite.

Dr. Rambachan: Thank you, Madam Chair. I would just take the opportunity, since the members of the technical staff of the Ministry of Works and Transport are here, to thank them for their tremendous hard work they did in moving this country forward under the previous administration. [Desk thumping]

Madam Chair, Item 12, Settlement of Arrears to Public Officers, I noted here there are no arrears to be settled. Is it that everyone has been paid what is due to them, and with the recent wage negotiations and what have you, that everything has been settled?

Madam Chairman: Hon. Minister of Works and Transport.

Hon. Hinds: We should put that one in writing, Madam Chair.

Member for Tabaquite.

Dr. Rambachan: Thank you, Madam Chairman. I just want to ask the Minister whether he believes that $5 million is sufficient for salaries and cost of living in order to deal with the management of drainage issues that exist all over the country, and for which there have been many, many complaints over the last couple of months?

Hon. Hinds: Madam Chairman, we propose to review that and to balance that off against what was allocated previously. However, let me say, we have made requests for certain sums and this is what we were allocated. We will review that and probably indicate to the Member at a later stage.

Dr. Rambachan: Can the Minister also let us know, maybe in writing, what are the vacant posts that are there under Drainage that need to be filled?

Hon. Hinds: I will certainly get that in writing for you. That will require some research.

4.15 p.m.

Dr. Rambachan: And also, the vacant posts, I would like to know the technical names of the posts.

Madam Chairman: So we are under 08?

Dr. Rambachan: 051. Well, under Drainage.

Madam Chairman: 005. Is the line Sub-Item 08?

Dr. Rambachan: Yes, yes, yes. Vacant posts, yes. Sorry.


Mr. Charles: You say you are continuing allocation for vacant posts. I want to know what is the current establishment and what are the proposed increases that will take care of this $4.8 million.
Hon. Hinds: We will put that in writing. That would require some time and research. We will forward that in writing to the hon. Member.

Madam Chairman: 008 Construction. 012 Unemployment Relief Programme. Hon. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: [Inaudible]

Madam Chairman: All right. 013 General Administration (Transport). 014 Transport. 015 Maritime Services. Sub-Head 02 Goods and Services. We are at Item 015? Okay? So Item 001, are we under General Administration? Hon. Member for Naparima.

Mr. Charles: Sub-Item 08 Rent/Lease - Office Accommodation and Storage. I see a figure close to $10 million. Again, I will ask—it is page 306.

Madam Chairman: Page 306 and it is Sub-Item 08.

Mr. Charles: Is this something that we started, or is it a new allocation for new premises; and will the necessary lease/rental/purchase option be explored to make an informed decision that would lead to value for money for the citizens of the country?

Hon. Hinds: This is not a new item. Its specific purport I will investigate and again inform this House in writing, but I am assured that it is not a new item.

Mr. Charles: Okay. So you are sure it is not a new item, but you are going to investigate?

Hon. Hinds: Yes.

Mr. Charles: Okay.

Madam Chairman: 002 Highways. 003 Traffic Management. 004 Central Planning Unit. Hon. Member for Tabaquite.

Dr. Rambachan: Madam Chair, you went very, very fast. Very, very fast.

Madam Chairman: All right. You see, I am not seeing any movement. All
right, hon. Member for Tabaquite, where are you?

Dr. Rambachan: I am on Highways, page 308. Under Other Contracted Services there is a large sum of $114 million, what I would like to find out from the Minister is what kind of services are envisaged under these Other Contracted Services?

Hon. Hinds: This allocation, hon. Member, is to facilitate the award of contracts for roadworks, culverts, patching, box drains in respect of local government roads that have been transferred to the Ministry of Works and Transport in certain districts.

Dr. Rambachan: So you are going to be building box drains under this?

Hon. Hinds: Say again?

Dr. Rambachan: You are going to be building box drains under this allocation?

Madam Chairman—

Madam Chairman: Hon. Minister of Finance, please allow the hon. Minister of Works and Transport to answer.

Hon. Hinds: I just answered. I said specifically what the allocation was for.

Dr. Rambachan: May I, Madam Chairman? Under Sub-Items 13 and 15, under Highways—

Madam Chairman: Which one you want to take first? Maintenance of Vehicles?

Dr. Rambachan: I have the same question with respect to both. There is a perpetual complaint by workers in the Ministry about the fact that equipment is always not available, that when you go to the different outlying districts a lot of equipment is there that is in an unserviceable state and have not been maintained. I am looking at the provision of just $300,000 for the repairs—and I emphasize repairs—and maintenance of this equipment because the lack of this equipment is proving to cause some very serious problems of servicing the communities, and I
think that in my own view, having been there, that this amount is not realistic.

**Hon. Hinds:** My information is, and the records will show that it was the same $300,000 last year.

**Dr. Rambachan:** So we will vire?

**Hon. Hinds:** We will exert best efforts to ensure that the equipment that is needed to carry out the job effectively is provided.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Thank you.

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

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Madam Chair, will you go back to Goods and Services?

**Madam Chairman:** Goods and Services? We are in Highways.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Page 307.

**Madam Chairman:** We are in 002. If fact, I was in 004 and was accused of going too quickly, and that is why I went back to 002. So I am very sorry. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** My question is in 002 as well, Madam Chair.

**Madam Chairman:** Well, we are in 002. I am not going back to 001.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** No, no, no.

**Madam Chairman:** Line Item, if you could assist us.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Yes. Thank you, Madam Chair. Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, line 37, Janitorial Services. Why is there such an exorbitant—

**Hon. Hinds:** Where are we speaking about?

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** 307.

**Madam Chairman:** We are on page 308, 002 Highways, and therefore, that is what I am saying. I have just said to the hon. Member for Couva South that I am in 002 because I had reached 004 and I was accused of going too quickly, and therefore, I went back to 002. I am at page 308, 002 Highways.
Hon. Member for Cumuto-Manzanilla that is where you are?

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Go ahead, Madam Chair. If you want to move on, it is not a problem.

**Madam Chairman:** Thank you so much. 003, which is at page 309. 004 Central Planning Unit, which is page 310. Item 005 Drainage. Hon. Member for Naparima.

**Mr. Charles:** Thank you very much. Again, I raise the question of rents for office accommodation, rent/lease for vehicles, and if in fact it is that we paid $7.1 million and therefore they are continuing what component of corruption existed that means either you are continuing it, or you have eliminated it. So it should be reduced.

**Madam Chairman:** So we are at page 310, Sub-Item 08.

**Mr. Charles:** 310, 08, what accounts for the $7.1 million? And I am noting a recurrent high rental bill—taxpayers’ money.

**Hon. Hinds:** I understand the Member to be asking, Madam Chair, for me to identify some of the mismanagement that he understood existed. So we will investigate that and we will put it in writing for the benefit of the hon. Member.

**Mr. Charles:** Madam Chair—

**Madam Chairman:** Members, please. I know sometimes that some contributions may evoke a response, but let us try to keep a little order.

**Mr. Charles:** Madam Chair—I was just quoting your own words and I am still asking the question and, please, I need it in writing without the editorializing.

**Madam Chairman:** Hon. Member for Naparima, I think the answer is that you will get it in writing.

**Mr. Charles:** Good. Thank you.

**Madam Chairman:** All assurances—Member for Barataria/San Juan. Please! All of these are considered assurances? Okay. Good. Right. I just have a clean ear.

**UNREVISED**
All right, Members, let us have a little order. Item 005 at page 10, Drainage.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Page 311.

Madam Chairman: Okay. Just now. We are under Item 005, anyway, I will take it, I recognize the hon. Member for Tabaquite.

Dr. Rambachan: Madam Chair, there is $10 million for the Rent/Lease of Vehicles and Equipment under Drainage, what I would like the hon. Minister to provide for us is what is his drainage plan for the year; the programme of work for the year under drainage?

Madam Chairman: What Item Head are you on?

Dr. Rambachan: I am under Rent/Lease of Vehicles and Equipment. But vehicles and equipment have to be related to a programme of work, and if you are telling me that you are going to spend $10 million, I have no problem with it, it might have been more, but can I get from the hon. Minister how this $10 million, the equipment that is being leased to the programme of work that is envisaged for 2016?

Hon. Hinds: Well, the Minister must be aware that Drainage was not within his own portfolio up to a few weeks ago.

Dr. Rambachan: No, it was not?

Hon. Hinds: It has only now come. So we will investigate that and we will put the response in writing for you.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Siparia.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar: Thank you, Madam Chair. Are we under 02 Goods and Services?

Mr. Imbert: Since I am the one who did these allocations, I can assist the hon. Member. If you go to Head 28 on the next page, you will see $145 million and that will be for the engagement of contractors to do drainage works.
Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: That is where I am trying to go, Goods and Services.

Madam Chairman: So, hon. Member for Siparia.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: I thank you very much. Line Sub-Item on page 311, under Goods and Services, Other Contracted Services. There is an allocation of $145 million and we would appreciate from the hon. Minister a breakdown of how this $145 million is to be spent. The amounts being allocated under this item.

Hon. Hinds: Most certainly, we will note that in our response.

Dr. Rambachan: Madam Chair, if I may, very quickly. Just to add to what the Leader of the Opposition has asked. And if that information that is going to be given, is going to be given by area. In other words—

Madam Chairman: You mean geographic area?

Dr. Rambachan: Geographic. The spread of Trinidad and Tobago.

Hon. Hinds: By district you mean? Okay. Most certainly.

Madam Chairman: So 006 Mechanical Services. That is page 311. 007 Maintenance.

Dr. Rambachan: Madam Chair, No. 13.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Tabaquite.

Dr. Rambachan: Madam Chair, I just want to ask the Minister whether this figure of $1 million is based upon an audit of the condition of existing vehicles in the Mechanical Services Division of the Ministry. Because if I may lean back on my own experience, the condition of vehicles are way beyond a million dollars in term of repairs and maintenance.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Imbert: Certainly.

Hon. Hinds: I will give the Members the assurance that one of the things that we will be doing is an audit of the vehicular stock in the entire Ministry, and whatever
is required to maintain those that we retain will be done. So we are yet to embark on that. We are just about three weeks or four weeks in the business, but we certainly intend, as we have been doing in other respects, to rationalize the vehicle stock in all Ministries. It will start with ours. Again, with a view of eliminating waste.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Imbert: Yes, as the hon. Minister will know, hon. former Minister I mean, and also the former Minister for the environment, I think that is what it was called Environment and Water Resources, that Mechanical Services is the division that provides equipment to deal with emergencies and natural disasters and so on. In my opinion this is a very important division, so I will anxiously await the review being done by the new Minister of Works and Transport so that we can see how we can assist the Mechanical Services Division to improve its plant and equipment, and improve its efficiency, and they will have my support.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Siparia. You are okay?

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Yes, thank you.

Madam Chairman: You are welcome. Can we go on to Item 007, which is Maintenance on page 312? Item 008, Construction, do we have any questions under that? All right. So that it is now 4.30 p.m. and we shall resume at five o’clock. Thank you.

4.30 p.m.: Standing Finance Committee suspended.

5.00 p.m.: Standing Finance Committee Resumed.

Madam Chairman: Members, we resume the Standing Finance Committee. We were examining the Ministry of Works and Transport and we have reached—

Hon. Hinds: Construction.

Madam Chairman: Thank you, hon. Minister. And that is Item 009,
Dr. Rambachan: Madam Chairman, I would just like to enquire from the Minister, Contract Employment in this unit is $5.1 million, is it that all the officers in this Environmental Health and Safety Unit continue to be contracted officers and are there full-time officers in this unit?

Madam Chairman: Might I ask what Item number? Where are you asking?

Dr. Rambachan: Or, sorry, 009, Sub-Item 16.

Hon. Hinds: As far as I am advised, there are 45 contract positions therein. I am not able to say whether that is the entirety of the staff, but certainly there are 45 contract positions. But I can ascertain that and advise you a bit later in writing.

Madam Chairman: In writing, okay.

Dr. Rambachan: My best recollection is that they are all contracted.

Hon. Hinds: The entirety of the department?

Dr. Rambachan: Yes, and I have always found that to be very strange.

Hon. Hinds: I am not surprised, you would know.

Madam Chairman: 010, Traffic Warden Unit.

Mr. Charles: Thank you very much, Item 16, Contract Employment. Is it that all the traffic wardens are on contract or—so the question is: what is the proportion of permanent as opposed to contracted employees in the Traffic Warden Unit?

Hon. Hinds: All the traffic wardens are contracted persons.

Mr. Charles: And the permanent staff is comprised of what percentage?

Hon. Hinds: They are all contracted. as I have said.

Mr. Charles: Oh, okay.

Dr. Rambachan: If you look at Contract Employment, $26.5 million, permit me, Madam Chairman, but that last year, it was $23 million. Does the increase of $3.5 million indicate that the traffic wardens are going to be getting an increase in pay?
Or is it that you are going to be recruiting new traffic wardens in order to get up to the 700 which has been approved by Cabinet?

Hon. Hinds: We have employed some more traffic wardens. In September 2015, we employed about 87 more to operate across Trinidad. That was some in September 2015.

Dr. Rambachan: Can you say how many traffic wardens are now employed in total?

Hon. Hinds: I think it is in the region—and I can get the specific figure but it should be in the region of about 388.

Dr. Rambachan: Thank you.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Hon. Minister, I would have liked to see a little more support for the training aspect of that. You have $500,000 for your traffic wardens, so if you are moving up your figure, I think there is need for a little increased training for traffic wardens.

Hon. Hinds: I should not doubt that and we will look at that.

Dr. Gopeesingh: So perhaps you could vire from somewhere to there to get it.

Hon. Hinds: A useful thought. We will look at it.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Yeah, the training needs to be improved.

Hon. Hinds: Thank you very much. Although, I must add, you know, from my observation as a citizen, I think they do a remarkably good job.

Dr. Gopeesingh: They do a good job but we could—

Hon. Hinds: And they have earned public respect as well.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Yeah, but there is room for improvement.

Hon. Hinds: Most certainly.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Madam Chairman. Through you, Madam Chairman, to the Minister of Works and Transport, regarding the Traffic Warden
Hon. Hinds: That happened before September 07, that significant day, so I should make an enquiry and I would advise you. I hope it was done properly.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: And I would like to know, with the indication that there will be an increase—

Hon. Hinds: I am sorry?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: You indicated that it will be increased. Not so?

Hon. Hinds: Numbers, yes, have been increased.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Okay, so there is no intention to increase in the near future?

Hon. Hinds: Well, I cannot say that now. But as we speak, it was increased just before the elections.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: All right, okay. Thank you.

Hon. Hinds: Thank you.

Madam Chairman: Item 011, Programme Monitoring and Evaluation Unit; Item 012, Unemployment Relief Programme; Item 013, General Administration (Transport). We are at page 316. Item 014, Transport Division; Item 015, Maritime Services Division, which is at page 318. We now go on to Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, page 319; Item 001, General Administration; Item 002, Highways; Item 003, Traffic Management; Item 004, Central Planning Unit; Item 005, Drainage; Item 006, Mechanical Services; Item 007, Maintenance; Item 008, Construction; Item 009, Environmental Health and Safety Unit. We are now at page 322. Item 010, Traffic Warden Unit.

Dr. Rambachan: Yes, Ma’am. I would like to know under Minor Equipment Purchases, whether there is inclusion there for radios for traffic wardens? Because
the traffic wardens find it very difficult to operate if they have to operate, let us say, 200 yards between each other, as happens, for example, in Gasparillo and other areas, and they need to communicate. If I give you an example, quickly. They are coordinating three or four different streets and they need radios. Are radios included?

**Hon. Hinds:** Unable to say at this time and I should advise in writing later.

**Mr. Imbert:** But there is an allocation of $6,013,000 for Other Minor Equipment as you can see.

**Dr. Rambachan:** I would like the Minister to consider the radios for the traffic wardens—they will become more efficient.

**Madam Chairman:** Okay. Item 011, Programme Monitoring Evaluation Unit; Item 012, Unemployment Relief Programme; Item 013, General Administration (Transport). We are on page 323. Item 014, Transport; Item 015, Maritime Services. We are now on page 324, Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies. Item 001, Regional Bodies; Item 003, United Nations Organization; Item 005, Non-Profit Institutions; Item 007, Households; Item 008, Subsidies; Item 009, Other Transfers.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Subsidies, 008.

**Madam Chairman:** And that is on page 325 it commences on.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Yes. I just want to confirm something. The $284 million that is the estimate, I want to confirm that that is the deficit on the operation of the coastal steamers. Is that therefore the totality of the subsidies to running the coastal steamers between Port of Spain and Scarborough?

**Mr. Imbert:** Let me answer that since we made the allocation. The subsidies towards the coastal steamers—well, the fast ferries to Tobago—we are going to do a comprehensive review. The Minister will be mandated to do a comprehensive review.
review of this service because the two fast ferries were acquired 10 years ago, and when they were acquired, they were not new. One of them, at the time, was about 10 years old, that is Express; and the Spirit would have been about three years old. So one is almost 20 years old and now the other one is 13 or 14 years old, so we have to look at this very seriously.

You will see in the budget statement that I referred to new fast ferries. So we would have to do a replacement programme. And then there was a proposal by the former Minister of Transport to look at retrofitting these vessels to use compressed natural gas. There was a view that this would save considerable sums in terms of expenditure on fuel and lubricants.

So that the Minister is going to be mandated to do a comprehensive review of this. This would be a contribution towards the deficit. So, in other words, the ferry service earns money and expends money and the Government—this has been going on for many, many years. When I was there, this was going on, way back in 1992. The Government had to subsidize the ferry service. So this is the contribution towards the deficit on the operation of the ferries.

**Dr. Rambachan:** And is it possible, through you, Madam Chairman, to know what is the earnings or income gained by the ferry service so that we can know the difference between the deficit here and the income gained? If you add the two, therefore, you will know exactly what is cost—

**Hon. Hinds:** Most certainly. I should forward that to you in writing. Yeah, I will get the information and do so.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Thank you.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 009, Other Transfers.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Thank you. Agua Santa, that is under 009, 02. Agua Santa, as far as I know, is an asphalt plant that we continue to spend $6 million in order to
keep that plant going. I would like to ask the Minister whether he intends to review whether the Ministry needs to keep in the business of producing asphalt or whether it may be better to buy asphalt from operators who are geared up to do it.

**Hon. Hinds:** In keeping with the philosophy that I articulated at the top of my presentation here today, everything is up for review; that will certainly be a part of it.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Because the Minister might like to know that under the PURE Programme, when the price of oil fell, we were able to reduce the supply of asphalt, put in place—that is supply, rolling and everything—from $700 and some dollars—I cannot remember the figure—to $690 a tonne. And you actually brought down the price from suppliers and that did—supply of, transport and rolling in place. So when the Minister spoke about value for money, I just wanted to give you an example of how we were achieving value for money also in the Ministry.

**Mr. Singh:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I just want to indicate to the Minister that a decision was taken, in the context of recycling, to utilize crumb rubber to be utilized by Agua Santa and other state enterprises that deal with asphalt, to create rubberized asphalt in order to—certainly from my recollection, it will be a thinner layer, it will last longer and it will also, therefore, impact upon your value for money, and certainly would lend itself in the environmental asset.

5.15 p.m.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 011 Transfers to State Enterprises. Is it a question? Because I notice you have been making statements?

**Dr. Rambachan:** No, Madam, I have a question.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Tabaquite.

**Dr. Rambachan:** I notice under 009, 05, that the subsidy to the Water Taxi
Service, the transfer is $39.4 million and in 2015, it was $37.855 million. Is this, therefore, the amount that it is costing us, beyond income, to keep the Water Taxi Service in operation and does this include, for example, maintenance as well as any other contracts we have with the people who have been hired to operate the service?

**Hon. Hinds:** As far as I am aware it includes an element of maintenance but I should get more specific information and forward that to you later.

**Dr. Rambachan:** But at this stage we can say it costs about $40 million to subsidize the Water Taxi Service.

**Hon. Hinds:** Well the figures are here.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 011 Transfers to State Enterprises.

**Dr. Moonilal:** I have a couple questions, Madam Chair. The matter of the repayment of the Trinidad Rapid Rail Transit System, $22.8 million, more or less, could we have an indication of how much more is owing on this repayment for the rapid rail transit system?

Secondly, Sub-Item 12 Interim Funding For Extension of Solomon Hochoy Highway to Point Fortin.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** Page 326.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Page 326. I am at 12. Am I reading correctly, there is no funding for the extension of the Solomon Hochoy Highway to Point Fortin? And what is the Government’s position on the continuation of that highway, vis-à-vis financing structure?

**Hon. Hinds:** The Minister of Finance would answer the second part.

**Dr. Moonilal:** I anticipated that.

**Mr. Imbert:** Sure. You should have asked me then. If you look at Item 12, you will see that you made no allocation in 2014 or in 2015. It should be obvious,
therefore, that this method of funding came to an end since 2014. This project is a source of considerable stress to the Exchequer, because it was never properly funded and it is now a challenge that the Ministry of Finance will have to face to put in place proper funding arrangements for the Point Fortin Highway.

Dr. Moonilal: So you do not have a clue of what you are going to do? Okay, thank you very much, Madam Chairman.

Mr. Imbert: I will put in writing. Madam Chairman, I have to answer those pejorative remarks. I do have a clue that you entered into an $8.5 billion contract without a source of funds. I do have a clue that you have been funding this out of general revenues and I do have a plan and I will write you and tell you what I will do about your mismanagement of this project.

Madam Chairman: Can we move on, please? Item 011, Member—

Hon. Hinds: With respect to the first part, the rapid rail, I am not in a position at this time to indicate the amount due and owing and that should be forthcoming later.

Dr. Rambachan: Madam Chairman, the hon. Minister of Finance said that the previous Government entered into an $8.5 billion contract; as Minister of Works, I am not aware of any $8.5 billion contract.

Mr. Imbert: What? Is that a question?

Dr. Rambachan: I know of a $5.2 billion contract—plus.

Mr. Imbert: It is an $8 billion plus contract. That is a matter of public record. You reported that to this House in 2015, $8.5 billion.

Dr. Rambachan: There is no $8 billion contract.

Hon. Hinds: Is there a question being asked?

Dr. Rambachan: I want to ask the Minister to bring to the House or to bring,
before we finish this part of the debate, the evidence that there is an $8.5 billion contract.  [*Desk thumping*]

**Hon. Hinds:** That comes under what Item?

**Dr. Rambachan:** Sorry?

**Dr. Moonilal:** Solomon Hochoy Highway.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Solomon Hochoy Highway. But the question I have to ask the Minister of Finance is this: given what he has just said, is it the intention— [*Interruption*]

**Madam Chairman:** Who is he, you want the Minister of Finance?

**Dr. Rambachan:** Or the Minister of Works and Transport. Is it the intention of the Government to complete the highway to Point Fortin going from the Mosquito Creek end, and as well to complete the segment going now from Ghandi Village right on to Mon Desir?

**Mr. Imbert:** If you look in our manifesto, which is referred to in the budget statement, what we said was that we would complete this project that is in the best interest of all concerned, in a manner that is in the best interest of all concerned.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Madam Chairman, if I heard the hon. Minister of Finance indicate that no money was put in 2014 and 2015 for the Solomon Hochoy Highway, if we look to page 471, what was the original— [*Interruption*]

**Mr. Imbert:** Stop misquoting me. I never said that. Stop misquoting me.

**Madam Chairman:** Hon. Member for Caroni East, what the statement that was made by the hon. Minister of Finance was in response to a specific question asked on a specific line, Sub-Item, 12.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Well I am speaking on 12.

**Madam Chairman:** What I have before me, there are no figures.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** If you look at page 471 you would see that.
Madam Chairman: On Sub-Item 12, what I have before me have no figures 2014/actual, 2015/estimates and it was with respect to Sub-Item 12.

Dr. Gopeesingh: I am speaking about item 12. Now item 12 was brought over. If you look, it was Ministry of Works and Infrastructure. Now it is Ministry of Works and Transport. And when we look at Ministry of Works and Infrastructure under item 12, we see that in 2014, $900 million was allocated to it in 2014—

[Interruption]

Mr. Imbert: What Head are you on?

Dr. Gopeesingh:—negating what the hon. Minister of Finance said.

Mr. Imbert: What Head are you on?

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Caroni East, could you refer me to the page?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Page 471, Madam Chair.

Madam Chairman: Are we talking about the same thing?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Yes, we are talking about the same thing. It was formerly Ministry of Works and Infrastructure, item 12, under Transfer to State Enterprises.

Dr. Moonilal: The man is misleading us.

Dr. Gopeesingh: He is misleading the House and it is the same thing, item 12, under Ministry of Works and Transport.

Mr. Imbert: No allocation for 2015.

Dr. Gopeesingh: You said 2014 and 2015.

Mr. Imbert: Well there is none for 2015.

Dr. Gopeesingh: You are wrong. So there was an allocation of $900 million for 2014.

Mr. Imbert: And none in 2015.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Well all right, 2015 there is none.
Mr. Imbert: You all are not serious.

Dr. Gopeesingh: That is settled.

Madam Chairman: Yes.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Can I ask on the rapid rail issue? Item 07, rapid rail, Repayment of Trinidad Rapid Rail Transit System, on our page 326, there is none for 2014 and 2015 here but I would refer you to the Ministry of Works and Infrastructure. So we now have to pay $22 million in 2016 for the rapid rail project. Would the Minister say if this is correct, that in 2014, we paid $97 million for the rapid rail and in 2015, we paid $58 million for the rapid rail? So 2014 and 2015, we paid $155 million and in 2016 now we would have to pay another $22 million, so it is about $177 million.

Madam Chairman: So, the question you are asking is that—

Dr. Gopeesingh: How much more we have to pay for the rapid rail feasibility?

Dr. Moonilal: My follow-up question.

Mr. Imbert: Asked and answered.

Madam Chairman: One minute please.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Minister, how much more we have to—[Interruption]

Madam Chairman: One minute, please—if the hon. Minister of Works and Transport would be allowed an opportunity to address the point that has been raised.

Hon. Hinds: I was asked that question by, I think it was the Member for Oropouche East, and I was pellucidly clear in my response.

Madam Chairman: All right? So that hon. Member for Oropouche East, I think you have a follow-up question.

Dr. Moonilal: No.

Madam Chairman: All right. Okay, so can we move on? We are now at 06

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Dr. Rambachan: Madam Chairperson, you have here, in line with what I have been asking, in terms of other current transfers, Airports Authority of Trinidad and Tobago, $210,870,000. I want to ask the same question for three items, if you permit me.

Port Authority, who have to get $138,304,000 and the Public Transport Service Corporation (PTSC), is supported by $370,463,125. And while you have said earlier that we cannot go into revenue, I would like to find out on each of these items, what is the revenue that is derived by the Airports Authority of Trinidad and Tobago, the revenue derived by Port Authority of Trinidad and Tobago and the revenue derived by the Public Transport Service Corporation, so one can arrive at some determination also by looking at these revenues or income streams exactly how these organizations are operating if compared internationally.

Madam Chairman: But I think you have answered the question by your own introduction, with respect to the ruling that I had made that we are not going forward in revenue.

Dr. Rambachan: I know, but I am asking the question whether that information can be provided to us?

Hon. Hinds: If the question is not allowed, how can I respond to it? I will be breaking the rules like you.

Madam Chairman: No, I would also say to the hon. Member for Tabaquite, we all know that there are other opportunities for you to ask questions maybe of that nature and get a response.

Mr. Singh: Madam Chair, in an effort to assist the committee, perhaps, we can look at page 398 of the Draft Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure of Statutory Bodies.
Boards and Similar Bodies 2016, and the question would be answered there.

Madam Chairman: I am so happy. I crave your indulgence, hon. Member for Chaguanas West, to maybe help guide some of those on your Bench who may not have the familiarity with the documents that you have. Thank you very much.

Mr. Imbert: I think we should put all the questions to him from now on.

Dr. Rambachan: Madam Chair, I think that is, with due respect, a bit unfair.

Madam Chairman: And I did not direct it to anybody for it to be unfair.

Dr. Rambachan: No, it is a bit unfair because there are members of the public who are looking on at us, which you yourself said, to be very respectful to you, and they would like to know also the details of the answers to the questions I am asking. That is all I want to find out.

Madam Chairman: And I would like to say this, while members of the public may be looking on and they would have a myriad of questions, we are always bound by the Standing Orders, and I think the members of the public would need to appreciate that too. Everything has rules, and we know our processes and maybe we will explain to them when we meet them one-on-one.

Dr. Rambachan: I would file it as a question in this House.

Madam Chairman: Thank you very much. I think they are now informed. All right, so can we go on to DP 09 and this is page 147 of your Draft Estimates of Development Programme. 001 Pre-Investment. So we have nothing under 001 Pre-Investment; 003 Economic Infrastructure, page 150; 005 Multi-Sectoral and Other Services, page 153.

And now we go on to the Infrastructure Development Fund, Head 701. 001 Pre-Investment, we are at page 316. Have we reached there? 003 Economic Infrastructure, page 317. Page 320.

Dr. Rambachan: Madam Chairman, under Drainage and Irrigation, National
Programme for the Upgrade of Drainage Channels, Flood Mitigation - Erosion Control Programme, on those two items, again I do not think I am permitted to refer to other books, but since I cannot, I would like to get from the Minister what are the specific projects, geographically, that are going to be undertaken as a result of this expenditure?

**5.30 p.m.**

**Madam Chairman:** Well, I just want say this, hon. Member for Tabaquite, again as you referred to the members of the public. I do not think it is accurate to say that we not allowed to refer to other books. Members here have referred to the budget statement, et cetera, et cetera. What I am saying is that we cannot ask questions on Items of revenue, and therefore you are asking—having corrected that, you are asking—you say at page 317, under Drainage, is it flood mitigation?

**Dr. Rambachan:** Yes.

**Madam Chairman:** Yes? What is your question, please?

**Dr. Rambachan:** Under these programmes, Flood Mitigation and the National Programme for the Upgrade of Drainage Channels, I would like to know specifically which are the drainage channels, and the Flood Mitigation Programmes geographically and where are they located?

**Madam Chairman:** I guess that will have to be given in writing, because that will call for some level of detail.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Yes.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Thank you, Chair. Through you, Chair, if the hon. Minister can identify specifically for projects in Cumuto/Manzanilla, please? Thank you.

**Hon. Hinds:** What was that?

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Continuing on the request.
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**Hon. Hinds:** Most certainly.

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

**Madam Chairman:** So, is it that therefore these projects must be identified by geographic—

**Hon. Hinds:** By constituency.

**Madam Chairman:** Or constituency?

**Mr. Singh:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I just would like to get a status report perhaps in writing on the Ravine Sable/Caparo Water Treatment Facility, Retention Reservoir Project. I know it will take a while, so by that time we can get a status report.

**Hon. Hinds:** Most certainly.

**Mr. Paray:** Thank you, Madam Chairman. The Minister of Works and Transport, while you are on the same exercise for Cumuto/Manzanilla, I know we have been having a similar issue from Guayaguayare in terms of the coastal erosion. I know from the former Minister that there was some work by the Coastal Erosion Unit. So perhaps some information as to how far along we are, and what positive news I can take back to my constituents when next we meet in terms of what is the next step in the exercise. Thank you.

**Hon. Hinds:** Most certainly.

**Mr. Imbert:** Madam Chairman, could I just ask what line Item is that?

**Madam Chairman:** Is this flood mitigation?

**Mr. Imbert:** No, but there has to be a line Item. Which one is it?

**Madam Chairman:** Flood Mitigation Erosion Control Programme, 007.

**Mr. Imbert:** No, he is talking about coastal erosion. Which line Item are you talking about?

**Mr. Paray:** 001, Coastal Protection.
Mr. Imbert: South Cocos Bay?

Mr. Paray: No, no, no.


Mr. Paray: The Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla was referring to the Manzanilla piece, and I simply asked the Minister that while he is on that Item, if he could have looked at the Guayaguayare/Mayaro piece for us also.

Mr. Imbert: There is no line Item for that.

Madam Chairman: While there is no line Item, I guess he can make a plea, and the Minister of Works and Transport has answered.

Mr. Singh: Madam Chair, just for clarification. I think the Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla asked with respect to the National Programme for Upgrade of Drainage Channels. So that is what the Member for Mayaro—

Mr. Imbert: No, he is speaking about shoreline stabilization—

Dr. Gopeesingh: Item 15, 260, Port of Spain East-West Corridor Transportation Project, $155 million. Could you, hon. Minister, give us an idea what that is? Is this the proposed mass transit or the rapid rail or is this just for roads? No. 260; page 380.

Hon. Hinds: That includes the very troubling Curepe Interchange. So we will be—like everything else, reviewing that and trying to see if we can rationalize that, and cut out waste, and get the thing done, giving the citizens of the country optimum value for money.

Dr. Gopeesingh: All right, I heard. Can we go to the next one? 280, Construction of the San Fernando to Mayaro thing. There is no funding available for that. Would you like to comment on that hon. Minister?

Madam Chairman: Line Item 280 on page 318.
Dr. Gopeesingh: Item 280, Construction of the San Fernando to Mayaro—there is no funding for that.

Mr. Imbert: I will answer that. As you will observe, the total allocation under this Head is quite significant, $795 million. So when in the context for the national budget, we must prioritize. However, this is a project that has been mentioned in our manifesto and, therefore, it is a project that is of great importance. So that during the year I expect that engineering will be completed, so that we can move swiftly to initiate this project as soon as possible.

Miss Ramdial: Thank you, Madam Chair. To the Minister, 275, Bridges Reconstruction Programme, can we get a list of those bridges that you intend to reconstruct during fiscal 2016? Thanks.

Hon. Hinds: Most certainly.

Mr. Singh: Thank you, Madam Chair. I see that Item 286, Construction of the Chaguanas Ring Road an allocation of $5 million.

Mr. Imbert: If you look in the budget statement, we have identified three population areas where we think they have reached the point where a ring road is required: Sangre Grande is one, Scarborough is another one and Chaguanas is one. And, therefore, we have committed during this year to do the necessary preliminary work to get cracking on these projects. So that is what the $8 million is for. If the engineering does not use up all of that money, then we will initiate the process of construction.

But I can assure you that a ring road around Chaguanas, around Sangre Grande and around Scarborough is of the highest priority. That is why it is mentioned in the budget statement. These are areas which have outgrown themselves, unplanned settlements, arbitrary route alignments, and it is really desperately needed, especially Chaguanas, where you have, you know, it is very...
difficult to get from one side of the highway to the other as the hon. Member for Tabaquite will know. We collaborated some years ago on some projects to try and improve that problem.

Dr. Rambachan: Start with the ring road—

Mr. Imbert: Yes.

Dr. Rambachan: —at the request of the Mayor of Chaguanas. Madam Chairman, under Transport, Roads and Bridges, Item 281, is the Minister of Works and Transport aware that under the PURE Programme the designs are about 75 per cent completed, and that work was about to commence on the San Fernando to Princes Town Highway?

Hon. Hinds: He did not make himself very clear. Would you be kind enough—

Dr. Rambachan: He was being disturbed by the Minister of Finance;

Mr. Imbert: Being prompted.

Dr. Rambachan:—being prompted. I can assure the Minister of Finance that—

Hon. Hinds: No, the Minister of Finance was saying that the “P” in PURE means “programme”, so you do not have to say under the PURE Programme. That was what he was saying, and he is right.

Mr. Imbert: I am tired of you saying that.

Hon. Hinds: You did not make yourself very clear. Would you take your chance to do it again?

Dr. Rambachan: The San Fernando to Princes Town Highway, is the Minister of Works and Transport aware that the designs for that portion of the highway was virtually completed by PURE, and that it is ready to start? Does $3 million facilitate at all, the start of this project? Or is this just a nominal sum that is intended to fool the people?

Mr. Imbert: I will answer that. As the former Minister of Works in 2010, we
actually put that project out to tender. So that the designs were actually completed in 2010. I do not know what you have been doing between 2010 and 2015. But we are going to make sure that this project is done properly, with integrity, with cost effectiveness, with transparency and we are cutting out the corruption, waste and mismanagement. [Desk thumping] So anything you did, we are going to review it.

Dr. Rambachan: Then why are you placing $40 million to review the plans, when the plans are already reviewed for that section of the highway?

Mr. Imbert: There is no $40 million to review anything. We were reviewing what you were going to spend. How you were going to spend it, and who you were going to give the money to.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Through you, Madam Chair, I was encouraged to hear that the Minister of Finance said he was going to start very soon on the ring road in Sangre Grande, Chaguanas and Tobago. I am wondering if the Minister can give a commitment as to when you will start the Churchill-Roosevelt Highway Extension to Manzanilla, the upgrade of the road.

Madam Chairman: Line 284?


Hon. Hinds: I can tell you that those projects would be treated or are being treated with the utmost urgency. They are high on our priority listing.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Sir.

Madam Chairman: At page 320, Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 43 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Madam Chairman: I would like to thank the representatives from the Ministry of Works and Transport, for coming and being of assistance to the committee, and
they are now relieved. Thank you hon. Minister.

Hon. Hinds: Thank you very much. Might I thank my Permanent Secretary, and her very hard-working team? Thank you all very much. Madam PS, thank you very much. It was a pleasure. God bless you, tomorrow.

Head 75.

Madam Chairman: This is Equal Opportunity Tribunal.

Dr. Moonilal: Madam Chair, I just want to raise a matter with you for your guidance. This process we are engaged in, this Standing Finance Committee meeting, as my understanding is, as the practice was last year, when some of us, but not all participated in this. It was our understanding—and we would like to know if that has changed—is that the opening statement by a Minister, allowed five minutes, is a statement to give us some summary of his policy items, his expenditure, tell us in a nutshell about his estimates, highlight a couple items quickly that he may like to emphasize in the coming year. It is not meant to be a political statement, a continuation of the budget debate which has closed. Is that still our understanding? Or is that five minutes to be used, and can be used for political statements?

Mr. Imbert: And that is also not true what you have just said. I was here last year. You all made political statements non-stop.

Dr. Moonilal: That is my understanding, Ma’am.

Madam Chairman: I understand. It is noted. Are we ready with the—hon. Minister of Finance are you responsible for the Equal Opportunity Tribunal?

Mr. Imbert: Madam Chairman, as Members opposite will be aware, all the Items that did not have a line Minister will be addressed by me.

Madam Chairman: Are you ready? Are your technical people here?

Mr. Imbert: Equal Opportunity is here.
Madam Chairman: Thank you very much. Head 75, Equal Opportunity Tribunal, $3,122,300. I will now invite the Minister of Finance to make a brief opening statement not exceeding five minutes.

Hon. Imbert: Thank you, Madam Chairman. Consistent with the statement made by the Member opposite, Equal Opportunity Tribunal is an institution established to ensure that there is equal opportunity for all citizens of Trinidad and Tobago, with respect to access to employment, services and other things that all of us as citizens are guaranteed under the Constitution, under sections 4 and 5 of the Constitution.

The allocation for the Equal Opportunity Tribunal which is $5,383,500 in the recurrent and one would assume there will be some item of development programme. The various Heads would be: Personnel Expenditure, Goods and Services, Minor Equipment Purchases.

5.45 p.m.

This is really a superior court of record which handles matters of discrimination. Is that good enough for you?

Question proposed: That Head 75 stand part of the Schedule.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Members, the sum of $3,122,300 for Head 75, Equal Opportunity Tribunal is comprised of moneys proposed for expenditure under the following Sub-Heads and Items to be found in the Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure.

Hon. Imbert: Madam Chairman, could I just point out that there are Direct Charges with respect to this Head involving salaries, allowances and Government’s contribution to national insurance totalling approximately $2 million and, therefore, the actual total is in fact in excess of $5,383,500.

Madam Chairman: Okay, so can we begin? We are at page 521, Sub-Head 01,
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Personnel Expenditure; 001, General Administration; Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services; 001, General Administration; Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases; 001, General Administration.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 75 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Madam Chairman: I would like to thank the representatives of the Equal Opportunity Tribunal for attending and assisting the committee and they are now relieved. Can we go on to Head 77?

Head 77.

Madam Chairman: Minister of Finance, are you taking Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries?

Mr. Imbert: No, Madam Chairman. I had indicated that where there is no line Minister, I would take it. There is a line Minister for agriculture, that is Minister Rambharat and he should be in the building, if you could just give him two minutes to arrive.

Hon. Members: He is here.

Mr. Imbert: And he is here. [Crosstalk]

Madam Chairman: All right Members, we are at page 537, Head 77. We are just waiting for you all to settle and indicate that you all are ready. Head 77, Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries, $1,177,523,359. I would now invite the hon. Minister of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries to make a brief opening statement not exceeding five minutes.

Hon. Rambharat: Thank you, Madam Chair. The Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries is made up of the former Ministries of Food Production, Land and Marine Resources and it is also made up of the Forestry Division from the former Ministry of the Environment.
The first step in the Ministry within the first year we expect to integrate those former Ministries to create this Agriculture, Land and Fisheries Ministry. The allocations were previously in the different Ministries. We are currently going through an exercise to rationalize that, in particular, to look at those areas which have been duplicated; for example, human resources and accounts across the two Ministries and the Forestry Division. So that exercise is taking up some time and some of the information we would be able to give today and some we would have to give in writing subsequently.

*Question proposed:* That Head 77 stand part of the Schedule.

**Madam Chairman:** Thank you, hon. Minister. Hon. Members, the sum of $1,177,523,359 for Head 77, Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries is comprised of moneys proposed for expenditure under the following Sub-Heads and Items to be found in the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure* and the *Draft Estimates of Development Programme*. Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure: Item 001, General Administration. Hon. Member for Mayaro.

**Mr. Paray:** Thank you very much, Madam Chairman. First, let me congratulate Minister Rambharat for his appointment to the Cabinet as Minister of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries. I am very glad that you are there. I know you and I, we have walked our constituency. I know you, more than anyone else, would know the plights of my constituents. I am thankful that you are there, Sir.

Madam Chairman, I know we have a ditto rule that we were following over the last couple days, and in terms of quite a few of the headings as we go along, I would probably want to invoke that ditto rule in terms of Salaries and Cost of Living Allowances.

**Madam Chairman:** If you would call it, and then we would say, if it is covered, that the undertaking given with respect to that is applicable.
Mr. Paray: Thank you, Madam Chairman. Items 01 and 08, both line items.

Madam Chairman: Those are, Salaries and Cost of Living Allowances?

Mr. Paray: That is correct.

Madam Chairman: And Vacant Post, Salaries and Cost of Living Allowances.

Mr. Paray: That is correct.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Minister of Finance, would this be under your general undertaking or do I need to get this from the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries?

Mr. Imbert: Madam Chairman, once it is an item of Personnel Expenditure, I would give an assurance that an explanation would be given for any variation, increases, decreases on all items relating to all units, departments, Ministries, agencies, “toute bagai”.

Madam Chairman: Thank you very much. So can we go on?

Mr. Paray: Yes, just both items and line Items 02 and 08, we would just like, in writing, exactly how much of these posts are vacant. What are the classifications of these vacant posts and are there any guarantees?

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Mayaro, I think that is what—and that is why I allowed the Minister to recite it so that it would bind us today.

Mr. Paray: Okay, so that is it for Personnel Expenditure.

Madam Chairman: All right, so Item 002, Agriculture. This is on page 538.

Mr. Paray: Again, Madam Chairman, through you, same exercise, Items 01 and 29.

Madam Chairman: Item 01 and Item 29.

Mr. Imbert: Madam Chairman, in order to save time, the undertaking I gave is for the entire Personnel Expenditure of $439 million which would include every division, every unit.
Mr. Paray: I thought Madam Chairman wanted each one, okay?

Madam Chairman: All right, so we go on to Item 003; Item 004, Horticulture; Item 005, Land and Marine Resources; Item 006, Surveys and Mapping; Item 007, Land Management; Item 008, Fisheries; Item 009, Agricultural Land Administration Division; Item 010, Forestry. Sub-Head 02. We are on page 543. Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services; Item 001, General Administration.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you. On 02, Goods and Services, line 07, through you, Madam Chair, could the Minister indicate what is the house rate? Who determines the house rate? How many houses would have to be paid from this vote?

Madam Chairman: 02, Goods and Services, Item 07 on page 543. Hon. Member, if you could look at page xi—

Mr. Imbert: In writing.

Madam Chairman:—the current expenditure, you would see a definition of house rates there.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Who determines the house rates? How is it determined?

Mr. Imbert: I think that needs to be provided in writing.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: You could give it in writing, it is not a problem. Just let me repeat what it is I requested, if you do not mind me, Madam Chair. It is, who determines the house rate? How the house rates are determined and how many houses have to be paid from this vote?

Madam Chairman: Sure.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you.

Madam Chairman: Might I ask, is that a question that is properly for agriculture or is that a question for local government?

Mr. Imbert: I find it odd because house rates are usually associated with
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boroughs and cities. It is peculiar, and that is why I think we better write and indicate whether this line should be somewhere else, whether it is properly located under this Head, and what it is for, who determines the house rates, et cetera.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you.

Mr. Indarsingh: Thank you, Madam Chair. I see under Contract Employment you have an allocation of $25 million, and it takes into consideration provision for graduate employment. Could you give a breakdown of how the Ministry intends to monitor or review this contract employment; and how many persons may be employed and the classification of contract employment in terms of the different jobs? Also, I am seeing Short-Term Employment of $2,250,000 and if you could give an explanation of what this allocation of fees of $4.5 million is?

6.00 p.m.

Mr. Imbert: Madam Speaker, I think the Minister can give further details in writing, but, just to repeat, short-term employment is employment for six months or less. It is not really associated with positions, and it is to deal with the exigencies of the service. With respect to fees, these would be licences and other fees that the Ministry would have to pay as a result of being a member of certain organizations, and so on. But I think the Minister could also give further elucidation in writing with respect to contract employment, and so on.

Mr. Indarsingh: What I appreciate, and this short-term—well, graduate employment and short-term will be advertised, how will these persons be recruited?

Mr. Imbert: As I indicated yesterday, I am in the process of finalizing the terms and conditions for graduate employment and this will be communicated to all the Ministries shortly. I would not want to prejudge but, of course, we are going to engage in advertisement.
Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Mayaro.

Mr. Paray: Thank you, Madam Chairman. To the Minister of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries, there is a line Item, Sub-Item 28, Other Contracted Services, for $33 million, could the Minister give us an idea of what are some of those contracted services?—the categories. And, secondly, are these services normally advertised or would they normally be based on sole selections? Thank you.

Mr. Imbert: In all of these Ministries, Contracted Services has a range of services so the best thing to do is to give you a written explanation for that, because it will cover so many different things.

Madam Chairman: The Member for Couva North. You no longer—all right, so can we move on, please? We are now at Item 002 Agriculture, which is on page 545. Item 003 Animal Production and Health. Item 004 Horticulture. Item 005 Land and Marine Resources. The hon. Member for Naparima.

Mr. Charles: Thank you very much, Madam Chairman. Again, I go to Sub-Item 08, Rent/Lease - Office Accommodation and Storage, a sum of $1.9 million, and the question is, in the context of the fact that we have left an excellent office complex for you in Chaguanas, and your stated intention to move to that building, would it not make sense as a cost-saving device to house this Item, this accommodation item, in that excellent facility which we left?

Madam Chairman: I think the hon. Member is at Item 005 Land and Marine Resources, Sub-Item 08 Rent/Lease – Office Accommodation and Storage, which is on page 547. I believe that is where you are.

Mr. Charles: Yes.

Mr. Imbert: Madam Chairman, there will be contractual obligations which would have been entered into by the former administration. There would be rental of offices in various places and, therefore, this all needs to be rationalized during
2016, and this is why the Ministry of Finance has given them an allocation of $1.9 million. Surely and certainly, if the move to Chaguanas can be done quickly and efficiently then there would be a savings here, but, I must say, the former Government opened a lot of buildings but they were just shells, empty shells. There was nothing in them. It was just a facade. When you go behind, all you see is concrete and steel, so we do not really know how soon it will be possible for the Minister to move into the building in Chaguanas—and that is specific to that building which is just an empty shell.

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

**Miss Ramdial:** Thank you, Madam Chairman, under Item 005 Land and Marine Resources, Sub-Item 16, Contract Employment, I am seeing $7 million for contract employment. Can the Minister kindly give us the information with respect to the contractual positions that exist at this cost?

**Madam Chairman:** And that will be done in writing.

**Miss Ramdial:** Yes.

**Madam Chairman:** Thank you. We are moving on, Item 006 Surveys and Mapping. Item 007 Land Management. Item 008 Fisheries. Item 009 Agricultural Land Administration Division. Item 010 Forestry. Sub-Head 03 Minor Equipment Purchases, we are at page 553. Item 001 General Administration. Item 002 Agriculture. Item 003 Animal Production and Health. Item 004 Horticulture. Item 005 Land and Marine Resources. Item 006 Surveys and Mapping. Item 007 Land Management. Item 008 Fisheries. Item 009 Agricultural Land Administration Division, and we are at page 556. Item 010 Forestry. We now move on to Sub-Head 04 Current Transfers and Subsidies, and that is at page 556. Item 002 Commonwealth Bodies. Item 003 United Nations Organizations. Item 005 Non-profit Institutions—Hon. Member for Mayaro.
Mr. Paray: Thank you very much, Madam Chairman. Just for the benefit of our viewing audience, there are some allocations in terms of the Caribbean Fisheries Training and Development for $11 million, Sub-Item 02, Caribbean Agriculture Research Development Institute for $5.5 million, and Sub-Item 04 Sugar Cane Feeds Centre for $14 million. I know these are all research organizations but could the Minister, or would the Minister be able to give us an indication in terms of—very, very brief—what are some of the projects or the plans for these agencies in terms of their research?—in terms of moving the agricultural vision that was described in the budget forward. If you can give us a little idea, Sir. Thank you.

Hon. Rambharat: Well what we have found is that we have at least seven agencies in the country involved in fisheries, six of them are in this Ministry, one is under Education, that is the Institute of Marine Affairs. What we have also found is a lot of duplication, in particular in research, so, for example, Caribbean Fisheries Training and Development Institute is a relic from a Caricom initiative, it is still involved in research, it is also involved in some processing, it is also involved in safety training for people going out to sea. In the case of Sugar Cane Feeds Centre, that is also essentially a research institution, it is a holdover from an old arrangement with Canada. It is involved in some processing, slaughter of animals, a range of activities. So, we are going through a process of rationalizing and streamlining to ensure that we do not have duplication in the Ministry. So, I expect some of those institutions to change over time once we understand where the duplication is and, you know, what changes we could make.

Mr. Paray: Okay. Thank you.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Couva South.

Mr. Indarsingh: Thank you, Madam Chairman, have you reached page 558?

Madam Chairman: We have not reached there as yet so I will ask you to hold
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until we reach there, please. Item 007 Households. Item 008 Subsidies—hon. Member for Mayaro.

Mr. Paray: Thank you, Madam Chairman. In terms of Sub-Item 01 Agricultural Incentive Programme, can you give me an idea, Minister, who are normally the recipients of that incentive programme? Who would be the recipients of that?

Mr. Imbert: That is a question going backwards, if you want to ask who is going to be the recipients then he could put that in writing for you.

Mr. Paray: Sure, thank you.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Couva South.

Mr. Indarsingh: Thank you, again, Madam Chairman. I see an allocation of $4.7 million for the Youth Apprenticeship Programme in Agriculture, if the hon. Minister would be so kind as to give a breakdown of, or clear direction in terms of how this $4.7 million will be utilized throughout Trinidad and Tobago. In addition to that, I am not seeing any kind of support. I know that there was a programme that was named Agriculture Now that was operating out of a former building of Caroni (1975) Limited in the constituency of Couva South for the last five years, and a number of the persons who have been working there for the last five years, and so on, they have approached me and indicated to me that they do not know of their future from an employment point of view in this particular Agriculture Now programme.

Madam Chairman: I call on the hon. Minister of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries, the hon. Member for Couva South has taken us beyond where we are so I just want to ask, are we finished with Item 008 Subsidies?—and, therefore, I am going to formally call—hon. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla, you are on Item 008?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Yes, Item 008.

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Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Couva South, if I could just ask you to hold on the response because we do not want to go back, so just let me finish Item 008. Thank you.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Madam Chair. Through you, hon. Minister of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries, I am aware of the subsidies as guided in your manifesto, which would have been various things that were already there, in light of the fact that those subsidies are already in place, what have you identified for your subsidies for this fiscal year?

Madam Chairman: We are under Item 008 Subsidies. Hon. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla, that is a general question that you are asking or is it related to one of these items?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Under Item 008, Subsidies, you have Sub-Item 01 Agricultural Incentive Programme, Incentive Programme in Sub-Item 02, and we were guided in your manifesto that there were so many incentives that you would put for agriculture, which in fact were already put in place by the previous administration—I am asking, have you revisited the incentive programme and can identify what are those programmes that you will be providing to farmers?

Mr. Imbert: Unfortunately, that entire question is based on a series of false premises. In the first instance, agricultural vehicles are still subject to Customs duty and motor vehicle tax; agricultural vessels are subject to Customs duty, and so on, and so on, and so on. It is a falsity for people to say that all of the things that we propose to do have already been done—that is just not true. It is like the $35 million allegedly lent to farmers from the ADB—that also is not true.

We are not providing incentives in the form of an incentive on this line Item. What we are doing is we are waiving all taxes, duties, motor vehicle tax, value added tax, any other tax related to approved inputs to agriculture; approved
vehicles, approved fishing vessels, and so on. So we are waiving taxes; that is the incentive we are giving specific to the point you are raising, in addition to also supporting the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries in its overall programme of providing other types of incentives to farmers.

6.15 p.m.

Madam Chairman: Can we go on to 009?

Mr. Indarsingh: I do not know if the Minister would like me to repeat or he got a firm grasp of what I said.

Mr. Imbert: You would see we put an allocation for the Youth Apprentice Programme in Agriculture. We intend to focus on that programme in 2016. I do not know what line item Agriculture Now would be. Could you direct me to it?

Mr. Indarsingh: No, no; I am saying that I know of a programme that was operating in the former building of Caroni (1975) Limited by the name of Agriculture Now. Is it part of the Youth Apprentice Programme in Agriculture, because I am seeing no line item for it? The entire complement of workers has come to me indicating that they know nothing of their future. In fact, I think that they have already been served with termination letters. I am just seeking clarification, and if this is part of the overall vision of expansion of the agricultural sector.

Mr. Imbert: Again, that information is incorrect. They were given short-term contracts which ended. The expiry in the contract that you gave them was September 30, 2015. However, we have put this allocation for the Youth Apprenticeship Programme to try to encourage young people to get involved in agriculture. We will examine all programmes, past and the ones going forward, to see which ones are most relevant. I will ask the Minister to look at this Agriculture Now thing, but it is not correct to say they have been terminated. You cannot
terminate a contract that has come to an end.

Mr. Indarsingh: You may have your own views.

Mr. Imbert: Madam Chairman, I am still speaking.

Mr. Indarsingh: I have experience in terms of what is continuous.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member, you have asked a question, you are getting the answer. Hon. Member, if you wish you can ask a supplemental question following from the answer, but let us get the answer and then another question if you wish.

Mr. Imbert: Chairman, this is across the board. The former administration entered into short-term contracts with an expiry date of September 30. These people have not been retrenched; their contracts came to an end and, as a union man, you should know that.

Mr. Indarsingh: Persons who are involved in continuous employment over a five-year period cannot be defined as contract employment. This is the high-handedness of this Government—

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Couva South. Is the question that you are going to put that these are long-term contracts that have been rolling over? Is that the question you are going to put?

Mr. Indarsingh: Well that is the direction of the discussion, Madam Chair.

Madam Chairman: No, no, no; I want to know if that is a question, because you just made a statement.

Mr. Indarsingh: Well, I am entitled to guide the Minister of Finance. He is short on trade relations experience.

Mr. Imbert: Madam Chairman, these are pejorative statements. Short-term contracts for election could never be long-term contracts.

Mr. Indarsingh: For the last five years, Madam Chair.

Mr. Imbert: You had election contracts for five years?
Dr. Rambachan: To the hon. Minister. The Seafood Industry Development Company limited was set up way back on March 31, 2006, as a wholly-owned state enterprise, that was there to modernize the fisheries and aquaculture sector. Does the Minister intend to do an analysis—a cost-benefit analysis—of this Seafood Industry Development Company Limited in order to see whether it is meeting its mandate, and whether these sums of money, like $8 million on a yearly basis, justify the existence of this company in terms of its value added contribution over the last nine years?

Hon. Rambharat: Madam Chair, through you, I referred previously to the seven agencies involved in fisheries. The Seafood Industry Development Company is one of those agencies. We are doing the review and, based on that review, we will determine the future of the Seafood Industry Development Company.

Mr. Karim: Madam Chairman, to the hon. Minister. I notice in Other Transfers 05, I listened to the hon. Minister in his opening remarks when he indicated that he had found some duplication of opportunities in the Ministry. Could he elucidate for us with this $3 million allocation on tourism development facilities?

Hon. Rambharat: This allocation deals with the facilities that fall under the parks responsibilities of the Ministry, so this covers the proposed development for San Fernando Hill, Fort St. George, Caura recreation facility, the Water Wheel in Diego Martin, Matura, where we have works planned and activities continuing and daily-paid workers employed.

Mr. Charles: Madam Chairman, looking at Item 03, Expansion and Development of the Farmers Market, would the hon. Minister give us some idea of the geographic areas in which this would be expanded; the reason for the expansion and whether the constituency of Naparima would be included in that expansion?

Hon. Rambharat: Madam Chair, through you, I would like to put that response in
Madam Chairman: Can we go on to Item 010 Other Transfers Abroad. Item 011 Transfers to State Enterprises.

Dr. Lee: Madam Chair, under 08, line item Agricultural Society of Trinidad and Tobago, in 2015 the revised estimate was approximately $2.7 million, and the 2016 estimate is $4.3 million. Through you to the hon. Minister of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries. What would give rise to this increase of approximately $1.6 million?

Mr. Imbert: Madam Chairman, as you may recall, or as Members should know, the former Minister was continuously embroiled in a battle, including litigation, with the Agricultural Society, and there are copious news reports—copious, many—to the effect that he refused to give them any money. But we in the PNM intend to resolve the issues with the Agricultural Society and that is why we have put an allocation for them, where you gave them nothing.

Mr. Paray: To the Minister of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries referring to Item 011, Sub-Item 01, Cocoa Development Company of Trinidad and Tobago, an allocation of $14 million. The cocoa industry has been receiving some issues, some problems, troubles over the last few years, and I am interested, and for the benefit of the viewing audience—with this injection of $14 million into that company, what can we expect in terms of an outcome, based on this investment, over the next probably 12 to 24 months? Thank you.

Mr. Imbert: The Members opposite should know—unless they have temporary amnesia—that is another thing. I remember during a debate in Parliament asking the former Minister a question about why did he shut down the Cocoa Development Board, and he said they were irrelevant. He said the Ministry of Agriculture could handle the functions of the Cocoa Development Board. So this is the new entity that has been formed to handle cocoa, and there are some issues
from the closure of the board and the cavalier manner in which the former Minister dealt with the Cocoa Board that have to be resolved. So this funding is to deal with the mess that you all created, plus going forward to put cocoa on a strong footing.

**Madam Chairman:** The hon. Member for Tabaquite has leapfrogged us into Sub-Head 06. Can we go back and just complete the prior Item, which is 011?

**Mr. Paray:** Just to follow up the question that I had before. What the hon. Minister of Finance is saying is that this is now a defunct board, there is a new board in place—*[ Interruption]* sorry, that is not what you are saying—

**Mr. Imbert:** That is a company, a new entity. The board was made defunct.

**Mr. Paray:** The question that I have is that none of that $14 million is going towards an investment opportunity in that board. What I am saying, in order for the industry—you have now said it is to clear up the mess left by the old board, so I just need some clarity, if there is any part of that $14 million that is actually going into the development of the industry? Thank you.

**Mr. Imbert:** This is for expenditure going forward. If you look lower down at 10, under 06, you are seeing it on the same page, 0610, and you see the explanation? The board disbanded in accordance with Cabinet Minute 2907, dated October 17, 2013. So you mash up the board; that is what that money is for.

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

**Madam Chairman:** Sub-Head 06 Current Transfers to Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies, and that is on page 560. Therefore we can now go to Sub-Head 09, Development Programme. We are at item 001 Pre-Investment. We are at page 366 in the Development Programme estimates. At page 367. Sorry, we are looking at the IDF. So we are at page 251, 001 Pre-Investment; 002 Productive Sectors, that is at page 262; Item 003, Economic Infrastructure.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Tech-Packs for New Product Development and Provision of
Facilities. Where are these tech-packs to be located and what is the nature of this tech-pack? Tech-Packs—packaging, sorry. What are these? What is it you have in mind here?

6.30 p.m.

Mr. Imbert: You will get more details in writing, but it is something that NAMDEVCO develops.

Dr. Rambachan: Oh, I see.

Mr. Imbert: But you will get more information on that in writing.

Dr. Rambachan: Okay.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Chair. To the hon. Minister of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries, through you, Chair. 003 line Item 285 and 286. 285, have you determined what is the total cost of this project? I know there is an allocation. Was any research conducted prior to the establishment of this project to determine its feasibility?

Mr. Imbert: You are referring to 285 or 286?


Mr. Imbert: You asked about feasibility.


Mr. Imbert: Okay. I will forgive you because you are new. The Carenage Fishing Complex was under construction when the PNM demitted office in 2010, and then it became a pappyshow for the next five years. It was just left abandoned, and we intend to complete this project which has been in progress now for many, many years. So it is not new.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Couva North.

Miss Ramdial: Thank you, Madam Chair. Under 003 Economic Infrastructure,
280 Orange Valley Wholesale Fish Market (Upgrade) for $1 million. Can the Minister tell us exactly what this upgrade will entail?

**Mr. Imbert:** I am advised that it is a NAMDEVCO project, and I will look at this, since you have raised it and see whether we need to supplement this vote during the fiscal year.

**Miss Ramdial:** Thank you very much.

**Mr. Imbert:** You are welcome.

**Dr. Rambachan:** As the Minister is on the matter of increasing this vote, I will like to draw the Minister’s attention to the Las Cuevas Fishing Facilities.

**Madam Chairman:** Is that listed here?

**Dr. Rambachan:** It is not here. It is not here, but I want to draw the Minister’s attention to it because I visited it and it is in a very dilapidated state, and fish products are being processed and sold under some very, very poor conditions, unsanitary conditions.

**Mr. Imbert:** I am very happy the Member is visiting areas outside of Mayo.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** Tabaquite.

**Mr. Imbert:** I know.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Mayo is only one village in Tabaquite.

**Mr. Imbert:** I know what I am saying. I am very pleased that you have zeroed-in on a PNM constituency and it will be given favourable consideration.

**Mr. Deyalsingh:** Like all constituencies.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Do not talk about the health—you are only fixing in—

**Madam Chairman:** Item 004 Social Infrastructure. Item 005 Multi-Sectoral and Other Services. It is at page 259. And can we go now to the Infrastructure Development Fund. That is where I was initially taking us. Page 365 I believe. Page 367. Thank you, hon. Minister.
Dr. Rambachan:  Madam Chairman, you went to Infrastructure already?

Madam Chairman:  Excuse me?

Dr. Rambachan:  You have gone to infrastructure?

Madam Chairman:  We have gone to—Yes.  Yes.  Because we have finished.

Dr. Rambachan:  There is just one Item I need to ask a question which was 536 on page 255.

Madam Chairman:  One question?

Dr. Rambachan:  Yes.  One question.

Madam Chairman:  You are taking us back for one question?

Dr. Rambachan:  Well it is an important question.

Madam Chairman:  Yeah.  I have no problem, I just want to limit us to one question.

Dr. Rambachan:  How are people going to—

Madam Chairman:  Page what again, please?

Dr. Rambachan:  Page 255.

Madam Chairman:  Thank you very much.

Dr. Rambachan:  Establishment of Community Based Aquaculture Programmes. How are communities going to access this programme and access this funding?  

[CrossTalk] “Nah, doh do that nah man.”  You know we are not going to get anything.

Mr. Imbert:  It is your programme.

Madam Chairman:  Hon. Member for Tabaquite, you cannot say that you are not going to get anything.

Dr. Rambachan:  Madam Chairman, over a million things they have said that they are going to put in writing.  You know it is not going to happen.  It is not going to happen.
Madam Chairman: There is a committee of government assurances.

Dr. Rambachan: It is not going to happen.

Mr. Imbert: But it is your programme. Why are you asking us about your programmes, as if you “doh” know?

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla, are we at the Infrastructure Development Fund?

Mr. Imbert: We will look for the corruption in the programme.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: We are at page 256.

Madam Chairman: No. That is where I am, please. Okay? We are at page 367 Item 003 Economic Infrastructure. Item 004 Social Infrastructure, which is on page 368.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Head 77 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.*

I want to thank the hon. Minister of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries and his technocrats for attending to assist the committee, and they are now relieved. Can we move on to Head 09 Tax Appeal Board?

Dr. Moonilal: Yes.

Madam Chairman: Yes?

Dr. Moonilal: Yes.

Madam Chairman: And can I take it that the Minister of Finance, this is under you? Tax Appeal Board.

Hon. Member: You again?

Mr. Imbert: Omnipresent.

Madam Chairman: We are at page 45 in the Recurrent Expenditure. Are we ready, hon. Minister? Okay?

*Head 09.*
I will now invite the Minister of Finance to make a brief opening statement not exceeding five minutes.

**Hon. Imbert:** The Tax Appeal Board adjudicates on challenges or objections to determinations made by the Board of Inland Revenue and by the Customs and Excise Division. It is a court of superior record.

*Question proposed:* That head 09 stand part of the Schedule.

**Madam Chairman:** Hon. Members, the sum of $8,583,800 for Head 09 Tax Appeal Board is comprised of moneys proposed for expenditure under the following Sub-Heads and Items to be found in the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure* and *Draft Estimates of Development Programme*. Sub-Head 01 Personnel Expenditure Item 001 General Administration. Hon. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I am just directing this question to the Minister of Finance, through you, Chair. Just noticing under 01/01 Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance that there was a 35 per cent decrease. I am not asking for it in writing. I just want to know, is this as a result of persons being sent home?

**Hon. Imbert:** No. This is arrears of salary and COLA.

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

**Madam Chairman:** Sub-Head 02 Goods and Services Item 1.

**Dr. Rambachan:** I want to ask about Sub-Head 01.

**Madam Chairman:** So, you are on Sub-Head 01 Personnel Expenditure?

**Dr. Rambachan:** Yes.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 001.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Is the Minister satisfied that the funding that is under Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance, as well as the Members of the Tax Appeal Board, is
it sufficient to do the work of the Tax Appeal Board in an efficient manner, a very responsive and an on-time manner or is it that there are many matters before this Tax Appeal Board that are languishing because of lack of staff?

**Hon. Imbert:** I will have to get back to you in writing on that. But what I would say is that the allocations for Personnel Expenditure are based on the Ninety-eighth Report of the Salaries Review Commission.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Based on the—

**Hon. Imbert:** Ninety-eighth Report of the Salaries Review Commission because the members of this tribunal, their terms and conditions are determined by the Salaries Review Commission and there some vacant posts. I personally am of the view that all of these entities like the Auditor General’s Office and the Tax Appeal Board need to be supported and strengthened where required. So now that you have brought that up, I would be in consultation with the Tax Appeal Board to ensure that this appropriation is adequate because it is consistent with previous years. And any additional funding that they require I will most certainly see what can be done to assist them.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Can I ask one more question? This Tax Appeal Board, because there is remuneration to the board members as direct charge, how often do they meet?

**Hon. Imbert:** Every day.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Okay. Thank you.

**Madam Chairman:** Sub-Head 02 Goods and Services. Item 1 General Administration.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Madam Chair, just to follow up on the question from my colleague to Minister. Is it that the Tax Appeal Board they meet every day to determine appeals?
Madam Chairman: Hon. Minister of Finance.

Hon. Imbert: Sorry. I was just consulting with the public servants. Could you repeat, please?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: You were indicating that they meet every day, is that to review appeals that come before them?

Hon. Imbert: That is to determine appeals.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Okay.

Hon. Imbert: It is a court and they meet every day. There are three members of the tribunal and a chairman and they settle about 100 matters a year, and I am told that there is a backlog, but not substantial. But I still will see what can be done to assist them further.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Sir.

Hon. Imbert: Apparently there are difficulties with accommodation.

Dr. Rambachan: That was the basis of—what is the backlog about?

Hon. Imbert: I will have to put that in writing. The information that I have is that they do about 100 matters a year and there is a slight backlog, but if you want to know the actual backlog and a sort of historical perspective, I will provide that—

Dr. Rambachan: But 100 matters a year is eight matters a month.

Hon. Imbert: Well, remember they do not sit on Saturdays and Sundays and so on, and it is a 100 matters a year that they are doing. So every three days they will be determining a matter more or less. Okay?

Madam Chairman: Sub-Head 02 Goods and Services. Item 1 General Administration. Sub-Head 03 Minor Equipment Purchases, Item 001 General Administration. Sub-Head 09, we going to the Development Programme and this is on page 15 of the Draft Estimate for the Development Programme. Item 005 Multi-Sectoral and Other Services. Hon. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.
Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Madam Chair. I noticed under 004 Upgrade of Library. I have not jumped, right?

Madam Chairman: No. No. You are in the right place.

6.45 p.m.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: All right. Good. Nice. I am just looking at it and I am seeing that there is an estimated 300 per cent increase in the revised estimate costing for the library. Is this as a result of the increase of goods and services due to the incentives being removed from the fuel and so forth? What is the—

[Interruption]

Madam Chairman: What is the reason for the change?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Yeah, thank you.

Hon. Imbert: You wish to know why the allocation for the library has been increased. That is the question?

Madam Chairman: Yes. That is the question, hon. Minister.

Hon. Imbert: Well, in percentage terms it may seem big but it is just $1.2 million. So it is not huge in the overall scheme of things. And what I am advised is that this money is for the collection development process, reconfiguration of the lighting, development and improvement of the tax, judgment data base and implementation of radio frequency identification in the library (RFIL). So it is really to just upgrade the library which has been in a bad way for some time. So it is just really to bring them into the modern era.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 09 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Madam Chairman: I would like to thank the Registrar and the other representative from the Tax Appeal Board for attending, and you are relieved.
Thank you very much.

Hon. Minister of Finance, do I take it that you are also with the other two Heads. Could we, therefore, break for just about 15 minutes to give—[Crosstalk]—10 minutes, for the hon. Minister to have an opportunity to recharge himself? [Laughter] Members, this meeting is suspended.

6.47 p.m.: Standing Finance Committee suspended.

6.56 p.m.: Standing Finance Committee resumed.

Madam Chairman: The Standing Finance Committee is now resumed. We are at Head 04, Industrial Court. And just for guidance of Members, we are on page 19 of the Draft Estimates, Details of Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure for the Financial Year 2016.

Head 04:

Industrial Court, $28,241,710. I will now invite the Minister of Finance to make a brief opening statement not exceeding five minutes.

Hon. Imbert: Thank you very much. The Industrial Court is a creature of statute. It is defined in section 4 of the Industrial Relations Act and it is comprised of judges, although my hon. Member opposite has told me that the correct terminology is, “Members of the court”, and it deals with industrial relations disputes.

Question proposed: That Head 04 stand part of the Schedule.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Members, the sum of $28,241,710 for Head 04: Industrial Court is comprised of moneys proposed for expenditure under the following Sub-Heads and Items to be found in the Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure and Draft Estimates of the Development Programme. Sub-Head 01: Personnel Expenditure, Item 001: General Administration.

And again just for repetition, all matters concerning increases, decreases and
so on, under this item would be covered by the undertaking of the Minister of Finance. Sub-Head 02: Goods and Services. Item 001: General Administration.

We are going on to page 20.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Thank you, Madam Chair. I note that for all these line Items there has been a decrease in every one, Item 11, 12, 13, 15, 16, 17, right down to Item 27, so all those there to start, Goods and Services and if the Minister would be kind enough to indicate whether these are no longer important or what is the reason for the decreases for 2016.

Hon. Imbert: Of course they are important.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Books and Periodicals, Materials and Supplies, et cetera.

Hon. Imbert: Of course they are important and if the Industrial Court requires supplementation during the year we would most certainly seek to oblige them within the context of the overall budget.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: But why was there a decrease in the first place, in the allocation?

Hon. Imbert: It is part of a budgeting exercise.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Thank you hon. Minister.

Madam Chairman: Sub-Head 002, South Office which is on page 21. Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, Item 001, General Administration. This is on page 21. And might we now go to Sub-Head 09, Development Programme and that is on page 7 of the Draft Estimates of Development Programme for the Financial Year, 2016. Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services. Hon. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Madam Chair. Under Administrative Services, Item 001, Computerization to the Industrial Court. Has this started?
Hon. Imbert: If I answer that I would just point out that every single Head under the Development Programme has been increased for 2016, and I will now get the answer. There are a number of projects and it is ongoing.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Do we anticipate any disruption as a result of the transference from manual to computerization?

Hon. Imbert: They are ongoing. They have been in progress for some time.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Okay.

Hon. Imbert: There is no anticipated disruption.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 04 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

I would like to thank the representatives from the Industrial Court for coming, and you are relieved. Thanks a lot.

Madam Chairman: Head 01. I take it again, Minister of Finance.

Hon. Imbert: By the way, the Acting Attorney General is seated behind me. If there were any operational questions on the Industrial Court—but there were not any.

Madam Chairman: Thank you for so advising the committee. Okay, Members, we are on page 1 of the Draft Estimates, Details of Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure for the Financial Year 2016.

Head 01:

President, $23,146,310. I now invite the Minister of Finance to make a brief opening statement not exceeding five minutes.

Hon. Imbert: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. The Office of the President, the President is the Head of State for Trinidad and Tobago elected by the Electoral College every five years. The present incumbent is His Excellency Anthony
Thomas Aquinas Carmona, SC, ORTT. And the various Heads and Sub-Heads and Sub-Items of expenditure would be to run the Office of the President and allow the President to perform its functions which will include, very important functions with respect to Service Commissions and other matters that are stated in various laws of our country.

7.05 p.m.

*Question proposed:* That Head 01 stand part of the Schedule.

**Madam Chairman:** The sum of $23,146,310 for Head 01, President, is 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 Development Programme*. Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure, Item 001. And, again, if there are any issues with respect to increases, decreases, et cetera, the hon. Minister of Finance’s undertaking is in place. Can we go on to Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services? Item 001, General Administration. Item 002, Tobago Services. Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases. Item 001, General Administration.

**Hon. Imbert:** Madam Chairman, I just wish to point out that the actual total for this Head 01, the President, which includes Direct Charges is, in fact, $25,867,000.

**Madam Chairman:** So it is an additional $2 million or so.

**Hon. Imbert:** Because of the Direct Charges, yes.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Head 01 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.*

**Madam Chairman:** I want to thank the representatives under the Head, President, for attending and I now relieve them.
Mr. Imbert: I just want to clarify that the Development Programme is handled by other Ministries. I also want to make a statement, that if the office of the President requires supplementary funding, this would be viewed very favourably by the Ministry of Finance within the context of the overall budget.

Madam Chairman: Thank you very much. You all are relieved. Thank you for coming.

Members, I really want to congratulate you all, and it just shows what a little cooperation can achieve, and I hope that tomorrow we can have a similar level of cooperation. I am sure the Minister of Finance would like this. This is within the budgeted time.

So tomorrow morning, Members, we resume at 10.00 a.m. I think Members sufficiently know what Heads we will be considering tomorrow.

Hon. Members: Yes.

Madam Chairman: This meeting is now suspended. Please reach home safely.

7.09 p.m.: Standing Finance Committee suspended.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Saturday, October 17, 2015

APPROPRIATION (FINANCIAL YEAR 2016) BILL, 2015

[Tenth Day]

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

[Chairman: Mrs. Annisette-George]

10.15 a.m.

Madam Chairman: The meeting of the Standing Financing Committee is

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resumed. We begin with Head 06, Service Commissions, $94,013,000.

Head 06.

I will now invite the hon. Minister of Finance to make a brief opening statement. I am sorry. I will now invite the Minister of Public Administration to make a brief opening statement not exceeding five minutes.

Hon. R. Mitchell: Madam Chair, I thank you for the opportunity to appear before this committee to answer any questions on Recurrent Expenditure and on the Development Programme as it pertains to the budgetary allocations for the Service Commissions.

The Service Commissions are constitutional bodies established under the Trinidad and Tobago Constitution and provide the following functions: appointment to the services under their jurisdiction and to ensure that the persons being appointed satisfy the prerequisites of integrity, skill, ability, training and experience; promotion based on training, experience, merit and ability and relative seniority along with relevant promotion examinations; transfers within their services; disciplinary control over officers in the services. There are four Service Commissions that have full executive power to exercise these functions and they are: Public Service Commission, which has jurisdiction over civil, fire and prison services; the Police Service Commission, with powers to appoint, to act, promote, confirm persons to the positions of Commissioner of Police and the Deputy Commissioner of Police; to monitor the efficiency and effectiveness of the discharge of the functions of the Commissioner of Police and the Deputy Commissioner of Police; prepare annual performance reports; hear and determine appeals from decisions of the Commissioner of Police as a result of disciplinary hearings; the Judicial and Legal Service Commission, which has jurisdiction over persons holding posts in the public service requiring the
possession of legal qualifications, and the Teaching Service Commission which deals with the appointment, promotion, transfer and discipline of members of the teaching service.

I thank you, Madam Chair, for allowing me these few remarks.

*Question proposed:* That Head 06 stand part of the Schedule.

**Madam Chairman:** Hon. Members, the sum of $94,013,000 for Head 06: Service Commissions is comprised of moneys proposed for expenditure under the following Sub-Heads and Items to be found in the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure* and the *Draft Estimates of Development Programme*. We are now at page 29. Sub-Head 01 Personnel Expenditure; Item 001 General Administration. Hon. Member for Caroni East.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** I would just like to go to the question of Vacant Posts in the Service Commissions—and no allocation to it. My experience as Education Minister in the past, and related to the Teaching Service Commission, there are thousands of vacancies to be filled by the Teaching Service Commission. That is just one. And the general statement is made that there is a deficiency—inadequacy of staff to deal with the question of 16,000 teachers. Would the hon. Minister be able to say whether any steps are being made to fill positions that might be vacant? Or how many positions deal with the Service Commissions, and are there vacant positions that need to be filled to bring about greater efficiency by these Service Commissions?

**Mr. Imbert:** Madam Chairman, before the Minister of Public Administration gives further details, I wish to point out to the Member that your statement is incorrect. There is, in fact, an allocation for Vacant Posts in 2016.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Well, this line here—

**Mr. Imbert:** You are probably looking at the wrong line.
Dr. Gopeesingh: Well, I am looking, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, Vacant Posts - Salaries, COLA - Direct Charges.

Mr. Imbert: Are you not seeing Vacant Posts, $800,000?

Dr. Gopeesingh: No. Vacant Posts, $200—

Mr. Imbert: You are not seeing lower down, Vacant Posts, $800,000?

Dr. Gopeesingh: I am on page 29, you know, Minister.

Mr. Imbert: So am I. After Government Contribution—

Dr. Gopeesingh: But there is a “Vacant Posts - Salaries and COLA - Direct Charges” where there is no line item—shows no fees here.

Mr. Imbert: No, no, no. Go down.

Dr. Gopeesingh: If you look at number 1, 2, 3, 4, 5—

Mr. Imbert: Yeah, and if you go down to—

Dr. Gopeesingh: I see the one down. So what is the difference between that “Vacant Posts - Salaries and COLA - Direct Charges” and the Vacant Posts you are referring to? What is the difference between those two? That is always confusing for us.

Mr. Imbert: All right. I think that could be easily elucidated in writing or if the Minister is capable of—

Dr. Gopeesingh: Tell us, “nuh”. The Minister of Public Administration may know, or his colleagues.

Hon. Mitchell: The Vacant Posts - Direct Charges, those pertain to the members of the Commission in the Service Commissions Department.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Okay. Well, it still goes back to my question. Is it possible, hon. Minister, to give us an idea of the amount of positions that are filled and those that are vacant in terms of bringing about greater efficiency in the management of these Service Commissions? You will experience the same difficulty, as a Government,
so I am just trying to make it easier for all of us, to understand where we are and whether there is need to fill more positions to make these Commissions more efficient and effective.

Hon. Mitchell: Madam Chair, we will put that in writing and forward it to the hon. Member of Parliament for Caroni East.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Fyzabad.

Dr. Bodeo: Thank you, Madam Chair. If I may ask, just to bring to the attention of the Minister, the decrease of $9.5 million in the allocation for Salaries and Cost of Living, that is 01 on page 30. Just under the “ditto” rule, if we can have an explanation, please, Sir.

Mr. Imbert: The “ditto” rule will apply.

Dr. Bodeo: Thank you.

Madam Chairman: There is an undertaking by the hon. Minister of Finance to provide in writing, the details. Member for Tabaquite.

Dr. Rambachan: It was the same question I wanted to ask, but I am asking in the light of the number of people who complain about the length of time it is taking to get matters of discipline dealt with by the Service Commissions, as well as appointments, and whether this $9.5 million decrease is not going to further exacerbate the situation.

Mr. Imbert: Madam Chairman, I have been at pains to point out that some categories of staff within the Government system were paid arrears in 2015 and others were not. So that when you see a decrease, in all probability it is because there was payment of arrears to particular categories of staff in 2015 which is not required in 2016, and this is why I have given the commitment that I will explain each variation, whether it is upward or downward, so you could see whether it is arrears or whatever it is. Okay?
Dr. Rambachan: Well, just a follow-up question. Is it the intention of the Minister then, to do a review of the Service Commissions in light of what has to be described as an inefficient operation in which disciplinary matters take so very long, and appointments are taking so very long, so that in a lot of schools people are remaining without teachers and what have you and so on? Is there any plan by the Government to review this in the shortest possible time and probably add staff so that the Service Commissions can become more efficient in what they are doing?

Hon. Mitchell: That matter is under consideration.

Dr. Rambachan: Is there a time frame for it?

Hon. Mitchell: Not at this time.

Madam Chairman: Might we move on to Sub-Head 02 Goods and Services; Item 001 General Administration? Hon. Member for Chaguanas East.

Mr. Karim: Thank you, Madam Chair. Can I just refer to line Item 16 Contract Employment? Is it possible to get an explanation for that increase as opposed to simply saying it is increased? And at the same time while you are there— [Crosstalk] Item 17, the decrease of $200,000 for training, what would have been the cause of this?

Hon. Mitchell: I will put that in writing.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Madam Chair, I am referring to line item 21 under Goods and Services: Repairs and Maintenance of Buildings. In my appreciation while serving as the Minister is that a number of these Commissions have complained and we have tried in our way as a government to assist them with their accommodation, and we tried to move them into different places and so on—still remains cramped. I visited the building where the Public Service Commission and the Teaching
Service Commission are held, and in the previous page there is a line Item for rent/lease and so on. That might be covering that. But it seems as though a number of other departments within these Service Commissions lack the space and office accommodation.

I see a very small amount being given to the Repairs and Maintenance of Buildings. Would you want to give any comment on that, whether you are comfortable with the accommodation of these four Service Commissions: Teaching Service, Public Service, Police Service and Judicial and Legal Service; and also Statutory Authorities Service Commission? Are you comfortable—well, I know you are a new Minister and perhaps it would be opportune for you to have an appreciation of the premises and the buildings and then you and your hon. Minister of Finance could determine where you go in terms of—

Madam Chairman: Member for Caroni East, might I ask if the question is: is the Minister satisfied there is sufficient money to maintain the buildings?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Are you aware of what the buildings are, and are you satisfied with the accommodation of your Commissions so far?

Hon. Mitchell: I have not yet had an appreciation of the accommodation.

Mr. Imbert: But there is a point that needs to be made. It is interesting that the Member for Caroni East would say that the allocation is small—

Dr. Gopeesingh: No, I said on the previous page there is one for rent and lease of $10 million.

Mr. Imbert: I am talking about this line item.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Right, good.

Mr. Imbert: It is interesting that the Member for Caroni East would say that the allocation in this line item, “Repairs and Maintenance” is small.

Dr. Gopeesingh: $400,000.
Mr. Imbert: It is 50 per cent more than you gave in 2014. But I would give an assurance that if the Service Commissions require a supplementary allocation it will be given to them in the context of the national budget.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Okay, thanks.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Tabaquite.

Dr. Rambachan: Thank you, Madam. Under Goods and Services: Electricity, we notice that electricity has been increased by about 33 per cent in 2016 over 2015. Does this reflect a possible rise in electricity rates in the country as a whole? Or is this for some specific—or new buildings or what have you? What does this really reflect?


Dr. Rambachan: Where is this new building, may I ask?


Dr. Rambachan: That is a new building you are going to occupy?

Mr. Imbert: Well, the building is not new. If you know the Development Finance building, it is not new—the corner of Tranquillity Street and Cipriani Boulevard—but it is new for the Service Commission and as a result of their increased accommodation requirements they will obviously have to pay increased utilities. So that is what that is all about.

Dr. Rambachan: Thank you.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Oropouche West.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: Under Goods and Services, Madam Chair, under 23, I am seeing Fees. I need to know, perhaps, would the hon. Minister, if he can account for what that is expected to be provided for, fees of $200,000?

10.30 a.m.

Mr. Imbert: You know, it is quite a long list. So I think this will be given to you
in writing, but I simply want to make the point that this Department has responsibility for software that is used within the Public Service, and there will be annual licensing fees associated with the use of software which are quite substantial. But the Minister does have a complete list which he can give you in writing.

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

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** I believe we are on page 32, Goods and Services.

**Madam Chairman:** Page 32, we have not reached there as yet. That is another item. Hon. Member for Tabaquite.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Yes, under Goods and Services again, I was completing my point on electricity. Given what appears to be a high cost item as the whole, which is energy in terms of electricity, and given what you see from time to time of buildings in the night with all these lights and nobody in the buildings, does the Government and the Minister have any plan that can effect energy savings in the use of public buildings?

**Mr. Imbert:** Minister, sorry, former Minister, as you can note from the budget statement, we set a target that 10 per cent of energy should come from renewable energy sources from the year 2021. It is part of an overall drive on the part of this Government to conserve energy, to move towards green buildings, to move towards the use of solar energy and wind power where feasible and where possible, and certainly I am concerned about the electricity bills. And you are right, you drive through Port of Spain and you would see—

**Dr. Rambachan:** Even this building.

**Mr. Imbert:** Well, I would not want to cast any aspersions—lights on all the time, and we really need to move to the use of building management systems. It is a common methodology where you have an electronic computerized system that
would determine what time of day it is—

Dr. Rambachan: Smart buildings.

Mr. Imbert:—will determine the energy needs and will turn off and turn on lights. We really need to move to that to conserve energy, and it is a policy, a manifesto commitment of this Government.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Just a short thing. Would it be possible for the hon. Minister to give us an idea of line Item 28 which speaks about Contracted Services? Of course, it carries the same amount from last year. If you can give us some ideas.

Mr. Imbert: I think essentially it is fees for recruitment, advertisement, selection of interview panels, boards for assessing promotions and that sort of thing. But if you want a detailed list—

Dr. Gopeesingh: No, no. I just wanted an idea.


Dr. Gopeesingh: Both the Public Service Commission and the Teaching Service Commission on that page, Other Contracted Services, 28, on both Items. Because of what is happening in terms of the amount of vacant positions across the board, I understand that there are about 11,000 positions that are vacant in the Public Service and I can tell you when we demitted office, in the Teaching Service Commission for personnel there is approximately 1500 positions that had not been filled. Can you increase that Contracted Services to bring about the necessary and the required amount of personnel to help to deal with filling the vacant positions, Minister? If this is contracted services—you can do a lot within contracted services.

Hon. Mitchell: Mediators in EDR.

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Mr. Imbert: This is not contract employment.

Dr. Gopeesingh: No, no. Just a while ago you explained what Contracted Services is.

Mr. Imbert: So what line Item are you on?


Mr. Imbert: Yes, that is the same thing, Contracted Services. That is not contract employment.

Dr. Gopeesingh: No, no, I know. But is there anything within that Contracted Services—

Mr. Imbert: No, no, no. That is not for hiring people. It is not for hiring people.

Dr. Gopeesingh: No. It is not for hiring people, but can you get a firm or an establishment to help you, like pay to the Government’s human resource information team. Pay a contracted service to them to help you get the positions filled.

Mr. Imbert: You see, the thing is, these are independent Commissions. So really they are the ones that will have to make that request to engage a firm and to use another method in an effort to expedite the recruitment of people.

Dr. Gopeesingh: And that is why I was asking you if there is any thought on probably increasing the appropriation in those areas to facilitate that.

Mr. Imbert: As I indicated, that if it is necessary to supplement this allocation to the Service Commissions, that will be done within the context of the budget. This is always a very important area, but the request will have to come from the Commission itself.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Minister of Finance, I appreciate you making a commitment to your colleague, the hon. Minister of Public Administration, that you will give him
the support to do what is required to bring these Commissions to the efficiency.

**Madam Chairman:** 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; Item 001, General Administration; Item 002, Tobago Services. Hon. Member for Caroni East, we are on Item 002, Tobago Services.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** That is all right.

**Madam Chairman:** Now we move on to the Development Programme, Sub-Head 09. It is Head 06 and it should be on page 11 of the *Development Programme, Draft Estimates*. Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Head 06 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.*

**Madam Chairman:** I would like to thank the representatives from the Service Commissions and the hon. Minister of Public Administration for assisting the Committee. You all are relieved.

We now go on to Head 40, Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries.

**Mr. Imbert:** Madam Chairman, before we start that, yesterday there was a query from the hon. Member for Oropouche East with respect to the Agricultural Development Bank. I am now able to clarify that matter. With your permission can we do so?

**Madam Chairman:** I think it should be held first while the other Ministry sets up.

**Mr. Imbert:** Thank you very much. Madam Chairman, I had been told by the Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Finance that the $75 million allocated and transferred to the Agricultural Development Bank for un-lending to farmers in 2015 had not been utilized up to the end of the fiscal year. The hon. Member for Oropouche East did his own checks and told this House, that as far as he had been
advised that what I had said was incorrect and that some $35 million had been un-
lent to farmers by the ADB in fiscal 2015 out of that $75 million, leaving a balance
of $40 million. So, of course, this caused me some concern and I have checked,
and I have in my possession a statement by the Chief Executive Officer of the
Agricultural Development Bank, Mr. Sheivan Ramnath, and this is his response.
As per your request, please note that the sum of $75 million received on 28th of
August has not been utilized—has not been utilized—and therefore, the amounts
available will be utilized in 2016 to satisfy the objects in the ADB Act.
So the fact of the matter is that the entire $75 million was not un-lent and was not
spent, and therefore, the information given to this House by the Member for
Oropouche East was incorrect. Not one cent. Exactly what I said.

Dr. Rambachan: But they got it in August?

Mr. Imbert: August 28. So how could they spend $35 million?

Dr. Rambachan: They did not lend from the last—

Mr. Imbert: They had not received an allocation since 2013. You starved them of
funds, and then when they got the money they were unable to give farmers one
cent in 2015.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Tabaquite, I think the letter is clear. The
letter said the date on which the $75 million had been—

Dr. Rambachan: I do not doubt it.

Madam Chairman: Okay? Are we ready to move on? Thank you, hon. Minister
of Finance for clearing up the record.

Head 40.

will now invite the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries to make a brief
opening statement not exceeding five minutes.

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Hon. Olivierre: Thank you, Madam Chair, for the opportunity to appear before the Standing Finance Committee as we examine the Estimates for the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries.

The areas of responsibility under the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries include the oil and gas sector, power generation and the minerals industry. The energy sector is the main driver of the Trinidad and Tobago economy, contributing historically on average approximately 40 per cent of GDP. In 2014, the sector contribution dropped to a low of 37.2 per cent of GDP.

Over the past five years, the Government has been unable to arrest the decline in oil production, which has fallen some 17 per cent from 98,100 barrel per day in 2010, to 81,000 barrels per day in 2014. Similarly, we have seen a persistent decline in our proven gas reserves from 17.0 tcf at the start-up of Train 4 in 2006 to a low of 11.5 tcf in 2014. I acknowledge that I have assumed responsibility for this Ministry at a very challenging time, but I view this as a tremendous opportunity. In times of high prices, operational inefficiencies can be masked by windfall profits. However, times of low prices and falling production do indeed test our ability to effectively and efficiently manage the sector.

Accordingly, in an effort to stimulate growth in the sector, this Government is committed to creating an environment in which producer companies, both existing and new, become aggressive about seeking new discoveries in oil and gas. During this term, we also intend to place greater attention to the regulation and management of the quarrying industry. There is an allocation of $3 million for the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative. These funds are earmarked for training as we build capacity in the mineral sector to enable the companies to comply with the reporting requirements for the 2014 and 2015 EITI reports.

In addition, the Permanent Local Content Committee will be reconvened and
given the mandate to transition from our current Local Content Policy into legislation to ensure that as a nation we receive maximum benefits from our energy sector. Several other committees which have gone dormant under the past administration will also be reconvened. These include the Standing Committee on Energy, the Retail Marketing Advisory Committee and the future power generation committee.

Correspondingly, there has been an increase in the allocation for remuneration to Members of Cabinet-appointed committees to cater for the increased activity under this Item. Overall, we anticipate that once we cut out the waste, mismanagement and corruption, we expect to realise increased revenues from our energy resources.

Thank you.

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

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

**Madam Chairman:** Hon. Members, the sum of $1,850,658,854 for Head 40, Energy and Energy Industries, is comprised of moneys proposed for Expenditure under the following Sub-Heads and Items to be found in the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure* and the *Draft Estimates of the Development Programme*.

10.45 a.m.

We are at page 289. Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure; Item 001, General Administration.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** Thank you, Madam Chairman. Line Item 14, Remunerations to Members of Cabinet-Appointed Committees. Through you, whether Minister of Finance or the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries.

**Mr. Imbert:** I am sure I can answer your question.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** Yeah, my husband said to me last night, you looked
very tired. He was watching the proceedings. So I was saying, you know, that you kept going and would not stop. He said, “No, man, the man looking tired”. He said, “Give him ah chance, give him ah chance”.

Mr. Imbert: I am so happy he is looking out for me. [Laughter]

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: So happy to see you this morning. Good morning to you, Minister. Line Item 14, Cabinet-appointed committees, would the Minister be so kind just to tell us which are these committees, one; two, the members of each of the committees and the qualifications of these members?

Mr. Imbert: If it was just the names of the committees, that would be easy, but since you want the names of the members and their qualifications, we will have to put that in writing to you.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Sure. Thank you, Minister.

Madam Chairman: Therefore, can we go on to—[Interruption] Sorry.

Dr. Tewarie: I have a question. Under 01, Personnel Expenditure and 04 Current Transfers and Subsidies—this is on page 288—we can see an overall decrease, specifically at 3.08 reduction in Current Transfers and Subsidies. Is that explainable simply by the reduction in the price of oil and the subsequent savings from subsidies and transfers?

Mr. Imbert: Let me handle that. In the first instance, that is on the summary page. We will get to it in due course. It is a couple of pages along. You will see, when we get there, there is a specific reference to the subsidy on petroleum products, so we can deal with that when we get to that.

Dr. Tewarie: Could I also then flag that I would appreciate an explanation of the reduction also for Goods and Services?

Madam Chairman: Are we at 01, Personnel Expenditure; 001, General Administration, hon. Member for Caroni Central? Are we there?
Dr. Tewarie: I was looking at this summary page.

Madam Chairman: Well, we started at page 289, so to avoid us having to defer your question too long, might I ask that we take it in the correct turn?

Dr. Tewarie: Yeah, that is fine. It is just a simple explanation.

Madam Chairman: Yeah, I think you will get a fuller answer then. Yes, Member for Siparia.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Thank you, Madam Chairman. Under Personnel Expenditure, just to remind us, I see the increase of $1.6 and the ditto question we have been asking on personnel expenditure, like—

Madam Chairman: Okay, so the undertaking given by the hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Imbert: [Inaudible]—ditto.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Sure, thank you, Minister.

Mr. Imbert: I just think “ditto” might not look too well in the record.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Well, we have been using it for days.

Mr. Imbert: Madam Chairman, I did not come up with that term “ditto”, you know.

Madam Chairman: No, we understand it but that is why I am taking the pains to still make the statement.

Mr. Imbert: But it was not mine.

Madam Chairman: Let us get along, please. Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services; Item 001, General Administration.

Mr. Singh: Madam Chairman, I want to look at 08, Rent/Lease, there is a substantial increase in rental of properties. What accounts for that? I have also a question—when that is answered—in three other areas.

Mr. Imbert: What was the first question?

Madam Chairman: We are on page 290, line Item 08.

Mr. Singh: Yeah, 08, Rent/Lease, Accommodation and Storage, substantial increase.

Hon. Olivierre: Yes, we have an increase there because we have an extension to our office in San Fernando. We are acquiring additional space, plus we also plan to have a mineral’s office which would be in the facility of Sangre Grande.

Mr. Singh: Item 17, Training. I noticed that there is a significant decrease in Training. What accounts for that?

Mr. Imbert: Let me answer that. This reduction was made by the Ministry of Finance. We have asked the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries to review their training needs and we will supplement this allocation if it is required.

Mr. Singh: Well, I do want a plug for the Minister.

Mr. Imbert: It is part of the budgeting exercise. You have to balance—

Mr. Singh: You have specialized skills set required in the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries and therefore—

Mr. Imbert: Yes, but you can vire funds. So we have asked the Minister to review and we will supplement and approve virements as and when required.

Madam Chairman: Member for Chaguanas West, I believe you said you had one more question.

Mr. Singh: Two more, yeah. I noticed that while there is a decrease in Training, there is an increase in overseas travel. What is responsible for that projection? Is this a reversal of policy that has enunciated cutting down overseas travel?

Hon. Olivierre: We do have several international obligations as a result of many of the organizations that we belong to, like OLADE and the Gas Exporting Countries Forum, the World Petroleum Council. So based on these international

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Madam Chairman: And you said you have one more question?

Mr. Singh: Yes, Madam Chair. Item 28, Other Contracted Services. I know that this is used for employment and that there is a decrease of some $10.6 million. So what—

Mr. Imbert: It is not employment; that is services.

Mr. Singh: What is this for, then?

Hon. Olivierre: Yes, well, I can give you an indication of some of the main services that would be covered under this. We do recognize that there is an allocation which is significantly less than we would have requested, but some of the main areas would be development work on the National Oil Spill Contingency Plan, the Bilateral Oil Spill Contingency Plan which is an initiative that we have with Venezuela and we also have one with Grenada.

There is a contract with the IMA for fingerprinting of oil. This would be important in the events of oil spills, we can identify exactly where the source of it is. There is a gas reserves audit, the Ryder Scott audit; there is an allocation for that. We also intend to do an oil reserves audit. There are some geological surveys and several other contracting services that we have on-stream.

Mr. Padarath: Madam Chairman, through you to the hon. Minister, we see on line Item 16, an increase of Contract Employment by $1 million for the Graduate Training Programme and it is a series of questions I have here with respect to contract employment in some of the other agencies that fall under the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries.

First, could the hon. Minister indicate whether the current Graduate Training Programme in Petrotrin will continue in its existing form, one? How many persons have been sent home since completing the programme over the last two months?
Whether the programme will be expanded due to the Government’s interest in employment? Which areas will be addressed? How many positions? A description of the programme and positions. And also, if the hon. Minister would be kind enough to give us a list of persons who have be retained since completing the Graduate Training Programme in Petrotrin over the last two months? And also, if we can get a list of all existing Graduate Training Programmes from all agencies under the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries?

**Mr. Imbert:** Let me deal with that, Madam Chairman, I realize the Member is new. This has nothing to do with Petrotrin, this is the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries. Petrotrin would have its own programme. There is not a single Item here that would have any relationship to any graduate training in Petrotrin.

**Mr. Padarath:** Madam Chairman, through you, again, I understand that, hon. Minister, I am asking in relation to the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries.

**Mr. Imbert:** You asked for the line Item.

**Mr. Padarath:** If the hon. Minister would be kind enough, as a line Minister with responsibility for these agencies, whether or not she can provide us with that information?

**Mr. Imbert:** But we are not on that line Item.

**Madam Chairman:** I was just about to indicate that—

**Mr. Padarath:** But we are on the line Item, Madam Chairman.

**Madam Chairman:** Yes, but we are dealing with the Ministry—

**Mr. Imbert:** Your question is irrelevant.

**Mr. Padarath:** You are irrelevant.

**Madam Chairman:** Minister of Finance, please. We are dealing with the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries and the line Item refers to the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries. [Interrupted] Could we please start off the day with a little
measure of tolerance? So that you may be able to get the information you wish using another mechanism that is available to you under the Standing Orders, but not under this particular Item. Okay?

Mr. Padarath: I understand that, Madam Chairman, but it is in relation to line Item 16, if the hon. Minister can indicate—

Mr. Imbert: It is not.

Mr. Padarath:—to us.

Mr. Imbert: It is not.

Madam Chairman: Excuse me, please, I have determined that I cannot allow that question under this line Item.

Mr. Padarath: Sure. Well, we go back to line Item 16 with its specific reference to Contract Employment with respect to that Graduate Training Programme in the Ministry, whether or not the hon. Minister can give us a clear indication of what positions will be created within the Ministry? Which areas? What sort of criteria will be used to select these persons? And then when we reach to that other area, I would like to raise the issue of the other agencies that fall under the Ministry.

Madam Chairman: All right. So right now, we are just dealing with your first part of your question. Yes?

Mr. Imbert: Madam Chairman, I have said now four times—this is now the fifth time, and I know that the hon. Member was present for at least three of those four times—that the Minister of Finance is the one who initiated this programme and allocated $55 million to Ministries and the Tobago House of Assembly, and that I will, in due course—and I was very clear about this—formulate guidelines and advise the Ministries on the mechanisms, the terms and conditions and the modus operandi of the graduate programme. Since I have not done that yet, it is unfair to ask a line Minister how it will operate and I have said that now five times.
Mr. Padarath: Madam Chairman, is it then that the Minister is admitting that there is no plan with respect to this programme?

Mr. Imbert: No, I am admitting nothing. I spoke about it in the budget statement just a few days ago and it is something that will be put in place within the next few weeks.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Chaguanas East. Hon. Member for Tabaquite.

Dr. Rambachan: No, he asked the question.

Madam Chairman: Much obliged. So that can we move on now and we go to Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases; Item 001, General Administration; Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies; Item 001, Regional Bodies.

Dr. Tewarie: I just want the decrease of $3 billion to be explained. That is all. Under Regional Bodies, 001.

Madam Chairman: We are at page 291.

Hon. Olivierre: Yes, that decrease is as a result of significant arrears which were due last year which have been paid, so there is no need to allocate that additional sum.

Dr. Tewarie: Okay.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: The Minister gave an explanation under 007, Household, 01 and I wanted, if I may, to follow up on the response.

Madam Chairman: That is what I am asking. If we are in 001, Regional Bodies.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: 007, 01.

Madam Chairman: Yes.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: No, Madam Chairman, not Regional Bodies, shortfall in subsidy.

Madam Chairman: We are at 00—
Madam Chairman: That is all right. Item 004, International Bodies; Item 007, Households. Hon. Member for Siparia, was there a question not under Households?

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Yes, Ma’am, thank you. 01, Shortfall in subsidy resale of Petroleum Products. So I just want to be sure this $3 billion is that we do not have to pay the fuel subsidy to the tune of $3 billion. Is this what this is for?

Mr. Imbert: Well, the Minister has a detailed explanation. I will just give you a little preliminary information, and then I will hand it over to our very competent Minister of Energy and Energy Industries to give you some details.

When we all began the fiscal year in 2015, oil was predicated on a price of $80, so the fuel subsidy, at that time, would have been calculated based on $80, which would have been the $4.8 billion. But during the year, the oil price dropped and therefore—because there was substantial amount of arrears in the 2015 estimates by the way. The $6 billion includes the substantial arrears from the previous year; $3 billion in arrears, I am told. So most of the arrears have been cleared off. And we now come to 2016 where, very fortunately, there is a significant reduction in the fuel subsidy because of the reduction in oil price. So I will hand you over to our very competent Minister of Energy and Energy Industries.

11.00 a.m.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Thank you, Sir but this may go up and down, depending on the price.

Mr. Imbert: It can go up and down, of course, up and down. Yes, yes, of course. As oil price goes up you have to pay more subsidy but you get more revenue and usually you get more revenue than you have to pay in subsidy.
Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: I thank you, Sir. I think that is sufficient to answer.

Mr. Imbert: So you do not want to hear from our very competent Minister of Energy?

Hon. N. Olivierre: If I can just add to that. The amount to $1.71 billion, this is comprised of an estimated $1.52 billion, which is estimated as Government liability for subsidy in 2016. But, in addition to that, we have a $600 million arrears from the 2015 payment, plus we have a $120 million, which would be increased cost due to the filling and handling charges when we opened the Caroni Gantry facility.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Thank you, Madam.

Mr. Singh: Thank you, Madam Chair. I am dealing with transfers to state enterprises.

Madam Chairman: All right, we have not reached there as yet. We are moving on from Item 007, Households. We are now at item 009.

Dr. Tewarie: Could I ask one question under 007, Households?

Madam Chairman: Yes.

Dr. Tewarie: I thought, I may be wrong, this is addressed, through you, Madam Chair, to the Minister of Finance. But I thought in the explanation to the Leader of the Opposition, he indicated that with the rise in the oil price the subsidies may then continue to accrue.

Mr. Imbert: Not may, it will. It will go up. As oil prices goes up and the price of fuel goes up, the subsidy goes up.

Dr. Tewarie: Yes. Therefore, my follow-up question is this: the Government policy, as articulated by you in the budget, is a 15 per cent tax, basically, on whatever price. Does the Government have any intention of holding the subsidies at the $45 price that you have now pegged the budget at?
Mr. Imbert: I appreciate that question and I gather from the Member's demeanour that it is a very sincere question and I thank you for that. I said in the budget statement that we are going to initiate a national dialogue because, as you will see, the subsidy for this year $1.7 billion. In the past, it has been $4 billion and we need to start talking as a country about this money. Is this the best way to spend $1.7 billion or $2 billion or $3 billion, as the case may be, because it will vary according to the price of fuel?

I started the discussion with the increase of 15 per cent. Arising from the dialogue, we will see whether there should be further adjustments or not but we have to try to reach consensus as a country. Because you could take a $1 billion of this money and use it to help the poor, for example. So we need to talk about these things. So, the 15 per cent was just to get the ball rolling, get people talking about it and then we would have a national dialogue to see where we go from here.

Madam Chairman: Okay, so Item 009; Other Transfers.

Dr. Gopeesingh: I just wanted to clarify whether the subsidies have any—

[Interruption]

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Caroni East, are we on 009?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Yes. I was just talking about the Households 007, just for a brief moment, following what the Member for Caroni Central was asking, just a short additional question on that, since the Minister of Finance cleared up very clearly.

Mr. Imbert: I also think it is a very important topic, so I would have no objection if it pleases you, Madam Chairman.

Madam Chairman: I am so happy, hon. Minister of Finance, so that we could get on with the business of the people.

Dr. Gopeesingh: I crave your indulgence, hon. Minister, to determine whether the subsidies have any tangential relationship with gas prices?
Mr. Imbert: Natural gas?

Dr. Gopeesingh: The gas, yes.

Mr. Imbert: When you say gas, you mean natural gas?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Which we pegged at $2.75.

Mr. Imbert: No, no, no. This is petroleum products which would be diesel, premium gasoline, super gasoline; petroleum products.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Thank you. I appreciate your answer.

Mr. Imbert: It is not natural gas.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Good.

Madam Chairman: Okay? So we move on to Item 009: Other Transfers? Item 011: Transfers to State Enterprises.

Mr. Singh: Thank you, Madam Chair, the establishment of the Quarries Authority, could you give us a sense of the status of that, where it is at, if it is—in writing, perhaps?

Hon. Olivierre: I would be happy to tell you. We have not yet determined that we will establish a quarries authority. Currently we have a choice between maintaining the Minerals Division within the Ministry or should we move to an authority, which would have greater autonomy and greater regulatory powers. So that is still under discussion. But we do have an allocation in there, in case we decide that we will move in that direction.

Mr. Singh: Yes, because there is need for significant regulation of quarries. I do not know whether the authority is the right mechanism, but certainly there is need for a greater regulatory intervention on the part of the Ministry.

Hon. Olivierre: And if you would note from my opening remarks, I did say that we do intend to place greater emphasis on the quarries industry because there has been a lot of activity of illegal quarrying and currently it is a little to manage to
bring them in line. So we are still determining whether the authority would be the best mechanism or if we can beef-up the legislation within the Minerals Division of the Ministry. So that is something that is foremost in our attention. It is something that I personally intend to champion.

Madam Chairman: Sub-Head 09: Development Programme; Consolidated Fund, Item 005: Multi-Sectoral and Other Services.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Thank you, Madam Chairman. Under 003, Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Initiatives, I note for 2016, an allocation of $6 million. If the Minister would be so kind as to identify the specific initiatives that would be included under this item of expenditure? I note that in 2015, still on the same Item, an allocation was made, estimated at $16 million. The revised remains at $16 million and now we are down to an allocation of $6 million. I guess this is just an estimate in 2015, and we do not know how much was actually expended. So, can you tell us, if any at all, was expended in 2015 and then for 2016, what specific initiatives are being included for this item of expenditure of $6 million for renewable energy?

Hon. Olivierre: A more up-to-date revised estimate for 2015, actually, it is going more like $12.2 million. A large percentage of that was on a public awareness campaign. So we feel that the public—as well as some of that work is completed and a lot of the public is aware. So we have a reduced allocation. But the areas under which we intend to expend the $6 million in 2016, we would be continuing with the light bulb exchange programme, the school public awareness, that would be continued and also the installation of solar equipment.

Mr. Singh: Madam Chair, I am listening to what the Minister has indicated, but in the budget speech, the hon. Minister of Finance indicated a 10 per cent renewable energy input into the grid by 2021 and I do not see the linkage between the projects
and the current issue.

**Mr. Imbert:** No, no, no. I would explain. The 27 European Union countries, for example, have agreed and put into their national legislation that they would achieve a 20 per cent from renewable energy sources by the year 2020. Now, I thought that 20 per cent was unachievable and I also thought that trying to do it in a five-year period was also unachievable because you have to do a lot of planning. So we will be planning how we would have this major thrust to encourage people to use solar energy and wind energy. I think it is a national discussion. Because at this point in time, these forms of renewable energy are quite expensive. They are coming down. The cost of wind energy is coming down; solar energy is still quite expensive, but we do need to discuss this.

There is a view that we should not be talking about our carbon footprint because even though we are the second largest country per capita, in terms of carbon emissions, when you look on the map you would see a little dot, in terms of quantum. But I think it was time that we as a country get serious, so I put the target of 10 per cent and we will use the mechanisms that have been used successfully in countries like Norway and the Scandinavian countries that are now up to 50 per cent of energy from renewable sources and learn from their experiences and apply best practice.

In 2016, we will be putting the framework in place to start to encourage the country to start moving towards renewable energy. So you are not going to see it in this allocation at this time.

**Dr. Gopessingh:** Madam Chair, Item 005, Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative. I saw a decrease of about $1.1 million. But bearing in mind that it took so long, even starting with their administration and our administration, we had the first set of publications for transparency with EITI in 2013/2014. Hon. Minister,
perhaps, can I ask you whether you think it is appropriate to cut their budget or you should give them more encouragement to facilitate greater transparency and accountability in the energy sector, which they have been lauded for internationally and globally, Trinidad and Tobago being one of the few countries now that has gone on to the transparency with the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative? Do you think it is worth reconsideration and to give them the full complement so that they can do their work and carry Trinidad and Tobago forward on the map?

Hon. Olivierre: Well, it is not that we have cut their budget. We have given them exactly what they have requested and this is the amount that they have requested for 2016. But I did mention in my opening statement that some of these funds would be expended in capacity building, particularly in the mineral sector. Because in the previous reports, the minerals sector were not included. And we intend to have them included in subsequent reports. So a lot of the funds is going to place some focus on the minerals/mining industry.

Dr. Gopeesingh: I just want to make one little point on what the Minister of Finance said. I crave you indulgence, Madam Chair. We have 20 schools now that have solar energy so, therefore it is a way to look at 134 secondary schools with solar energy. So, while you may want to talk, we have already gone forward with implementation.

Mr. Imbert: We will do this together.

Hon. Olivierre: If I can just mention we also plan to install some photovoltaic exterior lighting at 15 community centres and solar-powered water distillation units and photovoltaic exterior lighting technology at 15 secondary schools. So we are pressing ahead with this initiative.

Dr. Gopeesingh: The Minister of Education will be happy.

Dr. Tewarie: When we look at both the expenditure allocation and the
development allocation, the Minister of Finance, in this budget presentation talked about the challenge of production and he did mention, for instance, lease operatorships to small players in the gas industry. I do not see anything that would identify in the budgetary allocation, anything related to the production side. I wonder if either the Minister of Finance or the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries would care to address the issue of how we manage or how we focus on the production side.

Mr. Imbert: Yes, I will answer that. We have already had meetings. Now, a lot of this has to do with fiscal incentives. It is not really investing money. It is really waiving taxes and giving tax holidays and giving particular fiscal regimes that would encourage people to invest in particular areas in the energy sector. And if you look at what we said in the budget statement and also otherwise, we are going to have an open forum with the upstream/mid-stream/downstream service companies. From the perspective of the Ministry of Finance, we will be calling for submissions from all the players in the energy sector, in terms of their views on the fiscal regime. I already met with the energy chamber, very briefly, before the budget and they have asked for us to look at the level of supplementary petroleum tax.

11.15 a.m.

They have made the point, for example, that when the SPT was set at $50, oil was about $25, and then you would have some conflict in the Middle East or something like that, where it suddenly escalates the price up to $50. So with no additional investment on the part of the energy companies, they would make windfall profits. So it was a windfall tax, it is used all around the world. Supplementary petroleum tax is not unique to Trinidad. It is designed to allow Governments to get some of the windfall profits that oil companies make when
there is a sudden escalation in price. It has nothing to do with them. They have invested in plant and equipment.

So they asked us to review the SPT. It is very complex. We are looking at it because if you do raise the SPT threshold, then of course that results in a loss of revenue to the Government. But the point they made is that if we do not consider it, then they may not be able to invest in further production. Then you have the problems with small fields that do not have the capital necessary to invest, and they would need assistance in terms of fiscal incentives; then you have stranded gas, then you have problems with secondary recovery and so on.

We have all of these issues, because we are a mature oil province. We are not a new oil province. You know, our reserves are declining. Our fields are old. We are now going into the deep water. So that I have decided the best thing to do and, of course, the Ministry of Energy will be doing its own initiatives and approaches with respect to this matter, but after this debate is over, there will be a formal call for submissions from the industry, as to what we as a Government can do to incentivize them to get involved in production. That is similar to what was done in the United Kingdom in 2014. They faced the same problem that there was declining production, oil companies pulling out, so they had a call for evidence and it resulted in a lot of changes. Now they are getting increased investments. So that is the approach we are going to use.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Chair. Madam Chair, through you. The hon. Minister of Finance had indicated that they will be converting to renewable energy, the grounds. You have identified 15 recreation grounds, and then you all will look at schools and community centres. Would you please kindly put in writing the—[Interruption] she said that in her statement, Minister of Finance. I am just asking—in writing if you can identify what the grounds are and the schools and
community centres you are starting with, please? Thank you.

Madam Chairman: The Renewable Energy Projects?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Yeah.

Mr. Imbert: You want to know where they are?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Yes.

Madam Chairman: All right. Thank you very much. So that would be given in writing. Can we move on then to the Infrastructure Development Fund; that is at page 311? Item 003 Economic Infrastructure.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Madam Chair, line Item 001, Development of Industrial Sites, an allocation of $40 million. Would the Minister be so kind as to provide a list of the sites to be developed in 2016?

Madam Chairman: So you will take that in writing? Hon. Minister of Energy and Energy Industries, is the list available?

Hon. Olivierre: I will provide it in writing.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Thank you Ma’am, and 005, Development of New Port Facilities, a $40 million allocation. What projects will this fund?—which projects, again, a list of the project; new ports development.

Hon. Olivierre: Yes. So these new port facilities are the Brighton Port in La Brea and the Galeota Port, Port 1A, 1B and Port No. 2 in Galeota. So it is Brighton and Galeota, those are the ongoing projects.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Those are ongoing from 2015?

Hon. Olivierre: Those are the ongoing projects. Yes, they are.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Thank you. Thank you, Minister.

Mr. Paray: Thank you, Madam Chairman. Minister, she answered the question, so thank you.

Question put and agreed to.
Head 40 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Madam Chairman: I will like to thank the hon. Minister of Energy and Energy Industries and the representatives of that Ministry for coming and assisting the Committee. You all are relieved.

Head 42.

Madam Chairman: Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government. We are at page 293 of the Draft Estimates for Recurrent Expenditure. Head 42: Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government, $2,244,933.455. I will now invite the Minister of Rural Development and Local Government to make a brief opening statement not exceeding five minutes.

Hon. Khan: Okay. Thank you very much, Madam Chairman. I will start by saying it is certainly a personal pleasure and privilege for me to sit in this honourable House once again after a hiatus of eight years. Let me start first of all as Leader of Government Business in the other place, to formally congratulate you, Madam Chairman, for your election as Speaker of this honourable House, and I am sure you will do, as you have been doing, an excellent job.

Madam Chairman, for those of you who were listening carefully to the PNM’s election campaign, our political leader, now Prime Minister, spoke extensively on two transformational areas, aimed at radically changing the governance structure and the service delivery model in Trinidad and Tobago. These two policy areas were as follows: one, local government reform, by and large using the THA model. It involves, as I like to say, the retiring of the Ministry of Local Government, what I call the Gorbachev agenda. And secondly, the creation the Ministry of Rural Development—[Interruption] yeah, the Gorbachev agenda is the disbanding of the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, and to let the Republics be autonomous—[Interruption] the creation of the Ministry of
Rural Development and Local Government. I was handed this transformational exercise and I want to thank this hon. Prime Minister for placing this confidence in me. I want to give him the assurance that I will deliver.

With regard to local government reform, Madam Chairman, we propose the devolution of power and authority with the creation of executive councils, similar to that of the THA, and to the many other changes as articulated in our manifesto. As we speak, Cabinet has already set up two committees. One, a ministerial committee with oversight responsibility, and a technical committee to start the consultation as we embark on this exercise.

From the Budget Statement, Members would realize that the estimates are still cast in the old mould. You will also realize that under this mould, we will all admit that local government is very much under resourced. I want to give this House the assurance that this is the last year for that.

With regard to rural development, Madam Chairman, I would like to make two points. One, firstly, this is the first policy articulated by the current Prime Minister. As a matter of fact, he made the statement on the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government way back in January 2012 at a meeting in Basse Terre, Moruga.

So much effort is assigned to this Ministry, Madam Chairman, I want to draw your attention to the fact that the Cabinet has been reduced from 33 to 23 and the Prime Minister still saw it fit to have an entire Ministry dedicated to rural development, showing the emphasis that this administration now placed on this matter, with what I call a rural deficit in all areas.

However, when we took office a lot of the draft estimates were already prepared, so that the estimates do not truly reflect our focus on rural development. In the mid-year review, Madam Chairman, you will see a lot more changes as we
bring this Ministry into prominence with oversight responsibility for all rural development plans.

To hear more of our plans for local government reform and rural development, I invite Members to tune in on Tuesday at the Senate debate, where we will be articulating our position in some great detail, especially my contribution. So once again, Madam Chairman, I thank you very much for this opportunity to make these introductory remarks, and I am now willing to entertain questions.

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

Madam Chairman: Hon. Members, the sum of $2,244,933,455 for Head 42: the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government is comprised of moneys proposed for expenditure under the following Sub-Heads and Items to be found in the Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure and the Draft Estimates of Development Programme. Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure; Item 001, General Administration. We are at page 294.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Thank you very much, and may I crave your indulgence to welcome the Member back into the Parliament. I listened to him speak of making sure that rural development and local government is not under resourced and, therefore, if we are looking at Personnel Expenditure—in fact, the summary of recurrent expenditure, I note there has been a decrease of $92.3 million in recurrent expenditure. How does this fit in with the Minister’s words of more resourcing? Is there another source of funding for local government, given the $92.3 million decrease in recurrent expenditure?

Hon. Khan: You realize that in the recurrent expenditure, the revised estimates for 2015 was extremely high. That was largely due to the salary increases that were awarded to the PSA. If you look at our estimates for 2016, it is slightly higher than
the original estimates for 2015 and the estimates for 2014, and that reflects the actual salary increases of 10 per cent or 12 per cent as it were. So it is consistent. The expenditure has not grown, it is just the salary has increased by 10 per cent to 12 per cent. As we say, this year is transformational year, and we will be seeing a lot of new things coming out next year, but really with an empowered regional corporation and municipalities.

**Madam Chairman:** Page 294, Item 001 General Administration.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** Minister, under 01—

**Mr. Imbert:** Madam Chairman, could I just add some clarity if—

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** Are we going back?

**Mr. Imbert:** Just to give us a better—

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** Just to understand, are we going back?

**Madam Chairman:** We are, and we are at—

**Mr. Imbert:** On the question that the Leader of the Opposition raised. You had raised the question about the $92 million.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** Are we going back to—

**Mr. Imbert:** If you do not mind. I think it is necessary—

**Madam Chairman:** Is this the overall—

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** The speaker does not really—

**Madam Chairman:**—that was asked by—

**Mr. Imbert:** The overall question, because remember it is the Ministry of Finance that makes the appropriation.

11.30 a.m.

If you go along in the document, you would see that some of the responsibilities of this Ministry have been transferred to other Ministries. So, for example, the Solid Waste Management Company has been transferred to the
Ministry of Public Utilities and that alone is $75 million, and then the National Commission for Self-Help has been transferred to the Ministry of Community Development.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Where is the line Item for that?

Mr. Imbert: Look on 297.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Let us get to 296.

Mr. Imbert: When we get to this page, I would deal with that.

Madam Chairman: And, therefore, Members, if we would avoid the summary sheet, because some of the answers will be carrying us forward, and that is why I tried to direct us to the individual Heads.

So, we are again at 001, General Administration, and I would take it that any question concerning an increase or decrease in salaries, the hon. Minister of Finance is bound by that covering undertaking. Anything else in 001, General Administration? Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services: Item 001, General Administration.

Dr. Rambachan: Thank you, Madam Chair. I just want to ask: what accounts for the $5.2 million decrease in Travelling and Subsistence? What accounts for that big decrease? Is it related to the wage increase the year before, the back pay?

Hon. Khan: It comes back in line with arrears with a slight increase over 2014.

Miss Ramdial: That is okay. The question was asked.

Madam Chairman: Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases.

Dr. Rambachan: Page 295, Contract Employment.

Madam Chairman: Line Item? Could you give us the line Item, please?

Dr. Rambachan: Sure 16.

Madam Chairman: That is 16. Contract Employment is $25.7 million. Can the Minister give us an understanding of what is the nature of this Contract
Employment, apart from the Graduate Employment of about $2 million? What is the nature of this Contract Employment?

**Hon. Khan:** As you are aware, over the last several years, the public service has been leaning towards contract employment, so there are a lot of positions that are in the establishment, so to speak, that are contract employees. As a matter of fact, the contract establishment in the Ministry of Local Government is 338, and the established public service position is now getting smaller and smaller as a percentage of the public service, and it is something that the Minister of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise and the Prime Minister has indicated that they want to bring some sanity into. So we are just part of all the other Ministries that—I do not want to use the word “suffer”—are part of this whole process.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Can the Minister provide us with the names of persons and the positions of people who are in these contract positions now and when would these contract positions come to an end?

**Hon. Khan:** We will provide that in writing, but most of these contracts, my understanding are three-year contracts and they expire at various points in time.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** Thank you, Madam Chair. On the item of Short-Term Employment, I noticed a decrease of $3 million. There have been some concerns at local government bodies of persons being sent home. I know at the Siparia Regional Corporation, I think at Mayaro. Was it at Mayaro as well? I do not know if this is involved here or this is only at the Ministry level, but if you would kindly explain the reason for the decrease in Short-Term Employment, please.

**Mr. Imbert:** Let me come in there. As I indicated, Short-Term Employment is not attached to any position, and it is for employment periods of six months or less. There were a number of short-term contracts, not just in this Ministry, but all over the service which had an expiry date of September 30, 2015. People were hired just...
for three months, four months and so on. So there is no question of anybody being sent home. The short-term contracts came to an end.

All Ministers have been asked to review the short-term contracts that people were just hired in June or July or something like that. The Ministers have been asked to review the short-term contracts to determine what was their purpose, whether they achieved the intended objectives and whether the short-term contract should be revived in 2016, and that exercise is still incomplete.

I had discussions with a particular Minister and he is still in the process of reviewing all these three-month contracts that were scheduled to expire on September 30 and did. So, it is not a question of anybody being sent home. The contracts had an expiry date and they expired.

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

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** I do not know if we have gone off page 295? Have we?

**Madam Chairman:** We are at Item 03, Minor Equipment Purchases. That begins at page 296.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** Madam Chairman, I would crave your indulgence to ask the question on page 295 on promotions, line Item, 62.

**Madam Chairman:** I would allow it on this occasion, but I would really like all Members.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** I would try my best, Madam Chairman, okay.

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

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** Sometimes, you know, the pages move faster than we can keep up with them. Page 295—and I thank you for allowing the question—line Item 62, Promotions/Publicity and Printing. I noticed an increase in the allocation.
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I make this comment because I have noticed this is one of the few Ministries where you actually have an increase in promotions and so on. Would the Minister kindly indicate how he intends to expend this money? If there is any specific reason why it has increased?

**Hon. Khan:** The answer I would proffer here is that over the coming months there would be a minimum of 15 consultations that we will be hosting: 14 in the regional corporations and one with the Tobago House of Assembly to gain some institutional knowledge from them as to how they have rolled out their plans. So a lot of this expenditure there could be regarded—as a matter of fact, that is insufficient, so we may have to come back for a vote in the mid-year review or vire some money because the consultation process will be elaborate.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** Thank you, Minister. So, Item 66 now which deals with the hosting of conferences, seminars and functions.

**Hon. Khan:** Well, all of that is part of the same whole.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** So the promotions and the hosting—

**Hon. Khan:** Well, yeah, there is a big Venn diagram effect there, and a lot of overlapping.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** But you have two separate items.

**Hon. Khan:** But operationally there is this A\cap B sort of thing.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** So you would use the money for consultation.

**Madam Chairman:** So, we are moving on. Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases; Item 001, General Administration; Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies; Item 001, Regional Bodies.

**Mr. Charles:** Thank you very much, Madam Chairman. At 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies, I see a significant drop from the revised estimates of $100 million in 2015 to $43 million. Who are these bodies to which the moneys were provided? It
is a significant sum, $56 million. Could you provide some explanation as to the reason for the reduction? Thank you.

**Mr. Imbert:** Madam Chairman, this is the point I was making. If you look on the next page, you will see that Solid Waste Management has been transferred to Public Utilities, $75 million; National Commission for Self-Help transferred to the Ministry of Community Development and so on. So that there have been additions and subtractions, but the net effect is the reduction as a result of these significant elements like Solid Waste Management and National Commission for Self-Help going to other Ministries.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** Thank you, Madam Chairman. That may hold for as we go on to page 297 and so on, but we are dealing here with the Item, Regional Bodies, so that has nothing to do with Solid Waste.

**Madam Chairman:** No, no, no. Hon. Member of Siparia, the question was not asked with respect to regional bodies. There was a general question asked by the hon. Member for Naparima.

**Mr. Imbert:** The same question you had asked.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** Okay, well may I ask it then? So I hear you.

**Madam Chairman:** So, we are now at Item 002, Commonwealth Bodies; Item 007, Households; Item 009, Other Transfers.

**Miss Ramdia:** Thank you, Madam Chairman. Under 009, 03, ttconnect Service Centres, we are seeing in the 2016 estimates at $16 million. Can the Minister be so kind as to provide some information on these connect service centres?

**Hon. Khan:** This year, for the first time, the ttconnect portfolio has been handed to the Ministry of Local Government and, again, with keeping to provide connectivity to rural areas, I mean that is where it is best needed. So this $16 million is allocated, but we have a staff of 37 and an operating expense and we plan to roll
out that infrastructure big time, so to speak, in the rural areas because rural areas need connectivity, both physical connectivity and virtual connectivity.

Mr. Karim: That is the question I was going to ask.

Madam Chairman: Okay, so we go on to Item 011, Transfers to State Enterprises.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Thank you, Madam Chairman, line Items 05 and 06. I note that we are transferring to RDC moneys for the construction of the Princes Town Regional Corporation building. I welcome that because I know we had pushed really hard to have the designs and so on done. Can I ask if there is any similar provision for the Penal/Debe Regional Corporation Building?

Hon. Khan: We will provide that in writing because I am not totally seized of that matter.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Through you, Madam Chair. I asked because I know that was also one where the designs had been completed and, indeed, a contract was awarded. So, I would like to know the status, please. Thank you.

Mr. Singh: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, in similar vein, with respect to RDC, I know that the RDC had an allocation of, I think $20 million to deal with the Chaguanas Market. I would like to get a status report on the refurbishment of the Chaguanas Market?

Hon. Khan: That comes under the DP.

Mr. Singh: It is only $5 million there.

Hon. Khan: You will see it under DP when we get to that.

Madam Chairman: Sub-Head 06, Current Transfers to Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies; Item 005, Local Government Bodies.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Madam Chair, I note that there has been a net reduction of $92.3 million for transfers to these regional corporations, local
government bodies, and within that I note that several areas: the Siparia Regional Corporation has been slashed by $6.6 million; the Penal/Debe Regional Corporation has been slashed by $5.6 million; several have been slashed. I mentioned those two because they fall within my constituency areas, and I would be very happy to get an explanation as to why such a drastic drop in funding in these areas: Siparia Regional Corporation and the Penal/Debe Regional Corporation.

Mr. Imbert: Madam Chairman, if the Member would look at the whole list, you would see, for example.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Which is the whole list.

Mr. Imbert: The whole list, Port of Spain, San Fernando, Arima, Point Fortin.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: There was a total reduction.

Mr. Imbert: Yes, yes, but if you look inside the various items, you will see, for example, the Chaguanas Borough Corporation has been increased from $89 million to $100 million and the Couva/Tabaquite/Talparo Corporation has also been increased. So the Princes Town Regional Corporation has been increased.

Hon. Member: Couva/Tabaquite/Talparo, a decrease.

Mr. Imbert: Sorry, it is the Mayaro/Rio Claro Corporation that has been increased and the Princes Town Regional Corporation has been increased. So we have Princes Town increased, Mayaro/Rio Claro and Chaguanas and then there are other increases and decreases as the case may be. For example, the San Fernando City Corporation has a significant decrease and the Tunapuna/Piarco has a very significant decrease from $230 million to $208 million.

11.45 p.m.

So, in order to dispel any views that might be outside there that, you know, PNM corporations or UNC corporations are being targeted, you can see these
increases and decreases have been across the board, and it is based on the requests made by the corporations and the budgetary process. Again, in the fiscal year, once our fortunes improve and we can make reallocations, based on the needs of these corporations, we will consider requests for supplementary funding as the case may be.

**Madam Chairman:** Hon. Member for Tabaquite.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Madam Chairman, I am looking at the very same figures but it would have made a lot of sense if we could have gone through this particular section, Current Transfers to Statutory Bodies, by reference to the other document, Draft Estimates of the Revenue and Expenditure for the Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies, in which the details of each of the corporations are given, but given your ruling yesterday I do not think we can go to this document. But in that document you will see that there have been revisions to goods and services, and in several areas necessary goods and services have been cut, and, therefore, what you are doing is you are denying—and in a large portion of it is rural communities—the kind of resources that they need. And the promise of the Minister simply to say that, as time goes on, we will see what we can do, I do not think it is comforting to the people who live in these rural communities. You take a community like Couva/Tabaquite Regional Corporation, Minister, which is one of the largest in the country, and which, you know, even if I take my constituency of Tabaquite has 42 villages by itself, it gives you an idea of what is your margin. When you cut a small budget, and you cut it down before, you know you are going against the grain of your policy about rural development. You have a conflict in terms of, I am interested in rural development, and so on. While you attempt the reform, which is appreciated, at the same time the grass is growing but the horse is starving and the fellas cannot do any work.
Madam Chairman: And the question following on that—

Dr. Rambachan: The question is, why are you allowing local government to starve even if you are going through the reform process?

Hon. Khan: The point I made earlier is that this budget estimates have been cast in the old moon, just give us six months and you will see major transformation, because rural development will now take charge of oversight responsibility for all aspects of service delivery in rural areas, and there will be major revisions of the estimates in March.

Dr. Rambachan: Madam Chairman, while the Minister of Finance says he is going to cut off the waste and cut off corruption, and so on, I want to ask the Minister of Finance, what oversight mechanisms is he going to put in place that is going to ensure this country that what he does has value for money, accountability, transparency, and that there is equality of distribution of resources in the country?

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Madam Chairman. Madam Chairman, just to concur with my colleague, I have gone through the documents in details and I do see that there is a reduction in a number of goods and services that would really provide and so, therefore, I would like to ask, specifically for line Item 31, Sangre Grande Regional Corporation, how will the decrease in the allocation really impact upon the improvements that have been promised?—in light of the fact that even in today’s papers, there is someone who is writing from Toco—I am applauding the efforts of the Government on what it is you planned to do in Toco, and yet there is a decrease. So, I myself would like to know, how will the improvements be achieved? Thank you.

Hon. Khan: When you say improvements you more than likely refer to the development budget, this is on the recurrent side. They probably were cutting any
superfluous activity that was going on, but, really and truly, you see the impact of the development process from the DP, not from the recurrent side.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** I will be going through the DPE with you, Sir.

**Hon. Khan:** Okay. Yeah, well, we will talk when we reach the DPE.

**Madam Chairman:** Hon. Member for Caroni Central.

**Dr. Tewarie:** I wonder if I could ask you to permit me to ask the hon. Minister for Rural Development and Local Government some general questions based on what he articulated in his overarching contribution, but they relate directly—

**Madam Chairman:** Once you could identify a line item—

**Dr. Tewarie:** It relates to Item 005. It relates to local government. You see, I am having a little confusion right, and it is genuine, I am not trying to make any political point here. The confusion has to do with this, local government, the Ministry, Central, is being removed. Local government, the 14 regional corporations are going to be strengthened, a la, House of Assembly model. The budgetary allocations here, both here and in development, because when we get to development I can show you that no councillor in Couva/Tabaquite, for instance, gets more than $230,000 or $240,000 to basically do various types of important works, but the point I am making—so rural development, the Ministry is now going to be having the overarching responsibility for local government.

Now, local government is not only rural, you have rural local government and you have the City of San Fernando, City of Port of Spain, et cetera—[Interruption] I am getting to the question, I mean, if you would just indulge me—and in the strengthening of local government you also have the element of parliamentary representation, which is a fact of life in our parliamentary system, and my own sense, given the allocations here, I take your point that you are going to revise this in your March revisions when you come back to the budget.
If the power and the autonomy and the money is going to be given to local government agencies under the new framework that you are establishing, what is the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government going to do? What is the relationship between rural development and local government given now the abolition of local government, the central authority?

**Hon. Khan:** Member for Caroni Central, I invite you to listen to my contribution on Tuesday in the Senate, it will be clarified in some great detail.

**Madam Chairman:** Hon. Member for Fyzabad.

**Dr. Bodoe:** I would also like to have the opportunity to examine the allocations as per the regional corporations, but I just wanted to draw to the Minister’s attention that local health authority, allocations would come under this and I have noticed that there would have been a significant cut when you look at the line Items. So, Minister, just to draw that to your attention in terms of the environmental health and the control of mosquitos, and issues like that, if you can take that into account.

**Madam Chairman:** So that is just a general comment on—

**Dr. Bodoe:** Just a comment following on the last item.

**Madam Chairman:** Can we go on to Sub-Head 09, Development Programme; Consolidated Fund, Item 003, Economic Infrastructure. We are at page 135.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** Madam Chairman, on page 135, but I note again that there is a reduction in the Development Programme again for this Ministry and I am requesting, once more, to the hon. Minister, you speak about making sure you are not under-resourced, you have added a limb to local government and yet the DP has also been slashed.

**Hon. Khan:** Bear in mind, hon. Member for Siparia, that there is an overall reduction in revenue and an overall reduction in expenditure.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** No, you have a $63 billion budget.
Hon. Khan: Yeah, but, you know, $5 billion of that is to clear debt—whatever.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: I was just saying it is not in sync with your words.

Hon. Khan: But $12 million is a sizeable amount compared to $15, you know, it is not a significant decrease. We have to cut our cloth to suit the circumstances now and I think this $12 million will be well spent.

Madam Chairman: Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services—hon. Member for Chaguanas West.

Mr. Singh: Madam Chairman, thank you, I see that under Item 021, Local Government Reform Programme, there is no allocation, and whilst the Minister speaks of a relief form process that without an allocation it becomes an illusion.

Hon. Khan: This is really historical budgeting. This item has been occurring on the draft estimates for years. I mean, this was since in Hazel Manning—Mrs. Manning’s time, and then under Dr. Rambachan and Sharma and thing, so it is just part, it is picked up with the hold system, but this is of the old template. And our new reform process will largely be—in this first six months would be largely consultation and, again, as I said, we will put funding for it in March, as and when required.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Mayaro.

Mr. Paray: Thank you very much, Madam Chairman. To the Minister of Rural Development and Local Government, welcome to the House, Sir, I know you are a Mayaro man so I think our constituency will be well taken care of over the next fiscal year. I have two questions, Madam Chairman, on line item 029 and line item 030; with 029, can the Minister provide, for the benefit of the viewing audience, a brief description of the strategy behind the 211 implementation that I see here? And on item 030, I had done some work with the CARILED project at the Mayaro/Rio Claro Regional Corporation concerning the BIA assessment, and so
on, which I thought was very good that goes towards town centre development, and so on. I was very excited about that programme, but I am just looking at the allocation being a bit on the lower end and if we are going to push rural development our town centre has to be a great focus. Could you give us a bit of idea of where you plan to head in terms of your Ministry and pushing that CARILED model forward? Thank you.

Hon. Khan: Aid out of the Canadian Government in Caribbean local reform, so that, basically, we do not budget for the aid that comes out there, so the vast majority of the funding from that programme comes from the Canadian Government. So I think this is just largely some amount of facilities that we provide for them in Trinidad. But I met with CARILED last week and that programme is going well, their flagship project has been the Mayaro project, which has worked quite well. With regards to the 211 ICT Platform, that is a programme that we are currently reviewing because it was a platform where all the complaints and concerns of the national community will come into one centre and then redistribute them in the various regional corporations. But seeing that ttconnect is now under the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government, I plan to merge those two facilities into one—I do not want to say mega facilities, but into one consolidated facility where we will provide that service.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Siparia.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Line item 031, Amendment of the Municipal Corporations Act, I note an allocation of $1 million, would you explain how amending the Act will cost you $1 million? Is it not under the jurisdiction of the Office of the Attorney General, and so on?

Hon. Khan: Yeah, but I guess it is a generic term that covers part of the reform process. That is all I can say right, but I will check to see exactly what was meant
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by that and I can probably get back to you.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** Let us know thereafter. Item 060, please, on the same page, public buildings, Refurbishment of Administrative Building for Local Government Head Office, I note in the explanation, in the column under explanation, that you said this project has been transferred to the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development and, therefore, I ask the question, why is $1 million allocated under this Head if it is now under another Head of expenditure, namely the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development? Why are we putting it here and then—

**Hon. Khan:** No, no, no, projects number 53 and 55, which is new City Mall and East Side Plaza, that is where the note—

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** Okay. Thank you, Minister. So this $1 million—

**Hon. Khan:** It is just typed in the wrong area, but if you check project numbers 53 and 55—

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** Yes, 53 and 55—I am guided. So this particular project, 060, the allocation of $1 million, what is proposed to be done with this?

**Hon. Khan:** Well, I think there is still some repairs to be done at Kent House, it is an old building, I mean, some funding was allocated in previous years gone by. It has improved significantly. I think the office is reasonably well done, but there are still some work to be done.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** Sure. Minister, if my memory serves me right, No. 1 Alexandra was being outfitted for the head office for your Ministry, the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government, you are now telling me Kent House is in need of refurbishments continue—

**Hon. Khan:** If you want to hear about No. 1 Alexandra tune on on Tuesday and—

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** No, well you would give us in writing, I mean—
Hon. Member: Then we can stop now and just tune in.

Mr. Imbert: That is not a line item, this is the administrative office; this is Kent House, it is not No. 1 Alexandra. It has nothing to do with No. 1 Alexandra.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Refurbishment is being done to Kent House?

Mr. Imbert: Not at No. 1 Alexandra.

Madam Chairman: Okay, Members, can we go on to the Infrastructure Development Fund, page 313?

Dr. Rambachan: You are moving from page 136?

Madam Chairman: We still have questions under Item 005?

Dr. Rambachan: Yes.

Madam Chairman: All right. Hon. Member for Tabaquite.

Dr. Rambachan: No, well, I am looking at page 137, 09.

Madam Chairman: And under 09 I had called Item 005. We had done Item 003 and then I went on to Item 005, which is the Multi-Sectoral and Other Services.

Dr. Rambachan: Okay, but the last item we dealt with there was Refurbishment for Administrative Building for a Local Government Head Office—

Madam Chairman: So, are there any other questions or concerns to be raised on Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services?

Dr. Rambachan: All right, and that goes over to page 137, right?

Madam Chairman: I believe so, yes.

Dr. Rambachan: Okay, thank you. Well, with your permission, I would like to find out under the Local Government Services, Port of Spain City Corporation, the Item 038, there was $1 million allocated for Latrine Eradication Programme in 2015, and I know that the former Mayor of Port of Spain, Mr. Lee Sing, was very au courant with getting this programme on the road, but I noticed nothing has
been allocated in 2016, and given that the Government has expressed its interest to develop certain areas of Port of Spain why is it that you have not allocated money there in order to continue this programme?

**Hon. Khan:** Nothing is allocated in the revised estimate of 2015, so—

**Dr. Rambachan:** So nothing has been requested by the Port of Spain City Corporation for this?

**Mr. Imbert:** We did not spend any money.

**Hon. Khan:** We did not spend anything.

**Mr. Imbert:** Look at the 2015 revised estimates.

**Dr. Rambachan:** So you are not giving them any money?

**Mr. Imbert:** But they do not spend any money.

**Dr. Rambachan:** But they do not have the money, do they? The money has been returned, is that not so? Do they have this $1 million still?

**Mr. Imbert:** The revised estimate indicates there was no expenditure under this line item, so when that happens the Budget Division would consult and make a determination as to whether they should allocate to the item in the next fiscal.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Do they have this $1 million as unspent balances that they can now use for this programme?

**Mr. Imbert:** I am afraid that is something you will have to get in writing. As you know, unspent balances could only be used for certain things.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Okay. Further question, does the Port of Spain City Corporation still have a Latrine Eradication Programme?

**Hon. Khan:** I will have to consult with the corporation and—

**Hon. Member:** They did not ask for funds.

**Hon. Khan:** Yeah, but there is no funding here.

**Dr. Rambachan:** But there is no funding. We have a programme with no funding.

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**UNREVISED**
Hon. Khan: Let me get back to you in writing on that one.

Mr. Imbert: You will get it in writing.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Chaguanas West.

Mr. Singh: Madam Chairman, the question was asked by the hon. Member for Tabaquite.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Madam Chairman, I just want to know, under 09, if we are continuing in the pages here, my question is on page 141.

Madam Chairman: Once we are within the Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services, I will entertain it.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Madam Chairman. Under line item 233, if, through you, the hon. Minister can provide me with the areas where you will be having the Drainage and Irrigation Programme?

Hon. Khan: I will consult with the corporation and I will provide that to you.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: And, also, would you consider at all for line two—also, I need to get the information for the development of the recreational facilities, if Carmichael and Norris Rampersad is a part of that?

Hon. Khan: Yeah, I will be able to provide that at a later date in writing.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Mayaro.

Mr. Paray: Thank you very much, Madam Chairman. I am on page 142, under the Item 005, section U, item line 369, Establishment of Spatial Development Plan for the Mayaro/Rio Claro Regional Corporation. Hon. Minister, I am aware that a spatial development plan was about a year and a half ago—I am hoping that you would have seen that plan—I noticed there is no allocation for it but there were several areas in that plan in terms of the upgrading of the Plaisance Beach area, the Ortoire River bank, certain areas of the Church Road Church, could you give us an
idea in terms of, you know, whether this is something that would fall under your new Ministry and would you be adopting that spatial development plan for consideration?—just for the benefit of our viewing audience? Thank you.

**Hon. Khan:** That is under review, because the spatial development plans were developed by the Ministry of Local Government, and, in my opinion, without sufficient consultation with the regional corporation, if you check the PNM manifesto we said we were going with 14 regional plans to be developed by the corporations in an autonomous fashion so that they would determine what their priorities are, obviously in consultation with some scientific knowledge in terms of spatial development plan, how do you go about the planning process, and do not ad hocly assign projects. So, this spatial development plan, while it is there, I think it was too much of an up-down situation and we will now empower the corporations to come up with their own regional plans.

**Mr. Paray:** Thank you, Minister—just one minute, Madam Chairman. I know the plan was driven through the corporation. It was done by the corporation, I was part of that process in terms of the consulting, so I look forward to seeing—

**Hon. Khan:** But we are not reinventing the wheel, I mean, so a lot of it could form the basis for the new plan.

**Mr. Paray:** Good. I appreciate that Minister. Thank you.

**Madam Chairman:** Hon. Member, for Siparia.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** Thank you, Madam Chairman, I am looking at page 138, Item 136, under the Point Fortin Borough Corporation, and I note there was an allocation for a Municipal Police Sub Station in 2015, none now in 2016, and is it that this substation is complete? And, Madam Chairman, I go further as we speak of municipal police for our local government bodies, I was of the mistaken view that the local constabularies spoken of were under National Security, I then got the
impression that it was under TTPS, and then I was advised by the hon. Chair that the local constabularies would come under local government, can you tell me where in this is there any allocation for these local constabularies?

**Hon. Khan:** We have this in our manifesto that we plan to put 100 municipal police per corporation. We are in the process of discussion because, obviously, I have to consult closely with the Minister of National Security in that regard, because, as we speak, the municipal police report to the CEO and, probably, there is some inconsistencies in that because they should have a rank in the public service, and there is a thinking that the municipal police should report to the Commissioner of Police. So, we are still in the formative stages of that and we plan to get that programme well underway during this fiscal year with the strengthened force.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** Sure. So, municipal police and what was spoken about as local constabularies, am I to understand they are one and the same to be expanded?

**Hon. Khan:** Yes.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** But there is no allocation in these budgetary documents for that expansion?

**Hon. Khan:** Yeah, but that will come in March.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** Well, there is none at the moment. What happened to the substation, please? Item 136. There is no allocation, is it that that substation is now complete? The municipal police, under Point Fortin Borough Corporation, 136, allocation of $1 million in 2015, there is no allocation in 2016, is it that that substation is complete?

**Hon. Khan:** My information here is that they did not ask for any money.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** They did not ask, so is it complete?—the substation?
Hon. Khan: We will have to get back to you on that one—

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Well, in writing, please.

Hon. Khan: In writing, yes.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Thank you very much.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Chaguanas West.

Mr. Singh: Thank you, Madam Chairman. Madam Chairman, I had asked earlier about the status of the development programme for the Chaguanas market and in Item 148 on page 139, Construction of Markets and Abattoirs, there was a $15 million allocation, I would really like to get an update, perhaps in writing, of the status of the improvements to the Chaguanas market.

Hon. Khan: Well, that project is handled by the Rural Development Company, so I will give you a full update on that.

Mr. Singh: Thank you.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Tabaquite.

Dr. Rambachan: Thank you, Madam Chairman. Hon. Minister, I am looking at page 139, and this will apply to a lot of the other corporations, Item 145, Chaguanas Borough Corporation, Development of Recreational Facilities, there are 36 recreation grounds on the last count in the Borough of Chaguanas, and there is an allocation of $1 million to develop 36 recreation grounds, about $30,000 per ground, and you are talking about trying to attract youth away from the crime line to a more positive lifestyle, how is the corporation expected to maintain and develop 36 recreation grounds for $1 million?

Hon. Khan: Member for Tabaquite, you see, especially over the last five years, the Sport Company of Trinidad and Tobago has virtually invaded the territory of the regional corporations, and without permission from the corporations and with ministerial directive they went on an escapade—nothing wrong with that, they
were repairing grounds, building pavilions, doing all sorts of things. What we are planning to do now is to rationalize it and that is where the local government reform comes into play, so there will be a schedule of responsibilities that is clearly articulate, something like Schedule 5 in the THA, so that you would have an Act that assigns responsibilities to the corporation, and they will be so funded. So, for example, you see $1 million for 36 recreational grounds but previously you would have seen $30 million coming out of the Sport Company for recreation grounds, and the people who should be in charge of recreation grounds were not in charge.

Madam Chairman: You have a follow-up question?

Dr. Rambachan: I have two or three questions, Madam Chairman. Construction, Development of Cemeteries and Cremation Facilities, in 2015 you had $700,000; in 2016 you have cut that by $400,000, and you have a major cremation site in Felicity that is in dire need of development, and you also you have several cemeteries that were bought to a particular level and were looking, you know, like parks, how do you expect the corporation to continue to maintain that standard, and especially with respect for our ancestors, with $300,000? Fair question.

Hon. Khan: Yeah, fair question, but I have no answer right now but we will look into it.

Dr. Rambachan: All right. Construction of Markets and Abattoirs, $15 million allocated in 2015, as I understand it, the Rural Development Company had tendered the abattoir in Chaguanas, is there some update on the building of the abattoir in Chaguanas?

Hon. Khan: Yeah, I will get an update for you because I was briefed cursory with the—the tenders are almost complete on the Chaguanas abattoir. The Rural Development Company has funds for that, and it is a project that will be undertaken.
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Dr. Rambachan: So they have funds for it?

Hon. Khan: Yeah.

Dr. Rambachan: Would it be a similar answer for the development of the market for Chaguanas?

Hon. Khan: Yeah, the guttering and—

Dr. Rambachan: So they have funds for that also?

Hon. Khan: Yeah, they have funds for that too.

Dr. Rambachan: Okay.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Madam Chairman. Four questions, through you to the hon. Minister, page 141, line item 236, hon. Minister, I would just like to make a request on behalf of my constituents, the Muslim community has requested a site for their burial, and if you would consider that in your development of cemeteries? The second thing is on line 240, if you can identify, hon. Minister, the Local Roads and Bridges Programme, what have you identified in the constituency of Cumuto/Manzanilla? And just a question on line 385, I know you had indicated to the Opposition Leader that the municipal police would still have to have discussions with the hon. Minister of National Security, but I noticed that you have the Municipal Police Equipment as a line item with funding under you, so I just wanted to know if there is going to be a realignment in those discussions?

Finally, on line 389, Tourism Development Programme, I just want to make a request again on behalf of my constituents, there is the Fishing Pond boardwalk that is in serious disrepair and they have asked that you consider that as a tourism product to be developed. Thank you.

12.15 p.m.

Hon. Khan: Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla, while as a Minister of Local
Government and Rural Development: I present the budget, the actual projects has its genesis from the corporation, so it is better you liaise with your various councillors in the area to get these on the radar so to speak. I cannot tell a corporation, “Go and build a cemetery in Sangre Grande”.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: If I may just thank the Minister for his advice, but I am guided by my constituents; this is why I represent them inside of the Parliament, therefore, I must make my representation through here.

Hon. Khan: Will do.

Mr. Indarsingh: Thank you, Madam Chair. Just to reinforce something that was already indicated to the Minister. With respect to the Couva/Tabaquite/Talparo Regional Corporation, I see an allocation of $1 million for recreational facilities. There are approximately 163 grounds within the jurisdiction of Couva/Tabaquite/Talparo Regional Corporation. Also, the Waterloo cremation site, $300,000, as it relates to the maintenance of that cremation site. So $300,000 for maintenance of that cremation site and cemeteries throughout the Couva/Tabaquite/Talparo Regional Corporation, which has a land mass bigger than Barbados, Mr. Minister. You would appreciate the inadequate allocation of resources there.

Hon. Khan: Point well taken.

Mr. Karim: I noted the Minister’s desire to have approximately 100 municipal police, that strength, but for the Chaguanas Borough Corporation line item 156 under Municipal Police Equipment, I notice that there is no allocation for 2016. Is there a reason for it?

Hon. Khan: We are still in the formative process of putting that policy in place, so I can expect a revised estimate in March, because I am still consulting with the Minister of National Security as to what type of administrative structure and what
type of command chain, to use a military term, that that will be established in.

**Mr. Karim:** So we look forward to March for an adjustment?

**Hon. Khan:** Yes.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Under Municipal Police Station, page 139, Chaguanas Borough Corporation, this will apply I suppose to all the corporations in terms of the question I am about to ask. The only municipal police station ever built in the last 11 years was built in Chaguanas while I was the mayor of Chaguanas. It is a complete police station. Hon. Minister, you are saying that you are going to have 100 municipal officers per area. You have to house these 100 officers in every area, but you are going ahead with your plans next year, but you have made no provision in your budget for accommodation for your 100 municipal officers at all. You only have one police station that was built, as I said, and that was during my time as mayor.

**Hon. Khan:** Probably the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government is unique in the sense that this budget estimate was cast in the old mould. A new mould is going to be created within six to nine months, and very likely now we will reassign allocations to these issues, because remember, all the policy positions that we have articulated in local government came through the electoral process. We have now won election, we have adopted the manifesto as policy, so we did not have sufficient time to put our footprint as it were on the draft estimates. So stay tuned.

**Dr. Rambachan:** One follow-up question. Yesterday we were told on police that there are 911 officers short, or just under 1,000 officers short, in the police service and it takes quite a time to train officers. Do you have a plan in place as to how you are going to attract 1,400 officers into the police service? Chaguanas, by the way, only has four officers right now at the borough. So 1,400 officers—and over
what period of time do you intend to train these 1,400 officers to have them functioning as proper municipal officers?

**Hon. Khan:** Member for Tabaquite, I will be working closely with the hon. Minister of National Security who is an established military and crime prevention person. I am sure I will be well guided, and we will come up with a comprehensive plan in that regard.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Thank you.

**Mr. Singh:** Madam Chair, Item 151, Procurement of Major Vehicles and Equipment. I think that if you go through all the allocations for the various corporations, you can see that they get a set figure of $500,000. From my experience, I think that as you seek to move from this transition from local government into this new realm you speak about, that you ought to contemplate having some kind of central equipment that would allow for vacuum masters to be utilized by all the regional corporations, because the demand is higher than contemplated.

**Dr. Moonilal:** I must thank you very much, Madam Chairman. I have two questions for the hon. Minister. I am on page 143, Penal/Debe Regional Corporation. It is very evident here that this budget has been slashed violently. Drainage and irrigation programme has been slashed by 42 per cent, local roads and bridges programmes slashed by 50 per cent, $4 million for all the local roads and bridges in a very, very large regional corporation. I am asking you: Do you consider this adequate to meet the needs of the people in the Penal/Debe Regional Corporation?

Secondly, hearing you excited with the new Rural Development and Local Government Ministry and this portfolio and, of course, myself taken aback by your Gorbachev initiative of change, I want to ask you: What really is new in this
Hon. Khan: That is a policy question; it is not a line Item.

Dr. Moonilal: Or should I listen Tuesday.

Hon. Khan: Specifically to the $4 million, I just want to draw your attention that most corporations, if not all, have been assigned $4 million in that line item, so it is not any discriminatory point. Obviously, it is under-resourced as we speak, but so is the national budget under-resourced.

Dr. Moonilal: I never intended to accuse you of discriminating. I was just accusing you of slashing the budget.

Mr. Karim: Hon. Minister, in the Chaguanas Borough Corporation, line item 408 seems to be a new project. [Crosstalk]

Madam Chairman: I know it is almost time for lunch, but if we could just settle down a bit so we can proceed.

Mr. Karim: Will the Minister, Madam Chair, through you, be kind enough to give us some details of 408, that new project, $750,000?

Hon. Khan: I am not seized of it as we speak—[Interruption] no, no that is tourism.

Madam Chairman: Can we go to the Infrastructure Development Fund, Item 004, Social Infrastructure. We are on page 313.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Once again we note for the IDF that has been slashed by almost 50 per cent, from $112.5 to $50 million. I want to speak of line item 003 on page 313, Development of Rural Communities, an allocation of $25 million. If the Minister would kindly provide details of which rural communities are to be developed under this? What are the projects? What are the projects under the development of rural communities? This may be something new that you can do under rural development. Of course, this is a line item that was there anyhow under
local government.

The other one which is 007, Upgrade of Community Infrastructure in South and Southeast, again a continuing line item, but $25 million—if you would provide us with a list of the projects and, of course, the location of the projects, in which communities they will be undertaken.

**Hon. Khan:** Will do, Member for Siparia.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** Thank you very much.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** The allocation for the Self-Help Programme moved, it is gone. I thought it is a Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government, but what we see here is reduction in the development programmes for rural development, in terms of funding. So even though you tried to merge both, I thought it would be strengthening it rather that—

**Hon. Khan:** The thinking on self-help is social, because you are looking at the underprivileged; they need assistance to fix a house or to get a drain there. So that is more in the realm of social development.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** So that has been slashed altogether out?

**Hon. Khan:** That is ubiquitous; it is not rural or urban. It is just a ubiquitous service.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** But I understand when we go there we will talk about it.

**Dr. Tewarie:** In the development budget here on page 313, what we have is a total allocation of $50 billion for rural development. The Minister indicated that this will be revised in the March revision of the budget, that the numbers will be revised in March. Can I ask, since the local government entities are being underfunded, by his own admission, and this $50 million for the central Rural Development Ministry seems to me an underfunding also, would the increases come at both central and local government level, or is there a strategy involved in
that? It relates to the earlier question I asked of what Rural Development would do in relation to the local government entities.

**Hon. Khan:** It is premature to say, but I think it will probably come at the central level in the first instance, because until the local government reform is complete in its entirety, it may not be appropriate to pump additional funds when you do not have the administrative infrastructure in place.

**Dr. Tewarie:** So real allocation to the local government entities will only come post-legislation?

**Hon. Khan:** I did not say that.

**Dr. Tewarie:** I am just asking, you know. I am not trying to be smart.

**Hon. Khan:** As I said, it is cast in the old mould. There is funding there to continue most of the work that they have been doing over the years, and as the reform process kicks in we expect significantly increased funding, very likely in the 2016/2017 Budget.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Hon. Minister, you had said earlier in a response to the Member for Siparia that when we came under the development fund you would have some response to the Penal/Debe Regional Corporation administrative building. But I do not see anything in here to suggest that there is any activity that is planned for the Penal/Debe Regional Corporation administrative building, although it is with the—

**Hon. Khan:** The Penal/Debe regional building falls under PSAEL; PSAEL has awarded a contract for its construction. Initially some of that funding will come from the $25 million that you see there.

**Dr. Rambachan:** So if I may confirm, from this $25 million here, some funding will be given for the start-up of the Penal/Debe Regional Corporation building?

**Hon. Khan:** Very likely.

**Dr. Rambachan:** There is a difference between very likely and it is going to
Hon. Khan: Member for Tabaquite, that sod was turned the Sunday before the election, okay.

Dr. Rambachan: The sod could have been turned, but the contract was awarded.

Hon. Khan: The contract was not awarded as yet, and I am just checking the time lines with regards that; I am checking the integrity of the process before we move further.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Hon. Minister, Item 009 to 013 which relate to a number of things like pavilions and play parks, sporting infrastructure and sporting equipment, no funding is for that? Is that being transferred somewhere else or is it going to be done by the Ministry of Sport, 009 to 013? I am sure you need some pavilions in your constituency.

Hon. Khan: I will give you a written response on this.

Dr. Gopeesingh: You think it might be transferred to Sport?

Hon. Khan: I am not sure; I will investigate this and give you a written response.

[Interrupted]

Mr. Imbert: I just wanted to make a general statement.

Madam Chairman: I was going to put the question with respect to the Ministry of—

Mr. Imbert: Before you put that question, just a general statement to respond to some questions asked earlier.

Madam Chairman: Go ahead, hon. Minister.

Mr. Imbert: The hon. Member for Tabaquite had asked what system would be used to try and reduce waste and so on. We had been working for many, many years in a committee to establish a new procurement system and progress was made, and I fully expect that in 2016 we will fully implement the new procurement
system. I am certain that we will be able to cut out wasteful expenditure with the new procurement system, because there is going to be focus on value for money with the new system. Value for money—I mean, it is something that myself and the Member for Caroni Central had been at loggerheads for a long time, but the fact of the matter is we made progress. As a Parliament, we made progress.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 42 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Madam Chairman: Members, it is now 12.31 p.m., I suggest that we break now for lunch and resume at 1.30 p.m. This committee meeting is now suspended until 1.30 p.m.

12.31 p.m.: Standing Finance Committee suspended.

1.30 p.m.: Standing Finance Committee resumed.

[MR. FORDE in the Chair]

Mr. Chairman: Good afternoon, hon. Members. Let us reconvene the Standing Finance Committee meeting. We will be dealing with Head 61 Ministry of Housing and Urban Development.

Head 61.

I will now invite the Minister of Housing and Urban Development to make a brief opening statement not exceeding five minutes.

Hon. Mc Donald: Thank you, Chair, and thank you for this opportunity to make brief opening remarks as we examine the provisions in the estimates in respect of the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development. The Ministry’s team headed by the Permanent Secretary is committed to addressing the issues raised and providing clear and meaningful responses to all concerns either now or in the shortest possible time.

The core responsibilities of the Ministry of Housing and Urban
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Development are summarized as follows: functions related to community enhancement; housing; urban development; and squatter regularization. The implementing agencies include the Housing Development Corporation HDC, the East Port of Spain Development Company, the Land Settlement Agency, the Sugar Industry Welfare Committee, the Rent Assessment Board and the Urban Development Corporation of Trinidad and Tobago which is the project management company used by Government Ministries and Departments to provide management services.

The services provided by the Ministry are essential to comfortable and healthy living, physical and human growth and development, and for the general development of a modern society. The demand for those services, particularly housing, has grown to almost unmanageable proportions. This growth in demand is most marked at a time when the country faces numerous economic challenges. In this context, we recognize that spending by government should not be a reflex action, but a measured approach to responding to the needs of its population. Notwithstanding the challenges, we intend to meet our obligations whether statutory or moral. Consequently, we will ensure prompt, meaningful and effective responses to the needs of our clients. In the process, prudence and value for money will be at the forefront of our guiding principle. We will eliminate wastage, corruption and mismanagement wherever it exists.

Chair, let me state clearly that it is my Government’s intention to return to the original values and key principles that drive social housing. In the process our programme will prioritize areas of greatest need and build houses where are needed whether it is in the north, the south, the east or the west.

In closing, let me state that we intend to make a meaningful impact on the policy objectives outlined by the Government, setting and achieving realistic
targets. We shall improve the quality and quantity of housing stock and to deliver to those most in need affordable houses. Our agencies will ensure meaningful consultation with the people they serve and reflect the views of the public in their operation.

Finally, we shall ensure transparency and accountability in all our actions and procedures. I thank you.

*Question proposed:* That Head 61 stand part of the Schedule.

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Members, the sum of $1,409,017.035 billion for Head 61, Ministry of Housing and Urban Development is comprised of moneys proposed for the 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 and we go to page 369 of the *Draft Estimates Details of Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure* page 369. 01 Personnel Expenditure; 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 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies. I am now on page 373.

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

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** I am on page 373 number 20, the Education Tower. That would be of benefit to the Minister of Education as well because I was waiting for it for about four or five years. How much—

**Mr. Chairman:** Member for Caroni East, we have not reached that page as yet.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** You have not reached page 373?

**Mr. Chairman:** Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies. Item 009, Other Transfers. Item 0011, Transfer to State Enterprises.
Dr. Gopeesingh: Yeah. That is where I come in.

Mr. Chairman: Right. You can proceed.

Dr. Gopeesingh: The Education Tower, how much of it in terms of the outfitting, how much of it has been completed and how much has to be done again, and what cost has to be paid for the completion of the outfitting of the Education Tower? What time frame are we looking at?

Mr. Imbert: This is simply an interest payment. Right. If you want to know about how much interest it is, we can answer. This is just an interest payment.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Okay. But it is a fit out—No. A fit out.

Mr. Imbert: It is a payment on financing. [Crosstalk] It is a financing Item.

Dr. Gopeesingh: What am I fighting for? It is your Minister of Education should be fighting for that.

Mr. Imbert: What is your question?

Dr. Gopeesingh: If you do not want to answer, that is your business.

Mr. Imbert: It is a financing Item. It is an interest payment.

Mr. Chairman: Member for Oropouche East. [Crosstalk]

Dr. Moonilal: Proceed. Proceed.

Mr. Chairman: Sub-Head 06, Current Transfer to Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies; Item 004, Statutory Bodies. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Chair. Through you to hon. Minister, I just wanted to find out—the Land Settlement Agency, will they be continuing with the programme of where persons were drawn to acquire lands? Will that still be continuing? No. I am just asking.

Hon. Mc Donald: Yes. I have been advised, yes.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you.

Mr. Chairman: Sub-Head 06. Member for Caroni East.

Mr. Imbert: Chairman.

Dr. Gopeesingh: I want to ask on 04 at page 374.

Mr. Chairman: Where are you?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Page 374 on 04 the Item number 22 which is the Brian Lara—

Mr. Chairman: Proceed, Member for Caroni East.

Mr. Imbert: Are we going back?

Mr. Chairman: Proceed.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Proceed? Thank you, Chair. Number 22, the principal payment on the Brian Lara Cricket Academy which is $49.7 million. Could you say then, what is the total payment that we have to make for the Brian Lara Cricket Academy? You said the principal payment is $49.7 million. What is the total amount we have to pay for UDeCOTT for the Brian Lara Cricket Academy?

Hon. Mc Donald: Member for Caroni East—

Dr. Gopeesingh: Yes.

Hon. Mc Donald:—if you read Head 61 properly you will see that from Item 16 to 23 those are new Sub-Items added. Yes?

Dr. Gopeesingh: 16 to 23? Yes.

Hon. Mc Donald: Up to 374, 16 all the way the down to 23.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Yes.

Hon. Mc Donald: Yes? These are new ones added and I think that came in from Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs, I believe. Yes? So, we will have to provide you with that particular information. It was not at this Ministry before.

Dr. Gopeesingh: All right.

Mr. Imbert: We will put it in writing.
Dr. Gopeesingh: It a new Sub-Item. Okay.

Mr. Chairman: Item 004, Statutory Bodies.

Dr. Moonilal: Yes. Just a quick question. Of course, the Land Settlement Agency has been returned to the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development. The $40,992,000 for the Land Settlement Agency, would this include as well expenditure on staff requirements for the Land for the Landless Programme, and is that programme continuing?

Mr. Imbert: “You in de corner or what?”

Mr. Chairman: Sub-Head 09, Development Programme. So, we will now proceed to the Draft Estimates of Development Programme and we are on page 170, Consolidation Fund; Item 004, Social Infrastructure.

Dr. Moonilal: Me.

Mr. Chairman: Proceed, Member for Oropouche East.

Dr. Moonilal: All right. Let me start here now. The 086 page 170.

Hon. Mc Donald: One?

Dr. Moonilal: One seven zero page and 086. The Road Rehabilitation Works in Fenceline Communities, I notice there are no allocations made for this. Now this is really the work of the agencies in Ministry. Is it that in the coming fiscal there will no work to assist fenceline communities where—

Mr. Imbert: What line Item are you on?

Dr. Moonilal: I am on 086.

Mr. Imbert: I know. But what line Item?

Dr. Moonilal: It is Social Infrastructure.

Mr. Imbert: Road Rehabilitation Works in Fenceline Communities. Okay.

Dr. Moonilal: Are you good there? I am asking why no funds at all have been made available for fenceline communities road rehabilitation works that is
fundamental? There is a policy in several Ministries and in this Ministry as well, where when you do heavy construction in an area, invariably you bring roads and drainage and so on into disrepair in surrounding communities that you affect because of your heavy construction, so that we provide an allocation so that the relevant agency will do repairs and assist, so that reduces the social tension, unrest and so on by villagers surrounding heavy construction projects. Now it has been reduced to nil, you know. What is the reason for this?

**Hon. Mc Donald:** I have been advised that that particular work or those specs they have been transferred to EMBD.

**Dr. Moonilal:** No. Could I please?

**Hon. Mc Donald:** Yes. Sure.

**Dr. Moonilal:** The EMBD would also have a fenceline protection policy adopted by their board as a special purpose entity, but the HDC and others as well will also have fenceline communities’ policies. So that it is interesting therefore, the moneys allocated here is zero. For example, in an HDC estate you are going to construct somewhere, you will do some damage in neighbouring districts and so on, you will have no allocation to assist.

**Mr. Imbert:** Mr. Chairman, the point is noted. The responsibility has been transferred elsewhere, however we will look at the funding to make sure adequate funds are provided for this.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Sure.

1.45 p.m.

**Mr. Chairman:** Item 005—

**Dr. Moonilal:** No, hold on, I have several questions. If you could just permit me so I could exhaust my questions here.

**Mr. Chairman:** Okay, sure.
Dr. Moonilal: The Housing Estate Rehabilitation and Maintenance of HDC rental apartment housing units. Now, over the years in 2014 you would see here we had expended over $30 million; that went to $10 million, $10 million. Now, you have cut that by half. That has been slashed by half. Does the Minister believe that this is adequate to undertake rehabilitation and maintenance in the many, many HDC estates across the country, that this figure of $5 million will suffice? This is more in the vicinity of about $75 million.

Hon. Mc Donald: Yes, Chair. I have also been advised that the refurbishment programme will be funded by HDC’s expected rental income of some $11 million each month. So, even though there is a shortfall we would be able to make up the shortfall by using some of the rental income to carry out our refurbishment work in the HDC estates across the country.

Mr. Chairman: Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Moonilal: No, I have not finished as yet, I am still on HDC. You are aware, Madam Minister, that HDC could be owed over a hundred million dollars in rental income? My next question—

Hon. Mc Donald: Mr. Chair, I am also aware that the annual income of HDC rentals across the country amount to some $132 million. But, I am also aware that there is also an element of delinquency inside of there. Yes?

Dr. Moonilal: Yes.

Hon. Mc Donald: Of just about 30 or just a little over 30 per cent. But I assure you that this administration, we are working assiduously to reduce that figure.

Dr. Moonilal: Good. The residential lots programme at 234, $5 million. This is also—

Hon. Mc Donald: Residential—

Dr. Moonilal: The Residential Lots Programme (Land for the Landless), you are
there? The Land for the Landless Programme developed by the former administration, in 2016 you have an estimate of $5 million for that. I am asking you, is this adequate to develop for land development and preparation for the distribution of lots pursuant to the policy of land for the landless? And the deception, the hypocrisy and the mamaguy. What mamaguy is this?

Mr. Chairman: Are you through?

Dr. Moonilal: Then the final question Minister from me or you want to wait for her to—[Crosstalk]—and the mamaguy, and the mamaguy. [ Interruption ] The Minister of Finance is disturbing the Finance Committee.

Mr. Chairman: Members!

Hon. Mc Donald: Yes, I am answering.

Dr. Moonilal: Do you want me to put the next question or you want to answer now?

Hon. Mc Donald: Okay, ask. No, ask the next question.

Dr. Moonilal: And if you could just tell me briefly, the increase in the Housing Opportunity Programme from 53.9 to $103 million, what more in your scope for that programme you anticipate would lead you to such an increase?

Hon. Mc Donald: He is on line Item, he is on page 170.

Mr. Imbert: What is your problem? We increase it.

Hon. Mc Donald: Mr. Deputy Chair, I am being confused here, you know. [ Interruption ]

Mr. Imbert: That is an absurdity, you are asking about the increase.

Hon. Mc Donald: I am being confused, what question—

Mr. Imbert: That is an absurdity!

Hon. Mc Donald: Should I proceed to answer my questions?

Mr. Chairman: Members! [ Interruption ] Okay, Members! [ Interruption ]
Dr. Gopeesingh: A lot of deception and mamaguy.

Mr. Chairman: Hold on. Hold on. The Member for Oropouche East, proceed with your question so that the Minister of Housing and Urban Development can respond. [Interruption]

Dr. Moonilal: I do not know why he is jumping up like that.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, Members.

Dr. Moonilal: But, I want her attention otherwise I will have to repeat again. So, let me repeat my repetition. [Interruption] It was a simple thing, it was not anything that big. The mamaguy.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Hypocrisy.

Mr. Chairman: All right, she is gathering the information.

Dr. Moonilal: Sure, sure.

Mr. Imbert: The Member was asked an important question as to why we have doubled an allocation for housing and we will get the answer very quickly.

Hon. Member: Not for housing. The land for the landless.

Mr. Imbert: Opportunities for housing and housing are different?

Dr. Moonilal: Chair, if you do not have it you could put it in writing. I mean, is not that they have to—you are not compelled to answer now.

Hon. Mc Donald: One second.

Dr. Moonilal: They are not compelled, tell them put it in writing nah man, I want to get to some more important matters.

Hon. Mc Donald: Member for Oropouche East, that $103 million you are seeing there, if you turn to page 171, what you have there, all the IDB in collaboration with the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, you see all those squatter regularization, home improvement, new housing subsidies, et cetera, from 002, 005, 011, 017, that figure is an amalgam of all these various programmes. That is
what that $103 million is all about, right, in total.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Just to correct the Minister of Finance, so the Housing Opportunity Programme is really a squatter regularization programme, your home improvement grants, your sector institutional strengthening programme and your Design and Programme Administration—

**Mr. Imbert:** That is not housing related. Home improvement grants? You are putting things on the record which are not correct.

**Hon. Mc Donald:** One hon. Member at a time, please.

**Dr. Moonilal:** You do not know how to proceed.

**Mr. Imbert:** You are putting things on the record that are not correct.

**Mr. Chairman:** Member for Oropouche East will respond and then if the Minister of Finance has a reply we will entertain. Member for Oropouche East, please.

**Dr. Moonilal:** So, I am understanding you, Minister of Housing and Urban Development, that that is the amalgam of increases for those programmes. That is what you are saying, it is not a house construction, a home construction programme. I have asked two or three questions before, if you have any responses now or you want to commit it in writing?

**Hon. Mc Donald:** What is the first question?

**Dr. Moonilal:** Whether the rehabilitation and maintenance of HDC apartments and housing units, whether you believe the $5 million would be adequate?

**Hon. Mc Donald:** But I just answered that question, Member for Oropouche East, when I said that the monthly rentals would be able to take care of the shortfalls. So, even though it had been reduced by $5 million, we would be able to make up that figure, that deficit by utilizing our monthly rentals.

**Dr. Moonilal:** So, your answer stands for, whether it is fence-line communities, whether it is rehabilitation and rental, upgrade; you would be using rental money?
Hon. Mc Donald: We will be using it.

Mr. Chairman: All right.

Hon. Mc Donald: What is next?

Mr. Chairman: Item 234. Member for Oropouche East, you got your answer for 234?

Dr. Moonilal: Well, I got a response. Thank you.

Mr. Chairman: Okay. So, I can now proceed to the Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: The same questions I had my colleague ask them.

Mr. Chairman: Member for Naparima, you still have a question?

Mr. Charles: Yes, I do.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, can you proceed, please.

Mr. Charles: I am looking at Housing Grant and the reduction from $25 million to $9.5 million, and I am asking that question in the context of what the Minister of Finance told us about how, we will continue to strengthen programmes, and expand programmes, which we had established and which still exist, and we will review and strengthen the administration of home improvement grants and home improvement subsidy programmes to assist families experiencing financial difficulties, and yet we see an inconsistency with the draft. So, we want to know if that is a question of mamagu and deception, again.

Mr. Chairman: Minister of Finance.

Mr. Imbert: Certainly. Apart from the efficiency that will result from cutting out waste, corruption and mismanagement, if you look lower down you will see there are new projects: Surveys of Squatter Sites, Residential Lots Programme, and there are a number of increases. And the net increase which was pointed out by the Member for Oropouche East is in the order of 100 per cent. So what this administration has done is simply reallocated its priorities. For example, we are
increasing home improvement and housing subsidy from $16 million to $25 million; we are increasing squatter regularization from $32 million to $72 million. So, it is simply a question of reorganizing priorities, which has resulted in a vastly increased allocation to this Head. And we are also cutting out corruption, waste and mismanagement. [Interruption]

Mr. Chairman: Let us proceed. Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services, page 173. Infrastructure Development Fund: Item No. 004, Social Infrastructure, page 327, and we are in Draft Estimates of Development Programme. Still under Ministry of Housing and Urban Development, and we are at Infrastructure Development Fund, Item 004 Social Infrastructure.

Dr. Moonilal: I want to ask a specific question.

Mr. Chairman: Go ahead, proceed.

Dr. Moonilal: The page is 328, Support to Industrial Development Initiatives. The Ministry of—Madam Minister, I noticed here—you are with me?

Hon. Mc Donald: Yes.

Dr. Moonilal:—Invader’s Bay - Infrastructure Development, you have an allocation in 2015; in 2016 there is absolutely no allocation. Could I have an explanation for this in terms of two things, whether you would be pursuing this industrial development project. What do you anticipate to do, bearing in mind there is no allocation here for the Invader’s Bay project?

Mr. Chairman: What page, 328?

Dr. Moonilal: Page 412.

Hon. Mc Donald: You are looking at the right Head?

Dr. Moonilal: No, no, no, page 328.

Mr. Chairman: The Invader’s Bay project, Item 001.

Hon. Mc Donald: That is under UDeCoTT?
Dr. Moonilal: Yes. If you want to commit it in writing then, your response?

Hon. Mc Donald: Yes, I think we better commit this in writing. [Interruption] Yes, I understand your question.

Dr. Moonilal: If you could make the commitment that you will put it in writing.

Mr. Imbert: The thing is, though, Mr. Deputy Chairman, this project is the subject of tremendous controversy, litigation, accusation, allegation of corruption, waste and mismanagement, and therefore we have to look very closely at this project as we go forward. It is very complicated and we have to be very careful, because it is in court and a series of allegations of breaches of the law.

Dr. Moonilal: Mr. Deputy—

Mr. Chairman: One second, Member for Caroni Central, you caught my eyes first.

Dr. Tewarie: The Minister of Finance is concerned about what is put on the record, and while he may be correct about allegations, and while he may be correct about issues, it is the Invader’s Bay item. [Crosstalk]

Mr. Chairman: Members, it is there. It is a line Item.

Dr. Tewarie: That is right. There is no allegation or issue as far as I am aware that has anything to do with corruption, waste or mismanagement [Desk thumping] and I want to make it very clear that the evidence will be available in the documentation in the Ministry of Finance in these same allocation documents of no State funds being expended on this project except for legal fees and for consulting fees for PricewaterhouseCoopers, which is relatively minuscule in the scheme of things.

Mr. Chairman: A response from the Minister of Finance.

Mr. Imbert: Thank you very much. If that is so, then perhaps you may be able to explain why there was an allocation of $50 million in 2015. But, I can assure you
there are many allegations of corruption, waste and mismanagement with respect to this project.

**Mr. Chairman:** The Member for Caroni East.

**Mr. Imbert:** And if you think otherwise you are dreaming.

**Mr. Chairman:** I recognize the Member for Oropouche East.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Chair, it is important to clarify that none of that $50 million was spent.

**Mr. Imbert:** Why was it allocated? Why was it allocated?

**Dr. Tewarie:** It was allocated because of agreements which had to do with responsibilities of the State as opposed to responsibilities of the private sector entities. [ Interruption ] Of which no funds—

**Mr. Imbert:** Many allegations.

**Mr. Chairman:** Members! Members, there are no questions being asked at this time so I would like to move on to the Member for Oropouche East.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Mr. Deputy Chairman, I have accepted the Minister’s response that there will be no work and no development at the Invader’s Bay project.

**Mr. Imbert:** That is not true. That is not what we said, Mr. Deputy Chairman. [ Crosstalk ] He has put a misrepresentation on the record— [ Crosstalk ]

**Mr. Chairman:** Members! Minister of Finance, let the Member for Oropouche East complete his question and then I will proceed to you shortly.

**Mr. Imbert:** Sure, no problem.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Mr. Deputy Chairman, at 3.29, I am following your direction, Item 230, I consider this the scandal of the year, that in the budget statement, a lot is made about housing, about building more—housing, building affordable houses, going back to Legoland-type housing estates, and you have a violent slashing of the housing budget, the accelerated housing programme from $300 million to $160
Dr. Gopeesingh: That is deception. That is deception.

2.00 p.m.

Dr. Moonilal: Mr. Chairman, that cannot finish one housing project in the Ministry of Housing. This is the end of housing, the collapse of the sector, because the sector is driven by the accelerated housing programme. In 2014 $650 million was expended. And today, when they have violently slashed the budget to $160 million it means that in two to three months or less the housing sector that contributed in no small measure to construction activity, to employment, to economic growth and income distribution, that sector will collapse by Christmas 2015.

And I want to ask the Minister of Housing, whether the Minister is convinced that $160 million is sufficient? What do you intend to do with $160 million in the housing sector for fiscal 2016? And I am not prepared to accept the cliché about waste, corruption and mismanagement. That does not have a place when you come to the social infrastructure to housing. We have promised 100 homes a week, not one has been distributed since September 07. [Crosstalk]

Mr. Imbert: May I?

Mr. Chairman: He has five minutes.

Dr. Moonilal: I have five minutes. And I have four more left.

Mr. Chairman: Continue, Member for Oropouche East.

Dr. Moonilal: My question to the Minister of Housing is to explain to the finance committee what the Ministry expects to do with $160 million, and also bearing in mind the Minister of Finance has declared that the borrowing limits have been met. He cannot borrow money to finance the housing construction programme anymore. Is this the end of housing and the housing sector?
Mr. Chairman: Proceed Minister of Finance.

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Chairman, he asked the same question three times.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Right, give the answers.

Mr. Imbert: And you know we have been saddled with over $3 billion in contracts entered into by the former Ministry under the former Minister without any Cabinet approval and without any source of funds. We are also on this side very concerned about the fact that the cost of a house has doubled under the tenure of the former Minister. And, therefore, since the 2015 revised estimate was $300 million, we have allocated $160 million and the Minister will do a review, especially, of those billion dollar contracts that were entered into just before the general election and at the end of the Minister’s review then we will look at this again. But we cannot continue like this with a rogue Ministry entering into contract of billions of dollars without any source of funds.

Mr. Chairman: Member for Tabaquite.

Dr. Rambachan: Mr. Chairman, in light of the question asked by the hon. Member for Oropouche East in terms of the violent slashing of the housing budget, the question is this, in the light of the need for housing does the Minister have any plans to incentivize the private sector to provide housing to the population on accelerated basis? If the Minister is saying that there is no money and it has $3 billion, the private sector has money, has land. Is there any plan to incentivize this sector?

Hon. Mc Donald: Member for Tabaquite, this is something that we will be looking at and certainly will be evaluating. But I note with care, that earlier this year, the former Government had an agreement with Republic Bank with respect to this same public/private partnership and when I look at the terms of the agreement, believe me, I am very, very, very concerned. And whilst I think that there are
indeed opportunities I think that we should tread cautiously and it is something that we can look at.

Mr. Chairman: Member for Siparia.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Thank you very much. Under the same line Item 230, Accelerated Housing Programme. I heard you say earlier that you were using rental income to make up shortfalls in certain items. Would that be used there, as well?

Hon. Mc Donald: I did not say for all. A specific question, Member for Siparia was asked, and that was with respect to repairs and maintenance of HDC estates.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: So you will use rental income.

Hon. Mc Donald: I quoted the figure. I said that the Ministry collects approximately $11 million a month re: rental. And where there is this shortfall by some $5 million we will make it up from there. That is what I said. I never said it was supposed to be for construction.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Well following up on that then, is the Ministry then allowed to keep rental income? How I understand it, rental income will go into the revenue into the Consolidated Fund as property income.

Mr. Imbert: No, no, it is earned by the HDC.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: And kept by the HDC.

Mr. Imbert: It is a statutory corporation. Of course, that is their income. You are quite right, that is one thing that does not require Cabinet approval. But those billion-dollar contracts that you did not alert your leader to, those require Cabinet approval.

Mr. Chairman: Member for Siparia.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Line Item 001, Urban Redevelopment, $15 million was allocated in 2016. Would the Minister kindly share with us what this is? How are the projects to be determined? Which projects are to fall under this $15 million
of Urban Redevelopment, 2016? It seems to be a new item.

Hon. Mc,Donald: Thank you, yes it is. It is the East Port of Spain Development Company that has been placed under the Ministry of Housing, and the funds will be allocated to do the following. I can tell you, renovation works to pan yards, Community Enhancement Projects that include, roads, drainage, steps, other access routes, latrine eradication programme. [Crosstalk] That is right, children’s play park and other upgrades to community recreation facilities. So that allocation—

[Interruption]

Mr. Chairman: Members, let us hear the Minister please.

Hon. Mc,Donald:—is for Port of Spain East Development Company, which is a new item and new unit under the Ministry of Housing.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, the question is that the sum—oh, you are still continuing.

Dr. Gopeesingh: We have page 330.

Hon. Member: We have more.

Dr. Gopeesingh: We have more. Next page.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: I note on page 330 under the Item 003, which is the last item on the page, the construction for Couva Children’s Hospital, no allocation has been made in 2016. Is this—page 330. What does it mean no allocation is being made in 2016? And I am asking why, is it that the hospital construction is complete?

Mr. Imbert: Well you opened it.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: I am asking you Minister, you are in charge now.

Mr. Imbert: Well I have assumed that you opened a complete building.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Hon. Minister, through you, line Minister, can the line Minister answer? There is no allocation and I am asking does it mean that the
Mr. Imbert: Let me answer that. Mr. Chairman, my understanding is that this project was being financed through a Government to Government loan facility with the Chinese Government. And therefore there would normally be no obligation on the part of the Trinidad and Tobago Government to finance the construction of this hospital. And since—[Crosstalk]

Mr. Chairman: Let him finish please.

Mr. Imbert: Why are you getting on like this?

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: That is totally incorrect.

Mr. Imbert: All right, you can say that if you wish. But my understanding is that this project is being financed by the Chinese Government.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Mr. Chairman, whilst that may be true—[Interruption]

Mr. Imbert: May be true? Is true.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Whilst that may be true and we take him at his word, we see 2014—[Interruption]

Mr. Imbert: You opened the hospital. It is her hospital.

Mr. Chairman: Members. One Member at a time please. Hon. Member for Siparia.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: 2014, an allocation was made of $130 million. 2015 an allocation estimated at $140 million, revised in 2015 at $109.2 million and then in 2016 nothing. So the Minister’s explanation that this would have been built with funding through the Chinese Government which is true, we take that word—

Mr. Imbert: True now. You remember.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Can we please be allowed to complete?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, let me make a statement, please. One person at a
time will address the Chair and then individuals will have the opportunity to respond. Kindly proceed hon. Member.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** The question is—thank you, Mr. Chair.

**Hon. Mc Donald:** Perhaps I could provide a response.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** No, no, please, the Minister has indicated that it was funded by the Chinese Government. And therefore no allocation—I am trying to explain the no allocation in 2016 by virtue of that. I have pointed out that in the estimates every year that is shown in these estimates which is, 2014, 2015, an allocation has been made. So the question still remains why no allocation in 2016.

**Mr. Imbert:** Now, Mr. Chairman, I really find that we are just going around in circles. The hon. Leader of the Opposition was the Prime Minister that promoted this project, secured the financing from the Chinese Government, cut the ribbon and opened the hospital with great fanfare just before the election. So it is just wrong for the hon. Leader of the Opposition to say or pretend that she does not know.

Now the fact is, this project, if you are paying attention, has been transferred to the Ministry of Health and I think we now need to investigate since this project was supposed to be fully funded by the Chinese. Why the Government of Trinidad and Tobago was spending money on this project. And I can assure you there will be an investigation into that. But if you want to know what has happened to the allocation it has gone to the Ministry of Health.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** Could have done that 10 minutes ago.

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Minister of Finance, added to that, the question also was, is the building completed?

**Mr. Imbert:** I am shocked that the person who cut the ribbon and opened the building with great fanfare before the election will ask me that answer. I will have
to investigate that as well and find out why the hon. Leader of the Opposition opened this building with great fanfare and is now asking whether it is completed or not. When I get over my befuddlement and my astonishment, I will investigate.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: The question remains unanswered.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Why is he so garrulous? [Crosstalk]

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, will the question be placed in writing, please?

Mr. Imbert: I will most certainly give the results of the investigation as to why the hon. Leader of the Opposition opened that building and is now asking if it is completed or not. That will be put in writing the results of that investigation.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: [Laughter] You see this robber talk and gun talk, it will get you very far. Through you, Mr. Chairman—

Mr. Imbert: Is that a question?

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: With respect to the hospital—[Crosstalk] I am asking a question and I have not completed what I am saying.

Mr. Imbert: You want to know about robbers and so on.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: And so, still under the same item, with respect to the hospital, the question was asked whether it is completed. In this budget debate it was made out by the other side that the hospital was opened incomplete, the hospital would be done in phases and so on and that is why the query is there. So I await the investigation and answer.

Mr. Imbert: So you do not know.

Mr. Chairman: Await the report in writing.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: I will await the report in writing, Sir. Investigation.

Mr. Imbert: So that was not a question. Mr. Chairman, that was not a question?

Mr. Chairman: No, Sir. That was a statement. So I cannot make a statement now.

Dr. Gopeesingh: A statement on your hypocrisy.
Mr. Imbert: So the other side could make statements and I cannot.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: You have been doing that all day.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Mamaguying us all the time.

Mr. Chairman: No question was asked hon. Minister.

Mr. Imbert: Therefore a statement was allowed to be put on the record and we on this side cannot respond to that.

Mr. Chairman: Proceed hon. Minister.

Mr. Imbert: I am assuring this Parliament, we will find out why that building was opened and whether it was completed or not and we will advise national population through the medium of this Parliament.

Mr. Chairman: There being no further questions, hon. Members, the question is that the sum of $1,409,170,035 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: We would now proceed to Head 37: Integrity Commission. I would also like to thank the Minister of Housing and Urban Development and her technical team, her technocrats from the Ministry, thank you for coming and do have a good evening. So as we change we will move on to Integrity Commission, Head 37.

2.15 p.m.

Head 37.

Members, we are on Draft Estimates, Details of Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure and we will be proceeding to page 268, Integrity Commission, Head 37.

Welcome, to the Integrity Commission technocrats. Thanks for coming and

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we proceed now, Members.

Head 37, Integrity Commission—$19,822,600. I will now invite the Minister of Finance to make a brief opening statement not exceeding five minutes.

**Hon. Imbert:** I will most certainly take less than five minutes. The Integrity Commission is a creature of the Integrity in Public Life Act and has as its responsibilities the examination of declarations filed by persons in public life and the investigation of reports of irregularities and impropriety within the State system.

*Question proposed:* That Head 37 stand part of the Schedule.

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Members, the sum of $19,822,600 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*. We now proceed. 01, Personnel Expenditure; 001, General Administration, and we are at page 268. 02, Goods and Services; 001, General Administration; 03, Minor Equipment Purchases; 001, General Administration; 09, Development Programme, which will be the other booklet, *Draft Estimates of Development Programmes*, and we go to page 121. 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services. Member for Caroni East.

**Dr. Gopessingh:** Chairman, Administrative Services, 001 and 002, those are new projects for the Integrity Commission. That is the drafting of whistle-blower protection legislation and reform of the Integrity Commission. Those are new items on them, right?

**Hon. Imbert:** I believe these allocations were put in by the Ministry of Finance. It is part of the manifesto; it is part of the budget statement that we intend to implement a system of whistle-blower protection. So that is what this is for, [Interruption] whistle-blower protection. A whistle-blower is somebody who
blows the whistle on corrupt activities. This should have been in place for the last five years. A whistle-blower is—[Interrupt]

Mr. Chairman: Members—

Hon. Imbert:—somebody who reveals corrupt activities. This should have been here for five years. [Crosstalk]

Dr. Gopeesingh: 001—

Mr. Chairman: Any further questions?

Hon. Imbert: If you want to be flippant about it, you can be. You can be flippant.

Mr. Chairman: Members.

Hon. Imbert: Mr. Chairman, I have been asked a question; I will answer it. The funds are for drafting of legislation. It is there in black and white. It is there in black and white!

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, any further questions?

Dr. Gopeesingh: What type of majority—

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, the question is that the sum—

Dr. Gopeesingh: You are an amendment Government, “yuh know”. You are amendment Government.

Mr. Chairman: Members, I am speaking.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Head 37 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.*

Mr. Chairman: Thank you members of the Integrity Commission’s technical team. Thanks for coming and do enjoy the rest of the evening.

We will now proceed to Head 08, Elections and Boundaries Commission. I will just give two minutes in order for the technical team and the Minister of Finance to assess. We will now be going to the Draft Estimates, Details of Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure and we will be proceeding to page 40, Head
Appropriation (Financial Year 2016) Bill, 2015
Standing Finance Committee
08, Elections and Boundaries Commission.

[Technocrats enter Chamber]

Thanks for coming. Welcome.

Head 08. I will now invite the Minister of Finance to make a brief opening statement for no more than five minutes.

Hon. Imbert: The Elections and Boundaries Commission is an independent commission who has as its responsibility—

Hon. Member: Which—

Hon. Imbert: Who, which—has as its responsibility the management of the conduct of elections in Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you, Minister of Finance.

Question proposed: That Head 08 stand part of the Schedule.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, the sum of $102,653,200 for Head 08, Elections and Boundaries Commission is comprised of moneys proposed for expenditures under the following Subheads and Items to be found in the Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure and the Draft Estimates of the Development Programme.

I now proceed to Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure: Item 001, General Administration. I recognize the hon. Member for Siparia.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: On this same page 40, Election Expenses, I note that Election Expenses for 2015 in which a general election was held is less than Election Expenses projected and allocated for, for 2016 by 100 per cent increase, and we would like to know why that may be so.

Hon. Imbert: I am a little lost there. Look at the Revised Estimates and you will see the 2016—

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Two million.

Hon. Imbert:—2016 estimate and the revised—

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Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: I am guided, hon. Minister—$2 million.

Hon. Imbert:—they are identical. No, it is almost the same. It is only $11,000 difference. But I must say—

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Five million----I am sorry.

Hon. Imbert: Look at the bottom line, it is $98,411,000 and $98,400,000; it is just $11,000 difference.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Sure.

Hon. Imbert: But I want to make a point though. The EBC had requested a 164 and spent 98 and it is something we will have to look at; go back to their request of 2015 and see whether maybe they are carrying bills over, or whether this 164 was justified, to see whether we need to supplement their allocation. The fact is that the 2016 and the 2015 revised are identical. But it is something we will need to look at.

Mr. Chairman: Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Deputy Chair, could we get an understanding from the Minister of Finance who is the person that we have to ask the questions to because it is an independent institution, whether this increase in expenditure will incur a deep introspection—

Hon. Imbert: There is no increase. It is identical.

Dr. Gopeesingh: No, no, one minute. Look, you have under column here, $1 million.

Hon. Imbert: It is $11,000 in $98 million.

Dr. Gopeesingh: All right. Whether it is an increase that is immaterial.

Hon. Imbert: But it is important.

Dr. Gopeesingh: The question I want to ask is the allocation, whether that includes a deep introspection and an analysis and cleaning out of the EBC list
because of the questions that have been asked from time to time, that the election list contains that list of names of a number of people who are already dead or out of the country. And so, when we say that it is 1.013 million on the EBC list, many attempts have been made in terms of saying that that list is not, in fact, so and there are people who are dead and people who are out of the country on that list; and whether that is going to facilitate the EBC to do its proper work to clean up that list so that we will have a proper list in the future at election time.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister of Finance.

Hon. Imbert: Mr. Chairman, I would love to answer that question if it was associated with a line Item. Could you direct me to which line Item you are talking about?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Yes, that is associated with the line Item, Election Expenses.

Hon. Imbert: Where is this? What page?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Page 40, 002—

Mr. Chairman: Page 40, 002, Election Expenses.

Dr. Gopeesingh: So it could include the other line Item, 03, which is Overtime. And if we are giving overtime, we should give overtime to people who can help in that. And it is an easy thing, Mr. Deputy Chairman. All they have to do is to look at the Ministry of Legal Affairs and the list of the death certificates over the last 10 years, match those, versus the names that are on the list, because they will have the amount of people who are there—

Hon. Imbert: Mr. Chairman, he is not addressing the line Item.

Dr. Gopeesingh: I am asking the question. I have five minutes—

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, [Crosstalk] Hon. Members, the hon. Member has five minutes—

Hon. Imbert: To ask on a line Item—on a line Item.
Dr. Gopeesingh: I cannot ask a question in five minutes. I have to give a preface to my question.

Hon. Imbert: You cannot talk about the world, the moon and the sun and the stars.

Dr. Gopeesingh: I have to give a preface to my question.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister—proceed, Member for Caroni—

Hon. Imbert: Irrelevant! Irrelevant!

Dr. Gopeesingh: Not irrelevant at all. It is very relevant to a proper understanding of the democracy and the transparency as far as election is concerned.

[Interrupted]

Hon. Imbert: Which line Item are you on?

Dr. Gopeesingh: I gave you the line Item already.

Hon. Imbert: Overtime?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Are you deaf?

Hon. Imbert: Overtime?

Mr. Chairman: Members—

Dr. Gopeesingh: Election Expenses.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members—

Dr. Gopeesingh: Are you blind or are you deaf?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members—

Hon. Imbert: No, no, Mr. Chairman—

Mr. Chairman: Member for Caroni East and Hon. Minister of Finance—

Hon. Imbert: No, no, Mr. Chairman. I am referring—there is a line Item.

Dr. Gopeesingh: I gave him the line Item already.

Mr. Chairman: He has identified the line Item, Mr. Minister and he is giving an explanation and asking a question.

Dr. Gopeesingh: And if he would not be so rude to be disrupting me all the time
in my trend of thought.

Mr. Chairman: Proceed. Members, on both sides—Members on both sides—

Hon. Imbert: By the way, Mr. Chairman, he uttered some very pejorative language just now. I would ask you to ask him to withdraw that.

Dr. Gopeesingh: What withdraw?

Hon. Imbert: He said I was blind and deaf.

Dr. Gopeesingh: I am asking you a question.

Hon. Imbert: No, Mr. Chairman. [Crosstalk]

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, [Crosstalk] hon. Members.

Hon. Imbert: We must have decorum here.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members—

Hon. Imbert: We must have decorum.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, let us ensure that we maintain the decorum of the House.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Sure.

Mr. Chairman: All right? I am asking the hon. Member for Caroni East to continue, make your question and let us get on with the business of the—

Dr. Gopeesingh: Mr. Chair, there have been statements across the country, from election to election that the EBC’s list is not a clean and accurate list of the citizenry who are eligible to vote.

Hon. Member: Correct.

Dr. Gopeesingh: And years upon years—I have been associated with the politics from since 1994, Mr. Chairman, 21 years. I was elections officer of the United National Congress for two general elections and three local government elections. We spoke to the chairman of the EBC on many occasions, Mr. Karim, myself, Mr. Mark. We went to the EBC indicating time and time again that that EBC list has
names of people who are no longer alive and it has names of people who have migrated out of the country and who are not here living for at least five years, and all I am asking—

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Minister of Finance, he is coming to the question.

**Hon. Imbert:** Yeah, am—

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** I am asking whether money will be spent under Election Expenses or Overtime—

**Mr. Imbert:** Mr. Chairman, he start up again?

**Mr. Chairman:** He is finishing the question. I was just drawing your attention.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** He is not listening and then he cannot answer the question.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:**—whether money will be spent to do a cleaning of that list so that Trinidad and Tobago could get an accurate list of voters for any election to come. Thank you very much.

2.30 p.m.

**Mr. Chairman:** So, hon. Minister, any moneys identified in the budget to clean up the electoral list? That is the question.

**Hon. Imbert:** Mr. Deputy Chairman, I am having a problem here. I asked what line Item this was. I was referred to page 40, 002, 03, Overtime, and the question has to be framed in the context of that line Item. I kept asking the Member to identify and explain how a house to house field survey could possibly be associated with the Overtime Item, and I was prevented from making this point. I would like to know how the Member expects that a house to house survey could be covered under the Overtime vote. Explain that?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** I could answer that.

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Minister, the direct question that was asked is whether it is
Hon. Imbert: This Item. It has to be on this Item. It cannot be on every Item.

Mr. Chairman: Therefore, could you give an answer then?

Hon. Imbert: The point I was making is that the Member made all sorts of remarks, but what this has proven is that he has no understanding of the system of allocation of funds, and, Mr. Deputy Chairman, there is no way that the—

Dr. Gopeesingh: You are hypocritical again.

Mr. Chairman: Members! Hon. Members! Member for Caroni East, please, please.

Hon. Imbert: Mr. Deputy Chairman, what is happening here is that the Member is making a speech about matters that have no relationship to this line Item, and he cannot ask me a question about some other Item and try to bring it under this Item. And for the record, this is Overtime and this is Overtime expenses that will be incurred by workers at the EBC during an election when they are working beyond normal working hours, they are working on Saturday, they are working on Sunday, during an election, and this could not possibly be the line Item for a house to house survey to clean up the list.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, the answer is no. I proceed to the Member for Tabaquite.

Dr. Gopeesingh: The answer is no, you have not used any money for Overtime.

Dr. Rambachan: Mr. Chairman, we are under Goods and Services right? Just clarifying.

Mr. Chairman: 02.

Dr. Rambachan: So there are two Items I want to target. On page 41, Item, Contract Employment, which is No. 16, and also you have Short-Term Employment, No. 22, and then on the following page under Elections Expenses
you have Short-Term Employment, 22 again, under any of these Items, these three Items, are there any moneys there included for a cleaning up of the election list and the hiring of personnel for doing that?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, on page 41, line Item 16, Contract Employment, also line Item 22, Short-Term Employment on the same page, and then we proceed to page 42, line Item Short-Term Employment, and the question is: whether any moneys are allocated under these Items for cleaning up the electoral list?

Hon. Imbert: Mr. Deputy Chairman, might I say on the outset, I find it passing strange that Members who have been in Government for five years are all of a sudden fascinated with cleaning up a list that they should have allocated funds for during the period that they were in Government. But be that as it may, the house to house survey that is required to clean the list as it were, the last time that was done was in 20—Mr. Deputy Chairman, everybody over there is just muttering and mumbling. I would ask, Mr. Deputy Chairman, I can answer the question, but I cannot do so if there is a barrage of crosstalk on that side. I am asking you to ask hon. Members opposite, since they are fascinated with this, could they please allow me to speak without interruption?

Mr. Chairman: You can proceed, hon. Minister. [Interruption] Members! Member for Caroni East, please. Go ahead, hon. Minister of Finance.

Hon. Imbert: Yes, Mr. Deputy Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member for Caroni East, please, I am hearing you also.

Hon. Imbert: Yes, Mr. Deputy Chairman, firstly let me say no funds were allocated in the last five years to do that activity. In this fiscal year, since that activity requires considerable forward planning, the EBC has been given funds to do limited field checks. I can assure you since we are extremely interested in doing the necessary national survey to clean up the list, which we had hoped that the
other side would do, we would be giving the EBC the necessary funds after they have done their necessary planning. This involves examination of approximately one million registered voters, and it is not something that will be done by vaps. So I can assure you, that within our term, we will be giving the EBC the necessary funds to do a national house to house comprehensive survey as was done in 2001 to clean up the voters list. But for this year, they have funds under these Items to do limited field verification.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member for Tabaquite.

Dr. Rambachan: Mr. Deputy Chairman, that begs the question: Is the EBC, as an institution, not obligated for us to ensure fair and democratic elections, that on a continuous basis of updating that they will have a continuous plan and a programme for updating and cleaning up their list? Why is the Minister now saying that they have been given money for a limited intervention, when this, I presume, should have been a continuous programme of updating that the EBC will have as part of its activities?

Mr. Chairman: And that is in reference to the same three line Items we just identified.

Dr. Rambachan: Yes.

Hon. Imbert: Which Item are you on? This will be Contract Employment.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Overtime.

Hon. Imbert: We are not on Overtime.

Dr. Rambachan: Sorry, Mr. Deputy Chairman. I am asking direct response to what the Minister answered.

Hon. Imbert: What line Item?

Mr. Chairman: The same three line Items he identified.

Dr. Rambachan: The same three line Items.
Hon. Imbert: Contract Employment, what are the other two?

Mr. Chairman: Short-Term Employment—

Hon. Imbert: Short-Term Employment, Contract Employment, what is the third one?

Dr. Rambachan: Contract Employment again. Two Short-Term and one Contract.

Hon. Imbert: Two Short-Term—

Dr. Rambachan: Contact Employment and Short-Term Contract. On page 41, Items 16 and 22, and on page 42, Item 22. My question is very simple, you know. Does the EBC have a continuous programme for updating its list as part of its responsibility?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister of Finance.

Hon. Imbert: I just wanted to be clear on which line Items we are talking about because this exercise is the examination of the Heads of Expenditure. So now that you have asked whether under Head 02, 001, 16 and 001, 22, and you are telling me that over the page which will be 002, which we have not reached yet—I assumed we have not reached that yet, 22—you are asking whether there is funding allocated to do the national survey. Let me just state at the outset, no funding was allocated for the last five years to do a national survey. A national survey is not done every year. That would be a pointless exercise.

The time has come to do a national survey. The EBC has been given the same level of funding in 2016 that was given by the former Government in 2015, notwithstanding the fact that there is no general election in 2016. However, I am making a commitment on behalf of the PNM Government that we will do what the UNC did not do, and give the EBC the funds to do a national house to house survey. As I said, these things are not done by vaps, they are not done every year, and the EBC will be planning to do its house to house survey in fiscal 2016, and
we will give them the funds to do it in fiscal 2017.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member for Tabaquite.

Dr. Rambachan: I repeat a very important question, a very important question. Bear with me, this is of national importance. Does the EBC not have as part of its continuing planning and programming the continuous updating of its list? That is the question I am asking. Is that part of the normal function of EBC; or do we only have to wait for a national survey?

Hon. Imbert: What line Item are you referring to?

Mr. Chairman: Member for Tabaquite—

Hon. Imbert: You have to refer it to a line Item.

Dr. Rambachan: Minister, with due respect, you are trying to be cute.

Hon. Imbert: Mr. Deputy Chairman, they are really becoming very insulting. What line Item are you referring to?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member for Tabaquite, your question you are asking, in relation to staffing?

Hon. Imbert: What line Item?

Dr. Gopeesingh: 16, 22, those are the two. Contract Employment and Short-Term Employment.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Mr. Deputy Chair—

Mr. Chairman: But does it relate directly to staffing, hon. Member?

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Yes, Mr. Deputy Chair.

Dr. Gopeesingh: That is for employment for people who can do the work.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Is the allocation being made here for Short-Term Employment, for Contract Employment, does it include work to be done and continuous updating of EBC list?

Hon. Imbert: I wish the hon. Leader of the Opposition had intervened long ago.
The answer is, yes.

**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you. So we will now proceed—[Interuption] Hon. Members!

**Hon. Imbert:** Why did you not intervene before?

**Mr. Chairman:** Member for Siparia, your turn now.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** On page 41, Item 23, Fees, and I see we have an increase of $163,000. So a total of $263,000. Do these Fees include legal fees to be paid to lawyers for matters before the court?

**Mr. Chairman:** Page 41, line Item—

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** 41, line Item 23, Fees.

**Hon. Imbert:** I am advised that this Item is for fees paid to the Registrar of Births and Deaths for extracting the information required for the continuous updating of the voters list, and for legal fees as and when required. I can say that I looked at the evolution of the list in 2015 and I did see who were deceased in my own constituency coming off the list shortly after their deaths were recorded in the Births and Deaths Registry. So I must compliment the EBC for that.

**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you, hon. Member. Sub-Head—

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** Did you say yes to the second, the Fees—

**Hon. Imbert:** No, no, I did say that it includes fees to the Registrar of Births and Deaths for the continuous updating of the list, and for legal fees as and when they are required.

**Mr. Chairman:** Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases; Item 001, General Administration. Members, I am moving on. Sub-Head 09, Development Programme, Consolidated Fund. We now move over to the Development Programme booklet and we are on page 12. Page 12, Head 08, Elections and Boundaries Commission. Consolidated Fund, Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other
Services. Infrastructure Development Fund, Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services.

We now go to page—

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Pages 12 and 13. On page 12, Sir, we see Multi-Sectoral and Other Services total translated on to page 13. [Crosstalk] Okay, I withdraw my query. Thank you.

Mr. Chairman: You withdraw your query. Right! So we now move on to Multi-Infrastructure Fund, Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services, and we proceed to page 278 of the Draft Estimates of Development Programme. Okay. Thank you.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 08 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you members from the Elections and Boundaries Commission. Thanks for your time, thanks for your presence and do enjoy the rest of your afternoon.

2.45 p.m.

We will now proceed to Head 07: Statutory Authorities’ Service Commission and this is the last Schedule we will be doing today. Statutory Authorities’ Service Commission.

Hon. Members, we are in Draft Estimates Details of Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure and we are on page 36. I must also now take time to say, hon. Members, that as the Deputy Chairman, please respect the Chair. Somehow after lunch, we were getting a lot of crosstalk and the decorum was getting a little out of hand. Whoever is sitting in the Chair acts as the Chairman of the committee, so please offer a little more respect, please. Thank you.

We are on the last Schedule for the day. I know we had a long day and let us move on. Welcome, Madam.
Head 07.

Mr. Chairman: Statutory Authorities’ Service Commission, $6,061,200. I will now invite the Minister of Finance to make a brief opening statement not exceeding five minutes.

Mr. Imbert: I will defer to the Minister of Public Administration.

Mr. Chairman: Minister of Public Administration. Sorry.

Hon. Mitchell: Thank you, again, Mr. Deputy Chairman, for the opportunity to appear before this committee to answer questions on recurrent expenditure as it pertains to the budgetary allocations for the Statutory Authorities’ Service Commission. The Statutory Authorities’ Service Commission derives its mandate from the Statutory Authorities Act and Regulations. The Commission is responsible for providing the human resources of the statutory authorities; appointing persons whose remuneration is on a monthly basis in pensionable offices; providing for promotion of officers and their confirmation as appropriate and exercising disciplinary control over all officers through discussions, warnings, suspensions, fines and dismissals.

At present, there are a number of authorities under the purview of the Commission and they are: the Agricultural Society of Trinidad and Tobago, the Arima Borough Corporation, the National Lotteries Control Board, the Point Fortin Borough Corporation, the Port of Spain City Corporation, the San Fernando City Corporation, the St. Dominic’s Children’s Home, the St. Jude’s School for Girls, St. Michael’s School for Boys, the Sugar Industry Labour Welfare Fund Committee and the Zoological Society of Trinidad and Tobago. Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chairman, for the opportunity to make these few introductory remarks.

Question proposed: That Head 07 stand part of the Schedule.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, the sum of $6,061,200 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*. We now proceed to Sub-Head 01 Personnel Expenditure; Item 001 General Administration on page 36. Sub-Head 02 Goods and Services.

**Dr. Bodoe:** Reference to Sub-Item 08 Rent/Lease - Office Accommodation and Storage, I note a decrease here of $901,270. Can the Minister, perhaps, explain that?

**Hon. Mitchell:** That is because the department is no longer relocating to a new accommodation. That is the Goodwood Building.

**Mr. Chairman:** All right. Sub-Head 03.

**Mr. Karim:** Can I ask a question on 02? Line item 28 Other Contracted Services, which has been slashed by a significant amount, $377,000, almost $378,000. Could the Minister indicate what would have caused this, please?

**Mr. Imbert:** Yes, I can answer or the Minister can answer. Because the Statutory Authorities’ Service Commission is no longer relocating to this building, there is no longer a requirement for outfitting, so that is why contracted services has gone down.

**Mr. Chairman:** Sub-Head 03 Minor Equipment Purchases; Item 001 General Administration.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Head 07 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.*

**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you, Madam, for attending this afternoon. Do enjoy the rest of your evening.

Hon. Members, we have now come to the conclusion of our Standing Finance Committee for today, Saturday, October 17, 2015. However, we still have
some Schedules to complete which, as far as I understand, must be completed by Monday.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Mr. Chairman, we did say, if time permitted, we can examine the Office of the Prime Minister. Is the Prime Minister in the building and available?

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Member, that was not said.

**Dr. Moonilal:** But we have some extra time now. Is he available?

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Member.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Let us proceed then. Monday.

**Mr. Chairman:** We need to resume on Monday, and according to a note from the leader—[Interruption] Hon. Members, a note from the Leader of Government Business is that we resume on Monday at 1.30 p.m. in order to continue the business of the Standing Finance Committee. Right.

According to the Schedule, we still have the Judiciary; Environmental Commission; Ministry of Education; Ministry of Planning and Development; Ministry of Public Utilities; Registration Recognition and Certification Board; Ministry of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development; Ministry of Communications; Parliament; Ministry of Social Development and Family Services; Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs; the Ministry of Health; Personnel Department; Ministry of Tourism; Ministry of Community Development, Culture and the Arts and Ministry of Foreign and Caricom Affairs. Those Schedules have to be completed and also Office of the Prime Minister.

**Mr. Imbert:** Mr. Chairman, can I seek some clarification?

**Mr. Chairman:** Sure.

**Mr. Imbert:** If the examination of the first few Heads drags on and we approach the appointed time of eight o’clock and we run out of time, what will be the procedure? The question will be put. That is my understanding. Am I correct?
Standing Finance Committee

[Interruption] You all wasted time!

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

Mr. Imbert: You are in charge, not us. We are not in charge. You are in charge of this, you set the priorities.

Mr. Chairman: Okay. According to the Standing Orders, the work must be completed by 7.50 p.m. on Monday, October 19, 2015.

Mr. Imbert: Very nice and therefore, you will put the question at the appropriate time.

Mr. Chairman: At the appropriate time.

Mr. Imbert: Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: Right, Monday at 7.50 p.m. So, Members, at 1.30 p.m. on Monday, October 19, 2015, we will resume the Standing Finance Committee meeting. Enjoy the rest of your afternoon. Thank you.

2.54 p.m.: Standing Finance Committee suspended.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, October 19, 2015

APPROPRIATION (FINANCIAL YEAR 2016) BILL 2015

[Eleventh Day]

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

[Chairman: Mrs. Annisette-George]

1.30 p.m.

Madam Chairman: The meeting of the Standing Financing Committee is resumed and we are at Head 03, Judiciary, the sum of, $363,140,800. I will now invite the hon. Minister of Finance to make a brief opening statement not the exceeding five minutes.

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Mr. Imbert: I will defer to the Acting Attorney General on this. Mr. Young, could you explain what the Judiciary is all about?

Hon. Young: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. The Judiciary, as everyone is aware, is a separate arm protected by separation of powers, and as would have been heard by the hon. Minister of Finance in his budget presentation and is contained in the PNM Manifesto, which is now adopted as government policy. This Government is moving towards giving the Judiciary something it has been clamouring for, for years, and rightly so, which is financial autonomy. So we are in the process of making that a reality and we fully support the efforts of the Judiciary and the important position that it plays in governance of Trinidad and Tobago and in the protection of the separation and the independence of the Judiciary. Thank you very much.

Question proposed: That Head 03: stand part of the Schedule.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Members, the sum of $363,140,800 for Head 03, Judiciary, 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 Judiciary Trinidad; Item 002 Judiciary Tobago; Sub-Head 02: Goods and Services, Item 001 Judiciary Trinidad.

Dr. Rambachan: Thank you, Madam Chair. Under Goods and Services, Judiciary Trinidad, page 13, Item 16, I notice there is a $55.55million for contract employment, I am trying to get an understanding of what the nature of that contract employment is and I have another question with regard to training also.

Mr. Imbert: Could you repeat the question?

Dr. Rambachan: The question is on Item 16 Goods and Services, page 13. There is an amount of $55.55 million for Contract Employment. What is this contract employment in the Judiciary about?
Mr. Imbert: Well, as you could see from the amount, it is quite a lot of contract employment.

Dr. Rambachan: Yes.

Mr. Imbert: We can give you a list of the positions and so on. What exactly do you want to know?

Dr. Rambachan: So these positions are not filled, or are they vacant positions that exist?

Mr. Imbert: Some of them would be to supplement the Judiciary’s capacity, in terms of posts that may not be filled on the establishment, but quite a significant proportion is contract staff outside of the establishment. That is just how it is. If you want a list—they have an approval to contract 1,082 contract officers.

Dr. Rambachan: They have approval to contract that?

Mr. Imbert: That is what I am advised, and that they have filled 590 out of that 1,082. They have approved establishment of 1,259 public officers, of which 910 positions are filled and, well, the balance 349, would be vacant and, in terms of judicial officers, 172 approved positions, of which 108 are filled.

Dr. Rambachan: And now you are saying they have 1,082 positions for contract?

Mr. Imbert: They have an approval for 1,082. The total posts are 2,542. That is the approved total, of which they have 1,637.

Dr. Rambachan: 1,637?

Mr. Imbert: Yes. There is a shortfall of about 800, if my maths are right, or 900, somewhere around there.

Dr. Rambachan: So, in terms of the—since that is the case, then the Judiciary is only operating with 64 per cent of its personnel?

Mr. Imbert: Based on the information provided to me, the total complement
of posts is 2,542. The total staff currently on board, 1,637.

**Dr. Rambachan:** And my question is therefore: is the Judiciary operating on 64 per cent of its required human resources?

**Mr. Imbert:** I am giving you the numbers.

**Madam Chairman:** Hon. Member, may I ask if we are testing the hon. Minister of Finance on the maths?

**Dr. Rambachan:** No, I am not testing him, Madam.

**Madam Chairman:** I think the answer is clear with respect to the number of contract posts and the number that are filled. I think we need to really use our time prudently today.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Madam Chairman, I am using my time very prudently because, with due respect, you would appreciate that the delay in justice is a matter of great concern and the length of time it is taking to determine matters in the country is of great concern and if the Judiciary is operating at 64 per cent of its human resources, I want to know what is being done in order to ensure there is a full complement where we are voting moneys for that.

**Hon. Young:** Madam Chair, if I may.

**Madam Chairman:** One minute. Hon. Member for Tabaquite, that is not the question that you asked, and all I am saying is, if we can use our time today to be a little more direct, with respect to what we are asking.

**Hon. Young:** If I may, Madam Chair, in an attempt to clarify and more for the purposes of the public looking on, it would be very misleading to suggest that the Judiciary is only using 64 per cent of its personnel as it currently stands. This is only with respect to contract workers and the Member and others would be aware that you have permanent staff that would not be captured by the contract workers. So presumably they would be using their full complement and contract workers are
not always to be fully utilized, as we have seen happen since we have come into office.

Mr. Imbert: And not just that. Let me just clarify something else that I have been advised by the Judiciary and it goes to the decision we have made. We had put it in our manifesto and now we have a decision, well we are fulfilling that manifesto commitment that we are going to give the Judiciary complete responsibility for all of the things necessary to make the Judiciary function effectively, one of which would be accommodation. I was told here that even if all of the positions were filled tomorrow, and the word used is “magically”, if they were all magically filled tomorrow, in other words they were able to recruit, interview, locate suitable people, get them to agree to terms and conditions, et cetera, et cetera, the accommodation is inadequate. So, as we move towards giving the Judiciary full autonomy, in terms of also providing their own accommodation, then they would be able to solve these two problems—one, to be able to recruit, and also two, to be able to provide the necessary accommodation for all their staff.

Dr. Rambachan: Madam Chair, just—I was not trying to be anything. 1,637 of 2,542 is the number the Minister said, I did not say that and 1,637 of 2,542 is 64 per cent. So it does not just refer to the permanent workers. It refers to the entire cadre of workers, the 2,542 that we are talking about.

Mr. Imbert: It does not matter. As the Hon. Chairman said, we do not have to do arithmetic here.

Dr. Rambachan: No, no, I was just clarifying what I said. I was not trying to test your maths or anything.

Mr. Imbert: Okay, it is all right.

Dr. Moonilal: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. On the very heading 16, Contract Employment, I notice a drop in $1.4 million. Is there an explanation
for this, that positions were filled or anticipate that you would not need $1.4 million more with the contract employment allocation?

**Mr. Imbert:** The allocation was made by the Ministry of Finance. Now, as you know, we are going to be engaging in extensive discussions with the Judiciary, with a view that by the end of fiscal 2016, they would have the required autonomy in order to do their own procurement, acquire their own buildings, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera, and all of the allocations would be reviewed and by the time of the mid-year review there would be a lot of reallocation, consistent with the outcome of those discussions. So this is certainly—if I do the calculations that the former Minister, Member for Tabaquite, wanted me to do, this represents 2 percent of the total allocation. So I am sure that by March or April, we would be able to resolve this, and if they do need any more, they will get more.

Item 002 Judiciary Tobago; Item 003 Judiciary Family Court; Sub-Head 03: Minor Equipment Purchases; Item 001 Judiciary Trinidad; Item 003 Judiciary Family Court; Sub-Head 04: Current Transfers and Subsidies; Item 002 Commonwealth Bodies; Item 009 Other Transfers; Sub-Head 09: Development Programme Consolidated Fund; Item 005 Multi-Sectoral and Other Services. Hon. Members, the question is that the sum of $363,140—

**Mr. Singh:** Madam Chair, I am dealing with the Development Programme.

**Madam Chair:** Well, I was about to put the question.

**Mr. Singh:** Yeah, I know. Well, I was about to catch your eye and I did not. So, now that I have caught your eye. Madam Chair, I am not seeing any allocation for the Chaguanas Magistrates’ Court. I notice under the Development Programme it was transferred, the refurbishment of Magistrates’ Courts, to the Office of the Attorney General. I then looked under the Attorney General, I did not see anything about the Chaguanas Magistrates’ Court and I do not know. Because I know
currently the constituents of Chaguanas West are really inconvenienced. They have to travel to Tunapuna in order to get justice.

**Mr. Imbert:** Can you tell me what line Item you are talking about? You cannot talk about a line Item that is not there. So what line Item are you talking about?

**Mr. Singh:** No, no, I am dealing with the development expenditure.

**Mr. Imbert:** I know, but which line Item it deals with?

**Mr. Singh:** And it deals with refurbishment of Magistrates’ Courts, line Item 003 on page 5.

**Mr. Imbert:** Line Item 003, on page 5. Okay, right. And this is transferred to the Attorney General’s office.

**Mr. Singh:** Yes.

**Mr. Imbert:** And what happen, you went in the AG’s office and you did not see it?

**Mr. Singh:** I did not see anything for Chaguanas Magistrate.

**Mr. Imbert:** Well, when we get there we would deal with that. Okay?

**Dr. Moonilal:** Thank you, Ma’am. In light of the earlier response from the Minister of Finance, these Items are project No. 001, 003—11; project 021—3 transferred to the Ministry of the Attorney General——we are on page 5, yes—and Legal Affairs. How does this fly in the face of the stated policy of the Government to provide the Judiciary with this autonomy? Clearly autonomy is not undertaking their own work or their own rehabilitation of facilities and construction, and so on. They are in the hands of another Ministry to provide physical infrastructure. It asks the deeper question of what the Government understands autonomy to be, but certainly it is not in the case of facilitation, construction and the provision of accommodation.
Mr. Imbert: Which line?

1.45 p.m.

Dr. Moonilal: The decision to move these items to the Ministry of the Attorney General—

Mr. Imbert: So, when we get there we will deal with that.

Dr. Moonilal: But you have moved it from the Judiciary. It has gone. What influenced that?

Mr. Imbert: That is no longer a line item here, so when we get to the AG, consistent with how we had dealt with local constabularies, when we get there, we will deal with that.

Dr. Moonilal: “I am asking why it leave?”

Mr. Imbert: No, when we get there, we will deal with that.

Dr. Moonilal: Not why it arrived there?

Question put and agreed to.

Head 03 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Madam Chairman: I thank the members from the Judiciary who have attended to assist the committee, and they are relieved. Could we move on to Head 38: Environmental Commission.

Head 38.

Madam Chairman: Members, we are at page 271. Head 38: Environmental Commission, $12,019,300. I now, invite the Minister of Finance to make a brief opening statement, not exceeding five minutes.

Hon. Young: If I may, Madam Chair, the Environmental Commission is an environmental tribunal set up under the Environmental Management Act. It plays, basically, an appeal role on issues that may arise coming out of decisions by the Environmental Management Authority. It is staffed with the head of the
commission being someone with the qualifications of a judge of the High Court, and then members from other professional expertise areas dealing with the environment. It is a fully functioning commission and one that I have appeared at before in my previous life, and one that we take very seriously, as this Government moves towards the promotion of environmental concerns in Trinidad and Tobago.

*Question proposed:* That Head 38 stand part of the Schedule.

**Madam Chairman:** Hon. Members, the sum of $12,019,300 for Head 38: the Environmental Commission is comprised of moneys proposed for expenditure under the following Sub-Heads and Items to be found in the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure* and the *Draft Estimates of Development Programme*.

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-Sectorial and Other Services.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Head 38 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.*

**Madam Chairman:** I thank the representatives of the Environmental Commission for coming and assisting us. You all are relieved. May we move on to Head 26: Ministry of Education? We are at page 186.

*Head 26.*

**Madam Chairman:** Head 26: the Ministry of Education, $7,781,013,421. I now invite the Minister of Education to make a brief opening statement not exceeding five minutes.

**Hon. Garcia:** Thank you very much, Madam Chairman. My Government has been in the forefront of every major advance in education in this country. During this period we are committed to preserve, maintain and expand where
necessary our system of free education and training at all levels. Towards this end, we will ensure that the GATE system remains relevant, easily accessible and available to all citizens who need support.

We will give active support to our two public universities. We will implement a suitable school maintenance programme. We will promote and encourage continuing education. We will ensure that our system of education at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels prepares our young people for the challenging world of science and technology.

And, therefore, Madam Chairman, as we discuss our budget, our plans, our programmes, all our activities will be guided by these philosophical statements. Thank you very much.

*Question proposed:* That head 26 stand part of the Schedule.

**Madam Chairman:** Hon. Members, the sum of $7,781,013,421 for Head 26: Ministry of Education is comprised of moneys proposed for expenditure under the following Sub-Heads and Items to be found in the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure* and the *Draft Estimates of Development Programme*. Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure; Item 001, General Administration, and we are at page 187 for the information of Members.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Madam Chair, the detailed information at 187 is summarized in 186, and I would just like to draw to the attention and ask a question on 186 in terms of—since Education now comprises ECCE, primary, secondary, post-secondary and tertiary education. In the 2015 revised estimates, we had for salaries and cost of living, $2.845 billion which is about 60 per cent of the budget for education. But in 2016, the salaries and cost of living is $2.865, just a mere increase of $19 million. Is this increase for—that is salaries under tertiary education? Or could you explain the increase in the salaries of $19 million?
Mr. Imbert: Madam Chairman, I have given an undertaking to explain the variations in Personnel Expenditure for every, single Head and Ministry. I will do so for the Ministry of Education.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Okay. So—

Madam Chairman: Could I take the liberty to say, hon. Minister of Finance, that you do so for every Head to be considered today for Personnel Expenditure.

Mr. Imbert: Yeah, as I did with all the ones in the past, I am giving that undertaking for every remaining Head of expenditure.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Are we on—

Madam Chairman: We are on page 187, please.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Madam Chair, I just want to draw to the attention the increase, $2.351billion on Current Transfers and Subsidies on page 186. Could the Minister indicate—

Madam Chairman: Hon. Minister, please, we are at page 187, Current Transfers and Subsidies—

Dr. Gopeesingh: Could I go further down, Madam Chair? Sure, sure.

Madam Chairman:—would be in some pages to come. Let us make some prudent use of our time today.

Dr. Gopeesingh: But the overall picture is critical.

Madam Chairman: I have determined, please Member.

Dr. Gopeesingh: So you do not want to give an understanding of the overall critical picture?

Madam Chairman: No, we will get it—

Dr. Gopeesingh: How can we go into detail when we do not know what is—
Madam Chairman: We will get in the pages to come, please hon. Member. May we proceed. Item 001, General Administration; Item 005, Secondary Education.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance have increased on secondary education by $43 million from 1.357 to 1.40. Does that include any—is that the increase in salaries for the teachers? And if you look back, 2015 estimates was 1.085, and the revised estimate was 1.357, and I could indicate that that was—the difference there was to pay outstanding arrears of nearly $300 million for the back pay and new salaries in 2015. So $300 million was paid for back pay and arrears in salaries for 2015. Now, the increase in 2016, the $43 million, is that for increase in salaries or back pay and salaries as well?

Mr. Imbert: Madam Chairman, the undertaking that I gave just a few seconds ago is for every, single Item of Personnel Expenditure. You will get an explanation for everything. This is subsumed within the overall allocation for Personnel Expenditure.

2.00 p.m.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Would you consider back pay to be a part of the Personnel Expenditure? Is it included there when you are thinking about providing the information? Would you be providing information on back pay?

Mr. Imbert: As I said, at least 15 times, the change in Personnel Expenditure would be a combination of additional responsibilities or reduced responsibilities. Arrears of salary or no arrears of salary, increased salary or no increased salary. You would get an explanation for every single Head, Sub-Head, Item and Sub-Item with respect to variations in allocations for Personnel Expenditure. So, there is no point as we get to each Sub-Item that you ask the same question over and over and over again.
Dr. Gopeesingh: Item 005.

Mr. Imbert: It is a Sub-Item.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Okay.

Madam Chairman: Item 006, Primary Education.

Dr. Gopeesingh: I see a decrease in salaries again.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member, please.

Dr. Gopeesingh: But I have to draw it to his attention, Madam Chairman.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Caroni East, I understand your concern, but I believe that the undertaking binds every Head, one, and every Item under each Head that refers to Personnel Expenditure which would be salaries and cost of living, wages, allowances, back pay arrears. I think so.

Dr. Gopeesingh: It is not just the matter of the provision and the information, Madam Chair, it is the matter of the significance of the decrease. In other words, if salary X was for Primary Education and there is a decrease, does it mean that the teachers are going to be getting less salaries? And this is Primary Education, $18 million less than 2015 in 2016. What does that signify?

Mr. Imbert: Madam Chairman, in the hope that this would be the last question on Personnel Expenditure, an increase or decrease is either an increase or reduction in responsibilities, an increase in salary because we do not reduce salaries in Trinidad and Tobago, and arrears of salary, or not, as the case may be. Everything.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Are you reducing people’s salaries?

Mr. Imbert: Madam Chairman, it is absurd for the Member to ask whether we are reducing people’s salaries. We do not reduce salaries in Trinidad and Tobago, we increase them. So that, Madam Chairman, he would get the explanation for every item.
Dr. Gopeesingh: Are you firing people, hon. Member?

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Caroni—Members, please, let us just try and maintain—[Crosstalk] Members, please, let us try and maintain some degree of civility as we proceed.

Hon. Member for Caroni East, yes, I have noticed really how dedicated you are to this process, and on behalf of the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago, I commend you, but I also would like us all to be very prudent with the use of our time. The undertaking says that explanations will be given. Okay, so let us go on.

Item 010, General Administration; Item 011, Eastern Caribbean Institute of Agriculture; Item 012, Technical/Vocational Education; Item 013, Teachers’ Colleges; Item 014, National Examinations Council; Item 016, Scholarships and Advanced Training Division.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Chair, I just want to ask, I saw the transfer of Scholarships and Advanced Training from the Ministry of Public Administration to the Ministry of Education. Could the Government give—

Madam Chairman: Page 191, I believe.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Yes. Can they give an understanding of the rationale for moving it from public administration scholarship which has been predominantly taken care of by the Ministry of Public Administration now being brought to the Ministry of Education, and that would involve the open and national scholarships and so on as I see further down.

Mr. Imbert: You will get it in writing. [Desk thumping] Okay, you will get the answer to that question in writing.

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

Dr. Moonilal: Madam Chairman, this includes Primary Education, District
Services and so on that head. Could I move to page 195?

**Madam Chairman:** Are we under Item 001, General Administration, Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services?

**Dr. Moonilal:** Okay, I would hold until some questions earlier.

**Madam Chairman:** Thank you very much. Hon. Member for Tabaquite.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Thank you. Under Goods and Services, page 192, I notice again there is a very large sum for Contract Employment, $197.5 million which is an increase of $13.5 million. I am trying to understand in all these areas of contract employment, what does this relate to? Does it relate to teachers? Does it relate to administrative staff? Why the need for this high level of contract employment if you already have all those wages and so on for normal teachers? Is this additional teachers or teachers who have to be replacing other teachers who do not come to work or you do not have teachers or what have you?

**Mr. Imbert:** I am tempted to tell you to ask your colleague, the Member for Caroni East, but you will get that answer in writing.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Madam Chairman, I am still on 193.

**Madam Chairman:** I am certain, hon. Member for Caroni East, you will get your turn.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Just a question.

**Mr. Imbert:** We are not going back.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** That is what I am asking. Are we going to go back to page 192?

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

**Dr. Moonilal:** It is Goods and Services, the same Goods and Services. Yes. Item 43, 193, there is a slash here in the allocation. The allocation has been slashed for Security Services, and I am wondering if there is an explanation that you would
have $11.5 million slash for Security Services.

Mr. Imbert: That would have been a budgeting measure, and we will consult with the Ministry during the year. It is interesting how you all are describing a 2 or 3 per cent variation as a slash, but it is a budgeting measure. We will consult with Education.

You see, a lot of money was spent on a lot of things, for example, $169 million in security. We really have to go in there and see whether it was necessary to spend $169 million, whether there was any duplication. You asked why it was reduced, I am explaining why. We have to look at the expenditure in previous years, look at the contracts for Security Services, determine whether the Government has been receiving value for money, determine whether these contracts are transparent, determine whether they are not inflated, and as a result as a budgeting exercise, we have made a small reduction in the allocation for $169 million to $157 million.

Dr. Gopeesingh: I wanted to ask the hon. Minister, through you, whether the Contract Employment, page 192, includes the contract for remedial teachers in primary and secondary schools and the teachers doing the moderating for the Continuous Assessment Component in the primary schools. Is that included in $197 million?

Hon. Garcia: We will give you that answer in writing, okay?

Dr. Rambachan: Thank you, Ma’am. Under Security Services, page 193, what I would like to know is how much of that money of the $157.5 million or $169 million is paid to MTS for Security Services in the schools and how much is paid to other security companies.

Mr. Imbert: I would give you a breakdown of all the providers and the money that is allocated to them.

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Madam Chairman: That would be in writing.

Mr. Imbert: Definitely in writing.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Secondary Education on page 193, the Rent/Lease - Office Accommodation Storage. I saw it is for Bishop Anstey and Trinity College East which was a BOLT arrangement. Could the Minister, through you, Madam Chair, give us an idea of how many more years that we have to service this BOLT arrangement whether one or two more years?

Madam Chairman: Would that be furnished in writing?

Mr. Imbert: Of course.

Dr. Gopeesingh: That is 08.

Madam Chairman: That would be given in writing.

Dr. Moonilal: Yes, thank you very much. On page 195, Rudranath Capildeo Learning Resource Centre, Madam Chairman, we notice a—

Mr. Imbert: Does that mean that we are done with 06 and 07?

Dr. Moonilal: No. We are under a heading.

Mr. Imbert: No, you have gone to 008.

Dr. Moonilal: We are not going by page, we are going by heading.

Mr. Imbert: You have skipped two Sub-Heads.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Minister of Finance, I am entertaining under the various Items, so it does not matter because I cannot anticipate what order the questions will come.

Mr. Imbert: No problem, sure.

Dr. Moonilal: Thank you very much, Ma’am. The Rudranath Capildeo Learning Resource Centre, we notice a very severe disinvestment well, to me, a slash in the provision for that by $13.6 million and the biggest chunk of that is in Materials and Supplies and Short-Term Employment. My question is: what would
explain such a slashing of the budget for the Rudranath Capildeo Learning Resource Centre by $13 million where the most significant ones are Materials and Supplies and Short-Term Employment?

Mr. Imbert: We will put it in writing.

Dr. Moonilal: You will put that in writing too, okay

Dr. Gopeesingh: Just one area on Fees on page 193. Goods and Services, No. 23 on page 193. There is a reduction of fees of $269,000. Could we get an appreciation of what fees have been reduced and the reduction?

Hon. Garcia: What number you are on?

Dr. Gopeesingh: No. 23 on page 193. Is it CXC fees or what fee is that?

Madam Chairman: Goods and Services, page 193, line item 23.

Hon. Garcia: I have been advised that we are going to give you that in writing.

Dr. Gopeesingh: You do not have any idea what.

Hon. Garcia: No, we are not in a position to give you that right now, okay?

Dr. Moonilal: Yes, Ma’am, page 195, Early Childhood Care and Education Unit, 22. Madam Chairman, to put in writing again, this violent slash in the allocation for Short-Term Employment from $13 million to $3.7 million a decrease of $9.7 million for Short-Term Employment in that unit, another one for writing.

Dr. Gopeesingh: You will give the answer in writing to Dr. Moonilal. On page 194, under Primary Education, No. 21, Repairs and Maintenance - Buildings, there is a $6.2 million increase which is good, but could you just let us have an understanding, the reason for the increase on repairs and maintenance of buildings. We spent 1.3 last year which is good, if you are spending more to repair building which is good, but could you give a little explanation on it?

Hon. Garcia: Well, first of all, this is for minor repairs, okay. It does not
include the larger repairs.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Is this meant, Madam Chair, to give the primary schools a certain amount of money for themselves so that they can conduct their own repairs?

**Hon. Garcia:** Yes.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** I think if it is meant to do so it would be good.

**Hon. Garcia:** There are 126 primary schools that would be involved.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** That is government primary schools?

**Hon. Garcia:** Yes, government primary schools, and they will be given the sums of money to engage in minor repairs.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** So, you will share that money between the schools depending on the size of the school?

**Hon. Garcia:** And depending on the need of the school.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** I think you should give all equitably depending on the sizes of the schools and the amount of children in the school.

**Hon. Garcia:** Well, the Ministry of Education will decide that, determine that.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Thanks, good.

**Madam Chairman:** Hon. Members, we have reached Item 008, we have reached Rudranath Capildeo Learning Resource Centre. That is where we have reached. So anything else on Item 008, Rudranath Capildeo Learning Resource Centre?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** In addition to what my colleague, the Member for Oropouche East asked on the Short-Term Employment under 22, it is a significant reduction in ECCE.

**Madam Chairman:** Is that under 008?

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Dr. Gopeesingh: That was under 009.

Madam Chairman: Okay, I have not reached 009 as yet. We are at 008 and, therefore, if there are no questions, I would then take you, hon. Member for Caroni East. I now recognize you under Head 009.

2.15p.m.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Under line item 22 the Short-term Employment of ECCE—there is a marked reduction. May I be privileged to just indicate that in 2015 the $13.5 million was used for the payment of students in the ECCE centres. Teachers who would have been new teachers who came on board for the ECCE centres, $13 billion—certificate in education—

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Caroni East, and the question is?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Why is there a significant reduction of $9.7 million? What is the reason?

Madam Chairman: Can we get that in writing, please.

Hon. Garcia: At least at this point I can say that this allocation is for the payment of cleaners—cleaning staff.

Dr. Gopeesingh: For the ECCE centres?

Hon. Garcia: I have been informed that this is for payment of the cleaning staff.

Dr. Gopeesingh: I think you should be further advised, Minister.

Hon. Garcia: I am happy that—

Mr. Imbert: You got a response; that is what it is for. You do not need a written response anymore.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Better check it. It is not for that.

Madam Chairman: Item 010 General Administration.

Dr. Gopeesingh: I just wanted to ask on 009 under Goods and Services at
page 196; same thing here Early Childhood Education brought forward, a reduction of $9.6 million. From $20 million to $11 million. Are you all cutting across the board on early childhood education centres?

**Madam Chairman:** Hon. Member for Caroni East, that brought forward would have come from the various items—under the various items.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** I stand corrected; thank you.

**Madam Chairman:** We are at 010, General Administration. Item 011, Eastern Caribbean Institute of Agriculture. Item 014, National Examinations Council. Item 015, Spanish Secretariat. Item 016, Scholarships and Advanced Training Division.

**Dr. Lee:** Under the Scholarships 016, Item 16 Contract Employment, this came over from the Ministry of Public Administration, and in 2015 the revised estimate was $19.1 million, and it has gone up to $30million. Could we just get an explanation in writing if possible?

**Madam Chairman:** Can we go on now to Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, Item 001, General Administration.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** The minor equipment purchases have been reduced by $16 million. If you look at line Item 03, the heading, Minor Equipment Purchases—could you give us an understanding of the decrease? Why this decrease for minor equipment purchases? I will just preface it to indicate that the laptop programme was under this Item, and $64 million spent in 2015. Does this mean that the students are not going to be provided with the laptops or have any of the students received laptops so far? Have you purchased any so far?

**Madam Chairman:** Hon. Member for Caroni East, this will be answered in writing, because you are considering 01, 02, 03, 04 in that question that you have asked.
Dr. Gopeesingh: I am only considering 001 which is under Minor Equipment.

Madam Chairman: But the summary—what you are referring to there is the summary.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Basically, the largest part of that is the $15 million for minor equipment.

Madam Chairman: What therefore is your question? Do you want a breakdown with respect to decrease of the $15 million?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Yes; what would have caused you to decrease the expenditure for minor equipment. Is it because you are omitting the expenditure on the laptop programme?

Hon. Garcia: No. In fact, there is a budgetary allocation for laptops, so we are not omitting the laptops.

Dr. Gopeesingh: You are not omitting them?

Hon. Garcia: No, we are not omitting laptops.

Dr. Gopeesingh: And you will help to direct us to where that allocation is in this?

Hon. Garcia: No, the allocation is under 04, under Minor Equipment, and you have the 2016 estimate of $45 million and that will take in the laptops. To answer your other question which you just asked, yes, laptops will be provided, but right now we are reviewing the infrastructural needs of the schools before we give out these laptops. Of course as you would know, even in our budget presentation and in other discussions we have been saying that the schools must be properly equipped so that the students can use the laptops effectively as a learning tool.

Dr. Gopeesingh: I will debate that with you when it comes to a debate, because what you have indicated is not necessarily, in fact, so.
Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Caroni East, your question has been answered.

Dr. Rambachan: I just have a very straightforward question. Has a contract been given out for the acquisition of laptops for all students who have entered secondary school in this first year, and is that included in this $45 million?

Hon. Garcia: We will put that in writing for you. We will give you that information in writing.

Madam Chairman: Can we go on to Item 005, Secondary Education. Page 199, Item 006, Primary Education. Item 007, District Services Division. Item 008, Rudranath Capildeo Learning Resource Centre. Item 009, Early Childhood Care and Education Unit.

Dr. Rambachan: I asked this question because in my own constituency I have had several requests from the primary schools which have ECCE centres that they do not have furniture and furnishings for their schools. I see $45,000 here as not being able to provide the kinds of equipment and furnishings they need in school. Has the Ministry undertaken a survey of these schools in order to determine their needs and, therefore, to make an appropriate allocation?

Hon. Garcia: This is the allocation that was determined by the Ministry of Finance, and I can assure you that the Ministry of Education will do that survey that you are talking about, because we ourselves have been getting a number of requests from the schools, and as the Minister of Finance has been saying repeatedly there will be a midterm review and, perhaps, if there is need for increase that will be taken up in the mid-year review.

Mr. Singh: Madam Chair, I just want to indicate that a similar situation exists at the Munroe Road Early Childhood Care Centre, which was opened recently and the necessary requests have been made, and similarly at the Munroe
Road Primary School where the instructions were given to go back to the school, but the necessary equipment and furnishings are not yet there.

**Hon. Garcia:** I can simply say we are looking at it.

**Mr. Imbert:** Are you talking about page 200, 009, 03? That is the line item you are on? I am just asking: Is that the line item, page 200? Which line is it?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Furniture and furnishings, he was speaking about the Munroe Road—

**Mr. Imbert:** You are saying yes, he is saying no. Is it page 200?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** He asked about the Munroe Road ECCE centre.

**Mr. Imbert:** I know that, but is the line item page 200, 009, 03, is that it?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Yes.

**Mr. Imbert:** Okay, well this is the furniture for the unit, not for the facilities. [Crosstalk]

**Madam Chairman:** Can we have some order, please! Can we go on to item 010, General Administration. Item 015, Spanish Secretariat. Sub-head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies. Item 001, Regional Bodies. Item 002, Commonwealth Bodies. Item 003, United Nations Organizations. Item 004, International Bodies.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Not under “International Bodies”, Madam Chair. I want to ask a question under “Educational Institutions”.

**Madam Chairman:** We have not reached there as yet.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** You are very near.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 006, Educational Institutions.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Under “Grants to Assisted Primary Schools”, I see a very deep slash of $16.5 million. What would have been the rationale for that? Could the Minister be so willing to advise the national community?
Hon. Garcia: We will provide that information in writing.

Mr. Indarsingh: And similarly for the local school boards, because I am sure that the parents of the school children are looking on, and they would want to know what is happening.

Mr. Imbert: Madam Chairman, may I ask, is that 04, 006, 28?

Madam Chairman: 22—006, line item 22. [Crosstalk]

Mr. Imbert: No, he said local school boards.

Madam Chairman: Yes.

Mr. Imbert: 28.

Madam Chairman: 22; page 202, 006, that is where we are, Educational Institutions, line item 22. Is this answer going to be provided in writing?

Mr. Imbert: What is the question?

Mr. Indarsingh: Why the slash, and are we abandoning the school boards? I am asking.

Mr. Imbert: Madam Chairman, they are constantly—well, I am going to answer. Madam Chairman, [Crosstalk] what is that, is there a debate going on down there? I am answering the question.

Madam Chairman: Could you go ahead, hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Imbert: If the hon. Member would look at the 2015 original estimate, it was $1 million; so the 2016 original estimate is also $1 million. All we have done is restore the original allocation for 2015. What happened during the year is that the Minister of Education would have vired money, as required, from Head to Sub-Head, and there was a virement from some other Head into this, and if the new Minister of Education feels the need to reallocate funds and put more money into this Head, then he too will be given permission to vire or transfer into this Head. But the allocation is the same as it was originally for 2015, so it is wrong to use
Dr. Bodoe: My question refers to page 203 under 41, and I note the allocation to the Eric Williams Medical Sciences Complex of $53 million. In the same vein, I am wondering if the hon. Minister will be giving consideration to a similar allocation, perhaps in the mid-year review, for the San Fernando Teaching Hospital.

Madam Chairman: What is the question, please, hon. Member for Fyzabad?

Dr. Bodoe: Whether consideration will be given in a similar vein to the San Fernando Teaching Hospital?

Mr. Imbert: That is not an educational matter; that is health. When we get to health we will deal with that.

Mr. Karim: I am on 006, Educational Institutions, line item 19. I notice that there is no increase with respect to the Servol Junior Life Centres. May we have a list of those centres that are going to benefit from this identical allocation, please?

Hon. Garcia: Yes, you will be provided with that list.

Mr. Charles: This is a follow-up to the question asked by my colleague, the Member for Couva South. I am dealing here with 006, 09, the $16.5 million reduction to grants to assisted primary schools. I would like the Minister in his answer to specifically indicate whether Jordan Hill Presbyterian and Brothers Road Presbyterian will be affected in any way by this reduction to denominational schools.

Madam Chairman: So that answer, could it be given in writing, please?

Hon. Garcia: Yes. [Crosstalk]

Dr. Gopeesingh: Why these slashes?

Madam Chairman: One minute, please, hon. Member for Caroni East.
Appropriation (Financial Year 2016) Bill, 2015 2015.10.19
Standing Finance Committee

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Chair. Through you, Chair, line item 29, Grants for Students Enrolled at Private Special Schools. This grant, is it given to the school or can parents of children who are mildly autistic or encounter other challenges apply for this grant from the Ministry of Education, please? Thank you.

Hon. Garcia: The grant is given to the schools, not to the individuals, to the schools.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla, do you have a follow-up question on that?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: So is it that if a parent applies through the school, can it be done in that way or is there any special provision for parents who have children who are challenged in any way to apply for assistance for special schools, because they are very expensive?

Hon. Garcia: I have been advised that the fees identified here are for the schools. Your question does not relate to what is here; it is fees for the schools. What you are asking for can be taken up later on.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Madam Chair, it is a question on grants to assisted primary schools, 09. The slashing of $16.5 million, does it mean a reduction in the amount of money—

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Caroni East, you are on what, line Item 006, 09.

Dr. Gopeesingh: 09.

Mr. Imbert: What line Item are you on? Did we not move to 04?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Does it mean then that the assisted primary schools will be getting less money?

Madam Chairman: But, hon. Member for Caroni East, I believe that Item was dealt with and there is an undertaking to get it in writing.

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Mr. Imbert: We passed there already.

Dr. Gopeesingh: He said he would give it in writing?

Madam Chairman: Grants to assisted primary schools? Yes.

Mr. Imbert: Are you present?

Dr. Gopeesingh: No, he made a statement—

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Caroni East, please.

Dr. Gopeesingh: I want to ask a question. I am not finished, Madam Chair.

Miss Ramdial: Thank you, Madam Chair, 006, 30, Textbook Rental Secondary Management Unit Secondary Schools. Can the Minister give some clarification for the decrease by $1.5 million in 2016?

Mr. Imbert: Let me answer that. The textbook rental provision is based on the condition of the textbooks in the schools, the need for supplementation of the textbooks in the schools, it would vary from year to year. If you look at 2014, you would see the provision was only $4 million, then it went up to $20 million in 2015 where they purchased new books to replenish the stock, and then it is going back down to $18.5 million. So it varies from year to year depending on the demands in the schools; that is how it works. It is a stock of books, they are supposed to be returned and you replenish the stock as and when required.

Dr. Rambachan: Madam Chair, I just want one clarification. On six, Education Institutions 9, Grants to Assisted Primary Schools, the word “assisted”—

Mr. Imbert: This is now the third time.

Dr. Rambachan: I asked for clarification. The word “assisted”—

Madam Chairman: Hon. Minister of Finance.

Dr. Rambachan:—is it specifically related to denominational schools or are there other schools on that list, and what is the list of those schools?
Madam Chairman: I would suggest in the response in writing, that the question asked by the Member for Tabaquite also be addressed. Can I please move on?

Dr. Khan: Thank you, Madam Chair. This is directed to the Minister of Finance who just indicated to my colleague from Fyzabad, when he asked the question about Eric Williams Medical Sciences Complex, the $53 million there, and he indicated that the San Fernando Teaching Hospital is under health. But what I think I would like to know, the $53 million for Eric Medical Sciences Complex, what is that for?

Mr. Imbert: As you know there is an educational facility at Eric Williams.

Dr. Khan: I am very glad the Member has said that, now he understands the San Fernando Teaching Hospital is an education facility.

Mr. Imbert: Do you not know that our medical school is at Mount Hope? Are you not aware?

Dr. Khan: So you cannot say it is health. No offence, Member, this is a real question, and the thing about it you are being a little facetious with the part with health. You have to understand, the San Fernando Teaching Hospital has two floors for the University of the West Indies training medical students. He is looking up in the air now. He does that all the time, you know. [Crosstalk]

Madam Chairman: I suggest if you look here, you will not be distracted.

Dr. Khan: My question is this, can he follow up with the question for the Member for Fyzabad and indicate to us whether the San Fernando Teaching Hospital/UWI medical student facility, will be getting some money to continue, so we would not have to pay GATE to Grenada and Mona, Jamaica? That is all we are asking. It is not a health question.

Mr. Imbert: Madam Chairman, these questions keep coming in the form of
a speech, and they bear no relationship to the line Item. Madam Chairman, I am asking you to allow me to answer the question without interruption from the other side.

This allocation is for the Eric Williams Medical Sciences Complex, where the medical faculty of the University of the West Indies is located. How can you ask about San Fernando on a line item that speaks to the Eric Williams Medical Sciences Complex in Mount Hope? Find the line item with respect to San Fernando and ask the question there.

**Dr. Khan:** Had it been a line Item, Madam Chairman—if the line Item was more specific—this says Eric Williams Medical Sciences Complex. It does not say faculty—

**Mr. Imbert:** There is only one of those; it is in Mount Hope.

**Dr. Khan:** No, it did not say Faculty of Medicine, University of the West Indies, and that is where the confusion lies.

**Madam Chairman:** Hon. Member for Barataria/San Juan, I think the difficulty comes in the way the question—what is asked maybe not what is intended. Therefore I think Members have to watch the question they are asking; phrase it properly.

**Dr. Khan:** I will be guided. Can I ask just one question to the Minister of Education and the Minister of Finance?

**Mr. Imbert:** What line Item are you on?

**Madam Chairman:** One minute, please, hon. Minister of Finance.

**Dr. Khan:** On line Item 41. Would you consider, Minister of Education—I am not speaking to the Minister of Finance, he seems to be in a different place—putting the medical education and nursing education under the Ministry of Health where it belongs?
Hon. Garcia: I will consult with my Minister of Finance. [Crosstalk]

Madam Chairman: Hon. Minister of Finance, let us try and proceed.

Mr. Singh: Thank you, Madam Chair. I just want the Minister of Finance or the Minister of Education to clarify whether the Higher Education Loan Programme, Item 51, with the allocation of $30 million, is consistent with the plan by the Government to deal with means testing, and whether the allocation is appropriate?

Madam Chairman: This is line Item 51, and you are asking whether the allocation is appropriate?

Mr. Singh: Having regard to the announced policy.

Madam Chairman: And “appropriate” there means sufficient?

Mr. Singh: Yes.

Mr. Imbert: Madam Chairman, I will try my best today. “Ah go try.” I answered a question on GATE already, because the allocation for GATE is in the Ministry of Finance, and we went through a long, long explanation as to you have a special GATE fund into which funds are transferred. There was a balance already in the fund and, therefore, you have in excess of $700million in the GATE fund. The GATE fund is where we are looking at the question as to whether a means test should be introduced for wealthy people or not. It has nothing to do with this.

This is the Higher Education Loan Programme, and this is a programme to provide funding for expenses that are not associated with tuition, because the “T” in GATE is tuition, Government Assistance for Tuition Expenses. This is the Higher Education Loan Plan which is for funding, a loan to students for accommodation, for books, for transportation and for all their other expenses associated with university. It has nothing to do with a means test. A means test deals with a grant, not a loan, by definition. Please!
Mr. Charles: Thank you very much, Madam Chairman, Item 24, Grants to Government Secondary Schools. [Interruption]

Madam Chairman: May we have a little order, please!

Mr. Charles: The question relates to again—Minister of Finance will you permit me to ask the question, please?—006, Item 24. The question I am asking is: Why would the grants to government secondary schools be decreased by $1.5 million, in the context of the fact that there are challenges in the government secondary schools in terms of the performance at the exams, and your stated concern that you are looking at government secondary schools. Perhaps you may want to put that in writing, and I will also at the same time take the opportunity on 32 to ask: Why is there an increase to private primary schools of $500,000, and a decrease to assisted primary schools by $16 million, but an increase to private primary schools? I am sure there is a justification which the Minister would enlighten us on. So it is two questions.

Mr. Imbert: I can answer both questions. In the first instance it decreased to—grants to government secondary schools is 1 per cent of the allocation, and in a budgeting exercise one provides the funds that are required, consistent with the information provided. A decrease of $1 million in $100 million is just 1 per cent. So that if during the year the Minister of Education feels he needs that additional $1 million out of his overall budget of $7,000 million, I am sure the Minister could find $1 million out of $7,000 million elsewhere and do a transfer.

Similarly with respect to the second question, again this is an allocation based on the information and the requests coming from the Ministry of Education to the Ministry of Finance. I want to make the point, when you are a Ministry and you have an allocation of $7 billion, there are some things you cannot touch. You cannot touch direct charges, you cannot touch teachers’ salaries, but there are lots
of other Heads where you can move funds around to meet the exigencies of the service. So a 1 per cent change in a Head, in my opinion, in the context of what I have just said, is not significant and will be dealt with.

**Mr. Charles:** Madam Chairman, as a follow-up question, a 1 per cent change is not significant, but it points to a direction. The question is: One would assume that it is policy that the government schools would be prioritized and, therefore, to cut the government schools and increase the denominational schools is inconsistent with your stated policy.

**Madam Chairman:** Remember what we are entertaining here are questions. Remember, Members, we are dealing with questions here.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** My question has been lingering for a while, on the question of number 20, under 006 and 202, Fees for Students at Private Secondary Schools. There has been no allocation, no increase—

**Mr. Imbert:** You are going back again?

**Madam Chairman:** One minute, please.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** No, my hand has been up—

**Madam Chairman:** One minute, please. Hon. Member for Caroni East, we are at Educational Institutions. Is your question within Educational Institutions?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Madam Chair, my hands have been lingering to ask this question for a long time. [Interruption]

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

**Mr. Imbert:** We will never finish.

**Madam Chairman:** We have to finish and we shall finish.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** I have had my hand up for the longest while.

**Madam Chairman:** Is your question under the line Item Education Institutions?
Dr. Gopeesingh: Yes, Madam Chair.

Madam Chairman: I will allow it. What is the question?

Dr. Gopeesingh: The fees for students at primary schools remain the same.

Madam Chairman: And the question is?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Are there more students now within the private secondary schools which we will need to pay more money for?

Madam Chairman: Can I suggest that that answer be given in writing, please? So we are moving on.

Dr. Gopeesingh: No, just the last one on 22. The local school boards—

Mr. Imbert: May I make a request to you? Before we continue—

Madam Chairman: Hon. Minister of Finance, I have not recognized you.

Dr. Gopeesingh: The local school boards—the Minister attempted to give an answer for himself.

Madam Chairman: What line Item are we under?

Dr. Gopeesingh: No. 22. The local school boards for secondary schools, we began paying the increased fees last year—

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Caroni East, I do not want a statement. What is the question?—because we dealt with this.

Dr. Gopeesingh: The question is: why have they decreased the expenditure for local school boards for secondary schools when last year we had to pay $4.4 million?

2.45 p.m.

Madam Chairman: I believe the answer for that was—when you look at the estimates for 2016 they were the same as the estimates for 2015.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Madam Chair, that is what I was coming to.

Madam Chairman: And we said that would be given in writing.
Dr. Gopeesingh: In writing.

Madam Chairman: All right. So can we go on? And we are moving on to Item 007 Households. We are moving to Item 007—hon. Member for Siparia. I have determined we are moving to Item 007 Households. That is quite right. Item 007 Households. We are on page 204 for the guidance of everybody. Item 009 Other Transfers. Hon. Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.

Dr. Lee: No. I just want a question under Households line Item 25 Servol.

Madam Chairman: Item 009 Other Transfers. Item 011 Transfers to State Enterprises. Hon. Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: I see a reduction on Item No. 02 under Transfers to State Enterprises of $14.5 million less for the School Feeding Programme. Can you explain why you are cutting the expenditure for the School Feeding Programme from $250 million to $235 million. Are you going to leave out some students who are now receiving meals in schools? Are you cutting meals for students by $14.5 million?

Madam Chairman: Hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Imbert: Madam Chairman, before I answer this, I had a question I would like to ask it now if you do not mind.

Madam Chairman: I would really like the hon. Minister of Finance, if we could deal with the question.

Mr. Imbert: I will, but I am seeking your indulgence just to ask one question.

Madam Chairman: To ask a question.

Mr. Imbert: Just one.

Madam Chairman: Can we move on, please, to 02/011?

Mr. Imbert: Madam Chairman, we are almost at the end of the book, I just
want to know if we are going back again. So what is your ruling on that? Are you going to allow them to go back to previous pages in Education? I just want to know.

Madam Chairman: No. We are not going back.

Mr. Imbert: Thank you very much.

Madam Chairman: But I want us to understand that if we are on an Item and the Item spans pages.

Mr. Imbert: I understand that.

Madam Chairman: Right. Thank you.

Mr. Imbert: I am talking about previous cycles.

Madam Chairman: No. We are on 011—

Mr. Imbert: Thank you.

Madam Chairman: —commencing on page 205 and there is a question on the line Item 02.

Mr. Imbert: So that is 011: 02 National Schools Dietary Services Limited.

Madam Chairman: Yes.

Mr. Imbert: [Crosstalk] I got the question. I am going to answer it now. The revised estimate for 2015 was $250 million. The 2016 estimate is $235,500,000. Madam Chairman, we have recognized at the level of the Ministry of Education that there was a lot of overspending in 2015, and therefore, we have chosen to reduce allocations to a number—[Crosstalk]

Madam Chairman: Hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Imbert: I am waiting for the rest—the Members opposite to stop.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Minister of Finance, kindly proceed.

Mr. Imbert: We have chosen to reduce allocations where there was a lot of questionable expenditure, a lot of allegations of contracts being awarded under
very questionable circumstances; and this one, the National Schools Dietary Services Limited is a company where we are going to be looking very closely at the contracts that were awarded in 2015. And we do believe that we can provide the same amount of food to the same amount of children with the same amount of diet and nutrition in it, and quite possibly of a higher quality for less money because of what happened in this country in 2015 [Desk thumping] because of the corruption, the waste and the mismanagement. So that is the answer.

**Madam Chairman:** All right. Members, any other questions under 011 Transfers to State Enterprises? Therefore, we are going on to Sub-Head 06. Could we have some order, please?

**Mr. Imbert:** You would get more food for less.

**Madam Chairman:** Can we go on to Sub-Head 06 Current Transfers to Statutory Board and Similar Bodies? Item 004 Statutory Bodies. Hon. Member for Caroni East.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Line Item 53 NALIS. Could you give a rationale for moving NALIS from Ministry of Education to Ministry of Communications? You have moved it from Ministry of Education to Ministry of Communications — NALIS. And NALIS has libraries in each one of the secondary schools.

**Madam Chairman:** So the question is—

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** The question is why are you moving it from Ministry of Education to Ministry of Communications?

**Hon. Garcia:** That answer would be supplied to you in writing.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Really you should be able to—

**Madam Chairman:** Member, please. [Crosstalk] Member, please. Sub-Head 09 Development Programme. Consolidated Fund, Item 003 Economic Infrastructure. Hon. Member for Chaguanas East.
Dr. Karim: Madam Chair, when you get to F 001, if I can ask a question there, please? On that same page.

Madam Chairman: Any questions under Item 003 Economic Infrastructure? Therefore, we go on to 004 Social Infrastructure.

Dr. Karim: Madam Chair, sorry. I was going to ask on F same page 86 Support to Non-University Tertiary Education.

Madam Chairman: So, you are looking at Financial Services?

Dr. Karim: Yes.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Chaguanas East.

Dr. Karim: Thank you. Would the hon. Minister indicate—because this is really a European Union grant to the Government of Trinidad and Tobago to facilitate research projects in a number of areas beneficial to the education sector. Would you be kind enough to let us know what projects have been selected for implementation utilizing this fund?

Hon. Garcia: First of all I would like to state that not all projects that have been submitted will be funded this year. Those that will be funded will be given to you in writing.

Madam Chairman: Item 004 Social Infrastructure. Item 005 Multi-Sectoral and Other Services. Infrastructure Development Fund.

Dr. Karim: Madam Chair.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Chaguanas East, are you at Infrastructure Development Fund?

Dr. Karim: Yeah. Under IDF page 87, D, may I be permitted to ask?

Madam Chairman: IDF is not on page 87, D, you know, Development Programme is on 87. So, we are now on IDF. Members, please. We are on the Infrastructure Development Fund which is page 291. Item 004 Social
Dr. Gopeesingh: Line item 002 on Pre-Primary Improvement/Refurbishment/Extensions to ECCE Centres. There is no allocation there, as well as no allocation for procurement of furniture and equipment ECCE centres. Does it mean that you have abandoned everything for refurbishment and improvement of ECCE centres? Why is there no allocation whatsoever in these two line items for improvement/refurbishment/extension and procurement of furniture and equipment for ECCE centres? None. Absolutely none.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Minister of Education, are you in a position to give this response orally?

Hon. Garcia: Not at the moment, but we will furnish you with a report, as soon as we can, in writing.

Dr. Gopeesingh: You have no rationale for it?

Hon. Garcia: We will give you that report in writing.

M

Question put and agreed to.

Head 26 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Madam Chairman: Might I thank the representatives from the Ministry of Education for attending and assisting the committee. They are relieved. Head 67.

Madam Chairman: I will now invite the hon. Minister of Planning and Development to make a brief opening statement not exceeding five minutes.

Hon. Robinson-Regis: Thank you very kindly, Madam Chairman. The Ministry of Planning and Development is established as the leader in physical, socio-economic and environmental planning to provide guiding national policy development, strategic direction and budget support through the Public Sector Investment Programme, the Multilateral and Regional Financial and
Developmental Institutions programmes to drive the transformation of Trinidad and Tobago to be more diversified, competitive, innovative and people-focused. The core institutions placed under the Ministry will ensure that there is evidence-based policy planning, results-placed planning and links planning, budgeting and results to achieve the Government’s agenda for sustainable inclusive development and gender-based planning.

The Ministry of Planning and Development therefore is charged with responsibility of coordinating the development of the Vision 2030 for Trinidad and Tobago. The Ministry is mandated to cooperate with all the relevant agencies to prepare and implement strategies that would lead to the achievement of the goals of the Government’s vision for the advancement of our twin-island state.

As a consequence, through its various divisions and agencies, the Ministry prepares the Public Sector Investment Programme which is the capital expenditure component of the national budget. It contributes to the prioritizing of Government’s development programme and relates it to the national budget which, as I said, will be a gender-based budgeting. The Ministry interfaces with Inter-American Development Bank, the Caribbean Development Bank and the European Union. It also interfaces with the United Nations Development Programme and technical cooperation.

The Ministry also monitors those statutory bodies under the ambits of the Ministry ensuring that their financial affairs are conducted in a manner ensuring that principles of value for money, transparency and accountability are strictly adhered to.

Unfortunately, Madam Chairman, this Ministry and Trinidad and Tobago has had to suffer the ignominy of spending over $40 million on a forum on competitiveness with the result being that our competitiveness index fell and our
corruption index rose. Additionally, we have had the situation in the CDA which falls under this Ministry of over $18,000 being spent monthly on rental of a vehicle for the non-executive chairman, and the situation of the company of a son of Minister being given $4 million for public relations work not completed.

Madam Chairman, with the realignment of the environment function, the Ministry’s role is also to ensure that consideration is given to the environment in all Government’s development plans and programmes and emphasis will therefore be placed on this new focus of the Ministry.

Madam Chairman, thank you very much for this opportunity and the Ministry of Planning and Development will be working hand in hand with all Government Ministries to achieve the Government’s vision. Thank you very kindly, Madam Chairman.

*Question proposed:* That Head 67 stand part of the Schedule

3.00 p.m.

**Madam Chairman:** Hon. Members, the sum of $445,151,850 for Head 67, Ministry of Planning and Development is comprised of moneys proposed for expenditure under the following Sub-Heads and Items to be found in the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure* and the *Draft Estimates of the Development Programme*.

Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure, and we are on page 427 for the information of Members. Item 001, General Administration. Hon. Member for Caroni Central.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Under General Administration I am looking at the general increase on page 426, can that be explained simply by the incorporation of the Ministry of the Environment with the Ministry of Planning and Development?

**Hon. Robinson-Regis:** Yes, Member for Caroni Central.
Dr. Tewarie: Might I respond to the Member on the matters raised in the general comments of the Minister?

Madam Chairman: No, no. I am very sorry, hon. Member for Caroni Central, we are dealing with the line Items.

Dr. Tewarie: So, I have to wait till I get there?

Madam Chairman: Please! Item 001, General Administration? We are moving on to Item 003, Technical Co-operation? Item 004, Central Statistical Office? Item 005, Urban and Regional Planning Division? Item 006—

Dr. Tewarie: Could I ask something on this Central Statistical Office?

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Caroni Central.

Dr. Tewarie: Minister of Planning and Development, would it not be true to say that when you came to the Ministry that there were significant advances made?

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Caroni Central, could you refer me to the line Item?

Dr. Tewarie: Central Statistical Office.

Madam Chairman: No, I am sorry. [Interruption] One minute please, Members.

Dr. Tewarie: Did you call 004?

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Caroni Central, I will entertain a question on Item 005 because I was about to move on to 006. So, if it is that I have moved a little too quickly and somebody wants to ask a question on Item 005, which is Urban and Regional Planning Division, I will entertain that. If not, I am moving on to Item 006, Green Fund Executing Unit.

Dr. Tewarie: But, I did not get 004, Ma’am.

Madam Chairman: I called 004, hon. Member for Caroni Central.

Dr. Tewarie: Well, maybe you are faster on the draw than I am, Ma’am.
Madam Chairman: I am very sorry, I called and I paused. Hon. Member for Chaguanas West.

Dr. Tewarie: Ma’am, this is not a school, you know; this is a Parliament.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Caroni Central.


Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Caroni Central, I really would prefer if you retract that statement.

Mr. Hinds: Immediately.

Dr. Tewarie: Ma’am,—

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Caroni Central, I will really prefer that you retract that statement.

Dr. Tewarie: Retract what, Ma’am?

Madam Chairman: That this is not a primary school.

Dr. Tewarie: I did not say primary, I said it is not a school.

Madam Chairman: Whatever it is.

Dr. Tewarie: If that is offensive—

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Caroni Central.

Dr. Tewarie: If that is offensive to you, Ma’am, I withdraw it. It was not meant to be offensive.

Madam Chairman: I have heard you, may we go on, please. I now recognize the hon. Member for Chaguanas West.

Mr. Singh: Thank you, Ma’am. With respect to the Green Fund Executing Unit, the Member articulated that it is their intention to expand to Tobago, but I see that the allocation remains the same, so I just wanted to know, how can there be a reconciliation of the policy position indicated by the hon. Minister and the allocation remaining the same?
Hon. Robinson-Regis: Member, there had been no previous movement into Tobago. We are of the view that if we need more than this in order to do that expansion into Tobago, we will be able to get the funds in order to do that. But, based on what has happened with the Green Fund, we feel that this allocation is adequate and that Tobago will be covered.

Madam Chairman: Item 008, Project Planning and Reconstruction Division? Item 089, Environmental Policy and Planning Division? Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services; Item 001, General Administration, and we are at page 430? Item 002, Library Service Unit? Item 003, Technical Co-operation? Item 004, Central Statistical Office? Hon. Member for Couva North.

Miss Ramdial: Thank you, Madam Chair. Under 004, 08, Rent /Lease - Office Accommodation and Storage, we are seeing a sharp increase by $11.45 million for rent/lease. Can the Minister explain that?

Hon. Robinson-Regis: Thank you very much, Madam Chairman. Member, you may know that the Central Statistical Office has recently been moving to new accommodation, having not been adequately accommodated for perhaps four years, and they are moving to new accommodation and this would explain the increase for the accommodation. A lot of members of staff of that division were operating from home, but just prior to us coming into office they were moved to new accommodation, so that explains the figure.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Caroni Central.

Dr. Tewarie: I think, hon Member, you would agree that most of your units at the Ministry operate very effectively and efficiently, and the Central Statistical Office is no exception, and that the move that was made was moved—

Mr. Hinds: Question.

Madam Chairman: One minute please, proceed, hon. Member for Caroni
Dr. Tewarie: The move that was made at the Central Statistical Office was
to take care of problems that have been long-standing as indeed have been a
number of the reforms that took place there including bringing the unemployment
statistics up-to-date for the first time in a decade or so.

Madam Chairman: And hon. Member for Caroni Central, the question is?

Dr. Tewarie: The question is—

Mr. Imbert: What line Item?

Madam Chairman: One, minute please, hon. Minister of Finance.

Dr. Tewarie: Without planning politics, have there not been significant
advances in the rehabilitation of the Central Statistical Office in keeping with the
recommendations that were made?

Madam Chairman: And hon. Member for Caroni Central, could you guide
me with respect to which line Item you are referring?

Dr. Tewarie: Central Statistical Office, 004.

Madam Chairman: Yes, and line Item—which one of the line Items are we
addressing?

Dr. Tewarie: The Minister made a response—

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Caroni Central, I believe we have
already addressed that issue. So that I am willing to entertain a question on any of
the line Items under 004 which are numbered 01 to 96.

Dr. Tewarie: I cannot find it in a line Item.

Madam Chairman: Okay, so hon. Member for Caroni Central, what I will
do is—[Interruption] Members, please! I will entertain the next person. If you can
find the line Item that you want to pose your question under and I would revert to
you. Hon. Member for Naparima.
Mr. Charles: Thank you very much. I am looking at Item 08, which is an $11 million increase, and I am contrasting that with 16 Contract Employment where there is a $200,000 decrease. Training, Item 17, page 432, there is a decrease; short-term employment there is a decrease. The question I am asking is, it seems to be skewed—the increased expenditure—in terms of rent and property, rather than human resources, and would he agree that, given the challenges with the Central Statistical Office, attention should be paid to the human resource development?

Hon. Robinson-Regis: Thank you very much, Madam Chairman. In answer to the Member for Naparima, I would like to indicate that because of the fact that we are trying to regularize the employment at the CSO, the short-term employment is being reduced and actual bodies who can actually do the projects and proceed with what is necessary for the advancement of the CSO, those persons are in fact being employed.

Additionally, we are working with the IDB and Statistics Sweden. We have done work with Statistics Sweden in order to deal with the issue of training and in order to ensure that we have an independent statistical unit that will be developed over a short period of time in order to ensure that the CSO gets to the standard that it should be as an independent institution to provide accurate statistics. So, that explains the increases and decreases where you see them.

Mr. Charles: Thank you.

Hon. Robinson-Regis: You are welcome.

Dr. Moonilal: Just a follow-up with the hon. Minister in the response. You had already indicated your Government has indicated a policy decision to establish another institute to deal with statistics. It was described to us earlier in the budget statement. Why are you going to make this sort of investment in the statistical unit
which you intend to close down, in the first place?

Hon. Robinson-Regis: As usual, the Member for Oropouche East seems to be misleading this House. We have never said that we would be closing down the CSO. [Desk thumping] This Government has said, from day one, and even when we were in Government previously, that the intention is to make an independent statistical institute and, consequently, we are back on that road with the assistance of the IDB and other agencies, and we are moving assiduously in that direction. We have never indicated that we will be closing down the CSO. We have indicated that we will be developing an independent statistical institute that will include staff of the CSO, persons from the Central Bank and the University of the West Indies. We said that. [Desk thumping]

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Caroni Central.

Dr. Tewarie: I would just say, Ma’am, that the Member is seeking to mislead this House, because she is continuing what we started—

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Caroni Central. Hon. Member for Caroni Central, could you relate what—

Dr. Tewarie: You all are too unreasonable. [Crosstalk]

Madam Chairman: Could we stop the crosstalk, please, Members and let us have a little order! Hon. Member for Caroni Central, could you identify a line Item and the question that relates to that line Item?

Dr. Tewarie: The Item with the CSO, Ma’am; there is no specific line Item there. The Minister is making general statements that are untrue.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member!

Dr. Tewarie: Which she knows to be untrue.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Caroni Central, the statement—

Dr. Tewarie: I have no problem with her progress.

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Madam Chairman:— that the hon. Minister made was in relation to a particular question that was asked—Why suppress, why make an investment in a unit that you intend to close down?—and, therefore, the answer related to the question that was asked.

So, I am asking you, can you, therefore, relate your question to a line Item? If not, I will proceed, and I go on to Item 005, Urban and Regional Planning Division. Item 006, Green Fund Executing Unit? Item 008, Project Planning and Reconstruction Division? Item 009, Environmental Policy and Planning Division? Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases; Item 001, General Administration, we are at page 435 for the guidance of Members. Item 002, Library Service Unit? Item 003, Technical Co-operation? Item 004, Central Statistical Office? Item 005, Urban and Region Planning Division? Item 006, Green Fund Executing Unit? Item 008, Project, Planning and Reconstruction Division? Item 009, Environmental Policy and Planning Division?

We are moving on now to Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies, which is at page 438 for the guidance of Members. Item 001, Regional Bodies? Item 002, Commonwealth Bodies? Item 003, United Nations Organizations? Item 004, International Bodies? Item 005, Non-Profit Institutions? Item 006, Educational Institutions? Hon. Member for Caroni Central, Item 006, Educational Institutions.

Dr. Tewarie: Item 006, Caribbean Industrial Research Institute. This is an institution that plays an important role in the development—well, I better wait till we get to the development budget. [Crosstalk]

Madam Chairman: Members, could we have some order, please! Item 007, Households? Item 009, Other Transfers? Item 010, Other Transfers Abroad?

We move on to Sub-Head 06, Current Transfers to Statutory Boards and
Similar Bodies, we are at page 440 for the guidance of Members. Item 004, Statutory Bodies?

**Dr. Tewarie:** Yes, Chaguaramas Development Authority.

**Madam Chairman:** Hon. Member for Caroni Central.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Yes, Ma’am, in your opening statement you made some allegations about Chaguaramas Development Authority—

**Madam Chairman:** So, we are on line Item 49?

**Dr. Tewarie:** Yes.

**Madam Chairman:** Yes, please.

**Dr. Tewarie:** It had to do with some allegation about the chairman and something about a public relations firm. Was the Minister involved in this?

**Hon. Member:** “Ooooh”.

**Madam Chairman:** Excuse me! [Interrupt] Might I, please? Are we on Item 06, Current Transfers to Statutory Bodies and Similar Bodies?

**Dr. Tewarie:** Yes.

**Madam Chairman:** And this is under Current Transfers to Statutory Bodies and Similar Bodies?

**Dr. Tewarie:** Yes, but she made—

**Madam Chairman:** So, hon. Member for Caroni Central—

**Dr. Tewarie:** It has to do with the use of money, Ma’am.

**Madam Chairman:** Hon. Member for Caroni Central, I am not going to allow your question because it is not under Current Transfers to Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Madam Chair, the Minister made the allegation and you are protecting the Minister.

**Madam Chairman:** Honourable! Hon. Member for Couva South, do you
have a question on a line Item here?

**Mr. Indarsingh:** I am just supporting what the Member for Caroni Central said.

**Madam Chairman:** And I have ruled, hon. Member for Couva South, that I am not allowing the question. Any other question under Item 004, Statutory Bodies? Hon. Member for Caroni East.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** As far as I see, the hon. Member was on line Item, Chaguanas Development Authority, 49, and he is being prevented from asking his question.

**Madam Chairman:** Hon. Member for Caroni East. [Interrupt] Hon. Member for Caroni East, I would really wish that we be guided in our words. The hon. Member was never, never prohibited from asking his question. Can we go to, Sub-Item 09, Development Programme Consolidated Fund, and we are on page 196 of the Draft Estimates for Development Programme Consolidated Fund; Item 001, Pre-Investment? Item 003, Economic Infrastructure? Item 004, Social Infrastructure? Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services. Infrastructure Development Programme, and we are at page 345 for the guidance of Members. Item 004, Social Infrastructure.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Head 67 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.*

**Madam Chairman:** I want to thank the hon. Minister and the representatives from the Ministry of Planning and Development for coming to assist the committee, and you all are relieved.

Can we move on now to Head 39, Ministry of Public Utilities? And for the guidance of all Members we are now proceeding to page 276 of the Draft Estimates for Recurrent Expenditure.

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Dr. Moonilal: Could I raise a matter at this time while we wait for technical people? Ma’am, I could understand the need to move quickly and so on, but I just want to observe respectfully that this process could be undermined by such haste, and such attempt by Members of the Government to bulldoze the process, that we have on this side. When we catch ourselves simply to move to a page, you are already there and announcing another page. I know we are pressed for time today due to no fault of ours, but I would just ask for us to just concentrate, but follow the process with much more consideration. Then there is a risk that we can defeat this very process by an undue haste to get through the Heads, respectfully.

Mr. Young: Madam Chair, if I may? We take great offence on this side to the suggestion that the Government is bulldozing a process that, for the record, is really one driven by the Opposition. One would have thought that they would have researched their line Items and been prepared and listening to it in a manner where they can contribute and ask the questions on time.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Members, both comments are noted.

I am proceeding now to the Head under consideration, Head 39, Ministry of Public Utilities. Head 39, Ministry of Public Utilities, the sum of $3,976,709. I would now invite the Minister of Public Utilities to make a brief opening statement not exceeding five minutes.

Hon. Brig. Gen. Antoine: Madam Chairman, the public utilities sector has been allotted the sum of $4.425 billion in fiscal 2016. The Ministry will be aiming to restore public confidence and rebuild this nation’s trust in the delivery of public utilities. In this regard, I intend to manage the affairs with the Ministry, utilizing the core values of service excellence, partnership, transparency, accountability, integrity, trust and mutual respect. Good governance in the spending of public funds must therefore be the order in fiscal 2016 for the Ministry of Public Utilities.
and the agencies under its purview; those are: WASA, T&TEC, CEPEP, SWMCOL and TTPost. In addition, stringent reviewing, monitoring and evaluation of programmes and projects will become priority.

*Question proposed:* That Head 39 stand part of the Schedule.

**Madam Chairman:** Hon. Members, the sum of $3,976,709 for the Head 39, Ministry of Public Utilities, is comprised of moneys proposed for expenditure under the following Sub-Heads and Items to be found in the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure*, and the *Draft Estimates of the Development Programme*. For the guidance of Members, we are at page 276, Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure; Item 001, General Administration. Hon. Member for Chaguanas West.

**Mr. Singh:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Personnel Expenditure, General Administration, I see there is a decrease by $15,350,000. I would like to find out the reason for that decrease in the context of the personnel of the Ministry of Public Utilities?

**Madam Chairman:** And the hon. Minister of Finance will give that answer in writing under his general undertaking. Can we go on to Head 002, Meteorological Services?

**Mr. Singh:** No, Ma’am, I am not yet complete.

**Madam Chairman:** You are still under 001?

**Mr. Singh:** Yes, I am still under 001.

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

**Mr. Singh:** There is a decrease of $2.2 million in Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance, is this part of the general undertaking?

**Madam Chairman:** Hon. Member for Chaguanas West, everything under 01 for every Head will be dealt with under that general undertaking. Item 002,
Mr. Singh: Similarly, Madam Chairman—

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Chaguanas West.

Mr. Singh:—in 01, Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance for the Electrical Inspectorate, there is a decrease of $950,000.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Chaguanas West, that would be covered by the undertaking. Hon. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you Chair. Through you, Chair, Minister, can you indicate on line Item 42, 02, Goods and Services, why there is a decrease in the street lighting?

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member, please, we are still under Sub-Head 01, and we have now reached the Electrical Inspectorate, 005.


Madam Chairman: We are now going on to Item—Member for Tabaquite, did you have a question under that? All right, so we are going on to Item 007—

Hon. Member: Item 006.

Madam Chairman: Item 006, Government Printery.

Mr. Singh: There is a significant increase—

Madam Chairman: Is this Government Printery?

Mr. Singh: Yes. Yes, Ma’am. Significant increase, could you explain?

Mr. Imbert: It has gone to another Ministry.

Madam Chairman: Is there not an explanation there in the explanation column, saying transferred to Head, Ministry of Communications?

Mr. Imbert: It is there in black and white.

Madam Chairman: All right, so we will take it there, please, hon. Member for Chaguanas West. All right, can we go on, please? Item 007, General
Appropriation (Financial Year 2016) Bill, 2015
Standing Finance Committee

Administration. We are moving on to Sub-Head 03, and this is at page 298 for the guidance of Members.

**Hon. Member:** Page 278.

3.30 p.m.

**Madam Chairman:** Page 278, sorry. Sub-Head 03—and this is at page 278 for the guidance of Members. Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases. Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services. Item 001, General Administration.

**Mr. Singh:** Madam Chairman, line Item 16, Contract Employment. There is a small increase and it includes Provision for Graduate Employment. Is this confined to graduate employment or does it include additional employment?

**Madam Chairman:** Hon. Minister for Public Utilities.

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Antoine:** It includes additional employment.

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

**Mr. Singh:** Street Lighting, line Item 42, under Goods and Services. There is a decrease of $7.6 million in Street Lighting. What does that mean in the context of the lighting-up programme that the hon. Member talked about?

**Mr. Imbert:** What line Item?

**Madam Chairman:** Page 279, line Item 42.

**Mr. Imbert:** Well they light already.

**Madam Chairman:** Hon. Minister of Public Utilities are you in a position to give that answer orally or you will give it in writing?

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Antoine:** I will give it in writing.

**Madam Chairman:** Hon. Member for Tabaquite. Item 002, Meteorological Services. Item 005, Electrical Inspectorate. Hon. Member for Chaguanas West.

**Mr. Singh:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Similarly, Item 16, Contract Employment. There is an increase by $1.855 million for Contract Employment.

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This is an employment different from the electrical inspectorate having regard to the fact that, previously, under General Administration there was a decrease of $2.2 million.

**Hon. Brig. Gen. Antoine:** That is contract employment for electrical inspectors.

**Mr. Imbert:** Let me just deal with the particular question. If you look at the original allocation for that Head for 2015 you will see $3.5 million. Member for Chaguanas West?

**Mr. Singh:** Yes.

**Mr. Imbert:** Right. So if you look at the line Item 2015, original, you see $3.5 million. Okay? But they were only able to spend $395,000. So during fiscal 2015 they were not able to fill the positions. So now they got an increased allocation because they anticipate they would fill the positions in 2016 that they could not fill in 2015.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 007, General Administration. Sub-Head 03 Minor Equipment Purchases. And we are at page 283. Item 001, General Administration. Item 002, Meteorological Services. Item 005, Electrical Inspectorate. Item 007, General Administration. Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies, page 285, Item 001, Regional Bodies. Item 003, United Nations Organizations. Item 004, International Bodies. Item 007, Households. Hon. Member for Chaguanas West.

**Mr. Singh:** Thank you, Madam Chair. With respect to the Utilities Assistance Programme I see that there has been an increase of $1.4 million from the previous allocation in 2015 of $4.6. And whether this is sufficient to meet the expansion of the programme and how many households, individuals will be impacted by this increase?

**Madam Chairman:** Could that be in writing, please?
Hon. Brig. Gen. Antoine: It will be given in writing.

Madam Chairman: Item 009, Other Transfers. Item 011—I am sorry, hon. Member for Chaguanas West.

Mr. Singh: Madam Chair, I sit in the back. You have to cast your eyes at times. The CEPEP programme - Other Transfers remains at $609 million, so that therefore, the programme will be sustained in its current form?

Mr. Imbert: We did not want to do any radical surgery on CEPEP until we understood what was going on. If you look at the allocations for this programme over the years, it has gone from $300 million to $600 million. There has been a doubling of expenditure and it is a very large jump in the number of persons employed. So we felt that we would just put the allocation and then spend the time over the next couple months reviewing it to see whether we should continue with this level of expenditure in CEPEP.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Oropouche East.

Dr. Moonilal: Thank you very much, Ma’am, for the record we still have five minutes to ask a question? But I want to proceed. Bearing in mind the statement from the Minister of Finance, my question to the Minister of Public Utilities, over the last year CEPEP generated revenue to the tune of more or less $22 million. Do you have a further strategy in the coming fiscal year for generating more revenue from CEPEP to offset this expenditure which the Minister indicated was a concern?

Hon. Brig. Gen. Antoine: When we make a comprehensive examination of CEPEP we will put it for you in writing.

Madam Chairman: Sub-Head 06, Current Transfers to Statutory Bodies.

Mr. Singh: Madam Chair, I was still on Item 009.

Madam Chairman: Item 009, Other Transfers.
Mr. Singh: Yes. In dealing with the T&TEC repayment loan, item 13, T&TEC - Repayment of Loan to the National Gas Company. Madam Chair, there is a decrease of $8.709 million. And I just wanted to—whether it is in writing, whether this loan now is completed with this payment or how much money is outstanding for that T&TEC loan to the National Gas Company. And similarly, in item 14, Repayment of Loan – Re Cove Power Station. There is an allocation of now, $1.856 million and whether or not that loan has been repaid by T&TEC on the issue. A decrease, both decreases.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Minister for Public Utilities. Will the response be given in writing?

Hon. Brig. Gen. Antoine: That response will be given in writing.

Mr. Singh: And just for clarification, and I would like the hon.Member to clarity whether the T&TEC loan to the National Gas Company, whether it is related to the TGU in that regard?

Mr. Imbert: No.

Hon. Brig. Gen. Antoine: No, it is not related.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Tabaquite.

Dr. Rambachan: Under Current Transfers to Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies. Sub-Head 06.

Madam Chairman: Item 011, Transfers to State Enterprises. Sub-Head 06, Current Transfers to Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies. Item 004, Statutory Bodies. Hon. Member for Tabaquite.

Dr. Rambachan: Thank you, Madam Chair. In this instance I want to refer to the Draft Estimates of the Revenue and Expenditure of the Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies, page 213 under Goods and Services. It relates to WASA. And I noticed under Goods and Services, line Item 12, Materials and Supplies have been
cut by $29.8 million and Other Contracted Services have been cut by $70 million. Is this an indication that WASA is in anyway cutting down on its programme of the expansion of water mains to communities that now do not have water mains?

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

**Mr. Imbert:** Let me answer that. We made the allocations and the answer is, no.

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

**Mr. Singh:** Thank you, Madam Chair. In dealing with Current Transfers to Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies, item 51, the Water and Sewerage Authority. In the allocation of 2.257, I would like to get a breakdown of the revenue generated by the Water and Sewerage Authority so that therefore it offsets the subventions to WASA and also the loans over the period. So that therefore—because from my understanding how it operates, is that you have revenue generated in terms of its operating expenditure and recurrent expenditure and then you have the additional government subventions on an annual basis to deal with the additional moneys due to the enterprise.

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

**Mr. Imbert:** Let me just deal with that. If you go to page 210 of the same book.

**Mr. Singh:** Which one?

**Mr. Imbert:** This one. *Draft Estimates of the Revenue and Expenditure of the Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies.* Okay, all your questions will be answered there. All right?

**Mr. Singh:** It means based on the figures at the end of the day they have a net surplus of about $28 million.

**Mr. Imbert:** I do not know what you mean by that. We have appropriation
to the Ministry of Public Utilities for a transfer to the Water and Sewerage Authority in the sum of $2,257,949,000. And as the Member has correctly pointed out that transfer is required to supplement their income. You always have to add it. You see expensive WASA is?— $5 billion, eh. Real money.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Chair. In the Draft Estimates of the Revenue and Expenditure of the Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies, page 214. I noticed in line Item 68 under Goods and Services, Sub-Head 02Water Trucking. In light of the fact there is a dry season—I mean we are in the wet season but it has not rained as much—is it prudent to really reduce at this time any services with water trucking? Another question which is not related but if you could probably answer it in one. Item 69, Road Reinstatement—WASA, there is also a decrease and I was wondering if it is that you are going to not have much work in reinstating a lot of roads that are outside. Thank you, Minister.

Mr. Imbert: I can answer that. I can tell you that we certainly would be assisting the Ministry of Public Utilities in providing funding for water trucking and road reinstatement. And if additional funds are required they will be provided because it is a very serious matter.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Tabaquite.

Dr. Rambachan: Madam Chair, thank you. I ask the question about the cuts and other contracted services and materials and supply. And that is related also to road reinstatement where there is also a cut, because if you are cutting back on the number of roads that you are going to put water you will also slash on the reinstatement. So obviously they are at some programme.

Mr. Imbert: What line Item is this?
Dr. Rambachan: I am asking the question now on Current Transfers and Subsidies for Payment re: Voluntary Early Separation Plan (VSEP), for which $64million has been placed in 2016. Is it the intention of WASA to offer VSEP programme to its workers this year?

Mr. Imbert: What line Item are you on, please?

Dr. Rambachan: I am on page 214 of the other book, under Current Transfers and Subsidies, O4, 08. I am asking whether it is the intention of WASA to have a VSEP programme in 2016.

Mr. Imbert: Well, obviously. There is an allocation for it.

Dr. Rambachan: So you going to have a VSEP programme?

Mr. Imbert: Well, you have had it for the last three years. You have had a VSEP programme for the last three years.

Dr. Rambachan: I just want to know whether you also have it.

Mr. Imbert: Just continuing what you are doing. The same thing you were doing for the last three years. In fact, we have less money than you.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Minister of Finance I think the question is answered. Sub-Head 09, Development Programme, Consolidated Fund. Item 003, Economic Infrastructure.

3.45p.m.

And for the guidance of Members, we are on page 125 of the Draft Estimates of Development Programme. Hon. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Chair. Minister, through the Chair, if you can identify on line Item 586, Lighting of Parks and Recreational Grounds, if there would be any grounds or parks lit in Cumuto/Manzanilla, and if I can get that in writing, please.

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Hon. Brig. Gen. Antoine: We will put that in writing for you.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you.

Madam Chairman: Item 004: Social Infrastructure. Item 005: Multi-Sectoral and Other Services. We now go to the Infrastructure Development Fund. Hon. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla, you are under Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Page 126, Transport and Communication?

Madam Chairman: We are at page 129, Item 005: Multi-Sectoral and Other Services. That is where it commences. And we now move on to the Infrastructure Development—do you have a question?

Mr. Singh: Yes.

Madam Chairman: And this is under Item 005, please?

Mr. Singh: 005—

Madam Chairman: Multi-Sectoral and Other Services?

Mr. Singh: Yes.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Chaguanas West.

Mr. Singh: 047, Madam Chair, Development of an Integrated Water Security Programme for Tobago. I want the Minister to indicate whether or not that includes the de-silting of the Hillsborough Dam which has been on the books for over several generations.

Mr. Imbert: For the last five years.

Mr. Singh: Before that too. Because it ought to be part of the integrated water security for Tobago.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Minister of Public Utilities, are you in a position to give that answer already?

Hon. Brig. Gen. Antoine: I will give that in writing. [Crosstalk]
Mr. Singh: I just want to respond to the hon. Minister of Finance. The allocation is always smaller.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Chaguanas West, I have recognized the hon. Minister of Public Utilities and he gave the answer that it will be in writing. Anything else under Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services? Therefore, can we go on to the Infrastructure Development Fund? Item 003: Economic Infrastructure, and that is at page 309.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 39 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Madam Chairman: I would like to thank the hon. Minister and the representatives of the Ministry of Public Utilities for coming and assisting the committee, and you are now relieved.

Can we go on to Head 31, Ministry of Public Administration? For the guidance of Members we are at page 233 of the Draft Estimates for Recurrent Expenditure. Head 31, Ministry of Public Administration, $1,184,531,491. I would now invite the Minister of Public Administration to make a brief opening statement not exceeding five minutes.

Hon. Mitchell: Madam Chairman, I thank you for the opportunity to make this opening statement to outline briefly the purpose of the Ministry of Public Administration in the national landscape and to answer questions on the Recurrent Expenditure and Development Programme budgetary allocations for 2016.

In essence, Madam Chairman, the Ministry of Public Administration has responsibility for ensuring that systems and processes are in place for the effective management of the public sector; to lead the transformation and modernization of the public service into a new diamond standard of
excellence; to be responsible for helping create a suitable enabling environment for the uptake and usage of information and communication technology, both nationally and by Government.

This means that for the financial year 2016, the Ministry of Public Administration has assumed a wider portfolio compared to the previous budget cycle. While the Scholarships and Advanced Training Division has been transferred to the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Public Administration has been given responsibility for ICT and also the Property and Real Estate Services Division of Government.

Assuming additional responsibilities during a time of increasing financial constraints is a challenge. However, the team at the Ministry of Public Administration and I believe that every challenge also presents an opportunity. Reduced cash flows force us to be more efficient and rigorous in making the best use of limited resources. We become more innovative and inclusive as we increasingly partner with other stakeholders, both within Government and also from the private sector and civil society. Our focus is sharpened as we work to implement a smaller number of high priority programmes and initiatives.

I am therefore confident that by improving internal efficiencies, partnering and collaborating with all Government and national stakeholders, and above all, by harnessing the considerable pool of talent that makes up the staff of the Ministry of Public Administration, we will be well placed to achieve our work programme for the coming financial year and beyond.

Thank you for this opportunity, Madam Chair.

Question proposed: That Head 31 stand part of the Schedule.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Members, the sum of $1,184,531,491 for
Head 31, Ministry of Public Administration is comprised of moneys proposed for expenditure under the following Subheads and Items to be found in the Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure and the Draft Estimates of the Development Programme.

Subhead 01: Personnel Expenditure, Item 001, General Administration. And for the guidance of Members we are at page 233. Hon. Member for Fyzabad, Item 001, General Administration.

**Dr. Bodeo:** I was just going to go to page 232, just to get a broad picture because there is an increase of one billion, zero twenty-nine—

**Madam Chairman:** Hon. Member for Fyzabad, we are at page 233, Item 001: General Administration.

**Dr. Bodeo:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I will ask later on.


**Dr. Bodeo:** Thank you, Madam Chairman. The page referring to Item 16, the increase in Contract Employment of almost $7 million, if the Minister can give an undertaking in terms of the explanation.

**Hon. Mitchell:** The Ministry’s six-year plan was approved in late fiscal 2015, so it is expected that the contract positions will be filled in 2016.

**Dr. Bodeo:** Can the Minister indicate how many contract positions can they expect to be filled?
Hon. Mitchell: We will put that in writing.

Dr. Bodee: Thank you.


Dr. Bodee: Thank you, Madam Chairman. This will be Item 08 in terms of the allocation for Rent, Lease of Office Accommodation and Storage. If the Minister could perhaps indicate in writing, the allocation—08, Rent, Lease—of $486,100,000.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Minister of Public Administration, are you in a position to answer?

Hon. Mitchell: We will put that in writing.


Dr. Bodee: In relation to line 66, Hosting of Conferences, Seminars and other Functions, I note that there is an increase of $8,050,000 there. Can the Minister indicate what would account for the substantial increase in allocation?

Hon. Mitchell: This is attributable to the hosting of the 2016 Biennial Conference of the Commonwealth Association for Public Administration and Management. Cabinet agreed to the hosting of this conference in fiscal year 2016 at a cost of $19.8 million.

Dr. Bodee: Thank you.

Madam Chairman: Item 015: Strategic Services and Information
Standing Finance Committee


Dr. Bodoe: Thank you, Madam Chair. Line 23, fees of $800,000. Can the Minister indicate or give an idea what those fees will be for?

Madam Chairman: Hon. Minister for Public Administration.

Hon. Mitchell: This was an audit consultancy to audit the Diamond Standard Programme.

Madam Chairman: Subhead 03: Minor Equipment Purchases. And for the guidance of Members we are at page 245. Item 001: General Administration. Item 002: Science and Technology. Item 003: National Information and Communication Technology. Item 005: Property and Real Estate Management Services.

4.00 p.m.


We now move on to Sub-Head 09, Development Programme, Consolidated Fund, and is at page 105 of the Draft Estimates of Development Programme. Consolidated Fund: Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services. Hon. Member for Fyzabad.

Dr. Bodoe: Sorry, are we on page 106?
Miss Chairman: Yes.

Dr. Bodo: I was going to refer to Item 021, Enhanced Career and Succession Management Processes in the Public Service and to note that there is a decrease of $500,000. Could the Minister indicate what sort of training is involved under that Head and why would there be that decreased allocation?

Miss Chairman: Hon. Minister of Public Administration.

Hon. Mitchell: Madam Chair, the cost varies from year to year, but it deals with leadership training to the Public Service.

Miss Chairman: Hon Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: At page 106, 046, E-Government and Knowledge Brokering Programme, from $107 million Revised Estimates in 2015 to $20 million in 2016, could you give us some degree of understanding? And if that was spent in 2015, although it was budgeted at $50 million, why is there a significant decreased in the E-Government, particularly when the Government is speaking about improvement in broadband connectivity across the country?

Miss Chairman: Hon. Minister for Public Administration.

Mr. Imbert: No, I will take that. This project is funded by IDB loan and it ends in December of this year. So it is on phase basis. You know you have different demands for funding at different times.

Dr. Gopeesingh: The IDB component is utilized already? I see the Government has $20 million, GORTT, that means IDB component has been spent and the government part is $20 million.

Mr. Imbert: Member for Caroni East, forgive me. That is what it says.

Dr. Gopeesingh: But I am asking you whether that is the transfer?

Mr. Imbert: But that is what it says, and you ask me if this is a misprint?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Under IDB loan it has nothing written.

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Mr. Imbert: Yes, so you asking me if that is a misprint?

Dr. Gopeesingh: No, I am asking you whether in fact they have spent all the money under the IDB loan.

Mr. Imbert: There is no allocation for it.

Dr. Gopeesingh: How much was the IDB loan?

Mr. Imbert: What is the question?

Dr. Gopeesingh: How much was the IDB loan? You have nothing for it now, so how much was the IDB loan originally?

Mr. Imbert: IDB facility comes to an end in December of this year.

Dr. Gopeesingh: You are still not answering the question.

Mr. Imbert: We have no allocation for it in 2016.

Dr. Gopeesingh: It has none now, but what was the original IDB loan?

Mr. Imbert: Which line Item would that be?

Dr. Gopeesingh: The same line Item.

Mr. Imbert: You want to go back?

Dr. Gopeesingh: No. Same line Item.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Minister of Finance, could that be given in writing?

Mr. Imbert: Yes, whatever the question is.

Dr. Gopeesingh: He does not know the answer.

Madam Chairman: It will be given in writing. Members, please. Hon. Minister of Finance and hon. Member Caroni East. Hon. Member for Fyzabad.

Dr. Bodoе: Page 106, Item 040, Development of a Business Continuity Plan for the Public Service. I know that there is no allocation in 2016, could an explanation be given, Minister?

Madam Chairman: Hon. Minister of Public Administration.
Hon. Mitchell: This plan is ongoing. This is ongoing. There is one final payment to be made in the second quarter of 2016, and after the mid-year review, yes, we will get funding.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Fyzabad.

Dr. Bodee: 054, Establishment of a Virtual Call Centre in the Public Service, I see that there is no allocation for that, Minister.

Hon. Mitchell: This project is more or less complete. It is in the testing phase right now and we expect that it would be launched soon.

Dr. Bodee: Thank you.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Caroni—

Dr. Gopeesingh: That was the question.

Madam Chairman: Therefore we now go on to the Infrastructure Development Fund: Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services, and we at page 303 of Draft Estimates of Development Programme.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 31 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Madam Chairman: I would like to thank the hon. Minister and the representatives of the Ministry of Public Administration for attending and assisting the Committee. You are relieved.

Head 11.

Madam Chairman: Members we are at page 49 of the Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure. Head 11: Registration Recognition and Certification Board, $5,601,340. I will now invite the hon. Minister of Labour and Small Enterprise Development to make a brief opening statement not exceeding five minutes.

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: Thank you very much, Madam Chair, and allow me
the opportunity to extend to you my own personal congratulations regarding your ascension to such a prestigious position. We pray that Almighty God would grant you wisdom in guiding this House. A warm good afternoon to my colleagues on this side and also the Members of the House on the other side, in particular, the Member for Siparia.

Madam Chair, the Registration Recognition and Certification Board was created by the Industrial Relations Act, Chap. 88:01, and the purpose of the Act really is to make better provision for the stabilization, improvement and promotion of industrial relations. The board is responsible for the processing of applications for certification of recognition; petitions for variation, particularly variations of bargaining units; agency shop orders; membership in good standing; and worker within the meaning of the Act.

The Registration Recognition and Certification Board, Madam Chair, under this new administration, there would be certain realignments to ensure that the work of the Board enhances the rights of workers in Trinidad and Tobago.

I thank you, Madam Chair.

*Question proposed:* That Head 11 stand part of the Schedule.

*Madam Chairman:* Hon. Members, the sum of $5,601,340 for Head 11: Registration Recognition and Certification Board is comprised of moneys proposed for expenditure under the following Sub-Heads and Items to be found in the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure*. Sub-Head 01, Personal 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 11 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.*

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Madam Chairman: I would like to thank the hon. Minister and the representatives from the Registration Recognition and Certification Board for attending and assisting the committee. They are now relieved.

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you everyone.

Madam Chairman: Can we move to Head 30, Ministry of Labour and Small Enterprise Development?

Head 30.

Madam Chairman: Ministry of Labour and Small Enterprise Development, $212,147,500. I will now invite the hon. Minister of Labour and Small Enterprise Development to make a brief opening statement not exceeding five minutes.

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: I thank you, Madam Chairman, and I thank you for the opportunity to share a few brief remarks with you and the Members of this committee as we prepare to consider the funds allocated to the Ministry of Labour and Small Enterprise Development. The Government of Trinidad and Tobago has committed, among other things, to the promotion of sustainable economic growth, the provision of a clear framework of the rights and responsibilities in the workplace, strengthening tripartism, social dialogue and consultation, and to small business development and entrepreneurship.

As the name of the Ministry suggests, Madam Chairman, our work is pursued on two main planks: labour administration and small enterprise development.

4.15 p.m.

These two broad areas of work are fundamental pillars of the economy which require sustained effort and targeted investment in order to facilitate positive impact at the levels of the individual, the enterprise, the community, the economy and indeed, the country.

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Our work, Madam Chairman, has far-reaching impact and extends beyond the traditional role of Ministries of labour; at one time, regarded only as facilitators of industrial peace and harmony. While this aspect of our work remains paramount, there are many other developmental areas of work on the labour administration and small enterprise agendas which we propose to pursue in fiscal year 2015 to 2016.

In this regard, some of the key areas the Ministry proposes to focus on in the new fiscal year include the revision of the Industrial Relations Act, simplification of the recognition process for trade unions, Occupational Safety and Health, promotion of the rights of workers, the Fair Share Programme, green business, small enterprise and co-operative development and entrepreneurship.

Madam Chairman, we are committed to efficient and effective use of the funds that we have been allocated—although we would wish that the Minister of Finance would have allocated us a little more—and to monitoring and evaluation on an on-going basis. We will keep national development at the forefront of our planning and implementation and most importantly, Madam Chairman, we will enhance the consultative approach and keep in focus the promotion of decent work and growth and development to small enterprises in Trinidad and Tobago. Our focus will be people-centred and nation-driven. Thank you very much, Madam Chairman.

*Question proposed:* That Head 30 stand part of the Schedule.

*Madam Chairman:* Hon. Members, the sum of $212,147,500 for Head 30, 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 the Development Programme. Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure—for the
guidance of Members, we are at page 222—Item 001, General Administration.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Thank you, Madam Chairman, and to the Minister, under 06, Remuneration to Board Members, I see that there is an increase of remuneration to $2,847,000. Is the Minister willing to provide a breakdown and whether new boards are being remunerated?

**Hon. Baptiste-Primus:** Absolutely. I am advised that four new boards have been established, and they are: the Business Advisory Board for Integrated Business Incubator System, the Enterprise Investment Fund Board, Social Dialogue Task Force and lastly, Trinidad and Tobago Small and Micro Enterprise Council. I trust that that meets with the—

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** Thank you. Hon. Minister, would you be kind enough to provide us with a list of the names of the directors of these various boards that you have mentioned together with their qualifications?

**Hon. Baptiste-Primus:** Absolutely. Through the Chairman, would you like it now?

**Madam Chairman:** That will be given in writing.

**Hon. Baptiste-Primus:** Subsequently.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** Thank you.

**Madam Chairman:** And I just want to remind Members that with respect to Personnel Expenditure, the general undertaking given by the hon. Minister of Finance also applies, so I will just entertain questions under this Head if it falls outside of that.

**Mr. Karim:** Thank you, Madam Chairman. I just want to find out, under Personnel Expenditure, whether that includes the transfer of the On-The-Job Training Programme to this Ministry?

**Hon. Baptiste-Primus:** No, it does not.
Mr. Karim: Okay. But the OJT Programme has been transferred to the Ministry of Labour and Small and Micro Enterprise Development?

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: Yes, indeed it has. We are still working out the logistics in terms of how it would operate.

Mr. Karim: Okay.

Madam Chairman: Item 002, Co-operatives; Item 003, Friendly Society; Item 004, Occupational Safety and Health Authority.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Would the hon. Minister of Labour and Small Enterprise Development be kind enough to give a little understanding of the requirement for increased expenditure by OSH Authority?

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: I gather, Madam Chairman, the hon. Member is under 004. Yes?

Madam Chairman: Yes.

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: Actually, there are some long-standing problems with regard to OSH—as you may or may not be aware—where they have been presently housed cannot accommodate the entire unit and some 17 officers are operating from home; a situation that is causing me and the rest of the Ministry grave concerns. We are attempting to locate alternative accommodation so all the employees can be housed under one roof and they will all report for duty eight to four, Monday to Thursday and eight to quarter past four on a Friday.

Madam Chairman: Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, Item 001, General Administration.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Thank you, Madam Chairman. Line Item 22, Short-Term Employment, I note that there has been a slash by $2.1 million and if the Minister would be kind enough to explain why is the allocation cut in this regard?

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Hon. Baptiste-Primus: I am sure the Member for Siparia and her colleagues would be happy to know that our Government will be reviewing the position concerning contract employees and we will be looking at converting those contract positions into permanent positions on the establishment. We have to bring contract employment back on track.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: You mean off track?

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: No, back on track, meaning contract work is for a specific period and then people go off; and where work is of a continuous nature, people really ought not to be on contract five years, 10 years, as the case may be.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Okay. Would you be kind enough then to supply us with a total number of persons who are at present on contract employment in your Ministry in writing?

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: We will. Madam Chairman, subsequently, of course.

Mr. Indarsingh: Thank you, Madam Chairman, under Goods and Services, 08, Rent/Lease, Office Accommodation and Storage. There has been an increase of $2,320,000, could the Minister provide us with an explanation?

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: Certainly. Through you, Madam Chairman, the estimates for 2016 for this Item were increased due to the increase in rental for the following subunits: Duke Street, San Fernando and Tobago.

Madam Chairman: Item 002, Co-operatives.

Dr. Tewarie: Madam Chairman, through you to the Minister, Item 002, Co-operatives and if I may be allowed, Item 003, Friendly Society. We have had some challenges with co-operatives—

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: Madam Chairman, permit me? I am having difficulty in following the hon. Member. Could you please assist?
Madam Chairman: I expect that he is at page 225, 002, Co-operatives.

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: Okay.

Dr. Tewarie: Right, and the Friendly Society is on the next page at the top.

Madam Chairman: Well, hon. Member, I will ask if you ask each in its turn because then we would be jumping all about the place. So, in terms of Co-operatives.

Dr. Tewarie: Well, it is just one general question.

Mr. Imbert: Just ask which Sub-Head or Sub-Item.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Minister of Finance, we will get that. I would ensure that we get that. Let us just hear the question.

Dr. Tewarie: 002 is Co-operatives and because the question was of a general nature, I wanted to relate it also to 003.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Caroni Central, the way we would like to proceed on this is to have questions with respect to the various line Items. So I am prepared to hear you both on 002, Co-operatives and on 003, Friendly Society when we reach there. So if you could relate each question for each Item to an Item here, you may proceed. So we are in 002, Co-operatives.

Dr. Tewarie: All right. In the case of Co-operatives, these are institutions that we have all grown up with in the society.

Mr. Imbert: Madam Chairman, he is not on a line Item.

Madam Chairman: One minute, please. Minister of Finance. Yes, hon. Member for Caroni Central.

Dr. Tewarie: And they have served a useful purpose but they find themselves—these institutions find themselves in a difficult situation because of the transformation of the entire financial framework. And there are differences of opinion as to how these things should continue to operate. The Minister of Labour
and Small and Micro Enterprise Development, do you have any plans to address
that particular issue? And I wanted to ask in the case of Co-operatives on the one
hand and then Friendly Societies on the other.

Madam Chairman: No, no, we are going to go to Friendly Societies. Your
question? You have given us a statement.

Dr. Tewarie: The question is: is there an approach by the Minister of
Labour and Small Enterprise Development that would allow her to review the
operations of these institutions and perhaps find a modus operandi that would
strengthen them and make them more relevant to the current environment?

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Caroni Central, could you put that in
the context of one of the line Items 01 to 66 under 002?

Dr. Tewarie: Well, it has to do with the functioning of the institution. These
moneys are allocated to allow them to function. [Interruption]

Madam Chairman: Hon. Minister of Finance, please. Can we, therefore,
hon. Member for Caroni Central—maybe you can ask the question under 003 when
you frame it. Item 003, Friendly Societies; Item 004, Occupational Safety and
Health Authority.

Dr. Tewarie: The Minister is not going to answer the question?

Madam Chairman: Members, please. Hon. Member for Siparia.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Thank you very much. Line Item 08,
Rent/lease, Office Accommodation and Storage, I note that there is a marked
increase with respect to this Item and perhaps, the Minister would be kind enough
to explain where the increase would go.

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: Most certainly, Madam Chairman. The OSH
agency, they have identified temporary office space for 27 of 57 administrative
staff and that is not acceptable. We would want everyone under the same roof but
they had proceeded to identify these temporary quarters for which to accommodate 27 persons.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: This for that. And where is it located?

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: They are located on Duke Street. You mean this accommodation?

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Well, the one that you said they have now identified.

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: Right, one Alexandra Street. Alexandra Street.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: No, just the OSH unit. One Alexandra Street.

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: Well, not one, Alexandra Street. No. 9 Alexander Street. Not one, No. 9.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Okay.

Mr. Indarsingh: Thank you, Madam Chair. Given the Minister’s statement about addressing the issue of contract employment and ensuring that persons in the public service and so on, get within the—what she would call the permanent establishment, I see that there is an increased allocation of $1,854,000 for Contract Employment at OSH. Could we get the rationale for this, please?

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: Madam Chairman, we will supply that information at a later date.

Madam Chairman: All right. Hon. Members, it is now 4.30 p.m. and I suspend this meeting and we will resume at 5.00 p.m.

5.00 p.m.: Standing Finance Committee suspended.

5.00 p.m.: Standing Finance Committee resumed.

Madam Chairman: Meeting of the Standing Finance Committee is resumed. We are at Sub-Head 03: Minor Equipment and Purchases, and we are at page 227. Item 001 General Administration; Item 002 Co-operatives; Item 003
Friendly Societies; Item 004 Occupational Safety and Health Authority.

We are on to Sub-Head 04: Current Transfers and Subsidies; Item 003 United Nations Organizations; Item 005 Non-Profit Institutions.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Thank you very much. Madam Chair, if the Minister is so kind, as it relates to 03, the National Trade Union Centre and 07, the Joint Trade Union Movement, for the information of myself and the viewing public, if I could be guided so to find out: Which is the labour federation that is most representative of labour in relation to the International Labour Organization?

Also, if the Joint Trade Union Movement is a registered labour federation and if so, when was it legally incorporated? Further to that, when did the Joint Trade Union Movement and the National Trade Union Centre apply for what we would call under this particular Head as non-profit institution for funding or what was the rationale to provide this level of funding? We see $5 million to the National Trade Union Centre and $10 million to the Joint Trade Union Movement. What was the rationale for this allocation, in terms of the disparity and what was the reason for the said funding?

**Hon. Baptiste-Primus:** Madam Chair, I am unable to answer that question. I would suggest that question be directed to the Minister of Finance who made this allocation.

**Madam Chairman:** And in any event, therefore, that question, the response will be in writing.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Madam Chair.

**Madam Chairman:** Is there another question?

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Madam Chair.

**Madam Chairman:** Is there another question?

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Madam Chair. I am now willing.
Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Couva South, [Member for Couva South continues to speak] we cannot both speak at the same time.

Mr. Indarsingh: Madam Chairman, you are using this—[Interruption]

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Couva South, I would ask you to be very guarded in what you say.

Mr. Indarsingh: I will speak and if you want to prevent me from speaking, well you could do what you so desire.

Madam Chairman: Exactly, and I now desire that we move on to another speaker. We are under 005 Non-Profit Institutions.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Under 03 and 07, have these organizations accepted the funding that were—have they made the desire to accept the funding for NATUC for $5 million and JTUM for $10 million?

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: Madam Chair, through you, as the entire population is aware, because both labour bodies made public statements, the Joint Trade Union Movement declined at this point in time and indicated what their priority areas are, and the National Trade Union Centre accepted, and we will work within those boundaries.

Madam Chairman: Item 009 Other Transfers. Hon. Member for Caroni East, we are at Item 009 Other Transfers.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Line item 02, hon. Minister of Labour and Small Enterprise Development. Could you just give a little explanation of the Fair Share programme because it seems to be a new Item with $3million allocated. I did not see anything on revised estimates, or was it under a different Ministry?—because there is nothing here to suggest. It seems to be a new Item.

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: It is a new line Item, Member for Caroni East, and these Items have been moved from PSIP to recurrent expenditure.

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Dr. Gopeesingh: From PSIP to recurrent?

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: Yes.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Couva South do you have a question?

Mr. Indarsingh: No, Madam Chair, my colleague, the Member for Caroni East already asked the question.

Madam Chairman: Sub-Head 06: Current Transfers to Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies.

Mr. Karim: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Will the Minister be kind enough to advise what is responsible for the decrease of $5million to Cipriani?

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: There are no arrears to be paid at this point in time, although negotiations are outstanding.

Dr. Gopeesingh: That was the question and the Minister has answered.

Madam Chairman: We now move to Sub-Head 09: Development Programme, Consolidated Fund. We are at page 98 of the Development Programme, Consolidated Fund, Item 003 Economic Infrastructure.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Under Business Services, 003, the Implementation of the Fair Share Programme. Hon. Minister, you have just indicated that it had been moved from consolidated to recurrent but I am still seeing $600,000 under the consolidated, do you want to just give a clarification on that?

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: Yes, certainly, I am informed that the importance of the programme to entrepreneurship, we cannot overstate it. However, there needs to be more measures to solicit greater support for the programme by encouraging, and if necessary, legislating government Ministries and state agencies to provide more procurement opportunities for these small businesses.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Thank you.
Mr. Indarsingh: Thank you, Madam Chair. With respect to 011 and 019, the establishment of community-based business incubators, if the Minister is willing to give a little more or clarify this a bit and give some further information, as it relates to the National Enterprise Investment Fund. And in your statement, as it relates to increased remuneration for boards I could recollect you said four new boards will be established. Will these boards be tripartite in nature, or?

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: Through you, Madam Chair, I wish to assure the Member for Couva South and the rest of the country that, indeed, every aspect of this Ministry would have tripartism as a functional and realistic and genuine part of our operations.

With regard to your first question regarding the community-based business incubators, in recent months the Ministry has been reviewing the performance of the programme in general, and the incubators in particular, to improve the performance of IBIS and it has been determined that there is a need to rationalize the number of incubators and the Ministry has indeed taken steps to remove the least effective one from the programme and this Ministry will continue to monitor the effectiveness of the other incubators, with the objective of finding the most optimal distribution of incubators that can efficiently and effectively support entrepreneurship development in Trinidad.

Dr. Gopeesingh: That brings me to the question, hon. Chair and hon. Minister, on 019. Do you feel comfortable with just $1 million funding for the establishment of new business clusters, based on what you have indicated a while ago and your philosophical approach towards diversification of the economy? Do you feel that $1 million is enough to help you in trying to get new business going, and so on, based on the two numbers: 011 and 019?

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: Well, Member for Caroni East, if I could enlist your
assistance in squeezing some more out of the hands of the Minister of Finance, in that regard, I indeed welcome your assistance.

But we recognize that the business clusters have proven to be useful tools in supporting small businesses. Indeed, you are correct because most of the more successful economies in the world, when you examine small businesses, comprise the largest percentage. And we are hoping to start small and to expand, so that 2016 to 2017, where you see a healthy increase, I trust you will support this Ministry in that regard.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Thank you, Madam Chair, two questions, through you, to the hon. Minister of Labour and Small Enterprise Development. On 011, the Establishment of the Community-Based Business Incubators, is there a criterion which the Ministry would be using to establish these incubators?

**Hon. Baptiste-Primus:** Yes, yes, yes.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** And what are the criteria, if I may ask?

**Hon. Baptiste-Primus:** We will provide it subsequently.

**Madam Chairman:** In writing.

**Hon. Baptiste-Primus:** In writing, yes, of course, Madam Chair.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** My other question is on 009, the Determination and Impact of the Minimum Wage Level on the Economy. When do you plan to start the process of determining the impact and will it be made public, the determination? Thank you.

**Hon. Baptiste-Primus:** Actually, to be quite honest, we have not established a timeline. But, of course, at the moment you will appreciate as the new Minister I am still drilling down into the functional areas of the Ministry but all of that is part of the operational framework and, of course, we will make it public because minimum wage is an issue, in particular people who are at the lower strata.
They are interested in knowing what is happening in that regard.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** I do not think only the workers, but also the employers would also be concerned.

**Hon. Baptiste-Primus:** Employers. Certainly, I agree with you.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Barataria/San Juan.

**Dr. Khan:** No, no, no. I was just asking whether NEDCO—

**Madam Chairman:** Hon. Member for Barataria/San Juan, do you have a question? You started by saying no, no, no.

**Dr. Khan:** Yes, yes, I have a question.

**Madam Chairman:** Yes, please.

**Dr. Khan:** The NEDCO, the line item NEDCO, I am just asking if you are in agreement with the Minister of Finance—since you are saying that you need to develop small business—for attacking the business by increasing the Green Fund and the business levy almost about 300 per cent?

**Madam Chairman:** One minute please, hon. Minister of Labour and Small Enterprise Development.

**Dr. Khan:** Is that NEDCO?

**Mr. Imbert:** What—

**Madam Chairman:** Please, hon. Minister of Finance. We have one Chairman here. We are at Item 003. Hon. Member for Barataria/San Juan, could you direct me to—

**Dr. Khan:** Line item NEDCO.

**Madam Chairman:** Unfortunately, I am not seeing a line Item, so if you could tell me the number it might help me.

**Dr. Khan:** 017.

**Madam Chairman:** All right. The National Enterprise Investment Fund?
Dr. Khan: Yes.

Madam Chairman: Well you could forgive me for not seeing that as NIDCO.

Dr. Khan: No, I said NEDCO.

Madam Chairman: You could forgive me for not seeing that as NEDCO.

Dr. Khan: You would learn the—

Madam Chairman: Does that? Is that—so if that is not NEDCO what is the question?

Mr. Imbert: You are wrong.

Madam Chairman: What is the question?

Mr. Imbert: What is the question, even if you are wrong?

Madam Chairman: Hon. Minister of Finance.

Dr. Khan: He is attacking me, Madam Chairman.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Minister of Finance.

Dr. Khan: The Minister of Finance is attacking me.

Madam Chairman: No, I do not see any attack happening here. Do you vacate the question then hon. Member for Barataria/San Juan? Thank you very much.

Mr. Indarsingh: Chair, I will ask some questions later on, when you reach general public service.

5.15p.m.

Madam Chairman: Thank you very much. Item 004, Social Infrastructure.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Yeah, Chair, would the hon. Minister be able to say whether the establishment of the Heroes Park and Museum in Fyzabad, what stage have we reached in it, and whether this $2 million will be enough to complete it?

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: Yes, the $2million will be sufficient to complete the
Dr. Gopeesingh: Thank you.

Mr. Singh: Madam Chair, the question was asked by the Member for Caroni East.

Madam Chairman: Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services. We are at page 101, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services; that is where it commences.

Dr. Gopeesingh: I just crave your indulgence just to ask a small question on 100, which is Welfare Services, Prevention and Elimination of Child Labour.

Madam Chairman: Are we going back?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Just for a short thing.

Madam Chairman: You see hon. Member for Caroni East, when I indulge one—

Dr. Gopeesingh: I will ask the Minister privately.

Madam Chairman: Thank you very much. No, hon. Member for Caroni East, I assure you, you do not have to ask the Minister privately. You know that there is a question that you can ask if you wish.

So we are going on to the Consolidated Fund, Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services, under the Infrastructure Development Fund page, and we are at page 300.

Mr. Indarsingh: 300?

Madam Chairman: I had mentioned Item—I had called Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services, nobody indicated that they wanted to speak.

Mr. Indarsingh: No, no.

Dr. Tewarie: Chair, I would like to—

Miss Ramdial: 06.

Madam Chairman: Is there an Item under 06?
Dr. Tewarie: General Public Services, Administrative Services.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Members, let us just all sort of follow what is going on. [Interruption] Members, please if we could have some attention. I called under Sub-Head 09. I called 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services which commences at page 101, all right? We are not going here page by page. I waited a while, there was no indication from any Member that they wanted to speak. Therefore, I called the other Item, Item 005, which is under the Infrastructure Development Fund, and that is Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services, and that begins at page 300. So are there any matters to be raised under item 005 Multi-Sectoral and Other Services under the Infrastructure Development Fund, which commences at page 300? Hon. Members, the question is—

Dr. Tewarie: Ma’am, do you want us to participate or not?

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Caroni Central, I want everybody to participate. I think I have given—[Interruption] we both cannot speak at the same time, and this has been happening repeatedly. I had asked Members from since maybe three, four days ago—they were given rulers and markers, and I had asked Members to facility this process in the allotted time that is fixed by the Standing Orders, whether they could flag their pages to assist in the flow.

We had established from the first day we were not going page by page, but Sub-Head and line Item in any order once it was within the relevant Item or Sub-Head. So that is if Members do not want to be bound by the rules, I really do not think it could lie in anybody’s mouth to say that they are being prohibited from participating in the process and, therefore, I move on.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 30 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Madam Chairman: I would like to thank the hon. Minister of Labour and
Small Enterprise Development and the representatives of the Ministry, for coming and assisting; and they are now relieved.

**Hon. Baptiste-Primus:** Thank you, Madam Chairman.

**Head 70.**

**Madam Chairman:** Head 70, Ministry of Communications. Might I ask Members while the change is being facilitated of the representatives, if they can look at the Heads and the Items and the Sub-Items? It begins at page 219 of the Development Programme at page 473 of the Recurrent Expenditure.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Ma’am, could I just say, I mean, again with respect, you are also talking very fast, and some of us when we are opening and even turning the page, where we already identified questions or so on, it is passing quickly. Thank you.

**Madam Chairman:** I am guided, hon. Member for Oropouche East and, therefore, we are at page 473 of the recurrent estimates and we are at page 219 of the Development Programme.

Head 70, Ministry of Communications, $312,121,380. I will now invite the Minister of Communications to make a brief opening statement not exceeding five minutes.

**Hon. Cuffie:** Thank you, Madam Chairman. The Ministry of Communications is responsible for leading Government’s communication, coordinating, monitoring and guiding policies and standards throughout government agencies.

The Ministry also facilitates access to public information, for citizens and the media, providing printing services and archival research services. The Ministry has responsibility for state owned media companies, the Caribbean New Media Group and the Government Information Systems Limited; the Information Services
Division; the National Library and Information System Authority, NALIS; the Government Printery; the National Archives; Freedom of Information, data protection, content generation and the Film Censors Board.

The Ministry is a monitoring authority and a policy centre, with the overarching goal of ensuring transparency and accountability in government activities as a key element of good governance. As such, the Ministry of Communications has been continuously seeking to improve the quality of information and information services that are provided internally to Ministries and state agencies, and externally to the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago.

Although recently reconstituted following the realignment of ministerial portfolios, the agencies, divisions and state-owned enterprises which comprise the Ministry, have been drawn from several previous Ministries, and the estimates, therefore, do not reflect easy comparisons with previous years.

The increases and decreases represented in the budget estimate to a large extent reflect this as well as the Government’s commitment to eliminating waste, mismanagement and corruption which have been found to be quite prevalent in some of the agencies, [ Interruption] and I emphasize some of the agencies falling under the Ministry. With those words, Madam Chairman, I am prepared to answer any questions or concerns the committee may have.

Question proposed: That Head 70 stand part of the Schedule,

Madam Chairman: Hon. Members, the sum of $300,121,380 for Head 70, Ministry of 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 the Development Programme; Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure, Item 001.

Mr. Charles: Thank you very much. In respect to Item 08, I will be grateful
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if the hon. Minister would indicate to us what are the vacant posts, in which of the institutions or sub-institutions over which he has charge, and his time frame for filling them?

Hon. Cuffie: I think I will definitely have to put that in writing given the complexity of the response.

Madam Chairman: Item 002, Government Printery; Item 003, National archives; Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services; Item 001, General Administration.

Mr. Charles: Under Contract Employment, I see a fairly high figure of $5.3 million, and the question is, in the Ministry over which he has charge, what is the proportion of permanent employees to contract employees? And this $5.3 million refers to how many contract employees and in which subunits?

Hon. Cuffie: I will also have to put that in writing for you.

Mr. Charles: And while I am at the floor, Item 08, Rent/Lease of Offices and I want to know if the Minister has any plans for the acquisition or ownership of space, for the various units over which he has charge?

Hon. Cuffie: Well, I can tell you that the Government is now relooking at its real estate holdings, and apportioning Ministries and office space to the various Ministries.

Mr. Charles: Yes, but the plans for acquiring—doing the cost/benefit analysis as to—

Hon. Cuffie: That has—

Mr. Charles:—whether you would be engaging in that in your desire to save cost?

Hon. Cuffie: That does not fall under the Ministry of Communications. It falls under the Minister of Public Administration which handles government real estate holdings.
Mr. Charles: Well, the question is will you be pursuing with the relevant Ministry to ensure that we get value for money in the lease or purchase of property?

Hon. Cuffie: Member, you are asking answers. We will always be pursuing, getting value for money on all our operations.

Madam Chairman: Item 002, Government Printery; Item 003, National Archives.

Dr. Rambachan: Thank you Ma’am, under the Item, Rent/Lease, Office Accommodations, but particular storage, there is a lot of historical information housed at GISL and in various places in the Government. What attempts are being made by the Government in order to secure this great historical and valuable information that we have? But more than that, to move it from its present form, some are on cassettes, some on reels of tape and so on going back to the ’60s, and to put it in a digitized form if you may, to secure it. What is being done by the Government to ensure that we have this historical information properly secured?

Hon. Cuffie: We would have gotten to that under the Development Programme, there is an ongoing digitization project where funds have been allocated for not just GISL, but also the National Archives, NALIS, they are all involved in digitizing information so that we can put it in another format.

5.30 p.m.

Item 005, Freedom of Information Unit. Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies. I am sorry Members. Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases: Item 001, General Administration; Item 002, Government Printery.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Chair. Chair, through you, if the Minister can advise for line Item 12, exactly what Materials and Supplies would be required to the tune of $2 million?
Hon. Cuffie: I did not hear the question.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: We are on 002, Government Printery?

Madam Chairman: We are at 03. We are at page 478.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: All right, never mind.

Madam Chairman: It begins to the bottom of the page, 002, Government Printery. So, if I would just call it again. Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases; Item 002, Government Printery; Item 003, National Archives; Item 005, Freedom of Information Unit.

And for the guidance of Members, we are now at the foot of page 479, we are commencing there. Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies: Item 001, Regional Bodies; Item 003, United Nations Organizations; Item 004, International Bodies; Item 006, Government Printery; Item 007, Households.

Dr. Rambachan: I note that on Households 03, there is an enhanced gratuity for the closure of the Government Information Services Division. Now, I know you have GISL services limited and services division, is this stating that this division is going to be closed and, if so, how many employees are going to be put out of their jobs?

Hon. Cuffie: This is an inherited provision and an inherited figure. I think that this has been carried in the budget for the last five years, so we have no additional plans.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Chair. Hon. Minister, through you, line Item 01, just to ask, page 481.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member, we are still at 007, Households.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Right 007, is it continuing? No?

Madam Chairman: I believe page 481 starts at 011, Transfer to State Enterprises.
Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: All right, okay.

Madam Chairman: Are you at 007, hon. Member for Naparima? So, I now move on to Item, 011, Transfer to State Enterprises. Hon. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla that is where your question is?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Yes, Madam Chair, thank you. Hon. Minister, what has accounted for the significant increase to this state enterprise, which aims to be self-sufficient, in allocating $18 million as opposed to the previous figure, an increase in $18 million?

Hon. Cuffie: The allocation is as a result of a mandate from the Telecommunications Authority that television stations need to prepare for digital transmission. So, the allocation is meant to assist both GDSL and Caribbean New Media Group in getting ready for going digital.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you.

Mr. Charles: I would just like to ask the Minister, the allocation for last year for Caribbean New Media Group was $18.5 million. Am I correct?

Hon. Cuffie: No. Mr. Charles: What was it?

Hon. Cuffie: I think it was—

Madam Chairman: This is under 01?

Mr. Charles: This is under 01 and 02. The same $18 million and Caribbean Information Services Limited.

Hon. Cuffie: No, it was not the same $18 million.

Mr. Charles: It was not? I am looking at page 339 under the Ministry of Trade. The Caribbean New Media Group, the revised estimates for Caribbean New Media Group was $18.5 million. Am I correct? And for Government Information Services was $18 million. So, therefore, your expenditure for this year represents almost the same as it was last year. I am asking this in the context I thought that
some cost savings in your desire to reduce expenditure that by combining these two institutions you would have effected some cost savings, but I am not seeing it reflected in your 2016 estimates.

Hon. Cuffie: And that is because part of the allocation is for the digitizing of the operations of the television stations of both organizations. So, the allocation is not really meant to supplement the revenues that they get. Now, the fact that it is still at $18 million reflects the fact that they have not gotten far in terms of getting that going. I think with proper management that they now have, they will be getting that going.

Mr. Charles: Oh, I thought that the expenditure last year, could it be Minister that the expenditure last year were reflective of the real amounts to run an organization and now that you have come in, there is no way for any cost-saving measure as reflected in items 01 and 02.

Hon. Cuffie: Is that a question or a statement.

Mr. Charles: I am asking you, I am asking.

Madam Chairman: I think when you asked the question relating to the figures, the hon. Minister gave the answer why it remains the same amount in the estimates as last year.

Mr. Charles: And I followed up by asking him, is it an alternative interpretation.

Hon. Cuffie: I take that to be a rhetorical question.

Dr. Rambachan: Minister, you said that part of this money is for digitization of the station. Is digitization of the station not a capital expenditure that should come really under development? Then how are you including a capital expenditure like this under recurrent?

Hon. Cuffie: It is digital transmission and CNMG, well we have not gotten
to the development programme yet, but neither CNMG nor GISL has that under the development programme. Digital transmission is part of the ongoing operations of both organizations.

**Dr. Khan:** This is to the—Madam Chairman, through you,—to hon. Minister. I have seen your chairman indicate that there is a dire need to privatize those two entities. She said that in her utterances in the last couple months. If that is the case, the digitization of those entities should be taken by the private sector if that is the way it is going. So, why are you putting money into it when you could be going for privatization?

**Hon. Cuffie:** Because it is a mandate of the Telecommunications Authority of Trinidad and Tobago for all television stations. So they cannot wait until, you know, whatever plans obtain before they satisfy the mandate. It is an ongoing mandate.

**Mr. Charles:** I, perhaps, need some correction or clarification from the Minister, because when I look here—and we will get to that—under the development programme, I see institutional strengthening, digitization of Government’s media assets, is this separate from GISL and CNMG?

**Hon. Cuffie:** Yes, it is.

**Mr. Charles:** Thank you.

**Madam Chairman:** So, we go on to Sub-Head 06, Current Transfers to Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies—this is at the end of page 481, it commences there—item 004, Statutory Bodies. We move on to Sub-Head 09, Development Programme.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** NALIS, on current statutory boards.

**Madam Chairman:** Line item 53.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Line item 53. Hon. Minister, the estimate on that
previously was under the Ministry of Trade and Industry. You have a significant reduction for NALIS, I think I see more than $10 million. Have you thought it out to see why you are having such a reduction? What would suffer as a result of the reduction for NALIS?

**Hon. Cuffie:** Well, actually, the reduction is based on the allocation that was given last year. So we simply give the allocation—that was allocated, but the money released was $150 million. So we simply gave what was the least to them last year.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** But, they would have suffered as a result of the deficiency in the release.

**Hon. Cuffie:** I agree with you, they did suffer and I intend to ask the Minister of Finance to increase the allocation in the future.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Which Minister of Finance, this one?

**Hon. Cuffie:** Yes.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Thank you.

**Madam Chairman:** Sub-Head 09, Development Programme, and that is at page 219 of the *Draft Estimates of Development Programme*. Consolidated Fund, Item 004, Social Infrastructure.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** The 726, Upgrade of Public Library Facilities, if you forgive me hon. Minister, I know that would have been under the Ministry of Education before, but I am not finding the amount. Is it the same amount from last year for the Upgrade of Public Library Facilities and mobile libraries and Training of Librarians? Is it the same?

**Hon. Cuffie:** I would have to check that and get it to you in writing.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Okay, all right, I would check it too as well then.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Could I have a list,
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certainly in writing, at a later time of 726, the libraries to be upgraded and the facilities where the $3.5 million is committed?

Hon. Cuffie: We will provide it.

Madam Chairman: Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services.

Mr. Charles: For my information and, perhaps, the general public, could the Minister explain what are the media assets referred to in 001?

Hon. Cuffie: Okay. In terms of government media assets, that refers to the assets held at GISL in terms of photographs, electronic tapes and those kinds of things. Those are being digitized. And before you ask, the assets held at the National Archives refer to the archival material. There is also digitization going on at NALIS in terms of newspapers and the material held there.

Madam Chairman: Infrastructure Development Fund: Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services. And for the guidance of Members, this commences at page 354.

5.45 p.m.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Item 004, Public Buildings, I just want to ask the hon. Minister, the Heritage Library which forms part of the National Archives as well in terms of storing—

Madam Chairman: Hon.Member for Caroni East, could you please guide me? You are on page 354 or 355? Where are you? We are under the Infrastructure Development Fund, Item 005, which I said commenced on page 354.

Dr. Gopeesingh: “Nah”, I am not there. Sorry.

Madam Chairman: And that is where we are at.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 70 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Madam Chairman: I would like to thank the hon. Minister and the
members from the Ministry of Communications for coming and assisting us, you are relieved.

Head 05.

Madam Chairman: Members, for your guidance, while the change of technocrats is being facilitated, this is at page 9 of the draft estimates for DP and for the draft estimates of recurrent, this is at page 23. Head 05, Parliament, $134,726,000. I will now invite the hon. Minister of Finance to make a brief opening statement not exceeding five minutes.

Hon. Imbert: The Parliament is an institution in the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. It is bicameral. It is comprised of the House of Representatives and the Senate. It is referred to as one of the powers in Trinidad and Tobago. In the context of the separation of powers you have the Legislature, you have the Executive and you have the Judiciary, and this is where the concept of separation of powers comes in.

The Parliament performs many functions. In addition to providing the necessary support to elected Members and appointed Members, the Parliament also provides services in terms of support to committees, whether these are standing committees or joint select committees or ad hoc committees. The Parliament also puts on training to assist both new and old Members in terms of improving their knowledge and their skillset, and in terms of institutional strengthening.

Question proposed: That Head 05 stand part of the Schedule.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Members, the sum of $134,726,000 for Head 05, Parliament, is comprised of moneys proposed for expenditure under the following Sub-Heads and Items to be found in the Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure and the Draft Estimates of the Development Programme. For the guidance of Members we are at page 23, Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure, Item 001.
General Administration; Item 002, Office of the Ombudsman; Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services; Item 001, General Administration—Hon.Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Line Item number 64, Operations of Constituency Offices, reduced by approximately $15 million from $32 million, how would that affect the running of the constituency offices very significantly? Could the Minister of Finance indicate why this has been done and on what basis this has been done—and if he understands that the running of constituency offices will be severely restricted by a decrease of close to $15 million?

Hon. Imbert: What is the question?

Dr. Gopeesingh: I asked the question already.

Hon. Imbert: Which is?

Dr. Gopeesingh: If you are cerebrating you would probably be able to give the response.

Hon. Imbert: What is the question?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Explain the reduction—if you want me to repeat it again, “doh fall asleep”—you have a $15 million reduction for constituency offices which will affect the 41 constituencies of Parliament, what is the reason for it and do you understand that there are going to be major significant management issues for each Member of Parliament here in their constituencies? Why did you reduce it?

Hon. Imbert: What page?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Page 25, line item number 64—from $32 million last year to $17.5 million this year.

Hon. Imbert: It is hoped that the Parliament could achieve efficiency by utilizing more government buildings to house constituency offices. We have a number of new Members who are not entirely happy with the idea of occupying
rented accommodation that might have been occupied by someone from another political persuasion. So, in 2016, the Parliament will be reviewing all of this rented accommodation to see whether there are suitable government properties that can be used to provide accommodation for Members of Parliament. If the Parliament requires more funds at the end of this exercise then the Parliament would make the appropriate request to the Ministry of Finance.

**Madam Chairman:** Hon. Member for Barataria/San Juan.

**Dr. Khan:** Madam Chairman, thanks a lot. I direct this question to the Minister of Finance, as well as the Parliament, Sub-Head 02, Item 58, Medical Expenses, in 2015 we had a—

**Hon. Imbert:** You are done with rent?

**Madam Chairman:** Hon. Member, could you guide—Item 58, yes, we are here with you, Medical Expenses. Hon. Minister of Finance, we are now directing ourselves to the question posed by the hon. Member for Barataria/San Juan and it relates to line Item 58, Medical Expenses.

**Dr. Khan:** Thank you, Madam Chairman. The allocation was $5.5 million in 2015, that was for the medical expenses of parliamentarians and it was supposed to be given out by Parliament, and the House committee, I think, had a delay in developing that process; I saw in 2016 you put $200,000 which is $25,000 more than the $175,000, I would ask, are you going to revisit that Medical Expenses for parliamentarians—for medical insurance for parliamentarians, and the others?

**Hon. Imbert:** If you look at 2014 it was $195,000; if you look at the 2015 it was $175,000; in 2016 it is $200,000, it is an increase, what is the problem?

**Dr. Khan:** It is not an increase.

**Hon. Imbert:** It is not?

**Dr. Khan:** So what is $5.5 million?—that is a decrease?

**UNREVISED**
Hon. Imbert: That is the estimate.

Dr. Khan: Exactly, so I am asking a question, why is it not continuing?

Hon. Imbert: The revised figure for 2015 was $175,000—

Dr. Khan: But there was a reason to put in the $5.5 million, but I am asking if you are going to revisit it.

Hon. Imbert:— and what is that? That you could not manage the programme? What was the problem?

Dr. Khan: There is no problem, I think the problem is that you are not revisiting what I am asking. That is the problem right now.

Hon. Imbert: What is the problem? It is $175,000 in 2015 and $200,000 in 2016, what is the problem?

Dr. Khan: And that is not enough. It is not enough.

Madam Chairman: Hon.Member, Minister of Finance, the question is whether the Government intends to revisit the House—

Dr. Khan: Madam Chairman, I have a question on this line Item, why is it only on that side—

Hon. Imbert: Another question? A second question?

Dr. Khan: No. Why is it when you are on that side—

Madam Chairman: Hon.Member for Barataria/San Juan, I cannot allow that, all right? Hon. Minister of Finance, there is a question regarding Medical Expenses—

Hon. Imbert: Madam Chairman, this has a lot to do with the hon.Member for Barataria/San Juan in his previous incarnation. There was an original allocation of $5.5 million but only $175,000 was disbursed, and it has a lot to do with the Member for Barataria/San Juan in his previous incarnation. I can assure you that we on this side—since you on that side did not attend to the medical needs of
ordinary Members of Parliament when we were over there—now that we are over here we are going to make sure that Opposition Members of Parliament get the medical attention that they deserve, unlike what you did when we were in the Opposition.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Oropouche East.

Dr. Moonilal: To the Minister of Finance—[Crosstalk]

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Oropouche East—could we just have a little order so the hon. Member could ask the question, please.

Dr. Moonilal: I would like the attention of the Minister of Finance, he is engaged in another conversation at this time.

Madam Chairman: Direct your question to me, Hon. Member for Oropouche East.

Dr. Moonilal: Madam Chairman, I heard the Minister of Finance earlier, in explaining the decrease for Operations of Constituency Offices, spoke to the issue of rent, is he suggesting that the almost $15 million slashing of the Operations of Constituency Offices is for rental alone? And what are the implications of this slashing of the Parliament budget for the smooth operations of constituency offices? Are you also eradicating sub-offices of Members of Parliament by such a violent slashing of the funds?

Hon. Imbert: No, I am not suggesting that that entire figure is for rental of offices.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Tabaquite.

Dr. Rambachan: Thank you, Madam Chairman. I just want to ask two questions on the medical matter and then one on the Operations of Constituency Offices. On the medical matter, from what the hon. Minister of Finance was saying, I want to ask him whether he is implying that this Medical Expenses is
only for Members of the Opposition or for all Members of Parliament? That is the first question. Secondly, how many applications were received last year? How many applications were received in 2014 and 2015 for medical expenses? How many were actually honoured and how many were refused?

**Hon. Imbert:** You had two questions there, right?

**Madam Chairman:** Yes.

**Hon. Imbert:** The first one—you know, there are some things I really do not think should be out there in the public domain but since you brought it up, the medical programme for Members of Parliament—now, Ministers are entitled under the decision of the Salaries Review Commission to medical treatment paid for by their Ministries, so this medical plan is only necessary for persons who are not entitled to medical treatment under the Salaries Review Commission report—

**Dr. Rambachan:** My Ministry did not pay for my—

**Madam Chairman:** Hon. Member for Tabaquite, please.

**Hon. Imbert:** Look, look, look, look, the Salaries Review Commission has granted to all Cabinet Ministers free medical treatment, that has been so for 30 years, so if your Ministry did not pay for your medical expenses under your management, I am sorry. However—there is an aspect of this I did not want to bring up—the implementation for this medical programme for ordinary Members of Parliament was stuck in your Cabinet for one year, and the general election came and went and it remained—the Cabinet proposal remained in your Cabinet unresolved. So that is why ordinary Members of Parliament, Opposition Members of Parliament, like we were on this side, were not able to access these funds because your Government refused to settle the implementation mechanism for this medical programme for Members of Parliament. “And doh tell me yuh doh know, and doh tell me yuh doh remember”, because those are the facts.
6.00 p.m.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Chaguanas East.

Hon. Imbert: “Stick de ting in Cabinet for a year.” [Crosstalk] And you are laughing.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla, you no longer wish to speak?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Yes, Madam Chairman, thank you. Just going back to line Item 21, just to ask, will this amount be sufficient, Madam Chair—through you to hon. Minister—in light of the fact that there are a number of government buildings that need to be refurbished, particularly my own, which has to be rebuilt?

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member, are you under Operations of Constituency Offices?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: No. No. No. I am dealing with—[Crosstalk] Yes. That and also—Yes. Constituency Offices—

Madam Chairman: You are under 64?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Yes.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Minister of Finance.

Hon. Imbert: Okay. The refurbishment of constituency offices is not paid from that item. It is paid for under another vote. Okay? So there is a provision under another vote.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Madam Chair, with the violent slashing of $15 million from the constituency office fund, even though the Minister says they are going to get government offices for some of the Members of Parliament, if you get government offices for 40 Members of Parliament, that is only going to reduce the budget by $7 million, $15,000 at 12 months is $180,000 for each office, by 40
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offices it is $7.2 million. What else is affected by the other $7.8 million? Because he has removed another $7.8 million, admitting that you are getting government offices for all 40 or 41 Members of Parliament that is going to reduce the budget by only $7 million. What about the other $8 million? That would have significant repercussions on the management of the offices.

Hon. Imbert: The Parliament is going to, as I said, review the allocation of offices. For example, if you had rented premises where a UNC Member was occupying, a PNM Member may wish to go into government accommodations, so the Parliament is going to review the allocation of offices. In addition, how many of you all have left us? Eleven of you all have left us. Eleven of you all on that side have left us. So they had to pay severance to your employees. They had to pay severance to your employees because so many of you all have left us.

Dr. Gopeesingh: [Inaudible]

Hon. Imbert: No. It has been paid.

Dr. Rambachan: They are entitled to severance—

Hon. Imbert: No. No. No. You see, you all thought you all were going to win the election, so you did not provide for severance for your employees.

Madam Chairman: Members, could we kindly move on to another Item, please? Hon. Member for St. Augustine.

Mr. Ramadhar: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I am a bit perplexed and that is why I will ask this question. Will there be a—

Dr. Gopeesingh: His colleagues are perplexed as well.

Mr. Ramadhar:—reduction in the budget for staffing at those offices?

Hon. Imbert: I do not know how to say this. The budgetary allocation for this line Item is predicated on a request to the Parliament to try and accommodate Members of Parliament in government buildings where possible, and to try and

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avoid paying rent. That is number one. Number two, after the election of 2015, of September 7, a number of members of staff were severed. They were only paid up to September 7, and then they were paid their severance benefits. Now, we do not anticipate in 2016 that we are going to have a general election. So we do not have to have a provision for severance benefits for employees. And so many of you all have left us so we had to pay a lot of severance in September. Do you understand now? So we do not have to pay severance in 2016.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Oropouche East.

Dr. Moonilal: Yes Ma’am. My question to the hon. Minister of Finance: Is the Minister of Finance—and this is related No. 58—saying for the record that there were Members of the Opposition who made requests for medical expenses within our policy framework and were denied reimbursement for medical expenses? Just to be sure.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Minister of Finance.

Hon. Imbert: Yes.

Dr. Moonilal: The second question, is the Minister aware that when persons move into a constituency office, whether of one party or another, they can choose to go to any other office once it is proper. They are not stuck.

Hon. Imbert: Which line Item is this?

Dr. Moonilal: The Operations of Constituency Offices—because you are using this thing all the time about looking for government buildings. MPs in rural areas on many occasions do not have access to government buildings and bungalows because there are none, but they can move from one premise to another if it is so convenient. So raising this issue of government buildings really is an attempt to distract; obfuscate and distract.

Hon. Imbert: What is the question?
Dr. Moonilal: Do not mislead the Parliament.

Hon. Imbert: Madam Chairman, what is the question?

Madam Chairman: Members, please. I think we have exhausted—[Crosstalk] I think we have exhausted Sub-Head—[Crosstalk] I think we have exhausted—hon. Minister of Finance, we have we have exhausted the discussion on Sub-Head 002, Item 001. We now move on to Item 002 Office of the Ombudsman. Sub-Head 03 Minor Equipment Purchases. [Crosstalk] Hon. Minister of Finance. Sub-Head 03 Minor Equipment Purchases; Item 001—Members, if this continues I will have to suspend this sitting. Item 001 General Administration. Item 002 Office of the Ombudsman. [Crosstalk] Hon. Member for Tabaquite.

Dr. Rambachan: I had my hand up because under General Administration, Minor Equipment Purchases, the funding for—

Madam Chairman: Could you just point me to the line Item?

Dr. Rambachan: Sure. No. 04 Other Minor Equipment.

Madam Chairman: Members. Members, this Item affects us all. So I expect your cooperation.

Dr. Rambachan: Furniture and Furnishings and Other Minor Equipment, both of them. Right?

Madam Chairman: Yes.

Dr. Rambachan: Under this Item does this include the provisions for furniture and so on for the parliamentary offices of Members of Parliament? Because I have a question to ask.

Madam Chairman: This is page 27.

Dr. Rambachan: 27.

Madam Chairman: Item—

Dr. Rambachan: 03 Minor Equipment Purchases.
Madam Chairman: Three and 04. Hon. Minister of Finance.

Hon. Imbert: My answer is—no.

Dr. Rambachan: It does not?

Hon. Imbert: No.

Dr. Rambachan: Madam Chairman, since March this year the sign for my office collapsed. I have no sign for my office.

Hon. Imbert: You were in government then?

Dr. Rambachan: Why is it that—

Hon. Imbert: You were in government then?

Dr. Rambachan: I want to know whether the replacement of a sign for my office since March, by the Parliament, has not been done. And my desk which is also—

Madam Chairman: You want to know if that will come under Furniture and Furnishings and Other Minor Equipment?

Dr. Rambachan: When will it be done under this vote?

Madam Chairman: No. Well I cannot allow that question, but if you want to ask if it falls under this vote? I will allow that.

Hon. Imbert: Could I just get the timeline? March of which year?

Dr. Rambachan: This is the Parliament. It was reported to the Parliament.

Hon. Imbert: What is the timeline, Madam Chairman? March of which year?

Dr. Rambachan: March of 2015.

Hon. Imbert: When you were in Government.

Dr. Rambachan: It does not matter. It was reported to the Parliament.

Hon. Imbert: Ask yourself.

Dr. Rambachan: You do not expect me to put it up myself.
Hon. Imbert: Ask yourself.


Dr. Rambachan: Madam Chairman, Member for Diego Martin West cannot use insulting language like crazy people. And so on.

Madam Chairman: I do not think we have a Member for Diego Martin West present.

Dr. Rambachan: Diego Martin North/East. Yes. Sorry.

Madam Chairman: I would like us all to be guided. It is now 6.09. We have the business of the people to proceed with. Item 002 Office of the Ombudsman. Sub-Head 04 [Crosstalk] Members. Members. Hon. Minister of Finance—[Crosstalk] hon. Minister of Finance [Crosstalk]. This meeting is suspended for five minutes.

6.10 p.m.: Standing Finance Committee suspended.

6.15 p.m.: Standing Finance Committee resumed.

Madam Chairman: Sub-Head 03 Minor Equipment Purchases; Item 002 Office of the Ombudsman. Item—Sub-Head 04 Current Transfers and Subsidises. Item 002 Commonwealth Bodies. Item 004 International Bodies. We move on to the Development Programme and Sub-Head 09, Consolidated Fund, and we are at page 9. Item 005 Multi-Sectoral and Other Services. Hon. Member for Oropouche East.

Dr. Moonilal: I am on 06.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Chair. Hon. Minister, on line Item 005 Televising and Broadcasting of Parliamentary Proceedings. Can you advise what accounts for the increased allocation and also what does this expenditure entail?
Thank you.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Minister of Finance.

Hon. Imbert: Yeah. The broadcasting of parliamentary proceedings began several years ago, nine years ago. A lot of the equipment that was purchased at the inception is now obsolete and is in need of upgrade. So the increased allocation is simply to modernize and upgrade the equipment.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Oropouche East.

Dr. Moonilal: Yes. Ma’am, thank you very much. I am on page 9, of course, 013 and my question to Minister of Finance is, on the assumption that this is indeed the general accounting office that has been cited in the budget, it is not. It is the establishment of just an accounting office. Is this an accounting office for the Parliament itself?

Hon. Imbert: The short answer to that is—yes. There was a project—was it UNDP?—that looked at the way the Parliament manages its affairs, and it has been recommended that a budget office be established and this is what this is for.

Dr. Moonilal: Sure. Could I then—and my follow-up—what really then is the general accounting office cited in the budget?

Hon. Imbert: That is something completely different.

Dr. Moonilal: Because that was supposed to be also under the umbrella of the Parliament.

Hon. Imbert: No. That is different.

Dr. Moonilal: But is it provided for here then for the Parliament?

Hon. Imbert: The general accounting office has to be established, and the general accounting office will give real-time information on whether expenditure is in line with projection.

Dr. Moonilal: Is it an office under the ambit of the Parliament?
Hon. Imbert: Where did you see this in the budget speech?
Dr. Moonilal: Then it is not?
Hon. Imbert: I am asking you.
Dr. Moonilal: In the budget presentation there was a reference to a general accounting office.
Hon. Imbert: Obviously a general accounting office.
Dr. Moonilal: In the Parliament.
Hon. Imbert: In the Parliament? Could you show me the page?
Dr. Moonilal: Well I will get it for you. Let us proceed and I will just check on it.

Madam Chairman: So, we will return to that question. Hon. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Chair. Are we finished with it or are we on to F?

Madam Chairman: We are under Sub-Head 09, Item 005 Multi-Sectoral and Other Services.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Okay.

Madam Chairman: So that anything under that Head is entertained.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Great. 007 Equipping the Security Unit of Parliament. I see there is a revised downwards. Is it that they have been equipped sufficiently or almost sufficiently?

6.20 p.m.


Hon. Imbert: That is for the Chamber. This is for this building. What was your specific question?

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Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: I was asking, it has gone down, is it that we are more or less on par as to where we are supposed to be in terms of being equipped?

Hon. Imbert: In this building?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: I would assume so. If it is for this building, yes.

Hon. Imbert: I am advised that, yes.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Okay.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Oropouche East.

Dr. Moonilal: Yes, Madam Chair. I just quickly got the budget document because the Minister was asking where in the budget. It is at page 42, Mr. Minister, where you said that a:

“General Accounting Office which will be an independent office of Parliament…”

Hon. Imbert: Right.

Dr. Moonilal: For:

“…continuous real-time assessment of…budget performance”—et cetera.

I am asking then, bearing in mind what you said in the budget, where in the estimates are you providing for that, this general accounting office.

Hon. Imbert: We are on Development Programme, but I am advised that the allocation you are looking for is in Recurrent. You have passed that line Item.

Dr. Moonilal: Okay.

Hon. Imbert: But there is a $3 million allocation.

Dr. Moonilal: There is a $3 million allocation, then could I ask one follow-up question on this, because it is a very critical matter. Could you provide us with, in writing, a policy statement—

Hon. Imbert: Certainly, yes.
Dr. Moonilal:—as to what this is, how is it to established, how it is to function under the Parliament? So that we will have a clear idea of what this entails and what is the relationship with the Auditor General’s office if any at all.

Hon. Imbert: I will forgive the Member, but this matter was before your Cabinet since June.

Dr. Moonilal: Having made the statement in the Parliament surely you would be aware of the policy.

Hon. Imbert: You will get the framework, but I am just indicating my befuddlement at your unfamiliarity with the fact that this was before your Cabinet since June.

Dr. Moonilal: And that is fine. So you will provide it to all Members who were not in Cabinet at the time. [Crosstalk]

Madam Chairman: Infrastructure Development Fund, Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services. This is at page 276.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 05 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Madam Chairman: I want to thank the representatives of the Parliament for coming and assisting the committee, and they are relieved. Head 78:

Ministry of Social Development and Family Services. And for the assistance of Members we are now going to page 562 of your Draft Estimates Details of Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure for the Financial Year 2016.

Head 78.

Madam Chairman: Ministry of Social Development and Family Services, $4,792,928,472. I will now invite the Minister of Social Development and Family Services to make a brief opening statement not exceeding five minutes.

Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn: Thank you, Madam Chair. However, in the

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interest of time I forego my opening statement.

**Madam Chairman:** I am indeed grateful.

*Question proposed:* That Head 78 stand part of the Schedule.

**Madam Chairman:** Hon. Members, the sum of $4,792,928,472 for Head 78: the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services is comprised of moneys proposed for expenditure under the following Sub-Heads and Items to be found in the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure* and the *Draft Estimates of Development Programme*.

Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure. Item 001, General Administration.

Hon. Member for Couva North.

**Miss Ramdial:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Under 001, line item 08, Vacant Posts - Salaries & COLA, $3.2 million. I know that the Minister would give this in writing but just to reiterate and reconfirm a list of the vacant posts existing.

**Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn:** Yes, hon. Member, it will be provided to you in writing.

**Miss Ramdial:** Thank you.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 003, Social Welfare. Item 004, Gender Affairs Division. Item 005, Child Development Centre. Item 006, National Family Services. Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services; Item 001, General Administration.

Hon. Member for Siparia.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** Thank you, Madam Chair, through you to the hon. Minister, line Item 08, Rent/Lease - Office Accommodation and Storage. It is not reflected here on this page for the 2015 estimates, because it belonged to the Ministry when it was under a different name as you may well know, hon. Minister. But what we are saying is that we put those Ministries up for the 2015 Revised Estimates would have been $28 million under this Item. We now have an increase

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to $33.2 million, and would you be kind enough to give us an explanation as to why the increase? Is it that they getting additional accommodations somewhere else?

**Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn:** We budgeted for the relocation of the Head Office of the Ministry. So that would be responsible to an extent for the increase.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** And relocation to where?

**Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn:** We had proposed relocating to One Alexandra Place but that has been changed and we are now seeking an alternative accommodation.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** So you have not yet found alternative accommodation?

**Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn:** No, but we would have budgeted for it because we propose moving the Head Office.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** Do you know what One Alexandra is now for? It has been changed.

**Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn:** Sorry, I did not hear the question.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** I know the Ministry had spent a lot of time outfitting One Alexandra, with money, and a lot of money for outfitting that accommodation at One Alexandra for the Ministry under a different name, but this Ministry basically. Are we to understand that you are saying that it is not going to happen? And how much money was expended by the then Ministry of the People and Social Development which you have now inherited? It is a lot of money.

**Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn:** Hon. Member, for Siparia we have not spent any money on One Alexandra Place. Alexandra Place would have already been outfitted, so we would not have expended sums there.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** 2015 under your Revised Estimates. No
moneys were expended?

Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn: No, no moneys were expended on One Alexandra Place.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: By that specific Ministry?

Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn: That is correct.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Okay, we will check into it Madam, I thank you for your answers.

Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn: You are most welcome.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Chair. Hon. Minister, I know that there were some moneys expended in terms of the IT Unit being conducted in the building to provide for our services. Could you advise what will become of this now? That is under line item 08.

Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn: I am advised that the building is under the purview of the real estate administration. We would not have expended sums to outfit the building.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: No, no, I know that. Not an outfit. The building is outfitted through the Ministry of Local Government. I was referring to the IT, in particular, the IT, there was—

Madam Chairman: Please refer me to the line Item.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Line Item 08. I am on line Item 08.

Madam Chairman: Other office accommodation, rent/lease.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: In following up with the hon. Member for Siparia who requested a breakdown in moneys expended, the hon. Minister had explained that there were no moneys expended due to the fact that it came under another Ministry. But I am saying that during the time 2015, there were inadequate IT
services available and as such the Ministry had undertaken the project of implementing—

**Madam Chairman:** And therefore the question hon. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla that you wish to direct to the hon. Minister?

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** What happens, is it that the cost that the Ministry had put into it is that going to be entirely lost? As far as I am aware the Ministry at that time, the Ministry of the People and Social Development was in fact responsible for payment.

**Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn:** Hon. Member I am advised that funds were not expended on outfitting the building but in light of your question I will investigate and put the response in writing.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Thank you. And also item 09, hon. Minister, through you, Madam Chair, have you considered whether the purchasing of vehicles, as opposed to leasing, is cost effective?—because I know that you do have a mix of purchase and lease.

**Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn:** We are currently in the process of reviewing that and at the end the exercise, based on what we determine, we will look at the decision on the way forward.

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

**Madam Chairman:** Hon. Member for Oropouche East. Hon. Member for Chaguanas West.

**Mr. Singh:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I am dealing with item 22, Short-Term Employment. I see that there is an allocation of $27.5million for this and I would like to know the nature of that short-term employment and the duration. Is it beyond the three months that is generally envisaged and the numbers to accommodate this $27.5 million?

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Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn: Currently there are approximately 572 short-term employees within the Ministry and they are generally employed for up to three months. The Ministry is responsible for a number of projects and until we decide whether those projects are to be permanent projects or not, a number of persons are brought on short term to man those projects.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Couva North.

Miss Ramdial: Thank you, Madam Chair. Also 16, Contract Employment we see a high figure of $26,790,000. Can we get a list of these vacant positions, please, from the Minister?

Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn: Hon. Member, I will submit that in writing.

Miss Ramdial: Thank you.

Madam Chairman: Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Chair. Hon. Minister would any of these short-term contracts be employed in the recently approved six-year plan for both the retention as well as the new creation jobs?

Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn: The 572 persons who are currently in short term, they are in short term. We have approval for approximately 1,059 contract positions, 610 of them were approved in the six-year plan, but we have not started filling those vacancies as yet.

6.35p.m.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Hon. Minister, you said 600 under the six-year contract. Were any of those would have done three years already and then waiting to get the other three years? Or it starts ab initio for the six years from the future?

Mrs. Crichlow-Cockburn: The six-year plan is in respect of
additional positions. There may be persons who are currently on contract, well we advertise who may be suitable and fill some of those vacant contract positions.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** For the other three years.

**Mrs. Crichlow-Cockburn:** Yes.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** But a significant amount is open at the moment, waiting to be filled.

**Mrs. Crichlow-Cockburn:** Yes.


**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Thank you, Chair. Hon. Minister, would you be able to advise if Vision on Mission will be a part of this programme? I am not seeing their—

**Mrs. Crichlow-Cockburn:** Remember, they have gone to the Ministry of National Security.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Okay.

**Madam Chairman:** Hon. Member for Caroni East.
Dr. Gopeesingh: Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, under the other social programmes, 02, $15 million is allocated and you said here, 02, number 31, “Transferred from Head Ministry of People and Social Development”. There is no figure allocated to any one of these from 03 to 23, so 21 of them. Your Ministry will play it by ear to determine how much you will give to each one of these, out of the $15 million? Because there is no allocation for each one of these. There is a blank on our book. But $15 million has been allocated for about 21 of these social programme areas. What is your policy? When it comes to your understanding, you will determine how much your Ministry will give to each one of these centres?

Mrs. Crichlow-Cockburn: Subventions are granted to these institutions and it is normally based on a fee for service. So the different institutions will be granted different amounts.

Dr. Gopeesingh: That determination is made in your Ministry for each one of these areas?

Mrs. Crichlow-Cockburn: It is subject to Cabinet approval.

Dr. Gopeesingh: So you will go to Cabinet for each one of these and then ask Cabinet’s support out of the $15 million allocation?

Mrs. Crichlow-Cockburn: Yes.


Mr. Charles: Thank you very much. Item 01: Adult Education Programme. When I was reading the Singapore budget they talk about universal primary, universal secondary, universal tertiary education, and now they are going to universal adult education where people are trained for the four or five or six jobs that they will have to change in their careers. Are
we following this model? So the question I am asking is: what constitutes adult education? Is it 21st Century or is it—could you explain? Thank you.

Mrs. Crichlow-Cockburn: Currently, the adult education is provided in two categories: academics and craft, and the academics is really to bring people up to at least the secondary level, and then we treat with the craft training.

Mr. Charles: So therefore, it does not involve—and I am just asking, eh— monitoring changes in the marketplace and aligning our adults to prepare for those jobs. It is a little different?

Mrs. Crichlow-Cockburn: No, hon. Member. We have not gotten there as yet.

Mr. Charles: Thank you very much.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Cumuto-Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Hon. Minister, under Educational Institutions, I only see Adult Education Programme. If my memory is good, I know that under Gender, there was a facility being put in place for the autistic society in terms of the educational aspect of it. Could you tell me if that project and the programme will be considered by your Ministry?

Mrs. Crichlow-Cockburn: That programme has not been approved as yet, but it is something that we are looking at, the whole issue of autism.

Madam Chairman: Item 007: Households. Hon. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Chair. Hon. Minister, could you tell me, on line 06, what is the rehabilitative programme about, and which NGO will it function under? I have a couple questions, Chair.

Mrs. Crichlow-Cockburn: Most of the programmes that we
implement, there is a rehabilitative aspect to it because, at the end of the day, what we want to do is to ensure that we lift people out of the situation that they are in. So most of these programmes would have a rehabilitative component.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Agreed. But I just saw it separate as a line Item and I was wondering if there was another programme that you had in place as opposed to what would have been incorporated in the other programmes.

Mrs. Crichlow-Cockburn: This refers to the programme that we call the SEED and the RISE-UP.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: All right. Okay.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Couva North.

Miss Ramdial: Thank you, Madam Chair. 13 under 007: Relief for Underprivileged Newborn, I see an allocation of $10 million. Is this the new name for the Baby Care Grant?

Mrs. Crichlow-Cockburn: Hon. Member, this, in fact, refers to what you are calling the Baby Care Grant. Yes, it does.

Miss Ramdial: Thank you very much, and thank you, Madam Minister for keeping this going.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Chaguanas West.

Mr. Singh: Madam Chair, thank you. I was just looking at the allocation for the disability grant of $465 million. Could the hon. Minister provide, in writing, the number of beneficiaries of this disability grant?

Mrs. Crichlow-Cockburn: That would be provided.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Chair. Hon. Minister, just to—I do
not want to assume that because there is a $10 million budgeted for the relief for underprivileged mothers—I do not want to assume because it is a line Item—that, in fact, that it will be kept. Can you advise if the programme will be, in fact, maintained?

**Mrs. Crichlow-Cockburn:** Hon. Member, this is something that we would have to take to Cabinet because the approval by the previous Cabinet was granted up to September 2015. So to continue, we would need to get the necessary Cabinet approval. So this would have to go before Cabinet.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** And my other question, Number 12, the People’s Card, I see there is an allocation of $33 million. This, I would assume, is the Biometric Card? That is the first question.

**Mrs. Crichlow-Cockburn:** Yes, it is.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** And again, I do not want to assume, would the Minister continue the programme of the Biometric Card, or do you have intentions of discontinuing it?

**Mrs. Crichlow-Cockburn:** The Biometric Card system is continuing at present. However, we recognize that given the cost and given some of the issues with the system, we are doing a review, and it is based on the findings of that review we will determine whether we proceed with it in its current form or if we would need to change the form.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Is there any consideration as to the business persons who would have contributed, in no small way, in having their systems converted? Will you be taking those things into consideration?

**Mrs. Crichlow-Cockburn:** I am not sure I understand, hon. Member.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** When the card was brought on, you had to have the equipment for it to function on and business persons would have
had to invest, to acquire these equipment, and as such, I am asking when you are reviewing, if there is a consideration at all for you to discontinue with the programme, would you be looking at how it would impact on businesses as well?

**Madam Chairman:** Hon. Member, is that a line Item here?

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

**Madam Chairman:** I think it is more a question of policy and, therefore, I would ask the Minister to give you that answer in writing.

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

**Madam Chairman:** Okay? So we are moving on to 009: Other Transfers which begins on page 575. Hon. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Hon. Minister, through you, Chair, 01, the GAP Programme, I do believe it has been oversubscribed and as such I am asking if you have any intention to increase the staffing to facilitate persons who are out there who will require this programme?

**Mrs. Crichlow-Cockburn:** At present we are at the maximum and the requests currently outstrip what we have in place. So we are reviewing it with a view to seeing whether we can facilitate the additional requests.

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

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

**Mr. Singh:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, the Item under 009, 02, the NSDP programme---

**Madam Chairman:** Hon. Members, I think you—009? All right, I am sorry. Yes.

**Mr. Singh:** You thought I was ahead of myself?

**Madam Chairman:** I thought that you were ahead of us.
Mr. Singh: Yes, Madam Chair. I just wanted to find out what will the NSDP in the context of Social Development be doing in relation to the other areas of the NSDP?

Mrs. Crichlow-Cockburn: The functions are similar. What we do is we provide assistance to needy families with respect to wiring of their homes, plumbing of the homes, that type of assistance and it is more centred in the rural areas.

Mr. Singh: Same thing like before.


Dr. Gopeesingh: Just a little observation. I wish the word “retarded” will be removed from this Trinidad and Tobago Association for Retarded Children. We had envisaged that we would have changed that, if it is by the legislation, but perhaps the new Government could look towards removing that word.

Mrs. Crichlow-Cockburn: Your advice has been accepted.


Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Chair. Hon. Minister, line Item 036, the Establishment of a Substance Abuse Rehabilitation, would you be collaborating with the Ministry of Health in light of the fact that I do believe that they will be embarking on a similar programme?

Mrs. Crichlow-Cockburn: Yes, hon. Member. That is something we
Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Oropouche East.

Dr. Moonilal: Yes, Ma’am, to the hon. Minister. I am at page 263, 042. Could you provide, in writing, at a later time the list of the Community-Based Telecentres on which expansion works would be undertaken?

Mrs. Crichlow-Cockburn: Yes.

Dr. Moonilal: Thank you.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Chair. Line Item 112, the Street Dwellers Rehabilitation and Re-integration Project, does this include Queen Street, hon. Minister.

Mrs. Crichlow-Cockburn: No, this one relates to Riverside Plaza.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Does 044 relate to Queen Street?

Mrs. Crichlow-Cockburn: Yes, that refers to Queen Street.

6.50 p.m.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Just an observation, Minister, and it would be a grave oversight. I have not seen anything at all for Autistic Society, and prior to our demitting office there was something in place for the Autistic Society. I would implore you to please look at it. It is a serious need, please.

Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn: Thank you. I will look at it.

Madam Chairman: Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services. Infrastructure Development Fund: Item 004, Social Infrastructure. And for the guidance of Members, it is on page 370.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 78 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.
Madam Chairman: I would like to thank the hon. Minister and the representatives of the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services for coming and assisting the committee. You all are relieved.

Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn: Thank you, Madam Chairman.

Madam Chairman: We now move to Head 23, Ministry of the Attorney General. While the representatives of that Ministry set up, for the guidance of Members, we are at page 151 of the Draft Estimates, Details of Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure.

Head 23.

Madam Chairman: Head 23, Ministry of Attorney General and Legal Affairs, $442,735,550. I will now invite the Minister in the Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs to make a brief opening statement not exceeding five minutes.

Hon. Young: Thank you very much, Madam Chairman, Members of the committee. What we have happening post-September 07 is a decision by the hon. Prime Minister to merge the operations of what were three Ministries before into one: that is, the Ministry of the Attorney General, the Ministry of Legal Affairs and some aspects of the Ministry of Justice. We have now had created one Ministry known as the Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs, and an unprecedented and very fortuitous and good move by the Prime Minister, if I may say so. He has an Attorney General and a full Cabinet Minister dealing with these two Ministries.

The Ministry of Attorney General and the Attorney General have certain constitutional responsibilities. All suits brought for and against the State are done in civil suits and are done in the name of the Attorney General. The Attorney General provides advice to the various other Ministries and to Cabinet, and what
we have now is this merged Ministry with a lot of responsibilities and increased portfolio, and challenges as we have outlined in our budget debates as to what happened in the last five years, and we are in the process of dealing with some of these aspects, clearing it up. And I would like to take this opportunity to publicly thank the two Permanent Secretaries who are new to the Ministry, who have done a fabulous job in assisting us over the short period of time that we have been in Government and also the members of staff who have also been assisting us tremendously.

Thank you very much.

Question proposed: That Head 23 stand part of the Schedule.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Members, the sum of $442,735,550 for Head 23, Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs, is comprised of moneys proposed for Expenditure under the following Sub-Heads and Items to be found in the Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure and the Draft Estimates of Development Programme. Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure; Item 001, General Administration; Item 002, Law Commission; Item 003, Equal Opportunity Commission; Item 004, Legal Affairs; Item 005, Law Revision Commission; Item 007, Intellectual Property Office. Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services; Item 001, General Administration.

The hon. Member for Chaguanas West.

Mr. Singh: Thank you, Madam Chair, for catching me before you proceeded. Item under Goods and Services, Rent/Lease - Office Accommodation and Storage. I notice there is a significant increase by $8.3 million from last year in the allocation for 2015/2016, could I get an explanation as to why is that increase?

Hon. Young: Through you, Madam Chair, this increase is to deal with—what this line Item goes to, as it says, is rent and lease from third parties on behalf
of various offices that fall under the Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs. So we have 10 different landlords and, of course, as it is to be expected and as happens with third party rentals, you have escalation in the rental charges to the Ministries, and that has amounted to over an annual period in $8.3 million increase for the period going into the next fiscal year.

**Madam Chairman:** Hon. Member for Siparia.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** Madam Chair, line Item 16, Contract Employment. I noted a decrease of $10.6 million under this line Item. I do not know if the Minister would kindly tell us what accounts for this decrease in 2016.

**Hon. Young:** Thank you very much. Madam Chair, through you, to the Member for Siparia. What this is, as I had said in the outset, we now have a merger, a morphing of the three Ministries. So what is happening as a result of that is you are having a filling of vacant positions, these contract positions.

We had a number of vacant positions in the two main Ministries—Ministry of Legal Affairs and the Attorney General—so we are filling those. So some persons who were traditionally contract workers would merge into those vacant positions, and then, of course, by definition, when you are merging these Ministries there is a reduction in the numbers. Also, what this line Item goes towards is, you would see the note includes provision for graduate employment.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** How many?

**Hon. Young:** There is a programme there—we will provide the number of graduates in the graduate programme to you in writing. The specific numbers.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** Thank you, hon. Minister. At this time how many contract positions exist? I have already asked you the percentage for graduate employment. I guess we will get that in writing if not available.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 002, Law Commission; Item 003, Equal
Opportunity Commission; Item 004, Legal Affairs; Item 005, Law Revision Commission; Item 007, Intellectual Property Office; Item 008, National Centre for Dispute Resolution. Sub-Head—

Dr. Gopeesingh: Stop there, Madam Chair.

Madam Chairman: We are now moving on to—you have reached us?

Dr. Gopeesingh: I am looking for the 008 that you just said.

Madam Chairman: The 008 is on page 160 towards the middle of the page, National Centre for Dispute Resolution. Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases; Item 001, General Administration; Item 002, Law Commission; Item 003, Equal Opportunity Commission; Item 004, Legal Affairs; Item 005, Law Revision Commission; Item 007, Intellectual Property Office; Item 008, National Centre for Dispute Resolution.

We now proceed to Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies, and that begins at the foot of page 162. Item 005, Non-profit Institutions; Item 007, Households. Hon. Member for Chaguanas West.

Mr. Singh: I saw, Madam Chair, Item under Households, 03, Contribution to the Secretariat of the Council of Legal Education. There was an Estimate of $4.3 million and the Revised Estimate there is not anything nor in the Estimate of 2016, could that be explained?

Hon. Young: My understanding, Madam Chair, through you, to the Member for Chaguanas West, is that was a one-off payment to the Secretariat of the Council of Legal Education actually approved by the former Cabinet. So payment having been made, it is not a continuation of an annual expense or expenditure.

Madam Chairman: Item 009, Other Transfers. Item 010, Other Transfers Abroad. We now go on to the Development Programme, the Consolidated Fund. It is found at page 70 of the Draft Estimates of Development Programme. Item 004,
Social Infrastructure. Hon. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: I am just making sure I am on the right Head. Okay, 005.

Madam Chairman: Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services. The hon. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Chair. Hon. Minister, through you, I am looking at 011 Information Technology and Computerisation Legal Aid Advisory Authority.

7.05 p.m.

I notice that in your recurrent expenditure, there was a decrease and moneys were not allocated. I just want to know in tying the two: will we have a functioning Legal Aid Authority in light of the fact that there are not any moneys allocated? We have for IT, but we do not have for the—if you could bear with me, go back on the expenditure on page 170.

Hon. Young: Are we going back?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: No, no, it is just a comparison. You do not have to go back if you do not wish to, but I just want you to understand the question. On page 170, 01, you do not have any moneys allocated, yet in the current book that we are in—

Madam Chairman: Hon. Members.

Hon. Young: If I may, Madam Chair, through you, Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla, what you are seeing here is actually there were sums in the former year. Remember, as I said, you would have a merger now of MLA into the Ministry of the Attorney General, so previously, it had fallen under the Head of Ministry of Legal Affairs, but now it is all in one Ministry, so it has been provided for. And if you actually look at the estimates and actual expenditure for the
previous years, under the line Item that we are exploring now, which is the computerization of legal aid and you will see that it is consistent with what was revised in the estimates in the previous years. So we have obviously provided for Legal Aid Authority because it plays a very important part in the society.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Yes, thank you.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** Madam Chair, line Item 18 which is the Strengthened Information Management at the RG’s Department. Would the hon. Minister give us an idea of what this project entails?

**Hon. Young:** What is happening here is actually in 2015, we had the revised estimate expenditure of 10.8, approximately $10.9 million. There is an IDB loan for the strengthening of the Registrar General’s Department. Pardon?

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** $26 million.

**Hon. Young:** Correct, $26 million and what this is really for and being utilized for is the provision and the change to the digitization of the land registry. As you would be aware, Member for Siparia, there is a whole system in Trinidad.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** Yes.

**Hon. Young:** We are trying to get it to move towards the RPO and to build up a proper land registry system. So this is specifically to achieve that and it is an ongoing project.

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** Thank you, hon. Minister, for your very kind response.

**Dr. Moonilal:** On page 71, under Administrative Services—no, I am on the next page actually, page 72. I wanted to ask—this is the question I asked when the Judiciary came up earlier in that there are about 11 Items that have been removed from the Judiciary to the Attorney General and Ministry of Legal Affairs; 11 Items where most, if not all, involve construction. My two questions are, one: does the
Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs, does that Ministry have the capacity to manage construction projects of this nature involving courts throughout the land? Do you have internal capacity to do that or would that be sub-contracted to a special purpose company?

And secondly, is this not a policy contradiction with your own stated policy of autonomy of the Judiciary where the Judiciary is now dependent on a Minister of Government and a Ministry to provide them with physical infrastructure and facilities?

**Hon. Young:** Thank you very much. Madam Chair, through you, first of all, it would be recognized, as I had said when dealing with the Judiciary, that what this Government has undertaken to do is to provide financial autonomy. Of course, that is a process that has to have a transition. We found ourselves having to prepare a budget within three weeks and this is part of the transition arrangement. So this money is going to be passed over to the Judiciary through various measures. We are working it out. We are going to work out with the Judiciary how we can achieve this. Right?

**Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC:** [Inaudible] the separation of powers.

**Hon. Young:** And also—correct. Traditionally, the Ministry, as you would be aware, the Ministry of the Attorney General has been a conduit to get to the Cabinet for Judiciary decisions, et cetera.

To answer the first part of your question, as you would be aware being the former Minister of Housing and Urban Development, and having UDeCOTT under your supervision, what would happen, with all—a lot of the Ministries—is you would then sub-contract as a Ministry to a NIPDEC or a UDeCOTT, et cetera, to handle the whole project management aspect for you, but it would come from your part of the budget and your part of expenditure.
However, these Items here are found as a transitional arrangement to be able to achieve what it is we said we would with respect to the financial autonomy of the Judiciary.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Could I ask in a simple—just to simply follow up. What was the reason for moving these 11 Items to the Attorney General when the Attorney General will always be that conduit to the Cabinet for finance and so on? But now the Attorney General becomes a client Ministry of a construction company, and that creates another level of bureaucracy, whereas before it was the Judiciary simply conducting their own repairs, facilitation; and with great respect, I am not sure that the Ministry of the Attorney General has the internal capacity through project management and so on to even work with a construction company.

**Hon. Young:** But it would not be through project management, Member for Oropouche East, it would be the Attorney General’s office and who better suited to deal with contracts than the Attorney General’s Office and making sure that contracts are properly adhered to and moneys are expended properly, as you will see over the next few months. But it will not be the Attorney General entering into the construction contracts, it will be utilizing the companies, as I said, such as the UDeCoTTs, the NIPDECS and the other, as you mentioned, special purpose companies who are better suited to do this, so it is really a management role.

**Mr. Singh:** Thank you, Madam Chairman. I had asked the question when we had dealt with the Judiciary with respect to the refurbishment and under Item 003, Refurbishment of Magistrates’ Courts, I see that under 005 which is the one of the Items transferred from the Ministry of Legal Affairs to the AG’s office, the Establishment of Chaguanas District Office. Is this the Magistrates’ Court or is it a district office of the Ministry of Legal Affairs? If it is a district office of the Ministry of Legal Affairs, what is happening with the refurbishment of the
Chaguanas Magistrates’ Court?

Hon. Young: Through you, Madam Chair, as you would see at line Item 003, there is a sum of $8.4 million set aside for Refurbishment of Magistrates’ Courts. Again, coming in with just three weeks to prepare the budget, this sum was put here as a specific allocation to then meet with the Judiciary and find out how sums should be allocated towards the refurbishment. You have raised the Chaguanas Magistrates’ Court issue, it is something that will be raised with the Judiciary and attract the attention of this Government.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: Thank you, Madam Chair. I am on page 71, line Item 025, Drafting of Campaign Finance Legislation, to the hon. Minister, I am just curious to find out $1 million for the drafting of a campaign finance legislation. What would that entail?

Hon. Young: Well, I know, through you, Madam Chairman, it may come as a little bit of a shock and a surprise, the former administration spending $10 million for constitutional reform. But what we intend to do over the next year, and actually starting in January, is start off the campaign finance reform consultation by inviting the OAS to co-host with us a massive conference, and we have already begun discussions with some of jurisdictions—Jamaica, the United States and others that have campaign finance legislation—to come and attend that conference so we can start it, kick it off as an educational process and then continue that process with a move towards legislation that will be implemented before the next time it needs to be utilized in 2020. So this is just for the next fiscal year period.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Madam Chairman, Item 011, Fill-out of the Ministry of Legal Affairs Tower, Government Campus, $2 million has been set aside for it. Could the Acting Attorney General, the hon. Minister, give an idea of how much is required to complete the outfitting of it and when is it due to be completed?
Hon. Young: Yes, actually, again, because of the limited time period within which to prepare these figures, this sum of $2 million was an allocation by the Ministry of Finance. My understanding is, it will require more than that. We are in the process of doing it. It is actually a contract with UDeCOTT, so UDeCOTT is in charge of outfitting. The UDeCOTT has given a date of a November move for the two Ministries—Legal Affairs and Attorney General—into the tower. I do not think that is realistic having paid a site visit myself. I suspect it will be sometime either in December or early next year that this physical move will be able to take place.

Madam Chairman: Can we go on to IDF?

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: I had my hand up quite a while. I thank you very much. I refer to the line Items that have been transferred on page 72 from the Judiciary to the Ministry of the Attorney General with respect to construction projects. My question is, given that all matters against the State, the Attorney General is made a party to those and therefore is directly before the courts, given the whole principle of the separation of powers, this is where now the Judiciary will have to depend on the said Ministry of the Attorney General to say, “I am building your court”, “I am not building your court”. They will be directly dependent on the same Ministry which will be a party before the court in all matters against the State. And I ask the hon. Minister whether he could give the assurance that whether he is comfortable that there will not be a breach of the separation of powers with respect to these construction projects? The Judiciary is dependent on your Ministry.

Hon. Young: Correct, and that is how it has been traditionally. But it is actually an interesting conversation that you raised because if you left it, let us say it was completely in the hands of the Judiciary and there was a dispute, and it does
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not go to arbitration, you will then have a situation where the Judiciary is being called upon to decide a dispute with itself and a third party. As I said earlier, and as I was reminded by the hon. Minister of Finance, this is a transitional period. What you have said has been noted and will be taken into account as we go through this transitional period to execute towards the end game.

Mrs. Persad-Bissessar SC: Thank you, Minister.

Madam Chairman: Infrastructural Development Fund, Item 005, this is at page 287, Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 23 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Madam Chairman: I would like to thank you the hon. Minister and the members from the Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs for attending and assisting the committee. You all are relieved.

Head 28.

Madam Chairman: Ministry of Health. This is at page 209 of your Draft Estimates Details of Recurrent Expenditure. Head 28, Ministry of Health, $4,834,775,768. I will now invite the Minister of Health to make a brief opening statement not exceeding five minutes.

7.20p.m.

Hon. Deyalsingh: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, according to Government’s policy document, “Let’s Do This Together” the vision of the Ministry of Health entails a society with integrity and morality in public life is of the highest priority and the Government of the day serves the public good above all else and where decisions are made and actions taken in the best interest of all concerned. In this regard, a data-based scientific, holistic and evidence-driven support mechanism, driven by compassion and respect for the rights and freedoms

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of all citizens are key pillars of this development.

In light of the above, Madam Chair, the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago recognizes that the quality of public health care services and the management of health institutions continue to be a major concern to the citizens of this country.

More importantly, the focus of this administration is to modernize the existing facility programme with scientific evidence-driven strategies complemented with an efficient, well-managed health care system that is capable of delivering health care services in accordance with global standards. Critical to this effort is collaboration amongst all stakeholders within the health system to ensure the delivery of a first-class health care system.

Madam Chair, before I close my opening statement, I was recently asked by a media practitioner what did I find when I went into the Ministry of Health and I knew what they were trying to get from me. And my answer was, what I found in the Ministry of Health was a team of dedicated professionals whose only objective is to help this administration modernize the health care system.

My team is behind me ready and willing to support, and I must mention the role played by the Permanent Secretary who joined the Ministry of the Health with me on the same day. So I pay tribute to them and I am now ready to answer questions. Thank you very much.

*Question proposed:* That Head 28 stand part of the Schedule.

**Madam Chairman:** Hon. Members, the sum of $4,834,775,768 for Head 28: Ministry of Health is comprised of moneys proposed for expenditure under the following Sub-Heads and Items to be found in the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure* and the *Draft Estimates of the Development Programme*. Sub-Head 01: Personnel Expenditure, Item 001 General Administration.

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Dr. Khan: Thank you, Madam Chair, and may I congratulate the team from the Ministry of Health for the good job they had done and are also doing as we speak?

Just one thing, Minister and Minister of Finance, I notice there is a decrease in the allocations for salaries and cost of living allowances. Could you just give me a slight explanation as to why is this, when we are going to commission the Couva Children Hospital and other hospitals?

Hon. Deyalsingh: Are you referring to line Item 01?

Mr. Imbert: Ditto.

Dr. Khan: Ditto?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Under the Item would you be giving a list of all those who are employed and those who are sent home? Minister, this decrease in the Item, are you going to give us a list of those who are employed and those who are going to be sent home? Because there is a reduction in the salary.

Mr. Imbert: Madam Chairman, the Member for Caroni East is like a recurring decimal. This Item involves arrears and, therefore, you cannot draw any conclusion unless you see the build-up of the figures. I give an undertaking, as I have given now 19 times, that on every Item of Personnel Expenditure you will get a breakdown. So you will see if it is increased salaries, increased responsibilities, increased employment, or arrears.

Dr. Gopeesingh: And that goes for all the regional health authorities?

Mr. Imbert: Everything.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Right. Okay.

Madam Chairman: Item 004 Vertical Services; Item 005 North-West Regional Health 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. And the undertaking by the hon. Minister of Finance with respect to Personnel Expenditure binds all of these Items.

Sub-Head 02: Goods and Services; Item 001 General Administration.

Dr. Khan: Just one more thing, the heading 16, I notice there is an increase of $15 million for Contract Employment. Could you indicate what positions would be given to that heading? Also training has decreased by $3 million plus. I would like to know exactly why is that?

Hon. Deyalsingh: Thank you for the question. The answer is that is to cover the graduate employment and when we also get the six-year rolling plan.

Dr. Khan: So, could I ask the six-year—

Hon. Deyalsingh: If you want more details we could—[Interruption]

Dr. Khan: About six-year plan and the position for the six-year plan.

Hon. Deyalsingh: We could provide that to you in writing. Thank you.

Dr. Khan: And training, Minister?

Hon. Deyalsingh: Yes, in writing. Thank you.

Dr. Khan: Training decrease.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Could the hon. Minister give an idea of the graduate employment that you would need in this area? How many that you contemplate, having graduate employment? And if you speak about graduate employment, what type of graduates are you looking for to fill these positions in the Ministry?

Mr. Imbert: Madam Chairman, for the 22nd time, for the 22nd time, I am going to issue guidelines to each Ministry, with respect to the type of persons they should employ and the terms and conditions of employment for graduate employment. That will take place shortly after this. I have said that now for 22 times. Do I have to say it 44 times?
Madam Chairman: Hon. Members, we are running out of time. I am now going to put the question.

Question put.

[Continuous interruption and crosstalk]

Dr. Gopeesingh: Madam Chair, not at all. Madam Chair, we object to that.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: We object.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Member, and I note your objection.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Undemocratic.

Madam Chairman: The Standing Orders are quite clear; that five days have been allotted to this process. The Standing Orders are also quite clear that at 7.50 p.m., and if we are not familiar with our Standing Orders; Standing Order 81(6) and 81(7) govern this process. So I now put the question.

Question again put.

Hon. Members: No. Division.

Dr. Khan: We want a division.

Dr. Tewarie: We want a division.

The Standing Finance Committee divided: Ayes 21  Noes 18

Robinson-Regis, Mrs. C.

Rowley, Dr. K.

Imbert, C.

Mc Donald, Miss M.

Deyalsingh, T.

Dillon, Maj. Gen. E.

Hinds, F.

Young, S.
Appropriation (Financial Year 2016) Bill, 2015
Standing Finance Committee

Antoine, Brig. Gen. A.
Crichlow-Cockburn, Mrs. C.
Forde, E.
Cuffie, M.
Gadsby-Dolly, Dr. N.
Olivierre, Miss N.
Webster-Roy, Mrs. A.
Garcia, A.
Smith, D.
Mitchell, R.
Francis, Dr. L.
Leonce, A.
Jennings-Smith, Mrs. G.

NOES
Moonilal, Dr. R.
Persad-Bissessar SC, Mrs. K.
Gopeesingh, Dr. T.
Ramadhar, P.
Karim, F.
Rambachan, Dr. S.
Newallo-Hosein, Mrs. C.
Tewarie, Dr. B.
Gayadeen-Gopeesingh, Mrs. V.
Lee, Dr. D.
Indarsingh, R.
Ramdial, Miss R.
Question agreed to.

Head 28 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Madam Chairman: I thank the hon. Minister and the Members of the Ministry of Health for their assistance. They are relieved.

Head 17.

Question proposed: That Head 17 stand part of the Schedule.

Question put.

Mr. Singh: Division.

The Standing Finance Committee divided: Ayes 21 Noes 18

Robinson-Regis, Mrs. C.
Rowley, Dr. K.
Imbert, C.
Mc Donald, Miss M.
Deyalsingh, T.
Dillon, Maj. Gen. E.
Hinds, F.
Young, S.
Antoine, Brig. Gen. A.
Crichlow-Cockburn, Mrs. C.
Forde, E.

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Cuffie, M.
Gadsby-Dolly, Dr. N.
Olivierre, Miss N.
Webster-Roy, Mrs. A.
Garcia, A.
Smith, D.
Mitchell, R.
Francis, Dr. L.
Leonce, A.
Jennings-Smith, Mrs. G.
NOES
Moonilal, Dr. R.
Persad-Bissessar SC, Mrs. K.
Gopeesingh, Dr. T.
Ramadhar, P.
Karim, F.
Rambachan, Dr. S.
Newallo-Hosein, Mrs. C.
Tewarie, Dr. B.
Gayadeen-Gopeesingh, Mrs. V.
Lee, Dr. D.
Indarsingh, R.
Ramdial, Miss R.
Singh, G.
Khan, Dr. F.
Charles, R.
Appropriation (Financial Year 2016) Bill, 2015

Standing Finance Committee

Padarath, B.
Bodoe, Dr. L.
Paray, R.

*Question agreed to.*

*Head 17 ordered to stand part of the Bill.*

7.35p.m.

*Head 35.*

*Question proposed:* That Head 35 stand part of the Schedule.

*Question put.*

**Hon. Members:** Division.

*The Standing Finance Committee divided:* Ayes 21 Noes 18

Robinson-Regis, Mrs. C.
Rowley, Dr. K.
Imbert, C.
Mc Donald, Miss M.
Deyalsingh, T.
Dillon, Maj. Gen. E.
Hinds, F.
Young, S.
Antoine, Brig. Gen. A.
Crichlow-Cockburn, Mrs. C.
Forde, E.
Cuffie, M.
Gadsby-Dolly, Dr. N.
Olivierre, Miss N.
Webster-Roy, Mrs. A.

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Standing Finance Committee

Garcia, A.
Smith, D.
Mitchell, R.
Francis, Dr. L.
Leonce, A.
Jennings-Smith, Mrs. G.

NOES
Moonilal, Dr. R.
Persad-Bissessar SC, Mrs. K.
Gopeesingh, Dr. T.
Ramadhar, P.
Karim, F.
Rambachan, Dr. S.
Newallo-Hosein, Mrs. C.
Tewarie, Dr. B.
Gayadeen-Gopeesingh, Mrs. V.
Lee, Dr. D.
Indarsingh, R.
Ramdial, Miss R.
Singh, G.
Khan, Dr. F.
Charles, R.
Padarath, B.
Bodoe, Dr. L.
Paray, R.

Question agreed to.
Head 35 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Madam Chairman: I thank the hon. Minister and the representatives of the Ministry of Tourism.

Head 62.

Question proposed: That Head 62 stand part of the Schedule.

Question put.

Hon. Members: Division.

The Standing Finance Committee divided: Ayes 21 Noes 18

Robinson-Regis, Mrs. C.
Rowley, Dr. K.
Imbert, C.
Mc Donald, Miss M.
Deyalsingh, T.
Dillon, Maj. Gen. E.
Hinds, F.
Young, S.
Antoine, Brig. Gen. A.
Crichlow-Cockburn, Mrs. C.
Forde, E.
Cuffie, M.
Gadsby-Dolly, Dr. N.
Olivierre, Miss N.
Webster-Roy, Mrs. A.
Garcia, A.
Smith, D.
Mitchell, R.
Francis, Dr. L.
Leonce, A.
Jennings-Smith, Mrs. G.

NOES
Moonilal, Dr. R.
Persad-Bissessar SC, Mrs. K.
Gopeesingh, Dr. T.
Ramadhar, P.
Karim, F.
Rambachan, Dr. S.
Newallo-Hosein, Mrs. C.
Tewarie, Dr. B.
Gayadeen-Gopeesingh, Mrs. V.
Lee, Dr. D
Indarsingh, R.
Ramdial, Miss R.
Singh, G.
Khan, Dr. F.
Charles, R.
Padarath, B.
Bodoe, Dr. L.
Paray, R.

Question agreed to.

Head 62 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Madam Chairman: Thank you representatives of the Ministry of Community Development, Culture and the Arts for coming.
Head 65.

Question proposed: That Head 65 stand part of the Schedule.

Question put.

Hon. Members: Division.

The Standing Finance Committee divided: Ayes 21 Noes 18

Robinson-Regis, Mrs. C.
Rowley, Dr. K.
Imbert, C.
Mc Donald, Miss M.
Deyalsingh, T.
Dillon, Maj. Gen. E.
Hinds, F.
Young, S.
Antoine, Brig. Gen. A.
Crichlow-Cockburn, Mrs. C.
Forde, E.
Cuffie, M.
Gadsby-Dolly, Dr. N.
Olivierre, Miss N.
Webster-Roy, Mrs. A.
Garcia, A.
Smith, D.
Mitchell, R.
Francis, Dr. L.
Leonce, A.
Jennings-Smith, Mrs. G.
NOES
Moonilal, Dr. R.
Persad-Bissessar SC, Mrs. K.
Gopeesingh, Dr. T.
Ramadhar, P.
Karim, F.
Rambachan, Dr. S.
Newallo-Hosein, Mrs. C.
Tewarie, Dr. B.
Gayadeen-Gopeesingh, Mrs. V.
Lee, Dr. D.
Indarsingh, R.
Ramdial, Miss R.
Singh, G.
Khan, Dr. F.
Charles, R.
Padarath, B.
Bodoe, Dr. L.
Paray, R.

*Question agreed to.*

*Head 65 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.*

**Madam Chairman:** I thank the members of the Ministry for coming to this meeting.

*Head 13.*

*Question proposed:* That Head 13 stand part of the Schedule.

*Question put.*
Hon. Members: Division.

The Standing Finance Committee divided: Ayes 21 Noes 18

Robinson-Regis, Mrs. C.
Rowley, Dr. K.
Imbert, C.
Mc Donald, Miss M.
Deyalsingh, T.
Dillon, Maj. Gen. E.
Hinds, F.
Young, S.
Antoine, Brig. Gen. A.
Crichlow-Cockburn, Mrs. C.
Forde, E.
Cuffie, M.
Gadsby-Dolly, Dr. N.
Olivierre, Miss N.
Webster-Roy, Mrs. A.
Garcia, A.
Smith, D.
Mitchell, R.
Francis, Dr. L.
Leonce, A.
Jennings-Smith, Mrs. G.
NOES
Moonilal, Dr. R.
Persad-Bissessar SC, Mrs. K.
Standing Finance Committee

Gopeesingh, Dr. T.
Ramadhar, P.
Karim, F.
Rambachan, Dr. S.
Newallo-Hosein, Mrs. C.
Tewarie, Dr. B.
Gayadeen-Gopeesingh, Mrs. V.
Lee, Dr. D.
Indarsingh, R.
Ramdial, Miss R.
Singh, G.
Khan, Dr. F.
Charles, R.
Padarath, B.
Bodoe, Dr. L.
Paray, R.

Question agreed to.

Head 13 is ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Madam Chairman: Now, for considerations the clauses of the Bill.

Clauses 1 to 3 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Question proposed: That the Bill be reported to the House.

House resumed.

Bill reported, without amendment.

Question put: That the Bill be read a third time. [Interuption]

Question agreed to.

Bill accordingly read the third time and passed.
Madam Speaker: Hon. Members, may we have some order please? Hon. Members, at this time, the meeting of the House is suspended. We shall revert here in about 10 minutes.

7.51p.m: Sitting suspended.

7.59 p.m.: Sitting resumed.

SESSIONAL SELECT COMMITTEES

(APPOINTMENT OF)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Members, pursuant to Standing Order 89(2), I have appointed the following Members to serve on the sessional select committees of the House of Representatives for the First Session 2015/2016 of the Eleventh Parliament.

**Standing Orders Committee**

Mrs. Bridgid Annisette-George - Chairman
Mr. Faris Al-Rawi - Member
Mr. Anthony Garcia - Member
Mrs. Glenda Jennings-Smith - Member
Dr. Fuad Khan - Member
Mrs. Vidia Gayadeen-Gopeesingh - Member

**House Committee**

Mrs. Camille Robinson-Regis - Chairman
Mr. Colm Imbert - Member
Maj. Gen. Edmond Dillon - Member
Mrs. Ayanna Webster-Roy - Member
Dr. Roodal Moonilal - Member
Dr. Lackram Bodoe - Member

**Committee of Privileges**

UNREVISED
The Minister of Planning and Development (Hon. Camille Robinson-Regis): Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, I crave your indulgence to congratulate the Minister of Finance. [Desk thumping] Madam Speaker, I would like to ask that having regard to the fact that the Parliament was still engaged in the budgetary process, I beg to move that the time
Standing Finance Committee

for the appointment by the House of Representatives of Members of Joint Select Committees pursuant to section 66(a) of the Constitution be extended to Friday, November 13, 2015.

Question put and agreed to.

ADJOURNMENT

The Minister of Planning and Development (Hon. Camille Robinson-Regis): Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, at this point I beg to move that this House do now adjourn to a date to be fixed.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Members, before I put the question, I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate those of you who have made your maiden contribution during this first budget debate of the Eleventh Parliament. As the Speaker, it was an honour to serve as Chair of the Standing Finance Committee of this House which, as you are aware, is a relatively new initiative.

I appreciated what I interpreted as your robust enthusiasm for effective Parliamentary scrutiny that was evident over the past five days. To me, it is a clear signal that this session will generate vigorous participation by both sides in the work of committees, especially the financial and administration oversight committees soon to be appointed.

Hon. Members, on your behalf, I also thank the many accounting officers, Permanent Secretaries and technocrats from the various Ministries for their support to the Standing Finance Committee. [Desk thumping] Not to be left out is the Director of Budgets and the staff of the Budgets Division [Desk thumping] as well as the Government Printer and the staff of the Government Printery [Desk thumping] who worked tirelessly to ensure that the budget documents were prepared on time.

Question put and agreed to.
House adjourned accordingly.

Adjourned at 8.07 p.m.