Order read for resuming adjourned debate on question [October 06, 2017]:
That the Bill be now read a second time.

Question again proposed.

Mr. Rudranath Indarsingh (Couva South): [Desk thumping] Thank you, Madam Speaker, as I take the opportunity here to join this debate this morning on behalf of the Opposition of Trinidad and Tobago. Madam Speaker, I take the opportunity here to deal with this budget, a budget that has given no sense of direction to the people of Trinidad and Tobago in relation to its delivery. [Desk thumping] This budget has been a budget that all and sundry has been against since its delivery by the Minister of Finance, on behalf of the Government led by Prime Minister Dr. Keith Rowley. And this budget has been clinically dissected by the Leader of the Opposition [Desk thumping] and all of my colleagues on this side in relation to its content which lacks creativity, lacks a sense of direction and has given no hope to the people of Trinidad and Tobago. [Desk thumping]
And, Madam Speaker, I take the opportunity here, on behalf of the Leader of the Opposition and on behalf of all my colleagues on this side, to clearly indicate that there is a narrative that is being crafted, a narrative that is being put out in
the public domain that this budget has the widespread support of the people of Trinidad and Tobago and all the stakeholders at large. And I want to say from the outset, Madam Speaker, that this Government, led by Prime Minister Dr. Keith Rowley, is living in a fool’s paradise, is living in an environment where they are totally disconnected from the people of Trinidad and Tobago. [Desk thumping]

And before I do so, I want to take the opportunity here this morning to briefly respond to some of the issues that have been raised during this parliamentary debate, especially by the Minister in the Office of the Attorney General, the Member for Laventille West and the Member for Port of Spain South, who took the opportunity here to try and paint the People’s Partnership Government, led by Kamla Persad-Bissessar, as having Trinidad and Tobago in this current state that it is. And I want to say that in our five years, led by the hon. Kamla Persad-Bissessar, every sector of this society more or less experienced what we would call an increase in their standard of living [Desk thumping] and the population of this country understood what it meant in terms of the improvement in their quality of life, whether it was in health, whether it was in the cost of living and whether there was employment generation and so on, and a clear sense of direction.

And, Madam Speaker, the Member for Laventille West took the opportunity to use a cricketing analogy to indicate that the Minister of Finance was like the legendary West Indies fast bowler who is popularly known as, or referred to as Whispering Death, the legendary Michael Holding, and he said that the delivery—and he referred to that famous over at Kensington Oval in
Barbados where he indicated that the six balls that were bowled to opening batsman, Geoffrey Boycott, was unplayable, and the Leader of the Opposition had no response and could not reply and could not craft an inning in response to the Minister of Finance. Well, I want to tell the Member for Laventille West here this morning—he is not in the Chamber but I am sure that his colleagues will take the opportunity to inform him—that after three attempts to take his guard at the crease, Prime Minister Dr. Keith Rowley has relegated him to, what we would call, 13th man. He is no longer in the first 11. [Desk thumping] He is carrying, what we would call, towels and doing the job of a water boy in terms of his role on behalf of the Government of Prime Minister Dr. Keith Rowley.

The Member for Laventille West, in his usual style, crass, and attempting to be vulgar and intimidatory in his language and so on, launched, what we would call, a broad-based attack, an unwarranted attack, on all the prison officers of Trinidad and Tobago [Desk thumping] and the Prison Officers Association of this country. Madam Speaker, whilst there may be challenges within the prison service of this country, the Member for Laventille West attempted to broad-brush and to cast aspersions on the integrity of an arm of the law enforcement agencies of Trinidad and Tobago. And the Member for Laventille West went into the private lives of the prison officers of this country. He did not present one iota of evidence. He did not present any kind of studies or impact assessment as it relates to his findings or his conclusions, and he came up with his grand theory and so on. But what he will not tell the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago is that the Attorney General, who has been parading up and down Trinidad and Tobago, attempting to shape and craft an image of him

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as a performing Attorney General, has abandoned the Prison Officers Association [*Desk thumping*] since he met with them in February of 2017—eight months.

The Member for Laventille West, being a former member of the law enforcement agencies of this country, a former policeman and so on, should have been able to tell Trinidad and Tobago what his incompetent PNM Government is doing to deal with restorative justice [*Desk thumping*] and the prison system, the challenges that are confronting the prison officers of Trinidad and Tobago and even the prisoners within the restorative justice system and so on, in this country.

And, of course, my good friend from Port of Spain South who attempted to paint a picture of wastage, mismanagement and so on, well, I want to tell the Member for Port of Spain South this morning that she must do a sense of introspection and a sense of confession and admit that the PNM is scandal after scandal, [*Desk thumping*] corruption after corruption since September of 2015. And they attempt to take the opportunity here over the last few days of, as I said, attempting to shape a script, attempting to shape a narrative that there was waste, mismanagement and corruption.

But I want to tell the Member for Port of Spain South that if she had done her sense of introspection she would definitely come to the conclusion that there is crookedness in terms of the procurement of the *Cabo Star* and the *Ocean Flower* and [*Desk thumping*] the individual that the Prime Minister who is touted to have loved goat roti and so on, in relation to recruiting him as a lobbyist on behalf of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago and the people of
Trinidad and Tobago. And, Madam Speaker, no one can tell us after that allocation, I think, of how many million dollars—

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** $14 million.

**Mr. R. Indarsingh:** $14 million or $16 million for this famous or infamous gentleman, who the Member for Oropouche East said that has a penchant for goat roti and so on, if he has been able to bring any kind of, what we would call, foreign direct investment, anything that will lead to an improvement in the quality of life on behalf of the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago. He has been an abysmal failure in the field of foreign affairs and that is why Trinidad and Tobago is not really taken seriously at the United Nations based on the performance or the lack of performance on behalf of the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Madam Speaker, and they want to tell you—the Minister of Finance wants to tell Trinidad and Tobago that the burden is being shared by all and it is being equitably distributed based on the paradigm shift and ensuring a pathway of progress and prosperity and sustainability for the economy of this country. Well, I want to tell the Minister of Finance here this morning, after three budget presentations, after two midterm reviews, or mid-year reviews, whatever terminology he may want to append to it from a financial point of view, and after how many drawdowns from the Heritage and Stabilisation Fund and borrowings, whether locally or from the multilateral lending agencies and so on, the paradigm has not shifted and it will not change. [*Desk thumping*]

The only thing that the people have grown accustomed to under the PNM is taxation, unemployment, under-employment, pain, suffering and hardship.
[Desk thumping] The health sector is in chaos, Madam Speaker. It is taking people six and seven, and sometimes a year and more than a year to get an appointment to do routine surgeries. The passport system has collapsed in Trinidad and Tobago. We are longer able to access a passport after two weeks and so on, in terms of an appointment or a renewal. I am told that there is a shortage of passports in Trinidad and Tobago and as a result of that, people who want to fly out of Trinidad and Tobago, they are being subjected to exorbitant fees in terms of paying for an expedited passport.

So whether it is from an educational point of view, from a medical point of view, from dealing with wanting to even go on a business enterprise, and so on, people have to wait months now, and the renewal of passports and the passport system at the Immigration Division of the Ministry of National Security has collapsed and it is indicative of the performance and the lack of leadership [Desk thumping] on the part of Prime Minister, Dr. Keith Rowley.

And I want the Minister of Finance to listen because, apparently, he has made up his mind that he is not prepared to engage any stakeholder. That is why he went at the Chamber of Commerce post-budget forum analysis and attempted to attack a member of, what we would call, the professional class of this country, an economist who was attempting to put a different perspective, a different direction on the presentation of the budget. And the Minister of Finance attacked an economist in the person of Ms. Marla Dukharan. But the point I want to make here is that he indicated to the national community that he is not prepared to listen to any sterile or academic debate. The Member for Laventille West, when workers and persons who have been impacted upon in—
this budget—in their pockets, when they attempted to engage or send a message outside of the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago, in his usual style, the Member for Laventille West said, “They could do what they want”, when he was booed by the disenfranchised, the pauperized people outside of the Parliament.

And this is indicative of their style. And I want the Minister of Finance to listen to how the changes announced in the budget have affected your way of life. And these are ordinary people, eh. They do not belong to any particular group. [ Interruption ] You had your time. You are now the 13th man in the side, Member for Laventille West. [ Desk thumping ] You had your time. The Opposition is on the dance floor so you will relax and when you get the opportunity, through one of your colleagues who may not take you on—[ Interruption ] they may not take you on in terms of what you are attempting to do—

Dr. Gopeesingh: Standing Order 53, Madam Speaker. The Member is disturbing—

Madam Speaker: I think the Member can handle himself.

Mr. R. Indarsingh: So, Madam Speaker, for example, a kitchen supervisor by the name of Sharmatie Pancham from South Oropouche:

Things already expensive. Imagine what going to happen now that fuel prices gone up. Your pay not getting better, going up, but the cost of living getting higher and higher. Life will get harder for the people.

Annie Mohan, a business owner from Chaguanas:

I have a problem with GATE. My daughter got a diploma and I have to
get $14,000. I have to buy gas, food. I am single. We need to buy gas, food and pay bills. I feel like a pauper.

Angela Francis, a cemetery keeper from Morvant:

I don’t even want to think about it. Life is hard for the working class and think about it becoming stringent. The working class pays the price.

Sarah Pariah, a student from Port of Spain:

People can barely afford these prices we have now and they are not raising your salary.

And, of course, Natalie Purcelle, 18, a student from Rousillac:

In terms of GATE we have to wait too long when we apply for GATE to know if we are approved. Now with the means test, I don’t know what this means for us and in the meantime we have to find the money to pay our tuition fees.

This is just, what we would call, a snippet of the ordinary people who responded within—they did not need any sense of analysis, you know, Madam Speaker. They did not need an economist; they did not need an investment analyst and so on, to tell them. Within mere hours of the delivery of this budget this was the response of the ordinary people of Trinidad and Tobago, telling the failed Government and the incompetent Government of Prime Minister Dr.Keith Rowley, there can be no shift in the paradigm because it is sustained pressure on the poor since the 7th of February, 2015. [Desk thumping]

And they might want to tell you differently, you know, Madam Speaker. But they, through their manifesto of 2015 and also in their interaction with the different stakeholders and so on, in Trinidad and Tobago, they knew that in a
way, that when the Partnership came into being that there was, what we would call, an economic collapse or a financial collapse in 2008. When the Partnership came into power under Kamla Persad-Bissessar, it was no bed of roses in handling the economy of this country and dealing with the liabilities as it relates to the stakeholders of this country. But a Prime Minister with a sense of vision, a sense of creativity, a sense of wanting to work with the people and uplifting the people of Trinidad and Tobago, did not lift her hands in the air and say, “I cannot deal with the challenges of this country”. [Desk thumping] Because it was the first time in the country, in 17 years, that Trinidad and Tobago experienced, or went into negative economic growth of minus 4.4 per cent. There were liabilities across the board, whether it was from the point of view of Clico, the outstanding wage negotiations, settlements to contractors and so on, and I could go on and on.

And I want to tell Trinidad and Tobago to be very careful of this Government because it has been a sham, a charade, one of the biggest, what we would call, propaganda jobs that they have carried out on the population even before 2015, because they were in the practice nets, going all over the country, consulting with the stakeholders of this country. Whether it was the business community, the labour community, civil society and so on, they were consulting; they were in the practice nets telling the population of this country that they were “Red and Ready. We have all the solutions to the problems facing and confronting the people of Trinidad and Tobago.”

And they might want to tell you—they might want to deny it, but I want to remind you here this morning, and just read into the record and ask the
Minister of Finance what has become of the memorandum of understanding with the labour movement of Trinidad and Tobago and what has become of the grandiose promises that they made via the manifesto in terms of job creation and stimulating the economy of this country and providing a firm platform for future generations of this country. Madam Speaker, the great PNM, the saviour of the labour movement, the Minister of Labour and Small Enterprise Development, has gone into hiding two years ago since she made a promise for, what is called, a grand 10-point plan to the workers of ArcelorMittal and Centrin, and only resurfaced on Piggott’s corner, what night, two years after hiding from the population [Desk thumping] and the labour movement of Trinidad and Tobago.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Missing in action.

Mr. R. Indarsingh: But you know what is more important? And the labour movement must listen very carefully, because they promised to provide:

“…a clear Framework of the Rights and Responsibilities in the Workplace.

- A comprehensive and immediate review, in consultation with the Trade Union Movement, of all Labour Legislation”—including—“the Industrial Relations Act”—and the—“Retrenchment & Separation Benefits Act.”—and so on.

- “Simplification of the Recognition Process for Trade Unions.

Timely Settlement of all…public sector wage and salary negotiations.”

Madam Speaker, when we were the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, we met all the negotiations that they left hanging. In fact, the country must
remember and never forgive them, because they had, and enjoyed oil prices at being US $147 per barrel of oil. Natural gas was being sold at US $9 per MMBtu. And you know what was their offer to the labour movement at that time, Madam Speaker? Zero, zero, zero. [Desk thumping] So a leopard cannot change its skin. That is why the Minister of Finance could continue to sing the tune of zero, zero, zero and go to the Hyatt and tell the IMF that, “we will carry out your dictates”, and that is why [Desk thumping] he had to make the broad pronouncement of zero, zero, zero. [Interruption] You stay quiet. As I said, you had your turn. And that is why your arrogance will also continue to be remembered by the people of Trinidad and Tobago. [Desk thumping]

And in regard to that, Madam Speaker, they also took the opportunity to promise job creation. They took the opportunity and they promised a plywood factory somewhere down in South. That plywood factory probably has not gotten off the ground because they have not received the expert advice of the Minister of Education and the Member for Arima. [Desk thumping] Probably he has failed to deliver. I do not know if he could stand up to scrutiny in terms of what is his role and function in relation to being the best woodwork teacher in Trinidad and Tobago. Madam Speaker, I say no more.

So they have not delivered on the plywood factory. They have not delivered on—the Member for—in fact, she is my constituent but I do not see here. The only time I saw her was at Piggott’s corner and she promised 35,000 jobs. She told the workers who lost their jobs at ArcelorMittal and Centrin that she was engaged in discussions on behalf of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago with a recruitment agency by the name of Hire Pro Drivers Limited, I
think. And she promised 35,000 jobs in relation to the possibility of driving long-haul trucks in Canada, and also the possibility of dual citizenship to the nationals who would have taken up these jobs and so on. And she indicated that it would have been concretized and discussions would have been finalized by the end of December of 2016.

We are slowly approaching the end of 2017 and that is a hallmark of incompetence and the lack of delivery [Desk thumping] on the part of the Ministers of this Government of Trinidad and Tobago. And in addition to that, the Minister of National Security came to the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago and I think in three budget presentations they promised that there would be the recruitment of supplemental police officers in the relevant local government bodies in this country. They said that in the 14 corporations there will be a recruitment of 100 supplemental police officers. And in that regard that is yet to yet to get off the ground. And, again, it reeks of incompetence and a lack of delivery on the part of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago.

And in this regard, Madam Speaker, I want to tell you that there will be no job creation. There will be no growth of the economy. There will be no diversification of the economy of this country. And, in fact, the fallout from this budget is already impacting.  

10.30 a.m.

It is already causing a sense of hardship and pain, because, Madam Speaker, only yesterday you saw outside of the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago how warmly the Leader of the Opposition was greeted. [Desk thumping] She was greeted by a large contingent of workers from the union of commercial, what we
would call union of members’ clubs and lottery workers in Trinidad and Tobago, because they know that the only hope for the restoration of Trinidad and Tobago is a Government led by Kamla Persad-Bissessar, and already six clubs have closed their doors. [Desk thumping] Already six clubs have closed their doors and what that means is that 1,200 workers have joined the unemployment line, or the unemployment numbers in this country based on the lack of the creativity on the part of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago.

The Minister of Finance has attempted to double the taxation, Madam Speaker, on the already, what I would call persons who are committed to paying their taxation and so on. And in that regard, they do not have an appreciation of the pain, the injustice and so on, the instability that this will bring to the number of single mothers and so on, the over 9,000 persons who are directly employed in this particular sphere of the economy of Trinidad and Tobago, and the further impact it will have upon approximately 30,000 persons who rely on this industry.

Madam Speaker, the manner in terms of how the Minister of Finance has operated in imposing this form of taxation on the people, or on the gaming industry, reflects an overall modus operandi of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago. They continue to operate in bad faith. You cannot trust this Government [Desk thumping] at no point in time because of their modus operandi.

There was a Joint Select Committee before the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago headed by the Minister of Finance, and the Attorney General of this country being part of this Joint Select Committee, submissions were before the committee. The stakeholders were being afforded the opportunity to air their concerns and so on, and again like a thief in the night, without any sense of consultation, [Desk thumping] the Minister of Finance imposed this kind of
Appropriation (Financial Year 2018) 2017.10.12
Bill, 2017 (cont’d)
Mr. Indarsingh (cont’d)

taxation on the gaming industry of this country, and again a measure that will lead to further unemployment, further hardship, and further pain in Trinidad and Tobago.

Today, I want to ask the Prime Minister, and I want to ask the Minister of Finance in this country, what is the real plan for the public service of this country? Because whether it is in the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago, whether it is in their budget presentations, whether it is in their conversations with the people up in St. Augustine or at Piggott’s Corner, they continue to moan and groan about the size of the public service in Trinidad and Tobago. They continue to moan and groan about the collective bargaining process in the country. They said that the Partnership was irresponsible and reckless. I want to tell them unless they are prepared to undermine the collective bargaining process and the labour laws of Trinidad and Tobago, whatever wage increase was afforded to the trade union movement and their respective members, it was done through the collective bargaining process and the labour laws of Trinidad and Tobago.

What it tells me is that you are attacking the independence of the Office of the Chief Personnel Officer of this country, and the officers of the Ministry of Labour and Small Enterprise Development, and the Industrial Court of Trinidad and Tobago because there were agreements that were realized bilaterally at the Ministry of Labour and Small Enterprise Development, at the Office of the Chief Personnel Officer, and the Industrial Court of Trinidad and Tobago.

So, Madam Speaker, I want the Minister of Finance to tell us in his winding-up, whether it will be a programme of job losses and cutting-back in the Ministries and across the public service based on the cuts that we have seen from a Ministry point of view across the board, and, again, that reeks of what we would call an IMF
prescription. And I am further forced to deepen the argument whether it will be a programme of privatization at the state enterprises of this country because in his pronouncements, and if you read into the budget presentation, you will see that there are cuts earmarked and they continue to speak about the size of the debt at WASA and T&TEC and Petrotrin and so on.

In fact, what was stated in relation to Petrotrin, Madam Speaker, we heard it in the last budget and we heard it in the budget before. So nothing new has been said. Is it that the Minister of Finance is setting the platform for what I would call mass privatization of all the state enterprises in Trinidad and Tobago? Minister of Finance, come clean with the population of this country, and come clean with the respective trade unions who are representing these workers in all the state enterprises. And that leads me to the very issue of Petrotrin.

Madam Speaker, at Petrotrin there seems to be a process now—well, we would have heard of the fake oil and the scandals and so on that were pointed out by the Leader of the Opposition, and up to now they cannot tell us where the audit report is, what will become of the audit report and so on, but they boast of being—what?—they love to use the words “transparency and openness” in Government and so on, and working on behalf of the people of Trinidad and Tobago. What will be the business model that will be used or that will come at Petrotrin? Will all the workers at Petrotrin lose their jobs? Will there be the creation of three new state entities, or three new business entities at Petrotrin?

Also, Madam Speaker, I want to ask a very important question. At Petrotrin we have heard of restructuring, but it cannot get off the ground for whatever reason because anytime a board is appointed at Petrotrin, a board is replaced with a parallel committee. We have heard of an implementation committee now in this
budget presentation. When the board of Andrew Jupiter was appointed—up to now the country does not know why Andrew Jupiter resigned as the Chairman of Petrotrin. [*Desk thumping*] Whether it was linked to the fake oil scandal and the pressure that was applied on him, and nobody knows why the board of directors was replaced.

You had the Lashley report, Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries, a seven-man committee, nothing worked. The report is out in the public domain. I think the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries has it, but he is guarding it. I do not know for what reason, but he has to meet and treat with the OWTU at some point in time and they must remember, “time longer than twine”. [*Desk thumping*]

In relation to that, after that no restructuring at Petrotrin. You hear now of a board led by Wilfred Espinet and also we hear of an implementation committee, and I want to ask the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries and the Chairman of Petrotrin: In light of the scandals and in light of the debt burden, and in spite of we cannot spend money and so on, if he is aware of Mr. Neil Derrick, the Vice-President of HR and so on, in terms of who authorized the promotion of two persons within the HR Department of Petrotrin and so on, and who are drawing salaries in excess of $45,000 per month in addition to allowances; and is this part of what we will call restructuring based on the PNM’s position and based on the utterances of the Prime Minister that we must deal with the restructuring of Petrotrin?

Madam Speaker, I also want to turn my direction to the Trinidad Tobago Revenue Authority. We have heard of the Trinidad and Tobago Revenue Authority in budget one, budget two and budget three, and also we have heard of their
Appropriation (Financial Year 2018)
Bill, 2017 (cont’d)
Mr. Indarsingh (cont’d)

grandiose plans and so on, but I want to ask the Minister of Finance this morning, has he instructed the Minister in the Ministry of Finance Allyson West to conduct what we would call meetings with employees at the Board of Inland Revenue and Customs and Excise to carry out what it calls a human resource survey and a human resource exercise to find out whether persons will accept termination or whether they want to reapply in the new entity call the TTRA?

I ask that, Madam Speaker, because up till now, in spite of the Minister of Finance indicating in his budget presentation that this entity will come into force by the beginning of 2018, have they engaged the recognized majority union in law—that is the Public Services Association—have they formally written to him; have they completed a new organizational structure; have they completed a manpower audit exercise and so on? And in terms of successorship, Madam Speaker, will the Public Services Association have the right to continue to bargain on behalf of the employees who will form this new TTRA—these are the questions that I would want the Minister of Finance to answer on behalf of the 2,500 public servants who do not know what is the status of their job—and whether the Minister is only allowing the Minister in the Ministry to suppress and undermine the established labour laws of Trinidad and Tobago?

And since she has been appointed recently too, she came out of hiding too. She came out of hiding recently in a post-budget analysis again to say that she has evidence. She knows who is dodging tax in Trinidad and Tobago without providing any empirical data to the people of Trinidad and Tobago. [Desk thumping] A broad-based attack again. An unwarranted attack on the middle class in this country without providing any sense of data, without any kind of empirical evidence, Madam Speaker.
The Minister of Finance, we all want a more efficient tax collection system in this country, we all want a progressive Trinidad and Tobago, but we must remember this is the Minister of Finance who promised—he promised that he was going to hire—the broad headline was an army, a cadre of tax officers and compliance officers and so on. What have they done to improve the tax collection system at the Board of Inland Revenue and also at the Customs Division of the Ministry of Finance? He has presented nothing that will give the population of this country that the Government is serious about improving their revenue stream and improving the quality of life of the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago, Madam Speaker.

I also want to ask the Minister of Finance, because I am sure the Minister of Finance could recollect that the management of the National Insurance Board indicated to the population of this country that if a serious restructuring exercise is not done at the National Insurance Board that the pension benefits and the benefits of all who enjoy their, what we would call their “cacada” from the national insurance system, it may be in jeopardy, it may evaporate by 2030, Madam Speaker. And I want to know if the Minister of Finance would tell us whether he instructed, or whether there was a plan by the management of the board of the National Insurance Board to cut all pensions across the board in all classes, Madam Speaker, and whether a study was done and who instructed who at the national insurance system to restructure the pensions benefit system based on the last actuarial report or review. That is what I would like the Minister of Finance to answer in his winding-up.

In addition to this, Madam Speaker, they must always remember that they will try to fool the people one time, two times, or three times, but they must be
very aware that they cannot fool the people all the time in terms of their statistics and what they have attempted to put out before the population of this country, Madam Speaker, because I want to tell you that they have said that unemployment is 3.6 per cent in this country. Well, if unemployment is under 3.6 per cent in this country, we have full employment in this country. Then it should have nobody coming to my constituency office and lamenting the fact that they want a job because they cannot find a job in this economy. [Desk thumping]

**Madam Speaker:** Member for Couva South. Your original speaking time is now spent. You are entitled to 10 more minutes if you wish to avail yourself of it. Please proceed.

**Mr. R. Indarsingh:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. [Desk thumping] So they want us to forget that 25,000 people have lost their jobs and 1,200 now with the casino workers and climbing. They want us to forget how many state enterprises have been closed—Caroni Green, GISL—and I could read out the list off the top of my head. Madam Speaker, I will not bore you with that. And also, they want you to feel that people from an inflationary point of view can afford to purchase basic goods and services.

In my opening statement, Madam Speaker, I indicated how many people have been traumatized, how people have been brutalized, how people have been beaten into submission from the point of view of their standard of living, and I want to tell them that the taxi drivers in Les Coteaux, Tobago West, have already increased their taxi fares and that will be throughout the length and breadth of Trinidad and Tobago. [Desk thumping]

So, the inflationary trend will continue under this Government. There is no hope at all, and I want to ask Trinidad and Tobago—because I will make a case
here on behalf of the constituents of Couva South—after $110 billion that have been spent in this country in the last two years, if I hold you by your hand and walk you through the constituency of Couva South I cannot tell you that one thing has been completed [Desk thumping] on behalf of the people after $110 billion been spent.

Madam Speaker, I will not bore the House with reading into the record, but I have a bundle of letters that have been written to respective Ministers in this Government on this side. The Minister of Education—they could find $400 million to start the highway going to wherever, they could find $178 million to start the rehabilitation of some road in Moruga/Tableland. I have no problem with the development of Trinidad and Tobago you know, Madam Speaker, but the wickedness is what I have a problem with [Desk thumping] the vindictiveness is what I have a problem with. An early childhood education centre completed in Sonny Ladoo Trace in Couva, the former Minister of Education has told me that it will only cost $50,000 to outfit it, but you know what, they could find $90 million to pressure-wash the Brian Lara stadium [Desk thumping] and $3 million to drink champagne and have a good time at the opening ceremony, but you cannot find $50,000 in the development of the early childhood [Desk thumping] children of the constituency of Couva South.

Well, I do not want to talk about Rowhan—Rohan, not Rowhan—the Minister of Works and Transport. The Minister of Works and Transport going all around the constituencies of Trinidad and Tobago. With much fanfare, he is committed to the improvement of infrastructural development and road rehabilitation in Trinidad and Tobago. You know what? The Camden Bridge that was started by the Partnership Government and halted by the vicious Minister of
Appropriation (Financial Year 2018) (cont’d)
Mr. Indarsingh (cont’d)

Works and—

Mr. Mitchell: Madam Speaker, 48(6), please.

Mr. R. Indarsingh:—when he occupied—

Mr. Mitchell: Madam Speaker, 48(6).

Madam Speaker: Member? Member for Couva South, I think you could say that in a better way. Okay? So just retract that and say it in a more appropriate way.

Mr. R. Indarsingh: Yes, Madam Speaker. The heartless Minister of Works and Transport, [Desk thumping] he said that the need to stop the work on the Camden Bridge was to conduct an audit that there was corruption. Up to now I am still looking for him, like the Attorney General, to present their findings of audit for the people of Trinidad and Tobago. [Desk thumping] He said there was corruption, and after two years the Camden Bridge, which is of critical importance to the flow of vehicular traffic in and out of the port of Point Lisas and also the constituents of Couva South, no sign of it being completed.

Two years the Balmain recreation ground, the Partnership Government put up the lights, run the wires, everything. I have written to five Ministers of Public Utilities. [Desk thumping] In two years, the Members for Laventille West, D’Abadie/O’Meara, the Prime Minister when he held the portfolio of public utilities—

Miss Mc Donald: You never wrote me.

Mr. R. Indarsingh: You did not have time to even sit down on the chair. [Desk thumping] You did not even have time, Member for Port of Spain South, to warm the chair. I feel very sorry for you. I empathize with you.

Miss Mc Donald: You did not write me.

Mr. R. Indarsingh: Madam Speaker, they cannot light the Balmain recreation
In addition, the very progressive Minister of Tertiary Education that we had, Fazal Karim [Desk thumping] built the aviation campus. We had a vision under Kamla Persad-Bissessar that would have taken the young people of this country—I see the public gallery is filled with them this morning. [Desk thumping] We had a vision for their future. We spent $63 million in building an aviation campus that would have provided hope for the young people in building a career in aviation industry, conserving foreign exchange in this country. Do you know what, Madam Speaker? They are allowing caraille bush, they are allowing all kind of vine, they have gingee growing on it, and they have withdrawn the security because they do not want to open the aviation campus.

In addition to that—so they have failed the people of Couva South on their education, they have failed the people of Couva South on infrastructural development, they have failed the people of Couva South as it relates to the delivery of public utilities. Madam Speaker, I do not know if you drive throughout the length and breadth of Trinidad and Tobago, but the public lighting system in this country has collapsed everywhere. [Desk thumping] Everywhere you go there are areas of your respective constituencies that are in darkness. In fact, in Couva South—the Member for La Brea boasting how many street lights that she has had repaired—in Couva South there are over 200 street lights that have been blown [Desk thumping] and cannot be repaired on behalf of the people, and they live in fear because of the failure of them as it relates to tackling crime in Trinidad and Tobago.

So from where I sit, Madam Speaker, there can be no paradigm shift. The only thing that the people will experience under the Government of Prime Minister
Dr. Keith Rowley, is incompetent, scandal, corruption, a lack of delivery, and they will be forced to find more money to provide food on the table. They will only be able to barely make ends meet because they are committed to undermining the free and fair collective bargaining process in this country because in their manifesto too they promised a timely revision of the minimum wage rates in this country. They cannot tell you how much wage negotiation they have settled on behalf of the workers of this country. What is the future for workers and their children in an economy beyond 2040 in this country? Simply because it was a farce, it was a charade, [Desk thumping] it was a campaign in public relations. They were never ready to govern Trinidad and Tobago [Desk thumping] and that is why in the next general election, whenever it is called, the PNM and Prime Minister Dr. Keith Rowley will be history in terms of the political landscape of Trinidad and Tobago.

I thank you. [Desk thumping]

The Attorney General (Hon. Faris Al-Rawi): [Desk thumping] Thank you, Madam Speaker. Perhaps I should take a moment of silence just to let the volume subside from the Member who last spoke. Shakespeare was right, and so too many other authors, that sound and fury fill certain vessels. [Desk thumping] I would not even continue further lest I interrupt the privileges of the Parliament. Madam Speaker, I think that the Member for Couva South gave his most constructive speech yet. I am forced to reflect upon the fact that the Member for Couva South sat as a Minister in the Ministry of Finance. It was not that he did not serve in a position of authority or management. I really did expect the hon. Member to carry a message to all of Trinidad and Tobago as to the reality of where we are.

In speaking to the reality first of all, may I offer my sincere congratulations to the Minister of Finance, to the Minister of Planning and Development, for an
excellently constructed budget and I would like to say why. [Desk thumping] This budget was brought on the back of a first of its kind event, referred to as a Spotlight on Trinidad and Tobago. It was held on the 27th of September. It was an intervention by the public servants from the Ministry of Finance, the Central Bank, the Chambers of Commerce, and there was a full-day seminar speaking to the reality of Trinidad and Tobago.

The truth is an appropriation Bill as this is really intended to be a report to the country on two facts. One, your allocations on how they have been spent; and two, your prospects for future development and strategy, both of them residing in the context of what your current reality is, and that first of its kind introduction into the facts and the figures of Trinidad and Tobago on the 27th of September, demonstrated what I think we should all join in to, it is the reality of Trinidad and Tobago. It is in the context of the Appropriation Bill. What is the reality?

You see, it is very easy if you listen to the hyperbole of argument sometimes resembling that offered by my learned friend, the Member for Couva South. If you listen to the argument, “They say that it is only 3.5 per cent, 3.6 per cent unemployment in Trinidad and Tobago. That means nobody should be in my office asking for a job.” I mean, simple extrapolation mathematics will tell you that 3.5 per cent of 1.4 million people is 49,000 people. You must expect people to be at your office. But is it not true that the business community is now speaking to employment which resembles a 40 per cent absenteeism rate?

We have one of the backroom offices where we are encouraging growth and development in the sectors of Trinidad and Tobago. The back-room offices are saying that of the call centres across the Caribbean, and back-room offices across the Caribbean, Trinidad and Tobago distinguishes itself by having a 45 per cent
absenteeism rate.

The call to our country right now is sobriety, it is production, it is discipline, it is tolerance in the construct of the economic position that we find ourselves in. And what is that economic position? We had between 2010 and 2015, an average oil price—if you average off the prices per year—of roughly $101.66 for barrel. The average oil price between 2015 and 2017 is $41 per barrel. So you have gone from $100 to $41. The gas price on average between 2010 and 2015 is $3.96. The average price between 2015 and 2017 is $2.75.

11.00 a.m.

Now, we are a gas economy, not so much an oil economy. Our production levels have dropped from 100,000 barrels of oil per day to 77,000 barrels of oil per day and the price has dropped from $100 on average down to $41 on average. You are producing less and you are selling it for less. We have just had the Minister of Finance come truthfully and tell us that we have spent $53 billion and we earned $35 billion. There is a gap. We are told that the deficit gap this year is going to be $7 billion odd, after financing, et cetera, filling the hole.

But the real decision in telling the facts and centre-staging the need for productivity and value for money is really in the income that we earn. Taxes on incomes and profits. For oil companies, we have dropped from $16.02 billion, in 2011, $16,000 million—$16.02 billion, we have dropped to $472 million; $16 billion to $472 million is a 99.97 per cent drop in your revenue. Oil revenue, as a percentage of total revenue, has dropped from 33.7 per cent, in the time of the last Government, to 1.2 per cent. That is a 96.44 per cent drop in revenue.

Our expenditure, from 2010 to 2015, we moved from $6.7 billion to $10 billion. We increased our expenditure by 50 per cent. Goods and services, we
increased from $6.4 billion to $8 billion, a 20 per cent increase. Interest payments increased by 4 per cent from $3.29 billion to $3.4 billion. Transfers and subsidies grew from $23 billion to $30 billion. Transfers and subsidies include: social welfare support, CDAP, GATE, fuel subsidy. That entire package now, costs, in terms of our total expenditure, 53 cents out of every 100 are spent on transfers and subsidies. The subsidy on petroleum in 2015 was $4.5 billion; 2016, it went down to $0.9 billion, and 2017, it went down to $0.8 billion. Now why have I bothered to repeat the information?

Let us put it into context in the Appropriation Bill. If you listen to the Member for Couva South talk about spending money in certain areas, he then says, “Why do you not spend on another area”. But, Madam Speaker, with the greatest of respect, we hear prescriptions as to why do you not spend more but not a Member opposite tells us, in the thread and tapestry, what you should give up to spend over there. You see, the Minister of Finance has had the task in balancing the PSIP, in balancing the expenditure of our country. He has had to decide how do we spend in one area and take away from another. And what hon. Members opposite are not levelling with the country on, is why we are in this situation.

I heard hon. Member for Pointe-a-Pierre say that Kevin Ramnarine was the best Minister of Energy in Trinidad and Tobago, and I just want to spend one reflective point. Madam Speaker, what caused our revenue from our taxes on income and profits on oil companies to drop by 99.97 per cent? What dropped us from $16.9 billion in 2014 to $472 billion—million? What dropped from—let me repeat that. Sixteen point nine billion in 2014 to $472 million. It was a decision of the Cabinet of the last Government. Now, I do not propose this morning to be pejorative or to cast blame. The focus of my contribution this morning is to report
on the realities of where we are and what the Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs has done as I will come to shortly. What caused that decision?

It is true and it was a very good decision to give incentives for oil and gas production, to tell companies, in the oil and gas industry, come and invest and we will give you an incentive to invest. That is true. [Interruption] Yes, you must be honest. But the problem was, in failing to cap the carry-forward losses. That is the problem. There was no cap on carrying forward losses in the oil companies, which meant that they will carry forward their losses almost until 2025. So this 99.97 per cent drop in revenue continues until 2025 where we earn $472 million because they failed to put a cap on the write-off of deferred taxation liabilities. We have students from the University of the West Indies here understand, through you, Madam Speaker, what I am saying. The cyanide pill in the decision of the last Cabinet in 2014 was a failure to calculate what the companies would do in terms of their carry-forward losses, beyond the concession which extends only until the next two months.

So what do we do in Trinidad and Tobago? You have lost 99 per cent of your revenue. You have to continue in the public sector. We only manage to maintain, at most months, the payment of public servants’ salaries. As Attorney General, I have had to approve the bonds for each of the payments for public servants’ salaries as we have auctions going on right now, today, this week, to pay for public servants’ salaries.

We heard from the Opposition, “do not cut, spend over here”, but not one reflection is spent on where to take it from. And what has happened in Trinidad and Tobago—I have heard the Member for Naparima just say across the floor, “Cabo Star” and other events. Madam Speaker, permit me to reflect upon this. I
have heard the Member for St. Augustine, I have heard the Member for Couva South, I have heard the Member for N aparima. The truth is this. They say all of the allegations against the last Government and they are not seeing any action. I would like to say, we took a very specific decision not to prosecute in the press or in the public domain. And why? We spent as a country, between 2010 to 2015, $1.4 billion in legal fees and we have nothing to show for it.

Right now, today, I can tell that, in fact, pleadings have been served—have been filed in the court to deal with major corruption activities. There are several matters that are before the courts right now. But the truth is that the citizens of this country are tired of hearing talk, talk, talk, talk, “ah coming fuh you, ah coming fuh you, ah coming for you”; pre-action protocol after pre-action protocol, what I call “pap smearing”; $1.4 billion later and we do not have anything to show. So the truth is this. We understand that as a Government, we will be judged on our performance in 2019 in a local government election and in 2020 in the general election. Because the truth is that the population is waiting to see what you have done.

Let me turn, Madam Speaker, to the Attorney General’s office. As you know, there was a merger of two Ministries: Attorney General and Legal Affairs. That merger, I am happy to say, has been managed by the addition of two very skilled people into the Ministry. One is, of course, the Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann’s West and the other is the Member for Laventille West. [Desk thumping] I would like to take a moment to thank both hon. Members for the enterprise and skill that they bring in an egoless environment where we share up the work and divide and conquer. And why is that? The Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs is essentially responsible for all civil law, all criminal
law, our legislative work, reform of our jurisprudence and our path forward, but also responsible for 15 bodies, statutory bodies, including the Industrial Court, the Judiciary, the EOC, the environmental tribunal, the Anti-corruption Investigation Bureau and the list goes on. In that management of the entire backbone of Trinidad and Tobago’s structure, the Attorney General’s office is called upon to really be the engine for reform and reflection.

When we look to the appropriations, the appropriation that we came from by the last Government was $547,290 million. The appropriation now before us for the two Ministries, Attorney General and Legal Affairs, is $263 million. In other words then, it is 48 per cent of the budget that my predecessor Attorneys General worked with, 48 per cent of the budget. What have we done with our 48 per cent of the budget? What I can tell you is that the litmus test on that is to be found by a reflection of fees spent. We saw in the last Government that there was $444 million in legal fees spent in the Attorney General’s office. In fact, I am able to report today that we have spent $10 million on our local attorneys and we have cleared arrears of $38 million to the DPP’s office; $1.2 million again to the DPP’s office; we have half “ah” million dollars, again, to the DPP’s office and back pay in terms of arrears left, $137 million of bills left by the last Attorney General, we have cleared $1.5 million. [Interruption] Bills for lawyers.

What we have, therefore, done is to reduce the expenditure in the Attorney General’s office, year on year comparison. We, as a Government, have spent 8 per cent of what my predecessor spent year on year, [Desk thumping] 8 per cent. What have we done with the 8 per cent? We did that by ensuring that the 1,062 people that we employ are properly utilized across the divisions: the Solicitor General, the Chief State Solicitor, CPC’s department, the DPP’s department, by way of satellite
management.

But I want to inform hon. Members, the number of employees that we inherited in 2015 was 1,142. We are operating with 1,062. No persons at the AG’s office have been sent home. Not a single person has been sent home from 2015 to now. At the legal affairs end, where we have the discrepancy in bodies, the drop in figures, approximately 180 people were interviewed and re-interviewed, and what we had was roughly 86 people just not turning up. They did not possess the qualifications, they did not return to work, there was no interview process for them. In short, they were ghosts; were reported to 500 that we had in 2015 and we now have 86 but we have managed to keep the entire staff in check by simply reorganizing. That was sent to the police as you are aware, we awaiting on the police production. What I can say in relation to that, Madam Speaker, the Government can only go so far in dealing with matters.

Let me give you an example. We had an example of a case that is now complete of members of the Defence Force being alleged to have robbed the Defence Force essentially. The Attorney General’s office went in, took action against these persons, froze their accounts, recovered their assets and they admitted to guilt on the pleadings. They admitted to guilt, the police have yet to charge them. We have done our end of the work on the civil side. I cannot agitate the police or the Director of Public Prosecutions to do more than they can other than to provide them with the documentation.

We have roughly, in the Solicitor General’s Department, an increase in about 20 per cent of the workload year by year. We are processing approximately 2,519 new matters and when you do the ratio, how we manage to save money, we did so because we now have roughly 52 matters per attorney. In the Chief State
Solicitor’s Department, where we have 27 persons working across administrative matters and otherwise, we have a much higher number but it is a lesser workload of approximately 1,500 matters per attorney. And what we have done really is to ensure that we are getting value for money of the persons who are working there. That is how we are able to drop a legal bill from $138 million per year, as my predecessors spent, down to $10 million per year, and that is no small feat, Madam Speaker. That is accounting for value for money at the Attorney General’s office.

Madam Speaker, I heard the Member for St. Augustine yesterday speaking to efficiencies. I would like to say that some of the efficiency improvements in the Attorney General’s office have been because we have computerized the environment. We have provided laptops for the first time to the state attorneys working. We have provided a case management system for the first time to attorneys working. We have provided a tracking system, what you call docket management, for state attorneys working. What we have done essentially, Madam Speaker, is to make sure that Trinidad and Tobago has a functioning environment.

The Member for St. Augustine yesterday spoke about the Attorney General being tactical and bringing bad law and saying that three-fifth majorities were required on Bills. And I asked, in crosstalk yesterday to my learned colleague, well if you have a complaint of that nature, why do you not go to court? And his response was, it is too expensive to go to court. I would like to inform the hon. Member that in matters of a constitutional nature where you can go and there is no prescriptive amount, that the maximum exposure in cost that you are facing is TT $14,000. That is certainly not a far stretch, Madam Speaker.

But I would like to tell the hon. Member this, if the law was that bad, as he referred to it, in the abolition of child marriages where we were speaking about that
abolition for a short 26 years, where the Opposition was telling us “go and consult some more”, if it was that bad, why did every single Member—minus the Member for Siparia who was not here—vote for that Bill? [Desk thumping] You see, Madam Speaker, the hon. Members said to us, “Bring good law and we will support it”. How do we explain the fact that the Senate Bench of the United National Congress supported law 100 per cent as brought by this Government and then when we bring it down to the House, every man jack opposite votes “no” for it? How could that match up to bring good law and we will support it? Their own Senate Bench sits for hours on end and support the law but the Members in the House of Representatives vote “no” for what their own Senators brought. Now, it is true that you have two different Houses but they are under one whip, one leadership whip, and that is the Member for Siparia. So most respectfully, Madam Speaker, it makes no sense.

When we look to the work conducted by the CPC’s department, we are, in fact, properly on track to where we are, wanting to find ourselves, and when we look to the work that the CPC’s department brought forward, let me just reflect on some of those figures. We, in fact, dealt with 66 Bills at the legislative department, 186 Legal Notices, 25 Bills were introduced into Parliament. We dealt with the criminal justice reform, it was a mainstay and in dealing with criminal justice reform we then layer that as a platform to take the anti-corruption, which I will come to in just a moment, as to where we are headed to in the future. But the CPC’s department has been very hard at work. The work which we have performed is not without effort. In fact, as the “pilotor” of most of the Bills in this session now completed, I can tell you that we sat in Parliament up to four days a week—twice in the Senate and twice in the House. That is to keep pace with the
demand of work that is going on.

But, Madam Speaker, if you listen to hon. Members opposite, in their statement that they will only support good law, how do we reflect upon the Anti-Gang Bill that we brought? Madam Speaker, I propose to reflect upon the merit for supporting that Bill on two fronts. One, it was simply for an extension of a sunset clause by the last Government and two, we have had the benefit of litigation on anti-gang matters. There are 44 matters of litigation now completed in large part. All of which have had up to Court of Appeal reflection upon the Anti-Gang Bill and in reflecting upon the Anti-Gang Bill, what the court said, unfortunately, it was a double-edged sword. They said that the last Government basically caused the detention of persons without evidence and therefore, we are now exposed to $100,000 plus $120,000, $200,000 per case. So that is 44 multiplied by $200,000 in terms of exposure for costs.

But what the honourable Judge of Appeal, Mr. Justice Bereaux reflected upon was that had the police come with the evidence before the court that there was a structured gang activity, there were described operations amongst them, that the law could have stood. And my honourable colleagues opposite know this because one of their lead Senators, Sen. Ramdeen, who has done some very good work in the last Parliament, in the last session concluded, was part of that litigation team which dealt with it. But it is inexplicable, when we are battling with crime, for Members opposite not to support legislation as they have.

Madam Speaker, allow me to reflect upon the Office of the DPP. I would like to say that in dealing with the Office of the DPP, we have advanced work which was sitting idle for the very long time of successive Governments put back to back. In fact, there was a good push and momentum up to 2009 and then it fell
flat. We have invited the country to have the DPP’s office become more efficient specifically to operationalize the abolition of preliminary enquiries. Why? The example of fraud that stands foremost in the mind of citizens in Trinidad and Tobago is the Piarco airport enquiry. Persons who are before the court wish to have their day in court, persons who are crying for justice wish to see if there is merit in the case. The simple point there is that that case has been going on for 17 years. After the 17th year has now come upon us, we are now going into judicial review of the magistrate’s enquiry into Piarco No. 2. That then goes to the Court of Appeal, then to the Privy Council, then back to the Magistracy, so we are looking at another five to six years.

We have said to the country the abolition of preliminary enquiries will quicken the pace of justice. It allows for less people to stay in pre-trial detention in the prison’s population. It allows for the improvement of the consequence following the event. But when we look to the abolition of preliminary enquiries and in advocating the DPP as a central figure, whether it is under the existing law which allows the DPP to directly indict under section 23 of the preliminary enquiries Act or under the new proposed law, what we can say is that manpower was critical, offices were critical and budget was critical.

And permit me to put onto the record that we have given the DPP three new offices. One which is far advanced in Tobago, nearly complete, one in Port of Spain and one in San Fernando and all that we are waiting on is the DPP to give certain instructions for the completion of those works. We have similarly ensured that we have appointed a significant number of other bodies to the DPP by agitation to the Judicial and Legal Service Commission and we have improved their manpower by approximately 40 per cent. But more than that, I tie back to the
amount of fees spent. I asked you to note that of the budgeted amount of $50 million to be spent by the Attorney General’s office last year, $40 million was spent in the DPP’s office and that shows you the focused attention for the support of the Director of Public Prosecutions.

More than that, in terms of dealing with crime which is the number one issue in our country, if you look at the statistics in crime, you can analyse until kingdom come. It is true that serious crimes have fallen in 2017 significantly from where they were in the five-year period prior. But that has not redounded to a reduction in the number of murders which is the true barometer of crime and criminality or to the sense of security that citizens want to feel and ought to feel. But when you look to the administration of justice, the development of the Criminal Proceedings Rules, which came in April 2016 under this Government, has been a landmark event, and I wish to signal that as the backbone upon which we have prosecuted reforms for the introduction of judge only trials, for the introduction of plea bargaining, for the introduction of an easier access to bail, for the introduction of the decriminalization of motor vehicle offences as to violations, so that we remove 100,000 cases from the Magistracy.

But I would like to say that that has been on the back of two significant points of development in the AG’s office and that involves improving the prosecutorial management in the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service, which does 95 per cent of our prosecutions and also in the DPP’s office, and you have heard of the commitment that the Government has given to the DPP’s office. But when you look to the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service, the introduction, as is now happening under the very capable hand of Laventille West, is for case management structures in the TTPS so that the prosecutors are ready when the matters come in
and that they can meet their obligations under the Criminal Proceedings Rules.

Madam Speaker, this quickening of the pace of the criminal justice system is tied in to other aspects of significant development for us and that significant development lies in fraud and corruption, it lies in anti-terrorism and it lies in, specifically, ensuring that we meet our obligations by having a consequence meted out to an event. If you commit the crime, you should do the time. That is usually the maxim spoken there.

But what we have right now, Madam Speaker, in the quickening of justice is the next platform. You have heard the Government speak and you will see in this session of Parliament that having dealt with some of the criminal justice factors, we are improving the prosecutorial functions at the DPP’s office in tandem with the development of a public defender system. And that is specifically because one of the roadblocks to the prosecution of matters is that the defendant’s attorney is not available—my lawyer is busy. So the obligation should be that the matter starts, not with the counsel of choice but with competent counsel. If after three occasions have passed, you are not ready, the State should provide you with counsel and that is the development of the Legal Aid and Advice Authority reform which is fast under production, no lesser person than the Member for Laventille West doing yeoman service there, together with Minister Young and I, both.

Madam Speaker, when we come now to treating with criminality, the rationale standing behind what is referred to as the Al Capone approach is really quite simple. You not only look at taking guns off the street, charging people for murder, et cetera—and I would like to pause to compliment the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service. It is not lost upon me that there is an incredibly shortened gap now between an allegation of kidnapping and somebody now before the court,
[Desk thumping] an allegation of murder and somebody before the court, an allegation of a shooting and somebody before the court, and that did not happen by mistake. It is not spoken about widely but if you look at the improvement in the quickening of time frame of persons coming before the court, that did not happen by mistake. We have a very humble Minister of National Security who does not often boast about the work that he has done but I wish to testify for him that our international partners find the work at the Ministry of National Security, in improving the systems, to be the best that they have ever seen and I compliment the hon. Member for Point Fortin on the work that he has done. [Desk thumping]

Madam Speaker, we heard the Member for Naparima engaged in what I thought was a very reckless event and I say so because the hon. Member for Naparima stood up on the floor of this Parliament and told us—and I quote from his Hansard at page 19. The hon. Member for Naparima said this:

“We were told two weeks ago that when they captured one of the major cities in Syria…they captured ISIS fighters, they found Trinidad and Tobago families among those that were ISIS fighters. We had to find that out from aboard, not from our SSA.”

We made a big deal about that on this side by way of an interruption through the hon. Prime Minister under the Standing Order that the hon. Member stood to try to clarify the issue, when he then came back to say he was reading from a news report and that it was really Iraq and not Syria. And that was properly introduction of new material because that is not what the Member said, the hon. Member spoke to Syria. But the offence that was taken, Madam Speaker, is because the Anti-Terrorism Bill was introduced under a PNM Government in April 2010.
11.30 a.m.

For five years straight, nothing was done under anti-terrorism; not an entity listed, not a border patrol put into effect, no outward-bound management, no inward-bound management, not a file at the National Security Council. And Members opposite—the Member for Oropouche East is quoted as having given a statement saying that there were 400 persons from Trinidad and Tobago who were in ISIS; failing to recognize that there is no actual information in the system as to 400 people anywhere, but more particularly, not being available to answer a single query that was put to the hon. Member.

And the hon. Member for Naparima ought to know, because he served abroad for Trinidad and Tobago, that when you make statements like that, our international partners pay attention. It finds its way into international journals. It finds its way into television programmes. They promote that Trinidad and Tobago is this highest per capita contributor of ISIS fighters in the world. And when the Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann’s West says that that is unpatriotic, it is true. [Desk thumping]

And Madam Speaker, I would like to say, both Minister Young and I have been in constant discussions with our international partners. There are weeks when I attend at the United States Embassy on Skype conferencing to the Attorney General of the United States, to the Homeland Security, to the Department of Justice, accounting for what Trinidad and Tobago’s real position is. And do you know what the real position is? Since taking office, this Government has listed 341 persons under the anti-terrorism law. [Desk thumping]

This country has listed an individual from Trinidad and Tobago, based on evidence at the United Nations. This country, under the Minister of National

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Security, has taken up a product which sat languishing for five years under the last Government, to introduce the PISCES system. And for those who do not know, when you enter the United States and they ask for your fingerprints and they take a picture of you, that is the PISCES system. No border control mechanisms were put into place. The Advanced Passenger Information System, the introduction of the version of PISCES into our jails, so that we can do biometric mapping, none of that was put into place, but our Minister of National Security and the Attorney General’s Office have actually signed and are implementing all of these measures.

[Desk thumping]

So, Madam Speaker, standing up and making irresponsible statements devoid from facts, is the same form of behaviour that we see in Tobago: “Let us diversify. Trinidad and Tobago needs tourism.” “Buh doh bring Sandals, cause Sandals is de worse.” St. Lucia has seven of them or six of them, but Trinidad and Tobago does need any. “Let us diversify into tourism, buh doh go tuh Tobago, cause you will find no foods on the shelf, no water in de grocery, transportation cyah happen”, when the truth is the ferry is sailing with 30 per cent capacity, 30 per cent capacity.

And worse yet, when you see public servants being invited to go on leave, and investigations going on, it is not by mistake, Madam Speaker. When you see a dismissal happen in a public service environment, it is not by mistake, Madam Speaker. When the Government seeks to focus upon securing the goods and services for Trinidad and Tobago by eliminating corruption, what does the Opposition do? “Dey say ‘allyuh attacking public servants. Side wit dem.”

Madam Speaker, it reminds me of the debate that is going on in the gaming community right now. I noticed yesterday a person from my office was coming across and passed through the crowd and was given a book in his hand and he was
told sign the book otherwise you cannot be paid. That is a fact, Madam Speaker. A Government employee was handed a book yesterday and told: “Sign or you cannot be paid”.

I would like to declare, Madam Speaker, that I did do a considerable amount of work for persons in the gaming community when I was in private practice. And I want to tell you some of the scoping, without breaching any client privilege or other facts. I will speak in general terms. I am aware of one casino that rented a location for $450,000 a month and kept it empty for umpteen years, just to block competition from coming; $450,000 per month to block competition from occupying the space. I find it conspicuous that the actual owners are not coming forward, that the workers are being sent forward. [Desk thumping] I would like to tell the workers, do not be used as scapegoats. Do not be used as scapegoats. The gaming community is wealthy enough to afford the measures put into effect. But more than that, Madam Speaker, [Desk thumping] there is enough room for adjustment. There is no reason to threaten the workers or to agitate.

Madam Speaker, it gives this Government no pleasure for people to be told bad news, such as, let us remove a subsidy. Look at the increase in diesel. It is 48 per cent. Not every car uses diesel. There is CNG, which is massively cheaper and which has been incentivized for years but nobody has migrated to it. Why? Because there was no need to migrate. It is approximately a billion dollars in fuel subsidy, $800 million dollars last year to be precise. And we are at a point where we need to take that money in subsidy and actually provide it to other areas, like health, like education, like paying public servants’ salaries. But, Madam Speaker, when you try to prosper on the back of difficulty you are headed in the wrong direction, and the gaming workers are being exploited, Madam Speaker, and I ask
them to hold strong, because the Government is very aware of their position. [Desk thumping] As the regulatory environment pushes out, the industry will settle itself and we move away from the vagaries of an unregulated, un-bankable sector, into a regulated sector. And that is something to be looked forward to with anxious anticipation.

Madam Speaker, on that point of diesel, 48 per cent across a 12-seater maxi-taxi, is what per customer? Is it not 4 per cent? Is not a 25-seater maxi, 2.2 per cent per customer? Is it not true that customers should be empowered by the Opposition to say: “Well look, everybody does not have to suffer a 50 per cent hike.” In fact, if you take a 25-seater and you divide it by the number of users, it is 2 per cent per customer.

So instead of calling for responsibility, as Minister Young did in speaking to one of our banking sectors and saying: “Do not touch the hair on the head of an employee.” Minister Young was doing no different from what RBC did when David White stepped out and said in the public press that there will not be any adjustments as a result of the increase in 30 to 35 per cent for corporate taxes. Because, Madam Speaker, the truth is that this budget does not target the most vulnerable. This budget is designed to encourage the most vulnerable to receive the state resources. Taking a billion dollars in fuel subsidy and paying people to still be employed is maintaining their lifestyles. [Desk thumping] That is the truth of the equation.

Madam Speaker, another extremely important facet of success by this Government resides in the work that we have done. Tied into our criminal justice reform was the reform that we did in children, Madam Speaker. And let me speak to this because I notice that, perhaps, we do not boast well enough. This
Government came to Parliament with the Family and Children Division Bill and this Government amended 19 pieces of law. This Government sat and dealt with the child rehabilitation centres, children's homes, the conversion of YTC to child rehabilitation centre, from St. Michael’s moving across there, and this very humble Member for Tobago East, not out in the frontline boasting.

But, Madam Speaker, I notice other people are now taking credit for the facilitation of a product which sat down for 20 years in the Judiciary, five years under the last Government. Madam Speaker, we will, as a Government, be able to open two new courts, one in Fyzabad, one in Port of Spain; two new courts, after the interview of 13,000 employees, after the production of the rules of the juvenile court project, of the establishment of 169 child protection officers of the TTPS, under this Minister of National Security and all of that would have been done in 12 months’ time. [Desk thumping] What is the big news item for the Members opposite? Frankie Khan wife owns the property in Fyzabad. That is the big news.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Member for San Fernando West, your original time is now expired. You are entitled to 10 more minutes if you wish.

Hon. F. Al-Rawi: Thank you, Madam Speaker. So the big news for the Members opposite is that a Member of the Government, his spouse owns the property. And you know what? That is true. The Judiciary took the property in 2014/2015. The last Attorney General would have been dealing with the Judiciary in securing Mrs. Khan’s property. So all of a sudden it is scandal.

You see, Madam, Speaker, I want to caution the public. This Parliament has privilege. Some Members are wont to use their privilege in whatever way they see fit. Some of those Members are not ready to go outside and say what they have to say. You would notice that this Government is not “bussing any mark” in the
Parliament. What we have to say is on the outside. Madam Speaker, “we bussing it in de courthouse. That is where the mark is being bussed”, and albeit that it is measured. Because we wish not to sensationalize the matters because—do you know what is important?—it is the proof in the product, the proof in the pudding, proof in the eating; “not de gallery and ole talk.”

And I want to compliment Minister Young for his boundless energy in being such a phenomenal team player. [Desk thumping] And I would like to compliment the Prime Minister for having the foresight to put someone with energy, crossing two portfolios, Office of the Prime Minister and Office of the Attorney General. You see, we are team players, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, I could easily tell you about matters that we are looking at. There is a matter right now on my desk. A door, a door being replaced under a contract for $76,900, one door. That is the same type of bill that we had in Piarco Airport Enquiry where one door was $80,000. But Madam Speaker, that is in fact not a police matter. The truth is this, we could stand up, we could list the names. Minister Deyalsingh stood yesterday and showed you a plate for US $18. That lands here at TT $180, being sold for $5,800. He could have called the name. He could have called the supplier, but he did not. Do you know why? People want to see the results.

Madam Speaker, when we look to the Children and Family Division as a success story, I would like to say that this Government would have achieved in the Children and Family Division one of the greatest accomplishments in law possible. And, Madam Speaker, I would like to flag that coming next in line is in fact the criminal division, as we take that model and apply it to the criminal division.

Madam Speaker, I would like to spend a couple of moments on the registry,
that is, the land registry. I would like to tell you that we have achieved a landmark under this particular Government. There are 470,000 deeds that we are now scanning, from 1930—1959. We have completed the locking of the IDB project for the scanning of all deeds under the RPO section and from the 1970 go forward. We are prioritizing the registry so that we can have electronic filing, electronic availability of documents and I would like to flag that we are soon to introduce e-payment in a cashless environment.

But why are we doing this, Madam Speaker? The land registry and the vital records registry is critical to fraud and to enforcement. I am very pleased to say that the Registrar General’s division has signed MOUs with the FIB, with the TTPS, with the Ministry of Social Development, et cetera, where we provide all live records: birth records, death records, marriage records, et cetera.

We have taken the information in the Ministry of Works and Transport where we have completed the registration of all licences, of all cars, as we move forward. Put all of that into an accessibility amongst government stakeholders, be it in pensions or national security, or the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service. But the land registry ties into the implementation of property tax and it ties into the implementation of anti-fraud measures.

You see, Madam Speaker, when you know who the owner of a property is, when it was transferred, and when you lay that on with a very important thing, which is coming in the amendments to the registration of lands and deeds and other aspects, you are actually going to see an improvement in the knowledge of how we manage the resources of Trinidad and Tobago.

And when they ask the Minister of Finance what is he doing to operationalize the property tax; that is what is being done. Because, Madam
Speaker, there is nothing wrong with property taxes. Look at WASA, Minister Le Hunte put out into the public domain recently the fact that one litre of water costs $5.50. All day of WASA, tap on, run the tank dry, cost you TT $3.00. That is the level of subsidy in our country. But, Madam Speaker, property taxes are essential to make sure we repair roads, we have the municipal corporations functioning, we pick up garbage, we clean rivers, we deal with our schools.

And, Madam Speaker, that, perhaps takes me, because I have very little time, to one quick topic. I asked the national community to bear in mind, that a lot of the obstruction we are seeing right now could have been avoided. The previous Attorney General, Mr. Anand Ramlogan, took us to court for the Government failing to have a child rehabilitation centre. The claim before the court was the failure of the Attorney General to have a community residence. So, Ramlogan sued himself in a different capacity. As Attorney General, the law was proclaimed by his Government. He stops being Attorney General, he goes to court and he sues himself. And here is what it cost us. It cost us $1,579,000 to maintain one child, thanks to Mr. Ramlogan.

It is no different from Devant Maharaj going to court and suing the Government for the production of the annual reports for the Interception of Communications Act for the years 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014 and 2015. The judge was compelled to observe, after the judge refused to give the order that he requested, that he was a Member of the same Cabinet with the responsibility to do it that did not do it. [Interruption]

Dr. Rowley: And when we tell them: “Ask yourself, dey does get vex.”

Hon. F. Al-Rawi: As the Prime Minister says when we tell you ask yourselves, you get vex. But, Madam Speaker, what I am trying to point out here in the round,
is that there is significant need for sobriety. And I just ask hon. Members opposite, listen, if it is that you are confident that you will return to Government, do you not want a better system? Why not lean in and lend a hand? We demonstrated, without fear, the ability to support 95 per cent of the then Government’s legislation and still win an election. [Desk thumping] So let us be honest.

Madam Speaker, I would like to say to the Minister of Planning, the Minister of Housing, the Minister of Finance, the Minister of Community Development and Minister of Works and Transport, thank you from the people of San Fernando West for the work that you have done. Madam Speaker, I was disappointed that the Member for Pointe-a-Pierre did not reflect to the national community that on the day of significant flooding, that I was in his constituency with backhoes, with trucks, cleaning rivers in his constituency, called to make sure that the work was being done. But do you know what the incredible thing is? Acting Prime Minister, Errol McLeod, Member for Pointe-a-Pierre for five years straight, did absolutely nothing. And the Member for Pointe-a-Pierre says today: “why all yuh doh fix meh up?” Well, we are fixing you up and we started in your rivers and in your drains and we cleared.

But, Madam Speaker, I should declare my interest in housing. As you know I am involved in quite a lot of development. The measures under the Minister of Finance for housing are very significant. It is to completely renovate the housing demand in Trinidad and Tobago. Because, Madam Speaker, San Fernando West has approved in the budget its waterfront for the first time. [Desk thumping] It has approved housing under the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development for the first time. It has approved its community centres for the first time. We turned sod and opened the St. Vincent Street Community Centre, to complete the works which
were stopped in 2010. Seven years later, San Fernando central is about to get a community centre.

But, Madam Speaker, on housing, to the people of Trinidad and Tobago, to the people of San Fernando West, there is massive opportunity available under the housing programme. And under that housing programme, the private sector steps in, the private sector develops land, the private sector can access government land, the private sector, if it uses its own land, can be paid approximately $100,000 per unit in an environment where you are told: “Here is the plan, here is the selling price. If you build under the selling price the profit is yours. Here is your guaranteed surplus. Here is the list from the HDC.” And by the way, persons approved at the HDC come with the benefit of a TTMF mortgage or a Home Mortgage Bank mortgage, so your risk on investment is next to nothing. That is why the Member for Tabaquite was broad smiles throughout the whole budget. As a successful land developer himself, and I compliment him for it, the truth is that there is massive opportunity. It stimulates the private sector. It encourages development.

So, Madam Speaker, far from this being a budget of doom and gloom, this budget is a call to sobriety, to production. There is a lot to come, in terms of our regulatory growth, and Madam Speaker, I thank you for the opportunity to contribute. [Desk thumping]

Dr. Roodal Moonilal (Oropouche East): Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, for the opportunity to contribute to this debate on the last day, I believe, of debate in this House.

May I begin by congratulating colleagues on my side, particularly the Member for Siparia, for the very comprehensive [Desk thumping] and detailed
response to this budget statement, and to all my colleagues who, from various sectoral areas, presented their responses and spoke on behalf of the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago; many of whom have found it necessary to journey to Port of Spain to come in the burning hot sun or in the rain to express their view.

This has been a remarkable four days, Madam Speaker, where we have had in our Chamber 41, 40 speakers and we have had thousands of speakers on the pavement giving their budget statement. [Desk thumping] Whether it is casino workers, maxi-taxi drivers and operators, other workers, fishermen, and so on, they came outside to present their parliamentary budget response and we must applaud the democracy. And instead of intimidating and harassing and telling people not to be used by A, B, C we must applaud citizens that they can come to the Parliament [Desk thumping] and express their criticism, their discontent with the administration of the day.

Madam Speaker, I would indicate upfront that it is my intention to deal with two areas really, my two thematic areas. One would be to analyze Government expenditure policy, in response to a Government that for two years have carried a mantra, have carried a slogan, have carried a theme that there is no money, that we are pressed for cash.

The last speaker, for a few minutes, dealt with matters of finance, and the last speaker again told us the impact of the fall on revenues to the economy and the nature of the challenge that the Government faces. And that has been a thematic for two years that the Government is facing this crisis. We do not have money. We have to do more with less. Another catch line is value for money. I want to deal with that issue, because it relates to expenditure policy.

The other matter that affects us all is the matter of crime and criminality. I
would like to share some thoughts on that as well, because, Madam Speaker, it matters not if you do not have water if you are dead. You do not need a hospital bed if you are dead. You do not need social services, a food card and so on, if you are dead. And since this administration has been in place, we have had over 1,000 citizens of this country murdered. To date, we have had more murders per pay than days in the year. We estimate that we will pass, by far, Lara’s record and we will go on to 500 by the end of this year, and that is what we face. It is the most burning challenge.

While that is happening, our Minister of National Security from Point Fortin has declared war on crime. He has declared war on crime. The Leader of North Korea declared war on the United States. The Venezuelan leader may declare such. He has declared war. Just before he board the stage to dance on that boat, he declared war on crime. Mr. Minister, as the Member for Caroni Central indicated, you should really deal with the murder rate first before a declaration of war. [Desk thumping]

Madam Speaker, I will deal with the matter of crime and so on, but just a couple of points to make on the last speaker. Madam Speaker, I found it interesting that the last speaker said we are not about “bussing mark. We not about dat.” This is after two years of hearing about ghost workers at the Attorney General’s Office, where they said it went to the police and these ghost workers have been reported. To this day, nothing. It is not that they are not “bussing mark”, it is that they have no “mark tuh buss”. [Desk thumping] They have none. They have none. What will they say? And in the context where they have nothing to report, precious little or nothing, they have nothing to report. The Minister from San Fernando East has not built one single house in two years. [Desk thumping] They took away the food
cards. They have nothing to report in any sector.

Madam Speaker, they are stripping this economy. It is like an obscene striptease act. Piece by piece they are destroying the economy and destroying the society. They have nothing to report and they have no mark to “buss”. Because in their first year they spoke high and dry about all type of activities under the former administration. You know, the only matter that is in court, to our knowledge, because it is a matter in the civil court, a matter involving HDC.

Madam Speaker, after two years, the Government cannot file the requisite materials in the court, statements. They cannot, after two years. They cannot. But every time you see them—you see, Madam Speaker, this is the Government of threats. [Desk thumping] The Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann’s West, who appears more angry than anybody else, is the minister of threat. You threaten everybody in the society. The banker leader, we threaten him. We threaten the people at the Chamber of Commerce. The Wednesday before the budget, they went to the Hyatt to tell us that “we poor”. A lady stood up there and made a statement. The Minister made a disparaging remark. When they caught him out, he said: “No, ah did not mean all of you to insult you, yuh know. It was just dis lady, Marla.” Now poor Marla came there and faced that from the Minister.

The Prime Minister says to shut up. When he is pressed on: “How could you say dat?” He say: “No, no, no. I did not tell everybody dat, yuh know. Was just de Opposition I referring to.” This is their modus operandi. It is one of threatening people.

And I have been fortunate or unfortunate to be really the major recipient of their threats. Madam Speaker, if you go to 10 people in the national community and you ask them: “Who is the PNM after?” Eleven people will tell them the
Member for Oropouche East. If you ask 10, 11 people they will tell you that. But, Madam Speaker a lion “do not cower, do not hide”. [Desk thumping] Then you lose the element, definitional element of a lion. They believe that I will be frightened and intimidated and harassed and cower and I would stay quiet. But I know they are out to get me. That is why I am out to get you. [Desk thumping] That is why I am out to get you. And I will continue.

This morning, before I rose, Madam Speaker, I want to tell you, Madam Speaker, I just read my oath again, and the line:

“…will uphold the Constitution and the law, and will conscientiously and impartially discharge the responsibilities to the people…”

I read this just before I spoke today because I want to dwell on that as well.

Madam Speaker, the last speaker raised a matter concerning the Member for Naparima. When the Member for Naparima spoke of Iraq and Syria, the ISIS is called the Islamic State for Iraq and Syria. It is both in one. [Desk thumping] So to say he talked about Iraq and not Syria is neither here nor there. Nation states today do not exist like that before. There are transnational issues and international diplomatic challenges that transcend boundaries. The Member for Naparima understands that. He understands that. [Desk thumping]

Madam Speaker, the Member for San Fernando East again, you know, spoke about the challenges of the economy, employers and how much we spend. You know, every Minister talked about how much the last administration spent. Today, I want to talk about how much they spent because, Madam Speaker, let me remind the national community this occasion is not for the UNC to account for its performance. It is for the Government to account for its performance. Not the UNC. [Desk thumping] It is for you. We accounted in September2015. That is why

UNREvised
we are here. We accounted and we are here. You have to account. It is not us. So do not shift it to talk about the NGC dividends and the money spent. [*Desk thumping*]

And they accuse us of spending money. But public finance involves money. You must spend money properly. And this is why, when we speak so strongly, it is because we are convinced that we have done no wrong. Process has been followed. I never went all over the world and meet bankers and promise deal and tell them I am going to become a Minister soon, rest assured we will do some business. [*Desk thumping*] I am coming back to that. I am coming back to that, Madam Speaker. So we are strong and we are brave.

Madam Speaker, the Sandals matter, I just want to deal with that quickly; the Sandals matter. Now, the Member for Tobago West is not here now. But, to let the Member for Tobago West know, Madam Speaker, that nobody on this side is saying that we do not need Sandals or we do not need resort tourism and family resorts, and so on, in Tobago. Tobago needs that. We all know that. Maybe Trinidad needs that too in Mayaro and elsewhere. Right, of course, but that is not the issue. We are concerned with process. We are concerned with procurement. We are concerned with transparency. [*Desk thumping*] That is what we are concerned with, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, for two years, this Government has put a lot of emphasis on a twin pillar for development for their diversification. Well, first they are committed to diversification within the energy sector and they are also committed, they claim, to tourism. And they have hedged that, they spoke so much about that. Do you know what is remarkable? After two years they do not even have a piece of napkin signed by Sandals with a deal, with an arrangement, [*Desk thumping*] not
one piece of document. Because this is a paperless Government. They make deals without paper. [Desk thumping]

The Prime Minister goes to Houston, comes back to announce: “I represented you well. We had a nice deal cut there and thank God I went. We have a supply of gas to follow.” We say: “Who yuh went with? Nobody. What yuh have in writing? Nothing.” So when we form the Government soon and we want to fully implement his wonderful work, “who we need to talk to?” Somebody in Houston, we “doh know? When we go there what tuh say? A gentleman from Diego Martin West was here, what allyuh agree to? Tell us. We want tuh implement.” Public management involves, notes, minutes, papers, reports. [Desk thumping]

They talk about the gas line from Venezuela. “Dey fly tuh Venezuela.” We saw somebody in a conga line in Venezuela with Maduro. When we asked: What do you have in writing? “We doh have anything yet. We coming close, we coming close. We coming close.” Everything will happen soon. All we have is a picture of a conga line from Venezuela. Nothing we have. When we raise the issues, “dey say we unpatriotic we doh love Trinidad and Tobago.” That is what their response is, you know.

In Sandals, I would just put quickly on the table, Madam Speaker, Sandals have indicated to the Government, is it true or not, that while they may have an interest, they will not fund that project. [Desk thumping] That project is expected to be US $400 million to US $500 million, almost TT $4 billion. Where is the TT $4 billion coming from? [Desk thumping]

They tell us we are following the Hyatt model. Well this is actually the Hyatt model. We are in the Hyatt model. But the Hyatt model is taxpayers pay, and every single year we pay $256 million on loan arrangements for Hyatt, Wrightson Road
Tower I, Tower II. It is done under UDeCOTT. Those of us tin UDeCOTT over the years know. The Hyatt model is taxpayers pay. So is Tobago Sandals the Hyatt model? Where are you going to find $4 billion to $5 billion from? Because Sandals is telling you we will fly the flag, “buh we doh have dat money. You find de money.”

Madam Speaker, what are the favourable concessions, the tax concessions? What are the financial package and the tax breaks offered? What is the land deal? Are there foreign labour arrangements involved to bring in foreign labour? So people in Tobago who think they are getting jobs or certain categories of jobs, think again. What are the environmental considerations? What are the investment concessions packages that you are going to give? These are simple questions we ask.

And you know one problem with this Government, the Member for Caroni East, he bought 98,000 laptops in five years. “Anybody know dat?” [Desk thumping] Ninety-eight thousand laptops. No iota of corruption and to—“dey try tuh rent two boat, dey cyah do it without bobol. Tuh get two boats, they cyah do that without bobol. Yuh know it had four probes fuh two boats?” They cannot do it without some cooking up, some corruption, some “bobol”. And tell us upfront about Sandals before you create a situation where we need “20 probe” into Sandals.

“Who has the land been transferred?” If it has been transferred, to which company? Who is the chairman of that company? Who are the directors, if the land has been transferred? We ask you. Are there considerations for an expansion of the airport in Tobago? If that airport is to be expanded or a new airport built, on whose lands will you do that? What is the infrastructure cost? Do you all even know that
by now?

And, Madam Speaker, is that project to be funded outside of the constitutional THA budget allocation? These are important questions you must confront now, otherwise you would have to put “20 probe” in place after. [Desk thumping] Do it upfront and level with the population. We are not saying no to Sandals.

And the final point on Sandals I raise. What is it about you? There are established procurement processes in Ministries, Central Tenders Board, you have not implemented procurement legislation yet. So have CTB and so on. But did you open an invitation? Did you send out an invitation in the Caribbean, in the hemisphere, in whatever forum, and invited hotels and resort centres around the world to say: “Please send us your package. Give us your package, your proposals, for a resort and family beach resort in Tobago.” Did you do that? Did you ask Spice Island, Royalton Luxury Resort, Cap Maison, Four Seasons?

In San Fernando East, there is a resort “Villa-something”, and the Member is familiar with that. Did you enquire from them if they are interested in putting a proposal for Tobago? [Interruption] “Some villa thing” in San Fernando. Did you ask for proposals? No. It is on record that the principal of Sandals came to Trinidad years ago, met someone who he did not know was the Opposition Leader and they started to talk and “somebody say: ‘yuh know Sandals in Tobago is a good idea. Let us do it’.” You cannot do that. “You cyah do dat.” To say it in local terms. “Yuh cyah do dat.” Public expenditure requires public process, transparency. [Desk thumping] Go out. Go out and do the thing properly. You get a resort, you have a short-list. You put a team together and you select. [Cell phone rings] The Member for Moruga now is disturbing but he would find his way by himself, Madam
Speaker.

Yes, Madam Speaker, I heard him speak, from Moruga/Tableland, I took some notes to respond to the Member for Moruga/Tableland. He left. Madam Speaker, when he was talking, the sign language man could not understand. That is the man right here on the screen. [Desk thumping] He could not understand what he was saying. He made some statements about history and Moruga and the road. Do you know they had sod turning for roads in Moruga in his office? He turned the sod in his office. “But when he come back. Ah doh like talking behind people back.”

Madam Speaker, I want to get to another key matter. Everybody, the mantra, we do not have money, we do not have money. How we could do this without money. We have to cut and paste. We have to do this. Madam Speaker, look, I cannot display “nothing”, but I can hold in my hand, close to my chest. 

**Madam Speaker:** But you cannot brandish.

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** I cannot brandish nothing and this is a—I would put a clear page, Madam Speaker. This is information from NLCB, National Lotteries Control Board multibillion-dollar enterprise, came to us because people believe that if you come to us with information we can articulate in the Parliament and elsewhere and call people to account. NLCB, and I want to raise some matters about expenditure policy there, because the Attorney General and others telling us: “We doh have money. We doh have money.” The Minister of Finance came in this House and told us he was going to do a report on NLCB’s chairman. We have not heard anything yet because a whistle-blower will come to us.

But, Madam Speaker, there is now a sickening development taking place in the society. Madam Speaker, we all know of the trouble with the port. We all know
that. Madam Speaker, would you believe that on that matter, Madam Speaker, a witness came before the JSC and made certain statements about a Minister of Government. That witness was fired at 12.00 midnight by email, Madam Speaker, fired at 12 midnight by email, a dismissal letter from the Port Authority of Trinidad and Tobago.

Madam Speaker, whatever are the issues there, and I would come to it briefly, there is a serious matter here and it concerns an assault on this Parliament; an assault! An assault, not unlike 1990, an assault. That was a physical violent assault. This is an assault on a governance, the major governance structure of our democracy. And when you throw down the democracy and these structures, it leads to the violence. It leads to violence.

Imagine, under our Constitution, Madam Speaker, and this is why I had to pull the Constitution this morning, it is said, 55(4) of our Constitution:

“A person called to give any evidence before either House or any committee shall enjoy the same privileges and immunities as a member of either House.”

This is our Constitution. [Desk thumping] Someone came and gave evidence. The chairman, acting on your behalf or on behalf of the Parliament as chairman with the authority, invited the witness and “say: ‘Tell us the truth and only the truth. We need you to be upfront and transparent and honest’. ” The lady came and did that, two weeks later, fired 12.00 midnight. When you look at the letter now, “it say: ‘Well look yuh take vacation and we did not know yuh gone on vacation. Yuh did not take de vacation we send yuh on,’” and so on. That is fine. Relevant other—oh there is this:

Your said refusal to proceed on vacation and various issues the board had
But the one that interests me, the recent information from PricewaterhouseCoopers, a letter dated, Madam Speaker, 09 October, 2017, dismissal letter:

The recent information from PricewaterhouseCoopers forensic searches.

Madam Speaker, the Minister in charge of everything told a post Cabinet press conference 21st September, and I quote the Minister, I think it is the Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West.

“Minister in the Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs… yesterday said the ministry has, ‘already begun to conduct a forensic audit, forensic investigation and examination at the port authority.’”

This involved computer equipment, laptop, phones, and so on. What Ministry—when we asked how can a Ministry seize devices from a statutory body, an entity such as the Port Authority of Trinidad and Tobago. The Ministry of Housing and Urban Development has in its building the HDC.

This Minister of Housing cannot go to Mr. Newman and tell him surrender all your computer and your phones, and so on, we are doing an analysis—[Interruption]

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: Madam Speaker, Standing Order 48(1), there is no relevance.

Madam Speaker: Member, I would give you a little leeway. Please tie what you are saying to the budget presentation.

Dr. R. Moonilal: Madam Speaker, I will tie it because in the contribution of the Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann’s West, his contribution on the 6th of the 10th dealt with this matter. [Desk thumping] And I would just like to respond. The
Appropriation (Financial Year 2018)  
Bill, 2017 (cont’d)  
Dr. Moonilal (cont’d)

Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann’s West said, and I quote:

“It is trite law that an employer who owns the equipment of an employee is entitled to take the equipment of the employee and to look through the equipment of the employee…”

He said this. I respond.

The Ministry of Works and Transport or the Ministry of the Attorney General is not the employer of Charmaine Lewis. [Desk thumping] The port authority is. It is a statutory body and the Ministry is not an employer. This letter suggests that PricewaterhouseCoopers is acting as the FBI [Desk thumping] doing forensic analysis. When that phone—and I will end with this; there is a dangerous issue here. When that phone and computer go to PricewaterhouseCoopers, do you know now they have all the secret, private and confidential matters of the Port Authority of Trinidad and Tobago? A so-called independent agency paid by the Government. The Government pays PricewaterhouseCoopers. Correct? “Who pay dem? Not de Opposition, de Government.” They now have every sensitive material of the port in their possession and they are paid and they are doing forensic analysis. They are not the police.

In the police, you have a chain of command. You have a property keeper. You have persons authorized in law to interrogate phones, not in PricewaterhouseCoopers. They have now undermined. The port authority has its own police. Why did you not ask them, trained men and women, to undertake an analysis? This wrecks of corruption. This wrecks of a massive cover-up. It wrecks of political interference, victimization and the undermining of the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago. [Desk thumping]

Madam Speaker I move on, because I know they are troubled by this matter
Appropriation (Financial Year 2018)
Bill, 2017 (cont’d)
Dr. Moonilal (cont’d)

if I continue. Madam Speaker, they have no money. Because let us get to money, M-O-N-E-Y. They have no money, M-O-N-E-Y. At CEPEP, we learnt that they gave almost $3 million to a consultant, Mr. Rolph Balgobin, to undertake a reorganization of CEPEP. At the end of it, he was reorganized. He left all the state boards. He left. CEPEP squandering $3 million on that.

NLCB, Madam Speaker, I want to get to that quickly. NLCB is told, as the rest of the national community, to tighten their belt, tighten their belt and they have to cut expenses, and so on. Madam Speaker, we are seeing a total mismanagement of a leading financial organization in this country. The report suggests that they have squandered money as if they never see money. They have spent and overspent on trips abroad, Madam Speaker, lavish travels to China, Italy, Las Vegas, Magdalena, Tobago, expenditure on awards ceremony. The Minister of Finance stopped one trip. That is what they are muttering. The Minister stopped the travel of NLCB. I ask the Minister of Finance, did they return the money? Just confirm that money given to officials of NLCB were returned to NLCB, when the Minister of Finance actually did clip their wings. They were off to China, off to Japan and the Minister clipped their wings, whether they returned the money. That is the issue. They had awards ceremony, Madam Speaker, and I would come to it, retreats at the Hyatt, cricket excursions, invoices to friends and family. Unbelievable how they spend money.

Let us look at the money. At Hilton, NLCB staff and awards function. They took vouchers from Massy Stores. “Yuh know” the total amount of these vouchers, Madam Speaker, which they paid, was almost $100,000? Eighty thousand dollars plus additional expenses of $23,000 paid to Massy. This is voucher for employees at a time when they claim they have no money. Madam Speaker, 10 members of
staff received staff long service award, $108,000.

They bought Johnny Walker Black from AS Bryden as gifts for board members, $40,000. And yesterday the Minister of Health, poor “fella”, I saw a newspaper report, Madam Speaker, Minister of Health complaining it is too expensive for a screw. That is what he was complaining about yesterday. A screw for $3.50, they buying in the regional authority for $1,200. He went online on Amazon and see the screw for $3.50. He complaining that the screw too expensive, and at NLCB, $40,000 on Johnny Walker Black. That is where we reach, Madam Speaker. He wanted a cheaper screw and could not get it and complaining about that, while NLCB is squandering this type of money.

Madam Speaker, decoration for Hilton for their function, $106,000, $60,000 sound system. Hear this one, the entire bill for their awards ceremony was in excess of $800,000 at NLCB, complaining about this titanium screw.

Madam Speaker, the children's party, in excess of $250,000. They are farming out management services, and so on, to companies, $400,000. That is what they are spending, Madam Speaker. Is that tightening the belt at NLCB? Is that, Madam Speaker, what the Government is talking about? So when you ask us where to get the money, that is where you get the money.

Madam Speaker, I go to another piece of package, NLCB board members, friends and family. They had a grand fiesta at the CPL cricket. Do you know what is the expenditure for this cricket excursion for members when you add up all the cost? It is $687,000, NLCB.

Madam Speaker, this is unbelievable. I have the full list here of Prosecco and Johnny Walker. Some of these things I do not know, Madam Speaker, the type of thing. I do have a—Madam Speaker, where I come from “we doh have dis”.
Madam Speaker, they have the full list here. It is just a copy of that. A director came from Tobago. We welcome him to Trinidad. He went to the cricket, the taxi fare is $1,000 alone to go down to the Brian Lara. You all could have given him a lift in one of “allyuh” Benz and Porsche and whatever you all drive. Could have given him a little lift, you know. A thousand dollars for taxi to go Brian Lara—or in the Ford Mustang or whatever that is.

Madam Speaker, this is bad expenditure. It is a waste of money. They had a two-day retreat at Hyatt, I told you about that. Do you know the pens and the pencils, stationery cost $18,000. Paperclips, pens and pencils were $18,000 at the retreat. Look, I have here all the bills from Trinidad and Tobago Supply Chain Solutions is the company they are using for Hyatt. I have it here, bad expenditure, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, I raised a matter with the Minister of Finance. I told him they have a chairman there. Is the chairman related to any Member of the Cabinet? That is the first issue, eh. Is the chairman related to any Member of Cabinet? I do not know. Maybe they would clarify that, NLCB chairman. Do you know this member claimed to receive threats, but admitted in a letter to NLCB signed by the chairman: “I did not report this to the police. I spoke to a few board members. They tell me to get private security.” We have been—the taxpayer is paying, Madam Speaker, in excess per month, of $10,000 for personal bodyguard service for the chairman, people patrolling by his house and some other patrol. Oh no, “dey doing” bug sweep in his office. The Special Branch is there. If any Member of Government, senior Member of course, believes that somebody is spying on them, there is a unit in the police, you can call to do a sweep, and so on. That is normal. This is done independently, so the taxpayer pays $10,000 a month. This is,
what you call, value for money. [Interruption] Yeah dah is de man.

Madam Speaker, they have an outstanding bill there. They have an outstanding report, outstanding bad debts owed to NLCB, $25 million in bad debts owed to the NLCB from agents. It will be interesting to look at the list of agents to see who they are, where they are. I “doh have time fuh dat. I doh” have time today, Madam Speaker. Not today.

Madam Speaker, I come to another important point, because I want to get on to crime, badly. You see, Madam Speaker, when we speak on this matter, they accuse us. You know when we talk about corruption they accuse us of corruption? When we talk about theft, they accuse us of being thief. Thank God we do not talk about rape, Madam Speaker. So they accuse us of the crimes that we raise for accountability.

The Prime Minister went in the airport, and he knew. The Prime Minister said he knew that the Member for Oropouche East will be in court. “He know dat. Went on Piccadilly Square. He know what people wearing in dey bedroom”, but did not know the Minister of Public Utilities was not a citizen of Trinidad and Tobago or was a citizen of another country. He did not know that one, [Desk thumping] but know that.

And Madam Speaker—[Interruption]

Dr. Gopeesingh: And he could cuss.

Dr. R. Moonilal: Madam Speaker, as I heard that at the side, there is a disturbing, there is, Madam Speaker, to me, I want to say there is a disturbing and almost pathological obsession by the head of the Government with the female anatomy and female attire. [Desk thumping] It is a pathological obsession to—[Interruption]

Mr. Al-Rawi: Madam Speaker—[Interruption]
Madam Speaker: Member for Oropouche East, I ask you to withdraw that and say it another way, please.

Dr. R. Moonilal: Madam Speaker, I withdraw that. I would say it another way then. There is an obsession with attacking females. I can say that.

Mr. Al-Rawi: 48(6), Madam Speaker.

Dr. R. Moonilal: Okay, Madam Speaker, I withdraw it. Let us move. Madam Speaker, to deal with crime requires a certain approach. It requires a strong approach. It requires a law enforcement community, Madam Speaker, that is clean and we have to deal with corruption there.

A recent report, Madam Speaker, I must say, there was a report in the newspaper yesterday on the editorial page, I think page 7 of the Newsday. Elizabeth Solomon wrote on a Latin American report on corruption, the barometer of corruption by Transparency International, and in the hemisphere and in the Caribbean, it is well reported that persons do not have confidence in elected representatives and in the police, in dealing with corruption. We know that. And this is why we must work to deal with corruption. But dealing with corruption is not “mauvais langue” and “ole talk”, you know. It is not talking about a mall in Holland, which you cannot find in two years. It is not talking about house. “Only people on this side have house, it look like.” It is not talking about that. It is putting institutions in place, governance institutions, strengthening them and allowing them to do their job, allowing them to do their job to call to account persons. It is persons who themselves, their hands are clean.

I heard the Prime Minister say the Minister of Works and Transport went to the port and he is trying to clean up corruption. That is like giving a cat a tin opener.

UNREVISED
Mr. Al-Rawi: 48(6), Madam Speaker.

Dr. R. Moonilal: What do you expect to do with that? Madam Speaker, I withdraw that. I withdraw that. Madam Speaker, I am saying that one must build a police service, build a public service, where institutions respond to allegations.

Madam Speaker, people like us, members of the community give us information. Members of the public give us information. They come to us because they believe we can articulate matters. They are voiceless. In some cases, they are invisible. They give us information. Madam Speaker, some troubling information has come to me of allegations involving high public officials, public officials who themselves are in sensitive positions and information that public officials are involved themselves in wrongdoing, allegations.

One such matter, Madam Speaker, came to me and my advice to persons coming to me with that is one thing, I am not police. I “doh” investigate nothing. I have nothing to do with that. Anyone comes to me as an Opposition Member, I invite them to please go to the police and report. Because that is the right and correct thing to do. We do not investigate. We can raise matters, and so on, but we have no power beyond that. And so I have advised people over the last two years who come to my office. I say please go to the police station and report because you have some allegation, and that is what it is. It is an allegation. It is not true. So you cannot hold someone who is in public service to account or make them out as if they are guilty of something, unless it goes through a process, not what Members opposite do, like jumping up and saying how much, who “tief and who do this and who do dat.”

Madam Speaker, one such allegation involves public officials and I have come across material which suggests that there are transcripts, text message
transcripts between officials and between someone, not one person and not one official, other officials as well, suggesting that high public officials are involved, Madam Speaker, in certain criminal wrongdoings, matters involving Opposition MPs, matters involving a very sensitive matter.

One matter came to me, Madam Speaker, and a chill ran up my spine, because it spoke to a conspiracy to plant recording devices in the office of an Opposition Member of Parliament. And when I asked for some material to substantiate that, Madam Speaker, I got something in which a public official is replying to the person to say:

I will be away for a few days. I am waiting on you. I have to be at an important event tomorrow. We will do the rest next week. Thanks to you. I appreciate your reach out.

Madam Speaker, and what troubled me is when a public official is saying:

I am at your convenience. Just let me know what you need and when, and I will be ready to assist you. Be comfortable and prepared. Meet after six at the office.

Then:

Great, remember we in a new building. You can meet me in the new building in the basement.

Madam Speaker—[Interruption]

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: Madam Speaker, Standing Order 48(1).

Madam Speaker: Member, could you tie this to the budget, please. Thank you.

Dr. R. Moonilal: Madam Speaker, when the Member for Point Fortin spoke on dealing with crime and the Attorney General and the Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann’s West, they spoke about dealing with corruption within
government and within the law enforcement community. [Desk thumping] They did. All I am saying to the Members today is that the threat is real. The threat is real. Because if it is that Members or persons in high public service, something like this could be happening, Madam Speaker, where someone is reporting to us in the Opposition that they are engaged with public officials in a conspiracy to wiretap an office of an Opposition Leader, it is serious.

Madam Speaker, a President of the United States was impeached on Water Gate, President Nixon lost his job on this matter [Desk thumping] and in this—I will not read every single thing now, because I want to move on.

12.30 p.m.

In this matter before me, a public official is saying, “I am sending recording devices, SIM cards, what else do you need? And I have a go-between” and the name of the go-between is here. I cannot call the name because I cannot do that. The name and number of the go-between is here, “he is on his way to meet you. I have confidence in him, you can trust him. I have them and you will get them, sorting out the SIMS now, will do.”

Madam Speaker, all of this would have meant nothing, if I had this alone, it would have meant nothing. This means nothing really in the scheme of things, because you do not know the actual offence. And it continues, I will not read everything. Twenty-eight pages of text, but Madam Speaker, it is my information that a report has been made to the police, to investigate this matter and investigate one or more high public officials for a conspiracy to wiretap, to plant recording devices, and to break in the office of Opposition Member of Parliament, attorney-at-law, Sen. Gerald Ramdeen.

Madam Speaker, I do not have the name of the public officials, I have the
number. I have the number, I can tell you the number, if you want you can ring it. You can ring it. The number is 683-6442; that is the number on the document. I have never tried this number, I do not know if it is the number of anyone in the House or outside. You all can dial it, it may vibrate in the House. Madam Speaker, this is a serious matter [Interruption] the police is in the—

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: What does this relate to in the budget giving somebody's telephone number?

Madam Speaker: Member, I would ask you to move on.

Dr. R. Moonilal: Madam Speaker, in moving on could I indicate that it is my information that the draft of this transcript of text messages has been placed on social media by someone and anybody who wants to read can go there and read it. Madam Speaker, let me move on now. Another matter that troubles me another matter troubles me, is some time ago I asked a question in Parliament, I asked a question in Parliament, and that question related to a statement the Attorney General made that he had received legal advice on a matter. And when I asked the question in Parliament, the question, Madam Speaker, was allowed, properly, and the Attorney General got up and made an interesting comment. He said yes we got advice, I said "How much did you pay for it?" He said "No, it was free." and the Prime Minister ask "What wrong with that?"

The Prime Minister believes that he is running a parlour selling condensed milk, sweetie, and Chubby. [Desk thumping] Madam Speaker, in Government you cannot allow a situation where people are giving you free service. What is that? They appointed a one-man investigator into the Port. They ask him the reference is there August 15, 2017, a letter from the Prime Minister. You tell him “Please give us a report on the procurement of the Ocean Flower II and the Cabo Star”. You
know he wrote a report on *Galicia*, [Laughter] that is like you ask him to tell us about KFC and he tell you about Royal Castle. That is what happen there. Madam Speaker, you know what, I want to say I want my money back from the sole investigator the taxpayer wants their money back, but we did not pay. There is no legal contract; there is no binding arrangement; there is no proper terms of reference. No consideration.

Madam Speaker, if a citizen is affected by that report and sues the sole commissioner, Madam Speaker—they can sue him for that, for what he did there is no arrangement with the Government properly, you have to pay for a service. Even if you pay less money the person does it for you, for a smaller fee, you have to pay. Mr. Mouttet did a report; we have no contract with him; we have no arrangement with him properly, so we do not know if he breached any contract. This thing is wrong that you meet people, they are your friends and you are in government. Could you imagine, I am Minister of Housing and something happens in the housing sector, I call up a friend and say, “Partner come, we have some help, people making trouble here, investigate this for me”. You cannot do that, you have to properly recruit properly secure, properly pay someone with the requisite skills to do a job. That is how it is done in public—*[Desk thumping]*—business.

And the matter is not ending there, Madam Speaker, there is an issue down at Petrotrin, as if Petrotrin has not had enough bacchanal by themselves, there is an issue in Petrotrin. And, Madam Speaker, the issue in Petrotrin revolves around consultants at Petrotrin. Madam Speaker, consultants at Petrotrin—Madam Speaker, I have just been told that the information I gave was seen by someone at TT expose—Facebook.com\TT expose—Madam Speaker at Petrotrin they hire consultants—well they do not hire consultants. We are told based on a report in a
management meeting by their manager of exploration, Madam Speaker, that they are taking people on board to provide services, consultancy services, and when the managers at Pointe-a-Pierre in the note I have before me ask, they are told that the consultants are free, they are doing services for free.

One of the consultants is related to a Government Minister. Now, nothing is wrong with that on the surface. The person is probably well skilled and so on, but do you work for free and there are implications of this free work in the State sector? First we are told that it may be free for the individual but for a company linked to him they get a million dollars a year for that work.

**Madam Speaker:** Hon. Member for Oropouche East, your original speaking time is now spent you are entitled to 10 more minutes if you wish to avail yourself. Please proceed.

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** Humbly, Ma'am, I will. Madam Speaker *[Desk thumping]* the Petrotrin report tells us, and this is a minute of a meeting held on Wednesday 12 October, 2016. The managers are concerned about confidentiality agreements signed by consultants they are concerned Madam Speaker with recruitment, how did they—they are asking the company senior management: “How did you recruit consultants? Was it by open tender? Did you invite persons to submit an application and assess applications?” They did that at UTT as well, right.

They are asking how is the Vice-President and others, do they not have confidence in us? How can we trust people with confidential information, and you know what is one bit of the confidential information? Information that if it got into the hands of lease operators can be to the detriment of Petrotrin. So, so-called free consultants coming in at Petrotrin, getting sensitive information on exploration that can be used by lease operators. Who is a lease operator? That is the contractors
who outside in Cats Hill and wherever, Madam Speaker. And seismic information is also being made available to persons who have no contract, who have no recruitment policy, Madam Speaker, with Petrotrin. And this is a danger, we saw this trend developing with the Government, where they invite people they say "Come, come. Help us. We have a problem here." And no proper recruitment, no procurement policy followed, no proper contract in place, no payment based upon skill or expertise.

And, Madam Speaker, that leads me to the point that this came from, we were told, Madam Speaker, I did not have the misfortune of listening to the meeting at Piccadilly Corner, but of course—what you call it?—it is Piggott’s Corner. Sorry, sorry, it was at Piggott’s Corner. I did not have the misfortune of hearing it, but I got a report of course, I saw the newspaper, and the Prime Minister said something very interesting. In attacking the Member for Siparia, on the matter raised in this budget debate, might I remind you, Madam Speaker, the matter of TGU, the sale of 40 per cent of TGU is a live issue in the Parliament today in this budget debate. It is a live issue, before they stand on 48(1).

And, Madam Speaker, the Prime Minister said that he went to Germany as Opposition Leader and met bankers. Why did he go there, to open a bank account? What you met bankers for while being Opposition Leader? Madam Speaker, when you are an Opposition Leader, you meet protesters, you do not meet bankers. [Desk thumping]

Madam Speaker: Somebody's device is interfering with the system, somebody's device. Continue please, Oropouche—

Dr. Moonilal: Because it might be 683-6442. Madam Speaker, as Opposition Leader, went to Germany, met a banker and had chats with this banker and assured
them that I am Opposition Leader of Trinidad and Tobago and pretty soon I might be Prime Minister. Madam Speaker, the Opposition Leader—was the then Opposition Leader soliciting deals as Opposition Leader before becoming Prime Minister—

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: Madam Speaker, Standing Order 48(6).

Madam Speaker: Member, I would ask you to withdraw that, say it in another way.

Dr. R. Moonilal: Madam Speaker, I was never aware, having spent 10 years in Opposition, that an Opposition Leader properly, could be involved in banking and financial arrangements Prior to entering Government. [Desk thumping] I was not aware of that. And Madam Speaker, when that banker’s name was called, it is also linked to Ferrostaal and the TGU sell of 40 per cent, it is a dangerous set of dots that the population must connect. Because it happened with Sandals. Sandals was conceptualized prior to 2015. And—

Hon. Member: The golf course.

Dr. R. Moonilal:—I will come to the golf course just now. But it is a dangerous thing when a Leader of the Opposition then, seemed to be involved in some matters not properly under the ambit of a Leader of the Opposition and then indicates to the nation that the genesis of certain arrangements were in Opposition. What did you promise? What was promised to you? These are questions that arise. Did somebody promise you something? Did you promise somebody something? You cannot do that, and it speaks, Madam Speaker, regrettably I must say, it also speaks to a certain level of misbehaviour in public office, which somebody else—[Desk thumping] Madam Speaker, this matter the Opposition Leader raised with great care and concern, I suspect we will be hearing more about this matter as the
days and hours go by.

**Hon. Member:** Ferrostaal.

**Dr. R. Moonilal:** Ferrostaal. Madam Speaker, Ferrostaal came to my attention as a university student, when I was studying Point Lisas, and one Professor Ken Julien was at ISCOTT, Madam Speaker, and do you know at ISCOTT, Madam Speaker, they were losing a million dollars a day and there was a deal involving German companies and Ferrostaal. And today it comes back full circle.

But, as in the few minutes I have left, Madam Speaker, I want to assure the national community that their time is limited as the Opposition Leader, political leader said they have reached Wednesday in the political cycle; when you blink you on Friday. And they will soon discover that the time is ending and they have to account to the population, and accounting to the population is not saying, about 2010 and 2015. I heard the Member for Port of Spain South the other night reciting all the ills of the administration of the PNM, because claiming that we said that when we were in government and so on, and the Member for Port of Spain South, I could not stay too long to hear her but I understand she made a brief presentation, because the Member had to account, I think for two days as a minister [*Desk thumping*] so it did not take much time.

But Madam Speaker, when we raise matters like these, it is not for the Government, because I know what they will do, they will stand up after I am finished and say look who talking, and corruption, and mismanagement, and EMBDC and this and that. That is what they will do, accuse us when we stand to raise matters of governance, accountability and transparency to you. Madam Speaker, that is what they will do. If I said it once—last year I raised a matter, a sensitive matter as well, I want to remind the national community, when I raised
that matter, the Prime Minister got up and attacked me. The Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann’s West got up and was brutal, attacking me last year when I raised a sensitive matter. The mouse that roared from San Fernando East also put his two cents in, Madam Speaker, last year. This year I raise sensitive matters, I expect that they will treat me the same way. But I want to indicate, Madam Speaker that the lion does not hide, does not cower. They do not hide[Desk thumping] so I am prepared. Madam Speaker, it is only warriors that carry scars, cowards do not carry scars. [Desk thumping] So cowards do not have scars, it is only warriors. So we are afraid of no one on this side, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, I want to ask the Government in the closing time to look at their spending. Madam Speaker, the Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann’s West is misbehaving. Madam Speaker, in the closing moments I have, I want to ask the Prime Minister again, last year when we raised an issue with the money for the Prime Minister's house in Tobago, they said it was $500,000—$500,000, no more. It was for what? Pre-feasibility study. Do you know in the current budget, Madam Speaker—I have the document before me here—in the current budget they have put $5 million for a residence for the Prime Minister. You telling people you “doh” have money, $5 million for a residence for the Prime Minister, $3 million for a golf course—and let me tell the Member for Diego Martin Central one time. It is not that nobody do not like golf. Golf is one of the biggest, fastest growing games in the world. Children playing golf now; biggest, fastest growing game. Our vision was that the private sector would be involved in golf, not the taxpayer. Taxpayers do not involve themselves in spending $3 million for a golf course. That is the private sector must do that. Give them some benefit to open a restaurant and a bar and facilities and entertainment, they will manage the golf course not the
taxpayer.

12.45 p.m.

I am asking, is this the best time? You want value for money, do more with less. And more for less, Madam Speaker, mean getting more money for less oil. That is what it means. You are asking people, do more for less but $5 million for a Prime Minister house, at this time, when you claim you do not have money? That, Madam Speaker, is a travesty; that, Madam Speaker, speaks to a certain level of arrogance, a certain level of disbelief and disconnect between the citizens. [Desk thumping]

They are going to tax Play Whe. I call upon you, in closing, Mr. Minister, remove that tax from the Play Whe. The Play Whe, if you tax 10 per cent on Play Whe, it will lead to an expansion of illegal gambling. Withdraw that immediately. [Desk thumping]

Madam Speaker, in the less than one minute that I have before me, I want to ask the Minister of Housing and Urban Development, in particular, the people are suffering, calling for houses, do something apart from reciting old, beaten and trumped up polices like private/public partnership. They are coming with that two years now. I understand the partnership at Mount Hope, I think that partnership ended. The partnership ended in more ways than one. Private partnerships for the children’s hospital, absolutely nothing two years later. I predict that caraille vine will grow on the Couva hospital and reptiles will be running there. I predict that. Madam Speaker, I thank you so much for your patience. [Desk thumping]

Madam Speaker: Attorney General.

Mr. Al-Rawi: I rise on Standing Order 44(8). The hon. Member in reciting what I had said then introduced, by way of misrepresentation, my telephone number 683-
6442, onto a matter of a whistleblower which is properly the subject of a court action and (b), the subject of the police and, in fact, completely misrepresented all of the truth. I thank you for the opportunity to deal with that particular point.

**Dr. Moonilal:** That is a rebuttal. [Crosstalk]

**Madam Speaker:** Members, I think we agreed that we will take the break now for lunch. We shall return at two o’clock.

12.47 p.m.: **Sitting suspended.**

2.00 p.m.: **Sitting resumed.**

[**MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER in the Chair**]

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Okay. As we resume after lunch, I recognize the Member for Arouca/Maloney. [Desk thumping]

**The Minister of Planning and Development (Hon. Camille Robinson-Regis):** Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I rise to lend my voice and support to the package of fiscal measures articulated a few days ago by my colleague of long standing, the Minister of Finance and Member of Parliament for Diego Martin North/East. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I rise in my capacity as the Minister of Planning and Development, but also in my capacity as the Member of Parliament for Arouca/Maloney, a constituency that has remained faithful to the People’s National Movement for several years and a constituency that allows me to lend my voice here today.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Minister of Finance has gone through the colossal undertaking of successfully managing, compiling and presenting the budget that we have been debating for the last few days. Even though it was a daunting task, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I feel I can speak, not only for the constituents of Arouca/Maloney, but indeed for the constituents of Arima, Tunapuna, Diego
Martin West, Chaguanas West, Pointe-a-Pierre and Tobago East and West in saying that the Minister of Finance, his staff and the staff of the Ministry of Planning and Development have done an excellent budget for the people of Trinidad and Tobago under the circumstances. [Desk thumping]

Mr. Deputy Speaker, before I get into the meat of my contribution, I would like to start by talking about some of the things that my colleagues on the other side have put forward as their response to this budget. Mr. Deputy Speaker, you know, I wonder with a little shock that the Member for Oropouche East can talk about the issue of process. Mr. Deputy Speaker, hearing that from the Member for Oropouche East left me in shock and awe that that Member could talk about the issue of process and procedure. That is the Member, who as Minister of Housing left us with contracts worth over $3 billion without any contractual agreements. Contracts worth over $3 billion that the Member of San Fernando East as Minister of Housing and Urban Development is now trying to sort out, and he talks to us about process and procedure.

I would like to ask the Member for Oropouche East if he remembers the name Fixin’ T&T and the numerous rental vehicles that they rented at the HDC and the Ministry of Housing for staff who was not qualified and without a single contract and without a tendering process, no tendering process. [Crosstalk] And I ask today: Who was driving that Mercedes Benz that taxpayers were paying for? The Member for Oropouche East talks to us about process. I want to ask the Member for Oropouche East, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if he remembers that there was a search warrant issued for the County of St. Patrick. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I crave your indulgence to read the warrant. And it says:

Search Warrant:
The Indictable Offences (Preliminary Enquiry) Act, Chap. 12:01 section 5, County of St. Patrick.

To all Constables

Police Inspector Derick Walker,

Whereas by information on oath giving before me by Police Inspector of the Anti-Corruption Investigation Bureau—

I repeat:

of the Anti-Corruption Investigation Bureau, I the undersigned Maria Busby Earle-Caddle, Acting Chief Magistrate of Trinidad and Tobago, being a Magistrate in the district of St. George West in the Island of Trinidad and Tobago, am satisfied that there are reasonable grounds for believing that the material listed in the schedule hereunder is located on the premises of TN Ramnath and Company Limited at Teemul Trace.

I am also satisfied that the said material would afford evidence as to the commission of indictable offences by one Dr. Roodal Moonilal.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, is that process?

Mr. Charles: Mr. Deputy Speaker, Standing Order 48(1). The relevance of this to the budget. [Crosstalk]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Members, Overruled.

Hon. C. Robinson-Regis: Thank you very kindly, Mr. Deputy Speaker. [Desk thumping]

Dr. Gopeesingh: Standing Order 48(2). [Crosstalk]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Overruled.

Hon. C. Robinson-Regis: Thank you very kindly, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think the Member for Caroni East might be a little confused. It
is a search warrant under the Indictable Offences (Preliminary Enquiry) Act, Chap. 12:01, section 5 in the County of St. Patrick, to all constables, meaning every single police officer looking for him, and the magistrate said—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Member, excuse. Kindly address the Chair.

Hon. C. Robinson-Regis: Mr. Deputy Speaker, all police constables looking for him.

I am also satisfied that the said material would afford evidence as to the commission of indictable offences by one—the first one, you know, Mr. Deputy Speaker—Dr. Roolal Moonilal—the Member for Oropouche East—and several others. Mr. Deputy Speaker—and namely conspiracies to:

(1) Commit misconduct in public office by the said Dr. Roolal Moonilal.

Miss Cudjoe: He is not in his seat.

Hon. C. Robinson-Regis: Mr. Deputy Speaker, he is not in his seat now, out of the Chamber. But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, do I need to say more? But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will say more. [Crosstalk]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Member for Arouca/ Maloney. Members, the Member for Arouca/Maloney does not need no assistance from the other Members on the Government side in order to participate in the debate. According to Standing Order 53, listen in silence. The same thing goes for on the Opposition side. All right? Listen in silence. Thank you. Proceed.

Hon. C. Robinson-Regis: Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is Dr. Roolal Moonilal and eight other persons and companies. The offences are: conspiracies to commit misconduct in public office, corruptly give advantages as an inducement and or reward. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker,
imagine the Member for Oropouche East coming here today to tell us about process. I want to say a little more about that issue. What it means when a search warrant is issued? It means that a court was convinced, convinced, that there was a *prima facie* case of evidence linking the Member for Oropouche East to the charges that I just spoke about. So do not let the Member for Oropouche East come here and try to give us advice about process and procedure. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would like to say a little more.

The Member for Oropouche East came here today and spoke about a telephone number like if we did not all know that telephone number. The number was—and the Attorney General got up and indicated that it was his number. Again, a desperate man will grasp at a straw. I have spoken to the Attorney General on this, and I am going to give an indication of the real circumstances, Mr. Deputy Speaker, not the fabrication that was before us in this Parliament about an hour ago.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, a whistleblower—and I am asking to be allowed to read copiously from my notes, please, Mr. Deputy Speaker. A whistleblower came to the Attorney General on the LifeSport matter and other issues. Mr. Deputy Speaker, in case anybody has forgotten, LifeSport is a massive corruption that took place under the stewardship of the Member of Siparia and all those Members sitting there today.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Standing Order 48(4). Mr. Deputy Speaker, 48(4), imputing improper motives—[*Interruption*]

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Overruled.

**Hon. C. Robinson-Regis:** Thank you very kindly, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr.
Deputy Speaker, I repeat. A whistleblower came to the Attorney General on the LifeSport issue and other matters. He expressed fear for his life. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I just want to remind you that he is not the first person to express fear for their life under this LifeSport issue. In fact, some people lost their lives in relation to this LifeSport issue. He said he needed, what he called, clean numbers. He said he wanted to record—he wanted to record his statements and the Attorney General put him in the hands of an attorney-at-law to deal with these issues. The documents on certain matters to deal with LifeSport were received and, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there is ongoing litigation.

There has been a total misrepresentation and fabrication of the matters. The Attorney General has nothing to hide. As a matter of fact, this is an Attorney General coming after another Attorney General who served under them, he will never be seen in handcuffs. He will never be seen—[ Interruption]

Hon. Member: How could you say that?

Hon. C. Robinson-Regis: I will say that because I know that. [Crosstalk]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Silence.

Hon. C. Robinson-Regis: I know what we are on this side of the House. [Desk thumping] You cannot say that.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Member, address the Chair. Address the Chair, please.

Hon. C. Robinson-Regis: Sorry, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I know what we are on this side of the House. [Desk thumping] No Attorney General on this side of the House under Keith Rowley, the Member for Diego Martin West will be seen trying to tamper with a witness. [Desk thumping] Not any Attorney General under this Prime Minister and, certainly, not this Attorney General, the Member for San Fernando West. The Member for Oropouche East coming to talk to us about
process and procedure? Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is the sign of a desperate man, and he is not the only desperate one on that side.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to remind you of the behaviour of the Member for Caroni East when he was a Minister of Government. I have friends and colleagues in the Ministry of Education, and I know that the Member for Caroni East is a gynaecologist, but I do not think he needed to tell people in that Ministry how their mother conceive them.

Mr. Lee: Mr. Deputy Speaker, 48(1), please. [Crosstalk]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I am on my legs. [Crosstalk] Hon. Member for Arouca/Maloney.

Hon. C. Robinson-Regis: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I would prefer if you do not go down that line, please. Member, Members. Member for Caroni East, I am on my legs. Member, I am on my legs and I am making a ruling. [Interruption] Member for Arouca/Maloney, I would prefer if we do not go down that road. [Crosstalk] Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopessingh: Yes.

Hon. Member: Take a walk.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Members. Proceed.

Hon. C. Robinson-Regis: Thank you very kindly, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Member for Caroni East was disrespectful to public servants consistently in that—[Crosstalk]

Mr. Lee: Mr. Deputy Speaker, 48(1), the Member for Caroni East’s character is not on rule here. Mr. Deputy Speaker: Overruled.

Mr. Charles: What is the relevance?

Hon. C. Robinson-Regis: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am being asked what is the
relevance by the Member for Naparima. Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Member for Caroni East in his submission pontificated to us on this side about how we must treat people, how we must talk to people, how the Member for Diego Martin West must behave, how all of us must behave and how the Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann’s West must behave. [Desk thumping] Mr. Deputy Speaker, just like the Member for Oropouche East, he cannot tell us on this side how to behave. [Desk thumping]

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to remind them about their Member for Tobago East who came in this Parliament and denigrated this Parliament—they cannot tell us how to behave—and each one of them thumped their desks loudly.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Members. Member for Naparima. As a matter of fact, I am not going to tolerate any outburst across the House on both sides. Proceed, Member for Arouca/Maloney.

Hon. C. Robinson-Regis: Thank you very much, Sir. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to remind them about that banner that the Member for Oropouche East put up about our now Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, “hide your children” implying that he was a paedophile. Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are not going to stand for that. We are not going to stand for them pontificating on us when they have a history that shows that not one of them, not one of them can claim any kind of decency or moral authority to pontificate on us on this side of the House. [Desk thumping]

Mr. Charles: Standing Order 48(4), insulting language.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Overruled.

Hon. C. Robinson-Regis: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I also want to talk to them about truth. I want to talk to them about truth, because they are the ones who said that—
the Member for Naparima was the one who talked about persons—denigrating the country again. I do not even want to repeat it—with regard to that issue on Syria, totally fabricated, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I also want to talk to the Member for St. Augustine who said that he was one of the persons who was against Jack Warner’s appointment. He was one of the first person—[Interrupt]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Member, call the Member properly, please.

Hon. C. Robinson-Regis: The Member for St. Augustine was one of the first persons—that is what the Member for St. Augustine said yesterday—to be very concerned about the appointment of Jack Warner as a Minister of government. If I remember correctly, the only person who said anything as soon as Jack Warner was appointed, was the Member for Diego Martin West. [Desk thumping] And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think their memories are quite short. If I may, I would like to quote from the Newsday of Sunday June 24th an article by Corey Connelly: “Reshuffle will Strengthen PP”. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I quote:

“Congress of the People…political leader, Prakash Ramadhar, yesterday said the Cabinet reshuffle will strengthen the two-year-old People’s Partnership (PP) Government.

Asked about the appointment of Jack Warner as Minister of National Security, Ramadhar said, ‘Whoever could get the job done is the foremost and utmost priority to us. Crime is one of our biggest issues. The Prime Minister is continually worried about it, as we all are, and I wish Mr Warner the very best. His success is the success of Trinidad and Tobago in the fight of crime.”

Is this somebody who was against Jack Warner being appointed to the Cabinet of
Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would like to posit that that is very, very far from the truth. Mr. Deputy Speaker, we heard them talk about the effect of VAT on the income of Trinidad and Tobago, and they consistently say that the CSO figures are incorrect and we cannot trust the CSO. But. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am not going to quote from a CSO document. I am going to quote from a document of the Central Bank of Trinidad and Tobago. This is what the Central Bank document says, because they consistently want to mislead the population. It says and I quote—sorry, I am just trying to find the exact quotation. It is the *Economic Bulletin of the Central Bank of Trinidad and Tobago*, September 20, 2017, Volume XIX No. 2 and it says.

“In June 2017, food inflation eased to its lowest level since August 2011. Food inflation decelerated to 0.5 per cent in June 2017, compared with 7.6 per cent in January 2017 and 9.4 per cent in June 2016. The end of the base effect after the reintroduction of VAT in February 2016 on several zero-rated items contributed to the slowdown in food price increases.”

Mr. Deputy Speaker, they are the ones who are saying that because we put VAT back on items that there has been inflation. The Central Bank Bulletin says:

“Food inflation decelerated”—and it is because of—“The end of the base effect after the reintroduction of VAT in February on several zero-rated items”—and that—“contributed to the slowdown in food price increases.”

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the work of the Minister of Finance is coming to fruition. Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have been working consistently in this Government where they have been trying to give the impression that we are not doing anything, we do not have anything to show for it. Before anything can show,
there is a gestation period. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we came into this Government in a situation that was very difficult for the people of Trinidad and Tobago and for us as a Government. Massive debt: in one state enterprise alone, the EFCL, the debt was at the level of $4 billion when we came into this office, $4 billion. They consistently try to rewrite history but we will not allow them to do that on this side of the House.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, as I talk about rewriting history, I want to take the opportunity to speak very briefly about an allegation made by the Member for Princes Town that the Prime Minister—our Prime Minister and the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago—had over 17 trips since he came into office. I just want to set the record straight.

2.25 p.m.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Prime Minister for the period 2015—2016 travelled as follows:

The 24th session of the Commonwealth Heads of Government in Malta, and the cost of the entire contingent amounted to $590,181;

The meeting on cricket with the Prime Minister of Grenada and the President of the West Indian Cricket Board, the cost was $15,572;

The 27th Inter-Sessional Meeting of the Conference of Heads of Government, $30,502;

The participation in the US-Caribbean-Central American Energy Summit, $267,000;

The inter-hemispheric meeting with bp and the official visit to Ghana, and the 7th Summit of Heads of States of the Association of Caribbean States, $129,544;

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The 37th regular meeting of the Conference of Heads of Government of Caricom, $133,042;
The official visit to Jamaica—and you would remember that visit to Jamaica, Deputy Speaker, was to beg Jamaica not to take our goods off the shelves—was $249,447.

By comparison, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the total was $1,810,179.09 for eight trips. [Crosstalk] Eight, Mr. Deputy Speaker, by comparison.

Official overseas travel for the period 2010 to 2011 in respect of the Member for Siparia when she was Prime Minister:

21st meeting of the Subcommittee on External Trade, $405,715.

And that was the visit when the Member for Siparia, in her own inimitable style, told the Jamaicans and Caricom that Trinidad and Tobago was not an ATM. We paid $405,000 in order for her to go and say that—in order for the Member for Siparia to go and tell the Jamaicans and Caricom that we are no longer an ATM.

India Day Parade and other events in New York, $118,275.10.

I do not know if this was official but it is listed here.

The Prime Minister’s visit to the USA to attend meetings and events—I do not know if it was a lime—$252,742.55;

Commonwealth Day celebrations and other Commonwealth meetings, $486,210;

Hemispheric forum on women’s leadership for citizens’ democracy, $282,251;

Prime Minister’s visit to Brazil, 6th regional meeting of World Economic Forum—Mr. Deputy Speaker, you remember that was the World Cup visit when the Prime Minister’s grandson was dressed as Spiderman—that was
Mr. Padarath: Mr. Deputy Speaker, would the hon. Member give way just for clarification?

Hon. C. Robinson-Regis: No, I need to finish this.

Meeting of the prime-ministerial subcommittee on cricket and Caricom, $27,598.40.

Cricket, no involvement in cricket. I do not even think the Member goes to cricket here. Mr. Deputy Speaker, there were 14 trips during this time, and they came up to $3,287,617.32, and they are questioning the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago who, every single visit, every single one, was official business for the people of Trinidad and Tobago. [Desk thumping] [Crosstalk]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Member. Members. Proceed.

Hon. C. Robinson-Regis: Thank you very kindly, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

So when they come here and want to pontificate and say all kinds of things about us on this side, I want to remind them of what they did to Trinidad and Tobago, and why we need a paradigm shift. We have to move our country away from what they did to Trinidad and Tobago. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have heard the Members ask why we are paying $3million, or why we have allocated the sum of $3million for the golf course at Chaguaramas. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would like to answer that question. The Government of Trinidad and Tobago has acknowledged the importance of sports tourism. The Member for Diego Martin Central spoke about it, the Member for Tobago West spoke about tourism and sports tourism, and we have noted that one of the increasingly growing sports is the sport of golf.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to remind the Members on the other side that the golf course at Chaguaramas is the only public golf course in Trinidad and
Tobago. The other golf courses, you either have to be a member of a club or you have to be, in some way, a member before you can enter the golf course. With Chaguaramas the golf course is free. [ Interruption ] No, the one in Caroni is not. The golf course is free to the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago, and that is PNM policy. [ Desk thumping ] Mr. Deputy Speaker, they talk about the $3million that we have allocated, and I want to indicate that we have been doing upgrade works— “Yuh taking ah walk on yuh own?” [ Laughter ]

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Member, address the Chair. Chief Whip, the Member for Princes Town—“oh”, he is still here—the Member for Princes Town, tell him, please, I am not tolerating that in this House, the Member for Princes Town. Proceed. You can proceed. Proceed, Member.

**Hon. C. Robinson-Regis:** Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, upgrade works on the golf course started in November 2016. It had been left to languish under the Member for Caroni Central, nothing was done with the golf course during that time. It has resulted in a noticeable increase in revenue for the months thereafter. That was from November 2016 to now. This income boost followed a careful analysis of the golf course’s viability which allowed the CDA to indicate that this facility harboured very great potential. Mr. Deputy Speaker, despite the fact that there had been limited funds, the CDA formulated an action plan towards improving the golf course’s commercial revenue-generating ability, and the plan included upgrade works to the facility’s infrastructure, as well as restructuring and improving its administration. Mr. Deputy Speaker, this resulted with the upgrade and improvement in its administration. It has resulted in revenue soaring from $292,397 in September 2015, to $598,529 by September 2017. In the two-year period that the CDA is
under the PNM administration there has been a $300,000 increase in revenue at that golf course [Desk thumping] and they are begrudging the $3 million that we have allocated.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, after those initial improvements were made to the golf course, the CDA has been able to host a junior golf clinic and the Rudder Alexander tournament in September, 2017, which brought golfers from all other golf courses around the country to the Chaguaramas Golf Course. There were small improvements but it has resulted in a major boost to the sport of golf and to the Chaguaramas area.

I want to move now to the issue of what the Ministry of Planning and Development has been doing to ensure that we diversify the economy of Trinidad and Tobago. Mr. Deputy Speaker, we know that there have been several stops and starts as it relates to the issue of diversification, and I want to make the point very clearly that if those on the other side had followed the well-thought-out Vision 2020 we would have been much further along in Trinidad and Tobago on the road to diversification. That vision document had a diversification map. It had a mechanism by which Trinidad and Tobago would develop to developed country status by 2020. I have heard those on the other side indicate that Malaysia has done very well, that Jamaica is doing well, but one of the things that I want to point out to the Members on the other side, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is that in each instance where a country has done well with their vision document, it has been because it has been accepted by both sides of the aisle. It is not in circumstances where the document is a PNM document or a UNC document.

In fact, in the Vision 2020 we had over 600 citizens of Trinidad and Tobago participate in the development of that document, including the Member for Caroni
Central. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to make the point that we have laid that document here and yet the Members on the other side have not seen it fit to appoint their Members, or to indicate who their Members would be for the Joint Select Committee. Mr. Deputy Speaker, if we continue along that line nothing in the mode of Malaysia or in the mode of Jamaica will take place in the economy of Trinidad and Tobago, and we are not daunted. We will continue to do the work that has been outlined in the vision document and in the National Performance Framework document. The Ministry of Planning and Development is ready to implement, and each Ministry is ready to implement. I want to take the opportunity to congratulate my colleagues, who on each occasion that they stood in this Parliament outlined, very cogently, what their Ministries have been doing in order to move the process forward and in order to shift the paradigm in which we find ourselves. [Desk thumping]

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we left a university of Trinidad and Tobago poised for take-off, but when those on the other side came into office they fired Brian Lara, they fired Gordon Greenidge, and they fired several members of staff, and slandered and scandalized Professor Ramroop. [Interruption] Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am hearing them talking about the creative industries and so on, Professor Ramroop was ready to start that programme of bespoke tailoring in Trinidad and Tobago, but I want to make the point that he is now going to start it under this administration. [Desk thumping] And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is why I am very surprised when they talk about diversification. We handed them Tamana InTech Park. They did nothing with it, they just left it. The Minister at the time closed down the park, and they are talking about vine, and so on, growing, that was where vine and bamboo, and all sorts of things grew on it.
Mr. Deputy Speaker, we also handed them NAPA, we handed them SAPA, and, again, they did absolutely nothing, nothing with what we gave them. We handed them local content ready to go in Ghana; again, they did absolutely nothing with it. We handed them mega farms in Chaguaramas and they closed it down. And, you know, the Member for Caroni Central, Mr. Deputy Speaker, talks about diversification and what we should have done, and what we should do, and we handed him things on a platter and they did absolutely nothing with it, and now we have to talk again about diversification. As a matter of fact, one of the only ideas that the Member for Caroni Central had was to have cable cars over Laventille, and, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and also to give away Invaders Bay, and also to put buildings on the Eddie Hart ground. Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are not moving in that direction.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have a vision for Trinidad and Tobago, and that is what we call our Vision 2030. It is the national development strategy, and we have determined that that is the mechanism, that and the National Performance Framework are the mechanisms by which the Ministry of Planning and Development, in coordination with all Ministries, will be moving, or has started moving this country to the next paradigm. We have been making the paradigm shift, and we are working assiduously to ensure that the people of Trinidad and Tobago understand what we are doing, and understand the direction in which we are going as a country.

But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the development path is not easy. The development path is not easy. As a matter of fact, one of the issues that has concerned this administration is the issue of what took place under the last administration, and that is an issue because for the five years before we came into
Appropriation (Financial Year 2018)  
2017.10.12  
Bill, 2017 (cont’d)  
Hon. C. Robinson-Regis (cont’d)

governance, all the processes, all the procedures were broken down. And as a consequence of that, it is now very challenging for us to reinvigorate the public service, but we are seeing the first green shoots of a public service that is ready and raring to go. We have seen it in particular in the Ministry of the Member for St. Ann’s East. Everybody here has commended the Ministry of Community Development, Culture and the Arts for the work that they have been doing in communities, [Desk thumping] and that is one of the Ministries that has been working assiduously to ensure that they again go back to the moorings, go back to where we were in 2010.

Another Ministry that has been working assiduously is the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services, cleaning the rolls and making sure that those who deserve social assistance are the ones who are in fact getting that social assistance.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, as we move forward the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development with the new movement that we are seeing in terms of housing development is also moving in that direction. Mr. Deputy Speaker, our motto as a Government is, delivering good governance and service excellence, improving productivity through quality infrastructure and transport, building globally competitive businesses, and placing the environment at the centre of social and economic development, and that is the paradigm that we are shifting to as a Government of Trinidad and Tobago. As we shift the paradigm, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it means that each Ministry must move in the direction of strategic management, in the direction of careful and clear policy design and implementation coordination.

There must be, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in each Ministry a unit that deals with
monitoring and improving performance, a unit that deals with managing all the policies, not only of the respective Ministries, but the Government policies that lead us toward delivering good governance and service excellence. [Interruption]

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Member, your initial 45 minutes has expired. You have an additional 10. Care to avail yourself?

**Hon. C. Robinson-Regis:** Yes, thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

**Madam Speaker:** Proceed.

**Hon. C. Robinson-Regis:** Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, all of these units are transformational units, and we are certain that we are moving in the right direction and that we are, as the Minister of Finance said, shifting that paradigm. The Government’s approach has been strategic, the Government’s approach has been long term, and the developmental results will be realized through accessible and timely delivery of Government services, which citizens demand and rightfully deserve.

[Madam Speaker in the Chair]

Madam Speaker, Trinidad and Tobago is expected to achieve a modest recovery from the three consecutive years of economic decline. Whilst the modest improvement is projected to be a 3.4 per cent growth in GDP in 2018, our economy remains heavily dependent on the energy sector and the exogenous shocks will always come at us. And this vulnerability, Madam Speaker, is reflected in the current financial position of the Government and means that as a Government we will have to carefully navigate the effects of exogenous shocks whilst preventing a precipitous downturn in the economy. But, Madam Speaker, each one of us on this side, the 23 of us on this side are up to the task. [Desk thumping] Madam Speaker, I mentioned the 23 of us, it is each and every one of us...
on this side and our constituents.

Madam Speaker, I just want to make one slight—I want to divert a little from what I have been saying here and I want to talk a little bit about the Member for Port of Spain South. Madam Speaker, I heard the Member for Barataria/San Juan, and I think the Member for Oropouche East, talk about the Member for Port of Spain South being a PNM and they are not sure—Member for Barataria/San Juan, “you didn’ say dah?” [Interruption]

**Hon. Member:** Moonilal.

**Hon. C. Robinson-Regis:** Okay. The Member for Oropouche East—[Interruption] “Oh”, you said to reinstate her. All right. I just want to remind those on the other side that the Member for Port of Spain South, despite your various calls to her to have tea—do not look at me surprised. Several Members were calling her, the Member for Port of Spain South, to have tea with them—[Interruption]—yeah, to come and have tea. She is PNM, PNM, PNM, PNM, [Desk thumping] so do not bother to call her to have tea. On this side we have tea, we have cocoa, we have juice, we have coffee, we have everything that is needed for the Member. [Desk thumping] We even have “zebapeek”, so, Madam Speaker, she is safe on this side. [Desk thumping] The Member for Port of Spain South is a PNM and will remain PNM. [Desk thumping] Let me also say that the Member for Diego Martin West was also removed from a Cabinet, if some of you remember, and you see where he is now, okay. [Desk thumping] So stop calling her for tea, she does not need tea. [Interruption]

**Mr. Padarath:** Port of Spain South need a basket.

**Hon. C. Robinson-Regis:** She does not need tea.

**Mr. Padarath:**—take your basket.
Hon. C. Robinson-Regis: She has her own basket.

Hon. Member: We know that.

Madam Speaker: Order.

Hon. C. Robinson-Regis: Madam Speaker, let me also indicate that the projects that we have specifically named, that is the Revenue Authority, the establishment of the National Statistical Institute, the Global Services Promotion Programme, and I thank the Member for Caroni Central for negotiating that, the regeneration of the San Fernando waterfront, the IDB assisted Health Services Support Programme, and the completion of the Sir Solomon Hochoy Highway are all aligned to the vision for Trinidad and Tobago. Each project has been specifically aligned to the vision for Trinidad and Tobago.

Madam Speaker, let me also indicate that one area that I have to speak about before I take my seat is the area of agriculture. And, Madam Speaker, our medium-term growth strategy is outlined by the EDAB. They have given us advice on the diversification road map, and we thank the members of the EDAB for their yeoman service. This diversification strategy and road map focuses on four subsectors, that is, the energy services sub-sector, the tourism sector, the agriculture sector and the maritime services sector. Then there are, in year two, the export manufacturing sector, port development, building up our creative industries, and increasing the productive potential of the education sub-sector, and we also focused on the financial services sector, diaspora engagement and trans-shipment operations.

Madam Speaker, I want to touch briefly on the agricultural sector, and I have heard those on the other side claim that we of the PNM do nothing for agriculture. They always want to say that, we do nothing for agriculture, and I want to say that under this administration we have been focusing heavily on the agriculture sector,
and the budget documents bear testimony to that.

Madam Speaker, you would recall that one of the many Ministers of Agriculture of the other side who now parades himself as one of the biggest defenders of agriculture and the biggest defender of the downtrodden masses who—[Interuption] Madam Speaker, I do not know what word to give him—[Interuption] I cannot. But, Madam Speaker, that imposter, in one line in the Finance Act they repealed the 53-year-old Cocoa and Coffee Industry Board Act, one line in the Finance Act. And under that Act, the State bought and exported all cocoa and coffee, and paid guaranteed prices and provided technical support to cocoa and coffee farmers. By repealing that Act, the statutory framework for supporting the industry and managing the country’s status as a fine cocoa producer was destroyed. But what have we done, Madam Speaker, we have been working with local buyers to ensure that local beans can be bought and sold, and we have worked with the cocoa and coffee corporative to support their local buying activities, resulting in the launch of chocolate factories and the creation of several sustainable jobs. Additionally, Madam Speaker, we have our cocoa now being seen as one of the finest cocoas. We have known that, but it is now being considered for the International Cocoa Awards in Paris at the end of this month. And this year the Ministry’s beans from Rio Claro are being considered as the best in the world. [Desk thumping]

2.55 p.m.

Madam Speaker, I want to indicate that the World Intellectual Property Organization Magazine has Trinidad and Tobago’s cocoa sector as the front page of their magazine and it says:

“Breathing new life into Trinidad and Tobago’s cocoa sector”
Let me say that we have worked assiduously to ensure this. We have also worked assiduously to put agricultural access roads in place. And let me say that the people of Maloney and Arouca are grateful to this Government for this budget that the Minister of Finance has put in place.

Madam Speaker, I thank you for this opportunity. [Desk thumping]

Mr. Ganga Singh (Chaguanas West): Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. As I rise as the 40th speaker in this budget debate, and as the 18th speaker on behalf of the loyal and patriotic Opposition [Desk thumping] and the alternative Government, I rise with a tinge of displeasure because I rise to indicate to this Parliament and to the country that for the first time in my memory, a search warrant has been read into the parliamentary records of this Parliament of a sitting Member of Parliament.

Madam Speaker, what we have engaged in is a fudging of the lines of the separation of powers. It is clear that when a prima facie case is established, then the person is not yet charged. [Desk thumping] Our rule of law provides for a presumption of innocence, and a person is innocent until proven guilty. If you have a case, proceed with it. You know there is a line from the movie The Good, The Bad and The Ugly, “When you come to shoot, shoot, do not talk”. [Desk thumping]

You know the last time from my memory that such an event occurred was when the private, confidential psychiatric records of the pilot, Captain Hernandez, were read into the Parliament by the then Minister George Chambers.

So what has happened here today is something for thought and reflection, because what it points to is a zero-sum game. If what Vernella Toppin says is wrong, then it is cancelled out by what another Member says. So it is a zero-sum game we are engaging in, in this in Parliament and as a result of that what we have,
we would have a measure of parliamentary institutional paralysis, and then the reasonable man looking on the outside, other than our hard-core party supporters on both sides, will then look at the Parliament and say they continue their “kicksing” whilst there are serious problems impacting, affecting our society. [Desk thumping]

**Hon. Member:** He started it.

**Mr. G. Singh:** It does not matter who “start”, this is not an infant class. [Laughter] It does not matter who start, Madam Speaker, there is a position to take on this situation.

The hon. Member, my good friend, the Minister of Planning and Development, Member for Arouca/Maloney, indicated how we can find common ground. How can we lift this country but find common ground? And she pointed to the Vision 2030 which is, to my mind, a dusted-off version of Vision 2020. But the point is that it is a document that is before us and how can we find common ground. The reality is that when we conduct ourselves as we have today on that matter, that we will not find common ground and we have to deal with that reality, because in this manner we will alienate the majority of the people.

Madam Speaker, the hon. Member spoke about the text and interpreted the text to be part of a witness protection programme, so we have now text-gate. We have not resolved email-gate, which was dealt with in this House for how many years. My understanding is that the report is sitting on the desk of the current Acting Commissioner of Police for several months. The investigating officer presented his report, and he has since died. I want the Commissioner of Police to know, look, let us resolve this matter. It is a matter that is very germane to the body politic of this country. Make a decision either way but let us move forward
on the matter of the email-gate. [Desk thumping]

The hon. Member for Arouca/Maloney spoke of the hon. Member for Oropouche East as being a desperate man, but that can equally be applied. What about the desperation of this Government? There is heat outside and heat inside. So you understand that the reality is that it comes back to the constant alienation and the removal from the parliamentary process of the public, Madam Speaker.

The Member said something that really struck me, and I have a note here that we on this side cannot claim any decency or morality. Now, I claim, and I am a politician, I am not a statesman, I am a politician. I lay no claim to have the monopoly on virtue and morality. And I want to say that, Madam Speaker, I am willing to indicate to all those on the other side, nor can any one of them claim, as paragons of virtue, a monopoly on morality and decency and virtue. A zero-sum game again.

The hon. Member indicated that the Opposition is guilty of everything and must not question the Government on any of their questionable actions. The Opposition must shut up in accordance with the wishes of their leader. That cannot be the systemic and institutional response of an Opposition which has to monitor and scrutinize the actions of the Government. [Desk thumping] So, Madam Speaker, you know, for us, my colleague, the hon. Member for Princes Town, indicated to me that it was said that our leader attended the World Economic Forum in Brazil in 2012, but in fact, she attended it in 2014 and went to the World Cup and paid her way in a private visit. So this kind of infantile skirmish is something that really we ought to look at in the context of what is happening in the country.

Madam Speaker, the inflation is real in this country, ask people who eat or
buy consumer goods. The inflation is real because of the fluctuation in the TT dollar, and it is clear that it will get worse.

The golf course in Chaguaramas—I particularly like the golf course in Chaguaramas because whilst you are playing there, you can hear the howler monkeys. So there is nothing wrong with that investment as part of the public good. The question is: Is it a priority and are there competing priorities in respect of the investment in a golf course? That is the question. From our end, what is the role of the private sector? Is it an opportune investment for the private sector?

Madam Speaker, Members also spoke about the mega-farms, and that the only claim to fame was that we had two long cucumbers brought into Parliament by the former Minister. [Laughter] That is where we have reached in the context of what we are having. But, Madam Speaker, under the previous administration we provided a lease to a mega-farm that provided 100 acres, and today production is expanding in that area.

Cocoa? Look, I have been hearing about the gene pool in cocoa since the days of the Imperial College of Agriculture. [Laughter] All right, we have the best cocoa in the world, best cocoa, but we did not translate that into activity for the benefit. The fact that it is happening now and it started—and Government is a continuum—is because it started previously. So you understand, Madam Speaker. So those are just responses that I have to the hon. Member for Arouca/Maloney.

I just want to add, Madam Speaker, that I heard in his contribution, the hon. Member for San Fernando West, indicating that he had Skype conversations or discussions with the Attorney General when he went within the portals of the offices of the US Embassy. I think that the Member ought to be very careful as to how we proceed. We are a sovereign State. America is a sovereign State, and we
must not genuflect in any way to America. I am not saying you be like North Korea, but I am saying there are certain sovereign issues associated with that. And even if the conversation was of a confidential nature, I think—the Member—it is prudent not to mention that in the context of the Parliament.

The hon. Member indicated also that we are going back to where we were in 2010 by virtue of the planning process. I would tell the Member be very careful of that journey, because in the area I had responsibility for, the water and waste water sector, you would not want to go back to 2010, but you would want to build on the gains and the tremendous gains we made in the 2010 to 2015 era. [Desk thumping]

I want to just correct the Member for D’Abadie/O’Meara who was for a short while the Minister of Public Utilities. You know, Madam Speaker, when I looked across, there are three Members of Public Utilities in two years, three Ministers. My good friend, the hon. Member for Laventille West, my other good friend, the hon. Member for Port of Spain South, and the hon. Member for D’Abadie/O’Meara, and then, of course, the Member for Diego Martin West twice anointed and, similarly, Sen. the Hon. Robert Le Hunte twice anointed—twice appointed—because he had a faux pas over his Ghanaian citizenship.

The hon. Member for D’Abadie/O’Meara indicated that, and I quote from his Hansard—he called me out, that is why I am dealing with him:

“Too long we go without water in Malabar and the water problem in Trinidad and Tobago is man-made and I am glad that the Member for Chaguanas West is here. Trinidad and Tobago experienced sufficient rainfall during the course of the year. There is enough surface water. There is enough groundwater and, of course, now we have desalination water. The problem with Trinidad and Tobago is a water distribution problem. The
water is not being distributed properly.”

I want to tell the hon. Member maybe he ought to have spent more time reading the documentation. Look at the integrated water resource management, look at the whole question of the availability of water. There is sufficient rainfall, but rainfall is not the harvested water. When rain falls you have to harvest it, and if you do not harvest it and impound it, you do not have water to treat. So that is Water 101 for you.

Madam Speaker, I now proceed to the substantive nature of my contribution for today. I am always cognizant of the fact that I am No. 40 in the line-up. I first want to indicate that the tone for this loyal Opposition was set on Friday last with the thorough and comprehensive dissection of the budget statement by the Leader of the Opposition. [Desk thumping] The wounds inflicted by the Opposition Leader on the body politic of the Government were felt throughout, because throughout the contributions of Members you saw that reflected the pain that came from that.

**Mr. Hinds:** You know better than that.

**Mr. G. Singh:** That is tone that was set in the context of the Opposition Members, and that is why I want to congratulate my 16 other colleagues on their sterling contributions that they made.

But what was the first response of the leader on the other side to the statement, the response of the Leader of the Opposition? At Piggott’s Corner, as reported in the *Newsday* of Sunday, October 08, 2017, I quote:

Rowley said as Prime Minister he would never entertain any oil company executive in his hotel room in his pyjamas.

This is the kind of thinking from the country’s head of Government that inspired columnist Ralph Maraj, and a former Minister in the PNM. In fact—

**UNREVISED**
Hon. Member: Minister in the UNC too.

Mr. G. Singh:—this is what Ralph Maraj had to say, and he is a former Minister of Public Utilities. He said that as a result of this, words like “disturbing insufficiency, predictable and pedestrian, plain and empty, unjustly chastised women, callous insensitivity and abysmal ignorance”. It is in that context that I say that leaders set the tone.

In fact, the lethal and unmistakable significance of the hon. Leader of the Opposition’s marathon contribution was best captured by PNM apologist, Keith Subero, in the Trinidad Express on Monday, October 9, 2017, when he said:

“Opposition Leader Kamla Persad-Bissessar’s budget presentation on Friday was simply outstanding.” [Desk thumping]

Mr. Garcia: You do not understand satire?

Mr. G. Singh: There is no doubt that we are confronted with serious challenges, financially, socially and politically. We hear people talk about financial deficits, declines and slowdowns, but we need to stop sugar-coating the truth of the severity of the circumstances we are faced with. This Government, this PNM Government has savaged the Trinidad and Tobago economy and in doing so they have ravaged the people of the country.

We all remember the Finance Minister early in his term in a television interview, indicating that the people did not riot when the price of fuel was increased, so he might consider increasing it again. Well, he did and now the JTUM is saying that riot may come. In today’s newspaper of October 12, 2017, an article by Rhonda Dowlat:

Roget: Riot may become reality if no change to the budget.

So rather than recognizing and appreciating the stoic resilience of the Trinidad and
Tobago people, the hon. Minister punished them with blasé concern with subsequent price increases. This is what we are faced with, and this is what we confront as we genuinely lift ourselves out of this economic hardship.

Madam Speaker, let me correct one important miscommunication from the Government. The current state of the economy is not solely the cause of a serious fall off in revenue. It is in fact because of a Government that has absolutely no idea where it is, where it needs to go and how to get there and what it needs in order to get there. [Desk thumping]

If we look no further than the successive Public Sector Investment Programme, the documents of this current administration, it leaves us wondering how much closer we are to Vision 2030. As I indicated, we have basis for common ground, but what we are engaged in will ensure that there is no common ground.

The 2017 PSIP states a series of aspirational goals, and I get the impression it says, if it sounds good, write it, you do not have to worry about doing it, and I will explain that. The document stated in fiscal 2016 an original allocation of $7 billion was appropriated to facilitate the implementation of projects and programmes under the PSIP. The original allocation was increased to $7.7 billion by the end of the fiscal year. But there was only a 61.1 per cent utilization rate of the PSIP funding. In other words, notwithstanding having all this money, the hon. Members on that side as Members of the Government, only $4.7 million was expended, with $3.1 million under the Consolidated Fund and $1.5 billion under the Infrastructure Development Fund. So therefore, you had a poor utilization rate. When you compare that to what was being utilized by our administration, you had a 90 per cent-plus utilization rate in the PSIP, and this is throughout. Similarly in 2017, you had a low utilization rate, a 66 per cent utilization rate in the revised
allocation in 2017. So there is stark incompetence on the part of those who are implementing the moneys which the public sector funding is being doled out to.

Madam Speaker, it is clear that we have to confront the following challenges: low oil and gas price, low oil and gas production volumes, declining natural gas reserves, declining foreign exchange reserves accompanied by foreign exchange shortages and downgrade of the country’s credit ratings. So, while the money is there, incompetence and ineffective leadership is hampering the effective execution of the projects that will keep the economy fairly healthy.

Madam Speaker, can we blame people who are now saying bold and loud, how could they have claimed to be red and ready and end up looking like the biblical five foolish virgins, completely unprepared for anything that was in front of them. Red and ready, but when they finally found a way in, it rapidly became painfully clear that they were utterly unprepared for the responsibility of Government.

Madam Speaker, the economic facts are clear and my colleagues dealt with that. I want to indicate that from the very start of this administration, on every street corner they went crying wolf, “Things bad; cut spending; austerity.” And do you know what it amounted to? This is what Terrence Farrell refers to as “ritual incantation”. I want to quote from Terrence Farrell’s book: The underachieving society, development strategy and policy in Trinidad and Tobago, 1958 to 2008. Now, this is the same Farrell that is the head of the Economic Advisory Board, as I heard a muttering from the hon. Minister of Finance. This is how Mr. Farrell describes what happens, at page 252.

“Downturns are accompanied by ritual incantations by government officials of the need for ‘diversification’ to reduce the country’s dependence on oil
and the energy-based industries, the formation of new committees, task forces and boards, and considerable hand-wringing and angst about the ‘sustainability’ of government fiscal operations. Seemingly bold initiatives and projects are announced and all the while everyone is waiting and secretly hoping for a quick turnaround in the price of oil, ammonia, methanol and natural gas, so that rents will begin to accrue, governments spending programmes can restart and the fete can resume. Trinidad and Tobago”—he concludes—“will not achieve its potential for development until and unless the cycle is broken.”

So, reflective of that ritual incantation is the Minister in the budget statement at page 5 says:

A three-pronged strategy, one to improve revenue administration, two, to reduce, rethink expenditure patterns and three to intensify efforts at diversity.

First, you understand that what some of those on the other side are hoping is that there will be a confrontation by Kim Jong-Un and Donald Trump and the price of oil and gas will increase and skyrocket. That is what they hope, because this is what it is.

“Changing the Paradigm: Putting the Economy on a Sustainable Path” is a good example, because how you can change the paradigm when we see what happened here today? How can you restore confidence when there is no fundamental shift, which I will show later on? It is clear it is the same ritual incantations, the same economic savagery meted out against the people. The most politically unaware amongst us has suddenly realized that this country has made a political mistake and it has fed an economic crisis that did not have to be. [Desk
Madam Speaker, one of my colleagues, I think the Member for Caroni Central, spoke about what was projected and what was the actual deficit for 2016/2017 where you had a doubling up, and now for 2018.

3.25 p.m.

So it is clear what is emerging, Madam Speaker, that at the end of 2018 it appears that the budget deficit may be unbridgeable. Madam Speaker, it is clear that the Ministry of Finance, the Minister of Finance’s strategy of tax and spend is not working. As the Leader of the Opposition and others indicated, over $100 billion spent and nothing to show. [Desk thumping]

Madam Speaker, my colleague the hon. Member for Oropouche East raised the issue of Sandals and I have some questions, because what is happening there is that what you have is a situation where, and I will quote from the Guardian of July 04, 2016:

“Prime Minister Dr. Keith Rowley approached Jamaican hotel tycoon Gordon “Butch” Stewart to bring the Sandals chain to Tobago before he had won last year’s general election.”

This was confirmed by Stewart in an email interview with the Trinidad Guardian where it was noted that Mr. Rowley approached him and his son Adam when they were here in mid-2015 for a function hosted by the Manufacturers’ Association.

“Adam was a guest speaker at the manufacturing association. A gentleman came up to me and said when I become prime minister I am going to give you a call,”—Stewart said, adding that—“…that man was Keith Rowley.”

Now, Madam Speaker, the question you have to ask, this is a Government—our established institutional framework is government according to law. The entire
process of the selection of Sandals has been corrupted, subverted and exists only with \[Desk thumping\] the justification, this is what Dr. Rowley wants. How under our Constitution, where the Prime Minister is chairman of the Cabinet, how can you just merely by diktat de and anoint someone sole selected? Where is the bidding process? Where is the bidding process? \[Crosstalk\] What is that? \[Crosstalk\]

Madam Speaker, so it is clear that you cannot act in our system in our Constitution arbitrarily. \[Desk thumping\] There is a restriction of arbitrary action by anyone from the ordinary man in the maxi taxi to the Prime Minister, we are a Government according to law. What established law or provision in law gave the Prime Minister the right to choose Butch Stewart’s Sandals Resort without any competition, bidding or procurement process? \[Desk thumping\]

Madam Speaker, so this is about—we are in full support of foreign investment, but this is about a Prime Minister who brokered and confirmed a multi-million dollar deal involving public real estate without a single procurement process being activated and not a damn dog bark. \[Desk thumping\]

So you see, Madam Speaker, when you look at what this kind of value system and tone sets down the line, you begin to explain what happened in the TSTT acquisition of Massy Communications. The chairman, I would say, he was like a \textit{primus inter pares} of chairman. That was the phrase I used when I piloted the Motion. He was first amongst equals amongst chairmen; he had access. And he went and made—he said that the chairman acquired Massy Communications for $255 million dollars. How it went, Madam Speaker? The chairman of TSTT said that he had the approval of Cabinet to proceed with $255 million deal to purchase Massy Technologies. The Prime Minister then said that the Cabinet was aware of
the deal. The Corporation Sole disagreed, Minister Stuart Young disagreed and Minister Fitzgerald Hinds disagreed at that point in time. And it is also clear that for a state enterprise to make such large purchases approval is required from the Corporation Sole.

Madam Speaker, and you were purchasing a company that had already recorded a $40 million loss and experienced a $2 million loss at the start up. So what you have is not a buyout, but a bail out. [Desk thumping] You had TSTT being a white knight for the bail out of another conglomerate within that oligarchic circle.

So, Madam Speaker, but when the picture comes clear on July 31, 2017, it was reported TSTT completes buy out of Massy Communications for $40 million dollars. It was only because of the alertness and the focus and the monitoring and the scrutiny of the Opposition that you had the price dropped from 255 to 240. [Desk thumping] I want to suggest that that is a matter—[Crosstalk]

The second issue I want to raise with respect to this whole question of what transpires in this country now; the political leader and Leader of the Opposition raised the matter of TGU and indicated by way of Cabinet Note that there was, and a Cabinet Note and I quote, 922 dated 25 May, 2017:

That the Ministry of Finance and union Generation Company Limited with appropriate consultants managed the sale of TGU to Ferrostaal for 40 per cent of TGU with another 10 per cent offered to corporate and private institutional investors.

Madam Speaker, you would expect that a Cabinet considering of something of this magnitude, one would expect that issues of procurement and all the elements requesting proposals and so on would have been exhausted. The process
issue of procurement to reach at arrival on a Cabinet Note for Government to make a decision that would have been exhausted.

Madam Speaker, since the Leader of the Opposition raised that on Friday last 40 Members, well 39 Members on that side have spoken—no, 39 collectively in this House, but 22 on that side have spoken, not one Member, not a whimper, not a word from anyone who are Members of the Cabinet? If it is that there was a sale, say so, there was not a sale, say so, but is this new paradigm is that a matter of this nature, multi-billion dollar arrangement, is shrouded in secrecy? Madam Speaker, this cannot be the paradigm shift that the Government wants, it cannot be. Because you have to take the context that the last time there was a sale of generation assets in 1994, 1994, the hon. Member for Diego Martin West was a Parliament Member at the time, it was in PowerGen, the same, the hon. Member was a Member. You would think, cognizant of what transpired then, that you would have this level of openness taking place.

And when you look, as the Leader of the Opposition spoke about the role of Prof. Ken Julien and when we recall 23 years ago the role of Prof. Ken Julien in the sale of the PowerGen assets, generation assets, 49 per cent, then you have to ask yourself questions. What is the facilitative role and why is there not some measure of disclosure on the part of the Government in dealing with this matter? [Desk thumping]

Madam Speaker, in the area of the utilities, I think that on another occasion, I have other matters to raise and I will deal with that, but what I can say is that what is happening in the utilities sector, having regard to the utterances of those on the other side that you have a special relationship developing where a chairman, the chairman of the Water and Sewerage Authority has become a rogue chairman.
When there is a gap in the political vacuum through the appointment of the seven appointments of Ministers, what you have is that the technocrats and the bureaucrats take over to fill that vacuum, and the chairman of WASA has become an executive chairman \textit{[Desk thumping]} against all issues with respect to the state manual and so on.

Madam Speaker, I want to bring to the attention of the hon. Prime Minister, and when you read what is said in the budget statement on page 67 that the model has not worked. We all recognize that. Mr. Manning, Prime Minister Manning as he then was in 2006 said, WASA is a $27 billion dollar headache. It has always been like that. The whole utility sector has been in serious problem for some time. So the Minister is right, that the model has not worked for the benefit of the country so we need to change the model. But whilst the Minister is fashioning policy, what is happening?—is that they are doing their own thing in WASA. Due diligence document, a due diligence—Cowater International in association with Sogema Technologies.

You have a group that came, Madam Speaker, is doing a due diligence of WASA. Why a due diligence at this stage? The question is, I have several questions to ask with respect to this company and its intrusion into WASA. What was the procurement process that brought forth this company? How was it selected? Who made the decision? What is the purpose of the due diligence by this foreign entity on this multibillion dollar enterprise called WASA?

Due diligence is a comprehensive appraisal of a business undertaken by a prospective buyer especially to establish its assets, liabilities and evaluate its commercial potential. So, Madam Speaker, is due diligence being done? Due diligence being done so that therefore, what is it? They are anticipating the rate
hike which the current Minister is—the current Minister of Public Utilities is talking all over the place about rate hike, not understanding the role of the political directorate. The Regulated Industries Commission insulates the political directorate from involvement in the rate appraisal process, but the current Minister suffering from newness, perhaps jet lag from his journey from Ghana, is talking all of the place about the rate hike.

So there is a rate hike in electricity coming through the process, a rate hike in water coming, but the predators are swooping in whether it is through TGU or through WASA to deal with this rate hike. There are fundamental problems and certainly the strategic interest in this country is best served by taking a good look at these things before you make decisions. Certainly in Vision 2020 they articulate positions with water and wastewater, but never the whole question of private sector involvement in this kind of back door. So what this really, Madam Speaker, this due diligence process is to bring in a Canadian company through the backdoor for the privatization of the Water and Sewerage Authority, and the rouge chairman is at the very heart of it. Prime Minister, you look quizzical, but I would suggest that you take a look at that because that is what is happening under your very watch.

Because you see, Madam Speaker, the formula was there before with the Israelis Mekorot and Merhav. Yeah. They came in to do some work, then they did a framework agreement and then next thing you know they were taking over the operations of WASA.

Madam Speaker, I want to raise the issue of the gambling, my colleague dealt with it, but we sit on a Joint Select Committee. When we sit in that committee, we had very excellent sittings of the committee, we presented the reports, we listened to the consultation process was thorough, but this imposition
of this tax coming as it is, really sets back or regresses the process before the Joint Select Committee.

I live in the countryside, Madam Speaker, so in the bars you have these slot machines, they used to pay $3,000; now they will pay $6,000. It will cut into their rural community income and so on. So that therefore, it is a very expensive process, but what is the fundamental flaw is what they call the flypaper taxation theory, is that you think the tax that you are imposing is going to stick on what you are imposing it on, but the reality is that it will shift the burden. What will happen is that the members who are paying their taxes, they will be virtually punished into debt. These taxes and the quantum of the taxes talk to the death knell of the existing tax paying gaming fraternity. But the underground fraternity exists, some 80 or 90 per cent, they will continue their work because they have been working outside of the law. So, we need to review that. I saw in the newspaper that the members have requested a meeting with the Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance and I hope that they will begin to resolve those issues in a much more consultative manner.

You see, Madam Speaker, in the learning it is said that taxing on gaming is an unresented tax, unresented, but you have to also look at how you are going to grow your industry in that context.

Housing, Madam Speaker, I want to quickly deal with an issue in housing because you see, I had asked a question of the Prime Minister—[Interuption]

Madam Speaker: Hon. Member for Chaguanas West, your original speaking time is now spent. You are entitled to 10 more minutes if you wish to avail yourself of it.

Mr. G. Singh: Yes. Thank you, Madam Speaker. [Desk thumping] In housing, that
I had asked the Prime Minister a question on Prime Minister’s question day on 10th of the 5th 2017.

“Could the Prime Minister provide an update on the Public-Private Partnership Project on housing at Mount Hope entered into September 2016?”

Madam Speaker, this is the reply of the Prime Minister.

“…the latest update I have on that project is that the project is under way. Initial earthworks are under way and preparations and that the project is scheduled to be completed sometime in 2019.

Could Prime Minister indicate…”—

Me again:

“…whether Government has guaranteed or any state institution has guaranteed the financing of this project?

Hon. Dr. Keith Rowley: Madam Speaker, I am not aware that any government or state guarantee has been given and that is not the basis on which the public/private partnership is entered into.”

The Prime Minister was right. But, Madam Speaker, it is clear to me that this project notwithstanding, this project the first of its type under this administration has died, it is stillborn. Because, you see, when you read the evaluation report done by PricewaterhouseCoopers on this project, you would find that in the body of the proposals whilst a contractor was selected as the number one contractor, in the body of his request for proposal, they wanted a guarantee.

So for the last year this contractor has been shopping around for a guarantee, and I am happy that the Prime Minister who is aware of his good friend has not provided that guarantee, because it would have been going against the grain of the
RFP. So that therefore, this matter has died as a public sector/private sector partnership.

Madam Speaker, but you see in the housing sector what is happening under the Housing Act, there are leakages and the Member for Diego Martin North/East spoke about leakages, revenue leakages. Madam Speaker, whilst the Minister of Finance is taxing the gaming sector, taxing the nuts man, taxing the doubles man, widening the net of taxes, widening—taxing the vegetable vendor, taxing, taxing everybody, the question is—I want to point out under section 42(2)(c) of the Housing Act and form 6 on page 86 of the regulations to the Housing Act, they have two categories of housing contractors, traders, as my colleague no doubt will fall within that category, and builders in the housing sector.

Madam Speaker, traders in housing are exempted from corporation tax, they can do things tax free, but builders are not exempted from the income, their income from housing is not exempted and they must pay corporation tax.

What is happening, traders in the housing sectors who are also builders are required according to the law to keep separate books, to keep separate accounts, to show where their income is coming so they cannot dodge the tax man. As I indicated before, income as a trader is tax free, income as a builder is not.

So that what is happening in the housing sector, there are tax dodgers in the housing sector who are commingling, commingling their income not keeping separate accounts for the trader part of their business and separate accounts, which is tax free, and separate accounts for the builder part of their business which is not tax free.

So that I call upon the relevant authorities to take strong action, because whilst you seek to tax the ordinary man, the multi-millionaires are getting away
with tax evasion because they are commingling their income from the housing sector, and keep in mind, Madam Speaker, that the builders within are builders for the HDC and the traders exist outside the realm of the HDC. So millions of dollars of taxpayers’ money are being hidden by virtue of tax evasion in that sector, and nothing is being done about it.

Madam Speaker, it is clear to us on this side, that with this budget we are left with more questions than answers having to face the reality of the population with genuine and gentle concern for them. It is clear that under this administration that the rule of law is being compromised and we are hearing the public relations about a paradigm shift, but what we see is that the DNA of the PNM has not changed [Desk thumping] whether it is 1994 or 2017. So that the reality is there for us and we are saying that given the seriousness of the situation that there is need for fundamental shift and therefore, what you are saying here, you have to walk the talk.

Madam Speaker, in the few minutes in my contribution I want to pay attention, a bit of attention to my constituency, Chaguanas West. [Crosstalk] And I am hearing the utterance of the Member for Diego Martin West, I will tell amongst all 41 of us here, I got the highest number of votes in the 2015 election. [Desk thumping] So I have great privilege in representing the people of Chaguanas West. [Crosstalk]

Madam Speaker, it is clear that, look, Chaguanas is a cultural space, it is a commercial space, it is the shopper’s paradise, but we have fundamental problems, traffic, you have drainage issues. There is one issue that I have engaged the Minister of Works and Transport in his visit and the Minister of Local Government for the relocation of the Lakhan Kharia cremation site in Felicity. You have
coexisting a cremation site and moorings and a marina side by side in the Espanola River. So that therefore, there is need *[Crosstalk]* yes, a marina. We have, you see—*[Interruption]*

**Hon. Member:** “Ah better go down dey.”

**Mr. G. Singh:** Yeah. You could come down there. I will invite you to come down and see. You have a whole pleasure craft industry existing in Felicity. *[Desk thumping]* Felicity people is Felicity moorings, you know. We “doh” have to be Westmoorings. *[Crosstalk]*

The hospital facility. I looked in the books. The Minister made a promise on the last occasion in a question and response to Chaguanas East. There is nothing for the Chaguanas health facility, nothing for the Chaguanas health facility. Well, if you are saying, do something about that. It is an area in which there is significant need.

Madam Speaker, the road conditions. The road condition is in a poor state. Pothole, “yuh” dodging. Every day I travel in the area, “yuh” dodging pot hole in Munroe Road, “yuh” dodging pothole in Caroni Savannah Road, “yuh” dodging pothole in Narsaloo Ramiah Road, “yuh” dodging pothole in the Old Southern Main Road. Pick six, two, three men, it does not work, it does not work. Took the Minister for tour, promised a lot, but yet to deliver. He is a touring Minister, I can tell you that.

Madam Speaker, the people of Chaguanas are resilient. We have people from all over the Caribbean coming to shop there. You have the market is in dire need of repair, a $2million allocation has been made, but there is significant work necessary. Chaguanas is the capital centre of the Divali festival whether it is the Nagar *[Desk thumping]* or the Divali Utsav in Felicity. *[Desk thumping]* It is the
only community that has two noble laureates, Vidia Naipaul and Derick Walcott [Desk thumping] writing about the Ramleela in that community. And we have significant need for the infusion and for the Minister of Community Development, Culture and the Arts to get involved in building that creative centre in Chaguanas.

Madam Speaker, it is in the context of what is happening that there is need for a paradigm shift, but it is clear in the current situation that there will be no paradigm shift with the attitude, the tone of the head of the Government and the implementation process. We expect from the Prime Minister a different tone if you want to have a fundamental shift in the paradigm in this country. Madam Speaker, I thank you. [Desk thumping]

**Madam Speaker:** Member for Diego Martin West.

**The Prime Minister (Hon. Dr. Keith Rowley):** [Desk thumping] Thank you, Madam Speaker. I did not really plan to rise on the crescendo of my colleague for Chaguanas West. I had no idea that he was calling me into the debate and to end on such a note that the paradigm shift would take place by the behaviour of the Prime Minister being changed. I was not aware, Madam Speaker, that I was being held responsible for the behaviour of the Opposition, but now that I know, I will pay particular attention to it, because they really do need to change their behaviour. [Desk thumping] And since what we had been experiencing is as a result of what something that I have been doing, then maybe I have to look at myself too. Because if they do accept their responsibility or will wholly accept it based on the Prime Minister’s behaviour, then at least there is hope for Trinidad and Tobago. [Desk thumping]

Madam Speaker, I want to begin at this time where we have been here for what?—four or five days, five days debating the national budget for 2018. And I
want to begin by thanking the Minister of Finance for the very many long hours [Desk thumping] that he and his staff and their associates and those at the Ministry of Planning and Development who not only firmly prepared a budget, but who have been shepherding this country through some very difficult situations. [Desk thumping]

Members of the national community may only be paying attention at budget time to the budget, but the budget is not a one day, one stroke item, the budget is a living ongoing operation. And if you look at the documents, they are called loosely the budget, but the bold print on those yellow documents are estimates, they are called the draft estimates. The budget is a package of estimates.

3.55 p.m.

And by that I mean, you make certain presumptions and forecasts as to what kinds of revenues are likely to come in the next 12-month period, and assuming a figure for those revenues that you assume will be available from a variety of sources, you then now make projections and predictions as to how you will spend that revenue if you actually receive it. And that is why it is so easy for Members on the other side to get up here and point for five days at numbers, that you said you were going to spend “X” and you did not do it. You said you were going to spend “Y” and you did not do it. You said you were going to raise “X”—but that is the budgetary process. Projected revenues and anticipated expenditure—and if those revenues for whatever reason are not realized, then certainly you cannot expect to spend as if they were realized.

My colleague, the Member for Chaguanas West just made a very understanding consideration of the Public Sector Investment Programme. And
he was not the only one, there were other Members of the House, pointed that the Parliament had approved, I think it was $5 billion, and look they only spent this. And, of course, they drew conclusions from that. I cannot argue with that. I mean, you draw conclusions to make the Government look as bad as you can get it to look. “It is because the Government is incompetent. It is because there is no leadership.” That sounds good, makes good sound bite on television. But the bottom line is, it is because the money just was not there. It was not realized.

So, you plan to spend and you did not realize it for whatever reason. You can take issue with the reasons, but the bottom line is, when we make those projections and those predictions, the understanding is that they are always exposed to certain vagaries, one of which is the price of what you put in the marketplace. The other one is, as the Minister of Finance pointed out, in the budget we had planned to raise some funds from certain asset sales which had certain legal difficulties, and we did not hide that from the country. We said we wanted to raise a certain amount of money by disposing of some shareholding in TGU and CLF. Of course, the CLF story played out in full public view, so I need not go into that. But, it allows us, in 2018, an opening which we did not have in 2017, so at least we did not use up that money in 2017. We survived 2017 and some of that money is available in 2018.

The TGU thing—Madam Speaker, I noticed a number of my colleagues here, seeking to create some disquiet in the public domain about Ferrostaal and TGU. I want to go on record here, Madam Speaker, on record, as saying that as Prime Minister I have absolutely nothing to hide or to do with Ferrostaal’s
interest in any shareholding in any company in Trinidad and Tobago. [Desk thumping] So they could infer and speculate as much as they like, I am on record here now saying that no amount of conspiracy theory could draw me into any of their foolishness. If they know something and they want to come out and say so, then say so, but do not waste Parliament’s time about speculation and what you think, and who did talk to who and what.

Let me tell you something, Madam Speaker. I heard the Opposition Leader, and I see some lesser colleagues of mine, talking about the Opposition Leader spoke to Ferrostaal and he went to Germany and therefore there is something that the people of Trinidad and Tobago must be concerned about, and the bad penny of Oropouche, my colleague, the Member for Oropouche East, he is talking about there is more to come and you will hear more about it. Hear about what? What exactly are they implying? “Doh imply nutten, come out and say it!” If you know something, come out and say it. [Desk thumping]

Madam Speaker, I was Opposition Leader for five years. Five years I was in the Opposition, and during that period I familiarized myself with the country, the components of the country and the business of the country. [Desk thumping] I have met with virtually every head of every oil company that is significant in Trinidad and Tobago, as Opposition Leader. Either I went to see them or they came to see me. I met with bankers who bank in this country, because Trinidad and Tobago is a business. I met with universities. I met with all kinds of people as Opposition Leader and I am putting it to every one of them on the other side, you come forward and say any one of them make any deal with me and I will use unparliamentary language on you.
Madam Speaker, they have been accustomed to conduct their business and the country’s business in a particular way, and the paradigm shift that this country knows about today is that nobody in this Government has been shown to be operating—[Desk thumping] So for all the insinuations, and all this speculation, and all the “I think so and I know so”, it was just so much a waste of Parliament’s time. [Desk thumping]

A very important point was made by my colleague, the Member for San Fernando West, and I want to reiterate the point, and the point is this. We were never saying that you should not give incentives to stimulate investment in the offshore, in particular. The country had to do that. What we did not expect is that when you did that, you would have changed the existing arrangements for the carrying forward of the investment as tax losses. They did that and, as a result of that, where these huge investments are being made, the fact that they could write them off in that way and carry them forward, it means that the profits that would arise during the years ahead—and I was told by the Minister of Finance 2025—I was shocked when the Minister of Finance showed me that, the document from the oil company, showing that there are no taxes to come until 2025 as petroleum profits tax from that operation. I said, how could this happen? It turned out that they are carrying forward these losses, applying it, and what they had before was that the investment made this year could be written off in the shortest possible time.

Madam Speaker, I went to the boardroom of bp and I said to them, had the PNM Government been in office we would never have agreed to that. But,
of course, the argument of some people is that to get investment in this country you have to give away the shop, because if you do not give away the shop nobody would come to buy. So we give away the shop. They came and they agreed to big investments and we would stop and watch. Do you know what I said to them? I said to bp board, you have your shareholders who every year get a big dividend. I found out in that conversation that the largest number of shareholders in bp are Americans in California. It is called British Petroleum but it is owned by Californians. And I said I have my shareholders too. My shareholders are the people of Trinidad and Tobago. [Desk thumping]

And if that is the condition under which we are going to allow people to extract our hydrocarbon resources, we might as well let it stay in the ground, because their shareholders, the whole of British pension—bp is probably one of the largest contributors to British pension. When they had the Macondo fire in the Gulf of Mexico, the pensioners in Britain were scared that they could not get a pension if they did not pay for that. They paid $40 billion or more for that. But in Trinidad and Tobago, we have to give away the shop to get them to invest here? Well I dare say, no. No. And I told them that we have to revisit that situation. I speak as the Prime Minister of the Trinidad and Tobago on this matter. [Desk thumping] And if the Opposition, if the Opposition instead of standing and backing the Government on that, is prepared to talk about something underhand happened because the Prime Minister talk to the bp board. Let one person in bp or any oil company get up outside and say that they talked to me about any underhandedness and I fix for life; for life. [Laughter] Anybody who say they make a deal with me, I am fixed for life because we off to the Hall
of Justice. I cannot say all you could say that.

Madam Speaker, when I came in as Prime Minister there were two things that shocked me: The very first day I came in as Prime Minister I was told—I think my briefcase was still in my hand—that we had a little crisis. What is the crisis? There is a vessel, Trinidad and Tobago has a coast guard vessel on its way on the high seas approaching pirate infested waters and the vessel is unarmed and 30 people on board. I say, what you telling me at all? Trinidad and Tobago has a coast guard vessel on the high seas, where? Coming out of China. Coming out of China. You hear them talking about, as my friend, somebody from across there talked about we buy coast guard boats. That was one of the boats. What they did, Madam Speaker, they went to China and they saw a boat. They say, “Ah want one ah those”. And unbeknownst to the country, on the eve of the elections, without paying for the boat, they made an arrangement to have the vessel sailed to Trinidad without even a pop gun on board, with some Trinidad nationals on board and probably some Chinese nationals.

Madam Speaker, I had to call certain foreign countries and ask them to watch that vessel on its way to Trinidad and Tobago. They told me they did not have assets in the area. I had to ask them to ask their friends to watch it, to make sure it gets to Port of Spain. You understand? We are now—you look in the estimates you will see provision of a hundred and something million?

**Maj. Gen. Dillon:** A hundred and sixty seven.

**Hon. Dr. K. Rowley:** A hundred and sixty-seven million dollars. They are accusing us of spending money now. We are now paying for that boat. That boat
arrived here since when? Took a boat on credit, without a sound.

I just heard my friend, the Member for Chaguanas West there, making a big song and dance about process, process, and you want to know the process about Sandals. I will come to that in a minute. But the process, and this desire for process, and this need for process did not apply when they were the Government of Trinidad and Tobago. They trust a boat in China, put the boat to sea, and the boat sailed. Through all that risk, putting me in that situation to have to go and beg foreign countries to guard that vessel through dangerous waters to get here. But today, as my colleague, the Member for Arouca/Maloney say, they want to lecture us on process. We are now paying for that vessel, and it is here and being put to use. That is how they went about it. That is how they went about it.

Something else now, Madam Speaker, I will tell you about, changing the paradigm. We had look at the country’s needs for border protection under the Manning administration, and we paid for offshore patrol vessels, and associated with those vessels were high quality helicopters for offshore use, AugustaWestland, four of them. The Government of the day, the new Government came in, cancelled the arrangements on the OPVs, take back the money, for reasons best known to them, but they did not cancel the helicopters. They kept the helicopters. The helicopters were supposed to be on board those ships to be a part of a team. Helicopter and ship. Offshore patrol vessel out there with a helicopter. No, no, they cancelled it. They cancelled the offshore patrol
vessels but they kept the helicopters because they wanted pram. Right? And used them like pram back and forth, $20,000 a time.

The end result is, today, under the present circumstances, a few months ago, look we struggling as we are now, I am confronted with a bill, a maintenance bill of $200 million a year to maintain those four AugustaWestland helicopters. And without apologies to my friend of process, my friend, the Member for Chaguanas West. Process? As Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago I had to ask myself, if this country has $200 million to spend in the crime-fighting effort, is that the best way to spend it? If we can afford $200 million more in crime-fighting, pay $200 million to maintain four helicopters? The answer is no. I guided the Cabinet to a decision that we would ground those four helicopters, and they grounded them. [Desk thumping] Not to mention that in there was a training package for pilots. They spend years in office, when I asked for the pilots, none. I said, why not, because it is part of the arrangement. We paid for that. The Government did not provide the trainees to be trained.

You understand, Madam Speaker. I just give you these two examples so that you will understand how it is difficult for us to listen to them giving us lecture, and pontificating, and talking down to us. That is their record. And when we say they do not like this country, they “does” get vex. How could you have done that to this country? [Desk thumping] And every opportunity they get they come here and talk down to us about what we are doing wrong, and that the country waiting on them. But I tell this country already, you know, “the day they want all yuh back, take all yuh back”. Because if after that experience, they
in a hurry to get you back, I cannot argue with them. [Desk thumping] Madam Speaker, process.

The second shocker I got as Prime Minister, was—this came within the first month of being Prime Minister. A major local business house is a partner with Japanese Mitsubishi in a major plant. It was Neal & Massy. As a partner Neal & Massy, NGC and Mitsubishi are the partners, major partner being Mitsubishi, on a methanol plant. Right? Big plant in La Brea. Okay, we cannot argue with that. If we get some investment in La Brea, of all places, we would love to get it. But, guess what? I got this contact from Neal & Massy that they need the Attorney General to sign off on this project. And I said, but why sign off on it, the project is up and running. It is supposed to go. It was announced by the Government, everything is in place. They said, no. The legal document requires one more signature from the Attorney General.

So, I asked, why did the last Attorney General not sign it? And the answer was a little fuzzy, eh. I said, okay, we will look at it, and once it is the AG’s signature as required, we would look at it. When we looked at it, we saw this hand grenade with the pin pulled, saying that one of the conditions for that project—and this is a time when we had been into three years of gas shortages, eh. They knew that, because we were talking about that from the Opposition, and we were saying that we are exposed, because if there were existing gas contracts in Point Lisas, I am satisfied there are going to be liabilities for NGC. This new project has as a condition that they will have a guarantee on any gas available.

**Mr. Young:** In priority.
Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: Priority would go to them. This new company. And that was the Cabinet’s agreement, you know. The Cabinet changed the country’s gas sales policy, where existing companies, I mean, that go back to the beginning, investors who were here from the beginning, all those plants in Point Lisas that have gas contracts, many of them holding out, some of them operating at 75, 80 per cent capacity. Some of them threatening, and some of them talking to me in the Opposition, saying, “If we don’t get gas, and if there is no gas in the horizon we will have to lift our plants from in Trinidad and Tobago”. And that is what I was talking about. Do not do that. We could do it. I sat down at breakfast with them—Point Lisas people—to tell them, I am a geologist, I know we are in a good gas province, we can find the gas. We holding on. But, of course, this contract was there.

We, as a PNM Government, as a sane Government, said there is no way we can agree to this. We cannot agree to this. And worse, another clause in the contract said, “if the project came to grief at any point in time, the NGC will pay off the debt, and they will walk away, and don’t get the plant.” Would you believe that? NGC is a partner in there contracted to pay off the debt. The debt tail buy down is for them, if it comes to grief, and Mitsubishi will walk away. We said there is no way this Government will agree to that. We have to renegotiate this or we have no project. We did renegotiate it, the Japanese understood, and they backed away from those two conditions, and the plant is now under construction in Trinidad and Tobago. [Desk thumping]

Madam Speaker, I do not even want to go into the details here, it sounds crazy. NGC exposed $4.5 billion in that contract. We had to stop that. Stop that.
So when they are advising us, it is against that background they are talking about. Against that background. But, I want, Madam Speaker, to talk about Sandals, because it seems to be a problem for a lot of people. Again, I heard my friend, the Member for Chaguanas West, this evening talk about process, and the absence of process to bring Sandals. Madam Speaker, this Government is resolute that we need to do something, not talk something about expansion in tourism. We need to do something to expand our tourism input into our economy. It is the best opportunity for some diversification. Lots of Caribbean territories live only on tourism. We are saying, if we join the tourism export of the region, if we make Tobago a destination, a Caribbean destination, then we too can share in this benefit that our colleagues live off.

So, we looked at it, from the Opposition. Those who say we have no plan, from Opposition we looked at it. We looked at what that product is doing across the Caribbean. In Turks and Caicos, in Bahamas, in Jamaica, in Barbados, in Antigua, and lately in Grenada, and in every situation the Sandals model is a major contributor, and the best thing it does is that it is marketed as Caribbean destination. You do not see Jamaica Sandals, Antigua Sandals, Sandals market as Sandals. And anywhere Sandals exists, all that marketing is yours. You do not spend $200 million trying to market Tobago and nobody knows where Tobago is. We took the decision at the level of the Government, that we will invite Sandals into our country. And we are not the first one to do it. It was done before. But on this occasion, we went about it talking to them, and saying come and look at us and see if you can find a location, and the Government will ensure that we have the plan and you bring your brand to us, and the brand will
make Tobago a Caribbean destination. [*Desk thumping*]

How many of you have ever seen a Tobago ad anywhere in a magazine anywhere in the world? Or in the newspaper? I am in California a month ago, I am reading the *Newsweek*, I opened the middle of *Newsweek*, Antigua, centre spread. I have never seen Tobago marketed anywhere, and we have the gem of the Caribbean and the southerly in the Caribbean. And today you want to hold me in some conspiracy, in some underhandedness because I was able to attract Sandals interest to Tobago. I make no apologies to you or to anybody else. [*Desk thumping*]

And I will tell you one thing, the communication between me and Sandals ownership, is one of mutual respect. Mutual respect. I speak to Sandals as the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago. Mutual respect, no deal. No underhand deal, no under-table, not this time, we do not do that. Madam Speaker, if we took a decision that this unique product, not just a Caribbean product, eh—Sandals is a world brand. A world brand. It just happened to be Jamaican owned. World brand. If we want Sandals to be our flagship in Tobago, who would you go to for Sandals? Marriot? Hilton? Who?

If it is Sandals you want, and that is what this Government wants, it is the brand we want. We want the brand to lift Tobago, to make Tobago a Caribbean destination, like Barbados, like Antigua, like Jamaica, like Bahamas, you can only get Sandals from Sandals. What is wrong with that? And instead of joining with us as a national effort, you are undermining, nickel-and-diming, undermining. Do you know what happened last week? And one of them said today—the usual class clown, excuse that—that, not a piece of paper from
Sandals. Madam Speaker, the way these things go, you advance it and you hope that it is sold. Because I am really a salesman for this country, you know. I am the country’s number one salesman. [Desk thumping] And I make no apologies that I spoke to “Butch” Stewart, from the Opposition, when he came here to show off to Trinidad and Tobago what Sandals was doing in the rest of the Caribbean, and as Opposition Leader I say to him, “Haven’t you been invited to come to Tobago?” He said, “Yes, I came, but I didn’t really do anything in Tobago.” I said, “Well, a Government is coming”—a new Government is coming—“into office, come back and talk to us after.” That is how it went.

So, Madam Speaker, we talk—and a lot of discussions have been taking place. Questions asked, quite properly, how are we proceeding? The land that has been identified for this project, we got it from—we created a special purpose company, we put a board in, led by Tobagonians, a couple Trinidadians on the board, and, of course, this board is now to do the preparatory work in Tobago with respect to the site and so on, and so on. In the meantime, the conversation is going on between Sandals and the Government, and we were at the stage, interestingly enough, the very week that hurricane—the first one?

Hon. Member: Irma.

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: Irma. The very week that Hurricane Irma struck the Northern Antilles, we had a meeting set up here in Trinidad with Sandals. Then they had to, not come, because they got some serious damage in some of the islands, mainly in Turks and Caicos. So we postponed the meeting until last Wednesday.

They came last Wednesday, we had some discussions, involving the
Minister of Tourism, Minister in the Office of the Prime Minister, the Minister of Planning and Development, and we agreed on a memorandum of understanding, which is now being signed. [Desk thumping] And instead of supporting the Government in a matter of this nature, what I get—[Interruption] you know, he just made a point there. In Trinidad and Tobago there is a new fashion now. The conversation started, “Ah doh know”; having said, “I do not know”, they then proceed to pontificate as if they know, and then say and think the worse.

I mean, Madam Speaker, they want to know what has been given, what you giving Sandals? Madam Speaker, we are not giving Sandals nothing. It is a facility, a business venture. If it is not a worthy business it will not get off the ground. It is a project that will involve equity sharing. As a matter of fact, the Government is going to carry the whole equity to build that hotel, and Sandals will brand it and manage it. That is the model. We are not investing anything in it. The Government built the Hilton Hotel when I was a boy, and since then the Hilton has been running that government-owned hotel. That is a model that we have used since independence. Why are they now coming to create some kind of argument that something underhand is going on with Sandals? Hyatt is managing that there, same thing, Government owns it, Hyatt is running it. What is wrong with Tobago having one like that and being run by the largest best brand in the Caribbean? [Desk thumping] “What wrong with all yuh?” What is your alternative?

You want diversification, you want expansion—not an idea! By-the-hour hotel in Chaguanas is not an idea for this matter. That has its place. We are
talking about an international—we are talking about 800 rooms that will change Tobago, lift every boat in Tobago. *[Desk thumping]* The rising tide of that in Tobago, to create a location that is known to the outside, to raise standards, to provide backward linkage into agriculture, into tourism of all kinds of services. That is what Tobago is waiting on. That is what Tobago can use. Do you have an alternative?

**Hon. Member:** None.

**Hon. Dr. K. Rowley:** None! None! None! Budget debate finish, 18 “ah dem” spoke, not one of them offered one hope for Tobago! *[Desk thumping]* Not one of them!

Not one of them had an alternative to offer the people of Tobago, and they want to question how Sandals was chosen. So we suppose to advertise for Sandals. That is what they spent the whole budget debate doing, advertise for Sandals, when you know it is Sandals you want. When you have a toothache, advertise for a dentist, and you get a butcher or a heart specialist, or somebody. You know what you want. And you know sometimes in the conversation they say, “I have nothing against Sandals, but”.

It is the same thing, you know, Madam Speaker. We are struggling to ensure that we remain an oil and gas province. We have gas—at the present consumption, we have gas for another 10 or 11 years. And as you go forward, it is even getting less and less. This country is facing a crisis for gas within our border. Because until we find new gas within our border, the logical thing we did, as this Government, was to look at where we know there is gas.

We know there is gas in Venezuela. We are running out of gas here, and
if we run out of gas here then “crapaud smoke our pipe”. So, we have to look to where the gas is. What do you do? We do not get involved in Venezuelan politics. We talk to the Government of Venezuela, whoever that government is. And I led a team to the Government of Venezuela, and put to them a proposal that they make available to the international market their gas, from the Dragon field, through the Trinidad and Tobago plants. And the Venezuelans were convinced, and they agreed to that. That has never happened before, and many thought it would not happen. [Desk thumping] Many thought it would not happen. Instead of supporting that for the benefit of the people of Trinidad and Tobago for their future. Guess what? They are inciting the Opposition in Venezuela to oppose it. But the Venezuelan Opposition smarter than that, because they know that if they ever become Government, as they hope to sometime, that gas coming through from Dragon to Trinidad and Tobago, through our plants, and getting to the international market is money for them, whoever is Government.

So they have refused the intend treaties of those in Trinidad and Tobago who undermine them. [Desk thumping] And these are the issues in front of us. These are the paradigm shifts we are talking about, not coming here and talking about, you know, I went to Houston and not a paper.

4.25 p.m.

I have no locus standi to sign any paper with any company that is supplying oil and gas here. So you do not expect that I am going to sign any paper. But what I had was the imprimatur and the stature of Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago to sit down in the boardroom in Houston with those who have to make the decision
and say to them, “Your people have been stuck with my people, time for us to finish this matter”. [Desk thumping] And when I saw where they were and where we were—and by “we” I mean NGC, because NGC is us—the discussion between NGC and bp took place on the phone. Minister Young was on the phone to bp. BP talking to NGC. So the piece of paper that is missing from your file is at NGC file. And, Madam Speaker, I am proud that I closed the gap and I brought bp from where they were and I brought NGC from where they were and we had an agreement. [Desk thumping]

As a result of that, $10 billion in investment was now committed to Trinidad and Tobago. The alternative was, stand and watch. In the meantime, Madam Speaker, they were standing and watching, plants closing in Point Lisas because the future and the present were that there was not enough gas. The minute we had an agreement with bp; between bp and NGC, I went to EOG. EOG had a position. In fact, I think it was even more favourable and instructions were given immediately, right then and there that EOG will restart their drilling expansion in Trinidad and Tobago. That is what happened.

I tried to get the Angelin project saved but by that time because of what was happening up to that point, bp had taken Angelin out of Trinidad and Tobago into Louisiana and if they tried to save it for Trinidad it would have been a delay of another nine months or thereabouts and, of course, we could not entertain that delay while people are talking about closing plants and moving plants in Point Lisas. That is what a Prime Minister does. That is what a Prime Minister does. That is what I did. [Desk thumping]

And that is not the end of it, eh. We are talking to some Italians now who have expressed an interest to come to Trinidad and Tobago and get involved in
some kind of industrial business. We are talking and at the appropriate time we will tell you. Nucor came to see me in the same office that Ferrostaal came, talking about trying to express an interest in the ArcelorMittal Plant. They want to talk to the Prime Minister. Come and talk to me. I saw them, they asked to see me, I saw them. They expressed what they are going to do. I said, go talk to the liquidator and if you all have an agreement the Government of Trinidad and Tobago will back you in the same way we backed ArcelorMittal. That is where it is at. We are encouraging that.

But if you as Members of Parliament get up and tell the world that anybody who come and talk to the Prime Minister is “crookedery” and corruption and deal-making, all I could say to you all, give the people of Trinidad and Tobago a chance. Give us a chance to strive. [Desk thumping]

Madam Speaker, let me tell you something about how we went about cutting expenses, because you see this is a period that we have to cut expenses. Because if we do not realize, through the estimates, the revenue we expect and we do not do the common-sense thing of cutting expenses, we are just running ourselves into bankruptcy. I did not invent that. If you are spending more than you earn and you cannot pay your bills, you are bankrupt. And what you all are inviting us to do is to complete the bankruptcy of this country that you started. [Desk thumping]

Madam Speaker, in the office of Prime Minister, where I have been for the last two years, let me indicate to you how we have gone about spending money in that office. I have five heads here: Telephone, Entertainment, Overseas Travel, Promotions and Printing, Hosting of Conferences. Hear how it went. And hear how we spent the money when we had it. In 2011, telephones in the Prime Minister office, $163 million; [Crosstalk] 2012, 155—
Hon. Member: Thousand.

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: Thousand? “Yuh doh understand English?” “Mill-yen” dollars. [Crosstalk] In 2017—and this is not just in the Prime Minister—this is the whole Ministry of the Prime Minister because the Prime Minister’s office is a Ministry. We have cut that down by $35 million. [Desk thumping] Official entertainment, 2011, $12.3 million; 2012, $16.4 million; budget, $12 million, you spend $16 million, $4 million more than budgeted. In 2016, we down to $9 million and 2017, $3 million. [Desk thumping] We cut that down by $7 million.


Hosting of conferences, seminars and other functions; 2011, $58 million; 2012, $121 million; 2016, $51 million; 2017, $23 million. Cut that down, year to year, $27 million. [Desk thumping] Madam Speaker, let me total that for you in case you missed it. First year, 2011, for those five headings, $387 million. The following year, 2012, $495 million for a total of $882 million. Hear it, eh, for Telephone, Official Entertainment, Overseas Travel, Promoting and Printing, Hosting of Conferences. When we had money that is how they spent it. That is how they spent it, Madam Speaker. And to come here today to give us lessons as to how to spend money, no thank you. [Desk thumping] We have cut that down, all of those five Heads from $882 million to $521 million, a savings of $361 million. [Desk thumping] And for all those who are asking the Government to lead, that is
the leadership that this Government is providing on this platform. [Desk thumping]

Mr. Hinds: Changing the Paradigm.

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: Madam Speaker, I have said publicly and I am going to say it in this Parliament again, that notwithstanding my almost 30 years or thereabouts in public life in the Parliament of this country, of becoming the Prime Minister and having the Government under my control and supervision, I am shocked at the all-pervasive nature of the corruption in Trinidad and Tobago. And that is why I am also disturbed that Members of Parliament could come here today, inside the Parliament, see a board of a state authority, a statutory authority, take action against senior public servants who have been spending public money, who they suspend or who they fired and Members of Parliament are so cavalier they know more than the board that they come inside the Parliament and come in the budget debate to defend public officials who have had action taken against them by a board duly appointed by the Cabinet of Trinidad and Tobago. “All yuh brave”. You all brave.

Madam Speaker, I want to say one thing, it is that the actions of the port board is the action of a board authorized under law, authorized by the Cabinet of Trinidad and Tobago, and anybody who wants to take issue with what the board has done I am sure that the courthouse door is open and does not require the Parliament to come and talk about Parliament privilege and democracy being—what is wrong with this country, eh? What is wrong with this country?

And you know what “provoke meh”, Madam Speaker?—I came to a joint select committee of this Parliament, first time in the history of this country a Prime Minister has come and sat before a committee of Parliament [Desk thumping] in that way and I brought written evidence to that committee showing that the
Government was out looking for a boat and while a boat was available from the owner the board never knew that because person or persons unknown hid that from the board and the board eventually hired the same vessel for about US $6,000 a day more because the vessel was obtained by somebody else and the somebody else rent it to the port at about US $6,000 a day more. Madam Speaker, that did not bother nobody in the Opposition. What bothered them is that the board send home somebody down by the port. That bothered them.

**Madam Speaker:** Prime Minister, your original speaking time has expired. You are entitled to 10 more minutes. [*Desk thumping*]

**Hon. Dr. K. Rowley:** Yes, thank you.

And of course my colleague from Chaguanas West, today he was on his leg throughout talking about process and Government—we are to be governed by process and Government is a series of processes, but when it suits them to defend who they figure they want to defend they have no interest in process, but the taxpayer is paying US $6,000 a day more. What could we do with US $6,000 a day? How much medication we can buy with that? How much golf course we could fix with that? And making a big issue about $3 million in a $50 billion budget to fix the single public golf course in Trinidad and Tobago.

When, of course, Barbados has five or six golf courses and that is what makes them an attractive location, a golfing destination for high-end tourists and long-stay tourists. Golfers do not come and spend one day; most times they spend three to five days and they pay at the top. Trinidad and Tobago, we have a number of golf courses here, most of them are sheep pastures and my colleague you know, he knows better. Some of them, they know better. My friend, the Member for Caroni East he knows better, he knows what a golf course should be like and a golf
course is like a woman. You got to groom her every day, [Crosstalk] otherwise it turns into a pasture. And you are coming to make an issue over the fact that a single public golf course in the country, and I will tell you something else too, Madam Speaker, something else that they all know, most of the people who play golf in the north of Trinidad, learn to play at Chaguaramas. [Desk thumping] It has probably the only junior programme in the golfing fraternity in the country. So why would my colleagues come here and want to make an issue of that.

**Hon. Member:** Bacchanal.

**Mr. Hinds:** Princes Town say he want a golf course also. [Laughter]

**Hon. Dr. K. Rowley:** Madam Speaker, Tobago needs at least two good golf courses so that when they market the rooms as a destination every hotel or guest house in Tobago could offer a golf as an activity to any Tobago visitor. Why would the Opposition not support that? You know why?—“because they eh supporting nutten and they feel that if they eh support nutten the country go collapse, the Government go go bankrupt”, and then the population will call them back into office. [Desk thumping]

I want to ask my colleague from Chaguanas, when I was there and you were here and the Government came in here and make a big announcement about a company called SABIC—you remember SABIC? Saudi Arabian—a huge Saudi company. They came here one day, I was sitting right across there, and they gave us chapter and verse about a $5 billion investment that SABIC was coming to make in Trinidad and Tobago, the largest investment—and we all said, if you manage to do that, great. I want to ask you one question, where did you advertise for SABIC? Where did you find SABIC? When you came here and make a big announcement about all these plants, the CariSal Plant and the this one plant and
the—because they know that when you are in Government, you try to attract investment in any way you can and usually these investors are looking for locations and looking for opportunities and the first thing they want to do is to talk to the Government of the day. Is that not true, colleagues? It is the same thing happening now. If someone is interested in doing something in Trinidad and Tobago to make an investment, to create investment and have jobs for people, they want to talk to the Government, we talk to them nice and we put on our charm and try to get them to come here. Not go and tell them how we are the heart of ISIS in the country and the country is an ISIS nest and do not come here. That is treason!

[Desk thumping]

**Hon. Member:** Unpatriotic. Unpatriotic. [Crosstalk]

**Hon. Dr. K. Rowley:** Madam Speaker, I have a few minutes left. Again, my colleague—[Crosstalk]—Madam Speaker, I draw your attention to my colleague, the Member for Naparima. [Crosstalk] Madam Speaker, my friend from Chaguanas West—

**Madam Speaker:** I just want to remind Members with respect to decorum and with respect to what is expected as parliamentary behaviour. Prime Minister. [Desk thumping]

**Hon. Dr. K. Rowley:** Madam Speaker, my colleague, the Member for Chaguanas West, a former Minister for WASA, right? WASA fell under his portfolio and he made some statements about WASA today about how difficult WASA is and how much WASA consumes and so on. So all that is correct. And he said that WASA is in such bad shape and so on. WASA has not been in good shape for decades. But I seem to recall, again, I was over there and he was over here. And he had a campaign, “Water for all by the year 2000”. Water for all by the year 2000.
Madam Speaker, 2000 has come and gone. Subsequent to that, they had five more years and another Government under another Prime Minister, water for all by the year when? Madam Speaker, we are still trying to have water for all in Trinidad and Tobago. It is a difficult and expensive proposition. It is a life, it is a matter of life and death. WASA has to be looked in a very serious way; and he mentioned this evening, I am glad he mentioned it, that there are arrangements in place, the RIC, to determine what happens with the utilities and the costs and the charges. The RIC looks at WASA and T&TEC and they will determine what are the reasonable costs under the circumstances of the day and they will determine what charges will go to the users.

Madam Speaker, the people of Trinidad and Tobago have a problem. And the problem is this. They have been accustomed to being lied to so often by their leaders that they do not know how to accept and deal with the truth. But we intend to tell the people of this country the truth all the time even if the truth is bad news. [Desk thumping] Madam Speaker, we are paying for water and electricity in Trinidad and Tobago today, charges that have no relation to the cost of the service. My colleagues know that. They were in Government for five years recently, they know that. So why are you talking about riot. Leave that for somebody outside who have nothing else to do. Those inside the Parliament, why you are talking about social this—I listened to the number of instances in this debate that Members on the other side have been, you know, harbingers of, you know, riot and social discord.

I tell you something, Madam Speaker, I do not believe it. I believe that the vast majority of the people in Trinidad and Tobago are decent right-thinking sensible people and they understand the truth. [Desk thumping] I have no doubt
that there is a fringe minority or a small minority who might want to react that way because some of them believe that somebody owes them something. You have to look after your life otherwise your life could be miserable for you. That is what I was taught. It will have riot. And how is the riot going to solve it? And who is going to lead the riot when they cannot lead nothing else, lead the riot. That is what they are telling you, Madam Speaker, they have no contribution to make.

I was hoping to hear in this budget statement and I must say this, eh. I listened to the contribution of my colleague, the Member for Barataria/San Juan—as an Opposition Member, we do not expect the Opposition to praise the Government or to—but, Madam Speaker, you can focus on the issues where the country can benefit and that is what he did. [Desk thumping] I say to my colleague the Member for Fyzabad, and I am saying it to the Member for Barataria/San Juan we have a problem with the integration of that Couva Hospital, I want to talk to you all about it. [Desk thumping] Because I am not carrying it home. All right? And you certainly did not carry it home. The people of Trinidad and Tobago need to get serious about their circumstance and any snake oil salesman or saleswoman coming to them now, “dem is people to watch”. Because we are in great difficulty; and before I close, Madam Speaker, I have two minutes left, eh, two minutes, thank you.

My colleague, the Member for Chaguanas West made a comment which has me a little disturbed. He is saying that because there is some disturbance among the employees of the casinos that that in some way will affect the Joint Select Committee business in the House. I hope I did not hear that. I hope I am wrong.

Mr. Singh: You heard wrong.

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley: Okay, good, because I would like to say that the interesting
thing about that, I do not know how many of you know the casino owners are the major beneficiaries of those businesses. Let me back up a little bit. You all forget casinos are illegal in this country? So a batch of people engaging in an illegal activity and telling me that they are going to “bun” down the country and you giving them gasoline. Madam Speaker, what we have are private members clubs that foreigners have converted into casinos; foreigners you know, not even local people, creating serious national security risk, so serious that none of the local banks will handle their money and Members of Parliament come inside the Parliament—

Mr. Hinds: Treason, treason. [Desk thumping]

Hon. Dr. K. Rowley:—and threaten; and we are going to fix that by our Joint Select Committee work; we are going to legalize casino gambling in this country. We have a number of pastors who are saying to the Government no, no, do not do that because the Bible says and we ask them: Did the Bible say to have illegal gambling in the country and security risk and money laundering and so on and so on? The Bible did not say that. It is better if we have a gaming commission that controls the gambling, take out the crime from it, take out the criminality from it, take out the foreign details from it, regulate it because these same Christians and pastors they go to countries that have casinos and they eat, sleep and dream in the same place. So there is no question that we are going to be better off with gaming being properly organized and now that we are—probably days away or weeks away from the legislation that will give us a gaming commission I am appealing to my colleagues on the other side to join with the Government, put this thing under proper legislative control so the workers can have proper jobs, secured jobs in a legal setting and regulated environment. [Desk thumping] That is all I am asking
Hon. Dr. K. Rowley (cont’d)

from you. And if you do that, it is the Government’s intention to do this immediately after the budget when the Joint Select Committee reports to the House.

And I want to say to the employees outside, do not let your employers lead you in that way. The gaming business will provide an opportunity and the Government will secure proper. Because I do not see any—anyway, let me not say that today. So to talk about predators and to talk about due diligence at WASA, I do not know what you are talking about because the Government has no intention of selling WASA to anybody. Okay? And when the Minister of Finance winds up, he will deal with that casino issue. Thank you. [Desk thumping]

The Minister of Finance (Hon. Colm Imbert): Thank you, Madam Speaker. We have been in this Parliament now since the 2nd of October and we have heard presentations from 40—so the Member for Chaguanas West was the 39th because we are missing one of our dear Member, the hon. Member for La Horquetta/Talparo. And, Madam Speaker, I must express a sense of disappointment because throughout this budget debate from the hon. Members opposite I was unable to discern any alternative plan. No ideas, a number of the budget measures they avoided completely. For example, our innovative small business incentive programme, not a word. Our innovative farmers incentive programme, not a word. The US $100million foreign exchange window that we will establish at the Eximbank to allow manufacturers who are engaged in exports to access foreign exchange for raw materials and essential equipment, not a word. The reintroduction of the export allowance for manufacturers so they get an uplift on their chargeable expenses to encourage them to export, not a word, Madam Speaker, not a word.
I have heard nothing, absolutely nothing for the last 10 days or so. Nothing. The Member for Siparia spoke for three hours plus, not a word on any of these issues. Nothing. It is very, very, disappointing. I was expecting a robust debate. We are in a very difficult situation in this country, very, very difficult. Just yesterday I had a meeting in the Ministry looking at our situation for the month of October, looking at income and expenditure for the month of October, because this is where this country has reached now. You know, you will hear the Prime Minister, sometimes he says it in a bit of jocular manner, that there are countries in the Caribbean where the Minister of Finance and the Prime Minister have to sit down with the Central Bank Governor every afternoon, every morning and count every dollar received in taxes and determine which bills they can pay the next day. There are countries in the Caribbean like that. And we in Trinidad and Tobago are getting close to that, Madam Speaker.

Just yesterday I had a meeting with my staff to determine what would be the cash inflows for the month of October 2017 and what are the cash outflows. And for the month of October we are limiting outflows to salaries, wages, pensions, gratuities, social service grants and debt service. And that is totalling, Madam Speaker, all of that—salaries, wages, pensions, gratuities, debt servicing and social service benefits—$3.1 billion. We are limiting our outflows in the month of October to $3.1 billion to pay inescapable expenses, as I said, pensions, salaries, disability benefit and so on.

And, Madam Speaker, the total cash inflows for the month of October are being estimated to be $2.2 billion. So we have outflows of 3.1 and we have inflows of 2.2. And that does not include a number of cheques that were written in the month of September that will be presented in the month of October. And, Madam
Speaker, when you add the cheques that have been written in September but not yet presented in October, we get another billion dollars. So there is a billion dollars outside in un-presented cheques. We have inescapable payments for salaries, pensions and so on of $3.1 billion. We are talking about $4.1 billion for this month alone, and inflows of $2.2 billion. So we are short this month, $2 billion, Madam Speaker. That is what we in the Ministry of Finance have to deal with now in Trinidad and Tobago. That is what we have to deal with and I have to come in here and listen to all of this, not a single credible intelligent proposal.

4.55p.m.

The Minister of Health, very disappointing. The former Minister of Health, I am sorry. Not you, hon. Member for St. Joseph. I apologize. I did not mean you. I meant the former Minister of Health. We found an anomaly—the public servants brought it to my attention—where private hospitals which are multimillion-dollar enterprises—I dare say some of them could run up to $100 million in revenue; private hospitals—paying a licence fee to the State of $150 a year—$150 a year. And this has been going on for many, many years, and the public servants brought it to my attention when we were looking at the budget measures—the fiscal measures—and they proposed increases, at least to some point where we would generate some form of revenue. So that the licence fee for a private hospital with up to 30 beds, I believe it is, was raised from the paltry $150 to $25,000. And what is the response of the Member for Barataria/San Juan? He calls it a nuisance tax.

Hon. Member: He said you did not charge enough.

Hon. C. Imbert: A multimillionaire owner of a private hospital, who also happens to be a Member of Parliament, for the five years that he was Minister of Health, he was content to charge private hospitals $150 a year, but we raised the fee to
$25,000 and he calls it a nuisance tax. It is no wonder, Madam Speaker, I have been looking at expenditure in that Ministry and it bothers me. When I look at the increase—because something clued me in when the current Ministry of Health spoke about this plate that was available on the Internet for US $18 or US $20 and would land here for TT $150, or whatever it is, that the public health sector, the RHAs, have been purchasing under the previous Minister. That is where that—I would have to call it—rape of the Treasury began—for $5,000. So I heard this astonishing story of a plate used for orthopaedics, is it, or is it neurosurgery?

Hon. Member: Orthopaedics.

Hon. C. Imbert:—orthopaedics, that would cost $150, this country was paying $5,000 for it, easy. And I said, let me take a look at the Ministry of Health under the stewardship of the UNC, and I looked at goods and services because that is where I zeroed in, that is where you purchase these things, and in 2010 the expenditure on goods and services was somewhere in the vicinity of $660 million, but that managed to swell under the former administration to $900 million, an additional $250 million to buy plates and screws and other medical devices, and so on. That is an annual increase of $250 million, Madam Speaker—an annual increase of $250 million! And that is why the Member for Barataria/San Juan could be so cavalier. If you could increase the expenditure on buying these screws and plates, and so on, by $250 million a year and do that “just so”, and “it is no big ting”, then it is no wonder that $25,000 is a nuisance tax.

That is what we get from Members opposite, that kind of contemptuous approach to public expenditure, Madam Speaker. That has to stop, and I hope that the Minister of Health, having exposed this rape of the public purse, that he will not just talk about it. I am hoping, Madam Speaker, that the Minister of Health will
do something about it [Desk thumping] and identify the culprits in this fraud on the public purse.

Madam Speaker, I also—following the hon. Prime Minister, there has been a lot of talk about the increase in taxes on private members’ clubs, and so on, and I heard the offer from the Leader of the Opposition to one of the persons who represent these casinos and so on, to speak in the Senate on the taxes. Speak about what? There is no relationship between the gambling and gaming Bill which is to establish a commission to regulate casino gambling in this country, to put an end to the scourge of money laundering, the illegal activity that takes place in these casinos—there is no relationship between that, the intent to create a commission.

We are the only unregulated casino country in the world, Madam Speaker—in the world; in the world. We make all the reports—all the reports that, you know, the reports that the Member for Naparima likes to look at. He would not look at CFATF though, and look at how CFATF has condemned Trinidad and Tobago for having the largest unregulated casino gambling industry in the world. So I understand the hon. Leader of the Opposition wants to allow a member, a representative of the casino industry, to speak in the Senate. To say what?

Let me give some data now because people just like to talk in this country. You know, Madam Speaker, there is something I have come across recently and I think it is very interesting. You know, we have something in this country—a lot of people in this country suffer from something called “expert syndrome”. Let me tell you what it is. “An ailment characterized by the need to expound on a given topic beyond actual knowledge. The advanced sufferers are often unaware of the condition, losing the ability to distinguish opinion from fact.” And I am told there is no cure for expert syndrome. We have lots of those in this country, lots of people
suffering from expert syndrome. And the Prime Minister spoke about it. They start their contribution by saying, “I do not know, but…” and then they proceed to pontificate.

Let me tell you what the facts are with respect to the collection of revenue from the gaming industry, Madam Speaker. In the Joint Select Committee—and it has been published in this House so I can talk about it. The final report was laid in the last session and I pulled it up on the Internet just before I came here today. We had representatives of a particular group calling themselves the Amusement Gaming Association. Now, I have learnt in that Joint Select Committee—because I have never graced the—I have never passed through the door of a casino in my life. But I have learnt in the Joint Select Committee a little bit about this industry. And these two gentlemen came saying they represented the amusement gaming machine industry. So I said—I was chairing the committee. I said, “But what is that”? So they said well, there are two types of machines. You have amusement gaming machines where the maximum pay-out is $5,000 and then you have the regular gambling machines, slot machines, and so on, where the pay-out could be any amount; $50,000, $100,000 as the case may be.

Now, apparently in all these bars in Trinidad and Tobago, there is a proliferation of these amusement gaming machines—there is a proliferation. And I am told by my staff that there are in excess of 20,000 of these amusement gaming machines in Trinidad and Tobago. And the Member for Tabaquite, when we sent that gaming Bill to the Joint Select Committee, I heard that number from him. I have heard this is a conservative number, between 20,000 and 30,000 of these. There are 5,000 bars outside there with these things in them. Now, Madam Speaker, the tax on each one of these things is—the amusement slot machines—is
$3,000. So let us use the low number, 20,000. The Government should be collecting $60 million: $3,000 per machine per year by 20,000 machines is $60 million in revenue from these amusement slot machines. The Government should be collecting at least $60 million if you use the lowest possible number. We are also told that there are 1,000 amusement roulette machines in bars from which the Government is supposed to collect $36 million. The total conservative take from the machines known to exist in Trinidad and Tobago is supposed to be $100 million. That is what the Government should be collecting from amusement gaming machines.

So, I asked the Board of Inland Revenue to give me the actual figures of tax collection for amusement gaming machines. For the fiscal year 2015, $5 million—$5.023 million; for the fiscal year 2016, $8.53 million and for fiscal 2017, $7.99 million. Eight million dollars is the collection for these amusement gaming machines. We are supposed to be getting $100 million. And yet I would hear people go out and say, “This is all ah set ah ol’ talk. Everybody is paying their taxes. None of us are doing anything underhand. Everything that we do is above board. We are all legal.”

Madam Speaker, these are official figures from the Board of Inland Revenue and from the Customs and Excise in terms of the importation of these machines. The Government is losing over $90 million a year from those amusement gaming machines alone. Do not talk about the other ones, you know. The estimate I have of the amount of machines they have outside there, and devices and tables—the estimate of revenue we should be getting is close to $400 million. And what are we collecting, Madam Speaker? $48 million.

So we are getting $48 million from the devices in the private members’ club
and we are getting $8 million from the bars, when the two together should be giving us $500 million. These are the facts. This is going to come to an end, Madam Speaker. [Desk thumping] It is going to come to an end, because what is also happening outside there is that all of these large enterprises are owned by foreigners. They are not owned by Trinidadians. They are owned by Englishmen, by people from Turkey, by people from Indonesia, Russia, China.

Dr. Rowley: And the Chinese underworld too.

Hon. C. Imbert: And what happens—and the Member for Barataria/San Juan knows what I am talking about because he has a MoneyGram or one of “dem kinda machine”.

Dr. Rowley: He is a money tree.

Hon. C. Imbert: Yeah, one “ah dem ting, where yuh go and yuh buy—yuh pay and yuh buy US $100 or US $200, whatever it is, ah cannot remember. Ah think is MoneyGram.” I will stand to be corrected if it is not. And what happens is, the owners of these casinos, they send the little people, you know. You never see the owners here, you know. You never see the multimillionaires here, you know. They put the poor little workers outside to protest. They threaten the poor little workers with dismissal if they do not go and protest; if they “doh” come here, and as the Attorney General is reminding me, “If yuh do not sign an attendance register, doh come back in the casino tomorrow.” They send the poor, little unfortunate workers here to protest while they raking in the millions and the billions of dollars.

And you know what they are doing? They are leaking foreign exchange out of this country. They are laundering the money. They are taking the money and they are going and they are buying foreign exchange wherever they can. They buy it in the legal places and they buy it in the illegal places, and hundreds of millions
of US dollars, leaking out of this country every single year because this thing is unregulated.

And they all know that, you know. That is what pains me. Everybody on that side knows that. [Desk thumping] Everybody knows that. And all this talk about the workers will be unemployed, nonsense! “They making” billions of dollars—billions of dollars! And I am sure they are paying the workers starvation wages too. And when the commission comes in, they will have to pay the workers proper wages. [Desk thumping] Things will be properly regulated. The workers will have proper terms and conditions: vacation leave; maternity leave. “Ah sure dey don’t get that now.” So, Madam Speaker, this country has serious problems and you need serious people and a serious Government to deal with it. [Desk thumping]

Mr. Hinds: That is right.

Hon. C. Imbert: Madam Speaker, there is something else that has bothered me tremendously during this debate. What has bothered me as I look at the situation in terms of cash in and cash out in this country; the fact that we are running the overdraft at the limit almost every day, I have to listen to hon. Members opposite. Why do the hon. Members opposite not just own up to what you did? Own up “nuh”. Just own up, “nuh”. “Fess up”, as they say—“fess up”. [Laughter]

You know, we made a point in this debate that after the UNC used up all the cash balance in the Central Bank: they blew $15 billion there; they borrowed $30 billion and they still did not have enough money, we made the point that they looked around for cash and they took it out of the National Gas Company. We made this point. Madam Speaker, I said in the budget debate that they took out $16 billion. They sent out a 10-page or 20-page release. Well, you know, when I saw that “ah tell Budgets, ah want tuh see how much dividends they take out in 2010,

I asked them to tell “meh” how much money they spent on the Beetham Waste Water Plant—a billion dollars; how much money they spent on failed projects like that roundabout down in Couva, on a pavilion that never exist, on all sorts of Mickey Mouse projects that should cost $2 million that they were charged $200 million for—$600 million, Madam Speaker.

So under the UNC they wasted $1.5 billion. They raid the NGC bank account and they take out $1.5 billion for those things. They expense them; all “ah dis foolishness”. I mean, that waste water plant is still—it is impossible. We cannot deal with it because even if you finish the part in Port of Spain, even if you get the machinery in, even if you get the facility working in Port of Spain, there is no pipeline from Port of Spain to Point Lisas, Madam Speaker. There is no Certificate of Environmental Clearance. There is no route for the pipeline to pass. Nothing! It cannot be done. And they burn up a billion dollars for that out of NGC cash reserves. So $1.5 billion in NGC cash reserves burnt up; $14.4 billion in dividends paid out over their period. How much is that, Madam Speaker?—15.9. Sorry. I was out by $100 million. It “shouda be” 15.9, not 16.

But you see, Madam Speaker, what amazed me in the response of hon. Members opposite to the point we made that they had raided the bank account of the National Gas Company, they said, “Oh yes, we did. We did it to balance the 2014 budget.” You know, it is like “yuh ketch ah man tiefin and he say, ‘yes, ah was tiefin, is true’.” Because the point I was making, Madam Speaker, is that they increased expenditure in Trinidad and Tobago—public expenditure—to unreasonable and unsustainable points.

They took it from $46 billion in 2010 and they carried it up to $63 billion in
2014, and in order to do that it was unsustainable. It was impossible. This country could not afford it, and they knew it. They knew it because they were generating revenues at the time of about $43 billion. The revenues from taxation remained constant at about $43 billion in that period. But they kept ramping up the expenditure: 46, 50, 52, 56, 60, 63, while the revenue remained at 43, and they had to finance the gap somehow. So they borrow. They borrowed $30 billion but they also had to—they could not borrow too much so they had to use cash. So they used the NGC cash reserves to finance this unsustainable expenditure.

And when we tell them in this budget debate that that is what you do; you destroy the capability of the National Gas Company to invest in downstream industries in the petrochemical sector; to invest in upstream production; you destroyed the ability of the National Gas Company; you take $16 billion out of the National Gas Company which should have been used to invest in the productive sector; “yuh strip it out, and we tell dem dey do dat, dey issue a 10-page release saying, ‘Yes, we do dat’.” That was the net effect of that 10-page release: “Yes, we do dat. We took the money to balance the 2014 budget.” So they took the money out to finance the $20 billion gap between core revenue and expenditure in 2014.

Yes, Madam Speaker. I mean, this is the situation this country faces. This is what we face, and we on this side, we are coming up with innovative solutions. And I want to thank the Member for Chaguanas West for bringing a matter to my attention. I had heard about this thing with traders in housing, you know. You know, you hear a lot of things in Trinidad and Tobago and I had heard that under the stewardship of the Member for Oropouche East, who is mysteriously absent, that a significant number of building contractors in Trinidad and Tobago were registered as traders in housing. I had heard about this, you know, but it is only
when the Member for Chaguanas West put it into perspective, I understood. Because in the Housing Act, if you are a trader in housing, which is someone who constructs and sells houses like, I am told, the Member for Tabaquite may be doing that kind of thing—I am told; I hear in this Parliament from the Minister of Housing and Urban Development, and the Member for Tabaquite has applied and has been registered as a bona fide trader in housing, which is somebody who designs, constructs, finances and sells his own houses. That is a trader.

And many years ago—[Interruption]—yes, I understand that the Member for Tabaquite might be doing that. So he is using his own financing, his own land, his own resources, his own capabilities, design, finance, construct and sell houses. Years ago, previous governments decided that in order to encourage the private sector to get involved in this type of activity, they would give exemption from income tax on all income earned by traders in housing. But in order to get that tax exemption you first had to be a trader, so you had to be like Caribbean Homes; this is Dr. Bahadoorsingh in Chaguanas; like the Venezuelan fella, Louis Deny, and so on.

You have to mobilize all the resources yourself. So you mobilize the land, the finance, the equipment, the labour, the materials and you sell the house too. So the governments of the past wanted to encourage the private sector to get into that business and the incentive was, if you do that, if you mobilize your own resources; build your own houses and you sell them, then your income is exempt from tax. But somewhere in that UNC period, some clever person decided to register contractors.

**Dr. Rowley:** HDC contractors.

**Hon. C. Imbert:** HDC contractors—
Hon. Member: Oh my Lord.

Hon. C. Imbert:—who do not own their own land, who do not mobilize their own resources, who do not sell their own houses. They are simply builders. They build for the HDC. So they will get a contract to construct houses which are then sold by the HDC. So they do not fit the definition of a trader in housing. They are simply builders. And you know what is intriguing? The law makes the distinction, you know. It is very clear. It says someone who is a mere contractor does not qualify to be a trader. And I have been hearing about this thing, where these contractors that were registered under the previous administration were claiming that all of their income, that all of the income they received as contractors, was exempt from tax. And we are talking about billions of dollars.

So it is certainly worthy of an investigation and I want to thank the Member for Chaguanas West for that because we have a lot of tax dodgers and tax cheats in this country. I just spoke about the casino industry. When I made the statement in the budget speech that there is a 10 per cent compliance, they say, “No, no, no, not true!” So that is when I went and got the numbers and you could see with the amusement gaming machines, 90 per cent of the revenue is not being paid. We have tax cheats all over this country.

I can tell you now, Madam Speaker, in the build-up to this budget when we were looking at projections for 2018 and we go to Inland Revenue and I said I want to see the figures for income tax collections, and we noticed a decline in income tax collections—personal income tax. So I asked the Board of Inland Revenue, I said, “What causing that”? But it was not apparent at first sight. So I said I want to count the number of taxpayers. You know what I discovered, Madam Speaker? Mysteriously, 30,000 taxpayers have disappeared from the
PAYE system over the last couple years. Thirty thousand taxpayers have disappeared. So you had a particular number of taxpayers in one year and all of a sudden, 30,000 taxpayers gone. So I say, but that is not possible. Where these people gone?

Hon. Member: They dead?

Hon. C. Imbert: You know how we did it? You know how we “ketch dem”? We “gone and check” the people paying health surcharge, because some smart government years ago decided that companies do not have to give particulars on their employees when they send in their quarterly returns. They just send a lump-sum. They send one cheque. And I notice the Member for Barataria/San Juan looking at me, because he knows, because you are a big businessman.

Dr. Khan: No, no; “ah learning”.

Hon. C. Imbert: So that companies just send in a cheque. They “doh” have to give particulars of all the employees.

So the Inland Revenue people, quite ingeniously, said, “Leh we” check health surcharge, and that is when they discovered 30,000 people stop paying health surcharge over the last couple years, just so. And you know what it is? The companies are converting their employees from payroll employees to independent contractors and giving the employees the responsibility now to file returns, pay health surcharge, pay national insurance and so on, and, of course, they are not doing it; you know, they are not doing it.

So, there is a lot of tax dodging and cheating going on in this country. And while the casino one might seem to be the most glaring, they cheating everywhere, Madam Speaker. They cheating in everything. You know, you go in a store, they say, “You want a bill or you ‘doh’ want a bill”? If you do not want a bill, well, you
do not pay VAT. That is Trinidad and Tobago. Others are taking national insurance contributions from their employees and not remitting them; deducting PAYE from their employees and not remitting it; charging VAT on goods and services and not remitting it. All of that has to end, Madam Speaker, [Desk thumping] because we are facing a crisis in this country.

I want to go back to what I just said, that the outflows, the inescapable expenditure for the month of October is $4 billion and the revenue is $2 billion. So even if we go and borrow $1 billion, we still missing one. So we are going to have to find—in the Ministry of Finance we will have to find innovative ways to deal with that.

Madam Speaker, I want you to understand something, and the population understand something. That expenditure of $4 billion is made up of $3 billion in inescapable commitments; $1 billion in cheques written last month. It does not include goods and services; it does not include the development programme. So for the month of October we cannot make any payments for goods and services or the development programme, and we cannot continue like this. We are going to have to start paying some of those bills in November, and we are going to have to pay them in December because you have to pay for your light bill, your phone bill; you have to pay for construction projects that are under way; you have to pay for supplies, for medical supplies.

This country is in a serious situation and people need to understand. And that is why I was so disappointed when I heard the contributions opposite. We are trying to motivate the private sector. The Member for Tabaquite will mumble under his breath, “Good programme, boy, good programme”. “Buh yuh thik” he would get up and say that?

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Dr. Rambachan: I have said it here.

Hon. C. Imbert: Yeah, sure. I did not hear.

Hon. Member: No, you “doh” hear.

Hon. C. Imbert: But the fact of the matter is, Madam Speaker, we have come up with an innovative programme to mobilize the private sector to get involved in housing to deal with two issues.

5.25 p.m.

One, to deal with the backlog of housing and, two, to stimulate the economic, and recognizing [Desk thumping]—do you know what bothers me? They do not caucus you know, or if they do, they do not talk to each other—that the biggest problem in development in this country is the approvals process. The biggest problem in this country is the approvals process. That is the biggest turnoff to a potential investor. You have to have belly to get involved in a construction project in this country, to go through the rigours in Town and Country; and then after you finish with that, you have to face WASA; when you finish with them you have to face the Environmental Management Agency; and if you are still alive after that you have to go by the fire department and face them; and when that done, you are facing the regional corporation.

Mr. Al-Rawi: You forget OSHA.

Hon. C. Imbert: I forgot health, yes. I forgot health.

So to get projects going in this country, private sector construction, you have to have belly, Madam Speaker, because they will drag you down the road for years. So we decide, we this Government—because we have people who have been in this business we understand. We know that the biggest problem is approval, so we announced—which is something that people should be grateful for—that we are
setting up a committee to fast-track approvals for this housing initiative. We are stimulating the economy. So for this particular housing initiative, this one, because we know that all the private developers—and I have started to get correspondence already from people who have land and have money and want to get involved you know, and they are quite prepared to build the three-bedroom house for the $750,000. They can do it. They are starting to write me saying that they can do it already. Budget debate is not finished and private developers are coming forward, but the problem will be the approvals.

So we on this side know this because we do not suffer from expert syndrome. This is something that we actually know. So what do we say? We are establishing a high-level task force, which in the first instance—they do not even listen—to get it going, will be chaired by the Prime Minister. Why is the Prime Minister chairing that? [Desk thumping] Not just because he is the head of the Government, but the current Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago is the most successful Housing Minister this country has ever had in the modern era [Desk thumping] because I do not want to take away from great Housing Ministers like Wendell Mottley and Montano and so on. They did their part. But in the modern era, the current Member of Parliament for Diego Martin West was the most productive and best housing Minister ever. So we understand. [Desk thumping] We understand the approval process.

So we are saying in the first instance it would be chaired by Prime Minister, and once it is going and we get that time down from the current two years, and three years, you get it down to six months and four months and so on for getting all of these approvals, then we will begin to see the explosion of housing construction from two years, whatever it is now. And what does the Member for Caroni Central
say? You know I talked about expert syndrome. I had to listen to the Member for Caroni Central, and he ended with some contribution on quantum physics—and I thought about expert syndrome and badly afflicted by it—talking about quantum physics that the wave of the future will be, you could sit down in some room somewhere, you do not have to travel, and with the application of quantum physics you could experience another place. I say, “What is wrong with this man?”

The honourable gentleman must have read some article somewhere. You know they have people in this country like that. They read one article on shale gas and they are an expert on shale gas, Madam Speaker. I took three years to get a degree in oil and gas law. Three years. You have people in this country who will read one article on shale gas and they are an experts. They are experts. So I had to listen to that. Quantum physics is the study of subatomic particles. Quantum physics is the study of subatomic particles. What the hon. Member meant to say is that it is quantum computing which is the use of high speed computers to create virtual reality, but he read some little article somewhere and he is an expert all of a sudden. That is the problem that we have in this country, Madam Speaker.

I would have thought that the Members opposite—because we are not going to discriminate. We want every builder in this country, every developer to get involved in our housing programme *[Desk thumping]* and I am putting out an invitation to everybody. *[Desk thumping]* You could be the most hard core UNC, come and get involved in our programme. Of course, we want all PNM as well, and all neutrals. You know what they have to say? Oh, you are putting the Prime Minister there? Oh, that will be political victimization and discrimination. They have no vision. They are in a shallow little box. That is all they could think about. The only person on that side that could see it is the Member for Tabaquite, but as I
said he mumbling and muttering, “Good programme boy. Good programme”.  

[Laughter] You think he will get up and say that? No!  

Mr. Karim: The man give you the idea and that is what you say.  

Hon. C. Imbert: And then, Madam Speaker—[Interruption]  

Mr. Karim: Say thanks for idea “nah man”.  

Hon. C. Imbert: I tell you we do not suffer from expert syndrome. We have been building houses on this side for years, for years. [Desk thumping] We do not suffer from expert syndrome. There are things that we know about.  

And, Madam Speaker, the business incentive programme. The business incentive programme where we are modelling it after the Shark Tank reality show, where persons who want to get a grant of $100,000 to help their fledgling little business will go and sit down before successful entrepreneurs, and we are picking successful entrepreneurs across the board, because, again, this is not a political programme. This is to help every little fledgling business in Trinidad and Tobago because I want to echo the PNM motto, we have to do this together, Madam Speaker. We must do this together. [Desk thumping] And there are too many people who make joke, they are too superficial. They say the most inane things about serious matters.  

You know, I was talking to the public servants yesterday and we were talking some raising some financing, going to the commercial banks to raise some financing to deal with the $2 billion gap we have in the budget for this month, and I say, “You know, well listening to what some people say about the budget, suppose I go back in the Parliament and say do not send no file for me”, what would happen? It would mean that at the end of this month we will have chaos in Trinidad and Tobago, but that is not going to happen because I am a proud member of this PNM
Government [*Desk thumping*] and we have rescued this country. We have brought it back from the brink, and if I have to work 24/07 I will to make sure that salaries, wages, pensions and social welfare will be paid at the end of this month because I am a member of this team, this PNM team that you see here. But there are people who have no understanding of what is going on, absolutely no understanding, or they do not care to understand.

We have people in this country, Madam Speaker, who say touch everybody but not me. Touch everybody but “doh” touch me. Well, I am sorry, Madam Speaker, we are in a very, very difficult place, very, very difficult place. If the previous administration had taken the measures that we are taking now, this country would have been a far better place. [*Desk thumping*] If they had not exploded public expenditure from $46 billion to $63 billion, if they had not created unsustainable expectations among the population, we will be in a far better place. [*Desk thumping*] We would have been in a far better place, and now we have to pull back from the brink, we have to pull back, and that is what this budget is all about. It is about managing expectations, it is about living within your means. As I said, it is cutting your cloth to suit your coat.

I am not happy that we have had to take away the bulk of the subsidy on fuel. I am not happy about that. I am not happy. I know the effect that is going to have on people. I am well aware of it, but we have no choice. I cannot say I am unhappy that we have added additional tax to the banks. I am not unhappy about that, but I am not happy about some of the things that we have to do, some of the cut backs that we have to make, some of the taxes that we have to impose. I am not happy about it. I wish we did not have to do this. I wish we as a country had managed our resources properly so we would not be in this place.
Madam Speaker, I want to give a commitment on behalf of this Government that this PNM team that you see here, is going to work night and day to make this country better; [Desk thumping] is going to work night and day to rescue this country.

Madam Speaker: Member for Diego Martin North/East your original time has expired. You have 10 more minutes.

Hon. C. Imbert: Thank you, Madam Speaker. [Desk thumping] Madam Speaker, as I said, we are going to work night and day. We know what needs to be done. You know another Member that suffers from expert syndrome is the Member for Chaguanas East, talking about Saudi Arabia diversifying. You go and do some research. Instead of reading a little article in some magazine somewhere, go and study the Saudi Arabian economy.

Mr. Karim: I was there, I saw—[ Interruption]

Hon. C. Imbert: And, Madam Speaker, Saudi Arabia has been trying to diversify its economy since 1976. Since 1976 and they have failed. It is one of the most energy dependent economies in the world.

The unemployment in Saudi Arabia is 13 per cent. The situation in Saudi Arabia was so bad a couple years ago that the GDP per capita in that country, the country that has 25 per cent of the world’s oil reserves—Saudi Arabia has 25 per cent of the world’s oil reserves—it produces eight to nine million barrels of oil per day, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Karim: Ten million barrels.

Hon. C. Imbert: Whatever. Eight, nine, it does not matter. They have been cutting back. Madam Speaker, I am talking to you. I am not talking to him. You see he read some little article somewhere. Just yesterday, Saudi Arabia announced a
further cutback in its production. They are producing between eight and nine million barrels a day. As I said, I studied for three years on that topic. I am not suffering from expert syndrome, but the fact of the matter is Saudi Arabia’s economy is lopsided. The poverty rate in Saudi Arabia is much higher than Trinidad and Tobago. We have an unemployment of 4 per cent, they have unemployment of 13 per cent, and that is the country that the hon. Member for Chaguanas East wants us to look at? Look at that? So yes, let us be like Saudi Arabia. Let us take our unemployment from 4 per cent to 13 per cent. Let us take our dependence on oil from 30 per cent to 70 per cent, because that is what is happening.

Madam Speaker, I really would like practical solutions from Members opposite. Not just talk and old talk, practical. Look at our export allowance. We know that the number one problem in this country for manufacturers is foreign exchange. We know. Unless you can get the foreign exchange to import your raw materials and your equipment, it is going to hamper your business. [Crosstalk] So, Madam Speaker—[Interrupt]

Madam Speaker: Order. Order!

Hon. C. Imbert:—we have come up with this programme where we will be using the Exim Bank, and why are we using the Exim Bank? Because the Exim Bank manages exporters. It is primarily an institution that gives loans. It lends money for exporters. [Crosstalk] Madam Speaker, I am being disturbed. I really need your assistance here.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Members, if we could kindly cooperate. I remind you all of the provisions of Standing Order 43. Minister of Finance.

Hon. C. Imbert: So Exim Bank for all the years it has been in existence—it has
been in existence for over 30 years—it is in the business of looking at the business plans and the strategic plans of exporters. So we thought if we are going to create a foreign exchange window, US $100 million, make it available to people who are in the export trade, what better institution to analyse the applications [Desk thumping] than the Exim Bank. So we are putting this $100 million revolving facility in the Exim Bank, and the manufacturers, we are starting off with a threshold of 30 per cent. Thirty per cent of their business must be for export—and, again, what better institution than the Exim Bank to investigate and determine that—and they will get preferential access to foreign exchange in that window in the Exim Bank on condition that they repatriate whatever foreign exchange earnings that they earn from their exports.

I did not hear a comment from the other side on that. Not a word from the other side on that, Madam Speaker. Nothing, and I am really hoping as we move forward as a country—because we are in difficult times. They have difficult times ahead of us, and the only way for this country to survive is for our economy to grow. We have to deal with the tax cheating. That will give us more revenue, but the economy has to grow. The only way hon. Members opposite and their children, and their relatives, and their friends, and their associates will survive in this country is if our economy grows, and the only way the economy can grow is if we stimulate economic activity through the private sector. This country has tried for the last nine years to stimulate growth through deficit budgeting, through expenditure. We have tried for nine years to stimulate economic growth through expenditure. Has anybody ever taken a look at that to see whether that is a good and useful growth model? Well, I did. I did.

There is something call exogenous growth and there is something call
endogenous growth. Endogenous growth is growth from within. I have in my possession a scholarly paper just published, looking at Trinidad and Tobago and looking at the growth model for Trinidad and Tobago and saying, should Trinidad and Tobago continue to run deficit budgets, increase expenditure in order to stimulate growth, or should it have an endogenous model where you try to go from within and you try to stimulate production from within? Do you know what the conclusion was, Madam Speaker? After eight years of trying the exogenous model, it is about time for Trinidad and Tobago to try the endogenous model, which is to stimulate growth from within. [Desk thumping] And that is why we are stimulating housing from within, and that is why we are stimulating small business from within, and that is why we are stimulating tourism from within, and that is why we are going to promote exports from within.

**Mr. Hinds:** Good governance.

**Hon. C. Imbert:** Good governance, as the Member for Laventille West say.

So, I am sorry hon. Members felt that it was not important to discuss the problems facing this country, it was not important to discuss the budget measures, it was not of any consequence to them to look at the fiscal incentives that have been offered. That was not important. They just rambled and rambled for the last week. I apologize on behalf of this Parliament for them [Desk thumping] and I am hoping that the rest of the country will not adopt that superficial approach.

I am hoping that the rest of the country will understand the problems that we are in and that they will understand that no matter what political party you belong to, no matter what class you belong to, no matter what part of the country you are from, whether you are from Trinidad or Tobago, or from Diego Martin, or from Toco, Mayaro or from Chaguanas, or from Couva, or from Toco, or from Icacos as
my honourable friend tells me, no matter where you are from, whether you are from Felicity—I heard the Member for Chaguanas West talking about creating a marina in Felicity—wherever you are from, we are in this together and we must do it together in order to survive.

I thank you, Madam Speaker. [Desk thumping]

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a second time.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Members, before I call on Minister of Finance, Members are aware that on Friday, October 12, 2017, we celebrate First Peoples Day. On Friday, October 13th, sorry, 2017, we celebrate First Peoples Day, and on Wednesday, October 18, 2017, we celebrate Divali. I will now call upon Members to first express greetings on the occasion of First Peoples Day and then Divali.

FIRST PEOPLES DAY GREETINGS

The Minister of Education (Hon. Anthony Garcia): Madam Speaker, I rise this afternoon on behalf of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago to bring greetings and to pay tribute to our First Peoples on the eve of the public holiday which will be observed tomorrow, the 13th of October, 2017. What we do today should have been done a long time ago. We pay tribute to our First Peoples who were the first to make their mark on this land of Trinidad and Tobago. We pay tribute for their resilience, their fortitude, their grit, but most of all, for their enduring spirits.

We recognize the parts they played in moulding the character of our society. More than five centuries ago, Madam Speaker, a people who lived productive ordered lives in perfect tandem with the environment were forced by greedy adventurers to change their lifestyles to suit those of the interlopers. Today, they struggle to regain what has been taken away from them.
Greetings
First Peoples Day (cont’d)
Hon. A. Garcia (cont’d)

Madam Speaker, this one-off public holiday which they will have to tomorrow is only a small step in the process of recreating a focus on the First Peoples, a focus which will be productive rather than destructive. One form which we as a nation will benefit from as opposed to one in which a people was plundered and demeaned.

Madam Speaker, it give me great pleasure as the Member of Parliament for Arima, where the largest number of first people resides, and also as Minister of Education, to wish on behalf of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago a very happy First Peoples Day to a people who deserved the greatest recognition for the qualities which the rest of the society can do well to emulate, qualities of invincibility and endurance.

Madam Speaker, I must recognize this Government for being visionary in granting this holiday, and as a critical component of our history to be shared with the national community. May the First Peoples community and the wider Trinidad and Tobago have an eventful, engaging and enlightening holiday.

I thank you. [Desk thumping]

Mr. Rudranath Indarsingh (Couva South): Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise on behalf of the Leader of the Opposition, the Member for Siparia, and all my colleagues on this side, as we take the opportunity to extend congratulations and best wishes to the First Peoples of Trinidad and Tobago on the celebration of their one-off holiday which will take place tomorrow.

Madam Speaker, the Santa Rosa First Peoples Community kicked off a week of celebrations to commemorate this said holiday on the 9th of October, 2017, earlier on this week, with a water ceremony at Grand Chemin Beach in Moruga. On that beach it is also said that Christopher Columbus arrived, and it is ironic that
on that said day, also the 9\textsuperscript{th} of October, 2017, the people in the United States of America were commemorating Columbus Day. But, Madam Speaker, the very first citizens of Trinidad and Tobago would have included the Amerindians of the Kali’na, Warao, Kalapuya, Tanu, Arouca and the Kalinagos, who lived here for over 6,000 years ago.

For many centuries, Madam Speaker, the First Peoples evolved with their own civilization and they were a large part of the interisland and island to mainland trade network. Up till the 1930s, the Warao of Venezuela, who still exist, used to visit Trinidad regularly to trade in parrots, and hunting dogs, and hammocks and so on. Today the First Peoples exist in many ways in our country especially in the names of places such as Arima and Arouca; the rivers such as Caroni, Oropouche and Ortoire, and other places such as Paria, Tunapuna, Aripo and Toco. They have also made their mark in terms of the cuisine in Trinidad and Tobago from the point of view wild meat, cassava, pepper pot and so on.

Madam Speaker, we on this side are committed towards promoting the unity and the diversity of Trinidad and Tobago, and we have always supported the First Peoples’ right to remember and celebrate their heritage. In fact, the former Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago Kamla Persad-Bissessar and the Government, to which all of us on this side belong to, granted a 30-year lease of [Desk thumping] 25 acres of land in pursuit of their dream of a sustainable Amerindian model village.

Madam Speaker, they have survived the test of time, and the very fact that we are commemorating the existence of the indigenous people in 2017, which is a growing phenomenon worldwide in terms of their longevity and their culture and their way of life, it is important that we continue to ensure that they have an equal
Greetings
First Peoples Day (cont’d)
Mr. Indarsingh (cont’d)

place within Trinidad and Tobago. We pray that tomorrow will be a day of introspection, a day of reflection and a day that we will collectively understand the contribution of the First Peoples towards the development of Trinidad and Tobago.

I thank you. [Desk thumping]

Madam Speaker: Hon. Members, I wish to join with the hon. Member for Arima and the hon. Member for Couva South in offering warm greetings to the First Peoples of Trinidad and Tobago and the nation as a whole on the occasion of this very special First Peoples Day.

Indeed the contribution of the First Peoples to the history and heritage of our twin island state cannot be denied, and serves as an example of the importance of courage in the face of opposition, standing firm in one’s conviction and resilience. This strength and perseverance displayed by our indigenous ancestors are attributes not only to be admired, but to be emulated.

Undeniably, our indigenous heritage is infused in our daily lives, in the food we eat, in the streets and place names, and even in everyday items. It is quite apparent that the legacy of the First Peoples has been and will continue to be entrenched in the culture and history of Trinidad and Tobago. I therefore wish our First Peoples and our nation as a whole, a safe and celebratory First Peoples Day. [Desk thumping]

DIVALI GREETINGS

Madam Speaker: I now call upon Members to bring Divali greetings. The Member for San Fernando West.

The Attorney General (Hon. Faris Al-Rawi): Thank you, Madam Speaker. On Wednesday the 18th of October, 2017, Trinidad and Tobago will join with the rest of the world in celebrating Divali. We are, of course, pleased to join with our
Greetings
Divali (cont’d)
Hon. F. Al-Rawi (cont’d)

Hindu brothers and sisters in celebrating the festival of lights. The celebration is as old as its tradition. It is rooted in Sanskrit as Deepavali, the lining up of lights. It is rooted in the beautiful reflections which I enjoyed in particular as a child as I recall vividly my grandfather relaying to me the celebrations as it was intended to have originally happened, that being the return of Lord Rama after he defeated Arjuna on his journey back from Sri Lanka when he came with his wife Sita, his brother, her brother Lutchman and Lord Hanuman, and in that journey the people of the diaspora then celebrated that return and that victory by lighting the way with deyas.

That symbolism, as it is recorded in religious text and reflections, is something which is still very germane and relevant to our world. The celebration of light over dark, the celebration of wisdom, the celebration of Mother Lakshmi, in particular as the originator from her birth of the cosmic ocean of milk as it was put, from the five days prior to the celebration of Divali coming forward. It is that real celebration of life, light, music in the various incarnations of Brahma, the Almighty, be it in Saraswati or in Lord Rama or in Vishnu or in Mother Lakshmi. That is truly the multi-faceted reflections of our people as well.

5.55 p.m.

This celebration of light over dark is no different from the celebration which we have in the religious reflections amongst our Muslim brothers and sisters or our Christian brothers and sisters, and indeed, Trinidad and Tobago is a very blessed place to have religious tolerance and religious love. I recall vividly, as my learned friend from Chaguanas East would, that our upbringing in San Fernando, in particular, at Presentation College in particular, was such that our school and our society celebrated each religious event. Our brothers and sisters were called upon

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Greetings
Divali (cont’d)
Hon. F. Al-Rawi (cont’d)

to demonstrate and practise religious love and tolerance.

Therefore, we as school boys, as young men, at Presentation in particular, found ourselves fasting for Divali, fasting for Ramadan, fasting for Lent almost back to back. No wonder most of us came out a little bit on the trimmer side than not. [Laughter] So we thank the religious tolerance and love that exist in our society.

Permit me to try to do justice to a noble prayer which is offered at this time and to end by reflecting upon these words—

[Hindi spoken]—

“From untruth lead us to truth. From darkness lead us to light. From death lead us to immortality. Om, peace, peace, peace.”

Happy Divali, Shubh Divali to the people of Trinidad and Tobago on behalf of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago. [Desk thumping]

Mr. Barry Padarath (Princes Town): Madam Speaker, with your permission, allow me to greet your good self and Members of this House and the national community in the Hindu traditional way of Sita Rama or Namascaar. Madam Speaker, Hindus subscribe to “Maataa devo bhava” which means Mother is our first God. In the Bhagavad Gita, it says:

[Hindi spoken]

—for when translated, it means that the world cannot exist without Mother or “shaktee”.

Madam Speaker, Divali celebrates the character, the virtue of the Goddess Lakshmi. Hindus believe that those qualities—and I often say, whether it is in my own Divali celebrations or if I am giving a message anywhere, that the wealth of Hindus especially, enshrined in their dharma, enshrined in their own teachings, is
that the wealth of their home is the children in that home, especially the girl
children. It is often believed that Maha Lakshmi, who is celebrated during Divali
time, resides in our mothers, our grandmothers, our daughters, our sisters and our
wives. Madam Speaker, and that is why we believe, anywhere a society that
disrespects women, that society would crumble. [Desk thumping]

Madam Speaker, our cosmic mother and earthly mothers teach us, “see good
in everyone and in everything”. Be good in who you are and in your character. Do
good in all of your actions even though when no one is looking and good shall
always follow you. Madam Speaker, as a young politician, I must admit that the
Member for Siparia, the Leader of the Opposition, was one that taught me that first
lesson in Hindu dharma of “see good, be good, do good” and good will always
follow you. Again, exemplary of a mother to this nation but also a mother in our
dharma.

Madam Speaker, Divali reminds us of the fortunes of the Goddess Lakshmi
as she provides for “daan”. There are eight forms of Maha Lakshmi which is
celebrated on Divali day. Divali day takes place over a five-day period and the
eight forms of the Maha Lakshmi is Dhana Lakshmi, the Goddess of wealth, but
also the Goddess who provides food and sustenance, the Goddess of children, the
Goddess of health, the Goddess of happiness.

Madam Speaker, there are many stories that are associated with Divali and
we are often told of the story of Lord Rama returning to Ayodhya after 14 years of
exile. But I would like to introduce another story that is not often told but when
we, as Hindu parliamentarians, hold up that Bhagavad Gita in our hand and take
our oath of office, there is a story enshrined in that Bhagavad Gita that speaks
about the Vastraharan of Draupadi. Draupadi was the Queen of Hastinapur. She
Greetings  
Divali (cont’d)  
Mr. Padarath (cont’d)

represented everything that was good in that kingdom. She was the wealth, she was  
the prosperity, she was the values, the principles of that kingdom that saw the rise  
of Hastinapur.

But due to greed, hate, selfishness, she lost the kingdom and on losing that  
kingdom, she was dragged into the public courtyard and in order to humiliate her—after  
all that she had done for this kingdom, in order to humiliate her, they started to unravel  
her sari and she said to herself, she said, “Lord, only you can protect me”. Because at  
that time, all the Ministers in the Government of Hastinapur, they remained silent; all the princes, they remained silent. No one spoke for Draupadi no matter all that she had done to lift that kingdom and she turned to the Lord and she said, “Lord, you are my salvation, please help me.” And as she continued to pray, nothing happened and the sari started to unravel, being disrobed, and it is only when she let go of that sari and she allowed God to take over, only then piles and piles of sari started to come out and she was unable to be unmasked or disrobed and dishonoured.

Madam Speaker, the story of that is resonating with two days after Divali, we celebrate something called “Bhai Dooj”. “Bhai Dooj” which is a brotherly act of tying that bond of protection and the message in that, Madam Speaker, is that we must always protect our women because we see Lakshmi, through again, our sisters, our mothers, our grandmothers, our wives.

Madam Speaker, during Divali, one of the most popular “bhajans” is “Bando Charan Kamal Raghunandan” and Kamala is another name for the Goddess Lakshmi. Mother Lakshmi, Madam Speaker, is often reverred during this time and she is the light. She is the “shaktee” that many Hindus believe. And it is during this time of Divali that it is believed that Divali is celebrated on the darkest night of the
year. And we are often told that it is during the darkest time, especially the darkest hour, when the sun will shine brightly.

Madam Speaker, I really want to congratulate on behalf of the Leader of the Opposition, the hon. Kamla Persad-Bissessar, my colleagues on this side, to pay tribute to the Hindu community for all that they have done in terms of building Trinidad and Tobago, side by side, the other communities in this country. I want to pay particular emphasis to the contribution that they have made towards education and also inclusion when it comes to the cultural and social tapestry of Trinidad and Tobago. They have toiled long and hard to get us where we are today. Madam Speaker, I really want to also pay tribute—Lakshmi Girls’ Hindu College, two years in a row, has won the President’s Medal. And I am almost certain they, too, again, will do very well this year. But it tells you about the power, the glory of Maha Lakshmi that we celebrate during this Divali time.

Madam Speaker, I would like to say on behalf of all of us on this side, Shubh Divali 2017 to our Hindu brothers and sisters and to all the people of Trinidad and Tobago and may Maha Lakshmi provide that light, that honour and grace, that will retain and return good governance to the people of Trinidad and Tobago and enrich their lives so that the darkness will be removed. Sita Rama and Namaste. [Desk thumping]

Madam Speaker: Hon. Members, I join with fellow Members in extending greetings to the Hindu community and indeed the entire nation as we commemorate Divali, the festival of lights. As we all know, Divali is a special time for Hindus all over the world. It was brought to our shores by Indian indentured labourers and has become an intrinsic element in the sociocultural fabric of Trinidad and Tobago. It is an observance that brings together Hindus and non-
Greetings
Divali (cont’d)
Madam Speaker (cont’d)

Hindus annually to participate in the festivities.

As we celebrate, let us take some time to reflect upon our lives and renew our faith and our inner light. Let us remember that we can overcome all obstacles with tolerance, cooperation and collaboration. And let us continue to build a better and brighter Trinidad and Tobago. Shubh Divali to all. [Desk thumping]

APPROPRIATION (FINANCIAL YEAR 2018) BILL, 2017

The Minister of Finance (Hon. Colm Imbert): Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. In accordance with Standing Order 81(8), I beg to move that the Appropriation (Financial Year 2018) Bill, 2017, be referred to the Standing Finance Committee for the consideration of the Bill together with the Estimates.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Members, this House shall now go into Standing Finance Committee to consider the Bill and the Estimates.

House resolved itself into Standing Finance Committee.

Madam Chairman: 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 which identifies:

1. The Heads of Expenditure;
2. The chart of accounts and classification of expenditure Sub-Items, under Personnel Expenditure, Goods and Services and Minor Equipment Purchases Sub-Heads;
3. The summary of the total allocation to each Head of Expenditure;
4. The Sub-Item details relevant to each Head of Expenditure for the current fiscal year and the two fiscal years immediately preceding.

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The Draft Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure of the Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies and of the Tobago House of Assembly which identifies:

1. The statutory board or body for each Head of Expenditure;
2. The abstract of estimated revenue and expenditure for the year ending September 30, 2018;
3. The abstract showing the Government subvention for 2016, actual expenditure, 2017 estimates, 2017 revised estimates, 2018 estimates and the increase or decrease of the 2018 estimates over or under the 2017 revised estimates;
4. The chart of accounts for income and expenditure;
5. The classification of expenditure Sub-Items under the Personnel Expenditure, Goods and Services and Minor Equipment Purchases, Sub-Heads; and
6. The Sub-Items details relevant to each statutory board or body for the current fiscal year and the two fiscal years immediately preceding.

The Draft Estimates of Development Programme which includes:

1. The summary of estimates of the Development Programme for the financial year 2018 for Part A the Consolidated Fund;
2. The summary of the total allocation to each Head of Expenditure for Sub-Head 09, Development Programme Consolidated Fund;
3. The Sub-Item Project Group and Project Description details relevant to each Head of Expenditure for the current fiscal year and the two fiscal years immediately preceding;
4. The summary of estimates of Part B, the Infrastructure Development Fund for the financial year 2018;
5. The summary of the total allocation to each Head of Expenditure for
Head 701, the Infrastructure Development Fund;

6. The Sub-Item Project Group and Project Description details relevant to each Head of Expenditure for the current fiscal year and the two fiscal years immediately preceding.

The Appropriation (Financial Year 2018) Bill, 2017. The Bill provides for the service of Trinidad and Tobago for the financial year ending on the 30th of September, 2018. The Bill seeks to authorize the sum of $42,853,342,711 from the Consolidated Fund. The Schedule details the sum to be approved for each Head of Expenditure.

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

The proposed work schedule. Hon. Members, there are 40 Heads of Expenditure to be considered over a five-day period. Therefore, I propose that the Committee meets each day from 10.00 a.m. to 8.00 p.m., or for so long thereafter, to consider a minimum of eight Heads of Expenditure. And I would particularly like to just engage us a bit longer in consideration for the Tobago House of Assembly.

Hon. Members, I crave your indulgence to have the Committee agree on the time for the examination of the Tobago House of Assembly and the Central Administrative Services, Tobago. According to the list, they will be on day three which is Thursday, October 19, 2017, and in order to allow for the arrangements to be made for the representatives to come from Tobago to Trinidad. I would want to suggest that we take them in the order of the Tobago House of Assembly and then the Central Administrative Services Tobago to be examined on that day, and really
what I need to find out from us is agreement whether we take them at 10.00 a.m. or at 1.00 p.m.—[Crosstalk]—10.00 a.m.?

**Mrs. Robinson-Regis:** Madam Chairman, may I suggest that, because they are coming from Tobago, that we take them at 1.00 and I think that would be easier for them. That is my understanding. In addition to that, Madam Chairman, we would like propose that on Monday, we start at 1.30. I know you have said every day from 10.00 but on Monday, we would like to start at 1.30 please.

**Mr. Lee:** I have no problem with that.

**Madam Chairman:** So that the understanding is on Monday we start at 1.30, and therefore we sit until we complete eight Heads.

**Mrs. Robinson-Regis:** Madam Chairman, sorry about this, on Thursday also, we will have to start at 1.30 and it would mean therefore, we will go later on those two days—later than the proposed time. Thank you.

**Madam Chairman:** Well, I think, Members, just for clarification, the proposed time anticipates that we will do eight Heads by eight o’clock. Okay? If we do not, we do not stop until we do eight Heads. Okay? So that will cover both days. So therefore, it means for Tobago, the time we communicate for them is 1.30 on Thursday.

**Mrs. Robinson-Regis:** That I understand is a better time for them.

**Madam Chairman:** All right, okay. So that in terms of the speaking time and really, what we are trying to do is to set the table here so that we can start promptly on Monday. Hon. Members, in accordance with Standing Order 45(1), the speaking time in the Standing Finance Committee shall not exceed five minutes on each intervention. Each Minister will be invited to make a brief five-minute opening statement on the Ministry’s or Department’s priority areas for the upcoming year.
Hon. Members, the procedure for each Head of Expenditure shall be as follows:

1. The Head and the amount to be appropriated will be announced by the Chairman.
2. The Minister will then be invited to make a brief opening statement.
3. The Chairman will then propose the question that the sum proposed stand part of the Schedule.
4. For each Head of Expenditure, the Chairman will call the Sub-Head following by the Item. The Chair will not call the Sub-Items. Discussions can be ensued on the Item called or the relevant Sub-Item and clarification will be sought then. Once the committee moves to another Sub-Head, questions from a previous Sub-Head will not be entertained.
5. The Chairman will repeat the procedure for the Development Programme.
6. Once this is concluded, the Chairman will then put the question that the sum stand part of the Schedule.
7. The procedure will be repeated for each Head of Expenditure.

And therefore, I—[Interruption]—Yes, Whip.

**Mr. Lee:** Madam Chair, so on Monday, we start at 1.30 until we complete eight Heads?

**Madam Chairman:** Yes.

**Mr. Lee:** On Tuesday, we will start at 10 o’clock.

**Madam Chairman:** Yes, yes.

**Mrs. Robinson-Regis:** Tuesday will be 10 o’clock.

**Mr. Lee:** 10.00 to 8.00.

**Madam Chairman:** Tuesday at 10.00 until eight Heads are completed.
Mr. Lee: Wednesday, we do not sit?

Madam Chairman: Wednesday is Divali, it is a national holiday, we do not sit.

Mr. Lee: And Friday will be 10.00 to 8.00.

Madam Chairman: And Thursday will be 1.30 and Friday will be 10.00 until we complete eight.

Mr. Lee: Then the following Monday.

Madam Chairman: And then we come back on the following Monday.

Mr. Lee: At what time?

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: Madam Chairman, can I advise closer to Monday what time we will come back?

Madam Chairman: Can I remind, though, of the 7.50 deadline?

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: Yes, Ma’am, and I will advise.

Madam Chairman: Okay, Members, would there be anything else?

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: No, Ma’am.

Madam Chairman: Okay and therefore, Members, at this stage, the meeting of the Standing Finance Committee is suspended and we resume on Monday, October 16, 2017 at 1.30 p.m.

6.17 p.m.: Standing Finance Committee suspended.
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, October 16, 2017

APPROPRIATION (FINANCIAL YEAR 2018) BILL, 2017

[Sixth 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: Good afternoon everyone, and the meeting of the Standing Finance Committee will now resume. I wish to invite the Committee under announcements that the hon. Kamla Persad-Bissessar MP, Member for Siparia and Dr. Fuad Khan, MP, Member for Barataria/San Juan, have asked to be excused from today’s meeting of the Standing Finance Committee.

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:


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

As regard our proposed work schedule, you are reminded that the
Committee agreed to meet as follows: Today, beginning at 1.30 p.m.; tomorrow Tuesday, October 17, 2017 at 10.00 a.m.; Thursday, October 19, 2017 at 1.30 p.m.; Friday, October 20, 2017 at 10.00 a.m.; and you are reminded that the start time for Monday, October 23, 2017 is still to be determined. Hon. Members, you are also reminded that we agreed that we will consider a minimum of eight Heads of Expenditure each day in order to complete our work programme in the five allotted days. You are also reminded that the procedure for each head of expenditure shall be as follows:

1. The Head and the amount to be approved will be announced by the Chair;
2. The Minister will then be given the option to make a brief opening statement;
3. The Chairman will then propose the question, that the sum proposed stand part of the Schedule;
4. For each Head of Expenditure the Chairman will call the Sub-Head followed by the Item. The Sub-Items shall not be called. Discussion can ensue under Items called or the relevant Sub-Item and clarification sought. Once the committee moves to another Sub-Head, questions from a previous Sub-Head will not be entertained.

This procedure will be also repeated for the Development Programme. Once this is concluded, the Chair will then put the question that the sums stand part of the Schedule. The procedure will be repeated for each Head of Expenditure.

Hon. Members, you are reminded that in accordance with Standing Order 45(1), the speaking time in the Standing Finance Committee shall not exceed five minutes on each intervention. We have invited the accounting officers and the technocrats for the various Ministries and entities to arrive at specific times during
the day, so I want to urge us all to try to adhere to the agreed schedule, okay.

So that we now move on to the first Head okay, and we begin with Head 43: The Ministry Works and Transport

Head 43: Ministry of Works and Transport, $2,343,542,325.

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

Hon. Sinanan: Madam Chairman, let me begin by sharing a brief overview of the Ministry listed as Head 43: Ministry of Works and Transport. The Ministry of Works and Transport is responsible for the provision of quality infrastructure and regulatory framework in road, drainage, coastal and the building sector. In addition, the Ministry also provides the land, sea and air transportation service. It is a large sectorial entity that comprises over 23 technical and administrative divisions, statutory authorities and State.

Specifically, in keeping with its mandate, the Ministry provides the following services to its clientele, the general public, among others:

- National planning for roads, drainage and transportation: air, sea and land;
- Construction and maintenance of highways, major and secondary roads;
- Construction and maintenance of bridges and landslips;
- Construction and maintenance of major watercourse and existing drainage system;
- Land reclamation and coastal management in collaboration with stakeholders;
- Advice on, as well as the construction and maintenance of government buildings and facilities and the Ministry of Works and Transport buildings and facilities;
• Advice on maritime related matters;
• Advice on the purchase, repair and maintenance of the transport fleet of state agencies;
• Traffic management;
• Registration, classification, licensing and inspection of vehicles;
• Issuance of driver’s permits;
• Enforcement of laws under the Motor Vehicles and Road Traffic Act;
• Management and control of shipping within Trinidad and Tobago waters;
• Registration, licensing, surveying, inspection and classification of ships;
• Enforcement of the maritime law; and
• Navigational and monitoring of air service agreement.

As we start, I would like to bring to the attention of this House, that in reviewing the records of the Draft Estimates of Expenditure for the Financial Year 2018, we have identified variances between the Ministry’s records of expenditure in some areas to what has been provided in the revised estimate for 2017 in the draft budget document. In this respect, it would be identified from the onset that this is based on the time when the revised estimates would have been collected and the actual figures available to the Ministry as at 30 September, 2017. It has been a challenging year, but the Ministry has been seeking to stay the course and to allow the marriage of procedure, process and implementation to take its place. I stand ready to answer all questions and, where not readily available, to submit some in writing at the earliest possible opportunity. I thank you, Madam Chair.

Madam Chairman: Thank you, Minister.

Question proposed: That Head 43 stand part of the Schedule.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Members, the sum of $2,343,542,325 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 Details of Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure, the Draft Estimates of the Revenue and Expenditure of the Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies and of the Tobago House of Assembly and the Draft Estimates of Development Programme. We now proceed to consider the Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure Sub-Head 01: Personnel Expenditure.

Dr. Rambachan: Just for clarification, Madam Chair, what page are you on?

Madam Chairman: Page 274.

Dr. Rambachan: Okay, thank you. Under Personnel Expenditure, Madam Chair, there is a decrease of $5,380,495 under Personnel Expenditure. And I am asking the question, what is the reason for this cut of $5.4 million? And in view of the fact that there will be wage increases according to the union agreements for 2018, have you included any of these in the figures for 2018?

1.40 p.m.

Hon. Sinanan: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, there is a reduction in the daily-rated employees of $1.8 million. This is as a result of workers retiring and those posts have not been filled at this time. There is also—we are at this point in time conducting a need analysis to ensure that the positions that are available will be filled shortly.

Dr. Rambachan: The second question is, so that you are not sure whether you are going—are you sure or are you uncertain whether you are going to fill those positions?

Hon. Sinanan: Well, that is why we are conducting a needs analysis.

Dr. Rambachan: The second part of the question was, given that there are union agreements, have you included in these figures any of the increases for 2018?

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Hon. Sinanan: Madam Chair, wherever there are final agreements, those figures have been taken into consideration.

Dr. Rambachan: But there was in 2017, Minister, $492,487,500, Salaries and Cost of Living and Wages and Cost of Living, $290,350,000. In 2017, that was revised down to $461,338 and $263,67—

Hon. Sinanan: Madam Chair, what page?

Dr. Rambachan: I am sorry, page 274.

Hon. Sinanan: What item you are on?

Dr. Rambachan: 01 Personnel Expenditure.

Hon. Sinanan: So you are going by the overall figure?

Dr. Rambachan: Yes, yes. I am trying to establish whether, in fact, you have really included any increases in wages that are going to come due to union agreements in 2018 or whether these figures reflect—I am asking—whether they reflect a wage freeze or is retrenchment contemplated.

Hon. Sinanan: Madam Chair, the Government has said on several occasions there is no wage freeze as a policy and the Government has also stated that there is no retrenchment at this point in time.

Dr. Rambachan: Okay. But if that is so Minister, how is it that the figures have decreased from Revised Estimates of 461 to 455 which was originally estimated at 492 and from 263 to 261, not reflecting. If you look at it in terms of the percentage, what would be the percentage increase added to this in terms of the wage agreements that have been reached?

Hon. Sinanan: Okay, if you look at 30, there is a significant reduction in the traveling claims and the overtime allowances. What we are trying to do at the Ministry is to minimize these additional expenditures that have been treated as runaway horses.

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Dr. Rambachan: In overtime allowances? Overtime allowances, Mr. Minister—

Hon. Sinanan: And travelling.

Dr. Rambachan:—has increased by $708,000 and overtime allowances for monthly-paid officers increased by $256,000. So that on both of those they have increased. Only monthly-paid officers’ allowances have gone down by $6 million. It is lower down. But if the allowances are going down—

Hon. Sinanan: You see, you are dealing with the general administration. If you go into the actual—

Dr. Rambachan: But the general is the accumulation of all the actuals in the suns. So if, in fact, your monthly-paid allowances which are—monthly-paid allowances, in my view, which will be the union determined, is it that really you are not going to be employing or you are reducing the number of employed or there is general unstated policy of a wage freeze?

Hon. Sinanan: None of the above.

Dr. Rambachan: The figures, Mr. Minister, do not reflect that. I am still looking at the page 273, under Item 04. Can I look at it?

Madam Chairman: On the summary page?

Dr. Rambachan: On the summary page, Ma’am. But I guess we can go on and I would take it as we go on.

Madam Chairman: Okay. So, Member for Couva South.

Mr. Indarsingh: Through you, Madam Chair, to the Minister. Just for clarification Minister. You indicated that the Ministry is currently engaged in a manpower audit exercise.

Hon. Sinanan: Yes Sir, for the daily-rated employees.

Mr. Indarsingh: Daily-rated, not for monthly-rated?

Hon. Sinanan: No.
Mr. Indarsingh: And could you clarify for us how many existing vacant posts within the Ministry and in the relevant divisions?

Hon. Sinanan: Okay, what we will do is submit that to you in writing by divisions.

Mr. Indarsingh: But you have no idea at the moment?

Hon. Sinanan: No, I do not have that with me right now.

Mr. Indarsingh: Okay. Additionally, my colleague, the Member for Tabaquite, I just want to follow up on what he was asking. Is there any outstanding back pay for the expired agreements or what have been settled? What is the current status of the collective bargaining process as it relates to monthly-paid and daily-rated employees?

Hon. Sinanan: Through you, Madam Chair, we have been settling the arrears as they are confirmed to us, but we can give you a detailed listing of all the outstanding.

Mr. Indarsingh: So, could you advise this meeting, is there any outstanding—

Hon. Sinanan: Go ahead. Finish your question.

Mr. Indarsingh: Is there any outstanding—sums of moneys based on collective agreements that was settled between the employee and the respective unions in terms of the bargaining units? Are there any outstanding moneys?

Hon. Sinanan: At the end of the day, the answer to that is no.

Mr. Indarsingh: None?

Hon. Sinanan: No.

Mr. Indarsingh: What is the current status of the collective bargaining process as it relates to monthly-paid and daily-rated employees and for what period? Could you advise this meeting, please?

Hon. Sinanan: Through you, Madam Chairman, we do not have that information.
It is with the CPO and we will have that, again, in writing produced to you.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Line Item 14. Could the hon. Members indicate—Sub-Item 14. Could the hon. Minister indicate how many committees are in place at the moment, Cabinet-appointed committees?

**Hon. Sinanan:** At this point in time we have budgeted $434,000 because we expect to have the air service agreement committee established, the steering committee on the overseas—the operationalization of the MVA transport authority, and those are two steering committees that are expected to come on stream in this fiscal year.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Caroni Central. **Dr. Tewarie:** Yes, well one of my questions was answered by the Minister. I was going to ask a question on what were the Cabinet-appointed committees. But the other question I want to ask, I just want to understand clearly from the Minister, am I correct in saying that you have indicated that there has been no loss of employees over the year, that there are no plans to hire employees, but that there is a review of daily-paid employees? Am I correct?

**Hon. Sinanan:** Yes.

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

**Mr. Singh:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Minister, you indicated that—through you, Madam Chair—you are doing the manpower analysis, the needs analysis. When did that start and who is doing it and when will it be completed?

**Hon. Sinanan:** This project started in 2016 by PwC and there is a report that is being reviewed internally.

**Mr. Singh:** Just for my and for those who are listening, the PwC completed a review of the daily-rated workers required for the Ministry?

**Hon. Sinanan:** Which is being reviewed at this time.
Mr. Singh: The report is completed? It is being reviewed by whom?

Hon. Sinanan: By the Ministry.

Mr. Singh: By the Ministry. And what is the period of time that you have allotted for the review?

Hon. Sinanan: The shortest possible time. I expect that to be done shortly.

Mr. Singh: So it goes back to my initial question. When was it completed, the review by PwC?

Hon. Sinanan: Let me just make a correction there. It was Ernst & Young who did the study and it was submitted in April of 2017.

Mr. Singh: April of 2017. So that, therefore, you want to review what you said about the shortest possible time.

Hon. Sinanan: Well no, these things do take some time, I mean.

Mr. Singh: Could you enlighten us, through you Madam Chair, as to the recommendations of that report?

Hon. Sinanan: Well, I do not have the details of the recommendations at this time?

Me. Singh: Could you provide the Parliament with a copy of those recommendations.

Hon. Sinanan: Sure.

Mr. Singh: And could you indicate to us what was the cost of the Ernst & Young report?

Hon. Sinanan: I do not have those figures at this time, but I will be willing to submit them to you.

Mr. Singh: And did the union participate in the consultative process with Ernst & Young?

Hon. Sinanan: Again, I will have to get that information to you.
Mr. Padarath: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, through you to the hon. Minister. Hon. Minister, line item 14, going back to “Remuneration to members of Cabinet-Appointed Committees”, you mentioned that one of those Cabinet-appointed committees will be dealing with the MVA. Now, most recently, a few months ago, we have dealt with moving traffic offences into violations. Could you give us a sense of timeline as well as the report coming out from this Cabinet-appointed committees that will help to flesh out the fruition of that particular piece of legislation? What support is being provided by the Cabinet-appointed committee to ensure that this is not just on the statute books but rather implementation would be coming forward? Hon. Sinanan: Through you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, we do have an operationalized committee in place and we are looking at the third quarter of this year to have this committee in place.

Madam Chairman: Is it related to the—

Hon. Sinanan: Certain areas have been implemented.

Mr. Padarath: Could the hon. Minister confirm, Madam Chair, through you, whether or not the committee has actually met?

Hon. Sinanan: No, no. The operationalized, that committee have met and have been meeting for quite a while.

Mr. Padarath: But then Minister, you just indicated—

Hon. Sinanan: This is a different committee here.

Mr. Padarath: This is a separate and apart from.

Hon. Sinanan: This is separate and apart from the operationalized committee with comprises members from the different Ministries.

Mr. Padarath: But is it again, a separate Cabinet-appointed committee or is it a subcommittee of the original committee?

Madam Chairman: Which committee are you talking about?

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Hon. Sinanan: Which one are you talking about? Are you speaking about the operationalized?

Mr. Padarath: I am asking whether or not—

Madam Chairman: Just one minute. For clarification, the line Item refers to a Cabinet-appointed committee. I believe the Minister said that a committee under the MVA for the transport committee is to be established. This is what this line Item relates to, so I am allowing questions relating to that.

Mr. Padarath: Sure.

Madam Chairman: Yes, Member for Princes Town.

Mr. Padarath: Madam Chair, through you, again to the hon. Minister. I just wanted the clarification of whether or not that original committee, the MVA committee that you spoke of, is separate and apart from an operationalizing committee?

Hon. Sinanan: Yes, it is.

Mr. Padarath: And has that operationalizing committee met?

Hon. Sinanan: Yes.

Mr. Padarath: And what support is that giving in terms of the fruition of this piece of legislation, if you can give us an idea of how advanced that is.

Madam Chairman: Well, Member for Princes Town, I will not allow that if you are talking about the operationalized committee. I would not allow that kind of questioning for this. From what we understand, that is a committee of public servants, so it does not fall under this line item. Is that all you wish to ask? Member for Couva South.

Mr. Indarsingh: Just, Madam Chair, again, through you, and I heard the Minister indicate to my colleague from Caroni East—and I am seeking just a bit of clarification as it relates to the manpower audit exercise. It was done in full
concurrence with the bargaining, the recognized majority unions as it relates to the
daily-paid and monthly-paid bargaining units?

**Hon. Sinanan:** Through you, Madam Chairman, this was a request coming out of
the CPO’s office. It is for daily-paid workers and it is a needs analysis.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Yes, I am following the information. I am just seeking further
clarification in relation to what you outlined for my colleague the Member for
Caroni East. Was it done with the full agreement and—

**Hon. Sinanan:** As I said to the Member for Caroni East, we will get
that information to you.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** So you have no idea—

**Hon. Sinanan:** No, at this point in time.

**Mr. Indarsingh:**—as line Minister an exercise—

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Couva South, in the interest of us making full
benefit of this exercise, if you are tying it to a line Item, yeah I will allow it. You
will have an opportunity for general questions in another forum. Okay?

**Mr. Indarsingh:** No problem.

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

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, could you under Sub-
Item 002, Highways—

**Hon. Sinanan:** 002—

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** On page 274—

**Madam Chairman:** Might I ask before we go to there. Just for order sake, I can
take it, but I just want to ensure that we are finished with 001.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Okay. All right fine. I am waiting.

**Madam Chairman:** Are there any more questions with 001? Okay, so then we
are moving on to 002, and I would take the Member for Caroni East.

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Dr. Gopeesingh: Thank you, Madam Chair. Minister could you or our technocrat explain the difference between in Sub-Item 01, which is Salaries and Cost of Living Allowances which is $9.76 million and “Wages and C.O.L.A (including Leave Pay)” which is $105 million? Probably I am missing something. The difference between one line item of salaries and the other one is wages. What is the differentiation there? Probably a technocrat can help us there? Hon. Sinanan: One is monthly and one is daily-paid.

Dr. Gopeesingh: And which one is monthly, salaries?

Hon. Sinanan: The salaries.

Dr. Gopeesingh: The salaries is monthly. Thanks. I wanted to get—I appreciate it.

Madam Chairman: Member for Caroni Central.

Dr. Tewarie: Yes. The item there, “Salaries and Cost of Living Allowances” you have a variance by an increase of $323,000. How do you explain that? Is it for an increase in the salary itself because you said that there was no increase in numbers?

Hon. Sinanan: There are some vacant positions that we expect to fill.

Dr. Tewarie: Okay, so that will cover the potential hiring?

Hon. Sinanan: Yes.

Dr. Tewarie: Okay. As we go down the line then, Madam Chair, through you, we are likely to see opportunities for new hiring in the system?

Hon. Sinanan: Once the vacant posts exist.

Dr. Tewarie: All right.

Madam Chairman: Member for Tabaquite.

Dr. Rambachan: Thank you. Under Highways, Sub-Item 002, what percentage increase is included there under “Wages and C.O.L.A” in line with the union
agreement? What percentage is catered for?

**Madam Chairman:** Minister?

**Hon. Sinanan:** Okay. We have settled all the negotiations, outstanding payments and the negotiations are conducted by the CPO. So I do not know if that will answer the question.

**Dr. Rambachan:** In a three-year agreement, you will have 4 per cent, 5 percent or 6 per cent every year. How much have you included? If the agreement was 4 per cent for this particular year, have you included that percentage in this 2018 estimate?

**Hon. Sinanan:** Yes, that would have been taken into consideration.

**Dr. Rambachan:** All right, if you included it, in 2017 the Wages and C.O.L.A was $106,000,800 and in 2018 it is down to $105 million, a drop of $1.8 million. So it could not be that you are keeping the same workforce and increasing by the percentage and get a figure that is lower.

**Hon. Sinanan:** You are presuming that nobody will retire during that period. We did have and we do expect normal attrition during this period, and that was taken into consideration as well.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Minister, I am not satisfied but, you know, I am listening to you, but it does seem to me that there is an unstated policy of not filling positions and of very silently reducing the labour force, the daily-paid labour force in the Ministry of Works and Transport. But in line with that, I would like to just look at the item just below that. Sub-Item 08, Vacant Posts-Salaries & C.O.L.A (without incumbents). I see throughout the different divisions you have allocated money under that in 2018, and here you have allocated $500,000. Are you going to fill those positions?

**Hon. Sinanan:** Through you, Madam Chair, this is the money that we have been
given. So the answer is yes, we intend to fill, but we have to wait for Service Commission because they are the ones who will approve that.

Dr. Rambachan: Finally, how many persons are employed at the Ministry of Works and Transport now, in terms of daily-rated and monthly?

Hon. Sinanan: Through you, Madam Chair, at the daily-rated we have 3,866; the contract workers is 323 and the establishment is 1,549 and the short-term contracts are 57, bringing a total—

Dr. Rambachan: What do you mean by “establishment”, the salaries, monthly-paid and so on? Right.

Hon. Sinanan: Yes.

Dr. Rambachan: Okay. All right. Thank you.

Madam Chairman: Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Madam Chair. Just to follow up on the Member for Tabaquite. Hon. Minister, how many positions are vacant in each category?

Hon. Sinanan: Through you, Madam Chair, that we will produce that for you in writing.

Madam Chairman: Are you finished, Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Yes.

Madam Chairman: Yes. Member for Naparima.

Mr. Charles: Thank you. Through you, Madam Chair, I am looking at 02, Wages and C.O.L.A; there is a decrease of $1.8 million but at 29—that is on the next page—I see an increase in Overtime—Daily-Rated Workers. Why would you decrease Wages and C.O.L.A and increase—and I suspect that the numbers are reduced, but at the same time you are reducing the numbers but increasing overtime. That is looking at 02 and 29.
Hon. Sinanan: Through you, Madam Chair, that budgeted figure is for arrears that is outstanding, claims and so on. Sorry. Traveling claims, outstanding traveling claims.

Madam Chairman: Okay. Member for Couva South.

Mr. Indarsingh: Thank you, Madam Chair. Just again, a bit of clarification because I am trying to follow all the information that is coming out here. In relation to vacant posts and a commitment to fill vacancies and then I am hearing about a manpower audit exercise, so if the manpower exercise says that there must be a rationalization, a downsizing of the workforce and so on, is there going to be a contradiction of the stated policies here or the information that is being given to this meeting?

Hon. Sinanan: The needs analysis is for the daily-rated employees and the monthly-paid is what we are doing the manpower audit on. The vacant posts are for the monthly-paid employees.

Madam Chairman: Member for Caroni East. Member for Caroni East, could you just ensure that your mike is switched on? Thank you.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Sure, thanks, thanks. Hon. Minister, if we look at the bottom of page 274.

Hon. Sinanan: What page we are on?

Dr. Gopeesingh: We are still of 002, Highways, under the line Item carried forward, there is a differentiation between actual expenditure in 2016 of $135 million versus 2018 estimates of $125 million which is about a $10 million differentiation and that is following from what my colleague from Tabaquite was asking. What will be responsible for the entire $10 million less under this item here? If we go to the—

Madam Chairman: Caroni East, one minute please. It is so unusual, but it is
really difficult to hear you.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Oh sorry. [Laughter] I thought my voice was loud. Can you hear me now? The differentiation in short, hon. Minister. The 2016 actual is $135 million and 2018 estimates is $125 million, a $10 million differentiation. Any explanation? Was 2016 to pay arrears on salaries or wages or arrears and wages or that is by attrition of staff? Hon. Sinanan: You are at 274, right?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Yes, page 274, it is a sub-total. It is carried over on the next page. If we get an idea here now it will help us.

Hon. Sinanan: You are dealing with 2016 to 2018?


Hon. Sinanan: From 2016 to 2018, you are going to where?

Dr. Gopeesingh: At the bottom of page 274.

Madam Chairman: But the question is really what accounts for the difference between 2016 and 2018.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Yes, Madam Chair. Thank you.

Madam Chairman: What I would say though, Member for Caroni East, I think you do have 2017 here and I guess in 2016/2017 you would have asked a particular question. So if you could maybe look at it in terms of what currently we are looking at.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Well, there is a decrease from the previous year which was a decrease from the previous year.

Hon. Sinanan: Well, I could give you the $3 million. There is a decrease of $3 million from 2017 to 2018. There is a decrease of $3 million.

Dr. Gopeesingh: What accounts for it?

Hon. Sinanan: The total on page 275.
Dr. Gopeesingh: Is there any explanation for this, Sir?
Hon. Sinanan: So the $3 million would have been based on what we identified before. I cannot give you from 2016 to 2018.
Hon. Sinanan: It is just a $3 million difference.
Dr. Gopeesingh: Differentiation?
Hon. Sinanan: Right and we would have made that up to you with the employees. Member, if you look at line Item where we have the $1.8 million, we explained that and then if you go to the allowances.
Dr. Gopeesingh: I think you partly answered it when you indicated to—
Hon. Sinanan: We answered. Well, that is the reason for the $3 million.
Dr. Gopeesingh: The attrition aspect.
Hon. Sinanan: Yes. That is the $1.8 million.
Dr. Gopeesingh: I just wanted to know whether it was in relation to previous arrears on back pay and so on.
Hon. Sinanan: No, no.
Madam Chairman: Member for Naparima.
2.10 p.m.
Mr. Charles: Thank you, Madam Chair. In respect of just the Highways, 275, the decrease of $2.960 million, given that in 2018, this year, you would be doing a number of projects that you probably were not involved, the Toco Road, the Moruga Road, the overpass, is it that the Highways Division can do the same work, increased workload with reduced numbers or static numbers or are these projects allocated elsewhere? [Crosstalk]
Hon. Sinanan: If you look at 2017, the estimate was $4 million; 2018, it is $4.3 million. The revised was 6.8. We sought to pay for outstanding arrears in 2017,
which we do not have in 2018, so there is an increase in 2018.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Tabaquite? We now move on to 003, which is on page 275; 003, Traffic Management. Member for Caroni Central.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Minister, I want to raise a matter that has to do with traffic management on the highway but relates to something in my constituency. There is a portion of the highway just under a popular eating place called Highway Roti Shop, and it has been widened and is able to accommodate parked vehicles. However, that has turned out to be a traffic hazard, and we have had a situation where accidents—

**Madam Chairman:** Member, excuse me, in the interest of time, I cannot allow that type of question under this consideration. It may be a question regarding your constituency that you can ask at another opportunity, okay? So that if you have another question you want to ask under the line Items here, I will allow it. Member.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Well, I simply wanted to ask if the accommodation could be made on the highway to make it safe, that is all.

**Mr. Imbert:** Madam Chairman, may I ask a question? As far as I can see, we are on Personnel Expenditure, 003 Traffic Management, Wages and Salaries, I really do not understand, so I could ask you, perhaps you understand the relevance.

**Madam Chairman:** Thank you very much. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla—I think the Member understands we are moving on. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I just want to confirm, Minister, Traffic Management, is it limited to traffic wardens or is it expansive? And if it is, what it includes, please?

**Hon. Sinanan:** This does not include the traffic wardens.
Madam Chairman: Member for Couva South.

Mr. Indarsingh: Madam Chair, just again Minister, I see Government’s Contribution to NIS has been reduced by $425,000, any particular reason?

Hon. Sinanan: Through you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, this is what we had received for this period. This figure is what we would have received for this period.

Mr. Indarsingh: It does not satisfy me, but I really—

Madam Chairman: Okay. So, Member for Tabaquite.

Dr. Rambachan: Would it be this is what you receive and you would just accept it, would it be that you will be in debt to the NIS?

Hon. Sinanan: We will request money as required in the mid-year review to ensure that we make the necessary payments and contributions.

Mr. Indarsingh: But just on that—

Dr. Rambachan: Follow-up question, sorry.

Madam Chairman: Just for a minute, I would recognize the Member for Tabaquite, so after I will come back to you.

Dr. Rambachan: But Minister, how is it that a Ministry can be in debt to the NIS when you prosecute private companies when they are in debt to the NIS? Is the Ministry observing the tenet of the law?

Madam Chairman: Minister of Works and Transport. You want to defer to the Minister of Finance on this?

Mr. Imbert: I can come in here. There is no question of the Ministry being in debt. In fact, the Minister said the opposite. He said they will make the payments as and when they are required, so there is no debt. No debt has arisen.

Dr. Rambachan: Does the Minister of Finance make similar provisions for private sector companies who may not be able to meet their payments like the
Ministry of Works and Transport not being able to meet its payments?

Mr. Imbert: That is not so. The Minister said the payments will be made as and when required. So that that question is not relevant.

Dr. Rambachan: Very relevant.

Madam Chairman: Member for Couva South.

Mr. Indarsingh: Madam Chair, I fully endorse what the Member for Tabaquite is saying, and, additionally, Minister, say for example if someone retires and goes to the National Insurance Board seeking, or applies for his or her retirement benefits and they have been told that payments have not be made up, or contributions have not been paid on their behalf, what is their position, Minister?

Hon. Sinanan: Through you, Madam Chair, the Member is taking a stand—

Mr. Imbert: Let me deal with that. I just want to make it crystal clear that the Government treats very seriously the question of obligations to the National Insurance Board, and Ministries will be given the necessary funds or transfers, and virements will be approved, or supplementary funding will be made available as and when required. So this entire discussion does not arise. It has not arisen and will not arise.

Madam Chairman: Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.

Mr. Lee: Thank you, Madam Chairman, through you to the Minister of Finance, in giving that response just now. I have a concern, under Traffic Management, 003, you have 01 Item of $1.6 million budgeted for Salaries and Cost of Living; 02, Wages and COLA, budgeted 12.7; under the 05, Government’s Contribution to NIS, Items 01, 02 would have taken into account a certain number of employees on the payroll; 07 should also take into account the salaries and wages related to Item 01, 02—

Mr. Imbert: 07? There is no 07.
Mr. Lee: 05, Minister. Okay, sorry, I apologize, 05. So I am trying to understand why would you not budget the correct amount for the employer’s contribution in relationship to the number of employees and the quantum that you would have budgeted for wages?

Mr. Imbert: Certainly. I recognize that you have not been in a Cabinet Government before, but when these estimates are done, if supplementary funding is required, they will be made available. [Crosstalk]

Hon. Member: It was not meant to be pejorative.

Mr. Imbert: I am being very serious. In any budget these are merely estimates of expenditure; that is why we have a mid-year review around April or May of every year, and if there is a shortfall in any area it will be supplemented. In addition, during the period prior to the mid-year review Permanent Secretaries have the authority to request a transfer or a virement from another Head in order to supplement a Vote if additional funding is required. So there is no problem.

Madam Chairman: Member for Naparima. So we are moving on to Item 004, Central Planning Unit, which is on page 276. Item 005, Drainage, which is on page 276. Member for Chaguanas West.

Mr. Singh: Thank you, Madam Chair. Item 29, the Overtime for Daily-Rated Workers, the analysis that was done by Ernst & Young would incorporate all these things in the context of overtime and the manpower requirements. In the area of Guayamare, which is part of my constituency that is part of the central drainage area, you have significant staff shortages, and that is why I am interested in the recommendations of the Ernst & Young report, and I just used the line Item to make that request, to reinforce that request, Madam Chair.

Madam Chairman: Member for Tabaquite.

Dr. Rambachan: I want to follow up with the Member for Chaguanas West, in
that regard, what is the complement that is required in the Drainage Division and how many do you really have now? How many vacancies then are there in the Drainage Division given that we have all these drainage problems?

**Hon. Sinanan:** Through you, Madam Chair, we will submit that to you in writing.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Thank you, Madam Chair. If the hon. Minister can also indicate the amount that would be required also for the constituency of Cumuto/Manzanilla—Sangre Grande?

**Hon. Sinanan:** The entire drainage department. We would do it for the entire drainage department.

**Madam Chairman:** Do it for the entire drainage department, all right, thank you.

Can we move on to Item 006, Mechanical Services, which is on page 277. Item 007, Maintenance, which is on pages 277 and 278. Member for Tabaquite.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Madam Chairman, on both items, Sub-Items 01 and 02, I presume that Maintenance here refers to the maintenance of mechanical equipment, and what have you, in the Ministry.

**Hon. Sinanan:** No, it is not mechanical, mechanical is under the Mechanical Services, that is 006.

**Dr. Rambachan:** What does Maintenance refer to then?

**Hon. Sinanan:** The buildings, and so, government buildings, Ministry of Works and Transport buildings, things like that.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Okay.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 008, Construction, page 278. Item 012, Unemployment Relief Programme, page 279. [Interruption] Okay, I am sorry, I did not see it. Member for Tabaquite.

**Mr. Rambachan:** Under Construction, is the Minister aware that these funds here
of $11 million, $11 million on the average, being paid to on Wages and COLA and $14.5 million on Salaries and Cost of Living? Is the Minister aware that a lot of times these people just do not have any materials to do their jobs and that we are probably spending money here without getting productivity and any returns for it?

**Hon. Sinanan:** Through you, Madam Chair, this is one department that I am looking at. There are a lot more challenges than just not material, there are some physical infrastructure challenge, and we are looking at this very closely to get some value for money out of this department.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Is the Minister therefore saying that we are not getting value for money at this point in time?

**Hon. Sinanan:** We can get a lot more value for money.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Thank you.

**Madam Chairman:** Anything else on Item 008, Construction? Therefore, we move on to Item 012, Unemployment Relief Programme, page 279. Member for Chaguanas West.

**Mr. Singh:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Could the hon. Minister indicate how many persons are employed in this programme and the regional distribution of that employment?

**Hon. Sinanan:** This is the monthly paid staff, eh, this is not the daily paid URP, you want the monthly paid staff on the establishment? Okay, we would submit that in writing to you, because what we are dealing here with is the monthly paid staff.

**Madam Chairman:** Anything else on 012? Can we move on then to Item 013, General Administration (Transport), page 279. Item 014, Transport, page 280. Item 015, Maritime Services, page 280 and 281. Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, page 281. Member for Chaguanas East.

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Mr. Karim: Thank you, Madam Chairman. Sub-Item number 16, Contract Employment, could the hon. Minister indicate the reason for the substantial increase in that allocation from ’16 to ’17?

Madam Chairman: Minister of Works and Transport.

Hon. Sinanan: Sure. You said there is an increase, Contract Employment?

Mr. Karim: Well, I am looking at from 2016 onward to 2018.

Hon. Sinanan: I do not have the—okay, I have 2017 to—

Mr. Karim: Well, if you look at ’17 you will see the figure is about $12.4 million, up from a $7 million estimate.

Hon. Sinanan: This is page 281.

Mr. Karim: Page 281.

Hon. Sinanan: Sixteen, this is what we would have used in 2017—

Mr. Karim: I was just asking what might be responsible—

Hon. Sinanan: The revised figures and the estimate for 2018 is the exact, is the same figure.

Mr. Karim: What caused that increase from the year before? Page 281, Minister of Finance.

Hon. Sinanan: If you look at the Short-term Employment Vote, it went down significantly in 2017, so what it meant is that the short term, we moved people out of short term to the—

Mr. Karim: You moved them out of short term?

Hon. Sinanan: Yes, into more sustained employment. So that is why the short term went down significantly and the contract employees went up.

Mr. Karim: Okay.

Madam Chairman: Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, line Item 08,
can you account for the decrease in the Rent/Lease of Office Accommodations? And if you can provide the answer for how many properties are currently leased or rented, and what is the monthly cost and storage spaces as well?

Hon. Sinanan: We had some arrears, through you, Madam Chair, in 2017 and we tried to address it. Those arrears have been paid, so in 2018 we do not have that amount of arrears again.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you. If the hon. Minister can indicate what properties are currently leased or storage spaces.

Hon. Sinanan: We can submit that to you in writing.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thanks.

Madam Chairman: Member for Caroni Central.

Dr. Tewarie: Item 28, under the same Sub-Head, would you indicate, Minister, an example of what Other Contracted Services involves?—just one example would do? Page 281, Item 28, under Goods and Services, General Administration.

Hon. Sinanan: This could account for things like consultancy fees, and so on.

Dr. Tewarie: Okay.

Madam Chairman: Member for Princes Town.

Mr. Padarath: Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, when we look at Short-term Employment, can you give us an idea of the areas that are being targeted with respect to Short-term Employment?

Hon. Sinanan: You want to break that question down a little bit?

Mr. Padarath: What would account for a line Item, like line Item 22, with respect to Short-term Employment?

Hon. Sinanan: Through you, Madam Chair, this will account for a service that you need for like a short period of time. Let us say if you want to do an audit in the audit department and you want to bring in some for a short period of time,
maybe a two months, a three months for a specific project.

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

**Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh:** Thank you, Madam Chairman. Hon. Minister, line 17, Training, I would just like to enquire who will be utilizing this training and what skills will be targeted to be improved upon?

**Hon. Sinanan:** At this point, the Ministry is developing its training plan, and this is basically for the employees, and this is for the employees of the Ministry.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Oropouche West, you have any further question?

**Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh:** Yes, I just need to know if any special skills that would have to be targeted or no?

**Hon. Sinanan:** We are looking right now at things like project management, and so.

**Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh:** Thank you.

**Hon. Sinanan:** And also things like maritime.

**Madam Chairman:** Okay, are you finished, Member for Oropouche West?

**Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Chaguanas West, you have no question? Member for Couva South.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Just to follow up from Member for Oropouche West, Minister, are you satisfied that an allocation of $57,000, an increase of—well, it is $80,000 really to focus on training for your entire Ministry? And how many employees will benefit from this exercise?

**Hon. Sinanan:** Through you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, what we are trying to do at the Ministry is more with less. We are thankful for whatever we get, and I just want to draw your attention that each department does have a separate

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Training Vote. So this Training Vote here is for the General Administration. So other divisions do have a separate Training Vote.

Madam Chairman: Okay, are we finished with Item 001, General Administration? So we can go on to Item 022, Highways, pages 282 and 283.

Member for Chaguanas East.

Mr. Karim: Goods and Services.

Madam Chairman: Yeah, we are doing Goods and Services, Item 002, Highways, it is on pages 282 and 283.

Mr. Karim: Can I ask a question with respect to line Item 34 on 282?

Madam Chairman: So we are going back to Goods and Services.

Mr. Karim: Yeah.

Madam Chairman: Okay. Now, I just want Members to remember what the agreement was. Okay, so I allow it on this intervention, but I am going to try to call the page, right?

Mr. Karim: That will help.

Madam Chairman: I will try and raise my voice when I call the page, okay?

Mr. Karim: Thank you.

Madam Chairman: So we are on page 282, and we are on line Item 34. Member for Chaguanas East.

Mr. Karim: Thank you very much, Madam Chairman. If the hon. Minister could give us a status on this University Graduate Recruitment Programme, which was first mentioned by the Minister of Finance in the 2016 budget?

Mr. Imbert: Madam Chairman, this Item has appeared in the last three three budgets but financial constraints have prevented us from activating the programme. Hopefully this year we can do it.

Madam Chairman: Member for Chaguanas West.

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Mr. Singh: On page 282, Madam Chair, Water and Sewerage Rates, Item 06 under Highways, I noticed that there is an increase—

Madam Chairman: Okay, just hold up one minute, please, Member for Chaguanas West, are we finished with Item 001?

Hon. Member: Yes.

Madam Chairman: Okay. Item 002, Highways, pages 282 and 283. Member for Chaguanas West.

Mr. Singh: Thank you. The first question I have is with respect to Item 06, Water and Sewerage Rates. I noticed that in ’16, ’17 there was no allocation, but in 2018 there is a $60,000 allocation, which I am sure WASA will welcome, but I want to know, are there any arrears owed to the Water and Sewerage Authority by the Ministry or Works and Transport and/or its agencies to that utility?

Hon. Sinanan: The reason why, through you, Madam Chair, is that this year we have a line Item for the figure. It was being paid before under General Administration. So it was being paid before and now we have a separate line Item for it.

Mr. Singh: Part of the question, are there any arrears owed to the Water and Sewerage Authority for rates under the Ministry of Works and Transport and/or any of its agencies?

Hon. Sinanan: I would hope not, and I am not aware of any.

Mr. Singh: But if when you check, please provide the Parliament with the necessary update.

Hon. Sinanan: Sure.

Mr. Singh: Thank you.

Madam Chairman: Member for Princes Town.

Mr. Padarath: Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, line Item 04,
Electricity, there is an increase of $124,000 here, is this in anticipation of any impending rate hikes?

**Hon. Sinanan:** The answer to that is, no.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Pointe-a-Pierre. Member for Caroni Central.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Madam Chair, Item 28, under Goods and Services, page 283, Other Contracted Services, the Minister, in a previous question asking what these were for, said it is likely to be consultancies. Now, I am mentioning this one here, which is $5 million, and there was one before which I did not flag, another $3 million, is the answer to this one also the same?

**Hon. Sinanan:** No, General Admin will be a different type of contracted services, this is Highways. So this Vote here would be used for works, physical works under Highways.

**Dr. Tewarie:** So these are physical contracts, contractual obligations?

**Hon. Sinanan:** Yes, infrastructure works.

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

**Mr. Padarath:** Madam Chair, to the hon. Minister. Hon. Minister, line Item 43, Security Services, an increase of $400,000 here, could you indicate if this—well, I am guessing it is private security services—what would account for an increase of $400,000 for Security Services?

**Hon. Sinanan:** What we have in 2018, through you, Madam Chairman, is some outstanding bills, so we have requested some additional funding there. The increase is for outstanding bills.

**Mr. Padarath:** Hon. Minister, through you, Madam, would you give us the undertaking to indicate out of this increase of $400,000 how much you anticipate would have been used for bills from the past, or whether or not really, in truth and in fact, this may be adding to this year’s bill? So if you can give us the
undertaking of how much will be used to clear out outstanding bills, and what those outstanding bills would have been, and what are the Contracted Services for this financial year?

Hon. Sinanan: Sure.

Madam Chairman: Member for Chaguanas West.

Mr. Singh: Thank you. Madam Chairman, on page 283, are we dealing with Traffic Management?

Madam Chairman: No, we are not.

Mr. Singh: Okay.

Madam Chairman: Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.

Mr. Lee: Madam Chair, to the hon. Minister, line Item 28, Other Contracted Services, could the Minister in writing give a listing of what makes up that $22.7 million for 2017?

Hon. Sinanan: Sure.

Madam Chairman: Okay, so we are move on now to Item 003, Traffic Management, pages 283 to 284. Member for Chaguanas West.

Mr. Singh: Thank you, Madam Chair. Item 12, Materials and Supplies, there is a marginal increase of $15,000, it has been brought to my attention, hon. Minister, that the persons who draw the white lines on the road, they have a shortage of paint and that therefore they are unable to draw the white lines because of that shortage, whether or not the addition of $15,000 is sufficient to meet that demand that they have, having regard to the expansion of the road network and the need for more white paint on the roads.

Madam Chairman: Minister of Works and Transport.

2.40 p.m.

Hon. Sinanan: Madam Chair, again, we are thankful for the increase of $15,000
and if more paint is required we will go back to the Ministry of Finance in the mid-year review and request further funding.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Yes, Madam Chair. Minister, I just want to flag 28 again, Other Contracted Services, and to ask what these are likely to be.

**Hon. Sinanan:** Madam Chair, these are like routine maintenance on the traffic lights and so on.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Okay, so these are maintenance contracts?

**Hon. Sinanan:** Yes.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Minister, may I ask, how do you in the traffic management and transport arena, address the things such as transportation efficiency, traffic management, the possibility of park and ride and so on? Where does that figure in the Ministry?

**Hon. Sinanan:** Those come under traffic studies, so we will, from time to time—I can tell you now that we are doing some studies on park and ride. As a matter of fact, we do have a project that the Ministry is going to initiate shortly.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Minister, this is something that predates you, predates a lot of us, materials and supplies. The length of time which paint lasts on the road seems to be decreasing. Have you been doing any quality checks now on the quality of paint being supplied which they are using on the roads? They do not seem to last more than a couple of weeks.

**Hon. Sinanan:** Madam Chair, we are using now the thermoplast paint which seems to be holding up a lot longer than the regular paint on the road.

**Mr. Lee:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Minister, line Item 43, Security Services. A small amount of $10,000. What would that be for? I am just curious.

**Hon. Sinanan:** Madam Chair, the Traffic Management Unit does have some facilities that require, from time to time, security, depending on the areas that they
are working on. So that line item basically covers that.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Minister, in keeping with what the Member for Tabaquite asked under materials and so on, some of the highways need badly the cat eyes to help in traffic flow. There is no consideration here what I see from it. Is it something that you could contemplate, viring some funding from one area to another?

**Hon. Sinanan:** Yes.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** But you have a small amount in any case, $800,000, that cannot do anything.

**Hon. Sinanan:** I am still grateful for whatever little we get.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** I know your hands are tied.

**Mr. Singh:** Page 284 with Item 62, Promotions, Publicity and Printing, for the traffic management area—Item 62. We are going into a new arena of law with traffic light violations, and I notice that in the context of the culture of the country that you have now less moneys being allocated for the publicity of that. Is it that you plan to? There ought to have been a campaign in order to educate people. But how are you going to address that issue in the context of the new law that has emerged in the context of the allocation that you have a reduction?

**Hon. Sinanan:** Again, Madam Chair, this is one of the line Items that once we are ready to roll that aspect of the traffic management out, we will be approaching the Minister of Finance for some additional funding. But that will be an entire campaign.

**Mr. Singh:** Madam Chairman, on that issue. The traffic light management issue, will that be done by the private sector, these new traffic lights, or will it be done by the Ministry?

**Hon. Sinanan:** The Ministry.

**Mr. Singh:** Ministry?
Hon. Sinanan: Yes.

Dr. Rambachan: Madam Chairman, I just wanted to get from the Minister, Item 12. This Materials and Supplies, what does it really refer to, in terms of what materials? We spoke about paint. Are there other materials?

Hon. Sinanan: Yes; this is like the signage and so. Metal sheet signage, take for instance like the speed limit that we expect to—

Dr. Rambachan: But not material for the repair of roads?

Hon. Sinanan: No, no, no.

Dr. Rambachan: Because I want to ask you about Mosquito Creek.

Mr. Padarath: Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, again on line Item 12, Materials and Supplies. Minister, I have been noticing on the highways that the issue of the cable barriers, the repair of those cable barriers continue to be a burning issue, in that, when there are accidents it takes a long while for the cable barriers to be repaired, and in many instances when you drive from north to south, there are many instances where those barriers have not been repaired in months. Could you give us an indication of how through this vote and in any other area, a programme would be put in place to deal with the cable barriers? I know the reason for justifying the bringing on of the cable barriers was really to save lives, but if we have where it is not being repaired months on, then it is not really effecting what it was supposed to do.

Hon. Sinanan: The Item that you are speaking about is under Other Contracted Services, and it is something that we are looking at because it is a very expensive maintenance. I can tell you at the Ministry right now we are looking at doing a feasibility study whether we can continue to afford it, because the maintenance is very, very expensive.

Mr. Padarath: Hon. Minister, on the same issue can you indicate whether or not
there is an existing contract with any company right now?

**Hon. Sinanan:** Yes, there is.

**Mr. Padarath:** And could you indicate who the company is?

**Hon. Sinanan:** Is it UNICOMER? The company I think is UNISURE, but I could confirm that to you in writing.

**Madam Chairman:** So, can we move. Item 004, Central Planning Unit, this is at page 284. Item 005, Drainage, at page 285.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, line Sub-Item 05: Telephones. There is a significant increase in telephones of $607,000. Can the Minister indicate what accounts for this increase?

**Hon. Sinanan:** Madam Chair, if you look at 2017, you would see it was an estimated $900,000; 2018 is $900,000. Because there was some need to verify the bills in 2017; that is where the increase is. It is really not an increase at the estimated 2017 over the estimated 2018.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** I thought you would have looked at bringing it down in light of the fact that you have less money.

**Hon. Sinanan:** Well, we have. If you look at 2016, it was $994,000 now it is $900,000. There is a 10 per cent reduction.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Is this for land lines or for mobile?

**Hon. Sinanan:** Sorry?

**Madam Chairman:** Can you speak a little more loudly, please.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Is this mobiles or land line or a combination?

**Hon. Sinanan:** It is a combination.

**Mr. Charles:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Item 15, Drainage, Repairs and Maintenance of Equipment. In 2017, $150,000 was budgeted, the revised estimate
is $3,000, and now there is an increase. It is now $100,000. In light of the floodings that we experienced this year, and the need for equipment and the maintenance of equipment to effect those repairs in Williamsville and the Guaracara River, et cetera, is $97,000 in your view an increase adequate to deal with what we are seeing evolving in terms of the flooding?

**Hon. Sinanan:** Madam Chairman, what we are doing right now, again, in the Ministry, is the equipment for all the different departments to have a more holistic view of what is happening, rather than separate the drainage equipment, because we have one garage and what we are trying to do now is to get the garage a lot more efficient by having the vote—

**Mr. Charles:** So you are satisfied, Minister, that this $97,000 is going to give us the kind of equipment repairs and maintenance to satisfy—

**Hon. Sinanan:** Again, $97,000 is not much for equipment, but what we have decided to do is to pull it out as a project and have the vehicle maintenance looked at as a project, rather than each different—

**Mr. Padarath:** Madam, to the hon. Minister. Hon. Minister, line Sub-Item 09, Rent/Lease Vehicles and Equipment, an increase of $905,000. Minister one of the main complaints has been the dredging of rivers. Can you indicate with respect to this particular line Item whether or not this increase would see several of the rivers that have created serious flooding problems be addressed in terms of dredging, and whether or not you believe that this increase is significant enough to have an impact that is desired?

**Hon. Sinanan:** Madam Chairman, to answer the question in short, is that we are looking at the dredging as something that has to be done, and if it means that we have to move funding around to get most of the rivers, especially the mouths of the rivers clean, it is something that we are looking at seriously.
Mr. Padarath: Hon. Minister, following on that particular point, I know that whether it is south Trinidad or north Trinidad, we have been seeing, for instance, the Maraval River—my colleague from Naparima raised the Guaracara River, which has caused significant flooding in both parts of Trinidad and Tobago. Would those two areas be prioritized with respect to this particular line Item for that funding to be utilized, or whether or not you have an existing list at the Ministry in terms of priority areas?

Hon. Sinanan: Madam Chair, most of those that you are speaking about is done under the DP programme, so this money here definitely will not be enough to do all that river cleaning and so, but we do have other programmes that we do river cleaning from.

Mr. Padarath: Certainly. So, therefore, Minister, can you then indicate what are the target areas with respect to the increase, with respect to this particular line Item, if it would not be used for those rivers and so on?

Hon. Sinanan: We could get you a listing and submit it to you, on our work programme.

Dr. Rambachan: Item 28 under Drainage. The contracted services referred here to, does this refer to the rental of equipment in part?

Hon. Sinanan: 09 is Rent/Lease of Vehicle and Equipment, and which is the other one you called?

Dr. Rambachan: 28, Other Contracted Services.

Hon. Sinanan: 28 is where we do projects, small projects.

Dr. Rambachan: So you are contracting out cleaning of a river?

Hon. Sinanan: Well, they have like the walls and so, and desilting. Some you do under 28, and some you do under the 09.

Dr. Rambachan: Would the rental of a pump at Mosquito Creek be included
under this?

**Hon. Sinanan:** No, that is under NIDCO.

**Mr. Charles:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Item 15, again. I see in the revised estimates only $3,000 was spent for repairs and maintenance of equipment—only $3,000. I knew you said that you were centralizing it and what. Are you satisfied that $3,000 is adequate, given the problems that we experienced this year, and could that have been the bottleneck problem why we could not deal with the problems?

**Hon. Sinanan:** No. The answer to that is no. That would not have been the problem.

**Mr. Charles:** So $3,000 is a misrepresentation here? My car costs more than that to maintain. You could give it in writing.

**Hon. Sinanan:** I will give it in writing.

**Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh:** Hon. Minister, line 09, Vehicles. I am seeing here Vehicles and Equipment, but my question is, what vehicles are to be leased and from which company those vehicles would be leased from, and for what purpose?

**Hon. Sinanan:** I cannot say which company will lease the vehicles, but it is equipment that they would lease from time to time, and because it is drainage, from time to time you might have backhoes, trucks, things like that.

**Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh:** Thank you.

**Mr. Singh:** Thank you, Madam Chair. With respect to Items 09 and 28, is there moneys owed to contractors who leased equipment or who contracted services over the period, and could you provide a listing of the moneys owed to those contractors if it is in fact so.

**Hon. Sinanan:** Yes, we will.

**Madam Chairman:** Can we therefore now move on to Item 006, Mechanical
Mr. Padarath: Hon. Minister, line Items 37 and 43. Again, we are seeing an increase of $25,000, if you look at Janitorial Services under line Item 37, an increase of $25,000. If you look at line Item 43, Security Services, an increase of $95,000. Are there existing service contracts with companies and, therefore, if there is, why is there such a huge jump or an anticipated jump.

Hon. Sinanan: The answer to that, Madam Speaker, is we do have existing bills outstanding, and there is no increase in the price per say, but this is for—

Mr. Padarath: Hon. Minister, the existing contracts that you have, could you indicate, and probably in writing, you may not have it right now, but under line Items 37 and 43 what is the period of the existing contracts that you have? And whether or not they are coming up for renewal or whether or not it will expire? How you wish to treat with that in terms of sending it to us in writing, is your prerogative.

Hon. Sinanan: Yes.

Madam Chairman: So are we complete with Item 006, Mechanical Services, and therefore we go on to Item 007, Maintenance, pages 286 to 287.

Mr. Lee: Line Item 43, Security Services, under Maintenance on page 287, line Item 43, Security Services. Is the Minister saying in 2017 they had no security services provided, because I saw in the revised estimates it was zero, and in 2018 you have now budgeted 423, but in 2016 you had an expenditure of 423 also. Could the Minister explain what happened in 2017?

Hon. Sinanan: Madam Chair, this is for the outstanding bills that we did not pay in 2017.

Mr. Lee: Just to add, so you are saying that this is arrears for 2017?

Hon. Sinanan: A combination.
Appropriation (Financial Year 2018) Bill, 2017
Standing Finance Committee.

Mr. Lee: Of budgeted and arrears?

Hon. Sinanan: Yes.

Mr. Singh: Sub-Item 06, Water and Sewerage Rates. I see that you have in the 2018 estimates a sum of $200,000, an increase of $195,000. Is it because you only allocated $5,000 in 2017 and that therefore the addition is to pay the outstanding rates?

Hon. Sinanan: Yes.

Mr. Singh: You therefore do not budget for an increase in rates for 2018 then?

Hon. Sinanan: No, we do not.

Madam Chairman: So can we move on to Item 008, Construction, pages 287 to 288.

Mr. Padarath: To the hon. Minister, just for my information really, line Item 58 with respect to medical expenses. Could the hon. Minister give us an indication of what that is about?

Hon. Sinanan: Madam Chair, this is for the daily-rated establishment because from time to time we do send them for medical checks.

Madam Chairman: Item 009, Environmental Health and Safety Unit, page 288.

Dr. Rambachan: Minister, I note under Contract Employment that while you had budgeted $4.2 million in 2017, the revised estimate amount to $2.669 million, and you are holding the same amount in 2018. Is it that you have reduced the number of employees in the Environmental Health and Safety Unit?

Hon. Sinanan: Madam Chair, this unit is currently being restructured, and the intention is to put some of the employees into the different units.

Dr. Rambachan: Are you suggesting that you are going to be closing down the Environmental Health and Safety Unit?

Hon. Sinanan: No, Sir, it is just that we want to transfer some of the employees—
the monitoring aspect.

**Dr. Rambachan:** What is the function of the Environmental Health and Safety Unit, and I emphasize “safety”.

**Hon. Sinanan:** What they do, they look at the different buildings that we have in the Ministry to ensure that they are up to the—and any projects that we are doing, health and safety standards.

**Dr. Rambachan:** So they would oversee, for example, contractors who are working on the highway projects and so on?

**Hon. Sinanan:** What they would do is look at the contracts as well to ensure that the contract has the necessary requirements for health and safety.

**Dr. Rambachan:** And with the expansion of work that you are doing now—completion of the Point Fortin highway, Toco, Valencia, Manzanilla, what have you—by whittling down the size of the unit, are you going to be able to accommodate all of that work that has to be done?

**Hon. Sinanan:** What we do is we basically set the policy, and then you would have the different divisions, say NIDCO, whoever handling the projects, remember they too would have their health and safety departments. The Ministry deals basically with the policy.

**Dr. Rambachan:** So NIDCO has a health and safety department and a health and safety officer?

**Hon. Sinanan:** I will confirm that for you. But what we basically do is look at the contracts and the policy going forward.

**Dr. Rambachan:** But it is clear that the unit is being whittled down?

**Hon. Sinanan:** It is being restructured.

**Dr. Rambachan:** That is a neat way of saying that it is not being reduced.

**Hon. Sinanan:** Well, it is not being reduced.
Dr. Tewarie: Madam Chair, I want to focus on contract employment, but I want to ask a general question. When you were talking about drainage, Minister, you talked about the fact that a lot of the services are contracted. When we talk about the work—

Hon. Sinanan: I do not think I said a lot of the services are being contracted. We do have Contracted Services, but we also do a lot in-house.

Dr. Tewarie: From the Ministry?

Hon. Sinanan: Yes.

Dr. Tewarie: These are daily-paid workers who do this?

Hon. Sinanan: Yes.

Dr. Tewarie: Well, that is the question I was going to ask. You have nearly 4,000 daily-paid workers. How are they deployed for all of these things? The Ministry of Works and Transport is a very extensive Ministry in terms of the production that it does for the country. How are they deployed in relation to these contracted services that you have?

Hon. Sinanan: I will send you a breakdown on how it is deployed, but remember we operate with districts, so each district will have their cadre.

Dr. Tewarie: So it is regional distribution?

Hon. Sinanan: Yes.

Madam Chairman: Item 010, Traffic Warden Unit, page 289.

Mr. Padarath: Madam Chair, line Sub-Item 16, Contract Employment, we see an increase of $107,000, but when you look at line Sub-Item 37 for janitorial services more has been allocated for that, an increase of $115,000. The point I wish to make and ask of the hon. Minister is, in light of the legislation that was recently passed, moving offences into violations, where you will need stronger manpower, how then do you justify contract employment at $107,000, with an increase of only

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$107,000, when there is that required manpower that will be needed to effect the legislation, and then after you have on line Sub-Item 37, Janitorial Services at $115 000? Again, is this $115,000 for bills that have not been paid, outstanding bills? So I am particularly looking at 16 and 37. How do you reconcile the two?

Hon. Sinanan: So, of it will be for outstanding payments. What is the other question?

Mr. Padarath: The other one with respect to contract employment and the manpower that will be needed to effect the impending legislation with respect to the violations as opposed to offences?

Hon. Sinanan: Remember we are using a lot of technology going forward with the violations. We will be using technology, not necessarily more boots on the ground.

Mr. Padarath: Well, Minister, respectfully, I do not see one working without the other in this scenario, because remember this is not something that is existing right now. It is something that will have, according to the Member for Chaguanas West, it is a culture change as well. Really, I do not see the reconciliation between not having sufficient boots on the ground and using the technology to get the desired effect that you want.

Hon. Sinanan: It will be a combination of both, but it is not necessarily putting more boots on the ground.

Mr. Padarath: So in effect, hon. Minister, are you then saying that there is no additional human manpower resource available?

Hon. Sinanan: It is not just the traffic wardens will be implementing that. The police would have a significant role as well to play in it. So, to answer your question, yes, we have intentions of the new legislation, but it will not only be dependent on the traffic wardens.
Mr. Padarath: And if I am to get you right, there will be no additional support through the Traffic Warden Unit with respect to effecting the legislation? Is that what you are saying?

Hon. Sinanan: They may be deployed differently.

Mr. Padarath: But no additional support for the unit?

Hon. Sinanan: I am not saying that at this point in time.

Mr. Padarath: Well, Minister, you may not be saying that, but the figures reflect that.

Hon. Sinanan: There is an appraisal of the unit that has to go back to Cabinet very shortly for the whole appraisal of the traffic wardens, which had started about a year ago.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, the value of $14.5 million, how many traffic wardens are now employed?

Madam Chairman: Member, could you just assist us with the line Sub-Item?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Line Sub-Item 16. How many traffic wardens are employed under that Contract Employment? A corollary to that question—

Hon. Sinanan: Could I circulate that to you in writing?

Dr. Gopeesingh: You do not have an idea how precise?

Hon. Sinanan: I do not have the figures right now.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Seven hundred, 800? Hon. Minister, the question is that there is necessity for more training of these traffic wardens, and your budget for training is only $7,000. Could you give that some active consideration somewhere along there, because as what my colleague was mentioning, the new legislation coming where there is increased penalties and fines for violation of traffic wardens, we need to have them fully trained?

Hon. Sinanan: We will give it consideration.

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Dr. Rambachan: Mr. Minister, I noted that in 2017 you had an allocation of $17 million for traffic wardens under Contract Employment, and that was revised to 14.393, which means that there was a cut of about $2.6 million between what you budgeted and what you estimated. Is it that you had a lot of traffic wardens who left the job, or what is the reason for that decrease?

Hon. Sinanan: Madam Chair, it was a combination between contracts coming to an end and yes some of the traffic wardens were poached. A lot of them even went into the police service.

Dr. Rambachan: You said some of the contracts coming to an end. Is it because they are kept on contract and therefore they do not have any promise of longevity in terms of their jobs, that they are seeking to leave the Traffic Warden Unit like they are doing, in numbers?

Hon. Sinanan: What we are doing now with the traffic wardens is a performance appraisal of the entire programme, and once that is completed—

Dr. Rambachan: A performance review.

Hon. Sinanan: Review, yes, of the entire programme, and that has to go to Cabinet and then the programme will be—

Dr. Rambachan: Does that review, Mr. Minister, include a review of the performance of the head of the traffic unit?

Hon. Sinanan: Yes, everybody, the entire cadre in the programme.

3.10 p.m.

Dr. Rambachan: Mr. Minister, have you been receiving complaints from traffic wardens about how they are being treated under Contract Employment?

Hon. Sinanan: I get complaints and compliments. So it is something that we take, but I do get complaints and compliments. I would not want to pre-judge anybody at this stage.
Dr. Rambachan: Under Item 13, sorry, 16 self, is there any, in the future do you intend to make these positions not contract positions, but full time, full employees?

Hon. Sinanan: I guess that depends on the review. After the review that position will be taken.

Dr. Rambachan: Mr. Minister, under Maintenance of Vehicles, for a long while traffic wardens could not come from San Fernando to Gasparillo because of the unavailability of vehicles for months. Remember, I referred that to you and for three months there were no traffic wardens. Are you aware that continues to persist over time, not in Gasparillo now, but from time to time they cannot be moved?

Hon. Sinanan: Yes. From time to time they do have a challenge, but it is something that is being addressed. As you are aware, the Gasparillo problem has been solved.

Madam Chairman: Member for Couva South.

Mr. Indarsingh: Thank you, Madam Chair. On 17, it has been touched on the issue of training and probably finding additional resources. And on Contract Employment, Minister could you really be definitive as it relates to how many traffic wardens’ contracts have not been renewed?

Hon. Sinanan: I will submit that in writing to you. I do not have exact figure now, so I do not want to guess any figure. I will submit to you in writing.

Mr. Indarsingh: So those who were not renewed were subjected to a performance appraisal?—because I heard you say that something was being done for the consideration of the Cabinet.

Hon. Sinanan: It is the entire programme that we are doing the review on.

Mr. Indarsingh: On what basis were their contracts—whatever figure that you are to provide to this meeting, how or what was the basis not to renew their
contracts?

**Hon. Sinanan:** The contracts had a lifespan and the contracts came to an end. But because we are doing the whole appraisal of the unit, that will be determined after the appraisal is completed.

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

**Mr. Singh:** Minister, who is doing this appraisal under Item 16, the Contract Employment? Who is doing this appraisal of the traffic warden unit?

**Hon. Sinanan:** Yes. This is being conducted by PMCD in collaboration with the Commissioner of Police.

**Mr. Singh:** And when is that expected to be completed?

**Hon. Sinanan:** Again, I hope shortly.

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

**Mr. Karim:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Minister, you indicated just now that you would be giving in writing the existing complement of the traffic wardens. Might I ask that you, on a divisional basis, in addition to saying the existing complement, what the desired complement is so we can see whether there is a shortage and what that shortage is? And maybe in your analysis or your appraisal you might want to indicate how you intend to fill that?

**Hon. Sinanan:** I can also include where they are located. Yeah.

**Madam Chairman:** Okay. So, we are moving on to Item 011, Programme Monitoring and Evaluation Unit, page 290; Item 012, Unemployment Relief Programme page 290. Member for Naparima.

**Mr. Charles:** This will be very brief. Unemployment Relief Programme is a programme designed to help those who are disadvantaged. I am looking at Item 08, $3.6 million in rent. Is the Minister satisfied that such a rent is required in the circumstances?—given the fact that the administrative cost in these programmes
tend to outweigh the actual amount of moneys that are disbursed to the people who are in need.

**Hon. Sinanan:** Through you, Madam Chair. This is something that has captured my attention not only the rental, but the actual cost of administering the programme. I give you the assurance that this will be cut down significantly in 2018. Thank you.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 013, General Administration, Transport, page 291; Item 014, Transport Division page 292; Item 015, Maritime Services, page 293. Okay. So, we are now moving on to Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases at page 294; Item 001, General Administration, page 294; Item 002, Highways, page 294. Item 003, Traffic Management, page 294; Item 004, Central Planning Unit, page 295; Item 005, Drainage, page 295; Item 006, Mechanical Services, page 295; Item 007, Maintenance, page 296; Item 008, Construction, page 296; Item 009, Environmental Health and Safety Unit, page 296; Item 010, Traffic Warden Unit, page 297; Item 011, Programme Monitoring and Evaluation Unit, page 297; Item 012, Unemployment Relief Programme, page 297; Item 013, General Administration, Transport, page 298; Item 014, Transport, page 298; Item 015, Maritime Services, page 298.

We now move on to Sub-Head 04, Current Transfer and Subsidies at page 298; Item 001, Regional Bodies, page 298; Item 003, United Nations Organizations, page 299; Item 005, Non-Profit Institutions, page 299; Item 007, Households page 299. Member for Chaguanas West.

**Mr. Singh:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Under Item 007/09, Debit Card System for URP Employees. Minister, could you tell us how this system works?

**Hon. Sinanan:** The debit card system was—yeah, 2008, there was a challenge with the cheque system at the time. You would recall that there were people lining
up outside, was it the Central Bank?—the Treasury, sorry, the Treasury in Port of Spain and all the regional offices and so for cheques, and in 2008 a decision was taken to go to the card system, the debit card system, where once you sign up with the programme you are issued a debit card and your salary goes to the bank rather than you having to go line up to collect the cheque and so outside. And the challenge with that is that they had to provide all the requirements to open a bank account. It is something now that we are looking at now because of the different regulations at the financial institutions where it is a lot more difficult to open a bank account, as we are all aware, so it is something we are revisiting at this point in time.

Madam Chairman: Item 008, Subsidies, page 299. Member for Naparima.

Mr. Charles: Madam Chair, this is the Port Authority towards the deficits in the operations. Given that in 2016, the actual cost was $240 million, they say that the estimate in 2018 is $358.8 million, an increase of a $118 million. Given the fact that we are talking about you—or the Government has been talking about value for money and the dire circumstances in which we are in, is the Government satisfied that the necessary stringency is be applied to this subsidy arrangement, and if so what steps are being taken to contain expenditure?

Hon. Sinanan: Through you, Madam Chair. Yes, there is an increase in the 2017/2018. But the Member needs to be aware, this increase has resulted because one, we have a new cargo vessel; two, this increase takes into consideration the tender that is out now for a new passenger vessel which we did not have before, and it also takes into consideration the repairs and the dry docking for the two passenger ferries that are expected in this fiscal year. So, it is not an increase per se on the existing expenditure, but it does take into consideration a new fast ferry, sorry, another fast ferry and the dry docking of the two passenger ferries.
Madam Chairman: Member for Naparima.

Mr. Charles: I am comparing like with like, 2016 to now, and the vessels that carried, satisfied the requirements of the coastal arrangement with Tobago.

Hon. Sinanan: “Uh hmm.”

Mr. Charles: It worked in 2016. Are you saying that there are costs, there are objective costs that explain this increase?—you talk about a new cargo vessel. Are you saying that cargo vessels have increased now compared to then, or there is some other thing that we are not aware of?

Madam Chairman: Minister of Finance.

Mr. Imbert: When we looked at the request from the Ministry of Works and Transport on this particular Item it was recognized that the two fast ferries which were acquired about 10 years ago, the Express and the Spirit, were not in a condition to be in full service in 2018. This would require the port to lease ferries as replacements for these vessels. So that the situation in 2018 is a little different from 2016 when the vessels were in operation. Okay? So what is happening, we own the Express and the Spirit so there is no lease costs associated with the Express and the Spirit. There are, of course, repairs and maintenance, crew costs, fuel, supplies, that sort of thing. But since those two vessels are going to be refurbished in this fiscal and will not be then available for service on the route, you would have to lease vessels which were not required in 2016. So that is the reason for—that was the justification and we accepted it as being a reasonable justification.

Mr. Charles: Minister of Finance, you are reiterating that you are satisfied that the necessary approaches were taken and systems were put in place to protect the taxpayers’ money?

Mr. Imbert: That is a quantum leap. What I am saying is that in 2016, we had
the two vessels that we had acquired in 2005/2006 operating on the route, but now those two vessels require major refurbishment and therefore, there is requirement to lease vessels in 2018. That requirement did not exist in 2016 and therefore, we were satisfied that this request for additional funding to ensure a proper service on the inter-island route was justified.

Madam Chairman: Member for Caroni Central.

Dr. Tewarie: Just a clarification. You are saying in addition to whatever is transpiring now we have need to lease two additional vessels to replace the Express and the Spirit.

Mr. Imbert: No, one. That was what was presented to us that there is need to lease one additional—

Dr. Tewarie: One additional.

Mr. Imbert:—passenger roll on roll off vessel ferry vessel. Okay?

Madam Chairman: Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Madam Chair, it was already 007 which has already passed. Thanks.

Madam Chairman: Member Couva South. Member for Chaguanas West.

Mr. Singh: It is a continuation of 009, Madam. I am on 009.

Madam Chairman: Okay. We are still on 008. Member for Caroni East, 008.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Could the hon. Minister of Finance give an approximation of the repair cost that he speaks about and the cost for the temporary replacement of one of the passenger ferries when it is being repaired. So that the one that is going to be leased in substituting for that one, what is the approximate cost for that, and what is the approximate cost for the repairs?

Mr. Imbert: I cannot give you those details, perhaps the Minister of Works and Transport can do that in due course. But what I can say is that when we considered
the need to lease one additional passenger ferry and the need to refurbish the existing fast ferries, the additional amount for all of that work including the dry docking, refurbishment and leasing of the additional ferry, came up to the additional $93 million. But I cannot break it down for you, the Minister of Works and Transport will do that.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Tabaquite.

**Dr. Rambachan:** What is the procurement going to be used to effect the repairs of the two vessels?

**Hon. Sinanan:** Sorry.

**Dr. Rambachan:** What is the procurement process being used to effect the repairs of the two vessels that you are talking about?

**Hon. Sinanan:** That process is being done through the port procurement regulations, and as you are aware one is now at Caridock on dry dock, and the other one is expected to go on by the end of November.

**Dr. Rambachan:** The one at Caridock, dry dock was that done by open tender or was it a sole select?

**Hon. Sinanan:** I know it was carried out through the port’s procurement regulations and I can follow that up.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Did the Ministry have any hand in approving the contract through the Cabinet or was it simply done by the port?

**Hon. Sinanan:** Those are operation matters at the port, the repair of vessels.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Is the Minister satisfied that procurement process that will be used by the Port Authority on this occasion was satisfactory?

**Hon. Sinanan:** Once—the port has its rules and regulations for procurement, and once it is followed.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Was there a report sent by the chairman of the Port Authority to
the Minister, because these are moneys the port would not have, the moneys that are being subsidized by the Government, by the Cabinet, and does this have to have Cabinet approval?

**Hon. Sinanan:** Yes. So that is why the appropriation of funding for these expenditures.

**Dr. Rambachan:** No. On this occasion, Mr. Minister, is it that the Port Authority was given full autonomy to go and have these boats repairs at Caridock or where have you and so on?

**Hon. Sinanan:** The port has the responsibility for managing the repairs of the vessels, and any procurement undertaken by the port must be done within the port’s rules and regulation for procurement—

**Dr. Rambachan:** And given what has occurred—

**Hon. Sinanan:** —and approved by the board.

**Dr. Rambachan:** —and given what has occurred at the Joint Select Committee recently with respect to the Port Authority, did the Minister seek to satisfy himself that the process used by the board of the Port Authority and the Port Authority was valid, was one of integrity?

**Hon. Sinanan:** You would recognize that this vessel that is on dry dock went on dry dock a couple months ago. Okay? And subsequent to that we had the information coming out of the Joint Select Committee. I know that the board at the Port Authority, commissioners at the Port Authority are ensuring that all proper regulations are followed with any procurement at the port.

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

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, there is a difference between the Estimates and the Revised Estimates of $25 million for 2017. Could you help us appreciate the causative factor for that?
Hon. Sinanan: Sure. The $25 million, through you, Madam Chair, would have accounted for the procurement of the Cabo Star together with the dry docking, expenses for the dry docking for the T&T Sprit for 2017.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Okay. Bearing in mind that the new vessels came on around about February to replace the SS Galicia.

Hon. Sinanan: No. It was not February.

Dr. Gopeesingh: February, March or around there.

Hon. Sinanan: No.

Dr. Gopeesingh: So we would probably be dealing with about six months’—

Hon. Sinanan: I think it would have been August.

Dr. Gopeesingh:—difference with increased costs. Can you give us the increased cost for fiscal year 2017 as a result of the introduction of these two new vessels for 2017?

Hon. Sinanan: Well there is just one vessel, there is just one vessel which is the Cabo Star which came on, I think, was some time around August.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Right.

Hon. Sinanan: July. Right? Sometime around July, and there is an increase in the cost of the existing cargo vessel, and the previous vessel the Galicia. However, the cost might be in the range of about maybe about $3,000 or $4,000—

Dr. Gopeesingh: Per day?

Hon. Sinanan:—per day.

Dr. Gopeesingh: US?

Hon. Sinanan: I do not have the exact figure.

Dr. Gopeesingh: All right. But could you give us an appreciation of what the increased cost is going to be for fiscal 2018 as result of that?

Hon. Sinanan: I cannot give you a cost for the two vessels because remember
there is tender out now and we do not know what the price will come in for when the evaluation of that tender is completed.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Okay. Just permit me, the hon. Minister of Finance indicated that the $93 million would be as a result of the repairs, one, and two the rental for the substitution of one of the vessels.

Hon. Sinanan: Right.

Dr. Gopeesingh: And that would come back to the original $265 million, but there is also an increase cost for 2018 as a result of your new vessels leasing. So why this figure of $358 million is probably an under reflection of the actual cost and is possibly higher.

Hon. Sinanan: Again, this is based on our estimation, and if there is an increased cost, I am sure the Minister of Finance make it available to you, but this is based on the estimations that we have.

Madam Chairman: Member for Naparima.

Dr. Gopeesingh: All right.

Mr. Charles: Thank you, Chair. I would just like to follow up on questions asked by the Member for Tabaquite. Given the problems that we have experienced with procurement on the port, if there are problems, are you satisfied that the procurement systems meet the stringent requirements of the financial situation which we are in; have you reviewed it; have you looked it; and do you wish to give this House the understanding, the comfort that you are comfortable with the procurement approach by the Port Authority?

Hon. Sinanan: The assurance that I can give the House is that the commissioners at the port are reviewing the process for procurement at the port, and if need be, to make recommendations to the Ministry going forward. I can give you the assurance that the commissioners at the port are looking at this very seriously.
Madam Chairman: Member for Caroni Central.

Dr. Tewarie: Given that this expenditure has to do with payment for basically replacements to run between Tobago and Trinidad, my understanding is that the contract for the *Ocean Flower 2* is cancelled, can you confirm that?

Hon. Sinanan: Through you, Madam Chair. Yes. The contract has been cancelled, so there is no existing contract.

Dr. Tewarie: So there is no cost ascribed here to that?

Hon. Sinanan: To my information there is no cost incurred with the cancellation.

Dr. Tewarie: But a provision is made for another vessel.

Hon. Sinanan: Yes.

Dr. Tewarie: Okay. And that vessel, based on our understanding of the cancelling of the contract is likely to be some other vessel procured, but not the *Ocean Flower 2*.

Hon. Sinanan: I cannot say that there is an evaluation process. There was a public tender. I do not know the vessels that participated, so that I cannot prejudge what the outcome of the tender will be.

Dr. Tewarie: Madam Chair, through you, are you saying, Minister, that the contract with the *Ocean Flower 2* is cancelled, but there is a chance that or a possibility that the *Ocean Flower 2* may, in fact, be considered as the procured vessel which will eat up part of the allocation here for that purpose in the 2018 budget?

Hon. Sinanan: Madam Chair, through you, there was a public tender which you are all aware of. I cannot prejudge what the outcome of that tender will be, so I will not make any statements as to who the final, what the final evaluation will show up. That is an evaluation that will done by the port and the recommendations will come to the Ministry. I will wait until the recommendations come to the
Dr. Tewarie: May I ask, who cancelled the contract?

Hon. Sinanan: The cancellation of the Ocean Flower 2?

Dr. Tewarie: Yes.

Mr. Imbert: Madam Chairman, there seems to be a lot of questioning on this line Item, I think the Minister has been very forthcoming on this line Item.

Madam Chairman: All right. So Minister, are you answering the question?

Hon. Sinanan: Cancelled. This was a recommendation from the—

Dr. Rowley: Madam Chairman, just for the benefit of the public and to prevent any misunderstanding of that line of questioning, I seem to recall that the Port Authority issued a public statement which is a clear answer to that question, that the Port Authority cancelled that arrangement for reasons given. So, I do not want it left hanging here to give the impression that the Government did not want to answer the question.

Dr. Tewarie: But, Madam Chair, that is precisely the answer I wanted clarified. So the Prime Minister has indicated that the port cancelled the contract.

Dr. Rowley: That is it.

Dr. Tewarie: I then want to ask the Minister this question and he may choose to answer it as he feels a Minister should.

Hon. Sinanan: Madam Chair, through you, the Port Authority is the government agent—

Dr. Tewarie: Yes. I understand that and I am not trying to make any—

Hon. Sinanan: Okay. So the Port Authority would have gone out for a tender on behalf of the Ministry.

Dr. Tewarie: Yes.

Hon. Sinanan: On the advice of the Port Authority, the Ministry would have
cancelled the contract for the *Ocean Flower 2*.

**Mr. Young:** If I may assist, Madam Chair?

**Dr. Tewarie:** This makes it a little confusing. You have two answers.

**Mr. Young:** No. No. I will clarify, if I may, Madam Chair? The contract was executed with the Ministry of Works and Transport. So the Port Authority—

**Dr. Tewarie:** For the *Ocean Flower 2*.

**Mr. Young:**—for the *Ocean Flower 2*. All right? So that contract then privity of contract is between the Ministry of Works and Transport and the owners of the *Ocean Flower 2*, so the notice of cancellation termination was done on the advice of the port who are the agents, but it was done by the Ministry of Works and Transport because that is the party who had contracted.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Okay. And for the new tenders, Madam Chair, which is what I am trying to make a connection with, those new tenders are being administered and managed by the Port Authority.

**Hon. Sinanan:** Yeah.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Is that true, Minister?

**Hon. Sinanan:** Yes.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Okay. So any decision that is made whether it is for the *Ocean Flower 2* or for any other vessel will be by the port notwithstanding the fact that the Ministry cancelled the contract with the *Ocean Flower 2*?

**Hon. Sinanan:** Yeah.

**Dr. Tewarie:** I just want to know the facts.

**Hon. Sinanan:** Yes. Yes.

**Dr. Rowley:** Then let me make this very clear, this is the standard arrangement. The Ministry, the Ministry is the client and whenever, whenever a decision has to be made once the port has made the selection, it has to come to the Ministry. And
the reason I want to make this very clear is because there are some other questions being asked as to why the Ministry was approving vessel A, B, C or D. Every single vessel, whoever the vessel, whatever the vessel, when it is time to sign off on the port’s choice, it is done by the Ministry.

3.40 p.m.

Dr. Tewarie: Okay. Well, then that leads me to a very direct question to the Minister. Were it to be the case, Madam Chair, that the port were by its tendering process to choose the Ocean Flower 2, which the Ministry has indicated—the Minister has indicated, the Ministry cancelled, would the Minister then consider at all taking that vessel for approval to Cabinet?

Madam Chairman: Minister of Works and Transport.

Hon. Sinanan: Madam Chair, through you, I will not venture in presuming what is going to happen in a tender, and I will have no comment on that at this stage.

Dr. Tewarie: So, we will wait then.

Madam Chairman: So, we go on. Item 009, Other Transfers, page 30. Member for Chaguanas West.

Mr. Singh: Thank you, Madam Chair. Under Item 02, Agua Santa. Agua Santa, my understanding is the bitumen producing plant of the Government.

Hon. Sinanan: Yes.

Mr. Singh: I see that there is an increase of $428,000, which is welcomed. Madam Chair, I would like to find out from the Minister, what is the capacity of this plant? That is one. The production capacity of the plant and whether there is any intention, having regard to Government policy, to start a recycling industry with the imposition of the environmental tax on tyres, and I know that there is a Cabinet Note seeking to have crumb tyre part of the creation of rubberised asphalt, whether or not the Ministry plans to utilise and set the tone for the other private
sector in the creation of rubberised asphalt? One, and two, what is the production capacity of this Agua Santa plant for bitumen?

**Madam Chairman:** The Minister of Works and Transport.

**Hon. Sinanan:** Sure. Through you, Madam Chair. The Ministry at this point in time does not have plans for using the tyres in terms of the road bitumen. However, through the PURE programme, we are looking at techniques for landslips and so using tyres if possible. In terms of the capacity of the Agua Santa plant, it is 6000 tonnes per day. Sorry, the 6000 tonnes is annually.

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

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. In respect of 05, Water-Taxi Service, there is a decrease of $4,961,696 in terms of this particular line Item. Could the Minister provide the reason for this, and is there a contemplated increase in using the water taxi for the ordinary persons, price rise that is?

**Hon. Sinanan:** Again, Madam Chair, through you, there is no decision for any increase in price. The question is, if I get it right, you are asking about the increase in the water taxi?

**Mr. Indarsingh:** No.

**Hon. Sinanan:** The decrease, sorry.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** The decrease, and how it will impact upon the operations of the water taxi?

**Hon. Sinanan:** If you look at the estimate for 2018, it is $54 million. In 2017 it was $36 million. There was a revised estimate of $58 million. That was because of repairs that had to be conducted on the water taxis. So, over the estimate for 2017 and the estimate for 2018 is actually an increase.

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

**Mr. Indarsingh:** No, Madam, I give way to my colleague.
Madam Chairman: Okay, so Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Bearing in mind, hon. Minister, that the water taxi has been used to assist in the difficulties experienced in transportation to Tobago, what cost factor, or if any, has been attributed to that aspect for assisting in Tobago? Or if it is used—when it is used for Tobago, does the route suffer from South to North as a result, and what cost factor is involved in that?

Hon. Sinanan: Through you, Madam Chair. There has been no interruption in the service, because the water taxi would have been used basically on weekends when there is no demand coming from San Fernando to Port of Spain, and whatever cost would have been borne by the Port Authority.

Dr. Gopeesingh: So generally it might have been used more for the weekends than during the week?

Hon. Sinanan: Just for the weekends. Yes. When the need for more capacity arose.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Thank you.

Madam Chairman: Member for Tabaquite.

Dr. Rambachan: I would stick with the water taxi, but I will go back to Agua Santa in a moment. Mr. Minister, $54 million is going to be spent on the subsidy to the water taxi. What is the revenue of the water taxi in its operation from San Fernando to Port of Spain? How many passengers are moved? And thirdly, by how much are we subsidising each ticket, given the cost of operating the two water taxis?

Hon. Sinanan: Through you, Madam Chair, I would want to provide that in writing, but I just want to remind the Member that the water taxi is also an service. I said, just like how we have the PTSC and these other essential services. But I will forward it.
Dr. Rambachan: But you would agree that it is important for the taxpayer to know what the taxpayer is spending.

Hon. Sinanan: As I said I will furnish you in writing. But I just want to remind you that it is a service that is essential and is fully utilised.

Dr. Rambachan: Would the Minister agree that it might be worth the while of the Government to consider the more active decentralisation of services so as to cut down the amount of people who have to come to work in Port of Spain and therefore cannot get the transport that live closer to their areas, and therefore cut down on the cost of operations of these things, through active decentralisation, including decentralisation through local government?

Madam Chairman: Minister of Finance.

Mr. Imbert: These matters are always under consideration, and that is part of local government reform as you know.

Dr. Rambachan: Which is two years been promised now, eh.

Madam Chairman: Member for Chaguana East.

Mr. Karim: Thank you, Madam Chair. Just in terms as the Minister indicated with respect to the provision of a service by the water taxi and sometimes deemed essential, are you contemplating any additional stops for the water taxi?

Hon. Sinanan: Through you, Madam Chair. It is no secret that the country has some serious financial challenges at this point in time, and the water taxi, as the Member for Tabaquite said, is a fairly expensive service. So immediately, there are no plans to extend the service. However, again, it is something that the Ministry would always be looking in terms of once funding becomes available.

Madam Chairman: Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: I do not know if you have reached 011, Transfer to State Enterprises as yet?
Madam Chairman: I am about to call it. Member for Tabaquite, you still have on 009?

Dr. Rambachan: Yes, I said Agua Santa I was coming back to. Mr. Minister, you said that the plant is capable of producing 6,000 tonnes a year. Do we have how much the plant is producing now on an annual basis?

Hon. Sinanan: What we produced was 6,000 tonnes. It can produce more. What we use this plant basically for is for the new patching programme that we six to mend. So we use the Agua Santa plant to produce the material that we do a lot of in-house patching with. And what we are producing now is approximately 6000 tonnes.

Dr. Rambachan: Have you looked at the cost of producing 6,000 as against buying it at approximately $700 per tonne, supplied and put in place? What does the 6,000 tonnes cost you? A tonne of asphalt now, laid, is about $690 to $700 a tonne. That is supply and lay.

Hon. Sinanan: Okay. Again, what we use it is for is patching. A comparative analysis was done and we can compare with what they did. However, in the past when you asked contractors to go out and patch it is difficult to manage that, the patching. So we decided with the new programme we have, we have 10 trucks now, patching on a daily basis, and I want to compliment the Highway Division who have intentions of putting an additional 10, so we would have at least two trucks in every area.

Dr. Rambachan: So, Mr. Minister, you are not contracting out the service to patch right now?

Hon. Sinanan: No.

Dr. Rambachan: Mr. Minister, hold on. Then that cannot be correct, because up to two weeks ago, COOSAL was patching the entire road from Oropouche junction

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Hon. Sinanan: Okay, that job was not a patching job.

Dr. Rambachan: Yes, it was patching. Patching about 40 something potholes left by WASA.

Hon. Sinanan: Okay, right. What we are dealing with here is the Ministry of Works. WASA probably would have contracted them. But once the Ministry of Works is doing patching it is all done in house. WASA on the other hand may hire contractors to do patching for WASA purposes. So if you saw COOSAL patching WASA holes, it meant WASA would have contracted COOSAL, not the Ministry of Works.

Dr. Rambachan: We have to check that Mr. Minister, because your people from Ministry of Works were there on the site.

Hon. Sinanan: I have the directors here and they are telling me that we did that patching there with COOSAL.

Madam Chairman: Member for Caroni East, are we going on to 011?

Mr. Singh: Yes.

Madam Chairman: Okay, could you just allow me to call it. Member for Naparima, are you on 009 or 011?

Mr. Charles: 011.

Madam Chairman: Okay. So we now move on to Item 011, Transfers to States enterprises, page 300. Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Sub-Item 07, Madam Chair, to the hon. Minister of Finance. Could you indicate how much was paid for this rapid rail transit system? So far $23 million in 2016, $21 million in 2017, et cetera. And how much is still being owed for the complete payment of the rapid rail transit system? How much was paid so far and how much is owed, and how many years you estimate that we will
Madam Chairman: Minister of Finance.

Dr. Gopeesingh: That is question number one, Madam Chair, should I wait?

Madam Chairman: The Minister of Finance.

Mr. Imbert: Yes. That information will be provided together with the amount paid on the $1.5 billion loan for the Point Fortin highway. You will get both.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Thank you. I was going to ask for just a few more under this line Item. The motor vehicle for NIPDEC, that is 02, how much was paid? How much is to be paid? The four new fast ferries, that is 04 Item. The El Socorro overpass which we completed, and then the—

Madam Chairman: That is 05?

Dr. Gopeesingh: That is line Item 05. Then—well, he said he would give—the Minister said he will give it for 12.

Mr. Imbert: Madam Chairman to speed everything up, I will give all.

Dr. Gopeesingh: You would give all?

Mr. Imbert: All.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Right. Okay, thank you. How much was owed? How much was paid? And how much is to be paid?

Mr. Imbert: All the information.

Madam Chairman: Member for Naparima.

Mr. Charles: Still asked by my colleague, that the repayment of the Trinidad Rapid Rail Transit system, in addition to the information he has agreed to provide, could he tell us the benefits of this loan? Thank you.

Mr. Imbert: I will provide the information on the cost and the payments.

Madam Chairman: Member for Chaguanas West?

Mr. Singh: Thank you Madam Chair. Item 01, Transfers to State Enterprises:
VMCOTT, the allocation is $10 million. Minister, this is an enterprise earmarked for privatization, for private sector involvement. Is it part of the policy to continue that process of private sector involvement in VMCOTT, or is it—because my understanding is it is earmarked for private sector involvement.

**Mr. Imbert:** This is in your time?

**Mr. Singh:** Your time.

**Mr. Imbert:** So, that is your understanding of what is going on in our time?

**Mr. Singh:** Yes.

**Mr. Imbert:** We are looking at a public/private partnership. I answered you.

**Mr. Singh:** With respect to this specific organization?

**Mr. Imbert:** We are talking about this line Item, are we not?

**Mr. Singh:** All right.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Tabaquite. And I just want to remind all Members please, just to ensure that their mikes are on and that they speak in the mikes.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Sure.

**Madam Chairman:** Thank you.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Thank you. Minister, VMCOTT was set up originally to repair public service vehicles; police vehicles, and so on. Is it that VMCOTT has not been repairing police service vehicles again, or they are incapable, and/or is it that they are not being paid by the police service and so on for doing these vehicles that it necessitates this kind of subvention for the year? Firstly. And secondly, I noticed that a lot of police service vehicles are now being repaired by private organisations, so what is it that has made VMCOTT—that is taking VMCOTT out of the original core business that they were prepared to do?

**Hon. Sinanan:** Through you, Madam Chair. Over the last 10 years or so,
VMCOTT has continuously had a reduction in the government fleet for several reasons, and maybe the time has come now, as the Minister of Finance said, that we look to reshape the model of VMCOTT. Because clearly the model is not working and the Government has taken a decision to look for a public/private partnership for VMCOTT.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Mr. Minister, that lack of reshaping it, whether it is your Government or any other Government, has cost us $50 million in the last five years. In a country in which there are 800,000-plus vehicles, and one wonders why VMCOTT cannot get it right. Therefore, how long are you going to take to make a decision on getting it right with a company like VMCOTT to save this country $10 million a year?

**Hon. Sinanan:** Through you, Madam Chair, that has been the million dollar question that I asked the first month I came into the Ministry, and I am happy that we are actually going into the direction now where we are paying a lot of attention to VMCOTT, because it cannot continue at the rate that it is going. VMCOTT has recently gone into the car washing business, which is something that I find very strange, because I do not understand why somebody like VMCOTT have to turn to washing cars to survive. So, I take your point that the direction of VMCOTT has to change, and let us see what, coming out of the Ministry of Finance public/private partnership—that might just be what VMCOTT needs to turn around.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Mr. Minister, while I hear you, I do not necessarily agree with you. When people are placed to do a job, they must do the job and make the enterprise a profitable enterprise. And I think that in VMCOTT people are not doing their job, they are not marketing the services, and there is all the equipment, and you should take a drive down to South, and to see what really goes on there in
Hon. Sinanan: Again, through you, Madam Chair, that is a problem not only at VMCOTT. If we look at the Port of Port of Spain, they should be a profitable organization as well. If you look at Petrotrin, they too should be profitable. And, it is something that we have to look at as to the whole attitude by everyone working in the public sector. And I agree with you, VMCOTT should be profitable, but it is not, and it cannot continue.

Madam Chairman: Member for Princes Town.

Mr. Padarath: Thank you, Madam Chairman. Hon. Minister, on that same point with respect to the public/private partnerships you have indicated, can you tell us how advanced are these public/private partnership explorations? In that, have you identified companies that you wish—[Cell phone rings]

Madam Chairman: Excuse, somebody’s device.

Mr. Padarath:—who might express interest with respect to the partnerships?

Madam Chairman: Excuse me please, Member, somebody’s device! Okay, Member for Princes Town.

Mr. Padarath: Minister, what can happen is that we can hear for the next three years about these public/private partnerships and they never come to fruition. What is the work plan with respect to these public/private partnerships, and how advanced is it at this stage?

Hon. Sinanan: Through you, Madam Chair, that being handled by the Ministry of Finance, the VMCOTT matter.

Mr. Imbert: Look, can we put an end to this. VMCOTT as a state enterprise is being considered by the Corporation Sole for a public/private partnership to deal with all of the issues surrounding VMCOTT, its efficiency, its profitability, its relevance, et cetera. So, we are looking at a private/public partnership for this
Standing Finance Committee.

enterprise.

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

**Mr. Karim:** Thank you very much, Madam Chairperson. I am on Item 07. Can the hon. Minister indicate whether this sum that was engaged in for the feasibility study of the Trinidad Rapid Rail Transit System, whether any part of that study, or the study in itself is going to be used in the future for any purpose similar to what it was intended?

**Madam Chairman:** Minister of Finance.

**Hon. Member:** Rapid rail.

**Mr. Imbert:** We still on that? I thought we passed that? [Laughter] I thought that Item finished?

**Hon. Member:** Answer the question.

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

**Mr. Karim:** The question really is, whether the report, the feasibility study, any part of it, or the report is proposed to be used in the future for an investment that was due?

**Mr. Imbert:** We took a decision, because of the economic challenges facing Trinidad and Tobago, not to proceed with that project at this point in time. However, there was a lot of information on traffic patterns, traffic demand, vehicle population, the behaviour of drivers and passengers, and so on, which has been of invaluable service to the past Government and this the Government.

**Madam Chairman:** So we move on to Sub-Head 06. Do you have a question, Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla?

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Actually, just to add to the list that the hon. Minister of Finance, in his written response. If he can include what the line Item 17—

**Hon. Member:** 71.
Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: No, no, no. What services were provided? I know you would have had other things, but just to add what services were provided for the use of that $100 million.

Mr. Imbert: Just let me clear up. A lot of these Items—if you are still on that one, 011—are loans taken out by previous governments, including the one you were in, and I would think that that $400 million bond would certainly have been in your time.

Madam Chairman: Okay, so we move on to Sub-Head 06, Current Transfers to Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies, and we move directly to the Draft Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure, Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies, and the Tobago House of Assembly. That is where the details are, and we start at page 391, Sub-Head—we are under 39: Airports Authority of Trinidad and Tobago, Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure; 001 General Administration, page 391.

Mr. Indarsingh: Madam Chair, just to give us a little time?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Just give us a little time, three what, Madam Chair?

[MR. FORDE in the Chair]

Mr. Chairman: Page 391 colleagues.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Page 390, would you start—

Mr. Chairman: Page 391, Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure, and we are going to 001 General Administration.

Dr. Gopeesingh: All right. Okay.

Mr. Chairman: Tabaquite.

Dr. Rambachan: Thank you. Could the Minister explain why there has been projected a $5 million increase in salaries and cost of living for 2018 estimates over 2017 in an organization which is not earning its keep?
Mr. Chairman: Minister.

Dr. Rambachan: If the objective of the Government is performance management, if the objective of the Government is to get productivity and value for money, are we rewarding incompetence and lack of productivity by increasing salaries?

Hon. Sinanan: Through you, Mr. Chair, what was this increase? It is for the allocation for the increase in collective agreements, one. And two, for vacancies that have to be filled.

Mr. Chairman: Member for Couva South.

Mr. Indarsingh: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Just connecting with what the Minister indicated, that the $5 million increase in allocation is for settlement of increases and so on. Could the Minister advise if there are outstanding salaries or back pays as it relates to wage settlements that were realized between the employer and the recognized majority unions, and so on? And how much is owed?

Mr. Chairman: Minister.

Hon. Sinanan: So, there is one that is outstanding. [Crosstalk] Right, so there is one that is outstanding.

Mr. Indarsingh: For what period and the sum please?

Hon. Sinanan: What is the period? Yes, 2012/2014, and that is for the security.

Mr. Indarsingh: And how much is owed?

Hon. Sinanan: It is about $80 million outstanding.

Mr. Indarsingh: About $80 million that is outstanding.

Hon. Sinanan: Yes.

Mr. Indarsingh: Could the Minister advise this meeting when this sum of $80 million will be fully settled?

Hon. Sinanan: It was much more than that. It was $200 before—

Mr. Indarsingh: Yes, Minister, I am very aware of—
Hon. Sinanan: It was paid in tranches, and this year—the final payment is $80 million.

Mr. Indarsingh: Yes. But, again, are you in a position to advise the meeting when will this sum of $80 million be fully settled?

Hon. Sinanan: I will send that information in writing to you, once I—

Mr. Indarsingh: And, if I could ask, in terms of this allocation for salaries and cost of living, through you, Mr. Chair, could the Minister advise this meeting if he is aware of retirees who are currently employed at the Airports Authority, drawing sums of salary between 35 to $50,000 a month?

[ Mrs. Annissette-George in the Chair ]

Hon. Sinanan: Through you, Madam Chair, I have no knowledge of that at this point in time, but I could check.

Mr. Indarsingh: But, Mr. Minister, could I point you in the direction of the property department at the Airports Authority and also a deputy general manager who retired sometime in June or July.

Mr. Imbert: May I just intervene here. The Minister of Works and Transport has said that he is not aware of that. You cannot get anything more out of him.

Mr. Indarsingh: With all due respect to the Minister of Finance, Madam Chair, the Minister said he is not aware. I sought to advise him, and to look in the direction. I do not want to name the persons, but I could inform you of their initials also.

Madam Chairman: All right. Here is what I suggest Member for Couva South. I think that as it is not here, they would have an opportunity to interrogate that matter in some further detail in another forum. Okay? Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.

Mr. Lee: Thank you, Chair. To the Minister, Sub-Item 06, Remuneration to
Board Members. 2016 has been consistent with 2017, what is your increase for a million dollars by $400,000 this year?

**Hon. Sinanan:** Through you, Madam Chair, currently there are six board members. The full complement is 10. So, the allocation was made in 2018 for the full complement of the board.

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

**Mr. Indarsingh:** On the issue of salaries and cost of living, and so on, Mr. Minister you indicated that $80 million was for the expired period, have negotiations began between the Airports Authority and the Estate Police Association for the current period, and so on?

**Hon. Sinanan:** No, the negotiations have not started.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Any particular reason, Mr. Minister? Or are we suppressing the collective bargaining process out there?

**Madam Chairman:** Members!

**Mr. Imbert:** Madam Chairman, is that a line Item question?

**Madam Chairman:** The question comes under salary and Cost of Living Allowance.

**Hon. Sinanan:** The question is whether—

**Mr. Imbert:** You indicated that negotiations did not commence for the current period, and I was simply asking, what was the reason, and if the collective bargaining process is being suppressed out there?

**Hon. Sinanan:** The answer is not being suppressed. It has not started.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** But what is the reason for the current period?

**Hon. Sinanan:** Again, if you want that I will submit it to you in writing. But I do not have that information.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** And the person next to you—

**UNREVISED**
Madam Chairman: Member! Member, please! Are you asking a question—

Mr. Indarsingh: Yes, I am trying to find out the reason, Madam Chair, for the non-commencement of the negotiations—

Madam Chairman: And the Member has indicated—

Mr. Indarsingh: —and for the current period.

4.10 p.m.

Madam Chairman: Member, the Member has indicated that he will supply the reason for that in writing. Okay? It is not really a question that comes under a line Item here, but the Minister is prepared to answer and he said he will answer in writing.

Dr. Rowley: Madam Chairman, may I intervene just to draw your attention to the fact—I want, just for clarification. All the matters that we have here, and I think there are eight Heads, right? We are due to stop these proceedings at eight o’clock. Is that correct?

Madam Chairman: I believe what we agreed, Member for Diego Martin West—

Dr. Rowley: That we would examine eight Heads.

Madam Chairman: We will examine eight Heads and we either stop at 8.00 or when the eight Heads are completed, whichever is the later.

Dr. Rowley: Whichever is the later. So we could go until midnight? Well, that means—my concern, Madam Chairman, is that, I notice a number of questions are being entertained that have nothing to do with the budget—

Hon. Member: What?

Dr. Rowley: And a lot of these questions are—

Hon. Member: What?

Dr. Rowley: —prosecuting matters outside of budgetary consideration. I do not think that the Government will be answering any more of the questions that are
prosecuting matters outside of the budget. Because, like the last question, Madam Speaker, the last question about the progress of negotiations, that is not a budgetary matter.

**Hon. Member:** Why?

**Dr. Rowley:** If the Member wants to discuss the pros and cons of the pre-bargaining, whatever, that is a different matter, otherwise what we are going to do here is spend the whole afternoon dealing with one Head and then seven more Heads to come before daybreak and then tomorrow morning we will come back at 10 o’clock. Is that what you all want to do? I am just saying, Madam Chairman, is that I have been in this process before and we have—[*Interruption*]

**Madam Chairman:** Member.

**Dr. Rowley:** Whether you shut up or not is not my issue, Madam Chairman. I am not saying that. [*Interruption*]

**Madam Chairman:** Members, please.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Tell us, tell us.

**Dr. Rowley:** I am addressing the Chair on a matter of procedure and all I am saying, Madam Chairman, is that if we allow the time allocated to be used for extraneous matter on agendas that are not budgetary we will find ourselves with difficulty as we fade into the night. That is all I am saying.

**Madam Chairman:** So we are on Item 002, Passenger and Cargo Terminals, page 391. Item 003, Airport Operations, page 391; Item 004, Runways, Taxiways, Grounds and Carparks, page 391. Member for Caroni East.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Just a short question, the reason for the increase in salaries by $3.2 million. Is it more personnel going to be involved or what?

**Hon. Sinanan:** Is that 01?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Yes, 004/01, Salaries and Costs of Living Allowance for
personnel in runways, taxiways, grounds and carparks.

Hon. Sinanan: Right. It is a combination of the two, an increase in staff together with the preparation for the increase in salaries.

Dr. Gopeesingh: For the new bargaining process?

Hon. Sinanan: For the new bargaining process.

Dr. Gopeesingh: All right. Okay.

Madam Chairman: Member for Chaguanas West.

Mr. Singh: I am on Item 005 when you reach there.

Madam Chairman: All right. Member for Chaguanas East. You are on 004.

Mr. Karim: 004. Hon. Minister, the responsibility for all runways and taxiways falls under the Airports Authority to collect the respective fees?

Hon. Sinanan: Yes.

Mr. Karim: All runways?

Hon. Sinanan: Yes.

Mr. Karim: Does that include Camden?

Hon. Sinanan: No. Camden is not included. Camden is not under the Airports Authority.

Mr. Karim: Who is it under if you are able to advise?

Hon. Sinanan: There is no allowance right now for the—

Mr. Karim: Will it be under the Airports Authority or the Civil Aviation Authority?

Hon. Sinanan: Neither.

Mr. Karim: So right now it is on its own?

Hon. Sinanan: Yes. They do not report to the Airports Authority. The Airports Authority does not—

Mr. Karim: I just want to get it clear. The regulations indicate that all runways
and taxiways of airports, is it under the Airports Authority or who has the responsibility or the jurisdiction for those?

**Hon. Sinanan:** No. Under the Act it is the Piarco International Airport and the ANR Robinson International Airport. And Camden is not a certified airfield. So it is not—

**Mr. Karim:** By the Airports Authority?

**Hon. Sinanan:** It is not certified.

**Mr. Karim:** Okay.

**Madam Chairman:** Okay. So Item 005: Security, page 392. Member for Chaguanas West.

**Mr. Singh:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Could the hon. Minister indicate the complement of security staff under the issue of Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance? And secondly, overtime has been decreased considerably, and having regard to the fact that the airport is a—well—ought to have heightened security, how can you explain the decrease in overtime allowance by some $6 million?

**Hon. Sinanan:** So the complement is 408 security officers.

**Mr. Singh:** Is that the optimum level of security officers that is required for the efficient operation of the airport?

**Hon. Sinanan:** Through you, Madam Chair, the manpower is sufficient with the technology that is being used at the airport at this time. It is a combination of the manpower and the technology.

**Mr. Singh:** And how do you account for the decrease in the overtime? What is the management?

**Hon. Sinanan:** Through you, Madam Chair, the reduction in overtime is due to more management with the technology at the airport.

**Mr. Singh:** Could you give us an appreciation of this technology that you speak
Hon. Sinanan: An increase in the surveillance system.

Madam Chairman: Member for Couva South.

Mr. Indarsingh: Just on a point of clarification in relation to the response that was given to my colleague, the MP for Chaguanas West. Mr. Minister, the organizational structure in terms of the Airports Authority from a security point of view, I just heard you through the representative of the Airports Authority indicate that there is a full complement of security officers existing at the Airports Authority?

Madam Chairman: Is that a question or a statement?

Mr. Indarsingh: Yes, I am asking, taking into consideration my colleague asked and he was advised that there is an adequate complement of security officers at the Airports Authority.

Hon. Sinanan: There is a combination of security officers and technology that is being used at this time. A combination of two is adequate at this point in time.

Mr. Indarsingh: And is there a deficiency of security officers in relation to the organizational structure of the Airports Authority?

Hon. Sinanan: Again, through you, Madam Chair, there is a complement of 408 members of staff and that is sufficient at this point in time.

Mr. Indarsingh: From a security point of view. There is no deficiency in terms of the numbers?

Madam Chairman: But, Member, you have asked that question three times. Member for Naparima.

Mr. Charles: Thank you, Madam Chair. With respect to Goods and Services, Electricity—

Madam Chairman: We are not there as yet.

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Mr. Charles: We are not there. I thought we are going page by page.

Madam Chairman: Member for Tabaquite, we are still under 005. Is your question there? Okay, so we now go on to Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services. Member for Naparima.

Mr. Charles: I apologize for jumping the gun. 04, Electricity and 002, Water and Sewerage Rates. I note that there have been no increases. Do you not think, hon. Minister, that it might have been prudent to put in a figure given that we know that increases are likely to come? And if this is done across Ministries, to the Minister of Finance, if this is done across Ministries it means that we might be approaching a significant shortfall in estimates for next year’s budget.

Hon. Sinanan: Through you, Madam Chair, maybe the Member of Parliament has more information. I do not know of any increase coming in this fiscal year for these different Sub-Heads.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Sub-Item 23, Fees. Could you just explain what is that about? It is a small term but big in nature and 61, Insurance of $10 million with an increase of $4 million over 2017. What is that? Who is that paid to? Which insurance company or is it a number of insurance companies? And is it by tender that the airport goes out for tendering for this insurance?

Hon. Sinanan: Okay, let me deal with the fees first. This Fees is a combination of legal fees and consultant fees. And the other one, the insurance, yes, it will be public tender.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Do you know the insurance company? Is it one or more than one?

Hon. Sinanan: One or more than one what?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Insurance company that—

Hon. Sinanan: Well, you will go to the international markets. So this is done on
the international market because of the aviation insurance and so.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Right. Could you give us the name of the company if you have it?

**Hon. Sinanan:** Okay, I will have to get that.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Is it a local or do you not know whether it is a local—

**Hon. Sinanan:** It is a local broker, but the insurance will obviously be foreign companies.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Could you give us the name of the insurance company in Trinidad, the broker? And how much is paid to the broker and how much is paid to the foreign company for reinsurance.

**Madam Chairman:** That will be given in writing.

**Hon. Sinanan:** We will give that in writing.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Right, okay.

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

**Mr. Singh:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Item 15: Repairs and Maintenance of Equipment. Madam Chair, ever so often the down escalator in the airport does not work. It is very, very often that you come and then you have the down escalator not working and I saw that there is not an increase in your equipment allocation. Similarly, the baggage—

**Hon. Member:** Carousel.

**Mr. Singh:** Carousel. The baggage carousel, and there is no increased allocation. If you are not going to have an increased allocation perhaps there ought to be a much better deployment of the moneys in order to ensure. Because I will tell you, Madam Chair, when you are walking down an escalator that is not working, you have serious hazards especially that the very old encounter.

**Hon. Sinanan:** Through you, Madam Chair. The question is whether the $3
million will be sufficient for the repairs of the escalator and the baggage carousel?
Is the question, will the $3 million be—

Mr. Singh: Is it part of the allocation, because there is no increase from year to year.

Hon. Sinanan: There is no increase, but, yes, that will be taken up in the repairs and maintenance. Yes, that will be sufficient.

Mr. Singh: Then, hon. Minister, can I get an annual breakdown of the repairs to both the escalator and the carousel?

Hon. Sinanan: Sure.

Madam Chairman: Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Following the request for a breakdown, can we get a breakdown, hon. Minister for line Item 62, for Promotions, Publicity and Printing totalling $3 million?

Hon. Sinanan: Yeah, okay.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Thank you.

Madam Chairman: Item 002, Passenger and Cargo Terminals, pages 392 and 393. Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Line Item 09, Rent, Lease, Vehicles and Equipment. Could you just give a little explanation of what that $12.2 million is paid for?

Hon. Sinanan: The lease agreement for the equipment has come to an end, so there is an estimate for an increase in 2018.

Dr. Gopeesingh: If it has come to an end they will have a reduction or none. Line Item 09, Minister, I am trying to help you.

Hon. Sinanan: Yeah.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Rent, Lease, Vehicles and Equipment—

Hon. Sinanan: There is an increase of two—

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Dr. Gopeesingh:—million, yes.

Hon. Sinanan: Because the existing lease agreements have come to an end. So there are provisions for an increase.

Dr. Gopeesingh: In case if you have to pay more for it? Could you just give us an understanding of what we are paying for?

Hon. Sinanan: Vehicle leases will come to an end in April 2018; lease rentals of photocopiers and other units—[Crosstalk] And these are vehicles that work on the runway and so.

Dr. Gopeesingh: What comprise the largest—

Hon. Sinanan: The vehicles that work on the runway.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Okay, all right. So you will give us that. Okay, thank you.

Madam Chairman: Okay, 003, Airport Operations, page 393; 004, Runways, Taxis, Grounds and Car parks, pages 393 to 394. Member for Tabaquite.

Dr. Rambachan: Are you sure you are getting all the moneys that are supposed to be collected for the use of the car park? Are you aware of extortion taking place at the carpark?

Madam Chairman: Line Item. We are talking revenue here.

Dr. Rambachan: Yeah, under the general car parks.

Madam Chairman: Yeah, but, a line Item, which Item is it? I think the question is current revenue and not expenditure.

Dr. Rambachan: Other Contracted Services.

Madam Chairman: Other Contracted Services. 28?

Dr. Rambachan: Yeah. What does that represent? Does that represent the people who work at the car park? Is that a contracted service?

Hon. Sinanan: No, no. Those are the employees of the Airports Authority?

Hon. Sinanan: These is more for maintenance work and so at the airport. This is
not the car park or anything like that.

**Dr. Rambachan:** You have to pay $40 to get a car park.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 005, Security, page 394.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Madam Chair—

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

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Just want to—003, line Item 37—

**Madam Chairman:** 003? If it is 004 I will entertain it, but because I may have missed you when I went on to 005. But I am so sorry I will not go back to 003.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** All right. Do not worry.

**Madam Chairman:** Okay. 005, Security, page 395. The Member for Princes Town.

**Mr. Padarath:** Madam, to the hon. Minister, line Item 17, Training, an increase of $190,000 in that particular area. Could the Minister indicate what areas of training would this account for?

**Mr. Imbert:** Madam Chair, let me answer that. If you look at the original estimate for 2017 it was 900. The actual expenditure was 510. So we gave them $700,000 this year. It is just a block allocation.

**Mr. Padarath:** Sure.

**Madam Chairman:** Okay. So we go on to Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, page 394. 001, General Administration, page 394; Sub-Head 04, Current Transfer and Subsidies, page 394; 007, Households. Member for Couva South.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Could the Minister just under 01, Pension Contribution and 03, Group Health Plan, just elaborate on what accounted for the increases under these Heads of $1,590,000 and $500,000?

**Hon. Sinanan:** For an increase in staff.

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Madam Chairman: Member for Caroni East.

Mr. Indarsingh: I did not hear him, Madam.

Hon. Member: He said an increase in staff.

Mr. Indarsingh: An increase in staff. How much staff?

Hon. Sinanan: It is not an increase in staff. It is the same figure from 2017 to 2018 if you look at it. It is not an increase in staff. It is just that this is—

Mr. Indarsingh: You told me an increase in staff so I was just seeking clarification.

Hon. Sinanan: It is not an increase in staff. It is the same figure from 2017 to 2018.

Madam Chairman: Okay. Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Which company is involved in the pension issue in terms of the underwriting and management of the pension for all these employees? Which company is involved?

Hon. Sinanan: The pension plan is, First Citizens Bank is the trustee.

Madam Chairman: Item 009, Other Transfers, page 395. Okay, so we go on to 50, Port Authority of Trinidad and Tobago at page 406.

Mr. Singh: Madam Chair, just for my purposes of organizing my—I want to know what time we are taking the tea break?

Hon. Member: It is a valid question. [Crosstalk]

Madam Chairman: Do I take it that it is the wish of the Committee that we take tea now?

Hon. Members: Yes.

Madam Chairman: The meeting is now suspended. We will return here at five o’clock.

4.31 p.m.: Standing Finance Committee suspended.
5.00 p.m.: Standing Finance Committee resumed.

Madam Chairman: The meeting of the Standing Finance Committee is now resumed and we are now at 50, Port Authority of Trinidad and Tobago, and this is at page 406. Sub-Head 01, Personal Expenditure, 001, General Administration, page 406. Member for Tabaquite.

Dr. Rambachan: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Under General Administration, there is a question that I will ask as I go down, how many employees are there in the Port Authority of Trinidad and Tobago—if you have it by General Administration, the salaried people as against wages and COLA, or daily-rated workers?

Hon. Sinanan: All together, it is about 1,500.

Dr. Rambachan: Fifteen hundred workers in the Port. That is between salaried and daily-paid? Contract workers also?

Hon. Sinanan: All together.

Madam Chairman: Member for Tabaquite, are you complete?

Dr. Rambachan: Yes.

Madam Chairman: Okay. So can we go on to 002? Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla, what is this, 001?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Yes. Thank you, Madam Chair. I just wanted to find out, I know that the hon. Minister gave the number of employees, but just for the increase in salaries, I just wanted to know if there is an intention to employ more staff, and if so, what would the positions be, please? Thanks.

Madam Chairman: An increase in salary?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Yes. Line 01, is it—406?

Madam Chairman: Page 406?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Yeah.
Madam Chairman: Oh, you are looking at 01?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Yes.

Madam Chairman: Okay. Line Sub-Item 01, Salaries and Cost of Living.

Hon. Sinanan: This 35 would include the back pay. So that would be the new salaries.


Dr. Rambachan: I just wanted to find out what accounts for the increase of $2.25 million in Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance on the Cruise Ship Complex.

Hon. Sinanan: That would be the back pay and the new salaries.

Madam Chairman: Okay. So can we go on? Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, page 407; 001, General Administration, page 407; 002—Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: 02—

Madam Chairman: 002, Engineering Division, pages 407 to 408. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: No, 02, Goods and Services.

Madam Chairman: So you are at “Wages and COLA”?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: On page 407, we have—I just want to find out on line 29, “Losses on Foreign Currency Conversion”.

Madam Chairman: So we are on page 407, Item 02, Goods and Services, 001, General Administration.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Can the hon. Minister indicate what services would have been rendered, or items that would have been purchased that you would have incurred losses on foreign exchange? And has the hon. Minister taken into
consideration going forward of an increase in US—

Hon. Sinanan: This is for foreign purchase for parts. And if you take going forward, what do you mean?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Take into consideration, of course, having to pay the currency exchange, paying more for the US dollar.

Hon. Sinanan: Yes, that would have been taken into consideration.

Madam Chairman: All right. So we are now at 002, Engineering Division, pages 407 and 408; 004, Marine Division, page 408; 005, Wharves Division, page 408; 006, Cruise Ship Complex, page 409.

Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases; 001, General Administration, page 409; 002, Engineering Division, page 409; 005, Wharves Division, page 409; 006, Cruise Ship Complex, page 410; Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies, page 410; 007, Households, page 410. Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.

Mr. Lee: Thank you, Madam Chair. To the Minister, Sub-Item 03, Gratuities, General Administration, an increase of $16 million. Could he add some clarity and explain what is that about?

Hon. Sinanan: I think this would have been people who would have been retired and their gratuity, and some back pay of pensions.

Mr. Lee: So these are lump sum items? Could we get a list of those people that this refers to, please?

Hon. Sinanan: Yes.

Madam Chairman: 009, Other Transfers, pages 410 to 411. Member for Tabaquite.

Dr. Rambachan: I think there is something that all of us would like to understand just for clarity, which is the word “depreciation” and how it is—in the way that we understand depreciation. Here it is an expenditure. Can you explain that?
Hon. Sinanan: It is a balancing, really. I spent a lot of time trying to understand it myself yesterday.

Dr. Rambachan: Yeah, I have always tried.

Hon. Sinanan: It is really balancing a net figure.

Dr. Rambachan: It is not a flow of cash?

Hon. Sinanan: No. It is a book value, really, for a transfer.

Dr. Rambachan: Okay, thank you.

Hon. Sinanan: I had the same concern yesterday.

Dr. Rambachan: Okay. Items 32 and 33 under 009: $340.4 million bond. What was that bond for and how many years is that bond for? And what was it used for?

Hon. Sinanan: This was for financing of loans for cranes and infrastructure, and it was the Summit of the Americas.

Dr. Rambachan: Sorry, Minister, I am not really hearing you. Sorry.

Hon. Sinanan: Sorry. This would have been for refinancing of loans that would have been taken for the ship-to-shore cranes and other infrastructure work.

Madam Chairman: So, we now go on to 52, Public Transport Service Corporation. This is at page 425; Sub-Head 01, Personal Expenditure, page 425; 001, General Administration, page 425. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Madam Chair. Line Sub-Item 01, the decrease of $5 million for salaries and cost of living, can the Minister account for the decrease? Is it that less persons are employed?

Hon. Sinanan: If you look at the 2017 estimate and the 2018 estimate, there is an increase. The 2017, there was a back pay arrears which—

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: All right, okay.

Hon. Sinanan: So there is really an increase and not a decrease.

Madam Chairman: 002, Vehicles and Equipment Maintenance, page 425; 007,
DR. RAMBACHAN: Mr. Minister, the Wages and COLA here and Salaries and Cost of Living, this will include all the drivers’ costs and everything? This is all your wages and salaries relating to the management and also all your drivers and operators on the buses and what have you?

HON. SINANAN: This includes the drivers for both the commuter service and the—yes, for all the drivers.

DR. RAMBACHAN: Right. How many persons are employed in the PTSC?

HON. SINANAN: Approximately 1,600.

DR. RAMBACHAN: Do you know how many of those are drivers?

HON. SINANAN: Approximately 600.

DR. RAMBACHAN: And how many buses are operational in the fleet? How many buses are there in the fleet and how many are really operational?

HON. SINANAN: We have about 350 that are operational right now.

DR. RAMBACHAN: All are operational right now.

HON. SINANAN: Approximately about 210/215 operational.

DR. RAMBACHAN: Of the 350?

HON. SINANAN: Yes.

DR. RAMBACHAN: So these 600 drivers were hired to drive 350 vehicles—buses—or 210 buses?

HON. SINANAN: The international ratio is 2.5 drivers per bus. So if you calculate 600, then we are basically short of a couple buses but as you would see going forward that we have plans to increase the fleet.

DR. RAMBACHAN: I am going to make a point and a question here. We earn from Transit and Express Commuter Services about $25 million with these 210 buses, or
350 buses, depending on which, right? And we are subsidizing $304 million. So there is a difference between income and subsidy of approximately $279 million. How many passengers do we move on these buses annually?

Hon. Sinanan: Approximately nine million passengers.

Mr. Imbert: Excuse me, Madam Chairman. What line Item is this?

Dr. Rambachan: Salaries and Cost of Living, Wages and COLA. And I am asking how many are drivers and how many buses are operational with the drivers?

Mr. Imbert: With respect to salaries?

Dr. Rambachan: Yes.

Mr. Imbert: What does buses have to do with salaries?

Dr. Rambachan: Wages and COLA, yeah.

Mr. Imbert: That is Goods and Services.

Dr. Rambachan: Well, however you want to take it, I can go back at it. No problem.

Mr. Imbert: If you have 10 buses and three workers—

Hon. Sinanan: It has to be tight.

Mr. Imbert: So you would not ask anything on vehicles, then?

Dr. Rambachan: I will defer and ask it there.

Madam Chairman: This is under 008.

Mr. Imbert: I know, Madam Chairman.

Madam Chairman: Yes, Personnel Expenditure.

Mr. Imbert: If you look at 426, 002, there are a whole set of Items on vehicles.

Madam Chairman: Yes, but I think the question was in terms of salary and wages.

Mr. Imbert: Okay. I was just wondering how buses come in.

Madam Chairman: Well, I think there was a preliminary question that was asked
concerning drivers and buses. So, Member for Tabaquite.

Dr. Rambachan: I am finished.

Madam Chairman: You are finished? Okay. Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, page 426; 001, General Administration. Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.

Mr. Lee: Thank you, Madam Chair, to the Minister, Sub-Item 61, Insurance. There is an increase of $3.3 million. What is that for?

Hon. Sinanan: If you look at 2017, it was 8361, so it actually was a decrease.

Mr. Lee: Correct. In 2017, the revised estimate is $4.6 million, and now you increase it in 2018 to $8 million, an increase of $3.3 million.

Mr. Imbert: It is not an increase over the original provision in 2017.

Hon. Sinanan: It was not an increase over the original. This was just the revised in 2017. So you gone back to the original in 2017. In 2018, you go back to the original in 2018.

Mr. Lee: I know, but I do not know how to—you see—and I want to be respectful, Madam Chair, because I need some clarity. Under the revised estimates, and then you have these increases, what number do we—when you are budgeting for, do we take the original 2017 estimate or the revised estimates of 2017?

Mr. Imbert: You have to look at both of them. You would have an estimate in the beginning and for one reason or another the actual would be either more or less, depending on whether there are arrears or whether bills did not come in at the end of the financial year. There are all sorts of reasons, so you have to look at both of them. And if you look at this particular item you will see this year’s provision is less than the original provision for 2017.

Hon. Sinanan: And also, just to add to that, the estimate also includes the new buses that are expected to come on the fleet.
Mr. Lee: Okay. Well, as you add new buses, how many new buses that this insurance might be catering for?

Hon. Sinanan: Well, again, it varies. But it does include the new buses.

Mr. Lee: Okay.

Madam Chairman: Member for Tabaquite.

Dr. Rambachan: The insurance here relates just to the physical asset, the buses?

Hon. Sinanan: This will include the buildings and everything.

Dr. Rambachan: Do you have in your insurance here any coverage for passengers who might be injured while traveling on your buses?

Hon. Sinanan: Public liability will cover that.

Dr. Rambachan: So let me just ask you the question. So let us say the bus is on the road and it gets into an accident, a passenger travelling on that bus, how does that passenger access that public liability if that passenger is injured?

Hon. Sinanan: Like any insurance company for any vehicles hired, the claim will go to the insurance company and I guess the person could make a claim against the corporation through the brokers of the corporation. All vehicles that are licensed to carry passengers must have that coverage, and that is the difference with the PH drivers and the official taxis. The official taxis, whether it be PTSC, maxi-taxis, do have that coverage.

Dr. Rambachan: Is there a limit of liability in terms of what a passenger can claim, an injured passenger?

Hon. Sinanan: Basically all insurance will have their limits. As to what the limit on this is, I would not have that offhand.

Dr. Rambachan: No, but in the case of the PTSC, do you know what that limit of liability is?

Hon. Sinanan: No, I do not have it offhand, but if you want to find it—but all
insurances do have a limit.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Well, I would like to find out in terms of the ultimate, loss of life, what could be the claim; what could be the limit of the claim.

**Mr. Young:** If I may assist, Madam Chair, through you—

**Dr. Rambachan:** I am asking this in the public interest, eh.

**Mr. Young:** I know, correct. The Motor Vehicles Insurance (Third Party Risks) Act, sets out the statutory limits that are the minimum for these types of claims, including death and personal injury. I cannot remember. It was raised a couple years ago. I think it is now at $2 million, and generally you would find that all insurance policies—third party insurance policies—are deemed via that legislation to carry that as the maximum claim. So I would be surprised if PTSC was any different.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Tabaquite.

**Dr. Rambachan:** You have under Sub-Item 16 here, under 02, an allocation of $5.129 million for Contract Employment. This follows the $100 million under Salaries and Wages, you have Contract Employment. What kind of contract employment is contemplated, or has been the experienced under this $5.1 million?

**Hon. Sinanan:** Basically what you have, the cadre at the management is contracted.

**Dr. Rambachan:** The cadre of management is contracted?

**Hon. Sinanan:** Yes, all the managers are on contract at the PTSC at this time.

**Dr. Rambachan:** And what kind of contracts do these managers have, one year, two years, three years?

**Hon. Sinanan:** Two-year contracts.

**Dr. Rambachan:** These management personnel, are they subject to performance criteria—performance goals—in terms of performance review?
Hon. Sinanan: Yes, they have performance appraisals and I know for a fact that the board there is very strict on that.

Mr. Singh: In the papers this morning it was not so.

Dr. Rambachan: I wanted to go deeper, but it is okay.

Madam Chairman: Member for Caroni Central.

Dr. Tewarie: I wanted to wait for the next one.

Madam Chairman: All right. Member for Pointe-a-Pierre? No? All right. So we are going on to 002, Vehicles and Equipment Maintenance, page 426. Member for Caroni Central.

Dr. Tewarie: The Minister mentioned just now, Madam Chair, that in the insurance issue provision was made for newly acquired vehicles. So vehicles are going to be acquired in the year 2018, but were purchased in 2017. Is that right?

Madam Chairman: What is that line Item? We are on 002? Which one are we? Are we under 09? Because if we are talking about acquisition of vehicles, I think there is a line Item in the Development Programme under that, so that I do not know, Member—

Dr. Tewarie: All right, I will wait.

Madam Chairman: Okay, all right. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, line Item 13, Maintenance of Vehicles, I am just asking, the amount of $49 million, I notice there are a number of buses always breaking down, and I am just wondering if this would be adequate to keep the buses functional and running effectively and efficiently on the roadways.

Hon. Sinanan: This is what is budgeted, so I expect this is what is required to keep the buses running.

Madam Chairman: Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.
Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: I understand what the Minister is stating but it is one thing to say that you have been given that figure and also having—

Hon. Sinanan: Remember too, we are bringing new buses on line, eh.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Right.

Hon. Sinanan: So that will require less maintenance.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: But you are also bringing buses that may be of a different brand and therefore it means that you will have different types of parts—different parts that would not be really cost-effective in the long run.

Hon. Sinanan: Well, that is why one of the policies at the PTSC is to rationalize the fleet and to get it down to close to four models.

Madam Chairman: Member for Tabaquite.

Dr. Rambachan: Thank you. Mr. Minister, maintenance of vehicles, $40 million, 2017, $49 million projected. Earlier you said that you had 350 buses, possible buses that could be available in the fleet, but of which only 210 are functional. It means that you have 140 buses either under repair or from which you have cannibalized parts to place on other buses, and they are becoming more and more unavailable. That could represent a substantial loss. But yet, if you take $49 million and you divide it by 350 buses, you get an average, if I am correct, of $300,000 to maintain one bus per year, and yet you cannot have 140 buses. You are telling me that you have a management and $49 million in maintenance and 40 per cent of the buses are not available on the roads? One hundred and forty of 350 is 40 per cent. Forty per cent of your buses are down? That cannot be good management.

Hon. Sinanan: I do not know if it might be based on the funding. One of the prerogatives of the PTSC now is to rationalize the fleet. There is definitely a challenge in finding parts for 24 makes and models of buses, and one of the
challenges—the funding will be available, but you just cannot source the parts. Somewhere we have to find where we rationalize the fleet and you bring it down to four or five. Because it is not only parts, it is specialized tools as well.

**Dr. Rambachan:** So, Mr. Minister, do we expect to have another PTSC graveyard like we once had in Wallerfield?

**Hon. Sinanan:** I hope not.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Or if it is that you want to rationalize the fleet and you are short of money, have you considered, therefore, offering these buses for sale to private entrepreneurs? Because I see a lot of PTSC buses, very, very old numbers, still on the roads, well maintained by private operators. So something has to be wrong with this management you are paying—this contract management you are paying this money. And I have no apologies for saying that when people do not do their jobs you do not romanticize them. You deal with it, because this is public funds involved.

**Hon. Sinanan:** I agree with you and that is why the appraisal is in place now.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Naparima.

**Mr. Charles:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I am looking at 02, Contract Employment. I am seeing $5.1 million increased by 1.3. If I go down, 002, I see contract employment, another $800,000. At Port of Spain Transit Centre, contract employment, 1.4—

**Madam Chairman:** But we are still in 002.

**Mr. Charles:** I know we are still, but I am trying to make the point that there seems to be a reliance on contract labour as opposed to permanent employment. And when you look at contract labour, Goods and Services compared with Maintenance, I could understand contract labour for maintenance of vehicles, but the ratio is about four or five to one.
Mr. Imbert: Madam Chairman, may I ask what line Item is this?

Mr. Charles: 002, 16, and I am comparing it with others; just a general statement.

Madam Chairman: So that question is?

Mr. Imbert: What is the question?

Mr. Charles: The question is what these contract employment is in respect of, and is there an over-reliance on contract employment in PTSC?

Madam Chairman: Minister of Works and Transport.

Hon. Sinanan: Madam Chair, the percentage of contract workers compared to the permanent employees is very low, so there is not a move to go into contract. The figures do not state that.

Mr. Charles: Well, could you give me the figures, please?

Hon. Sinanan: I would have to forward that information to you. I do not have that here.

Madam Chairman: All right. So can we go on to 005, Port of Spain Transit Centre at page 427? 006, Para-Transit Unit, page 427; 007, Property Development Services, page 427. Member for Naparima.

Mr. Charles: Again, Item 16, Contract Employment. So I wanted to make the point that I am seeing it everywhere but you say it is still low, so probably when I get the figures.

5.30 p.m.

Madam Chairman: Item 008, Transit/Express Commuter Services, page 428; Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, page 428; Item 001, General Administration; Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies, page 428; 007, Households; 009, Other Transfers; pages 428 and 429.

Mr. Charles: I can go back. 04, Severance Pay to Operational Staff, and I just
wanted to know if there is a laying-off for—what is the reason for paying this $10 million? I know it is a decrease.

**Hon. Sinanan:** This would have been employees who had retired during the current years.

**Mr. Charles:** Normal retirement?

**Hon. Sinanan:** Yes, normal retirement.

**Dr. Rambachan:** We are paying $51 million a year in these other transfers, most of which has to do with either depreciation or interest and principal payments, and you said earlier that we transport nine million passengers a year; that is, we are transporting just 25,000 passengers on the average per day in our buses at a subsidy of $304 million a year. I put that squarely to you, Minister, because I do not think we have looked—

**Hon. Sinanan:** What you are making is a statement.

**Dr. Rambachan:** No, I am going to ask the question. I am going to ask the question. Is this kind of analysis, would it lead you to think about a private/public sector partnership for the PTSC?

**Mr. Imbert:** No.

**Mr. Charles:** Just so? Why?

**Mr. Imbert:** Because he say so.

**Hon. Sinanan:** Corporation Sole.

**Dr. Rambachan:** He put you in your place.

**Madam Chairman:** Okay, Members. 57, Trinidad and Tobago Civil Aviation Authority. We are moving now to page 438. Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure, page 438; 001, General Administration. Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.

**Mr. Lee:** Thank you, Madam Chair. To the Minister and his team from Civil Aviation, Sub-Head 01, Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance, an increase of $22
million for 2018.

**Hon. Sinanan:** This is for the provision for the new salary agreement.

**Mr. Lee:** That would be in effect? How many staff this affects, this increase?

**Hon. Sinanan:** 303.

**Mr. Lee:** And this negotiation is for what period?

**Hon. Sinanan:** 2011—2013.

**Madam Chairman:** Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, page 438; 001, General Administration. Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.

**Mr. Lee:** Thank you, Madam Chair. To the Minister, Sub-Head 07, House Rates of $4.7 million. Is this, I am assuming, property tax?

**Hon. Sinanan:** It was budgeted for.

**Mr. Lee:** And what formula was used?

**Hon. Sinanan:** What was used is a percentage of the value.

**Mr. Charles:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Item 27, Overseas Travel. I see it is an increase of $500,000 to $3.3 million, is there a reason?

**Hon. Sinanan:** The original estimate was 3.5. So what we have here is a decrease at 3.3, a decrease of $200,000.

**Mr. Charles:** No, but your revised estimates was 2.8.

**Mr. Imbert:** Member for Naparima, let me assist. The provision for 2017 original was 3.5. They obviously did not travel to that extent in 2017, but they may have some IATA conferences or other things coming up in 2018 so they have put back the original provisions. They may not use all of it. Okay?

**Mr. Karim:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Item 28, Other Contracted Services, an increase of $6.1 million. Can we get an idea as to what that will involve?

**Hon. Sinanan:** Equipment upgrades that have to take place in 2018.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Line Item 99. I just wanted to
find out from the hon. Minister—that is 99—has any employee accessed this service?

Hon. Sinanan: The answer is yes.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Can you state how many persons have? Well, not now.

Hon. Sinanan: Sure.

Mr. Karim: Thank you, Madam Chair. Item No. 17, there is an increase in training of $6.5 million.

Hon. Sinanan: This is because of training in the upgrade of the equipment and so. The staff has to be trained to manage the equipment.

Dr. Rambachan: What is Item 23, Fees? I need to know what fees are those to ask my question.

Madam Chairman: Item?

Dr. Rambachan: No. 23.

Madam Chairman: Twenty-three.

Hon. Sinanan: These are fees for the subscription for the staff to the professional bodies.

Dr. Rambachan: To the professional bodies?

Hon. Sinanan: Yeah.

Dr. Rambachan: Right. Mr. Minister, so taking fees together with medical expenses and employee assistance programmes, I want to ask this question: do you have any mandatory testing for your civil aviation people, especially those who direct traffic and so on for drug use and alcoholism?

Hon. Sinanan: There is a medical programme and all the employees have to go through the medical programme.

Dr. Rambachan: Do they go through mandatory testing for drug use and alcoholism?
Hon. Sinanan: The answer is yes.

Madam Chairman: Okay. So can we go on to Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases on page 439? 001, General Administration; Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies, page 439; 001, Regional Bodies.

Mr. Charles: 04, are we there?

Madam Chairman: No, we are still at 01, 001 Regional Bodies; 004 International Bodies.

Mr. Charles: No, I was at 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies, from $13 million in 2017 revised estimates to $86 million estimated—

Madam Chairman: So what you are doing there is the overall figure.

Mr. Charles: Oh, it is the overall? Okay. Sorry.

Madam Chairman: So I do not know if you want to raise it?

Mr. Charles: No.

Madam Chairman: Okay? So we are at 004, International Bodies; 007, Households. Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.

Mr. Lee: Thank you, Chair. Sub-Item under 007, 03, the Pension Plan to $72 million, and in 2016 it was $10 million; in 2017, 7.2. Could you clarify what is happening with the pension plan?

Hon. Sinanan: This is a provision made for the deficit of the plan.

Mr. Lee: Yeah, but—okay. I know it is a deficit, but what is happening? Why the plan went into that tremendous deficit over the years? Was it not being funded properly?

Mr. Imbert: It was not being funded under UNC. We are fixing it now.

Mr. Charles: Is that the official answer?

Mr. Imbert: Yes.

Mr. Charles: So why did it take over two years for you to correct it?
Mr. Imbert: It is all right. It better than five years and three months.

Dr. Rambchan: Madam Chairman, would the hon. Minister of Works and Transport, or the Corporation Sole, hon. Minister of Finance, say when this deficit started in terms of this pension?

Mr. Imbert: We will send you the information. We would send you a full report.

Dr. Rambchan: You see, you made an accusation just now. You should answer it.

Mr. Imbert: What is the next line Item?

Dr. Rambchan: And who is the name of the actuary?

Mr. Imbert: You will get a full report.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Members. Hon. Members, we will now move on to the Draft Estimates of the Development Programme. We are going to a different book and we are starting at page 118. Sub-Head 09, Development Programme, Consolidated Fund; we are at page 1-1-8. Page 118. Okay? So Consolidated Fund, Item 001, Pre-Investment, pages 118 to 120. Member for Mayaro.

Mr. Paray: Thank you, Madam Chairman. Minister, under Item 004, under Highway Improvement Studies, there is a new project for $2 million, can you identify exactly what facet of the highway services that we are going to be studying to improve exactly what component?

Hon. Sinanan: Could you give me the page that you are on there?

Mr. Paray: Page 118, line Item 004.

Hon. Sinanan: This is for the Wrightson Road improvement.

Madam Chairman: Member for Mayaro, you are all right?

Mr. Paray: Yes.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Madam Chair. Line Item 001, Administrative Services, Development of a National Transportation Plan. Can the hon. Minister
indicate when will this plan be developed and available for perusal?

Hon. Sinanan: This committee will be established this year.

Dr. Tewarie: Just a quick question, Chair. Under Coastal Studies 241, page 119, I just wanted to know what part of the country is going to be addressed for that $2 million. [ Interruption] No actually, I think this here?

Hon. Sinanan: Yeah.

Mr. Lee: Yeah, Madam Chair. I just want to go back to the Minister, 004. The new project which he had mentioned was Wrightson Road, could he expand a little bit on what that is about?

Hon. Sinanan: It is a studying of the widening of the Wrightson Road, so we could try to get additional lanes on Wrightson Road.

Mr. Lee: Additional lanes?

Hon. Sinanan: Yeah.

Mr. Lee: Good.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Madam Chair, we are on 119 as well?

Madam Chairman: Yes, we are.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: All right. Good. 241, the Coastal Studies, Drainage and Irrigation as well as Coastal Studies. Hon. Minister, in light of the last crisis that took place in Matelot, is this figure adequate for drainage and irrigation in light of the fact that there are three constituencies that border, that is, Mayaro—

Mr. Imbert: Member, there is no figure.

Hon. Sinanan: This is for studies, you know.

Mr. Imbert: But there is no figure. It is zero.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: We realize that.

Mr. Imbert: You sure?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Yeah. So I mean, it is like, should there not be
something? [Crosstalk] No, but it is a serious matter. I mean, would there be any consideration for something to be put in place?

Mr. Charles: Thank you, Madam Chair. Again, Drainage and Irrigation. I know nothing has been allocated, but does this mean that the Williamsville problem that arises from the Guaracara River that nothing will be done?

Hon. Sinanan: Those are under a different programme.

Mr. Charles: And those studies will be done?

Hon. Sinanan: That study has been completed and there is design work under way now.

Mr. Charles: So they can expect some relief?

Hon. Sinanan: Based on the availability of funding.

Madam Chairman: Member for Chaguanas West.

Mr. Singh: My question was answered.

Madam Chairman: Member for Princes Town? Okay, so can we go on to Item 003, Economic Infrastructure, pages 121 to 124? Member for Chaguanas West.

Mr. Singh: Thank you, Madam Chair. I am dealing with, under 003, Item 005, Flood Alleviation and Drainage Programme, an allocation of $500,000, Project No. 005—funded as follows: IDB loan $0.5 million.

Madam Chairman: Okay. So we are on page 121, 005.

Mr. Singh: Madam Chair, to the hon. Minister. Is this the IDB loan for the drainage of Port of Spain and that, therefore, this loan initially was US $120 million, and because of the lack of capacity at NIDCO and within the Ministry they were unable to deal with the plans and programmes put forward by WSP and that therefore, Minister I would suggest you take a close look at this thing because it is two areas really.

Mr. Imbert: Member for Chaguanas West, could you indicate what is your
Mr. Singh: The question is: Why it is just this small allocation for the flooding that we have in Port of Spain having regard to the initial fact that the loan allocation by IDB which was secured about three years aback was US $120 million?

Mr. Imbert: The problem has been studied for more than 30 years. You will remember a former Mayor of Port of Spain had his desk removed for non-payment for a study done on the drainage for Port of Spain when neither you nor I were in this House. So that there have been so many studies over the years and so much money spent on studies. This thing has been studied to death. It is time for action now. Not studies, action.

Mr. Singh: That is my point. My point that we had reached the stage of action and—

Mr. Imbert: No, this loan programme was for studies, for consultancy work, for designs. I myself have seen four separate designs for this same project. So we decided that there is no point in continuing to study it and design it for yet another time. Time for action now.

Mr. Singh: Just to complete, Madam Chair, I hope that in the action that the hon. Minister would find the location of the various utility conduits that are located in the streets of Port of Spain because that was the principal hindrance to action.

Mr. Imbert: Those have been mapped many times as you know.

Mr. Charles: Item 01, Major River Clearing Programme, and Infrastructure Rehabilitation Flood Mitigation. Could the Minister tell us what rivers have been targeted for major river clearing, and is the Guaracara River included in that?

Hon. Sinanan: Madam Chair, through the Drainage Department, rivers throughout all the districts would have been identified, and based—
Mr. Charles: Can you provide a list?

Hon. Sinanan: Yes, I can provide you a list, but the process that we used is the different departments. Drainage Department will identify all the critical rivers that need to be cleaned in the different regions and based on that the funding is allocated—

Mr. Charles: Would you be prepared to say whether the Guaracara River is included in it?

Hon. Sinanan: I do not have the listing in front of me here, but once it is critical I am sure the division would have identified it.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, just to ask if you can identify, not now, if any of rivers in Sangre Grande, in my area, have been targeted. And also, the coastal protection unit, how it would impact upon areas such as my own, please? Thank you.

Hon. Sinanan: Thank you, Madam Chair. Again, all the divisions would have submitted their requests for river cleaning, and one thing we ensure is that everybody gets—

Dr. Tewarie: Will you circulate the list?

Hon. Sinanan:—some piece of the pie. In terms of the coastal protection, we do have a programme for costal protection and the north coast is heavily involved in terms of the projects.

Mr. Imbert: I just want to say this Item is for establishment of the unit. So this is for the personnel and the infrastructure and bureaucracy associated with the unit, not with the work that would be done by the unit. That would be in another Head.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: I appreciate that very much, Minister of Finance, and particularly in light of the fact that the area that my constituency borders with Sangre Grande, Toco and Mayaro, I mean, there is this concern if an earthquake or
if Kick ’em Jenny were to erupt and a scenario were to come, I mean, we need to know what situations are in place to mitigate against any sort of—

**Madam Chairman:** He said he would make the list available.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Yes.

**Mr. Lee:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I would like to ask the Minister of Finance based on what he just said, I just want to ensure that I understand it. Sub-Item 001, Major River Clearing Programme, which was budgeted in 2017 for $8 million, I am assuming that only $1 million was exercised in 2017 and they are now budgeting in 2018, $9 million. Is he saying that this is just for setting up a unit?

**Mr. Imbert:** No, Sir. If you would pay attention, I was speaking about coastal protection—

**Mr. Lee:** No. I am talking about this item.

**Mr. Imbert:**—001, in response to a question that—you noticed the Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla is not going ahead.

**Mr. Lee:** So, let me ask my question now, Madam Chair, to the Minister of Works and Transport. Can I ask the Minister of Works and Transport a follow-up question to my question? 001, Major River Clearing Programme, 2017 revised estimate of $1 million. Is it fair to say, Minister, that throughout 2016/2017 only a million dollars was spent on Major River Clearing Programme?

**Hon. Sinanan:** No. We did a lot of major river cleaning under the 09 and 28, and although we have $1 million here we have an outstanding of $4.4 million out of this Vote to be paid for work that was done because this is—

**Mr. Lee:** So out of your budgeted amount in 2017, $8 million, you would have done about $5 million on work.

**Hon. Sinanan:** From this Vote. However, the reason why we could not use the full $8 million is because there are a lot of outstanding payments pre-2015 that we
were not able to verify that should have been paid from this Vote and we were not able to pay—

Mr. Lee: Does that also apply to 003 also?

Hon. Sinanan: Yes, but we did do work under other programmes.

Mr. Lee: Can I get a list of the work that was done throughout 2017, please?

Hon. Sinanan: Sure.

Mr. Padarath: Thank you, Madam Chair. I am on page 122, under 050 Purchase of 100 New Buses at a cost of $45 million. Could the hon. Minister indicate—I know that Government had spoken about 32 new buses last year—are those 32 new buses included in this 100 figure, or is this separate and apart thereof?

Hon. Sinanan: It is part of the 100.

Mr. Padarath: It is part of the 100?

Hon. Sinanan: Yes.

Mr. Padarath: Okay. But Minister, if I am not mistaken, the 32 that you are speaking of, that is included in this has already been contracted at a cost of 30-something million for 32, and you are now saying 100 at $45 million.

Mr. Imbert: That is simply the project description, purchase of 100 buses. So there is an approval to buy 100 over a period of years. You follow?

Mr. Paray: Thank you very much, Madam Chairman. Minister, I have two questions under the section for bus transport. Can you give me an update? I notice that under line Item for Rio Claro, 039, $1 million has been put into the project, what can we expect at the end of fiscal 2018 in terms of that project looking at the fact there is only $1 million that has been put on that project, what can we expect to be done?

Hon. Sinanan: There are some issues with the project which we are trying to sort out. There was a down payment make to the contractor. However, we were not
able to proceed in 2017 because of issues with the land and so. A decision will be taken shortly with that project, but it is an open project right now and the issues are trying to be sorted out.

Mr. Paray: And the second question that I have Minister, under Item 072 Retooling of the Mechanical Engineering Garages, I am aware that there has been a cry for some time for a second wrecker for the PTSC service, I am wondering if that has been raised through the PTSC management in terms of acquiring a second wrecker because that puts a real spoke in maintenance component of the buses.

Hon. Sinanan: Yes, that has been raised and also what has been raised is mobile garages—meaning, vehicles that can go out to fix buses on the spot rather than having to wreck them to the different garages. So it is something that they are looking at. Unfortunately, we have constraints on financing.

Mr. Paray: So that is not taken up in the 2018 fiscal?

Hon. Sinanan: No.

Mr. Paray: Okay.

Dr. Tewarie: The question of the 100 buses, how many buses did we get in 2017 for the $35 million?

Hon. Sinanan: Thirty-five.

Dr. Tewarie: Okay. And did we get about 17 in 2017 for the $17 million?

Hon. Sinanan: In 2017, the order was placed for 35 buses.

Dr. Tewarie: Okay.

Hon. Sinanan: So those should be delivered by March.

Dr. Tewarie: Okay. So those are not yet delivered?

Hon. Sinanan: No. And then they have an additional 35 that should come in within the next fiscal year, because now that we have the approval it is a combination of the buses.
Dr. Tewarie: Okay. So, was it one procurement initiative for 100 buses, or different years?

Hon. Sinanan: No, different procurement.

Mr. Lee: Thank you, Madam Chair. Just to go back to the Sub-Item under Air Transport 001, Programme of Safety and Security. It was budgeted in 2017 of $3 million, I am assuming nothing ever happened to that programme, and you now budgeted a further 3.5, could the Minister explain what this programme is about, where it would fall and why was it not important to implement it in 2016/2017 and what is going to happen?

Hon. Sinanan: This was initiated in 2017 although we did not get the releases on it. It was initiated by the internal funding from the Airports Authority and this is for the continuation of the projects. It is for scanners and things along that line, but it has started, within the funding of the Airports Authorities

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, line Item 221, page 122. I just wanted to—

Madam Chairman: To the bottom, Roads and Bridges.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Yeah. I have several bridges in my area and roads. I have Bon Air Road and the Guaico Tamana and the Cumuto Main Road, just to name a few, and I just needed to know hon. Minister, not now, but if you can submit a list of the various roads that are in line to be rehabilitated particularly in my constituency. I am particularly asking for Bon Air Road and—

Hon. Sinanan: Those bridges you are concerned about are not from this programme. We have another programme that deals with those bridges. This is basically for outstanding claims that we would have had on another programme.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: So if you could identify that other programme, not now, and just submit a list at all, I have many of these roads in my constituency.
Hon. Sinanan: That is under our IDF Programme.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Okay, great. Thanks.

Mr. Padarath: Hon, Minister, through you, Madam Chair, line Item 060 Procurement of One Standby Generator for Use at the PTSC Bus Depot Port of Spain. Under 2017 estimate, it is $5.2 million, then we see the revised estimate at $1 million, and now in 2018, 1.4. When I see on line Item 060, Procurement of One Standby Generator, one would have thought that it is a one-off purchase. What is the situation with respect to this? Having moved from 5.2 now to 1.4, has this been procured?

Hon. Sinanan: It was awarded in July 2017 at a cost of $3.7 million. Sixty per cent has been paid already.

Mr. Padarath: This reflection is outstanding amounts?

Hon. Sinanan: Yes, it is expected in 2018.

6.00 p.m.

Mr. Padarath: And is there a maintenance contract to this?

Hon. Sinanan: Like any new piece of equipment that is there, there will be the guarantee period and a maintenance contract.

Mr. Lee: Thank you, Madam Chairman. Line Item 270, I do not know which Minister to ask, the Minister of Finance or the Works Minister, it talks about the improvement to the Maraval Access Saddle Road from Rapsey Street to Valleton Avenue of $15 million. I do not know which Minister might want to—

Mr. Imbert: I can answer that. That project was started by the PNM Government in 2010, stopped by the UNC Government and we are going to complete it in 2018.

Mr. Lee: A follow-up question. Does the $15 million include acquisition of properties?

Mr. Imbert: No.
Mr. Lee: So what sort of improvements would that $15 million do?

Mr. Imbert: It will take the four lanes up to at least Valleton.

Mr. Lee: Thank you.

Mr. Singh: On that same page, Madam Chair. Three questions I have. One dealing with the redefinition—

Madam Chairman: Item 274, page 123.

Mr. Singh: Item 274, page 123, Redefinition of Highway Reserves. I want to know: what does this redefinition entail? It is $2 million allocated.

Hon. Sinanan: It is for the establishment of a database on the major components of the real estate vested in the Highway Division.

Mr. Singh: Okay. So what you are saying that this with a view to doing the data for the preservation of the highway reserves as highway reserves?

Hon. Sinanan: Yes.

Mr. Singh: I want to take the opportunity, Madam Chair, through you, to point out that the highway reserves of the Churchill Roosevelt Highway, along the whole of Charlierville, opposite the Ackbar Road, is deteriorated to the extent that it is impacting upon the highway. Hon. Minister, you may be aware of that.

Hon. Sinanan: Yes, I am.

Mr. Singh: My second question, Madam Chair, is Item 824 under Road Systems Operations and Services, Removal and Disposal of Wrecks and Derelict Vessels. There is two hundred—under 2017, $6 million. Was there any work done? Revised Estimate was $5.1 and in 2018, $5 million. Was there any work done in 2017? Yeah, under Sea Transport.

Hon. Sinanan: Yes, this has started.

Mr. Singh: So that therefore, you have a continuation of that process. And similarly, under Sea Transport, you have under Item 828, the Dredging of
Government Shipping Service Basin to accommodate *Super Fast Galicia* for the sum of $28 million. I know the *Super Fast Galicia* must be a carry over, but is that scheduled to be done in 2018?

**Hon. Sinanan:** Yes.

**Mr. Singh:** Okay.

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

**Dr. Tewarie:** Well I wanted to ask a question about that same matter. I do not know if Minister has answered.

**Hon. Sinanan:** Yes, I answered. I said yes.

**Dr. Tewarie:** So the dredging will in fact take place?

**Hon. Sinanan:** Yes.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Okay. So any boat will need it?

**Hon. Sinanan:** Well, we are doing dredging and we are also dredging the channel. We must recognize that one of the challenges we have out there is the water coming down from the Caroni River continuously brings silt down to the Waterfront, so the dredging has to take place and it also will include some dredging where the passenger—where the cruise ship terminal is. So it is basically a dredging at the port at Port of Spain.

**Dr. Tewarie:** So the dredging was necessary regardless of whether the ship was *Galicia* or any other ship?

**Hon. Sinanan:** Well dredging is something that has to be done on a periodic basis.

**Mr. Imbert:** This is a provision. The basin and harbour at the Port of Spain port requires continuous dredging. As the Minister has pointed out, it is at the delta of the Caroni River and therefore, from time to time, dredging will always be required. It has nothing to do with that boat that you are talking about and it would
not have been dredged in a couple of years, however, the boat that was sent away or left on its own accord did require dredging.

Mr. Padarath: Hon. Minister, when you look at line Item 168, it is identified as a new project called Pedestrian Channelling in Urban Areas.

Madam Chairman: Page 123, Item 168.

Mr. Padarath: Could you identify, hon. Minister what this new project, Pedestrian Channelling in Urban Areas.


Mr. Padarath: We are looking at page 123. Could you identify what this new project Pedestrian Channelling in Urban Areas is about and what urban areas are you looking at?

Hon. Sinanan: What page?

Mr. Padarath: 168 is the line Item, 123 is the page number under the Development Programme.

Hon. Sinanan: There are certain areas where people cross the street at various points. The idea is to bring them to one point where we can manage the flow across the street. So this is a new project that we are introducing where people would not be just crossing the streets at different places, we will channel them to one. Just like how it is done in the more developed countries where you walk to the end of street and you cross there. In Trinidad and Tobago, we have a culture where we cross anywhere.

Mr. Padarath: But Minister, this is $1 million that has been identified as a new project. Is this for a study? Is it for infrastructure? Is it for personnel?

Hon. Sinanan: It is for infrastructure and we have two areas identified which is South Quay and Independence Square.

Mr. Padarath: So it is like a pilot project?
Hon. Sinanan: Yes.

Madam Chairman: Okay. Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Line Item 155. Could you identify hon. Minister which are the highways what you are interested in putting up these new jersey-type barriers? Is it on the East-West corridor from Port of Spain to the East or is it on to the South?


Dr. Gopeesingh: From where to where?

Hon. Sinanan: The Churchill Roosevelt Highway between Golden Grove Road and O’Meara Road.

Dr. Gopeesingh: All right, good. It is needed.

Madam Chairman: Can we go on? Item 005 Multi-Sectoral and Other Services, pages 125 and 126. Pointe-a-Pierre.

Mr. Lee: Thank you, Madam Chair. Under VMCOTT, 001 and 002, we had an earlier discourse about VMCOTT and the feasibility or the financial viability of VMCOTT. Now we are seeing we have an allocation of development work of $1.5 million in total. Could we get some clarity maybe from corporation soul? Why are we putting more money into VMCOTT when we still do not—

Mr. Imbert: Because we cannot wave a magic wand and just—VMCOTT go “poof” like that. There must be a transition to the new paradigm.


Mr. Paray: Thank you, Madam Chairman. Minister, I notice that there is about—under Coastal Protection, line Item 001, 012, 017, there is about $20 million that is going to be invested in that South Cocos Bay area. In fiscal 2018, are we going to
see some actual physical work being done in that area in terms of that coastal rehabilitation?

**Hon. Sinanan:** Yes, there are contracts that have been awarded just at the end of the last financial year.

**Mr. Paray:** Okay. So we should see some action starting?

**Hon. Sinanan:** Yes.

**Mr. Paray:** Okay.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 004, Social Infrastructure, pages 231 and 232; Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services, page 232.

Hon. Members, the question is that the sum of $2,343,542,325 for Head 43, the Ministry of Works and Transport stand part of the Schedule.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Head 43 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.*

**Madam Chairman:** I would like to thank the Minister of Works and Transport, the Permanent Secretary and other technocrats. You all are discharged.

**Head 39:** Ministry of Public Utilities $2,971,514,74

**Madam Chairman:** And Members, can go to page 253 of the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure*. Members, page 253. I will now invite the Minister of Public Utilities to make a brief opening statement not exceeding five minutes. Hon. Minister.

**Hon. Le Hunte:** Thank you, Madam Chairman. It is an honour for me to address the Standing Finance Committee of Parliament this evening. Let me first express my gratitude to the Prime Minister, Dr. Keith Rowley, for reposing his confidence in my ability to lead the Ministry of Public Utilities and to serve the country at this level.

The Ministry of Public Utilities is charged with the very critical
responsibility of providing strategic leadership and governance to the public utilities sector while facilitating the delivery of affordable quality utilities service to the people of this country. The Ministry has a team of 327 public officers who, through their engagement with key stakeholders, ensure the delivery of our core business which is effected through the stewardship of nine implementing agencies and divisions namely:

- the Trinidad and Tobago Electricity Commission;
- the Telecommunication Service of Trinidad and Tobago, (TSTT);
- the Water and Sewerage Authority (WASA);
- the Trinidad and Tobago Solid Waste Management Company;
- the Trinidad and Tobago Postal Corporation;
- the Maintenance Training and Security Company Limited;
- the Regulated Industries Commission;
- the Meteorological Services Division;
- the Electrical Inspectorate Division.

Madam Chairman, as at September the 30th, 2017, the Ministry of Public Utilities had expended approximately $444.2 million or 84.4 per cent of its allocation under the 2017 Public Sector Investment Programme. This reflects commendably on the Ministry’s capacity to successfully implement its programmes and projects and to deliver positive outcomes for our citizens. Madam Chairman, over the next year, the Ministry will focus on further accelerating the implementation of Government policies and programmes in priority areas such as: water resource management, improved transmission and distribution of water. Our particular focus would be on the reduction of non-revenue water, expansion of the national power grid and waste and wastewater
Madam Chairman, the Minister of Finance spoke at length about the paradigm shift that we need to effect as a country. The Ministry of Public Utilities is intent on playing its part in creating the economy and society of the 2030 that we all desire. Improving efficiency in the use of resources, reducing and recycling waste and moving towards more sustainable options are paramount. Almost immediately, we will be pioneering a conservation and efficiency drive across the public sector as it relates to the use of electricity and water, and the generation and disposal of recyclable waste. Our intent is not only to reduce cost and waste but more importantly, to build a culture of sustainability in the use of resources.

In fiscal 2018, the draft estimates proposed an allocation of $3.544 billion; $2,813,314,742 for recurrent expenditure and $713,649,000 for the Development Programme. We intend to deliver on our suite of programmes and initiatives that are geared towards ensuring that our public utilities infrastructure is modern and resilient. We, at the Ministry of Public Utilities, are committed to doing more with less. I thank you. [Desk thumping]

Question proposed: That Head 39 stand part of the Schedule.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Members, the sum of $2,971,514,742 for Head 39, Ministry of Public Utilities is comprised of moneys proposed for expenditure under the following Sub-Heads and Items to be found in the Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure, the Draft Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure of the Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies and of the Tobago House of Assembly and the Draft Estimates of the Development Programme. We now proceed to consider the Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure. We are at page 253, Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure, Item 001, General Administration, page 253. Member for Chaguanas West.
Mr. Singh: Thank you, Madam Chair. I want to take the opportunity to welcome the hon. Minister at his maiden appearance before this House and I know that he is no maiden but we wish to welcome him and we are cognizant of the fact that it is his maiden appearance and that therefore, we will act accordingly.

Madam Chair, the allocation for salaries and allowances is $23.4 million, an increase of $1.4 million. I would like to find out how many members of staff this salary is to pay in the Ministry of Public Utilities. In other words, what is the number of persons employed?

Hon. Le Hunte: Okay. The Ministry, at present, has 104 positions on its permanent establishment of which 95 positions are presently filled. We have nine positions that are basically vacant at this point in time.

Mr. Singh: Could you inform the Committee what are the nine vacancies?

Hon. Le Hunte: Sure. We have one is the Director of Economic Research and Policy Planning, we have two Economist IIs, one Compliant Officer, four Clerks, Stenographers and one Clerk Typist.

Madam Chairman: Item 002, Meteorological Services, pages 253 to 254. Member for Chaguanas West.

Mr. Singh: Thank you, Madam Chair. What is the complement of the employees of Met Services and is there a full establishment of Met Officers or employees at the Met Services?

Hon. Le Hunte: Again, the complement of staff at the Met Services, we have 50 positions on the permanent establishment of which 43 are filled and we have seven vacancies. Two Meteorological Officers—seven vacancies.

Mr. Singh: All meteorological?

Hon. Le Hunte: Yes.

Mr. Singh: Okay.
Madam Chairman:  Okay.  Item 005, Electrical Inspectorate, page 254.  Member for Chaguanas West.

Mr. Singh:  A similar question, Madam Chair.  The complement of staff and the vacancies.

Hon. Le Hunte:  Again, we have 48 positions on the permanent establishment of which 41 positions are filled.  In this category, we have six Electrical Inspectors and one Cleaner.

Madam Chairman:  Item 007, General Administration, page 255.  Member for Chaguanas West.  We go on the Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, page 2—

Dr. Gopeesingh:  I had one on Sub-Item 16.

Madam Chairman:  You are on Item 007, General Administration or you at Goods and Services?

Dr. Gopeesingh:  Yeah, 001, General Administration.

Madam Chairman:  All right, so just let me call it.  Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, Item 001, General Administration, pages 255 to 256.  Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh:  Item 16, could the hon. Minister indicate the complement of Contract Employment within the Ministry to come up to the value of $13.1 million?  The amount of bodies that you may have under Contract Employment.

Hon. Le Hunte:  Okay, Contract Employment for the year of September, the end, we actually have a decrease from 118 to 88, hence the reason for the change.  But as at the end of September, we have 88 contract employees.

Dr. Gopeesingh:  Were these three-year contracts?

Hon. Le Hunte:  Were they three-year contracts? Not sure.

Dr. Gopeesingh:  “Yuh not too sure about.”  Okay.

Madam Chairman:  Member Caroni Central.
Dr. Tewarie: I pass.

Madam Chairman: Pass? Member for Naparima.

Mr. Charles: Thank you, Madam Chair. Item 53, 02, Refunds to WASA Re: Water Improvement Rate and I see $51 million approximately decrease, and one would have thought that given the challenges we face with water distribution—if, in fact, this vote relates to that—that it should be increased rather than decreased as it is. So, it is a question of no money or is it a question of there is no need to increase the rate at this time?

Hon. Le Hunte: The reason, basically one, this vote really deals with moneys from the industrial customers at Point Lisas and it is a flow through. Mittal actually left as one of the industrial customers there so the amount of industrial customers is a little less. That is why the reduction for this particular—but it is a flow through.

Mr. Charles: Okay. I wonder if I could ask a related question. Your accounts receivables with Government Ministries, is it up to par at this stage or is it in deficit and if so, by what percentage?

Hon. Le Hunte: I will have to give you that figure, that exact figure, but the answer, we have sum of receivables from Government Ministries. The exact amount, I will have to provide.

Mr. Charles: Okay.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Madam Chair. Line Item 42, hon. Minister, can you account for the decrease in the Street Lighting of $38 million?

Hon. Le Hunte: Well, that is for the increase or the decrease?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Decrease. Can you account for the decrease?

Hon. Le Hunte: Well, we would be initiating—what we have realized, I mean this is actually the cost that we pay for street lighting throughout the system and
there is a lot of—not only in street lighting, this also covers the parks also. And one of the things that we have found is that we are going to be putting in a system to help manage the lights that are always left on in the parks all the time and it is burning a lot. So we are going to try to—we will be instituting a programme at T&TEC so that we could automatically take out those lights because people have been wasting the electricity and plus, we would be putting in a number of more energy conservation-type activities. So hopefully, we would be working towards getting that cost down as much as possible.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: A follow-up question. Thank you, Madam Chairman. Those areas identified for reducing the lighting, have you identified those areas and where are those areas?

Hon. Le Hunte: Have we identified the areas? I said it. The reduction is going to be a combination of different activities: conservation activities. But what you are asking is the actual areas of the parks that we will be looking at reducing?

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: Yes, Sir.

Hon. Le Hunte: No, we have not identified it but there is a general problem that a lot of the people have been complaining about the lights that are just left on and there have been, in some cases, vandalism of the process and the lights have been put on or where they are supposed to come off, they will continue to remain on. So we have to create a process of trying to reduce that bill. So this is all an attempt within this particular line Item of a number of activities to reduce the cost of electricity that we pay for recurrent expenditure via electricity, via parks, et cetera, et cetera.

Mr. Singh: Thank you, Madam Chair. I want to return to the Water Improvement Rate, could the hon. Minister provide a breakdown of that reduction by $50.7 million?
Hon. Le Hunte: I will then have to supply you with that information. The actual breakdown? Okay.

Mr. Karim: Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, I want to return to line Item 42, Street Lighting. Many of the constituents seem to indicate that there is a corollary, a relationship, between the lack of street lighting and the inducement to crime and criminality. Do you have a running commentary in terms of the number of street lights—when we pass on the highway, we see a number of them that are not repaired. Do you have an idea as to how many thousands or hundreds of thousands that have not been lit for the last month, out of service and what do you plan to do within which period of time?

Hon. Le Hunte: No, I do not have that number of the amount of street lights that are not operational at this point in time. I would probably try to get that number to you.

Mr. Karim: Okay. I am certain that you will be aware that it is a critical problem. Can you give us some measure of comfort as to what you intend to do to alleviate or to respond to this situation?

6.30 p.m.

Hon. Le Hunte: Well, we do respond. Where we find that there are street lights that are not working, we do work through the agency and try to get them working as quickly as possible. So, it is, we have—I mean, the figure that was presented to me is that we have 15,000 lights that are presently not working out of a total of 205,000 lights. So there are 15,000 out of 205,000 and we will be working towards rectifying that during the year.

Madam Chairman: Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: The question has been answered.

Madam Chairman: Member for Princes Town.
Mr. Padarath: Thank you, Madam Chair. Under the same line Item, street lighting at 42, two questions. First, to the hon. Minister. Hon. Minister there appears to be a breakdown of responsiveness when it comes to the hotline that is associated with street lighting. I can tell you from my own experience, I have had my street light out for over a year, after about 10 complaints and still nothing. But this is something that is across the board, where we have found over the past year in particular, probably because there have been so many Ministers of Public Utilities, but really there has been a breakdown of responsiveness with respect to the hotlines, in terms of communicating with the public and also accepting these complaints. What is your method, in terms of moving forward, in terms of becoming more responsive through the street lighting programme to the public?—one.

And the second one was that you spoke about alternative energy conservation streams. Now, it is fine and well to make those sort of pronouncements without giving any specifics. At this point, we are looking for specifics. What are some of these alternatives?

Hon. Le Hunte: Well, if I could start with the second question on some of the alternatives that we have been putting in place, we have been putting in place the LED lighting facilities and we have been changing the—we have been moving. In the case of the street lighting, we have been using some of the solar lighting in some areas and we have been, as I said, we have been changing the types of bulbs that we have been using on the street lighting to be more energy-conservation-type bulbs.

With regard to the breakdown, it is something I would definitely have to look into. We do try to respond as quickly as possible, and I, since I have assumed office a month ago, I have been responding to most of the queries, as they relate to
street lighting activities and I have not seen a big backlog that is outstanding, but if there is, I will look into it.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Two questions. The first question is the recreation—I know that you are indicating that you are going to be reducing the lights, and so forth, in the recreation parks. And for clubs and for athletes and for various sporting activities that take place at these recreation grounds, what systems would be put in place for an extension of the lighting system? That is one.

And two, I understand that some persons are—some recreation grounds are experiencing problems in terms of payment. As far as I am aware, the Ministry of Public Utilities has taken up the responsibility, has accepted responsibility of the payment of these grounds. Is this still continuing, or has it been discontinued?

**Hon. Le Hunte:** In case of the latter, yes we do make the payments for these grounds. We foot the bill for these grounds, and hence we are trying as much possible to manage the optimal use of these grounds. And hence the reason why we are trying as much as possible to ensure when the grounds are not in use that the lights are not going to be kept on burning unnecessary electricity. And really that is the second question.

And the first question, sorry again?

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** What systems would be put in place for clubs or athletes who would have to use the grounds for extended periods? How can they ask for the lights to be extended? Do they write to the Ministry? Who do they liaise with?

**Hon. Le Hunte:** Well, again, you know there will be—the system that would be put in place would be one that would be, one we would be able to have sight of the particular recreation grounds, and in addition there are timers on these particular
recreation grounds too that if it is that it has to go for an extended period of time, you could actually go in there and make the requirements through the timer. So we could adjust the timing system if it is required.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 002, Met Services, pages 256 and 257. Member for Chaguanas West.

**Mr. Singh:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Item 16, Contract Employment. Could the Minister indicate what are the types of contract employment you have at the Met Services and how many persons have been employed over the last year in the allocation? Because there is an increase by $326,000.

In addition, there is an allocation under 22 for Short-Term Employment and that too has $1.1 million allocation. Could you indicate what is that short-term employment for?

**Hon. Le Hunte:** Under Item 16, you said Contract Employment. And the other one dealt with?

**Mr. Singh:** Short-Term Employment, under 22.

**Hon. Le Hunte:** Short-Term Employment. So should I take both one time, together? One at a time? Okay. Contract 16. Under Contract Employment for fiscal year September, there was a decrease from 12 to seven. Five positions were not recommended for retention by the Public Management Consulting Division. So that is really the reasons for the reduction in the contract employment.

**Mr. Singh:** I wanted to know what positions, what type of work that these contract employees do.

**Hon. Le Hunte:** The actual positions that are actually there in the Contract Employment, I will have to get back to you and let you know the actual positions that are being filled.

**Mr. Singh:** Okay, and your short-term?
Hon. Le Hunte: And in the case of the short-term contracts, there are currently 33 persons on short-term contracts in the Ministry.

Mr. Singh: In the Met Services?

Hon. Le Hunte: In Met Services there are 18 on contract.

Mr. Singh: Through you, Madam Chair, what are those positions?

Hon. Le Hunte: Again, the actual breakdown of the positions I will provide you with.

Mr. Singh: The point I want to make, Madam Chair, to the hon. Minister is that, look, the Met Services is a very small complement of staff. You have both contract and Short-Term Employment. It really requires a level of rationalization.

Madam Chairman: That is a question or a statement?

Mr. Singh: No, no, that is a statement. That is a statement of assistance.

Madam Chairman: Minister, would you want to respond?

Hon. Le Hunte: No, no, no.

Madam Chairman: Item 005: Electrical Inspectorate, pages 257 and 258. Member for Chaguanas East.

Mr. Karim: Thank you, Madam Chair, just Item 16. First, hon. Minister, would you be able to indicate to us, with respect to contract employment, whether you are adequately served in terms of the ratio of electrical inspectors to households, and if so, if you can give an idea as to the deficit and what you might want to do to correct that deficit?

Hon. Le Hunte: Again, with regard to Contract Employment, on Item 16, presently there are 14 persons employed on contract in that particular division. What has happened in that particular division, there has been a reduction in the amount of Contract Employment there because there have been an increase in the number of the filling of the vacancies in the permanent employment, and as we fill
the vacancies in the permanent employment category, we have been reducing the number of contract employees.

At this point in time, we feel that as we fill, our emphasis is to try to put the vacancies, to fill the permanent vacancies and there so rely less on the Contract Employment. And as we do that, we think yes, we have enough people in the employ.

Mr. Karim: Just to get it right, you are saying that you are convinced or you are satisfied that you have sufficient electrical inspectors to satisfy the needs of customers?

Hon. Le Hunte: Based on—yes.

Mr. Karim: That might not necessarily be the view of the household, but anyway. Item number 17, there seems to be a consistent decline in the amount allocated to training. In fact, it seems as though, although security is very important, but the security here seems to be consistently increasing while the opportunity for training in capacity building and improving the quality of the service seems to be reducing. Is there a reason why we are seeing this decline?

Hon. Le Hunte: Well, I mean under that budget of training, I mean, I think there has been a dramatic decline overall in all areas. In the area of training, we do have, based on the needs analysis done, there is a training for one electrical inspector in fire investigations of high voltage. So there is a particular training that we have identified in the training gaps of the inspectors that we need to provide for and that is what we are catering for under this particular item of training.

Mr. Karim: The reason why I am raising it is because you may have improvements to building codes, and so on, and new developments and technological developments. So I was really looking at that aspect of it, in terms of how do you respond to the information age and the knowledge base of the
employees, in terms of the capacity of themselves. It might be something you want to consider.

**Hon. Le Hunte:** It is something that I will consider, but as the need arises I am sure we would be able to look at it going forward.

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

**Mr. Singh:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, under contract employment, could you indicate what is the revenue that the State earns from the Electrical Inspectorate?

**Hon. Le Hunte:** I will get that information back to you.

**Mr. Singh:** There is a reason for that, because at one point in time there was a model that was being talked about with a view to privatizing the Electrical Inspectorate in order to be more effective and more responsive, and being a fresh Minister I thought you might want to take a look at that.

**Hon. Le Hunte:** Sure, I take that on board.


**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Madam Chair.

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

**Mr. Singh:** Madam Chair, under the Utilities Assistance Programme, there is an increase of—what is this, $4 million?

**Hon. Le Hunte:** Four thousand.
Mr. Singh: Thought so, $4,000. Madam Chair, I would like to find out from the Minister, is this really a reflection of the fact that this Utilities Assistance Programme is for the pensioners and for the impoverished in the society? Is this what the increased allocation amounts to and the projections of the Ministry? What was the demand of the Ministry of the Ministry of Finance—request of the Ministry to the Ministry of Finance on this issue?

Hon. Le Hunte: At this point in time, the actual request is not in front of me. But the programme is one that we think is well utilized and it is well patronized and is one that we feel that the particular allocation will allow us to continue to satisfy the needs or some of the needs of the people as they request.

Madam Chairman: Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Sub-Item 08, Madam Chair, to the Minister. Could you give a little explanation on this issue of the rebate on electricity bills, almost similar to the rebate on WASA bills? And the increase, is it you are giving more subsidies? Could you explain that rebate to us, rebate on electricity bill?

Hon. Le Hunte: So the increase in the amount for the payment of the—the actual increase in the amount that you are speaking about was really, the increase in the amount was for the payment of arrears for the period February to September 2017, in the sum of $33 million. Furthermore, the rebate amount for September 2017 is outstanding. The projected figure for fiscal 2018 is around $49 million.

Dr. Gopeesingh: So that is—could you just explain the rebate process just briefly?

Hon. Le Hunte: Well, as it is now the present rebate is that you get 25 per cent if the bill is $300 or less, and the amount of people that are being affected is about 209,000.

Dr. Gopeesingh: If the bill is less than?
Hon. Le Hunte: You get 25 per cent off if your bill is $300 or less.

Mr. Imbert: Madam Chairman, let me assist the Member for Caroni East. This was a budget measure—

Dr. Gopeesingh: Yes, but—

Mr. Imbert: —announced last year.

Dr. Gopeesingh: So what, I cannot ask a question on it for clarity?

Mr. Imbert: It was clarified in last year's budget.

Dr. Gopeesingh: No, you were never clear.

Madam Chairman: Member for Pointe-a-Pierre, do you have a question?

Mr. Lee: No, no, no.

Madam Chairman: Okay. We are now on to 009, Other Transfers, page 261. Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.

Mr. Lee: Thank you, Chair. Sub-Items 16 and 17, the bond facility repayment. Is it fair to say, Minister, that nothing was paid on these two bond facilities in 2017?

Hon. Le Hunte: Well, it is fair to say nothing was paid on them because they were not issued in 2017. Right now, if there are 20, they will be issued. There is a bridging loan that would be converted into a bond and, therefore, they will be paid in 2016 and 2017. And as you see, the bridging loan component will fall away.

Mr. Lee: So, why did we estimate something in 2017, budgeted that amount?

Hon. Le Hunte: Beg pardon?

Mr. Lee: Why did we budget $67 million and $50 million respectively in those two line Items 16 and 17 in 2017?

Hon. Le Hunte: Now, there is no estimate. Well because at the time, I mean this particular bond is a bond that was expected to be done. It has been slightly delayed and is going to be, the existing loan is going to be converted into a bond. All documentations have been signed up, and so forth, and will be converted into a
bond within a relatively short space of time and the repayment of the bond will actually start this year, in October. It should completed be very soon, by the end of the month.

Madam Chairman: Member for Chaguanas West.

Mr. Singh: Thank you, Madam Chair. With respect to Item 2 for the Water Resource Management Unit, there is an allocation of $650,000, an increase of 550. Could the hon. Minister indicate as to what stage the process is at, in the context of the emergence of this new water resource management unit?

Hon. Le Hunte: What Item? What number, please?

Mr. Singh: Item 02, under 009.

Madam Chairman: Page 261, 009, Other Transfers, 02 and 03.

Hon. Le Hunte: All right, at this point in time we are looking at now the establishment of a national water resource information system, the enhancement of the water resource hydrological monitoring network and development of the flood monitoring system. So, the water resource management unit, those are the Items that are earmarked to be completed in 2018.

Mr. Singh: Okay, just to assist. This is not what this is about. Madam Chair, this is a bifurcation of the water resources agency into a water resource management united and it is a whole entity that your manifesto talks about. So, perhaps, you can take a look at that.

But my second question now, Madam Chair, the Waste Recycling Management Authority, there is an allocation of $2 million for that. That is something new. Could you explain what is happening with respect to that?

Hon. Le Hunte: We are looking at moving. There is a move towards moving SWMCOL into having to undertake the role and function of a waste recycling management authority. So SWMCOL, in addition to its present role will take up a
recycling management authority role. And, therefore, this particular money is therefore looking at putting the hiring of staff, in the first instance, and the doing of the necessary, some of the necessary fixing of the necessary buildings, and so forth to facilitate that change. But we feel that there is a need to have a recycling management authority and we feel that SWMCOL is the best place to place that particular authority in, or the responsibility for that authority in.

**Mr. Al-Rawi:** Madam Chair, could I just add? Cabinet took a decision to treat with the operationalization of the waste recycling matters, prior to my colleague's joining the Bench. That has now morphed into exactly as he said. I am just giving you a little bit of background detail. We intend to do some retrofitting of SWMCOL to be the operational and functional element on that background and it would be treated with, in a combination of legislation and operational measures.

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

**Mr. Singh:** Thank you, Madam Chair. And the hon. Member for San Fernando West, together with the hon. Minister would know there was a draft legislation already in place.

**Mr. Imbert:** Could you tell me what line Item you are on, please?

**Mr. Singh:** I am on line Item 04 under 09.

**Mr. Imbert:** And what is the point?

**Mr. Singh:** Trinidad and Tobago Postal Corporation. Madam Chair.

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

**Mr. Singh:** I see that there is a significant reduction to TTPost, could the hon. Minister give—a $33 million—

**Mr. Imbert:** If you look at the original estimate for 2017, it was $75 million. So we have simply put this identical amount for this year. If the need arises, this Head will be supplemented. If the need does not arise, this Head will be reduced.
Mr. Singh: So in other words, it is an allocation subject to the need arising?

Mr. Imbert: Yes, as I said, if it needs to be supplemented it will be. It if needs to be reduced it will be, as you know, having held this portfolio.

Mr. Singh: Madam Chair, Item 14, re: Cove Power Station, there is a decrease in the allocation by $1.1 million.

Mr. Imbert: That is just a one repayment. It is principal and interest payments. That is the actual amount.

Mr. Singh: Okay, but fine. Thank you.

Madam Chairman: Item 011, Transfers to State Enterprises, page 261. Member for Caroni Central.

Dr. Tewarie: yeah, just a short question, Madam Chair. I see that there is no allocation for MTS. I just want to know, was it moved to another Ministry or is there some other explanation?

Madam Chairman: Minister of Finance.

Hon. Le Hunte: No, it was not moved. Sorry, Minister of Finance.

Madam Chairman: The Minister could answer.

Hon. Le Hunte: Well the payment under 004, at that point in time, MTS is a company that basically sees about—they pay their bills. The amount that was paid, there were the arrears that the Ministry actually took up in paying the arrears of the MTS, their collective bargaining payment, and that payment was actually paid.

Dr. Tewarie: So you just do not owe them anything?

Hon. Le Hunte: So it is no longer needed.

Madam Chairman: Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.

Mr. Lee: Thank you, Madam Chair. To the Minister. Is the Minister aware that there are still some negotiations that are still outstanding at MTS?

Mr. Imbert: Could I just come in here? I was just telling the Minister, because he
is new, that we have to deal with collective agreement for the janitorial staff at MTS, which will be dealt with in 2018. Okay? Just to make sure, because these workers at MTS they really work hard and I did not want any of them to feel that we were not attending to their needs.

Madam Chairman: Okay, we now go on to Sub-Head 06, Current Transfers to Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies. That is the other book and we are going to page 261. So we are now going to page 213, 51, Water and Sewerage Authority.

Hon. Members, we now move on to the Draft Estimates of the Revenue and Expenditure of Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies and the Tobago House of Assembly. Page 213, 51, Water and Sewerage Authority, Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure, 001, General Administration, page 213; Sub-head 02, Goods and Services; 001, General Administration, pages 213 and 214. Member for Chaguanas West.

Mr. Singh: Madam Chair, under Item 06: Remuneration to Board Members, I see that there has been an increase from $495,000 to $627,000. Although that was the amount in 2016, is there a reversion to that again, reversion to the same amount?

Madam Chairman: Member you have gone back to 01: Personnel Expenditure?

Mr. Singh: Yeah.

Madam Chairman: Okay, I think we are on 02, Goods and Services, 001, General Administration.

Mr. Singh: Okay, well I will pass.

Madam Chairman: That is where we have reached. All right? Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.

Mr. Lee: Thank you, Madam Chair. To the Minister, line Item 43, Security Services. An increase of $12 million is budgeted for $70 million, is this $70 million that is budgeted for this year, Minister? Does it include arrears owing to
security firms?

**Hon. Le Hunte:** I will need to get back to you to know what percentage of that money represents payment of arrears.

**Mr. Lee:** Follow-up question. Could the Minister, also in writing, give a list of security firms—moneys owed to them still outstanding, please?

**Hon. Le Hunte:** Okay, I know we have 13 firms that we have contractual services. I would give you the list of those that we have outstanding moneys to. Yes.

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

**Mr. Singh:** Thank you, Madam Chairman, under Item 28, Other Contracted Services, there is an increase in 2018. Well, no increase really, but there is an allocation of $90 million. Could the Minister indicate what are those Other Contracted Services?

**Hon. Le Hunte:** I will get back to you with the actual breakdown of what are those services. But basically, they are services that WASA deems that they need to do outside of their present staffing that they could handle within the existing staffing.

**Mr. Singh:** Through you, Madam Chair. Minister, please take a look at the contracted services for the chemicals to treat the water because it is my understanding that you have a real problem in accessing those services and material.

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

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Yes, I was just about to ask the question on what are the supplies that would account for the increase of $77 million under line Item 12, the same one that MP for Chaguanas West was asking about—line Item 12, Materials and Supplies, increase of $77 million. What are the general supplies and hence,
what is the reason for the increase of $77 million?

7.00 p.m.

**Hon. Le Hunte:** In that particular area, there are a number of different areas that basically make up that increase of 77. One, the Seven Seas plant is producing a slightly increased amount of water and that particular about 4,546 cubic metres per day in additional water, that results in an increase of about $15.8 million of that 77. Then the adoption of almost—there are about 43 HDC waste water treatment plants that are now being brought on stream. That requires some additional amount. There is an increase in the water production cost and the materials that are required, as a result of that increase in production. That accounts for about $14.3 million. And then the additional chemicals to treat the silt water as a consequence of the heavy rains that have been happening, and other chemicals, that is about $7.5 million, et cetera, et cetera. I think that should that care of the majority of that increase.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Thank you. As you are on that, Madam Chair, may I be permitted? The next line Item 16, Contract Employment. That is the first time in 2018 that you have brought that on for $37 million. Could you indicate the rationale for a new budgetary allocation of $37 million for Contract Employment not being in done in 2017 nor in 2016?

**Hon. Le Hunte:** If you go all the way back to 001, under Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance, you would see that there is a reduction in there from 670 down to 609 under that allocation, which is a $60 million reduction. In 2017, that 670 included things like previously included contracts and short-term contracts and also short-term employment were covered under that 670. So it is now being reduced, pulled out of there, so you would also see an increase in short-term employment. So that contract employee is just breaking it out.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Thank you. I wonder whether you would be kind enough to give
an indication of how many—what is the staff on full time and how many are on contract?

**Hon. Le Hunte:** All right. We presently at WASA have a complement of about 5,151 employees. We have 1,988 daily paid, 3,163 monthly paid and 155 employees on short-term contracts.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Thank you, Minister.

**Mr. Charles:** Thank you, Madam Chair, Item 69, Road Reinstatement WASA. Mr. Minister, I think you know that WASA has a history of noting when roads are repaired and digging them up and leaving them not in the state in which they met them. So the question is, one, given the pervasiveness of that kind of activity, could you just explain the $2 million decrease? Secondly, will you work with WASA to work with the Ministry of Works and Transport to coordinate their work so that there will be less of that problem that we have spoken about? And will you work with WASA to tell them please to when reinstate the road, do it as they met it rather than an inferior replica of what they should do?

**Hon. Le Hunte:** Could I just answer that by saying all of the above? So that is why we are reducing.

**Madam Chairman:** Are you finished, Member for Naparima?

**Mr. Charles:** But the explanation for the decrease, given the pervasiveness—

**Hon. Le Hunte:** Because we will be working more closely with—the whole idea is to work more closely with the Ministry of Works and Transport in this particular area, whereby and they themselves—and we have that agreement so they themselves will be taking up that fixing of the roads because of that collaboration, so hence our idea of having a smaller allocation.

**Mr. Charles:** And if you can do that you will earn the trust that the Prime Minister
has reposed in you.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you Madam Chair, just to follow up on that point before I get to my question. Hon. Minister, a lot of the roads sometimes deteriorate very quickly because of leaks, you know, that remain there for quite some time and it causes the erosion and ultimately the collapse so if you could—probably if you dealt with that then maybe we could avoid that road rehabilitation in so many cases that is so costly.

But going to Line 68, Water Trucking. I see that you have $10 million estimated and I am asking: One, what steps has the Ministry taken to ensure that residents who do not have a regular supply of water that they can receive an adequate supply—truck-born water, that is—an adequate supply on a timely basis? Two, without paying any cost—because sometimes the water trucks do come and want to charge for this—what steps are being taken to ensure that this $10 million is adequately put in place to supply persons throughout the island that do not have a regular supply?

Hon. Le Hunte: Well, one of the things we would be doing, and it will launched very soon, we are increasing our communication problem. We recognize that there have been some glitches in our communications to WASA, which has been resolved and therefore we expect that we will be able to get feedback from customers and on those requests a lot more efficiently, within the next month, now that that situation is resolved.

Secondly, as you see we did increase the amount slightly, all right? Third, we are, on the other question that you, the last part of your question was how could we ensure, with regard to the charging—

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: A number of persons—

Hon. Le Hunte: As you know, a lot of the delivery of this water—we would like
people if they are being charged for that water, when it is being delivered, that is something that we are actually closely monitoring, because you are not really supposed—these institutions are not supposed to be selling water, because they are paid by us to deliver water. And therefore, where there are areas or incidents where people are being charged, we will be coming out with some communication whereby we would like to find that out so we could take the necessary action.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: You said there was a glitch in the communications in your earlier statement. What really is the glitch?

Hon. Le Hunte: Well there are, as a matter of fact, I mean, we know that the system—the system, the communication system into WASA over the last month has been malfunctioning and therefore a number of times to get in to make a request has not been as effective as it is supposed to be. We will be launching a new communication system within the next month which is part of our outreach programme which will allow people, and we will be using new technology creating an app et cetera, et cetera, that will actually allow people to make that request on their phones and allow you to leave messages and get into WASA a lot better to facilitate the better—the more efficient operations.

Madam Chairman: We will go on to Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, page 214. 001, General Administration. Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies, page 214; 007, Households; 009, Other Transfers, pages 214 to 215. Member for Chaguanas West.

Mr. Singh: Thank you Madam Chair, the Item under 09, 02 Settlement of Claims. What are these claims for, hon. Minister? Are these workers’ claims, are these damage to property claims against the Water and Sewerage Authority? What are these claims?

Hon. Le Hunte: I will get back to you.
Dr. Gopeesingh: Hon. Minister, from Sub-Item, 06 to 59, there are a number of line Items there for Interest Payment and Principal Payment and perhaps you may need to get the assistance of the hon. Minister of Finance. Could you tell this committee what are the principals? What is the amount of loan in each one of these line Items? What has been the principal payment? How much interest has been paid? How much is owed still and what is the interest rate? I am asking that last question on interest rate because during the budget debate one of my colleagues indicated that whether the Government was contemplating at any time for its benefit a rearrangement of—or a re-discussion on the interest rate of all these loans.

7.10 p.m.

So in summary, could you give us a detailed analysis of the principals, the amount that was borrowed, how much was paid, how much is owed and over what period of time it is expected for completion of the payment and at what rate?

Mr. Imbert: Are you referring to 52 to 59?
Dr. Gopeesingh: I am referring to page 214.
Mr. Imbert: Yes, I am aware of that.
Dr. Gopeesingh: 06 to 59, Minister.
Mr. Imbert: But 52 to 59 is already finished.
Dr. Gopeesingh: Sorry, I am not getting you.
Mr. Imbert: Items 52 to 59 no longer exist.
Dr. Gopeesingh: Sure. But there is an Item there in 2016 for information—
Mr. Imbert: Come on, we are in 2018.
Dr. Gopeesingh: Could you give us an idea of the—
Mr. Imbert: That is already finished. That was finished under your time. Secondly, if you look at 20, 21, it tells you what it is: Interest, principal. I mean, it is all there.
Dr. Gopeesingh: Sure, Minister, but interest for how long? How long the payments are supposed to be? It is the same thing. Remember I asked you about the rapid rail last year and the same thing is coming up again.

Mr. Imbert: Madam Chairman, the Member asked me for the interest and the principal. It is all there.

Dr. Gopeesingh: And how long it is to be paid, Minister? What is the total amount of payment?

Mr. Imbert: I think you better reduce your question to writing, and I will respond in writing because there is no point in telling you the interest when it is already there. It is already in the public domain. It says interest on Desalcott loan facility; principal on $271.4 million bond; interest on working capital funding loans; interest on Desalcott loan. Therefore, the interest on the principal is already stated.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Hon. Minister, I can read. So, therefore, it seems as though you do not understand my question.

Mr. Imbert: I do not.

Dr. Gopeesingh: My question is, could you indicate or request what was the amount of the loan, how much was paid, what period of time—

Mr. Imbert: For example, Member, Item 28 says—

Madam Chairman: One minute, please.

Mr. Imbert: The principal of $271.4 million bond, therefore, the amount is $271.4 million.

Madam Chairman: That is the principal.

Mr. Imbert: That is the amount. $271.4 million is the amount. 23, principal on $500 million bond. So the amount of the loan is $500 million.

Dr. Gopeesingh: So, how much of that was paid and what is the interest rate and when it will be completed? A simple question. Why you are so reluctant to give
Mr. Imbert: We will answer that in writing.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Yes, thank you.

Madam Chairman: All right. So can we go on now to 55, Regulated Industries Commission. We are at page 233, Sub-Head 01, Personal Expenditure; 001, General Administration, and we are in a different book. We are in the Draft Estimate of Revenue and Expenditure Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies. Page 233, 001, General Administration, Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services; page 233, 001, General Administration. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, in light of the decrease in goods and services—General Administration. In light of the fact that there is a decrease of $10,539,000, can you advise what is the status of the request by the Water and Sewage Authority and the Trinidad and Tobago Electrical Commission to increase rates paid by citizens?

Mr. Imbert: Madam Chairman, I cannot see the relevance of that question to the line Item. So I would ask the Member to clarify.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: If there is a decrease, Madam Chair, I would think that you would be looking for additional funds from some other source, so I am asking.

Madam Chairman: So, do you want to ask the Minister the reason for the decrease?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Sure. Minister, can you account for the decrease, one and two, is there any way the Minister is going to be looking for additional funding to assist to take place where there is a deficit, please?

Madam Chairman: One minute. Let us first hear the reasons for the decrease, because your second question may not arise. There is a breakdown, because you have given the total figure. I do not know Member, if you want to ask under each
Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: I will await the Minister’s response on the account for the decrease.

Madam Chairman: But then he is going to go through each Item, so that is where I was trying to save us some time. Maybe if you can direct him to the particular items because that is the total figure, but you do have the breakdown there. Do you understand, Member?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Can the Minister indicate how many positions that are in line 16, Contract Employment? I see there is a decrease and, therefore, I would like to find out from the Minister what accounts for this decrease, please?

Hon. Le Hunt: Okay. Well, basically, contract employment is again similar to another—the allocation for contract employment was previously under Salaries. So if you look under Salaries and Cost of Living Allowances, you would see that there was no allocation in 2017 and there was a $5.7 million allocation there now in 2018. So a part of that is just really where—it is an allocation that was all under that particular contract employment that is no longer covered under that particular allocation.

Madam Chairman: Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla, yes?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you. Madam Chair, there was statement made here during the Standing Finance Committee between hon. Brig. Gen. Antoine and MP Tewarie and I just wanted to get some clarification on it in regard—yeah. During the budget—

Madam Chairman: The debate?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Yes, during the debate.

Mr. Imbert: Madam Chairman, can we deal with a line Item please?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Well, it is related.
Appropriation (Financial Year 2018) Bill, 2017
Standing Finance Committee.

Madam Chairman: Yes, let me hear the question.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: And it is to find out—they indicated that there was going to be an increase—they made an increase to RIC. So I just wanted to know because—Mr. Imbert: Which line Item is this please?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Under the RIC here, details of expenditure, I wanted to find out, does the commission have plans to increase any utility rates for fiscal 2018?

Mr. Imbert: That is not a line Item.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: But it is related, Madam, because a statement was made.

Madam Chairman: But, Member, wait. We know the statement was made. In fact that is what you are saying, that there was a plan to increase the rates. Okay? So that in terms of what we have before us are really estimates of expenditure. So I will allow it if you want to tie that to something that is here but not to explore that discussion.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Would the estimate take into account the increase?

Mr. Imbert: What increase? Madam Chairman, I cannot see any line Item that deals with that, but there is no increase. There is a review.

Madam Chairman: Member for Chaguanas West.

Mr. Singh: Thank you, Madam Chair. Item 28, Other Contracted Services. Could the Minister indicate what those other contracted services by the RIC are?

Madam Chairman: Minister of Public Utilities.

Hon. Le Hunt: I will have to get back to you.

Mr. Singh: I have to begin to understand your nuances. Anyway, it must be from the banking sector.

Under Item 62, Promotions, Publicity and Printing, I see that there is an allocation of $380,000. Minister, do you think this is sufficient having regard to the fact that
there is a request for a review before and there is a process by the independent body called the RIC to engage in and in order to bring about—and I know you are beginning to read what I said—that people to the process, you have to have advertisements and you have to bring in people, and whether that is a sufficient allocation having regard to the nature and function of the RIC?

**Hon. Le Hunt:** Yes, I think that is sufficient but if it requires relooking in the mid-year review, I am sure that we would be able to accommodate.

**Madam Chairman:** Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, page 234, 001, General Administration; Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies, page 234; 007, Households; 009, Other Transfers, page 234.

Hon. Members, we will now move on to the *Draft Estimates of the Development Programme.* Sub-Head 09, Development Programme, page 98.

**Mr. Lee:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Line Item 591, Additional Transmission Infrastructure to Move Power from TGU to National Grid. You had a budget allocation of $3 million in 2017. The first question: Was anything done in that infrastructure during 2016 to 2017? And the second part, in 2018 you have allocated $9 million, where is this infrastructure being done to bring the power on to the national grid?

**Mr. Imbert:** Excuse, Madam Chair. You said in 2016?

**Mr. Lee:** 2016/2017.

**Mr. Imbert:** That is not the last fiscal year. That is the one before.

**Mr. Lee:** 2015/2016 would have been your first. Correct?

**Mr. Imbert:** Yeah.

**Mr. Lee:** I am saying 2016/2017 you had budgeted $3 million.

**Mr. Imbert:** Well, it is zero. **Mr. Lee:** No, well the revised. Now, I am asking,
was anything spent during 2017?

Mr. Imbert: How is that possible if it is zero?

Mr. Lee: So, nothing was spent.

Mr. Imbert: Well, that is what zero means.

Mr. Lee: So, I am asking you. [Crosstalk]

Madam Chairman: One minute please, Members. So the question, Pointe-a-Pierre, is why nothing was spent?

Mr. Lee: Yes.

Madam Chairman: Okay. I think he has revised his question. Why nothing was spent?

Mr. Lee: The first part.

Mr. Imbert: How I would know that?

Mr. Lee: Well, I was asking. Not you Minister, I was asking the Minister of Public Utilities. [Crosstalk]

Madam Chairman: Members.

Mr. Lee: Is anything wrong with that?

Madam Chairman: Members. Members. Hon. Members, can we proceed please? Minister of Public Utilities.

Hon. Le Hunt: Okay, so let me just give you an update on that particular project. In fiscal 2017, the initial phase of this project was completed to allow the commissioning to take through 720 megawatts of power into the national grid. T&TEC will utilize previously years’ balances along with the 2018 fiscal allocation for the construction of the second line from Union Estate to Brechin Castle. This will comprise phase two of the project at a cost of $57 million. So the answer is that yes work was completed. The money that was spent was previously allocated—balances that we used from this particular project and the work
completed was phase one. Phase two of the project will be completed in this year.

Mr. Lee: So the work was done during 2017?

Hon. Le Hunt: Yes.

Mr. Lee: Okay. Second question, line Item 597, Expansion of Generating Capacity in Tobago. You have estimated $94 million on this plant. I am assuming this is in Cove?

Hon. Le Hunt: Yes.

Mr. Lee: What projects are coming on stream that would initiate this expansion in 2018?

Hon. Le Hunt: I think when we look at the grid in Tobago, I think we feel that there is a general need for an expansion of the power and the reserve power that you have in Tobago and, therefore, this is a project, this is one to meet all the ensuing demands and also for security of service of power distribution on the island of Tobago.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Madam Chair. Line Item 583. Can the hon. Minister indicate how far has the preparedness capabilities the development of it, how far has it reached in terms of the status of the plan?

Hon. Le Hunt: What? Do you want to just—

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: 583, Development of Disaster Preparedness Capabilities in T&TEC.

Hon. Le Hunt: Madam Chairman, we have been moving fairly rapidly. We have over in fiscal 2017, we have purchased 10 trailers, 10 mounted trailers with generators that have the capacity to be moving and to be able to be mobile generators that we are going to deploy throughout the country. That was done and we intend to continue to expand. In 2018, we will continue in that particular disaster preparedness.

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Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Line 586, I see the Lighting of Parks and Recreation Grounds— we had spoken about it earlier—but I saw $2 million estimated. Is it that you have $2 million throughout Trinidad and Tobago that you will be able— how do you plan to disburse this funding? What is the criteria? What is the process? What is the methodology?

Hon. Le Hunt: What particular—

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: 586.

Hon. Le Hunt: 586. There is a bulk allocation. Again, the funding for this was done on previously allocated funds to T&TEC. In fiscal 2017, we did 13 recreation grounds and parks at a cost of about $11 million and we intend to do another 12 parks.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Could the hon. Minister—I mean, just for expediency— probably send what parks you have in plan, the 12 parks at another time, not now. And also, if you could identify 593, if the electrification programme is discontinued. I am not seeing anything through it. So I am just asking.

Hon. Le Hunt: So would you like to get an indication of the parks that were done last year?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: No, no, no. You said there are 12 parks to be done.

Hon. Le Hunt: Well, no, based on the estimate that we are looking at, we feel that we should be in a position. We have not identified these parks.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: So, therefore, we can as MPs submit—

Hon. Le Hunt: We have budgeted based on what we know as to the cost of doing a park, how much we think we might be able to get achieved in 2018.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: All right, no problem.

Mr. Singh: Item 596, Replacement of Aging Transmission Infrastructure. An allocation of $2 million in 2018. Could the Minister indicate what areas of
replacement and also since the PowerGen is replacing the whole infrastructure at the Colville Street area, could the Minister indicate who is bearing the cost of that?

**Hon. Le Hunt:** Well, the latter question, who would be bearing the cost of the replacing of the—

**Mr. Imbert:** This is the old electricity station at Colville Street? Well, the UNC made an agreement that Government has to pay for it. Unfortunately, you committed us to that.

**Mr. Singh:** I just want to respond to that. The agreement was signed in 1994 for the generation assets.

**Mr. Imbert:** That is not my information. It is the UNC that did it.

**Mr. Singh:** At the time of the sale of generation assets, the cost of any kind of environmental clean-up would be borne by the Government. So it is not UNC.

**Mr. Imbert:** It is a 2014 agreement by the UNC with respect to the Port of Spain station. *[Desk thumping]* I have seen it myself.

**Mr. Singh:** No. Could the hon. Minister bring both the 1994 agreement and the 2014 agreement?

**Mr. Imbert:** No problem.

**Madam Chairman:** All right. Member for Chaguanas East. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**Mr. Karim:** Hon. Minister, this might be—hon. Minister, Item No. 595.

**Madam Chairman:** Page 98, Item 595.

**Mr. Karim:** Page 98, Item 595. This might be a rhetorical question, but I just want to ask it for the records. Has T&TEC abandoned the renewable energy initiatives?

**Hon. Le Hunt:** No.

**Mr. Karim:** No. The other question is, Item 583, Development of Disaster
Preparedness Capabilities in T&TEC. Given the experiences recently, do you think that this allocation is adequate?

Hon. Le Hunt: Yes, yes.

Mr. Paray: Thank you very much, Madam Chairman. Minister, one of the previous Acting Ministers of Public Utilities, did make a commitment for the solar lighting programme in the Manzanilla Road area, and that we would have seen some progress on it this year. I noticed under Item 581 there is no allocation under the Street Lighting Programme. Will we still be seeing—is that still something that your Ministry has on the calendar for fiscal 2018? That is the first question. The second question, coming back again to the Manzanilla Road area, there has been some infrastructure put in place to move the high voltage lines that are currently sitting inside the Nariva Swamp onto the sides of the Main Road for obvious reasons that has not been energized as yet. Is that something that is planned for 2018 to get that up and running?

Hon. Le Hunt: The answer to your latter question is yes, and the allocation, as I said, we will be continuing the Street Lighting Programme, but the allocation again would come from previous years’ balances and internal funds generated from T&TEC. So it is not that the fact that there is not an allocation there means that the programme will not be continuing next year.

Mr. Paray: But, specifically, for the solar lighting project that was referred to, is that something we will see in 2018 fiscal?

Hon. Le Hunt: We do intend to continue to expand solar lighting facilities.

Mr. Paray: This is specifically on the Manzanilla Road area.

Hon. Le Hunt: The answer is yes.

Mr. Paray: Okay. Thank you.

Madam Chairman: All right. So, can we go on? Item 004, Social Infrastructure,
Appropriation (Financial Year 2018) Bill, 2017
Standing Finance Committee.

pages 102 and 103. Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services, pages 103 and 104.

Mr. Padarath: Thank you, Madam Chair. Minister, line Item 045, Establishment of a Water Resource Agency. You will notice that in 2017 an allocation of $8 million only $1.1 million was spent and now in 2018 an allocation of $1 million, a very drastic revision from what was estimated in 2017. Can you indicate, at this point, what is the status of the Water Resource Agency? With this type of allocation, what sort of projections do you have in terms of its actual fruition, in terms of utilizing the Water Resource Agency in a new form and dispensation?

Hon. Le Hunt: The creation of a Water Resource Agency which really, as you are aware, that particular work is presently being conducted under WASA and the idea would be to create an agency that will deal with the management of the water resources as a separate body. The project is presently in its execution phrase. In fiscal 2017, the National Integrated Water Policy was updated. The deliverables for 2018 will include the approved integrated water resource policy. We will be looking at the report of the consultant; we will be revising the legislation and we will be bringing the necessary legislation to put into effect that particular authority.

Mr. Padarath: Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, in light of the explanation you have just provided us with being an ongoing operationalizing process, much in the national community would take what you have just said as this project being likened to a URP project where it is over an extensive period of time without specific benchmark and without specific timelines. If you really want to bring this into effect to integrate it into the system, what timeline are you looking at with respect to legislation to bring effect, but also in terms of the timeline for the actual organization itself to be ready to effect the legislation? So one limb is the legislation and also the second limb is the
actualizing and putting into effect, therefore, there must be some sort of symmetry between the Office of the Attorney General and your good self as the operationalizing arm, but there must be some level of timeline. As I said, this could be seen as a URP project.

**Madam Chairman:** Member, one minute. What is the question?

**Mr. Padarath:** The question is what is the timeline?

**Madam Chairman:** Okay, thank you very much.

**Mr. Padarath:** But both, probably the AG could help you since you have raised the issue of legislation.

**Hon. Le Hunt:** This particular agency is one that we think is very important, and it is one that we would be—I think it is on our legislative agenda for this particular year and, therefore, we are working simultaneously in getting the legislation in place and also doing the necessary level of consultation that is required to be able to also put it effective.

**Mr. Padarath:** Minister, with all due respect, therefore that is contradictory, because if you are allocating $1 million and you will not be able to effect the operationalizing limb of the Water Resource Agency when in effect you are saying the legislation is coming sometime this year, you really have a huge disparity in terms of actualizing the legislation by your own figures here. So, therefore, how do you justify your comments?

**Hon. Le Hunt:** I mean, what I did mention and just for clarification, we are looking—I have outlined what are the plans for 2018 as it regards the agency.

**Mr. Imbert:** I would just like to get involved here. These are estimates, this is an allocation. If additional funding is required, it will be provided. If you look at previous estimates of expenditure—look at the last 30 years and you will see, in many cases, there is an allocation of $1 million, $2 million for large projects. The
Ministry has the ability to request a virement or a transfer or a supplementary appropriation which they will receive if it is required.

Mr. Singh: Madam Chair to the hon. Minister, Items 047, Development of an Integrated Water Security Programme for Tobago. The last allocation was in 2017 and no money was expended, no money spent. So I take it that we have an integrated water security plan for Tobago. Item 049, Development of a Water Supply Drought Management Plan; allocated $500,000 in 2017, nothing in 2018. So I take it that too has been completed. Item 051, Development of a Water Supply Management Plan; that too, no allocation in 2018 and Item 55, Adopt and Implement Integrated Water Resources Management; an allocation of $263,000 in 2017 and none in 2018. Minister, could you indicate whether or not these one, two, three, four items with the allocations have they been completed?

Hon. Le Hunt: These projects are on the way and these projects will be completed in 2018 utilizing in-house resources from WASA.

Mr. Singh: I am a bit puzzled. With the allocation, whether you are utilizing outside the resources or in-house resources.

Hon. Le Hunt: Well, with the resources, remember these particular projects, as I said, the projects are on the way to be completed in fiscal 2018 utilizing resources, management and funding internal to WASA.

Mr. Singh: Okay.

Hon. Le Hunt: And we are using the core. When I say “internal to WASA”, the core engineering techniques and so forth internal. I remember last year you brought up these particular projects and you felt that they could have been done in-house.

Mr. Singh: So you are now taking my advice?

Hon. Le Hunt: So, basically, I think they are being done in-house and we are
Mr. Singh: Very well.

7.40 p.m.


Question put and agreed to.

Head 39 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Madam Chairman: I wish to thank the Minister, his Permanent Secretary and the technocrats from the various agencies, and you all are now discharged.

Head 12: Public Service Appeal Board, $3,489,865.

Madam Chairman: We now move on to Head 12: Public Service Appeal Board, $3,489,865. Members, we are in the book, Draft Estimate, Details of Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure for the Financial Year, 2018, page 55. I will now invite the Minister of Finance to make a brief opening statement for a maximum of five minutes.

Hon. Imbert: Madam Chairman, this entity is covered by its name. It is the Public Service Appeal Board and it handles appeals from decisions of the Public Service Commission.

Question proposed: That Head 12 stand part of the Schedule.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Members, the sum of $3,489,865 for Head 12, the Public Service Appeal Board, is comprised of moneys proposed for the expenditure under the following Sub-Heads and Items to be found in the Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure. We are at page 55, Sub-Head 01, Personnel
Madam Chairman: I would like to thank you very much, the representatives of the Public Service Appeal Board.

[MR. FORDE in the Chair]

Head 42: Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government, 2,330,671,110.

Mr. Chairman: Members, we now go to Head 42: Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government. We would be going to page 268, Details of Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure. I would like to welcome the Minister this evening, making your debut. I would like to also welcome the technocrats, Permanent Secretary and her senior staff to the Parliament Chamber this evening, and we would be going straight into Head 42: Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government, $2,330,671,110. I will now invite the Minister of Rural Development and Local Government to make a brief statement not exceeding five minutes.

Hon. Hosein: Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Chairman. The Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government is a crucial part of our governing system and in moving us forward to a more successful future. We are happy to report to this Standing Finance Committee and all the people of the republic of Trinidad and Tobago.

Since being employed at the Ministry almost one year now I have, to date, acquired a better understanding of the Ministry as a system. Indeed, we have had our fair share of challenges in areas such as filling vacancies and public service
delivery. However, we at the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government continue to work diligently to best serve the people of our beloved nation. We are pleased to be part of this democratic process which will allow us this opportunity for scrutiny and recommendation as we move forward into the new fiscal year.

As I reflect on our success stories over the last months, I continue to be encouraged by the hard work and dedication of our Permanent Secretaries, mayors, chairmen, councillors, public servants, and every citizen who remain committed to the future growth and development of our country. In particular, I would like to pay special recognition to all the previous Ministers of Local Government who have gone before for their contribution which has set the foundation for good governance, transparency and quality performance on which we continue to build.

Local Government affects all persons, whether you reside in urban or rural communities. From roads, bridges, landslips, we at the Ministry remain people-centred, focused and results oriented. It is our duty to listen to the concerns of the burgesses and equip local government bodies and administration to carry out the necessary functions, engage between local government practitioners and the people is a key facet in achieving the goal of the Ministry, which is to improve deliverables by making them easily accessible to rural communities without alternating the overview of these communities itself.

We welcome this opportunity and will continue to serve the public and deliver relief to the people in consultation and engagement of all. I thank you.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Minister.

Question proposed: That Head 42 stand part of the Schedule.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, the sum of $2,330,671,110 for the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government is comprised of moneys proposed for
expenditure under the following Sub-Heads and Items to be found in the Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure, the Draft Estimates of the Revenue and Expenditure of the Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies and of the Tobago House of Assembly, and the Draft Estimates of Development Programme. We now proceed to consider the Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure, and, as previously said, we are on page 269, Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure, Item 001, General Administration. Member for Tabaquite.

Dr. Rambachan: Thank you, Chairman. Minister, under Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance you are going to be spending $69 million in Salaries and Cost of Living, I ask the following question based on the performance of the Ministry, but particularly with respect to the IDF and the Consolidated Fund. The overall spending on IDF was 61 per cent but your Ministry only spent 40 per cent, and the overall spending on the Consolidated was 70 per cent but your Ministry spent 76 per cent, are you satisfied that you are getting the value for money that you want from the $69 million, since the new mantra seems to be, value for money?

Mr. Chairman: Mr. Minister.

Hon. Hosein: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Hon. Member for Tabaquite, I would like to say that we intend to work together with all the mayors and chairmen, members of council, and the administration to ensure that productivity comes about in this year, because I am now getting a feel of the Ministry. I have been there almost one year now and I intend to work—

Hon. Member: You are still feeling?

Hon. Hosein: No, I got the feel of it.

Dr. Rambachan: Mr. Minister, in that regard, have you monitored the hours that people are working in your Ministry, and that people are working two hours, coming to work at seven, leaving at nine? In other instances, under the agreements
they are supposed to work six hours, for example Health, but they are working three hours, how can you get productivity if you cannot get people to adhere to their agreement to do a work that they are supposed to do for the hours that they are being paid? I think it is endemic.

Hon. Hosein: Hon. Member, yes, and I totally agree with you. I being a former councillor and also a mayor, I have encountered—I saw this first hand, and at the Ministry and being in this position, I intend to work to ensure that we cut out this wastage because we want productivity. Money is very short right now, and people come to work seven o’clock, nine o’clock they are home, and the public knows it, everybody knows it. This cannot continue, and I intend to work, as I said, with all the mayors and chairmen, and the CEOs, who is the administrative arm. As a matter of fact, I set up a meeting for the second week in November to meet all these practitioners concerning productivity.

Dr. Rambachan: The salaries, of course, are paid to your senior public servants and monthly paid staff who are supposed to be the engine of change in your Ministry. Are you satisfied that this cadre of people have the capacity to take forward the reform that you are talking about, given that two years have elapsed and virtually nothing has happened, even to make simple changes that will create efficiency in local government?

Hon. Hosein: Thank you again, Member for Tabaquite. The local government reform was—I think every Minister passed through the Ministry of Local Government wanted local government reform to be centralized, and this Government promised local government reform before the year 2019. Right now they are at the stage of the legislative at the Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs, and I think we will work together, the administrative staff, and they have to get serious. It cannot be business as usual, and I intend to carry this
mandate. I intend to do it, and with the advice from people like you, I am sure I will get it done.  *[Laughter]*

**Dr. Rambachan:** “He buying he way out ah trouble, yuh know.”  *[Laughter]*

**Mr. Chairman:** Member for Tabaquite, question again on the same topic or we want to move on? Okay. Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, page 269 again; Item 001, General Administration, pages 269 to 270; Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, pages 271.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Wait, wait, you are jumping.

**Mr. Chairman:** No, I am not jumping, I am looking up to see who is acknowledging.

**Dr. Rambachan:** No, no, no—

**Mr. Chairman:** Okay, so where are we, we are at Sub-Head, Goods and Services, Item 001, General Administration, page 269, 270.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Item 16, Contract Employment, what does this contract employment refer to, especially since we see it has gone up—the revised estimates were $7 million more in 2017, and that $26 million has now been retained for 2018? What is this Contract Employment about?

**Hon. Hosein:** Thank you again, Member for Tabaquite—

**Mr. Chairman:** Minister, excuse, you can kindly go straight to the point, you do not need to extend the courtesies as identifying the Member, you can go straight to it. You know, in the interest of time and so on, you could just go straight to the— you know, but it is up to you also.

**Hon. Hosein:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Member, at head office we have 56 contract positions, and at head office we also have 176 permanent positions. At the corporations we have 282 contract positions, and in corporations again, we have 898 permanent positions. So contract positions total would be 338 and
permanent is 1,074.

**Dr. Rambachan**: So the 338 refers to the $26 million?

**Hon. Hosein**: Yes.

**Dr. Rambachan**: Okay. Move on.

**Mr. Chairman**: Moving ahead, Sub-Head 30, Minor Equipment Purchases, page 271; Item 001, General Administration, page 271; Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies, page 271; Item 001, Regional Bodies, page 271. Members, you all are with me here? Item 002, Commonwealth Bodies, page 271; Item 007, Households, page 272. Item 009—

**Dr. Rambachan**: Wait, my hand up, you know.

**Mr. Chairman**: Okay, Member for Tabaquite.

**Dr. Rambachan**: Households—

**Mr. Chairman**: Page 271.

**Dr. Rambachan**: 272.

**Mr. Chairman**: Okay.

**Dr. Rambachan**: Item 04, Other Transfers, Sub-Item 04; 009, 04, Community Based Environment Protection and Enhancement Programme, CEPEP. I noticed that CEPEP spent $425 million in 2017 but CEPEP has been reduced by $75 million, is that a reflection that you are going to cut down the number of contractors now in CEPEP?

**Mr. Chairman**: The Ministry of Finance.

**Mr. Imbert**: CEPEP is under review by the Ministry of Finance.

**Dr. Rambachan**: Do we expect then that after the review it could be cut more?

**Hon. Member**: Or increased?

**Mr. Imbert**: It is under review.

**Mr. Chairman**: Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.
Mr. Lee: Thank you, Chair. Could the Minister state when the trucking of the truckers programme will come back on stream, given that all their contracts have come to an end and no one is picking up the waste at this point in time?

Mr. Chairman: Line Item, Member?

Mr. Lee: Item 04.

Mr. Chairman: Item 04, under CEPEP, right, okay. Page 272.

Dr. Rambachan: That is the small trucks who pick up the grass.

Mr. Imbert: The entire CEPEP is under review by the Ministry of Finance. When the review is completed we can deal with those matters.

Dr. Rambachan: So, Mr. Chairman, is the Minister saying that in the meantime they are cutting the grass and it will remain right there and the whole environment will be desecrated with cut grass, and all kinds of things, and baggage, and bags of garbage to pick up and nobody will pick it up because the Minister is under review?

Mr. Imbert: No, we are not saying that.

Dr. Rambachan: The Minister is reviewing the programme.

Mr. Imbert: We are not saying that.

Dr. Rambachan: Minister, to be very frank, then who is going to pick it up when the trucks, they have expired? Who is going to pick it up?

Mr. Imbert: Arrangements will be made.

Dr. Rambachan: Well, can I ask the Minister who is in charge and not you, with due respect, what arrangements has the Minister made to pick up those garbage and bags and waste?

Mr. Chairman: The Minister of Rural Development and Local Government, specifically to what was asked.

Hon. Hosein: We have in-house CEPEP vehicles, like dump trucks who take up...
the cuttings, and so on. In the meantime, where these contractors have not been—and we have also the corporations assisting, but we really need these truckers as soon as possible.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Minister, how many trucks does CEPEP have in-house?

**Hon. Hosein:** Mr. Chairman, I will provide the answer. I do not have it offhand, but I see them working along the East-West Corridor, the big dump trucks. They have a few, but I will get the full amount for you as soon as possible.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Minister, are you sure these are not the contracted trucks which have a CEPEP sticker on it, and it is not really a CEPEP asset? Because I do not know, I cannot recall, maybe the Permanent Secretary can recall whether CEPEP owns any trucks.

**Hon. Hosein:** I am now being told, Member, that it is a contractor truck with the CEPEP sticker on it.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Right. And those are the very trucks whose contracts have not been renewed, and, therefore, this is why people are complaining that the garbage that CEPEP has cut is remaining there. So can you give an assurance as to how quick this review will be completed so that people will not have the stench of garbage that is picked up left in their communities?

**Hon. Hosein:** Hon. Member, I assure you that I will get it to you.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Thank you.

**Mr. Chairman:** Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla, question.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Yes. Thank you. Hon. Minister, the same line Item 04, I understand the decrease, I understand that it is under review, what I need to understand is with this decrease the contractors who are currently working, will they be paid on time?

**Hon. Hosein:** Hon. Member, so far all contractors up to the 29th of September, all
contractors were paid on time.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: I beg to differ, hon. Minister, there are contractors that I am aware of—[ Interruption ]—No, I am not, and I do not have any. There are contractors who have not received payment. [ Crosstalk ]

Mr. Chairman: Members. Members—

Hon. Imbert: Chairman, let me assist here.

Mr. Chairman: Members. One second, Mr. Minister.

Hon. Imbert: Allow me to assist.

Mr. Chairman: Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla, right, the Minister answered, even though you may not be in agreement with the Minister, he has answered the question.

Hon. Hosein: I stand to be corrected, eh.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Minister, are you aware there are contractors who have not been paid for the last three months?

Hon. Hosein: For the last three months, no, I am not aware of the last three months.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Would you like me to provide you the information, Sir?

Hon. Hosein: For the last three months.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Sure, will do.

Mr. Chairman: Minister of Finance.

Hon. Imbert: For the benefit of the Member, towards the end of the financial year we did a transfer of funds to allow the Ministry to settle its obligations within the Community Based Environmental Protection and Enhancement Programme to pay outstanding debts.

Mr. Chairman: Member for Naparima, you still have a question?

Mr. Charles: At 06, only when we get there.

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Mr. Chairman: Okay, 06, so, Member for Naparima, I will entertain you.

Mr. Charles: Thank you, Chair. To the Minister, how are these allocations arrived at? Are they arrived at on historical expenditures and you add on to it, or on the submissions by the representative local bodies? And the reason why I asked is that the Princes Town Regional Corporation—

Mr. Chairman: Line Item?

Mr. Charles: It is line Item 36. The Princes Town Regional Corporation has only been allocated $87 million.

Mr. Chairman: Member, one second. No, we have not reached there as yet, right, I am now corrected by my Procedural Clerk. We are at Sub-Head 06, Current Transfers to Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies.

Mr. Charles: Yeah, well, that is where I am.

Mr. Chairman: Which is page—

Mr. Charles: Page 272, Item 36. [Crosstalk]

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, we will now move on to the Draft Estimates of the Revenue and Expenditure of the Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies and of the Tobago House of Assembly. Item 23, Port of Spain City Corporation, Sub-Head 01, Personal Expenditure, page 242 of the Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies and of the Tobago House of Assembly. That is the book we are now going to. And the details on page 272 of our recurrent expenditure, right, are also included in this book that we are now go to, which the Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies and of the Tobago House of Assembly.

Mr. Charles: But I was asking a general question related to all, and I was saying, how do they arrive at these expenditures, given that Princes Town Regional Corporation serves 120,000 persons? We have the topographies, have issues with landslips, et cetera. We have probably the second largest geographic area, and I
am seeing only $87 million. So the general question is, is there any consideration given to the geography, the population, the topography, et cetera, and the problems of the corporations in determining—

**Mr. Chairman:** In determining the estimates that are allocated? You are clear with us, Minister?

**Hon. Hosein:** Yes.

**Mr. Charles:** And you could give it later if you wish, I have no problem with that, I just want to understand it.

**Hon. Hosein:** Thank you, hon. Member.

**Mr. Chairman:** Member, before you answer, I know you are new to this process, there is the provision whereby you can provide it at a later date. I am sure your PS will be able to, you know, clarify accordingly. So, proceed.

**Hon. Hosein:** Thank you. Hon. Member for Naparima, the trend was whatever they spent in 2018 they got the same thing in 2018, but what you are saying, I would get the answer for you for that.

**Mr. Chairman:** Member for Caroni Central.

**Dr. Tewarie:** I would like to raise under Item 06, two matters, one involves the Couva/Tabaquete/Talparo Regional Corporation, which is 32, and I know that the allocation is the same as last year, but I would just like to draw to the attention of the Minister that there is a difference between allocation and releases, and we had a situation in Couva/Tabaquete/Talparo where everything was set to bring water to 26 families. It had been approved, everything was set, Ministries agreed, corporation agreed, but because we did not get the allocation—although the tenders were sent out and contractors bid, and everything—it means that those 26 families will not get the water that they were entitled to. And I want to draw that to your attention because I think this is something—I mean, it is a human concern
really.

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

**Mr. Chairman:** We are on Item 32, Couva/Tabaquite/Talparo Regional Corporation we are dealing with, Sir.

**Hon. Imbert:** But he is not talking about a line Item.

**Dr. Tewarie:** And the other matter I would raise is under Chaguanas Borough, simply to say that although the amount allocated was about the same, you know, I think Chaguanas has peculiar challenges given the nature of that city and the broad area that it covers, and it is something that, you know, requires a little more attention, I think, in terms of allocation.

**8.10 p.m.**

**Hon. Hosein:** Hon. Member for Caroni Central, I am pleased to say that I have a very, very good relationship with all corporations across the board, and this was not brought to my attention before. I am thanking you for the information and I will ensure that we will bring a solution to this problem, especially the water problem.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Well, I am grateful for that.

**Dr. Rambachan:** I want to build on the question of my colleague, the Member for Caroni Central. The population of Port of Spain is under 50,000 now and granted that—

**Mr. Imbert:** The line Item.

**Mr. Chairman:** Member, remember we need to identify the line Item. You are making your comment and then you come to your questions.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Line Items 23 and 27.

**Mr. Chairman:** Line Items 23 and 27.

**Mr. Imbert:** Mr. Chairman, did you not say you were in this book?
Mr. Chairman: Yes, but it is in reference to the both books, Minister.

Mr. Imbert: “So I ha’ to look in two books?” I cannot do that. I can only look in one.

Mr. Hinds: The Member for Tabaquite submitted that the population of Port of Spain is under 50,000. Could he just indicate for the benefit of Members where he got that statistic?

Dr. Rambachan: There has been an exodus of people from Port of Spain. [Crosstalk] I am talking about living in Port of Spain, residents.

Hon. Member: Where is the statistic?

Mr. Chairman: Members!

Mr. Hinds: Where did you get that official statistic? [Crosstalk] How can we proceed on that false premise?

Mr. Chairman: Members!

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Chairman, I would just like to suggest, I know you are chairing the meeting, but if you go line Item by line Item we will be fine. If you have a general discussion and a debate it would deteriorate.

Dr. Rambachan: You want to accept 120,000—and the population of Chaguanas is 120,000. Let us take that assumption.

Mr. Chairman: Member for Tabaquite, address the Chair. Let us get your comment, line Item, and come to your question.

Dr. Rambachan: Let us take his assumption that the population of Port of Spain is 120,000, and let us take the assumption that the population of Chaguanas is also—[Crosstalk]—yeah I know, 2011 population statistics.

Mr. Imbert: What is the question?

Dr. Rambachan: The question is: Why is there such a disparity in terms of the allocation to Chaguanas which is one-third—sorry, Port of Spain is $235 million
and Chaguanas is $83 million? But the movement of population to Chaguanas, the number of housing developments in the Chaguanas borough, the increase in business activity in Chaguanas and so on, does not justify—do you believe that it justifies such a small allocation for Chaguanas?

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Chairman, let me just deal with this general question. Firstly, if you go back into your period you would see these allocations were similar. But if you go to the line Item, which is what you should be looking at, on page 242 of this book, you would see that out of the $235 million for Port of Spain, $160 million is for Personnel Expenditure. So are you suggesting that we reduce that and retrench the workers of the Port of Spain City Corporation?

Dr. Rambachan: I am not suggesting that at all. What I am saying very categorically and very strong is that there is unfair treatment of Chaguanas, which has grown in stature and grown in importance, in terms of what you are giving to Chaguanas to continue to pursue its development.

Mr. Imbert: But it is the same amount for Personnel Expenditure that was given by your administration and—

Dr. Rambachan: Mr. Minister of Finance—

Mr. Imbert:—Mr. Chairman, I am explaining because it seems you have forgotten, that there are Items here. You have public health, you have abattoirs, you have transport and cleaning. These are all line Items which are allocated with an amount similar to what you allocated when you were the Minister. So what is your issue?

Hon. Members: Certainly, because things have changed.

Mr. Imbert: Or things have changed since you all gone in Opposition?

[Crosstalk]

Mr. Chairman: Members!

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Mr. Imbert: Because you in Opposition we give Port of Spain less?

Dr. Rambachan: Mr. Minister, the question is, are you ignoring the characteristics of the borough of Chaguanas and what it requires in order to do that? [Desk thumping]

Mr. Imbert: This is a line Item that deals with Personnel Expenditure, workers. It is payment for salaries and wages. Are you saying we should retrench the workers in the Port of Spain Corporation to satisfy you? That is what you are saying? You do not like the people in Port of Spain?

Dr. Rambachan: You are trying to put words in my mouth and I will not allow you to put words in my mouth.

Mr. Imbert: That is the only answer to your question.

Dr. Rambachan: You want to put words in my mouth. I will not allow you to put words in my mouth. But what is very clear is that you have taken a very biased approach to the allocation of moneys to the borough of Chaguanas.

Mr. Chairman: Members, I have heard the various comments. As the Chairman of this session of the committee, if it is that you all would like me to be a little more firm in the deliberations, I will probably have to take that course. It is now 8.14, we are now dealing with the fourth Item. We still have four more to go and it is now 8.14. So Members, I would like you all in the process that has gone in the earlier part of the day, make your comment, identify your question and we will move on, and we are going according to the line Item as identified. Member for Tabaquite and others. Right?

So we are at 23, Port of Spain City Corporation: Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure, page 242; 001, General Administration. We are going to be specific as we go on now; 002, Public Health and Disposal, page 242; 003, Abattoirs, Markets and Dining Shed, page 242 also; [Interruption] 004—Minister of Finance,
no question as yet, Sir—004, Transport and Cleansing, page 243; 005, Squares, Playgrounds and Trees, page 243; 006, Stores, Works and Repairs, page 243; 007, Cemeteries and Crematoriums, 243; 008, Woodbrook Estate, 244.

We now go on to Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, and we are on page 244; 001, General Administration, page 244; 002, Public Health and Disposal, page 245; 003, Abattoirs, Markets and Dining Sheds, page 245; 004, Transport and Cleansing, page 246; 005, Squares, Playgrounds and Trees, page 246; 006, Stores, Works and Repairs, page 246 to 247; 007, Cemeteries and Crematoriums, page 247; 008, Woodbrook Estate, page 247; 009, Corporation Properties, page 248.

Moving on. Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, page 248 of the same book; 001, General Administration, page 248.

Mr. Singh: Chairman, may I be of some assistance? I take your approach. Might I suggest that you deal with the General Head under each corporation? For example, let us take the Chaguanas. It has, Government Subvention, other Income, Rent, Fees, Service Charges of Licence, Interest, Miscellaneous, and ask if anybody has any questions and we proceed in that direction, instead of page by page. [Crosstalk] Listen to me, I am trying to be helpful. Do not interfere with me. [Crosstalk]

Mr. Chairman: Okay, Members. I take your point, Member for Chaguanas West, but I am guided by the Procedural Clerk. What we will do is we will identify the various Sub-Heads and the titles and then we call the regional corporations. Then I will ask if there are any questions and you identify a line Item and we move on. Okay, Members? So we are clear. Okay, Mr. Minister? Nice.

So we are now at 24, San Fernando City Corporation. Any questions? Do I have to say “going once”? 25: Arima Borough Corporation; 26, Point Fortin Borough Corporation; 27, Chaguanas Borough Corporation. I recognize the
Mr. Singh: Mr. Chairman, the whole question of Personnel Expenditure, daily-rated overtime, daily-rated workers. The 2018 estimate is $599,000. I want to know, in the management of these employees, whether or not they ought to increase the cadre instead of having significant levels of overtime?

Mr. Imbert: While the Minister is preparing his response, look at the quantum. If you look at the quantum of wages, it is $41.5 million, whereas the quantum of overtime is $600,000, so that even if you eliminated overtime to zero, you will not be able to get workers as permanent workers or regular workers as the case may be, so it is not a large amount.

Mr. Singh: I take your point.

Mr. Chairman: Goods and Services, page 299. Subhead 03: Minor Equipment Purchases.

Mr. Singh: I was keeping with the whole question of Goods and Services, janitorial services under item 37. Mr. Chairman, I get complaints when I go to the Chaguanas market of the lack of hygienic conditions existing there. In fact, one fisherman complained to me that they went there a Monday morning and you had a very foul stench emerging, and also worms and all kinds of decaying matter, notwithstanding the fact that it ought to have been cleaned. So, Minister, perhaps you might want to look into that. Page 299.

Mr. Imbert: Item 37.

Mr. Singh: Janitorial Services, 37. “Ah trying to help yuh”.

Mr. Chairman: Sub-Head—Minister, you want to add anything.

Hon. Hosein: No, no, I intend to follow it up.

Mr. Chairman: Subhead 03: Minor Equipment Purchases; Sub-Head 04,
Current Transfers and Subsidies. We now go on to 28, Diego Martin Regional Corporation. Sub-Head, 02 Goods and Services, page 307.

Mr. Lee: Sub-Item 23, Fees. In 2016 you had $42,000 spent; 2017, you have an estimated budget of $1 million; 2018 a budget of $800,000. Could the Minister describe what are these fees about for the Diego Martin Corporation?

Hon. Hosein: We are not too sure. Some say the legal fees, but we could provide the answer for you; the technocrats in the back will.

Mr. Chairman: Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases. Sub-Head 04, Current Transfer and Subsidies. We now go on to San Juan/Laventille Regional Corporation, No. 29. Tunapuna/Piarco Regional Corporation, No. 30. No. 31, Sangre Grande Regional Corporation. Cumuto/Manzanilla, Member, page and line Item.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Page 332, line Item under Goods and Services, 03. Can the Minister indicate what are these uniforms for? Who are they for? That is, 03, Sir, Goods and Services.

Mr. Chairman: Line Item 03, page 332.

Hon. Hosein: Hon. Member, I am advised that some were used for municipal police and some for litter wardens.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Okay. Line Item 08, you have an increase. Can the hon. Minister indicate what accounts for the increase in rent or lease of office accommodation and storage?

Hon. Hosein: Hon. Member, this will be catering for the Sangre Grande Office, the corporation, being removed from the present location.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: They are being relocated?

Hon. Hosein: Being relocated.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Line Item No. 23, Fees. What are these fees? You have
an increase of $25,000 to $100,000?

**Hon. Hosein:** Legal fees.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Line Item 46, Natural Disasters, same page 332. You have $100,000 allocated, and I am asking in light of the fact that we are dealing with two constituencies, is this adequate given that we have two constituencies and we are on the coastline? Particularly when you look at the clean-up cost for Matelot, is this in fact adequate at all?

**Hon. Hosein:** Hon. Member, we realize, I myself am aware of the fact that Sangre Grande is in that disaster zone, and when the need arises we will ensure that funds will be added to that through a virement.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Page 333, hon. Chair.

**Mr. Chairman:** Line Item?

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Line Item 68, Water Trucking. I see there is a decrease of $834,000. Given the fact that some areas do not have an adequate water supply and, I mean, this has been taking place for quite some time, has the Minister considered at all that the areas that are affected, this will be inadequate, and in addition to the fact that if we have to have the desalination plant being shut down for a week, can this decrease adequately supply the two constituencies?

**Mr. Chairman:** So why the decrease, Mr. Minister? Line Item 68.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Water Trucking.

**Hon. Hosein:** Hon. Member, historically we have used the Ministry vote, which is Vote 37, to supplement this item.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** So it is in line 37?

**Hon. Hosein:** Yes.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Line 99, the Employee Assistance Programme. How many persons have utilized this programme, hon. Minister?
Hon. Hosein: Hon. Member, I will have to get the information from the Sangre Grande Regional Corporation.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Coming down to 003, same page, 04, Electricity. I notice there was an increase for the market and the abattoir. Could the Minister indicate if this increase was to settle outstanding bills, because I know that the market was without electricity for some time due to non-payment of bills?

Hon. Hosein: Yes.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: So we are back?

Hon. Hosein: Yes.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Very good. Line Item under 004, 22, Short-Term Employment, I see there is a decrease of $62,300. Can the Minister account for this decrease?

Hon. Hosein: We are trying to fill the public service positions so there will be less need for these short-term contracts.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: So therefore, we are looking at reducing the staffing, the short-term? We are reducing it?

Hon. Hosein: No, we are filling the permanent positions.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Okay, good. How many positions are you looking at filling in the permanent positions?

Hon. Hosein: We are looking at all the vacancies.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Not now, but if you can supply me with the positions that are filled and those that are required, the number. Line Item No. 28, Other Contracted Services. Who are these other contracted services, before I can ask for the account in the decrease? Same page, 333?

Hon. Hosein: These are really small contracts that take place within the corporation.
Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Small contracts like?

Mr. Chairman: Small contractors.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Would it impact? With these contractors being decreased, the allocation being decreased, would it impact in terms of services being rendered to the constituency and neglect in any way?

Mr. Chairman: Minister, would it affect the operations?

Hon. Hosein: No, no. We will vire moneys and so on for that.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Finally on page 334, 006, Maintenance of State—

Mr. Chairman: Member, are you okay?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: It is okay, go ahead.

Mr. Chairman: Sure?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Yes.

Mr. Chairman: We now move on to 32, Couva/Tabaquite/Talparo Regional Corporation; 33, Mayaro/Rio Claro Regional Corporation; 34, Siparia Regional Corporation. Members, you all are with me?

Hon. Members: Yes.

Mr. Chairman: 35, Penal/Debe Regional Corporation and 36, Princes Town Regional Corporation.

Mr. Charles: Just one question, page 68, 04, that is the question of rent, and I think the Minister has been in discussion with the—

Hon. Hosein: Yes.

Mr. Charles: Could you give us what the latest is with respect to—I think there are some challenges with the present site.

Hon. Hosein: Yes, hon. Member, there are a lot of challenges there, because I visited that corporation up to about a month ago. They had a volunteer exercise up there, and the conditions are—I know there were plans to build an admin complex
there a couple years ago. The plan is still in train, and I advised them to look for a place up there, and they are in search of it right now. The Chairman—I am in consultation with the Chairman at all times.

**Mr. Charles:** Very good.

**Mr. Chairman:** No. 38, Trinidad and Tobago Association of Local Government Authorities.

Hon. Members, we will now move on to the Draft Estimates of the Development Programme. Sub-Head 09, Development Programme Consolidated Fund, page 108; Item 003, Economic Infrastructure, pages 108 to 109.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Thank you, Chair. Just to ask the Minister under line Item 001 and 003, if he could identify any roads and bridges that would be facilitated in the constituency of Cumuto/Manzanilla?

**Hon. Hosein:** That is in Toco/Sangre Grande.

**Mr. Chairman:** No, Cumuto/Manzanilla. Do you have the specifics here, Mr. Minister?

**Hon. Hosein:** I have everything.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** You do not have to give it to me now because of time, but if you can identify to me in my area the restoration of local roads, bridges, the landslides and the local drains that would have restorative work done to them.

**Hon. Hosein:** Hon. Member, and I will give it to you.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Thank you, and Toco/Sangre Grande.

**Hon. Hosein:** I will circulate it to everybody. Thank you for the advice.

**Mr. Chairman:** So all Members will be supplied with the information. Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services, page 109 to 116.

**Mr. Lee:** Thank you, Chair, page 109, Sub-Item 038, Development of West Park, a new project, $5 million. Could the Minister state where in Trinidad and Tobago
Mr. Imbert: Opposite Westmoorings. It is a park.

Mr. Lee: Opposite West Mall, where the WASA pumping station is?

Mr. Imbert: It is a park, a green space for the people of Diego Martin who have no park to call their own.

Mr. Lee: Thank you, Minister of Finance. Could the Minister of Rural Development and Local Government, 028, the implementation of the Dog Control Act. I see $3 million there. Could the Minister state what is the status of this implementation of the Dog Control Act?

Hon. Hosein: Thank you, hon. Member for Pointe-a-Pierre. In keeping with the requirements of the Act we propose to construct a facility in San Fernando, that will cater for San Fernando and the environs, which will be Penal, Debe, Princes Town, and Siparia. [Laughter] I was just advised all the south dogs. I was advised. [Laughter and crosstalk]

Mr. Chairman: Moving on, Mr. Minister. Member for Tabaquite, you okay?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Chair. Hon. Minister, 024.

Mr. Chairman: Page?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: 109. I notice there is no estimate for the disaster management capacity. Can the Minister indicate why?

Hon. Hosein: Hon. Member, I will like to let you know that money was allocated to the 14 corporation, they got an increase of $4 million. None was allocated to the head office, but we have a new position which is a disaster management coordinator who will coordinate the 14 corporations. So the money will be spent where it is necessary in the corporations.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: Thank you. I will like to revert to 028, the
implementation of the Dog Control Act. Hon. Minister, I just need to know what is the actual start date for this project, and what are the expected achievements from this project?

**Hon. Hosein:** Hon. Member, we are looking at within this fiscal year. I cannot give you a time, but I assure you it will be within this year because we have the money for it, and we are having consultation with the main stakeholders right now.

**Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh:** Who are those stakeholders?

**Hon. Hosein:** The San Fernando Corporation, the other corporations, TSPCA.

**Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh:** The last part of the question, what are the expected achievements from this project?

**Mr. Chairman:** Minister, expected outcome, the achievements you would like to achieve as a result.

**Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh:** From this project. Perhaps you could put it in writing?

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. AG, you would like to come in here?

**Mr. Al-Rawi:** Yes please. The objective is to operationalize the law which the last Government left without putting it into effect.

**Mr. Chairman:** Infrastructure Development Fund, pages 223 to 224. [Crosstalk]

**Mr. Singh:** Page 112 dealing with the Chaguanas borough. Item 145: Development of Recreational Facilities, $1 million. I would like to find out through the Minister, I know he may not have that available, what are the areas to be developed in terms of recreational facilities. Construction of markets and abattoirs, Item 148, $3.6 million. What is the scope of works and what particular area this work is going to be done? Item 406, Environmental Project—

**Mr. Chairman:** One second, Member for Chaguanas West. Mr. Minister, we have two questions on the table so far, you are with us?
Mr. Singh: Yeah. I tell him provide it subsequently. Mr. Chairman: All right. Go ahead, Member for Chaguanas West.

8.40 p.m.

Mr. Singh: Item 406, Environmental Project an allocation of $800,000 in 2018 and what is this Environmental Project and the scope of works associated with that? And the establishment of a tourism park in 408 of an allocation of $200,000, what is this and the scope of works associated and where it will be located?

Mr. Chairman: Minister.

Hon. Hosein: Hon. Member, I will provide this for you in writing.

Mr. Chairman: Member for Mayaro.

Mr. Paray: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Minister, under the Mayaro/Rio Claro Regional Corporation, I took note of the fact that Item 370, Local Government Tourism Programme there was no allocation, and something as critical tourism for us up in Mayaro there. Any particular reason why it would not considered as an Item for funding in this fiscal year?

Mr. Chairman: Minister.

Hon. Hosein: Hon. Member for Mayaro, we do not have the answer right now, but I will put it in writing for you.

Mr. Chairman: Member for Pointe-a-Pierre, page 114.

Mr. Lee: Under the Couva/Tabaquite/Talparo Corporation, line Item 261, Minister, Development of Recreational Facilities for $1 million, could you provide a list of what those, you know, facilities where they are at a later date in writing?

Hon. Hosein: Yes. Member for Pointe-a-Pierre, I will provide it in writing. Sure. Sure.

Mr. Chairman: We are moving on Infrastructure Development Fund pages 223 to 234, Item 004, Social Infrastructure, pages 234 to 235, Item—Member for
Tabaquite.

Dr. Rambachan: 003, I would simply like to get from the Minister a list of the projects that are indicated in terms of the Development of Rural Communities [Crosstalk] in writing.

Hon. Hosein: In writing?

Dr. Rambachan: That is right, in writing.

Mr. Chairman: Minister.

Hon. Hosein: Yes. Member for Tabaquite, we have it and I will get it to you.

Mr. Chairman: We will provide in writing.

Hon. Hosein: Yes.

Mr. Chairman: Item 004, Social Infrastructure, pages 234 to 235.

Dr. Rambachan: 234 to 235.

Mr. Chairman: We are in—

Dr. Rambachan: Hold on, hold on.

Mr. Chairman:—Development Programme, eh.

Dr. Rambachan: No. No. No. 224 to 225.

Mr. Chairman: 225—

Dr. Rambachan: Yeah.

Mr. Chairman:—006, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services or “yuh” want the one before?

Dr. Rambachan: Yeah. For 005, Sub-Head F Public Buildings 060 there.

Mr. Chairman: Right. Okay. Page 225.

Dr. Rambachan: Right. I would like to know which complex is going to be constructed or are there several complexes because I see construction of administrative complexes. Is it one or are there several?

Hon. Hosein: Hon. Member, two.
Dr. Rambachan: And can you indicate which two complexes, please?


Dr. Rambachan: So you are bringing my plans into effect.

Hon. Hosein: Your plans, yes.

Dr. Rambachan: Another Tabaquite initiative.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, Members. Member for Tabaquite, any more questions?

Dr. Rambachan: No.

Mr. Chairman: Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services, page 235. [Crosstalk] Hon. Member for Pointe-a-Pierre, do you have a question?

Hon. Members, the question is that the sum of $2,330,671,110 for the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government stand part of the Schedule.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 42 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Mr. Chairman: Mr. Minister, thank you for coming. Thank you to the Permanent Secretary and other senior technocrats. Do have a good evening. Thank you on your debut. Well done. Okay. Mr. Minister, thanks for coming.

Members, we now proceed to the Draft Estimates, details of Estimates Recurrent Expenditure, and we are going to page 406, Head 78, Ministry of Social Development and Family Services.

So, Members, 406 Recurrent Expenditure, page 406, Head 78, Ministry of Social Development and Family Services. I would like to welcome the Minister of Social Development and Family Services, welcome, Madam Minister. Welcome to the Permanent Secretary and the senior executives of the Ministry, welcome to our Standing Finance Committee.

Head 78: Ministry of Social Development and Family Services, $4,729,245,300.
Mr. Chairman: 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, Mr. Chairman. In fiscal 2018, the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services is committed to leading the social sector through a number of transformative initiatives. The Ministry will chart a course towards a more cost-effective, customer-driven, evidence-based and targeted social service delivery system to reduce poverty and equip and empower the vulnerable. In the main, the focus of the Ministry will be on the implementation of an integrated service delivery system and the national social mitigation plan.

Implementation of the new service delivery model will lead to increased capacity and value for money, simplified access, holistic and customized support, faster response times, greater collaboration among agencies and enhanced user experience. Implementation of the social mitigation plan will involve the restructuring of the Ministry’s systems, processes and social programming to improve efficiency and effectiveness, and will extend to the sector.

Additionally, relevant legislative and policy frameworks would be revisited for gap identification and will be amended or designed as necessary to complement the restructuring exercise. The social mitigation plan is also expected to introduce transformative strategies into existing social interventions and to inculcate positive values, attitudes and behaviours among programme beneficiaries and the wider population.

Of particular importance will be the proposed improvements in the Ministry’s food support service through the implementation and monitoring of the developmental conditional component known as STEP UP which is Social Transformation and Empowering Programme uplifting people. An integral
component in the thrust to achieve sustainable poverty reduction and strong functional families.

Mr. Chairman, I look forward with anticipation to the implementation of these and other key initiatives intended to change the landscape of the social sector and bring about exponential improvements in the quality of life of our most vulnerable citizens. I thank you.

**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you, Madam Minister.

*Question proposed:* That Head 78 stand part of the Schedule.

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Members, the sum of $4,729,245,300 for Head 78: Ministry of Social Development and Family Services is comprised of moneys proposed for expenditure under the following Sub-Heads and Items to be found in the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure*, the *Draft Estimates of the Revenue and Expenditure of the Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies* and of the *Tobago House of Assembly*, and the *Draft Estimates of the Development Programme*. We now proceed to consider the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure*.

Sub-Head 01, Personal Expenditure, page 406. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla, I have you first.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** I will go to the next one when you are ready for 006.

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

**Mr. Padarath:** Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chairman. Hon. Minister, line Item 14, Remuneration to Members of Cabinet-Appointed Committees, how many Cabinet-appointed committees are there and what do they deal with?

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Minister.

**Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn:** There are 17 Cabinet-appointed committees. However, at present only one of those committees functions and that is the inter-ministerial social policy council. That committee is responsible for
coordinating all of the policies within the public service.

The other committees there are supposed to be 14 regional social human development councils, those are councils that were supposed to work within communities and would have been comprised of public sector, civil society and the Government, but they were never established. Those committees were never established, and we also have the inter-ministerial research council. So those are the committees that are non-functional.

Mr. Chairman: Member for Princes Town, again.

Mr. Padarath: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chairman. Madam Minister, in light of the explanation you just have given with the respect to the inter-ministerial committees, Cabinet-appointed committees, can you indicate what has prevented you from ensuring that these other 14, 15 committees are non-functional, in terms of operationalizing them, what has prevented you from operationalizing them?

Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn: The 14 regional councils were intended to be part of the poverty reduction strategy under the last administration and it was never established. The new administration having come in and looking at the whole issue of poverty and the absence of a poverty reduction strategy, did not think it made a lot of sense to introduce those councils until we would have identified exactly what strategies we were going to be using and the direction in which we were heading.

Mr. Chairman: Member for Princes Town.

Mr. Padarath: Again, thank you, Mr. Deputy Chairman, to hon. Minister. Madam Minister, in light of you being in the position as Minister for the past two years what sort of timeline are you looking forward to then, seeing two years have passed with respect to these ministerial committees not having been established to assist in the area of poverty reduction and poverty alleviation. Is it in the
forthcoming few months, the next financial year that you foresee that these committees will become operationalized in the sense that you are now probably getting things in train with respect to your own ideas and policies with respect to poverty reduction and poverty alleviation?

Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn: Hon. Member, we have not sat idly by and done nothing in terms of poverty reduction, we have been working in that area. At the end of it, it may be determined that we would go with these councils or it may be determined that we will go with something different, but we are working on the whole issue of poverty reduction.

Mr. Padarath: Just to follow up, Madam Minister, again, timeline, two years have passed, what sort of timeline are you looking now in terms of implementation?

Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn: We are expecting to complete it within this fiscal. We are working very closely with the UNDP on the poverty reduction strategy and we also very much engaged in the whole structuring exercise within the Ministry.

Mr. Padarath: Okay. So you are looking forward to 2018 being your implementation year?

Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn: Yes.

Mr. Chairman: Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Chair. Hon. Minister, in light of the fact that you had indicated that the poverty reduction plan is going to take effect in 2018, and two years ago we were looking at whatever infrastructure and so forth and whatever policies, would you say that things have drastically changed between then and now, and that there may be some fine-tuning that you may need to do to the plan?—the poverty reduction plan.

Mr. Imbert: May I just ask, which line Item is this?
Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: That would be the Remuneration to Members.

Mr. Imbert: No. Which line Item could you tell me, please?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: I am continuing the line that Minister in line 14—

Mr. Imbert: Cabinet-Appointed Committees. Which Cabinet-appointed committee are you referring to?

Mr. Padarath: It has not been established.

Mr. Imbert: No. Which one are you referring to?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: There were 17 according to Minister, there were 17 committees.

Mr. Imbert: “Uh hmm.” And which one are you referring to?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: The only one that was established.

Mr. Chairman: Mr. Minister, Mr. Minister, in all fairness, in all fairness you have to “ketch” up where the Member is talking about. So just hold on for a little while. Just hold on for a little while. Go ahead, Member for Toco/Manzanilla.

Mr. Imbert: Now, Mr. Chairman, with great respect I was listening and I could not see the connection between the line of questioning and 14. Perhaps the Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla—

Mr. Chairman: Go ahead, Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Chair. Thank you, Chair.

Mr. Chairman: She is following up on the Member for Princes Town.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Hon. Minister, I was just asking whether there would be some disparity between what decisions had been recognized and taken two years ago and implementation now, would there be a disparity and how would you—

Mr. Imbert: This is the 2018 budget. What is two years ago have to do with the 2018 budget, Mr. Chairman?—please.

Mr. Chairman: Mr. Minister, as I said when the Minister answered, the Minister
gave an answer based on her stewardship for the last two years in terms of the comment.

Mr. Imbert: She was too generous.

Mr. Chairman: Member, could you come to the question, please. Mr. Minister, please.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: I asked—

Mr. Chairman: Mr. Minister, please. Go ahead, Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Would the plan be adequate at this time, hon. Minister?

Mr. Chairman: So the plan, Mr. Minister, for the Cabinet-Appointed Committees, what is the status going forward?

Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn: Mr. Chairman, we have not made a decision in terms of whether we are going to go with the regional councils or if we are going to have a different type of committee.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Okay. So we know where it is. Thank you.

Mr. Chairman: Item 003, Social Welfare page 406 to 407. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Yeah.

Mr. Chairman: Go ahead, go ahead.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Line 01, Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance. Could the hon. Minister indicate, is this unit, the Social Welfare Unit adequately staffed in regard to the salaries here? I am seeing an increase of $100,000. So is it an increase in staff; is it an increase in salaries and, of course, is the unit adequately staffed?

Mr. Chairman: Minister.

Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn: The unit is adequately staffed, it is not ideally staffed

UNREVISED
in that there a number of vacant positions, but it is adequately staffed, and the
increase that you are seeing there has to do with—we have placed a number of
person in there to treat with the food support programme. So this is intended to
also assist with that. Oh, no. Sorry. This is increments, those persons would be
under short term. So this is to treat increments.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: On line Item 08, Vacant Posts, can the hon. Minister
indicate how many positions are vacant in 08, line 08?

Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn: There are 89 vacancies, but there are only 18 vacant
posts without bodies, without incumbents.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Eighteen.

Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn: Eighteen, one eight.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: All right. And just going back to 01, how many temporary
or contract workers do you have?

Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn: This Item does not deal with contract employees.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: All right. But this position that you indicated would have
the staff coming across from the food card, not so?

Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn: No. Hon. Member, I corrected myself and indicated
that this does not treat with that.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Okay.

Mr. Chairman: Item 005, Child Development Centre. No. Sorry. Item 004,
Gender Affairs Division, page 407; Item 005, Child Development Centre, page
407. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Chair, hon. Minister, under this line Item Child
Development Centre you have salaries and allowances, could you tell me how
many centres are in this development?

Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn: This is one development centre.
Standing Finance Committee.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: One. And where is it located?

Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn: Couva.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: And how many staff would be positioned there?

Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn: There are 19 permanent employees employed there.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Nineteen. And those are positions as well?—19 positions.

Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn: Nineteen positions.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: So they are all filled?

Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn: No. We have some vacancies, but I will have to confirm if there are six positions without incumbents.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: All right. So you will confirm. Okay.

Mr. Chairman: Item 006, National Family Services, page 408, Sub-Head 02.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: 01, 006. Yeah.

Mr. Chairman: 006, National Family Services?


Mr. Chairman: Comment, question?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Where is this NFS located, hon. Minister, and how many members of staff you have there?

Mr. Chairman: Minister.

Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn: We have the National Family Services at different locations. The head unit is at Frederick Street currently, I believe we also have a unit in Couva.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: And how many of members of staff?

Mr. Chairman: Members of staff?

Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn: Mr. Chairman, what happens normally, the family services unit would operate out of units either within the regional offices or close by, so it means we probably have about 11 of those units?
Standing Finance Committee.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: You have 11 of those units, you are saying. Right? Are we going down to 02? Can I go to Goods and Services?

Mr. Chairman: Right. Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, page 408, Item 001, General Administration pages 408 to 409. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: 08, Rent/Lease - Office Accommodation and Storage, you have $26,286 million for rent or office accommodation. In light of the fact that you just stated that you have these offices that are aligned with regional bodies and so forth, can you account for this amount in rent?

Mr. Chairman: Minister.

Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn: Hon. Member, I am not too sure that I understand your question.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: You indicated in National Family Services you indicated that there were two, there was Frederick Street and there was another one, but you said that there are 11, but they were at regional—which means that you do not have to pay for their rent. No?—am I being accurate in that statement?

Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn: We may not have to pay separately for the rent under National Family Services, but we would definitely pay for it under General Administration. The Ministry currently rents or leases 22 properties.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: For National Family Services?

Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn: For the Ministry.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: All right. Okay.

Mr. Chairman: Member for Princes Town, line Item?

Mr. Padarath: I am looking at line Item 16 and line Item 22. Through you, Mr. Deputy Chairman, Madam Minister, on the last occasion on the last Standing Finance Committee last year you had indicated that the Ministry was looking at Contract Employment, as well as Short-Term Employment in terms of reduction

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and having more persons on the establishment as opposed to short term and contract employment. But when you look at Contract Employment, it remains within the same figures of last year and the year before, whereas with Short-Term Employment there is a decrease by $6.3 million. What accounts for the decrease by the $6.3 million in the Short-Term Employment, but when you look at Contract Employment it remains within the same average as previous years?

**Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn:** Hon. Member, what I believe what I would have indicated is that we would have been seeking to fill the vacant contract positions, and by filling the vacant contract positions we expected a decrease in the short-term positions. We have advertised 345 positions, we have only been able to fill 64 thus far, but we continue to seek to fill the contract positions.

**Mr. Padarath:** Again, through you, Mr. Deputy Chairman, to the hon. Minister. Minister, what would have accounted for only 64 positions being filled and not across the board?

**Mr. Chairman:** Minister.

**Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn:** There is a process involved in the filling of vacancies.

**Mr. Padarath:** Sure. These contract positions?

**Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn:** We have to have—yes. We have to advertise externally/externally, we have to shortlist, we have to interview and then we have to make decisions, and has been done. Given the sheer numbers and given the numbers of persons within the HR unit within the Ministry, it has taken sometime.

**Mr. Padarath:** So this is an internal process—

**Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn:** Yes.

**Mr. Padarath:**—with the Ministry?

**Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn:** Yes.

**Mr. Padarath:** No external agency or so is being utilized whether it is
Government or private—

**Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn:** No.

**Mr. Padarath:** —with respect to the recruitment?

**Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn:** No. The recruitment and selection is being done by Ministry. What we do, we co-opt persons from other Ministries externally to sit on the interviewing panels.

**Mr. Padarath:** Okay.

**Mr. Chairman:** Item—Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** This 08, Madam Minister, the building that was rented where NSDP was in—

**Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn:** ANSA McAl?

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** —ANSA McAl, was the rent deducted for there or do you still pay rent for that building?

**Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn:** No. We no longer pay rent for there.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** All right. Because I did not see—

**Mr. Imbert:** Did we not deal with that Item already?

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** —a decrease that is why.

**Mr. Chairman:** No. She is on a different—

**Mr. Imbert:** Are you sure?

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** I did not observe a decrease. I was just asking.

**Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn:** You would notice that the allocation is more or less the same. So while we would have had a reduction by not paying rent at ANSA McAl, we now have Frederick Street on board and we are also looking at getting some other properties to house other departments.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Okay.

**Mr. Chairman:** Member for Oropouche West, you still have a question?
Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: Thank you, Deputy Chair. Line 05, Telephones. I am seeing there is an increase, Madam Minister, of half a million dollars. Can you kindly let me know or tell the public what is the policy of the use of phones by the Ministry?

Mr. Chairman: Minister.

Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn: The policy basically is that the telephones are to be used for the Ministry’s business.

Mr. Imbert: Less phones, less phone calls.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Continuing on page 409.

Mr. Chairman: Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.


Mr. Chairman: Could you take off your mike please, Mr. Minister. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Page 409 now, eh? Line Item 28, Other Contracted Services. Can the hon. Minister indicate who these Other Contracted Services are?

Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn: This has to do with like pest control, the roto bins and upkeep of the premises.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Okay. And I noticed that for security, is this private security?

Mr. Chairman: Minister.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Line 43.

Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn: Yes. We utilize MTS and we also utilize private security.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: For line Item 58, Medical Expenses, does this medical expense include services that clients would receive like when you receive persons off the streets or you bring persons for National Family Services who may have...
some trauma? Does it include any of that—the costing that would be incurred?

**Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn:** No, hon. Member. This relates to terms and conditions of the PSs, DPSs and the Minister.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** All right. Okay. But is there any medical expenses that would be incurred for that service that you offer?

**Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn:** You would not find it under line Item here.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Okay. And line 99, how many persons have accessed this programme? I saw there was an increase and I was just wondering if many persons have accessed it.

**Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn:** That is the Employee Assistance Programme?

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Yes.

**Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn:** Hon. Member, I am advised that it is approximately 15 persons who would utilize in any year.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Okay.

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

**Mr. Padarath:** Madam Minister, let us look at line Item 37, Janitorial Services. You have a huge increase of almost $1.4 million in this area. Can you give us an idea of why such a large increase in the area of janitorial services?

**Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn:** MTS increased their fees and we also provided an allocation for the National Enrichment Centre and Frederick Street.

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

**Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh:** Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair. Madam Minister, line 43, sorry, line 34, University Graduate Recruitment Programme.

**Mr. Imbert:** Mr. Chairman, I have already spoken about that. I said, and that is across the board, that that has not be implemented because of funding constraints. We will implement it across the board if funding allows in 2018.
Mr. Chairman: Point taken. Member for Princes Town.

9.10 p.m.

Mr. Chairman: Member for Princes Town.

Mr. Padarath: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair. Madam Minister, just to go back to the issue on Item 37, just for a point of clarification. Is MTS your sole service provider?

Mr. Chairman: Minister.

Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn: No, it is not.

Mr. Padarath: So therefore, when you indicated that this increase would have been due to increased rates partly being contributed by increased rates by MTS, it may be that there are other service providers that you can look at to reduce this cost rather than MTS. Have those options been explored?

Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn: Yes. We already have a contract with MTS—

Mr. Padarath: An existing contract?

Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn: Yes, and it was in addition to the increased rates. We also would have additional properties to be serviced. So those were the two main factors for the increase.

Mr. Padarath: And the existing contracts that you have, do you have an idea of when the expiry will be or whether or not it could be renegotiated? Because, if you look at the market, I am sure there are other companies with cheaper rates that can reduce this cost significantly because you have an increase of $1.4 million for janitorial services when that could be used in several other areas, in a critical Ministry like the Ministry of Social Development?

Hon. Member: Yes, almost 1.4.

Mr. Chairman: Minister of Finance.

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Chairman, through you, there was a recent collective agreement
signed with MTS—the union representing MTS—which has resulted in increased salaries and wages. And MTS is really at the lower end of the spectrum in terms of its charges, and it is a state enterprise. So the practice is, where possible, you know, to use state enterprises.

**Mr. Chairman:** Item 002, Division of Ageing, pages 409 to 410. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Page 410.

**Mr. Chairman:** Go ahead.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Line 16, Contract Employment. Can the hon. Minister indicate what accounts for the increase by $620,000?

**Mr. Chairman:** Minister.

**Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn:** Mr. Chairman, during 2017 we employed, I believe it was 15 or 16 inspectors, so there would be a resultant increase in our bill. Okay?

**Mr. Imbert:** Not only that, just let me come in here.

**Mr. Chairman:** Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Imbert:** If you look at the actual original estimate for that Item in 2017, it was $900,000, and it is the same estimate of $900,000. This often happens with estimates; you would put a figure but for one reason or another people may not be employed during the year, because the recruitment process might be delayed and so on. So the allocation is exactly the same as it was originally in 2017.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Agreed. However, I know that there was—they were severely short-staffed, so is it that the Minister is indicating that the vacancies have been filled?

**Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn:** Not all of them. We now have 18 of the 25 positions filled, so there are just seven vacancies to be filled now.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** All right. Okay.
Mr. Chairman: Item 003, Social Welfare, pages 410 and 411; Item 004. Member for Princes Town you are at 003; Social Welfare?

Mr. Padarath: Yes, Social Welfare.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, proceed.

Mr. Padarath: Item 17, Training. An allocation of $135,000, could the hon. Minister give us an idea of what type of training this would entail under the area of social welfare?

Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn: We would provide that in detail. But I can indicate that the focus this year is going to be on the continuation of our customer care training.

Mr. Padarath: Okay. Customer care.

Mr. Chairman: You okay? Let me know. You okay?

Mr. Padarath: Yes, yes, I am fine.

Mr. Chairman: Item 004: Gender Affairs Division, page 411.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: We do not have any Gender Affairs.

Mr. Chairman: Item 005: Child Development Centre, page 412. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Chair. Hon. Minister, line 17: Training. How many staff members have been trained for this position—for this child development centre? Is it an ongoing training programme for your staff, or is this—

Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn: Training is ongoing throughout the Ministry, but if you are asking in terms of the actual programmes, we would have to provide that subsequently.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Where are the child development centres located?

Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn: Couva.

UNREVISED
Mr. Chairman: Item 006, National Family Services, 412; Item 007, Disability Affairs Unit, page 413; Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, page 413; Item 001, General Administration, page 413; Item 002, Division of Ageing, page 413; Item 005, Child Development Centre, page 414. Item 006, National Family Services, page 414; Item 007, Disability Affairs Unit, page 414; Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies, page 414. Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Thank you. Madam Minister, line Item 31: Contributions to Non-Profit Institutions. We note with support your increase from $8 million to $13 million, and on it you have listed a number of organizations. Are there any criteria that the Ministry uses for allocation of the funding, and are there other applicants for allocation for help, and how is that determined by the Ministry? I think it would be good for general national input.

Mr. Chairman: Madam Minister.

Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn: The criteria utilized include the service that is being provided, the number of persons that are likely to be serviced. We also, when we provide the subvention we provide to a maximum of 60 per cent of the operating cost. These organizations must also be registered, they must also be able to provide their banking information, and depending on how long they have been in existence, we would expect to see their audited financial statements.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Are you finding that there are new applicants to your Ministry over a period of time?

Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn: Yes, we have had a number of new applicants.

Dr. Gopeesingh: So, you are entertaining the new applicants?

Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn: Yes, we go through the process.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Thank you.

Mr. Chairman: Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.
Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Chair. Can the hon. Minister identify in line Item 02, what other social programmes accounted for the increase? You do want have to give it to me now, you could probably provide it in writing.

Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn: If you look at the figures, there has not really been an increase per se. This item has to do with the programmes put on by our units within the Ministry. For example, on the Brian Lara Promenade you may see for disability week we run a programme on the promenade. It is also used to build awareness and to educate the public in terms of, for example, ageing, disability, that type of thing. So, that is what these programmes are about.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: It is more like an outreach? Because I would think that if you are dealing with education it would come under material and promotional material—promotion and publication. So, this is more outreach?

Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn: This is a different type of outreach. This is a different type of outreach.

Mr. Chairman: Member for Princes Town.

Mr. Padarath: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair. Madam Minister, you would agree that there has been growing public concern with respect to some of these organizations in terms of quality assurance, in term of the law as well. Can you indicate what mechanisms exist in the Ministry to deal with some of these growing public concerns with respect to the administration of these homes in compatibility with the law, but also with respect to how the subventions are spent and so on?

Mr. Chairman: Minister.

Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn: There are a number of inspectors attached to the Division of Ageing, and—

Mr. Padarath: Ageing? We are dealing with Children’s Homes and so on.

Mr. Chairman: Non-profit Institutions?

UNREVISED
Mr. Padarath: Yes.

Mr. Chairman: Item 005, page 414.

Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn: Okay, Children’s Homes are not under us, so which ones specifically are you looking at? The Senior Citizens’ Homes or the Senior Citizens’ Centres?

Mr. Padarath: Both. Both.

Mr. Chairman: So 28 and 29, line Items, Madam Minister.

Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn: Yes. Okay. Every year before we do a renewal of the subvention a detailed review and assessment is done of each organization. That review entails visits to the physical facility. We interview the persons there. For example, if you go to one of the activity centres we would interview the persons who utilize the services there. We interview the staff, we look at their financial statements, we look at their accounts. So an in-depth assessment is done on the organization before we make a determination as to continue with the subvention.

Mr. Chairman: Item 006, Educational Institutions, page 416. Member for Chaguanas East.

Mr. Karim: Thank you Mr. Deputy Speaker. Hon. Minister, with respect to Item 006, 01, Adult Education Programme. Further to a request I had made before, can you indicate whether consideration is given to a facility in or a programme in the Enterprise district?

Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn: Hon. Member, that is an issue that would have been raised with the Adult Education Programme, and I was given the assurance that in the next cycle they would look at it.

Mr. Karim: The next cycle should be like when, if you could advise.

Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn: I am not sure at present, but I will give you that
Mr. Karim: Okay. Well, we look forward to it, and if it is possible for us to get a listing of all these centres, so that if there are any in close proximity, and we might be able to refer other persons as well.

Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn: There are 41 centres that we utilize, and yes they are spread throughout Trinidad and Tobago, so there is a centre in that area.

Mr. Karim: Okay. So we look forward to the programme in Enterprise. Thank you.

Mr. Chairman: Member for Princes Town.

Mr. Padarath: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair. Madam Minister, under line Item 02, under Households. The Senior Citizens Grant, could you indicate to us how many persons access the Senior Citizens Grant? And in relation to that, how many persons who access the Senior Citizens Grant are also beneficiaries of food cards?

Mr. Chairman: Madam Minister, could you provide that information now?

Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn: Well, currently there are 93,677 persons who receive the senior citizen pension. In terms of how many of them are also in receipt of the food support, I am not able to give you that information at present, but we could provide it subsequently.

Mr. Padarath: Please, if you could furnish that, that would be helpful.

Mr. Chairman: Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla or Member for Caroni East?

Dr. Gopeesingh: All right, I would give way to Christine.

Mr. Chairman: You would give way to the Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Yes.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you. Thank you, Chair. Concerning line Item 02, I notice there is not much of an increase, and as far as I am aware we were told during the budget that there was an increase, senior citizens received an increase
from within there—from $3,000. So, you are saying that there was no increase?

**Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn:** That increase came last fiscal, so that would have been in place during fiscal 2017.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Hon. Minister, a number of persons have indicated they have not received it. Are you aware that a number of persons have not received the increase?

**Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn:** Hon. Member, the increase was not an across-the-board increase—

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** No, no.

**Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn:**—so there are some persons who would have benefited. And all persons who were deemed to be eligible for the increase have been paid the increase as far as the Ministry is aware.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Is there any recourse for those who would be eligible and have not received it?

**Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn:** There is always recourse. Persons would need to write the Ministry and indicate that they believe they have not been paid the correct amount and we will investigate it.

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

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

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Following my colleague’s request, from Princes Town, could you indicate, Minister, the number of people receiving social assistance under line Item 03, and then line Item 08? So, 03 and 08, and also 04. If you have the answer now, it would be appreciated.

**Mr. Chairman:** Madam Minister.

**Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn:** There are 25,728 persons in receipt of the Social Assistance or Public Assistance Grant as we call it, and 23,625 persons in receipt
of the Disability Grant. In terms of the urgent temporary assistance, that relates really to 12 of the grants that we provide at the Ministry, so it is not fixed. Those grants are not fixed. So, it is not like in this case where you would have persons in receipt every month.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Thank you. My last question on this line Item. Payments to Registrars of Births and Deaths. I note that there has always been a small amount of 11,000 et cetera. Are you comfortable, Madam Minister, with the registration of such an important aspect in terms of how we chart the course for the country in terms of determination of where we are going? Well, in other words, do you feel that you get the necessary information which is required to help us manage the population issue? And how many centres are there for registration of births and deaths? I find that is very low, 11,000.

Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn: Hon. Member, this line Item here was intended to assist persons who could not have afforded to pay for the birth or death certificates. And last year we were informed by the hon. Minister Stuart Young that the Registrar General’s Office have taken over that, and they see after that. Because we at the Ministry have noted that we really have not been receiving claims for this.

Dr. Gopeesingh: So, it is the Ministry of the Registrar General’s Office that is looking after this line Item?

Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn: They have really taken over that.

Dr. Gopeesingh: All right, thank you for the clarification.

Mr. Chairman: Member for Princes Town.

Mr. Padarath: Madam Minister, through you, Deputy Chair, line Item 08, Disability Grant. Madam Minister, can you indicate how many persons currently access the disability grant? One, and there has been a decrease by $24,602,000—
Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn: Yes. [ Interruption ]

Mr. Padarath: What was that, sorry?

Mr. Chairman: The Minister just provided—that question was just asked by your colleague. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: The question I asked hon. Minister is not how many persons, but rather, why was there such a significant decrease to the disability grant?

Mr. Chairman: Minister.

Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn: Hon. Member, the Ministry would have requested a sum that would have been consistent with what was paid in 2017. The Ministry of Finance would have granted an allocation of $500 million. But the Minister has given a commitment that once we need additional funds it will be provided.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: All right. Okay. I just wanted to make sure you did not cut anyone.

Mr. Chairman: Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: On that issue Madam Minister, of disability, your Ministry helps to quantify or qualify the type of disability, and could you just give a little explanation whether different percentages of disability receive different percentages of funding?

Mr. Chairman: Minister.

Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn: No. Hon. Member, the disability grant is a fixed amount, I believe, of $1,800. The percentage disability is really utilized in determining whether the grant should be provided or not.

Dr. Gopeesingh: And how much disability you look for to determine that?

Mr. Chairman: Minister, you can provide the information now?

Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn: Hon. Member, it would seem—I am advised there is
not a fixed percentage, but the percentage is utilized by the boards when they are making their determination.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Oh, the boards determine that?

**Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn:** Yes.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Well, it is a bit arbitrary, but perhaps it is something that you probably need to focus a bit of attention on as the Minister for policy planning and so on. Because, I remember having to sign some things for a number of patients over a period of time, and it is rather confusing to determine what percentage of disability you accrue to a particular disability, and then what would qualify them for it. So, I just throw out that so that you perhaps can direct a little attention to that in the course of your discussions with your technocrats.

**Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn:** At this point in time we rely on the doctors, because the doctors make a recommendation in terms of what the percentage disability is. But then the board would look at that and make a determination, looking also at other factors, but I take your point.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** That is why I indicated. Sometimes it is very difficult to—you want to help the patient, but then what qualifies for a disability sometimes might not be necessary.

**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you, Member. Member for Princes Town.

**Mr. Padarath:** Thank you, Deputy Chairman. Madam Minister, the last study that was done with respect to children who are affected with disabilities, my own constituency Princes Town was identified as the largest area with respect to the total amount of children affected by cerebral palsy. Is it the view of the Government or yourself, as the policy director in your Ministry, to have a review with respect to these disability grants? Because when you have children affected by it, there are now new areas of study and training, and other avenues that are
available to them through physiotherapy, through other mediums in terms of educational training and so on, that can really assist children who are disabled, especially those who are afflicted with cerebral palsy, is there any review being considered by the Ministry with respect to these cases when it comes to children in light of disabilities such as cerebral palsy, autism and others?

**Mr. Chairman:** Madam Minister.

**Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn:** Hon. Member, are you asking that in terms of the grant that is provided or just generally?

**Mr. Padarath:** Well, both, Madam. In terms of policy and also whether or not it could be a consideration or recommendation coming from your good self as the Minister, in terms of directing policy with respect to the disability grant in relation to specific needs for children afflicted with varying disabilities.

**Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn:** The Ministry is currently looking at all of the grants we provide, and we are looking at them in terms of the information that would have come to us from the stakeholders in the area and also our experience. So, we are looking at the grants, but a decision has not been made as yet in terms of whether we are going to have something in addition to the special child grant that we have at present.

**Mr. Chairman:** Member for Princes Town, again.

**Mr. Padarath:** Madam Minister, again, with respect to some of these child development centres in relation, again, to the disability grant, is it the consideration of your Government to have some of these child development centres equipped with persons who are specifically trained in some of these areas of physiotherapy and education, and so on, that will be able to assist children in particular through these centres, who are afflicted with some of these disabilities? Because, I can tell you, in my own constituency recently we have had to raise funds to send a child for
surgery just to be able to use their limbs, and when you send them for training through a physiotherapist and so on, you actually are seeing the results. But there are only like two specialists in Trinidad and Tobago that actually offer these services, and the prices in terms of the cost are astronomical. Is it something that the Ministry can consider with respect to these child development centres?

**Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn:** The—

**Mrs. Robinson-Regis:** Mr. Chairman—sorry.

**Mr. Chairman:** Who is going? Minister of Planning and Development.

**Mrs. Robinson-Regis:** Mr. Chairman, if I may, some of these issues that are being raised by the Member for Princes Town would be better raised under the Development Programme. And I would like to ask whether the Minister could be allowed to answer some of these questions under the Development Programme, because there are some projects under the welfare services, under the Consolidated Fund, that the Member could probably ask these questions under that programme. Because, what we are dealing with now is the recurrent expenditure, and they would not fall under recurrent.

**Mr. Chairman:** Okay, point taken, Madam Minister. Right. So, next Item, Item 009, Other Transfers. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla, where are you?

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Just one—007, just one question on Item 11. Can the Minister indicate what is this Target Conditional Cash Transfer Programme - Development Component for Recipients?

**Mr. Chairman:** Page 417 line Item 11, under 007, Households, Target Conditional Cash Transfer Programme.

**Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn:** This is the developmental aspect of the Food Support Programme, and it has been rebranded to Step-Up. It was Rise-Up under the previous administration. This is the developmental component where we have
case management persons working with the families to either provide them—send them in the direction of enhancing their education, enhancing their skills so that they can bring themselves out of that dependency status.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Okay, so it is Step-Up as opposed to Rise-Up.

**Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn:** Yes.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Okay.

**Mr. Chairman:** Right, it is a change of name. Okay, Item 009, Other Transfers, page 417. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Thank you, Chair. Line Item 01, hon. Minister, is this programme fully under the Ministry?

**Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn:** Yes.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** I see there is just a slight decrease, but I do not know if the hon. Minister is aware that this programme is oversubscribed, and if there is any intention of enhancing it and improving it and enlarging the need for more staff to come on board?

**Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn:** The programme is under review, because currently the policy provides for a maximum of 600 caregivers and we are at the maximum, but we recognize that the demand is great, so it is being reviewed.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Okay, thanks.

**Mr. Chairman:** Members, Item 009, Other Transfers, page 417; Sub-Head 006, Current Transfer to Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies, page 418. Do we have questions on page 418?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Yes.

**Mr. Chairman:** I recognize the Member for Caroni East.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Line Item 15, through the Chair, Madam Minister. May I humbly suggest that this nomenclature for these children be looked at urgently and
changed from “retarded children” to “specially challenged children”? It is something that we need to do, so I want to make the recommendation. And just one question as well—well, of course, Lady Hochoy Home has been doing a great job. Line Item 41, Association for the Hearing Impaired, is there any consideration for helping children with middle-ear deafness who need cochlear implants, surgical implants—would that be entertained in this vote here, and if not, is this a new line Item you can put? Because, from the research we did at the Ministry of Education, and Minister will tell you, about 7 per cent of students have either visual or auditory difficulties.

**Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn:** Hon. Member, in terms of your first question, the Ministry has raised the issue of the use of the word “retarded”, but this is the organization’s name, and they will make a decision as to whether they change it. But we have raised it with them. And secondly, in terms of the Association for the Hearing Impaired, the Ministry is not really able to indicate to the organization what they should be pursuing. They provide their proposals and their request, and we assess it and we provide the subvention. But we are not involved in the operations of the organization.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Sure. But I am sure there are a number of children who need it, but unfortunately the expense is quite expensive, but they end up without having the surgical procedure to help them. So, it is something that your Ministry can look after. And, Minister, why is it that we cannot make legislation to change this name from “retarded”?

**Mr. Chairman:** Member, we would take that as a suggestion. Minister, take note it, but we can move on. Are there any questions based on the statutory boards at this time? Any questions with regard to the statutory boards? So, as a result we are going to move on now to development programmes. Development
Programme, the Consolidated Fund, page 182, of the Development Programme, page 182, and we will go to Item 004, Social Infrastructure, pages 182 to 183. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Chair. Hon. Minister, line Item 044 on page 182, Establishment of Social Displacement Centres. Are these centres related to the street dwellers?

Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn: Yes, it is.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Where are these centres going to be located?

Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn: The proposal is to establish one at the corner of Piccadilly and South Quay, and we also looking at retrofitting a building at the corner of Duncan Street and Independence Square.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: And how soon you are looking at accomplishing such?

Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn: In terms of the building on Independence Square, we hope to have that done within this financial year. In terms of the other building we are looking at a two- to three-year time frame for completion.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Will the Ministry no longer require the services of St. Vincent De Paul in terms of their facility, or is it going to be working in tandem?

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Chairman, this is the Development Programme, that question is more relevant to recurrent expenditure. This has nothing to do with that. There is no relationship.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Of course there is a relationship.

Mr. Imbert: It is a building.

Mr. Chairman: Okay. I would not be able to entertain it, Madam. We now go to the Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.

Mr. Lee: Thank you, Chair. To the Minister, Item 096, Development Centre for Persons with Challenges, $4 million. Could the Minister state whether it is one
centre, or what is it?

**Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn:** This is the national—sorry, the Enrichment Centre at Carlsen Field.

**9.40 p.m.**

**Mr. Chairman:** Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** 096, the same, Development Centre for Persons with Challenges. Is this facility functional, Madam Minister?

**Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn:** No, it has not been operationalized. The myriad of problems we have encountered with that Centre has delayed its operationalization. During last fiscal we had to get the UWI Engineering Institute on board to do a structural assessment of the building. They did that. We have since submitted their report to the Ministry of Works and Transport, because the Ministry of Works and Transport—approval is needed before we can get approvals from the regional corporation.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** But we have Janitorial Services here, right?

**Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn:** Well, the building is there so we have to make sure that it is properly maintained.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** All right. 114.

**Mr. Chairman:** The Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.

**Mr. Imbert:** Mr. Chairman, again, this is the Development Programme, not Recurrent Expenditure.

**Mr. Chairman:** Okay. The Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.

**Mr. Lee:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Through you to the Minister, line Item 130, Refurbishment of Hernandez Place. Could you describe where this place is and what is involved?

**Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn:** Hernandez Place is in Arima. It provides
accommodation for the elderly/socially displaced persons in society.

Mr. Chairman: Cumuto/Manzanilla, last question.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Item 112, the Street Dwellers Rehabilitation and Re-Integration Project. Is this work in tandem with line Item 044?

Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn: This relates to the Centre for the Socially Displaced Persons at Riverside Plaza.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: All right, so now I can ask my question. So, are we going to continue with this programme, Madam Minister? [Crosstalk]

Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn: We are going to continue with the—

Mr. Imbert:—It is obvious.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: No, it is not obvious.

Mr. Chairman: Minister, yes?

Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn: Yes.

Mr. Imbert: It is obvious.

Mr. Lee: One more question.

Mr. Chairman: Member for Pointe-a-Pierre?

Mr. Lee: Line Item 131, Community Therapeutic Services for Persons with Disabilities. Could the Minister expand a bit on what that is about?

Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn: This—the intention is to forge an alliance with the Ministry of Health and have therapeutic services and assessments provided for children, in particular, and other persons with disabilities within the communities. So we are going to be exploring—having this done through the health centres and the regional hospitals.

Mr. Chairman: Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Which line Item was this, Mr. Chairman?

Mr. Chairman: Member, Member, no, one second.
Standing Finance Committee.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: 126?

Mr. Chairman: No, Member. Do you have a—

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Yes, yes. I want to know if—because I have a question on it.

Mr. Chairman: Which one you would like.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: 126.

Mr. Chairman: Which one?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Line Item 126. Because I did not see any allocation that is why.

Mr. Imbert: There is no allocation.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Right.

Mr. Imbert: So what is your point?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: No, this is why I was asking.

Mr. Chairman: Why there is no allocation?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Yes. Why there is no allocation?

Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn: We are no longer pursuing that. We are now pursuing utilizing the community therapeutic services.

Mrs. Robinson Regis: Mr. Chairman, if I could just indicate, that what the Government has had to do is move to prioritizing projects. So where we have no allocation at all it is that there may have been an overlap and consequently there is one project or one development programme that will cover some of the things that may have been here before and so there is no allocation for it. But in many instances there was overlapping and the Government now has to move to prioritizing projects.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you, Madam Minister.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: But, hon. Minister, there is no overlapping with the Centre
for Persons with Disabilities because there was supposed to have Carlsen Field.

**Mrs. Robinson Regis:** The Minister was very clear and explained—

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** And Carlsen Field is not operational.

**Mrs. Robinson Regis:** But the Minister explained—

**Mr. Chairman:** Members, Members, Members. Thanks for that input, Madam Minister. Thank you, Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

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

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Head 78 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.*

**Mr. Chairman:** Madam Minister, I thank you.

**Hon. Crichlow-Cockburn:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

**Mr. Chairman:** Madam PS and all the technocrats, thanks for coming. Do reach home safely. Thank you.

**Mr. Chairman:** Head 01, President and we are now on *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure*, page 1.

*Head 01:* President, $15,939,050.

**Mr. Chairman:** I will now ask the Minister of Finance to make an opening statement.

**Mr. Imbert:** Mr. Chairman, I think we are all aware that the President is the Head of State.

**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you. Thanks for coming technocrats, senior advisors at the President’s Office.

*Question proposed:* That Head 01 stand part of the Schedule.

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Members, the sum of $15,939,050 for Head 01, President is comprised of moneys proposed for expenditure under the following Sub-Heads and Items to be found in the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure.*

**UNREVISED**
Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure; Item 001, General Administration; Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, page 1; Item 001, General Administration, page 1 and page 2; Item 002, Tobago Services, page 3; Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment purchases, page 3; Item 001, General Administration, page 3.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 01 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Mr. Chairman: Thanks for coming anyhow.

[MRS. ANNISETTE-GEORGE in the Chair]

Head 08: Elections and Boundaries Commission, $81,248,100.

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

Mr. Imbert: Thank you. Madam Chairman, the Election and Boundaries Commission establishes boundaries and conducts elections.

Question proposed: That Head 08 stand part of the Schedule.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Members, the sum of $81,248,100 for Head 08, Elections and Boundaries Commission is comprised of moneys proposed for expenditure under the following Sub-Heads and Items to be found in the Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure and the Draft Estimates of the Development Programme. We now proceed to consider the Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure.

Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure, page 43; Item 001, General Administration; Item 002, General Expenses; Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, page 44; Item 001, General Administration. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Madam Chair. Line Item, 12, Materials and Supplies. Can the hon. Minister indicate what the rationale for this increase in the allocations is?
Mr. Imbert: There will be a field verification exercise in 2018.

Madam Chairman: Item 002, Election Expenses, page 45; Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, page 46; Item 001, General Administration. Hon. Members, we will now proceed to the Draft Estimates of the Development Programme. Sub-Head 09, Development Programme Consolidated Fund, page 13; Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services; Infrastructure Development Fund, page 194; Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 08 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Madam Chairman: Thank you representatives from Elections and Boundaries Commission.

Head 07: Statutory Authorities’ Service Commission, $8,901,550.

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

Mr. Imbert: Certainly. The Statutory Authorities’ Service Commission in similar fashion to the Public Services Commission, is responsible for promotions, discipline and other matters of a personnel nature within a number of statutory authorities, most notably, the regional corporations and other entities such as the National Lotteries Control Broad and so on.

Question proposed: That Head 07 stand part of the Schedule.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Members, the sum of $8,901,550 for Head 07, Statutory Authorities’ Service Commission is comprised of moneys proposed to expenditure under the following Sub-Heads and Items to be found in the Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure.

Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure; Item 001, General Administration, page 39; Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services; Item 001, General Administration,
pages 39 and 40; Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases; Item 001, General Administration, page 40.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Head 07 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.*

**Madam Chairman:** I thank the representatives and the Commission for coming.

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

**Madam Chairman:** Hon. Members, the Standing Finance Committee is suspended to Tuesday, the 17th day of October, 2017, at 10.00 a.m. and we start with the Ministry of National Security. Okay, so have a good evening everyone. Reach home safely.

**9.53 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]
of Trinidad and Tobago, and this is executed by way of the maintenance of law and order, by defence against aggression, by the response to natural and man-made disasters, by ensuring that our border protection is dealt with in an effective and efficient manner. And to do this, Madam Chair, the Ministry of National Security has 10 established divisions and about 15 mandatory units and these divisions include: the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service, General Administration, of course; Trinidad and Tobago Defence Force; Trinidad and Tobago Fire Service; Trinidad and Tobago Prison Service; the Office of Disaster Management and Preparedness; the Forensic Science Centre; the Strategic Services Agency; Immigration; the Trinidad and Tobago Cadet Force; and other mandatory units, Madam Chair, such as the anti-money laundering/combating the financing of terrorism, the counter-trafficking unit, the life guards, probation services, transnational organized crime, to name a few.

Madam Chair, in fiscal 2018, the Ministry of National Security has been allocated a recurrent expenditure of $3.3 billion and a PSIP of $475 million, a total of 3.8, together with the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service which we will deal with later, Madam Chair. But more importantly, these allocations would be used to deal with institutional strengthening throughout the length and breadth of the national security, capacity-building, personnel development, infrastructure maintenance and construction, and we intend to align these expenditure through the five strategic pillars of prediction, deterrence, detection, prosecution and rehabilitation.
Madam Chair, we are sure, in keeping with the theme of fiscal budget, we will create the environment for the paradigm change that is required for the sustainable development of Trinidad and Tobago.

Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

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

**Madam Chairman:** Hon. Members, the sum of $2,838,568,421 for Head 22, the Ministry of National Security, is comprised of moneys proposed for expenditure under six Sub-Heads to be found in the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure and the Draft Estimates of Development Programme*.

We now proceed to consider the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure*. We are at page 126. Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure, Item 001, General Administration, page 126. Member for Naparima.

**Mr. Charles:** Permit me—for clarification, are we dealing with 01, Personnel Expenditure?

**Madam Chairman:** Yes, but we are under 001, General Administration which is at page 126.

**Mr. Charles:** Okay. Thank you, Madam Chair. There is a decrease of $500,000, Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance. Would the Minister care to explain in the context of the war on crime?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** 01, Salaries and Cost of Living, right? Correct?

**Mr. Charles:** Yes.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** The increase here had to do with—arrears were paid out
in last fiscal year and therefore there are no arrears to be paid out in this current fiscal year, in 2018. So that is why there is a difference. Hence the reason for the decrease.

Mr. Charles:  Okay. When one looks at allowances, I see—


Mr. Charles:  Line Item 04, Monthly Paid Officers and Overtime, 03. It is 03 and 04. There are no increases. Are we to assume then that there are no increased activities with respect to the police service in this fiscal year compared to last—

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:  These are not police service, right? This is General Administration.

Mr. Charles:  Yeah, General Administration.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:  So these are not the police service as such.

Mr. Charles:  So, we will take it that there is no increased activity, given all the initiatives that you have started?


Madam Chairman:  But I think what the Minister is saying, these are public servants, these are not police officers.

Mr. Charles:  Yes, but they have a supervisory role and therefore—

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:  No, they do not. They have an administrative role but not a supervisory role.

Mr. Charles:  So you are saying administratively, the work is remaining constant.

Mr. Charles: No, well I am asking.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: No, it is not remaining constant.

Mr. Charles: Right, so therefore—and this is not reflected in any increased allocations.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: No, it is not an increase. There is a decrease because there were arrears paid off in 2017 so there is no need for arrears to be paid off in 2018, hence the reason why there is a decrease in the allocation.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: Madam Chair, if I may, if the Member would also look at what were the revised estimates for last year, he would see that the amounts that are now the estimates for 2018 are very similar, which means that there is a certain constancy with regard to the amount of money that is allocated.

Mr. Charles: And that is exactly the point I was making, that there is a constancy but then there is an increased activity with respect to crime. But I move on. I move on.


Mrs. Robinson-Regis: What the Minister explained is that these are public servants, so these are not the people who are actually in the field dealing with the crime issue. Okay? So you are moving on?

Mr. Charles: I do not want to belabour the point—

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: So you are moving on?

Mr. Charles:—but the public servants have an administrative role.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Well, everyone has a role to play towards crime.
Mr. Charles: But let us go on. Let us go on, Madam Speaker.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: Madam Speaker, I think we should move on.

Mr. Charles: We should move on.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: Yes.

Madam Chairman: Thank you very much. Anyone else? Member for Princes Town.

Mr. Padarath: Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, Line Item 14. With respect to remuneration to members of Cabinet-appointed committees, can you indicate how many Cabinet-appointed committees there are, and what committees are they?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Okay. I can give you the list of those. The Cabinet-appointed committees are: the Seized Assets Committee; Inter-Ministerial Committee; National Anti-Money Laundering/Counter-Financing Terrorism Committee; National Emblems Committee; Work Permit Advisory Committee; Trinidad and Tobago Cadet Force Advisory Committee; the National Drug Council; Protective Services Compensation Committee; Advisory Committee on the Powers of Pardon; Firearms Appeal Board also comes under that list. Did I call the National Drug Council? I think I did. The National Security Officers Foundation is another such Cabinet-appointed body; Trinidad and Tobago Police Service Manpower Audit Committee. That is the list.

Madam Chairman: Member for Chaguanas West.

Mr. Singh: Thank you, Madam Chair. With respect to the Work Permit Advisory
Committee, which is a committee under the Ministry of National Security, Minister, have you done a productivity analysis of that work permit committee? Because as a parliamentarian I get lot of requests that they have a lot of matters before this work permit committee and the processing takes a lot of time. So, in the context of all that is happening in the country for productivity, may I suggest that you undertake an analysis, a review analysis, of the productivity of that work permit committee?


Madam Chairman: Member for Couva South.

Mr. Indarsingh: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. To the Minister, from the point of view of salaries and cost of living, there is no—


Mr. Indarsingh: 01—


Mr. Indarsingh: Yes. Just for my clarification, there is no outstanding back pay or any sums being owed to public servants, right?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: This question was asked a while ago with respect to the line Item and I said it was based on arrears that were paid last year. I do not know if you heard that.

Mr. Indarsingh: Okay. So there is no allocation as it relates to 2018 for any increase from a collective bargaining point of view for public servants?

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: No, there is none.
Mr. Indarsingh: There is none.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: No.

Mr. Indarsingh: So what that means is that, is there an ongoing—

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: At this point, what the budget reflects is what is on the table at present. At present there is none.

Mr. Indarsingh: There is none.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: Yeah.

Mr. Indarsingh: Okay.

Madam Chairman: Member for Princes Town.

Mr. Padarath: Hon. Minister, through you, Madam, I am referring to line Item 14 again. With respect to one of the committees you identified, the Firearms Appeal Committee, I know there has been a lot of complaints with respect to legally acquiring firearms. Have you seen an increased activity with respect to this particular committee?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: The committee meets regularly. There have been several appeals brought before the committee and I have been treating with it. To suggest that there has been an increase, I cannot say there has been an increase, but I know they have been dealing with several matters before them.

Mr. Padarath: Is there any attempt to reform the process of legally acquiring firearms?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Not at this time, no. The Commissioner of Police still has the sole discretion, and then the Appeal Committee treats with that.
Madam Chairman:  Member for Tabaquite, you have a question?

Dr. Rambachan: No, Madam Chair.

Madam Chairman: Okay. So can we go on to 002, Fire Service, and this is at pages 126 and 127. Member for Naparima.

Mr. Charles: Thank you, Madam Chair. Would the Minister explain the—this is 01—significant decrease of $51 million in respect of salaries and cost of living allowances? And this includes provision for vacant posts and incumbents.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: The decrease here reflects the arrears that were paid out in the last fiscal year and therefore it more or less returned back to its normal standing. So that is based on the arrears that were paid out. So there was an increase last fiscal year to cater for the arrears, which no longer exists in this fiscal year.

Mr. Charles: Could the Minister give us an indication of how many acting positions there are in the Fire Service and what provision ought to be included for this?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Let me just find out if you are referring to—now, this first Item here refers to civilians, right? Do you want the civilians or you want the fire officers? Which one? Now we are dealing with line Item—

Mr. Charles: Civilians first.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: This is fire officers, sorry. 01 is in fact fire officers. At the established strength of the fire service right now, based on 2,713 uniformed personnel, the number of positions filled is 2,219. So there are vacant positions of
494 uniformed personnel in the fire service right now, and there are plans to recruit in this fiscal year.

Mr. Charles: I am just asking. If there are plans to recruit and there are plans to regularize officers in the position in which they are acting, how does that tie in with this decrease of $51 million?


Mr. Charles: But when we look at the revised estimate for 2017 it was $352 million, and it is 301 now. So if—

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: Madam Chair, may I intervene, please? If you add the $51 million increase to the estimates, you would get the 352.

Mr. Charles: Yes, agreed.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: Okay? And what the Minister is saying is the 352 included the money that was paid in arrears, and so on.

Mr. Charles: Agreed.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: And I would like to indicate that if you do that throughout, you will see that all the time. So I do not know if you would still want to ask the same questions on each occasion.

Mr. Charles: No.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Because most of this is based on arrears.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: Okay? Because it is arrears. So even if you look back at 2016 actual, you would see that it was less than what we have budgeted for this

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year. Because in 2017 we paid arrears, and so on.

**Mr. Charles:** Okay.

**Mrs. Robinson-Regis:** Okay? Thank you.

**Mr. Charles:** Item 04, Allowances, Monthly Paid, a decrease of $8 million. Is that the same—

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** Same arrears—based on the arrears.

**Madam Chairman:** Okay, can we go on?

**Mr. Charles:** Item 10, Remuneration to the Auxiliary Fire Unit. I need some clarification. Was there a promise at all to regularize auxiliary fire—

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** To absorb.

**Mr. Charles:** To absorb?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** Right. That is before Cabinet right now. That matter is still before Cabinet.

**Mr. Charles:** So it is not budgeted here?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** The absorption is not budgeted.

**Mr. Charles:** It is before Cabinet and you will go for a virement—

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** Once Cabinet does the approval, then we will deal with it.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Tabaquite.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Minister, Item 4. The allowances to monthly-paid officers amounts to $118 million in 2017 and of course, $110 million in 2018.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** Yes.
Dr. Rambachan: That is 33 per cent, basically, of your salaries and cost of living. What accounts for these allowances that is 33 per cent of the cost of salaries? In other words, you are looking at really $410 million rather than $301 million, when you take all the allowances. What accounts for this substantial allowance?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: The allowances are based on laundry allowances and proficiency allowances.

Dr. Rambachan: Proficiency allowances?


Dr. Rambachan: Can you explain proficiency?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Proficiency is based on your skills. There is a proficiency allowance based on the skill set that you acquire through training and development. You are paid an allowance based on your proficiency.

Dr. Rambachan: It is a substantial amount. That is why I asked. It is 33 per cent of the salaries, eh.

Mr. Imbert: You had negotiated and signed that agreement.

Dr. Rambachan: You blame everything on Kamla and the UNC. You come back with that thing again?

Madam Chairman: Item 004, Prison Service, page 127; Item 005, Regiment, page 128; Item 006, Coast Guard, pages 128 to 129. Member for Tabaquite.

Dr. Rambachan: Mr. Minister, in the summary document you have under Personnel, a total overtime to monthly-paid officers of approximately 80—

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Which line Item are you on?
Dr. Rambachan: There is a Summary Item under Personnel Expenditure which was on page 125 that says $80 million was paid—


Madam Chairman: 128 and 129.

Dr. Rambachan: Yes, I know.

Madam Chairman: But we would not have done 125. That is the Summary Page. So could you find it, though—

Dr. Rambachan: It is there, 125, under Personnel Expenditure, Overtime, Monthly Paid amounted to $80 million in—$80,338,039—in 2017—and it is projected to be $72 million in 2018.


Dr. Rambachan: On page 125, the Summary page.

Madam Chairman: So let us hear the question. So you are going to relate that to Coast Guard.

Dr. Rambachan: Right.

Madam Chairman: Right, yes.

Dr. Rambachan: So I see $8 million under Coast Guard, all right? And which is now—that is about 11 per cent of the total. Item 3—

Madam Chairman: But this is what Item—

Mr. Charles: 03.

Dr. Rambachan: Sorry, sorry.

Mr. Karim: You in Immigration?
Dr. Rambachan: Immigration, sorry. You are on Coast Guard?

Madam Chairman: Yes, we are on Coast Guard. Okay?

Dr. Rambachan: Yes, sorry. Okay, I will come back to it.

Madam Chairman: So can we go on to 007, which is Immigration? And Member for Tabaquite, I will take you now if that is where you are at?

Dr. Rambachan: Yes, that is where I am, Ma’am. Thank you.

Madam Chairman: Right. So page 129.

Dr. Rambachan: So overtime for Immigration here is $8 million, right? Okay. As I go along I am trying to find where that other $64 million in overtime in Personnel Expenditure is coming from—

Madam Chairman: Okay, so that—

Dr. Rambachan: The question is why do we occasion so much overtime?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: It depends on the division. Immigration, for instance, would have overtime based on the various crew having to work additional hours, either through shortages or people who may have reported sick, and so on, at the ports of entry. So you have overtime. They build up overtime based on that.

Madam Chairman: Member for Chaguanas West.

Mr. Singh: Thank you, Madam Chair. That raises the issue of what is your establishment of immigration officers, what is your current complement, and how many vacancies you have?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: The established position for Immigration, 569; the number of positions filled, 366; vacant positions, 203.
Mr. Singh: So immediately we can recognize that that is why you have such a high overtime bill.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Yes, that is right. And the fact is that there are several applicants being processed by the Service Commission which takes some time, because immigration applicants come through the Service Commission and it takes some time. But they are in fact—I know there are several applicants right now being processed at Service Commission to fill those shortages.

Madam Chairman: Member for Couva South.

Mr. Indarsingh: Thank you, Madam Chair. And it goes back to this very issue of overtime. Could the Minister indicate to this meeting how many passports, in terms of—

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Which line Item are you on?

Mr. Indarsingh: Well, I am speaking about overtime, and the overtime that is being paid to—and I want to know if the public, really, is getting value for money in terms of the amount of passports that have been pending in relation to the processing at this point in time for the benefit of the wider public.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Processing of passports is just one aspect of the Immigration Department, so I cannot link that to any sort of emphasis on overtime.

Mr. Indarsingh: Well, I am trying to find out for the benefit of those persons who have passports that are pending in terms of their processing, and so on. How many passports are pending in terms of processing—

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Right now I can tell you there are roughly about 30,000
passports that have been completed processing and waiting to be collected at Immigration right now. People have come, applied for their passport, and we have sent out notices for them to come and collect their passports. There are roughly about that amount of passports, people who have processed, applied and have not come to collect their passports.

Mr. Indarsingh: I welcome what you are saying in terms of those that have been processed. I am trying to find out in terms of how many are pending.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: I will provide you with that at a later stage. I cannot understand the relevance of it but I will provide you with it.

Mr. Indarsingh: Well, the relevance is in the context of the overtime that is being paid out and whether the wider public is getting value for money. Simple as that.

Mr. Imbert: The Minister made it clear that is for work at ports of entry, at the airport when a flight comes in at midnight.

Mr. Indarsingh: Mr. Minister, with all due respect to the Minister of Finance, does this not apply to the head office and all various arms of the Immigration Division, Madam Chair?

Madam Chairman: But, Member for Couva South, it is with respect—it is not that it may not be relevant, but in terms of the particular Item, the overtime—

Mr. Indarsingh: No, I—

Madam Chairman: Just one minute. The overtime related to ports of entry. I am not certain that the processing of new passports are done at the port of entry. Member for Chaguanas East.
Mr. Indarsingh: Well, I am not seeing under the line Item that—

Madam Chairman: Member for Couva South, I no longer recognize you. Member for Chaguanas East.

Mr. Karim: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, I am on line Item 03, Immigration again, Overtime. Might you be able to indicate to us which one of your ports of entry has the highest amount of overtime being paid to?


Mr. Karim: I am just going on to another question, with your permission. In that case, would you say that the highest overtime at the Piarco International Airport is as a result of the significant amount of vacancies? Or is it a high level of absenteeism among the officers?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: It is a combination of both.

Madam Chairman: Member for Tabaquite.

Dr. Rambachan: My question is—you will shoot me down, with due respect—

Madam Chairman: There is no shooting being done here.

Dr. Rambachan:—because I was going to ask the question why does it take 10 weeks to get a passport processed in Chaguanas. [Interruption] But it is 10 weeks. It is a long time to wait for a passport.

Madam Chairman: Members, can we now go on to Item 008, Probation Service, page 130? Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, Line Item 01, where you have a decrease, can you indicate how many positions are there in the
Probation Service and how many are filled, please?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** The established position is 97; number of positions filled, 34; vacant positions, 63; and Cabinet has approved, in fact, the creation of 48 positions and Service Commission has been requested to fill these vacancies. So they are in the process of being filled.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Thank you. Has this severe shortfall affected the efficiency of the services of the probation officers in terms of meeting the needs of—

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** This is a decrease in terms of Salaries and Cost of Living Allowances, but that, in fact, would be dealt with when additional posts come on board in the next fiscal year. We expect that when the Juvenile Court comes on board there will be additional probation officers requested and then we will request the increase accordingly.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Naparima.

**Mr. Charles:** That question was asked.

**Madam Chairman:** Okay. So can we go on to Item 009, Forensic Science Centre, page 130. I recognize the Member for Mayaro.

**Mr. Paray:** Thank you very much, Madam Chairman. Minister, I note under line Item 01, there is an increase of $1.8 million for Salaries and Cost of Living Allowances. Taking note of the pending departure of Dr. Alexandrov from the Forensic Science Centre, are there any plans to add additional pathologists, one, to
replace him and to boost up the ability of the Forensic Science Centre to be more efficient in delivering its reports?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** The pathologists come under Contracted Officers, not under this line Item. But I can answer your question by saying that we are treating with the issue of Dr. Alexandrov’s retirement at the end of this year, with respect to recruitment of additional pathologists.

10.30 a.m.

**Mr. Charles:** In respect of 01, the Minister indicated that the replacements would be contracted officers.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** No. The pathologists are not under this line Item. They are not under contracted, but I answered the question all the same.

**Mr. Charles:** Okay. Is the Minister satisfied that we are doing enough to incentivize positions in the forensic science centre, such that we would not have this problem of people leaving and recruiting new people repeatedly?

**Mr. Imbert:** Madam Chairman, the Minister was clear that this does not relate to pathologists. So the question is not relevant.

**Mr. Charles:** No!

**Madam Chairman:** Let me ask something. Member, would you want to find out what post 01 relates to, and then see whether you would want to ask your question?

**Mr. Charles:** Okay. Could the Minister tell us what post this relates to—positions.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** This relates to scientific staff and other staff in the Forensic Science Centre. Not the pathologists.

**Mr. Charles:** Scientific staff? These are the people who do the testing and what
Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: The ballistic testing, the chemical testing, the labs and so on.

Mr. Charles: So are you satisfied that we are adequately resourced with personnel to handle that, and that this $1.8 million would handle what is needed because that seems to be a bottleneck in the crime solving area.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Still, we have requested the DPA to fill additional posts in the Forensic Science Centre. So we are not yet fully satisfied and we are making arrangements to increase the staff. We have made requests to have an increase in staff.

Mr. Charles: Could the Minister indicate: what is the extent of the backlog in a time frame? It should be operating at—tests should take one day, or two days, and it is taking a month. You have a sense of where we are?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: You are talking about the process that is—

Mr. Charles: The process. The test and the efficiency of the forensic science centre.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: I cannot give you that. I cannot go into details of the process that takes place in the Forensic Science Centre.

Mr. Imbert: Madam Chairman—

Mr. Charles: Are you satisfied with the way, the outputs and the efficiency of the Forensic Science Centre?

Mr. Imbert: Madam Chairman, is that a relevant question to this line Item?

Mr. Charles: It is. It is because you have allocated some money and I am asking is this enough to meet the needs of—because this is a bottleneck.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: There are vacancies that we are filling at this point in
time.

Mr. Imbert: He answered you.


Madam Chairman: Okay, and Member for Couva South.

Mr. Indarsingh: Thank you, Madam Chair. I will pass to my colleague.

Madam Chairman: Member for Chaguanas West.

Mr. Singh: Yes, I think my colleague asked the question. Through you, based on your guidance, Madam Chair, what are the vacant posts in the Forensic Science Centre; and if you have that knowledge available, how can you deal now with the processes in the Forensic Science Centre so as to facilitate the efficiency of the process? For example, I am told that firearm testing, if there vacancies in that area, certainly firearm testing takes a very, very long time. So I would like to find out whether or not the firearm testing—how can I put it—expertise, is one of the vacant areas?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: No. The firearm testing is not one of the vacant areas and there is a process in terms of the firearm testing that takes place. That takes some time. More so the process as opposed to the vacancies of staff. There are in fact adequate staff to deal with the firearm testing. But in terms of the positions, I can give you the list of positions if you want. I can provide it. It is a long list to you. So I can provide it to you rather than to read them out to you.

Mr. Singh: No, no.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: I can provide them to you.

Mr. Singh: For our own efficiency, I would rather you—

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: The list of positions and vacancies and so on, I can provide that to you.
Mr. Singh: And much like not only the vacancies, but are these positions also filled by the Service Commission.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: They are. They are all filled by the Service Commission other than the contracted officers, like the pathologists. All.

Mr. Padarath: Thank you, Madam. Just as a follow-up to the hon. Minister on the last comment that he made with respect to the filling of these vacancies by the Service Commission as opposed to contracted services. You indicated in one category that falls under this line Item is the issue of forensic technicians, that seems to be a significant area in which we—


Mr. Padarath: Yes—do not get the type of delivery that we are looking for in the shortest possible time. Is there any indication at this point to have some of the scientific officers and the forensic technicians become contracted officers?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: No. Those positions are not under the contracted positions. So we do not use the contracted position for those types of positions mentioned. We go through the Service Commission to do that type of selection.

Mr. Padarath: There is no attempt to utilise that particular area to bring in these technicians and these scientific staff.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: It is not an area that is—in fact, we have four of such officers on contract right now.

Mr. Padarath: Scientific staff and technicians?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Yes, that is right. We do have four on contract.

Mr. Padarath: And is there an attempt to increase that as we go along?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Well, there is a combination of measures. One, through contract and also through the Service Commission. So it depends on if the length

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of time—

Mr. Padarath: Which one comes first?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Well, there is a combination because you see, because of the length of time that Service Commission takes, we have to go the contract route, but when we get there, Service Commission, which is the “permanent staff” then we can deal with the contracts. So there is a combination of both, one to support to complement the other.

Mr. Charles: Minister, help us understand why the pathologists are contracted positions. I understand the point that to get it done quickly, but is there any attempt to put those posts on the permanent establishment?

Madam Chairman: Member, we will take that question when we come to the Contract Positions under Goods and Services.

Mr. Charles: Okay.

Madam Chairman: So can we go on? Item 012, Lifeguard Services, page 131. Member for Chaguanas West.

Mr. Singh: Thank you, Madam Chair. I would like to find out the complement of lifeguard service, their deployment and whether or not we have fulfilled the establishment in that area.

Madam Chairman: So we are at 01?

Mr. Singh: 01, Salaries and Cost of Living.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: The established positions—the lifeguards are in fact under 02 and not 01. I do not know if you want to refocus?

Mr. Singh: Wages. Okay. So fine.

Mr. Imbert: Madam Chairman, could I just make a general point with response to these queries of this particular nature? There is a budget document, all Members
would have received it—this is what it looks like. [Mr. Imbert displays document]—and in this document every single post on every single establishment is listed.

Mr. Singh: Yes, but we want to find out—

Mr. Imbert: So with respect to this particular matter on page 105 under Lifeguard Services, you would see the establishment positions under Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance and that applies throughout every single Head here. Just for your information because questions have been asked as to what is the establishment. It is all in this document.

Mr. Singh: Okay. I think that we do not want to get the positions. We want to get the arithmetic because if you have 100 positions and 50 filled, then you can get a sense of where is the deficiency and what is the service being provided.

Mr. Imbert: Now, I understand that. It is just that one of the typical questions is: what is the establishment? And the establishment is in this document. So you do not need to ask the question.

Mr. Singh: I need to understand the arithmetic because I am following up a question from last year.

Madam Chairman: Okay, so the question is the vacancies?

Mr. Singh: How many, yes.


Mr. Singh: No, but you said it come under 02.

Madam Chairman: The vacancies in terms of what, lifeguards?

Mr. Singh: Lifeguards.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: I will provide that for you.

Mr. Singh: The reason why I asked that question, Madam Chair, is that last
Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Okay, let me answer your question. Lifeguards under 02, Wages: number of established positions 93; number of positions filled 33; vacant positions 60; daily-rated workers, 108 daily-rated not on the establishment. So you have 108 persons who are not on the establishment that are being regularized right now.

Mr. Singh: So you are saying that you are exceeding your positions?


Mr. Singh: The establishment positions?


Mr. Singh: Okay. Because the reason being is that on the last occasion the lifeguards complained that since they have come under your Ministry they have been neglected, and I just wanted to know from last year whether or not that position has been corrected.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: That position has been corrected.

Mr. Imbert: They did not complain this year, right?


Mr. Charles: Thank you very much. Item 01, Salaries and Cost of Living Allowances, 183, and all I am asking is this related to any attempt to expand the cadet force in secondary schools in the country?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: The cadet force has expanded over the last year to a number of secondary schools.

Mr. Charles: So could you tell us what proportion of secondary schools have cadet forces?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: I will provide that for you.
Mr. Charles: And is there any attempt to do this in the hotspot schools in those areas or—

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: The plan is to have the cadet force throughout the length and breadth of Trinidad and Tobago.

Madam Chairman: Item 016, Air Guard, page 132. Sorry, Member for Chaguanas East. Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, Item 001, General Administration, pages 132 to 133. Member for Naparima.

Mr. Charles: Item 09, Rent, Lease, Vehicles and Equipment and there is an increase of $90 million, could the Minister enlighten us?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Sorry, which line Item are you on?

Mr. Charles: Item 09?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: 09. 09, that is the CCTV, most of the rent there is based on the CCTV. That is the CCTV—

Mr. Charles: Expansion throughout.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:—throughout Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Indarsingh: Thank you, Madam Chair. Under 02, 16 Contract Employment, I see a decrease $7,002,900, why is this; and if so, does this indicate a reduction in staff and—

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: If you look at last year’s expenditure, we have spent just about $34 million. So it is almost about the same amount being allocated for 2018.

Mr. Indarsingh: I am seeing under the revised estimates, Minister, $38,450,000, and 2018, $31,447,100.


Mr. Imbert: Just let me say as a general point, if you look at the original 2017, the allocation for this Item was $18 million. The actual expenditure was $38
This year Finance has allocated $31 million and we would hope that the Ministry would stay within that $31 million.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Princes Town. Just one minute. I will take Member for Princes Town and then I will call you back Member for Couva South. Member for Princes Town.

**Mr. Padarath:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, going back to line Item 09 with respect to your last comments about the CCTV cameras, I just want to get a sense of clarification where this additional $90 million that is being appropriated here. Does this also have to do with lending support with respect to the infrastructure from removing traffic offences to violations in terms of the technology needed for the red light cameras and all these things?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** Well, the whole camera system is integrated, but this also includes the new equipment and so on because some of the cameras would have need replacement and so on. So it includes new equipment, the whole CCTV framework.

**Mr. Padarath:** With respect also to the specifications that will be needed to enforce this legislation, yes?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** In the way going forward yes, in terms of treating with the whole question of the red light and cameras. Yes.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Yes, Madam Chair, I have listened to the Ministry about the Ministry and the air guard’s staying within the parameters of the allocation, but I am still to get an explanation in terms of the decrease in $7,002,900, whether this reflects a reduction in staff within the operations of the air guard?

**Madam Chairman:** I think Member we got an answer to that question.

**Mr. Imbert:** He dealt with it.

Mr. Imbert: Originally they got $118 million, they spent $38 million, we are asking them to spend $31 million.

Mr. Indarsingh: I am just asking whether in terms of the numbers.

Madam Chairman: Minister, your numbers remain the same?


Madam Chairman: So, could you please answer. Have your numbers remained the same?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Yes, they have.

Madam Chairman: Right. Member for Chaguanas East.

Mr. Karim: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, I am still on this same Item, the heading 02, Goods and Services, but on page 133, Item 36, if it is okay with you.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Extraordinary Expenditure? Yes, the question is?

Mr. Karim: The question is really if you could give us a sense as to what the extraordinary for $50 million?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Those are more in keeping with the IATF operation and covert activities which I will not go into any further explanation.

Mr. Karim: While I am at that, you may likely be also to give us a sense as to line Item 28, there is a decrease of $1.3 million Other Contracted Services. What is it that might have decreased in the quantum of the sum? Whatever caused that?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: This line Item deals with more the maintenance contracts and so on. The decrease here I will provide you with some answers on that.

Mr. Karim: Minister, this will be maintenance of what?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Maintenance, as things like waste disposals and so on,
MTS as well.

Mr. Karim: Okay.

Mr. Singh: Thank you, Madam Chair. Line Items 11 and 12, Books and Periodicals, there is an allocation of $150,000, a decrease of $128,000 from $270,000, and materials and supplies an allocation of $40,000. What I am seeing is that, look, there is a—I am happy that you have a reading and an up to date air guard with the allocation, but I am seeing a disparity with Materials and Supplies in terms—I do not know how they organize themselves with only that piddling amount allocated to that as against that. Just a comment. But I want to go back to—

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: You know, I gather this is General Administration.

Mr. Singh: This is not under—okay.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: This is Goods and Services, General Administration.

Mr. Singh: Okay. Fine. I thought it was air guard. My apologies. Item 36, Extraordinary Expenditure. My colleague asked the question and you said it is for covert operations, I understand that, but is there any kind of oversight in this $50 million allocation for covert operations—


Mr. Singh:—so as to ensure that there are checks and balances so it does not become a slush fund in the hands of personnel.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: There is oversight through the Permanent Secretary and through the National Security Council.

Mr. Padarath: Madam, I am on line Item 43, Security Services. We see an increase of $1.1 million, is this a case of private company being paid to guard the guards; or is this MTS; or whether or not this figure reflected here is for arrears?
Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: It is in fact services provided by MTS, the national security building in particular, and other national security institutions.

Mr. Padarath: By MTS?


Mr. Padarath: Is there any consideration—


Mr. Padarath: — to use law enforcement in terms of—

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: No. Not to do those kinds of static guards. Law enforcement are required to do more law enforcement typed duties. So we contract those out to MTS and so. But if you use our manpower like police to guard the Ministry of National Security building, it is not an effective use of manpower. So we contract the security at the buildings—

Mr. Padarath: Especially when you already have a depleting police force.

Madam Chairman: Item 002, Fire Service, page 134. Member for Naparima

Mr. Charles: Thank you, Madam Chair. Item 21, Repairs and Maintenance - Buildings, and I see a decrease of $1.6 million and my own observations are that a number of the fire stations are in need of repair. I can speak specifically of the Princes Town Fire Station that I understand has not been repaired for about 20 years or so, and the question is: is this enough, this decrease?

Mr. Imbert: Exactly what page are you on?

Mr. Charles: I am on page 134, Item 21, Repairs and Maintenance - Buildings.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: The whole question of repairs to buildings, fire service is based on a priority and the Chief Fire Officer will go and— he will, of course, prioritize the nature of the buildings and the ones that need to be repaired.

Mr. Charles: So can you say if Princes Town—

Mr. Charles: You have no idea.


Mr. Charles: Okay. Item 13, Maintenance of Vehicles, a $3.6 million decrease. Are you satisfied, Minister, that the appliances are ready to fulfil their mandate?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Again, to use the term satisfied, one will never be satisfied, but we will have to be able to prioritize and treat with the issues of maintenance accordingly.

Mr. Charles: So, in your view a $3.6 million decrease is not a problem? I am just asking.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: No, I would not use those words “It is not a problem”. I am saying we have to prioritize given the situation.

Mr. Charles: Could I ask it in a different way? In Princes Town there is one appliance to handle a geographic area that could be 30 miles away—not 30, but 20 miles if it is Moruga. That appliance must be functioning at all times. You are sure given what is budgeted here that that would be ready as required?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: The Chief Fire Officer is in fact will do his prioritization. But in addition to that, there are in fact new fire appliances that are ordered, that in fact were ordered last year and due to come into the country this year, and we continue to purchase additional vehicles as the finance allocated comes to us, but there are in fact new appliances on order that are due to arrive in Trinidad.

Mr. Charles: And the last question. Is there a response time in the fire service generally to say that if a fire takes place within 30 minutes, or 20 minutes, or 40 minutes, an appliance will be on site?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: There is a response time all things considered.

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Mr. Paray: Thank you very much, Madam Chairman. Minister, I just want to follow up with one issue that is still outstanding at the Mayaro Fire Station. The fire officers are quite happy with the tender and so on that was provided and I think the people are very appreciative for that. There is an issue of communications in the building. There is still no telephone and internet circuits at that building, and I think there is only wireless service available. I hope that is something that can be addressed soonest.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Yes. That is being dealt with. That is being treated with.

Madam Chairman: And that is under 05.


Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Madam Chair. Line Item 13, hon. Minister. Just a follow-up on my colleague. With the decrease, how will the reduction impact upon the effectiveness of the fire services?


Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: No, 13.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: 38?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: No, 13.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: 38?

Madam Chairman: 13, Maintenance of Vehicles.


Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: I know, but you did not indicate how it would impact upon the effectiveness. You said that there were new fire tenders on the way, but those tenders have not arrived and in the meanwhile there is a transition period.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: And as I said, the Chief Fire Officer will do this in terms of priority, maintain the vehicles accordingly.
Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Hon. Minister, I know what it is you are saying. Let me ask another question. Does the maintenance of vehicles include the fire tenders, the ambulances, the vehicles? Is it all the vehicles?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: All the vehicles under their administration.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: And the fire officer will determine what should be repaired at what time?


Mr. Karim: Thank you, Madam Chair. I am on line Item 22, Short-Term Employment, hon. Minister. Could you give us a sense—and I am sure the public will be happy to hear—what is the role or what do these fire and guardians do, what do they perform? And as a follow-up to that, how many are engaged currently, and how are they recruited?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: There are 22 fire guardians and what they do especially—sorry, there are 90 fire guardians employed in the fire service right now and they are the ones who would go out into—especially during the dry season and so on—the forested areas and look at the situation where there may be a propensity for bush fires and so on, and with the initial response to treat with that in terms of talking to people and so on, dealing with the people who may be inclined to start those fires and so on, and pass the kind of information to the fire service so they can develop the appropriate response.

Mr. Karim: Do you intend to increase that complement?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: As the need determines, Sir.

Mr. Karim: And how are they recruited?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: The positions are in fact advertised and people respond to the advertisement.
Mr. Karim: Okay.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, I am on line Item 37, Janitorial Services and I am seeing there is an increase of $2.4 million. Is there a system in place for the procurement process for janitorial services, and what criteria is used?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: There is a system in place for the equipment and it is based on advertisement and people who respond to the advertisement, et cetera.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: Sorry, Minister, what?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: It is based on an advertisement for the services and response to that, and it goes through the selection process.

Mr. Padarath: Thank you, Madam. Hon Minister, as a follow-up to that and I think the real question there is that when you look at line Item 37, Janitorial Services, an increase of $2.4 million while you decrease a critical area like vehicles by $3.6 million, is this to deal with arrears?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Exactly and that is the reason why there is arrears due to those companies in this fiscal year and that is to cater for the arrears.

Mr. Singh: Thank you, Madam Chair. Line Item 17, and this is really a follow-up from last year. Last year, Madam Chair, I had asked the question about training for landfill fires and the Chief Fire Officer, acting then, had indicated that they had embarked on a programme for training of fire officers with respect to landfill fires. I just wanted to know whether or not that training took place, and whether there will be the continuation of that training, or is it completed.


Madam Chairman: Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: My question was answered.
Madam Chairman: Okay, we go on. Item 004, Prison Service, page 135. Member for Naparima.

Mr. Charles: Thank you, Madam Chair. Looking at Item 43, Security Services, and I am asking: Does this relate to the “Justice on Time” programme?


Mr. Charles: Right. Have you done an audit on the benefit, or whether there are alternative ways of saving a $43 million; and also is that subject to tender or is it just a rollover annually?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: To answer your first question, we are in fact looking at alternatives to that with the coming on stream of the video conferencing centre which is about 70/75 per cent complete. Once that centre is up and running, it means that there would not be the requirement for prisoners to go from Golden Grove throughout Trinidad and Tobago, but they can be dealt with by video conferencing between the centre and the courts. So that is one alternative that we are working on and that should be on stream, all things considered, by the end of 2018, if not before.

Mr. Charles: At present this is tendered, or is it just a rollover?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: It is contracted for three years.

Mr. Padarath: Hon. Minister, just out of pure curiosity, I am looking at line Item with 40, Food at Institutions with an allocation of $15 million—


Mr. Padarath: Pardon me?


Mr. Padarath: 4-0, yes—I am guessing that this is food for prisoners?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Yes, it is.

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11.00 p.m.

Mr. Padarath: What is the complement of inmates right now?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Three thousand and seven. That is convicted. And of course, we have the remand population.

Mr. Padarath: Any idea how many?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Three thousand and seven is, in fact, the total, convicted and remand.

Mr. Padarath: Three thousand?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Three thousand and seven as of today, and of course, that could change by this afternoon.

Mr. Padarath: Of course, of course.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Three thousand, seven hundred, as of today, which could change by this evening.

Madam Chairman: Member for Naparima.

Mr. Charles: Thank you, Madam Chair. Item 21, Repairs and Maintenance - Buildings. This allocation refers to the prisons or the administrative buildings?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: This would be all the buildings.

Mr. Charles: All the buildings? Right. I know that there is an allocation for fixing the sewer at Remand Yard.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: That is Remand; that is different. That is captured under another—

Mr. Charles: But given complaints about prison conditions and cramped conditions and whatnot, there is a decrease of 1.1. Do you think that that decrease is justified?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: We have other allocations to treat with—under
Development Programme to treat with other issues of prisons infrastructure.

Madam Chairman: Member for Oropouche West.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, line Item 23, Fees. I just need some edification on it. What does that represent?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Fees, you have chaplain fees, customs fees and so on.

Madam Chairman: Item 005, Regiment, page 136; Item 006, Coast Guard page 137. Member for Chaguanas West.

Mr. Singh: Madam Chair, both with respect to the Regiment and to the Coast Guard, the line Item dealing with Food at Institutions, Item 40, there is reduction in both, one of $3.5 million with respect to the Regiment from $20.5 million to $17 million in 2018, and in 2017, the allocation was $9.5 million to an allocation of $9 million for the Regiment in 2018. I want to know whether the quality of the food offered will be affected by this and what measures will be in place having regard that the complement of staff at both these institutions are increasing.

Hon. Maj Gen. Dillon: The quality, I do not think it would be affected but it is in fact a better management of the resources available. That is the measures that are put in place.

Madam Chairman: Member for Couva South.

Mr. Indarsingh: Thank you, Madam Chair. In relation to both 005, Regiment and 006, Coast Guard in terms of line Item 17, Training, there is a decrease of $1,894,000 and $2,570,000. Minister, is this in any way means that the quality of training is being compromised in any way?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: No, it is not being compromised whatsoever. No.

Madam Chairman: Member for Chaguanas East.

Mr. Karim: My question was just taken.

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Madam Chairman: Member for Princes Town.

Mr. Padarath: Minister, if you look at line Item 50, Housing Accommodation, a decrease of $214,400. This vote is utilized with respect to who and what?

Madam Chairman: Page 137.

Hon. Maj Gen. Dillon: Housing Accommodation, that would be with respect to commissioned officers in the Trinidad and Tobago Coast Guard. Based on their terms and conditions, they would be afforded rental accommodations depending on where they work and where they operate from. The decrease—

Mr. Imbert: Member, if you look at the 2016, 2017, 2018 figures, you will see it fluctuates, so that obviously dependent on the actual officer on the ground at the particular time, and this vote would be supplemented if necessary. It is an entitlement.

Mr. Padarath: So it is part of their package?

Hon. Maj Gen. Dillon: That is right.

Mr. Imbert: It is an entitlement.

Madam Chairman: Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Madam Chair. I just wanted to enquire, line Item 15, Repairs and Maintenance – Equipment, what equipment we refer to here for a decrease? I just want to know how it would impact.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Those are like small machines and so on, photocopiers and the makings and those kinds of things.

Madam Chairman: The Member for Princes Town.

Mr. Padarath: Line Item 37, Janitorial Services. It seems across the board, under this Ministry, there is a significant increase when it comes to janitorial services. Again, is this for outstanding arrears?

Mr. Imbert: I would also like to point out that the actual expenditure for 2017 was far less than the provision. There was a provision of $4 million and expenditure of $1,022,000, so a provision of $2 million this year should be adequate.

Madam Chairman: Item 007, Immigration, page 138. Member for Chaguanas East.

Mr. Karim: Thank you, Madam Chair. Just would like to get some information with respect to line Item 28, Other Contracted Services which seems to have an increase of about 50 per cent.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Those are based on arrears for agencies like Rentokil and so on. We have some arrears due to them so that is based on that. Outstanding arrears.

Mr. Karim: Okay. And Item 12, Materials and Supplies. Is that in any way connected with what you have to distribute to the public?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Materials and Supplies has to do with the payment for passports and permits and so on, security papers and so on.

Mr. Karim: Security papers. Do you have sufficient amount? There seems to be a concern that there is an insufficiency why you have the delay. I do not know if there is any veracity to that.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: No, that is not the case.

Mr. Karim: Because at one time, we did not have paper to print payslips.

Mr. Imbert: Where you get that from?

Mr. Karim: No, I am just indicating whether—

Mr. Imbert: “So yuh going on allegations.”

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Mr. Karim: The question is: Do you have sufficient?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Yes, we do.

Madam Chairman: Member for Naparima.

Mr. Charles: Thank you, Madam Chair. Line Item 51, Relocation of Overseas Staff. Does this relate to the immigration officers who process passports in the missions aboard?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Those relate to all immigration staff who work in the various embassies and missions abroad.

Mr. Charles: Right. Are you aware that it is now taking, I think, six months for an appointment in New York and in Miami for a passport and therefore, the figure is $7 million last year and $7 million this year, whether there is need to look at that figure and increase the numbers?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: This is based on relocation, you know, based on whether the staff have to be relocated, either return to Trinidad or relocated from one mission to the next. That is where this allocation is about.

Mr. Charles: So, if you need more staff, you would need an increased relocation allowance. And I am just saying are you satisfied the existing staff—relocated staff, you are happy with their outputs? Have you been getting complaints from nationals abroad?


Mr. Charles: Okay.

Madam Chairman: Member for Princes Town.

Mr. Padarath: Hon. Minister, just as a follow up on that same line Item, can you indicate what is the current complement of immigration staff at our diplomatic missions aboard?
Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: I would have to provide that to you because there is a different amount of staff at the various missions. It depends on where you are operating from. So I can provide you with that.

Mr. Padarath: Okay. Similarly, another follow up, could you also indicate whether or not there is a shortage at any particular mission currently?

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

Mr. Singh: Thank you, Madam Chair. Item 28, Other Contracted Services. Minister, there exists and it is in the media, that there seems to be a problem with the provision of passports between one firm and a competing firm. The question I want is whether under this line Item, there exists a subsisting contract for the provision of passports, what is that firm, whether it is a month-to-month arrangement or whether or not it has a continuous period for a number of years or whether there is going to be a change?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: The present situation is that the contracted firm is being treated at the level of Cabinet right now with respect to the renewal of the contract.

Mr. Singh: Madam Chair, through you, how long has that matter been before the Cabinet?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: I do not want to give you a guess, I can get the date for you.

Mr. Singh: So it has been for some time because—

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: I would not use the words “for some time”, it is before the Cabinet right now for the approval of renewal of the contract.

Mr. Karim: Madam Chair, I am referring to Item 16, Contract Employment, just to ask the question with respect to that line Item, whether there is a sufficient amount of persons contracted to assist in the preparation, production and delivery
of passports, and if not, by how much do we have a deficit?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** These are persons like Business Assistants and so on, who have been recruited to assist in the administration areas of the Immigration.

**Mr. Karim:** And the question I am really asking is: Do you have enough of those persons to assist in the requisite work to deliver?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** Well, we continue to build on that capacity. Enough is not a finite figure so we continue to build. If there is a requirement, then we continue to use the contracting services.

**Mr. Karim:** I think what I want to establish and I think what people want to know, by what percentage are you short of persons? How many persons—

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** In fact, I had as much as about 22 this year alone.

**Mr. Karim:** Twenty-two short—

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** They were hired.

**Mr. Karim:** Or hired. No, how many—*[Interruption]* You are telling the Minister to say that—

**Mr. Imbert:** Yes, I am.

**Mr. Karim:** Minister, can I ask the question whether in your opinion, you have sufficient number of staff to satisfy the need for passports being prepared on a timely basis for members of the public? You will be on record as answering, eh.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** Yeah. It all depends on so I would not give you a definite answer.

**Mr. Karim:** But the Minister of Finance “telling yuh tuh say yes”, I want to ask you.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** I will not—listen to me, right. Yes, I have enough.

**Mr. Karim:** Yes, okay.
Madam Chairman: Item 008, Probation Service, page 139; Item 009, Forensic Service Centre, page 140. Member for Naparima.

Mr. Charles: Right. I am asking on Item 16, contract, it came up earlier. Which positions are contract positions in the Forensic Science Centre? You mentioned forensic pathologist earlier.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Again, I have the list, it is a long list and I can provide it for you.

Mr. Charles: Does it include forensic pathologist?


Mr. Charles: Okay, so the question I am asking is, if the budget is—in $3.7 million revised estimates in 2017 and it has increased only by $244,000, and in 2017, we got complaints that bodies were piling up, I think from the—you know from whom and that the number of pathologists were inadequate to the needs of that centre, are you satisfied that a mere $244,000 would ameliorate that situation?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: As you see there, we have the line Item. If there is a need to increase it, we will increase it as the need arises.

Mr. Charles: So how many do we need? How many forensic pathologists do we need to be operating optimally?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: We need—four is the figure that is being, so we have posts for our pathologists and we are, in fact, trying to recruit in addition to the replacement of Alexandrov.

Mr. Charles: The earlier question, an important position like this: should it be contract employment or the time has come for us to have a permanent establishment, professional pathologist and dealing with the crime situation?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: There is a move right now to look at permanent but it is a
very specialized field, and therefore, you have to look at scholarships—starting at scholarship level and bringing people. So that is the approach that we are using right now. Getting people from the scholarship now.

Mr. Charles: So you are aligning the GATE programme with the needs of the Forensic Science Centre.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: And looking at scholarships and so on. Because it is a specialized field.

Dr. Moonilal: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. To the Minister of National Security, on this very matter, I note this increase of 244, no pun intended, but to the Forensic Science Centre, how many warm bodies this will include? What is the 244 increase meant to address in terms of the number of people at this skill level? Because I am just saying at that level, I imagine it is a competitive salary and package. What is the $244,000 I think, what is it meant to do?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: It is meant to address the increase in staff.

Dr. Moonilal: And as of now, having put 244 and not 245 or 243, how many warm bodies and what skill and who, to the Minister of National Security I asked?

Mr. Imbert: That is fine but I will answer. Madam Chairman, I just want to make the point that the actual expenditure on this Item in 2016 was $2.5 million, $2.9 million was provided in 2017, the actual was 3.7 and we are now providing $4 million. So clearly, this will employ more people than was employed last year.

Dr. Moonilal: Madam Chairman, I think the Minister of Finance jumped in and created another question for me. So you have been increasing over the period, we are looking at estimates here, we do not have before us a 2017 actual, so that is what the estimate was, it was not what was spent.

Mr. Imbert: The revised estimate is $3.75 million. It is right in front of you.
Dr. Moonilal: Yes, but what is the actual for 2017?

Mr. Imbert: Revised and the actual will be almost the same.

Dr. Moonilal: What will be almost the same?

Mr. Imbert: You have been in this Parliament for a long time. You know the system.

Dr. Moonilal: Madam Chairman, you must permit me to ask the Minister a question.

Madam Chairman: Fine. So what is the question?

Dr. Moonilal: The question is since we do not have an actual, we do not know how much was spent in 2017 and my question is that when you have been increasing this, could you tell us—and you do not have to tell us now, you are not obliged now, the warm bodies, how many have been hired in 2016, 2017, 2018; what is required now that validates your 244 increase? That is all. You may not have the answer but you could commit to answering.

Mr. Imbert: Madam Chairman, I just want to make a point. The allocation was made by the Ministry of Finance, it is a round number, $4 million flat. The Revised Estimates—and I want to clear that up as well. The Revised Estimates are the best number given by the Budget Division at the end of September. They are very close to the actual. So the actual will be very close to $3.75 million. The Ministry of Finance has allocated $4 million, a flat number, we have rounded up the $3.75 million.

Dr. Moonilal: Okay. Could I ask the Minister of Finance now, why 244 and not zero? What are you doing with 244?

Mr. Imbert: Madam Chairman, I have to object to this continuous reference to 244, the allocation is $4 million.
Dr. Moonilal: But there is an increase.

Mr. Imbert: That is simply because, as I said—

Dr. Moonilal: You wanted to round it?

Mr. Imbert: We rounded up on the 3.75 obviously.

Mr. Padarath: Hon. Minister, line Item 28, in a critical area like your Forensic Science Centre, what is included in Other Contracted Services?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: That would be waste disposals, disposal of materials and so on and some short-term services.

Mr. Padarath: With respect to that comment, short-term services, could you expand a little in terms of what type of services? Whether or not these include some of those same technicians we spoke of? So there is no outsourcing?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Some areas like when leave reliefs are not provided, they would use that as short-term contract services and so on to provide leave reliefs in various positions. Very short term.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, I am coming back to line Item 16 with Contract Employment and I just want to confirm. You said contract employment, you were identifying the skill sets in terms of the pathologist and persons who are required to do very specific tasks that are highly skilled and with an increase of 244 to add—I just calculated it—that is $20,333 per month. How does the Minister intend to attract these high-skilled personnel with a figure such as that and it is in an area that is clearly needed?

Madam Chairman: Member, I am not going to allow that. I think that was exhausted in a different manner in a conversation earlier. Member for Couva South.

Mr. Indarsingh: Thank you, Madam Chair. 21, Repairs and Maintenance -
Buildings, I see an increase in the allocation of $500,000, what will this address?
And there have always been rumours in relation or allegations that the refrigeration services at the forensic centre are not functioning properly, Minister. Could you give the listening public an assurance that this has been addressed?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** Repairs and maintenance continue at the Forensic Science Centre including the issue that you mentioned a while ago.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** So the refrigeration services—

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** This allocation is to treat with that. Repairs and maintenance throughout.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** The refrigeration services is up to par?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** Upgrading of Plants and Equipment.

**Madam Chairman:** Would 21 be equipment?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** More buildings, Madam Chair. The 15 would be equipment, 21 would be buildings.

**Mr. Singh:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Under Item 28, Other Contracted Services, Minister, in terms of the holistic approach to the role of the Forensic Science Centre, do you think it is prudent for an analysis to be done in the manner in which the processes of the Forensic Science Centre impact upon the judicial system?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** We continue to look at ways of improving throughout national security including the Forensic Science Centre including the delivery.

**Mr. Singh:** But specifically because in my discussions with members who practise before the lower courts, the whole question of the verification exercise of firearms—

**Mr. Imbert:** Madam Chairman, could I ask what line Item this is?

**Mr. Singh:** That is line Item 28, Other Contracted Services, so I am making an
argument for the Other Contracted Services to be utilized, that line Item, for someone to do a thorough analysis of the processes of the Forensic Science Centre and its impact upon the judicial system in the country.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: In fact, that is already being done because we are going through the process of accreditation at the Forensic Science Centre and that includes part of that—

Mr. Padarath: Madam, I will try to tie this into line Item 15 and again, just for my information, especially seeing that we have had reports of bodies going missing, records not being easily accessible. Is the Forensic Science Centre, their records, are they computerized?

Madam Chairman: Under what Item are we?

Mr. Padarath: I am trying to tie it into 15. But just for my information really.


Mr. Padarath: Yes. I am really trying to find out whether or not their system is computerized.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: I am not aware if anybody is missing so I do not know if you may want to correct that statement.

Mr. Padarath: No, you have to pick that up with the media.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: No, but you may have to correct it.

Mr. Padarath: But the question I really want to find out is whether or not their systems are computerized.

Madam Chairman: But this Item is Repairs and Maintenance - Equipment so that I do not see this under that Item. So we now move on to Item 010, Fire Service, Tobago, page 141. Member for Naparima.

Mr. Charles: Thank you, Madam Chair. Item 15, Repairs and Maintenance -
Equipment, could the Minister tell us what that relates to?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** Repairs to things like pumps and saws, Jaws of Life, rescue equipment, et cetera.

**Mr. Charles:** Right and I note that the figure, the estimates, $460,000, half a million, that is for the Fire Services, but for the entirety of Trinidad, we just did it at 002, Fire Services, $1 million. Could you explain why Tobago would have half the allocation of the entire equipment in the Fire Service in Trinidad?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** The difference in needs between Trinidad and Tobago based on the Chief Fire Officer’s assessment.

**Mr. Charles:** But is it not the same equipment that was used there?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** Yeah, but it is a difference in terms of Tobago. Of course, it is different to Trinidad. It must be different, size etc.


**Mr. Charles:** Again, and I do not want to—but the allocation for the Fire Service in Trinidad is $31 million and we just saw in Tobago, it is $19.1 million, closely two-thirds. The total of 01, 02, 03 and 04 is $31 million estimate and I am just asking if $31 million in Trinidad as opposed to $19.1 million in Tobago, is there any reason for that high allocation or the disparity given the size and geography and population and equipment and that—

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Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: It is not so much the size and population, it depends on the needs analysis that was done by the Chief Fire Officer at any point in time. That is the requirement now.

Mr. Charles: So you do not look at equipment or you do not look at vehicles in Trinidad, vehicles elsewhere and say well, look, if you have 10 here and 100 here, that there must be some proportionality?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Of course, the Chief Fire Officer will look at that. That is his remit.

Madam Chairman: Item 004, Prison Service, page 149; Item 005, Regiment, page 149; Item 006, Coast Guard, page 150; Item 007, Immigration, page 150; Item 008, Probation Service, page 150; Item 009, Forensic Science Centre, page 151.

Mr. Charles: Item 04, could the Minister indicate to us what that Other Minor Equipment relates to?


Mr. Charles: Or, special related to the forensic.


Mr. Karim: Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, might you be able to indicate to us line Item 05 refers, MiLAT Programme for the allocation of $10 million, how many students are currently enrolled in that programme and how many centres do you have?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: We have two cohorts right now, roughly about 237 students.

Mr. Karim: How many centres?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: They operate from one centre out at Mausica.

Mr. Karim: Mausica. The other question, the line Item before that, 04, could you tell us the complement of the CCC? And I have an idea as to how many centres but I do not know if you will just want to indicate it to us so that we will see the spread throughout Trinidad.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: There are about 727 trainees right now in the CCC programme that is going on right now.

Mr. Karim: Okay and the Item 11, is that programme discontinued?

11.30 a.m.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: That programme has been discontinued.

Mr. Karim: I thank you.

Madam Chairman: Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, following on colleague, on line Item 11, is there a programme that will replace this most important mentoring programme for youths at risk?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: The intention of the programme, based on a survey that was done, is to move the programme from Ministry of National Security and send

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it to another Ministry. That was based on a consultancy who looked at the programme for us. So that is the way forward but I cannot say when it will happen.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Have you all decided as yet which Ministry will assume that?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** Most likely Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs is one of the recommended Ministries.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Naparima.

**Mr. Charles:** Thank you. So we can expect to see the $13 million reduction in the Civilian Conservation Corps. It would be budgeted elsewhere in another Ministry is what you are telling us. Or you are telling us until that happens there is a significant cut in the Civilian Conservation Corps?

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

**Mr. Charles:** Minister, on a broader note, are you happy with these cuts to MiLAT and Civilian Conservation Corps, et cetera, in the mentoring youth programme, the youth at risk, in the context of crime prevention and the need for males, particularly, to get help in dealing with the issues they face that lead them ultimately to a life of crime?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** I am sure that you would have heard in the Minister of Finance's presentation that based on our economic situation, we have to look at cuts across the entire spectrum, whether National Security or other Ministries, and therefore there are areas in which we have to adjust accordingly.

**Mr. Charles:** I thank you very much, but when we get to 009, I will deal with the SSA, the increased allocation.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Couva South.
Mr. Indarsingh: Thank you, Madam Chair. Under 15, Compensation to the Estates of Members of the Protective Services, I see an increase in the allocation of $1 million. Mr. Minister, will this allocation be enough to compensate the estates of members of the protective services?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Sorry, I did not hear. Could you repeat the last part of your question?

Mr. Indarsingh: I said, will this allocation be adequate to compensate the estates of members of the protective services?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: If there is a need for additional funds, then that will be pursued.

Mr. Indarsingh: But, in terms of who have died in the line of duty, could you give a number, in terms of the estates who are awaiting compensation?


Mr. Indarsingh: You cannot?


Madam Chairman: Member for Princes Town.

Mr. Padarath: Madam Chair, line Item 13, the Criminal Injuries Compensation. We see an increase by half a million. Could the hon. Minister indicate how many persons were able to access compensation through the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board over the last fiscal year and in which categories are the sums and whether or not there are any plans by the Ministry or the Government to increase the ceiling with respect to that? I know that has been a very contentious issue with respect to the ceiling limits, and whether or not there are any plans to review and reform?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: There are no plans to do that.
Mr. Padarath: And with respect to the amount of persons?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: I can provide you with that at a later stage.

Mr. Padarath: Sure.

Madam Chairman: Member for Mayaro.

Mr. Paray: Madam Chairman, question asked by the Member for Princes Town.

Madam Chairman: Member for Oropouche West.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: Madam Chair, is it 009, Other Transfers?

Madam Chairman: No, we have not reached there as yet.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Okay, so when we reach there.

Madam Chairman: So we can now move on to Item 009, Other Transfers. Member for Oropouche West, pages 154 and 155.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, line 12, HIV/AIDS Coordinating Unit. I would just like to know what is the status of this unit and what has this unit achieved thus far?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: That unit is functioning at the Ministry of National Security and it has been instrumental in looking at measures and policy measures to treat with HIV/AIDS across the spectrum of national security.

Madam Chairman: Member for Naparima.

Mr. Charles: Thank you, Madam Chair. Item 02, Strategic Services Agency. Could the Minister tell us briefly what are the main functions of the SSA? And I have a follow-up question.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: I am sure that you would have heard, in terms of our legislative agenda, we dealt with that issue at length and breadth, in terms of the function, the scope and the organization structure of the Strategic Services Agency and I am sure I can provide you with—if you need additional information I can
provide you with that.

**Mr. Charles:** Am I correct in saying that this is a surveillance agency in general?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** I have provided you with the kind of information that is required and I, again, if you need—

**Mr. Charles:** Would the Minister give us an assurance that this agency is not engaged in surveillance of Members of the Opposition, including monitoring our phones? [Crosstalk]

**Madam Chairman:** Okay. So, I would not allow that. Member, do you have any other questions?

**Mr. Charles:** The $2 million increase, you mentioned that they are cutting everywhere because of the financial circumstances and MiLAT and Civilian Conservation Corps but yet there is an increase here. What justifies an emphasis on after the crime, rather than on crime prevention?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** It is to deal with additional criminals. So the measures are there. You have to balance. I mean, you have to balance it across the board.

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

**Mr. Karim:** Thank you, Madam Chairman. Line Item 17, the Morvant/Laventille Initiative of $2 million. Hon. Minister, is this connected because I know there is an allocation under the Ministry of Education for the Morvant/Laventille School Improvement programme. Is this connected, and if it is, what really does this subset do in relation to that project?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** While the schools would deal specifically with the schools, this deals with outside of the school areas, to a large extent, in the communities in that area. So it is at-risk communities in Morvant and Laventille. So it is a combination of the school and then the other environs.
Madam Chairman: Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, line Item 10, Office of Disaster Preparedness and Management. I think it is a very important unit and I just want to know, would this unit require, or would they have an intimate working relationship with the helicopter services?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: When you say they are working with the helicopter service, I do not understand your question.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: If I could go back to Matelot. You could not, with the disaster that had taken place, you needed helicopter access, so is there going to be a working relationship with the air guard, or—?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: There is collaboration and cooperation across national security. If there is a requirement we will cooperate fully.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: All right, okay, thanks.

Madam Chairman: Member for Chaguanas West.

Mr. Singh: Thank you, Madam Chair, line 22, Cyber Security Programme. There is an allocation and an increase of $160,000. Minister, could you give us an appreciation of what this programme is about?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: The Ministry has set up, based on a cyber security policy, a Cyber Security Unit that treats with the whole aspect of what goes on in cyber security and this allocation is to treat with issues pertinent to that unit. They relate directly, together with the other cyber unit in the police unit as well. This is at the Ministry of National Security.

Mr. Singh: Okay, so this is an internal in-house unit that liaises with the police unit.

Madam Chairman: Member for Naparima.

Mr. Charles: Thank you very much. Item 23, Community Comfort Patrol programme, that has been disbanded, $27 million less. Am I correct in stating that the intent was to replace this programme by the Community Police that were assigned to the local government bodies and municipalities?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: I think I mentioned in this very House that this area would be dealt with by the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service, in terms of increased patrols in various areas, and so on. And that was my reply.

Mr. Charles: So, therefore, we could look to an enhanced police capability, community police?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: I had mentioned that before. Hence the reason there is no allocation here for the Comfort Patrol.

Mr. Charles: Thank you.

Madam Chairman: Member for Couva South.

Mr. Indarsingh: Thank you, Madam Chair, 16, Transit Police Unit. There is a decrease in the allocation of $2 million. Mr. Minister, could you give us the reason for this reduction?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: That was based on arrears that were paid out last year.

Mr. Indarsingh: Arrears?


Mr. Indarsingh: Okay.

Madam Chairman: Members, we will now move on to the Draft Estimates of the Development Programme. Sub-Head 09, Development Programme, Consolidated Fund, page 56; Item 004, Social Infrastructure, pages 56 to 62. Member for Naparima.
Mr. Charles: Thank you. Item 019, Purchase of Vessels for the Coast Guard. I was under the impression that, with the vessels that we left, you had reached your complement of vessels for the Coast Guard. This $5.8 million, what is that in respect of?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: That is to purchase four high-speed interceptors, inboard diesel interceptors.

Madam Chairman: Item 005, Multi-sectoral and Other Services, pages 62 to 64; Infrastructure Development Fund, page 199, same book; Item 004, Social Infrastructure, pages 199 to 202; Item 005, Multi-sectoral and Other Services, page 202.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 22 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Madam Chairman: Thank you, Madam PS and the other technocrats. You all are now discharged. We move on to Head 64.

Hon. Members, I have been advised that the members of the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service were advised to come for 12.00. So, I would want to suggest, that in the interest of time, we take the lunch break now and we return at 12.30. So that the meeting is now suspended to 12.30.

11.44 a.m.: Standing Finance Committee suspended.

12.30 p.m.: Standing Finance Committee resumed.

[MR. FORDE in the Chair]

Head 64: Trinidad and Tobago Police Service, $2,323,223,100.

Mr. Chairman: Good afternoon. We would like to resume the Standing Finance Committee meeting this afternoon, and we are on head 64, Trinidad and Tobago Police Service. Welcome Mr. Minister, and welcome also Mr. Williams,
Commissioner of Police. Also to the technocrats, all the senior advisors and officers at the Police Service of Trinidad and Tobago.

Head 64, Trinidad and Tobago Police Service, $2,323,223,100. I will now invite the Minister of Finance to make a brief opening statement for a maximum of five minutes.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** Chair, in my opening remarks this morning under National Security, I covered all agencies including the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service, so I would definitely want to go straight into the matters before us.

**Mr. Chairman:** Sure.

*Question proposed:* That Head 64 stand part of the Schedule.

**Mr. Chairman:** At this stage hon. Members, the sum of $2,323,223,100 for Head 64: The Trinidad and Tobago Police Service is comprised of moneys proposed for expenditure under the following Sub-Heads and Items to be found in the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure and the Draft Estimates of the Development Programme*. We now proceed to consider the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure*.

Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure, page 332; Item 001, Police Service, page 332. I recognize the Member for Naparima.

**Mr. Charles:** Thank you, Deputy Chair. I refer to Items 03 and 04, and note that the estimates in 2018 are less than the actuals in 2016. So one relates to Overtime - Monthly Paid Officers; and Allowances - Monthly Paid Officers.

**Mr. Chairman:** And the question is?

**Mr. Charles:** And the question is what explains that significant reduction, $92 million, in one instance and $78 million in the other.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** That had to do with the arrears that would have been paid...
in 2017.

**Mr. Charles:** The 2017 estimate for overtime was 476 and the year before it was 337. So if—and is 300 the lowest in four years? So if it was arrears, we would see an increase in one year and then it goes back to the normal. But the normal, if you take the average, it is about $360 million for overtime and it is now $300 million. Now, there may be a reason, I—

**Mr. Imbert:** Member for Naparima, what is the question?

**Mr. Charles:** The question is: What is the reason for the $92 million decrease in overtime?

**Mr. Imbert:** There is back pay in overtime too, you know.

**Mr. Charles:** Yeah.

**Mr. Imbert:** So that is what it is.

**Mr. Charles:** So it was a back pay paid in 2016 also?

**Mr. Imbert:** Fifty per cent and 50 per cent. The whole country knows that.

**Mr. Charles:** Okay.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Chairman. To the hon. Minister on this Sub-Head, may I also welcome the Commissioner of Police and other members of the police service. For the record, my name is Roodal Moonilal; for the record, Member for Oropouche East. [Crosstalk]

**Mr. Chairman:** Member, Member.

**Dr. Moonilal:** But we have a higher-ranking officer in the Chamber, so I bow to that. And if I could be permitted now, Mr. Chairman, after my own introduction to the team.

On the matter of personnel expenditure, matters as being discussed over the years here, concern the payments and the quantum being paid to officers who may
be on suspension for one reason or another, whether full-pay or half-pay, and so on and whatever benefits—if not now, could we get a list of the numbers, not the names, and so on, but the number of officers at this time on suspension, and for what reason, and the time of the suspension ongoing, from when and the amount of moneys being paid on this matter? That is one.  

Secondly, Current Transfers and Subsidies, we notice between the actual—


Mr. Chairman: We have not reached there as yet.

Dr. Moonilal: Okay, sure. We would leave it there and I will come back.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: We will provide you with that information.

Dr. Moonilal: You would provide. Thank you very much.

Mr. Chairman: Member for Chaguanas East.

Mr. Karim: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Item 08, hon. Minister, Vacant Posts, for $10 million. It is indicated there, without incumbents. Could we say how many of these such posts are vacant and the ranks, if possible? If you do not have it now, you can supply it in writing. And how long have these been vacant?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: I would provide that to you in writing.

Mr. Karim: Okay, thank you.

Mr. Chairman: Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, page 332, Item 001, Police Service (Trinidad), pages 332 and 333; Item 002. Okay. Member for Chaguanas West.

Mr. Singh: Under Goods and Services, first Item of Training, line Item 17, there is a line Item 17, $2.5 million for training. This is the same as last year. Does this training take into consideration the training at the Cambridge University for police officers?

Mr. Singh: Could the hon. Minister indicate how many officers have been trained at the Cambridge University in this higher education arena?

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Chairman, could I just get clarification here? Can that question be asked; if in this year there is no training at Cambridge? Can the Member ask about what happened in previous years? Is that a correct question?

Mr. Chairman: Yes, I am guided. Yes.

Mr. Imbert: Are you sure?

Mr. Chairman: Yes.

Mr. Imbert: How far back?


Mr. Chairman: What year are you enquiring for, Member?

Mr. Singh: For the period 2015 to 2017.

Mr. Imbert: No, you cannot go that—Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have to complain, you know. He cannot do that, 2015 does not even appear in this book.

Mr. Singh: Well, then for the period 2016.

Mr. Chairman: So 2016/2017, Member.

Mr. Singh: Yes.

Mr. Chairman: Mr. Minister, you could provide the information now?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: No, no, I would provide that at a later stage.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, so 2016/2017.

Mr. Singh: Similarly, Mr. Chairman, line Item 19. In the face of significant cutbacks, I see that official entertainment has increased by $200,000. Could the Minister provide a justification for that increase in official entertainment?
Mr. Imbert: Let me clarify that, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: Minister of Finance.

Mr. Imbert: The Member is very cleverly not reading that the original estimate in 2017 was $500,000, exactly the same as the original estimate in 2018. So, on the face of it, there is no increase. It simply means that the police, I would have to say, very prudently, did not spend all of the allocation provided for entertainment on entertainment in the last fiscal year.

Mr. Singh: I merely want to indicate, Mr. Chairman, that under line Item 19, that under the column “Increase”, there is an increase of $200,000.

Mr. Imbert: On the actual but not on the original.

Mr. Singh: All right.

Mr. Imbert: “Leh we keep an eye on dem. Doh worry.”

Mr. Chairman: Member for Naparima.

Mr. Charles: Thanks. Item 16: Contract Employment, to whom this refers?

Mr. Chairman: Mr. Minister, contract employment.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: These would be civilian staff employed by the Commissioner of Police, to a large extent.

Mr. Charles: You are talking about stenographers, clerks or technical staff?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Business operating assistants. All the data entry clerks, heads of various divisions. In the police administration arm, most of them are civilians.

Mr. Chairman: Member for Chaguanas East.

Mr. Karim: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Line Item 13, hon. Minister.


Mr. Karim: Maintenance of vehicles, allocation of $35 million, an increase of $2
 Appropriation (Financial Year 2018) Bill, 2017
Standing Finance Committee (cont’d)
Head 64 Trinidad and Tobago Police Service

million. Would you be able to give us a sense, and to the viewing public as well, as to the status of these vehicles, because oftentimes their roadworthiness and the amount that are available to respond. Oftentimes, when you see some of these vehicles they appear not to be in proper functioning order, even in terms of the lights, the security lights on the vehicles. So, the question is: If you can give us a sense as to the functioning, the road worthiness of these vehicles?

In addition to that, are these vehicles maintained in-house at a government agency, or are they privately secured or properly maintained by other outfits?

Mr. Chairman: Mr. Minister.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: There is a total of 1,526 operational vehicles, 320 non-operational and a total of 1,613 vehicles.

Mr. Karim: As a follow-up. In terms of where are they maintained? Are they maintained within the service or are they contracted out for maintenance?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: It depends on the age of the vehicle. Of course, the new vehicles would go back to the dealers for the maintenance. And depending on the—again depending on the—vehicle itself, it will be sent to various contactors, some contracted out, including VMCOTT. VMCOTT also handles some of the repairs of the police vehicles.

Mr. Karim: And would the majority go to VMCOTT?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: I cannot say whether the majority goes there but it is across the board. It all depends on the vehicle and the services that are needed.

Mr. Karim: Okay. Well then as a follow-up question, would it be possible for you to indicate to us and therefore to the national community, to whom are these vehicles sent? In other words, what are the agencies that maintain these vehicles on behalf of the police service?
Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: We can provide that for you.

Mr. Karim: Sure.

Mr. Chairman: Okay. Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Thank you, Chair. The Contract Employment of approximately $50 million.


Dr. Gopeesingh: Line Item 16. Would you be kind enough to give us a breakdown, if not today, in writing, of the different positions within the police service that there are contract employees?

Mr. Chairman: Member, that question was asked a while ago.


Dr. Gopeesingh: Yes, it was just asked a while ago.

Mr. Chairman: And it would be provided.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Okay.

Mr. Chairman: That would be provided by the Minister.

Dr. Gopeesingh: I did not get that but all right. Thank you.

Mr. Chairman: Do you have another question?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Yes. Also the Short-Term Employment. When you say short-term—

Mr. Chairman: Call the line Item, please, to make it easier.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Line Item 22.

Mr. Chairman: Go ahead.

Dr. Gopeesingh: When you say Short-Term Employment, would the Minister be kind enough to give us an understanding of what he means by that?

Mr. Chairman: Mr. Minister.
Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:  Sure.  Short-Term Employment is basically as it says, short-term such as leave relief, and so on for three months, and so on; three months employment, very short-term, as it says.

Dr. Gopeesingh:  To fill gaps.


Dr. Gopeesingh:  All right, okay.  And last question here on the Fees.  Could you explain what that means $7 million in Fees, to whom and for what?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:  Fees are: upgrade in IT and the licences and so on, software licensing and so on.  The upgrade of IT.  Those are basically where the fees are expended.

Dr. Gopeesingh:  Okay, all right, thanks.

Mr. Chairman:  Member for Chaguanas West.

Mr. Singh:  Thank you, Mr. Chairman.  Under Item: Maintenance of Vehicles, line Item 13, I am told that the—


Mr. Singh:  Line Item 13, Maintenance of Vehicles.  The new vehicles and their maintenance at the various dealerships.


Mr. Singh:  New ones, relatively new because you have a maintenance profile.  I am told that the police department has a history of bad pay with the new car dealers, well the car dealerships that provide these vehicles.  I want to know what measures would be put in place so as to ensure the proper payment for the maintenance of these vehicles?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:  I do not know if that is true, where they bad pay.  I have no information that that is true so I cannot respond to your question.
Mr. Singh: Okay, well—

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: I cannot remedy something that I am not sure is right.

Mr. Singh: Well, I think you should enquire as to the payment scheduling for these vehicles, for their maintenance and then you can arrive at a position. But I am telling you from my information that there is bad pay from the major car dealers, Neal & Massy, Lifestyle Motors by the police service.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: You related to all of them?

Mr. Chairman: Okay, we will move on.

12.45 p.m.

Mr. Chairman: I recognize the Member for Tabaquite. You still have a question?

Dr. Rambachan: Thank you. I want to go to Item 21, Repairs and Maintenance of Buildings. And to begin by asking what is the process by which a building gets repaired? And if I may draw an example, recently I went to the Oropouche Police Station in South and the policemen were complaining that the air-condition system was not operational for quite a while—a couple of weeks well. And it was looking very bad, the ceiling and so on was opened up, and I asked, have you requested that it be repaired. And they said yes and nothing was done for quite a couple of weeks.

What is the process by which, you know, a police station gets repaired and how quickly does that happen? Because this was a couple of weeks that the policemen said that the system was down, and incidentally, it was not the only air-condition system down in a police station. A similar system in another police station, the same air-condition type broke down again.

Mr. Chairman: Mr. Minister.
Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: There are over 115 buildings under the police charge, so therefore, their maintenance of course is done based on priority and based on—so if you could single out Oropouche, it may not be in terms of the list for priority, but all stations are being targeted for repairs.

Dr. Rambachan: Well, it might be a list of priorities when you do not have sufficient windows to open in that police station and they have to sit in the hot—in the heat—

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Well, it was you all who constructed it, you know.

Dr. Rambachan: Sorry?


Mr. Imbert: Mr. Chairman, what Line Item is this?

Dr. Rambachan: Line Item 21. [Crosstalk]

Mr. Imbert: Can you assist me? What Line Item is this?

Mr. Chairman: Line Item 18 and we are on page 339.

Mr. Imbert: Thank you very much.

Mr. Chairman: I will now recognize Member for Oropouche East.

Dr. Moonilal: Mr. Chairman, I want to be on Line Item 21 on 333 to follow up on my colleague's question really. Now, the actual 2016 was 12.6 million of which you had a revised estimate in '17 of 10 million. This has taken a decrease—a cut by $4 million. I am asking the Minister two questions on this matter.

First, what is the likely implication of cutting on such a critical area as repairs and maintenance of buildings? And secondly, what is the maintenance and repair regime that exists at this time to ensure that buildings, particularly those nine police stations built by the Partnership Government and the three started are now completed. Particularly where you have new facilities that it is, I could continue,
particularly where you have buildings built over the last four or five years. The nine police stations plus three and to maintain a regime of maintenance of these facilities so that they do not go as traditionally throughout the public sector go into disrepair and become you know so terribly in a state of disrepair that you have to take all type of steps, emergency steps, to repair buildings and so on? So I am asking two things, your maintenance regime to ensure that those high quality products produced just a few years ago are maintained. And what is the likely implication of this cut in $4 million?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** You would realize of course that the part of your question with respect to the 4 million decrease, but the actual estimate in 2017 was 6 million so there might have been some virement transfers to the revised estimate of 10 so there is no difference in terms of the allocated 2017 and 2018, the 6 billion stands—if there is need for virement later on the Commissioner could make that sort of request.

All right, in terms of the—who handles the repairs and so on. Is the use of service contracts for generators, lifts and sewer repairs and so on, and the AC of course in the police station?

**Dr. Moonilal:** But Mr. Minister, you will agree that we need a very strong maintenance regime given the new assets in terms of buildings and so on supplied to the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service over the last seven years or so.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** We need maintenance for every structure that we put up and every facility that we have, including the police service.

**Mr. Karim:** Thank you Mr. Chairman. Hon. Minister, I am just following up on the question from my colleague Member for Chaguanas West. Is it possible that in terms of Line Item 13, you might be able to supply us in writing with all those
persons or companies to whom you are indebted for the provision of maintenance of these vehicles?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** I will provide the list of the vehicles and some of the providers. I cannot tell you if they are indebted.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Line Item 58, Hon. Minister, Medical Expenses, is it for insurance for the members of the police service or is that for incidental or when issues arise for medical personnel that is the amount could you give an explanation of the—

**Mr. Chairman:** Member you are tying in both 58 and 61?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Yes, well—

**Mr. Chairman:** You are speaking about insurance but you are in line Item 58?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** Item 58 is the medial expenses for officers. It is for officers of the police service.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Yeah, but are your—is the police service insured medically by a group health plan or is it for individual payments?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** No. That is for individuals who access medical services and part of the terms and conditions the police pay for their medical.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Minister, I am not hearing you clearly.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** I said part of their terms and conditions they pay for their medicals. The police service pays for their medicals so this is for the officers in the police service.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Now, you are not making that clear.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** How clearer do you want it?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** If you have an "X" amount of police officers, and you have on a daily basis one or two or monthly basis three or four with problems how is that
managed from a medical perspective and for expenses. You just pay the bill, or the officers pay the bill, or is there an insurance plan—a medical insurance plan for the officers?

Mr. Imbert: I believe the Minister said payments are made—

Dr. Gopeesingh: You believe—I am asking the Minister—

Mr. Imbert: That is what he said—

Dr. Gopeesingh: I am not asking you to believe, I am asking a direct question to the Minister.

Mr. Imbert: Asked and answered. [Crosstalk]

Mr. Chairman: Member for Caroni East.

Mr. Imbert: I am being polite to you.

Mr. Chairman: Member for Caroni East and the Minister of Finance again let us do it in a cordial fashion. So your question has been answered and you have a clarification could we hear it.

Dr. Gopeesingh: No. I have not received the clarification, Speaker or Chair.

Mr. Chairman: But an answer was given—

Dr. Gopeesingh: I did not hear the answer.

Mr. Chairman: You did not hear the answer—[Crosstalk] hold on, Mr. Minister, he said he did not hear the answer could you just kindly provide the answer for him.

Mr. Imbert: For the third time.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Their terms and conditions of the members of the police service entitle them for a medical, there are times when they have reimbursement, there are times when the medical is paid in advance for them it all depends on the situation, but they are entitled to medical and this is what this Vote allows for the
expenses incurred for medical.

Dr. Gopeesingh: That is an ambiguous answer. Is there—

Mr. Chairman: Member, Member, Member for Caroni East, one second, an answer was provided, okay whether it is that you are pleased with it or not an answer was provided, if you have a subsequent question as a result, you are free you have the time to do it. So could we get—?

Dr. Gopeesingh: I have a subsequent question—

Mr. Chairman: Fine. Proceed.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Do you have a medical insurance plan established with an insurance company for officers of the police service.


Mr. Chairman: Yes or no?

Mr. Imbert: He said no three times.

Mr. Chairman: Member for Chaguanas East, Minister of Finance.

Mr. Karim: Thank you very much Mr. Chairman. Hon. Minister, Line Item 23. [Crosstalk]

Mr. Chairman: Member for Chaguanas East is on floor.

Mr. Karim: Yes, Hon. Minister, line Item 23, could you indicate what these fees are and what would have caused—


Mr. Karim: The decrease as well? Did you respond to why the decrease? I am not sure what I heard you say what is responsible for the 3 million decrease.

Mr. Chairman: That is a separate question you want to know why the decrease.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: There has been a reduction across the entire National

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Security that is just one of them.

Mr. Chairman: Item 002, Police Service Tobago, page 334. Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, page 334. I recognize the Member for Chaguanas West.

Mr. Singh: Dealing with Sub-Head 002, Tobago Food at Institutions, you have there an increase of $110,000 is that increase as a result of the increase of food prices in Tobago?


Mr. Chairman: Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases page 334. Item 001, Police Service Trinidad, page 334; Item 002, Police Service Tobago, page 335; Sub-Head 04, Current Transfer and Subsidies, page 335. Item 001, Regional Bodies, page 335.

12.55 p.m.

Mr. Singh: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Item 01, under 004, International Bodies, Interpol. What is our staff complement for Interpol in Trinidad. How many persons?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: There are 12 officers assigned to Interpol.

Mr. Chairman: Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: So, is 004, 01—following on my colleague’s question, the $153,000, is it for a fee attached to being a member of the Interpol?


Dr. Gopeesingh: Right, okay. Thank you.

Mr. Chairman: Item 005, Non-profit Institutions, page 335. Member for Tabaquite.

Dr. Rambachan: Thank you. I am very happy to see that under Item 01, the amount of money for Police Youth Clubs has increased to $6 million, although,
you know, the $4 million that was estimated only $2.4 million was received or spent, but I want to just tell the Commissioner of Police, through the Minister, that there are some Police Youth Clubs with buildings that do not have proper toilets, for example, at Whiteland where there are 97 children in a Police Youth Club, one that I had set up and they need one toilet that will cost $4,000 or $5,000.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: You could expand on that?

Dr. Rambachan: Sorry?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: You could expand?

Dr. Rambachan: I took a Minister, the Minister of Works and Transport there eight weeks ago and they promised to do something and nothing was done. There is a building sitting in Tabaquite—you had asked for a building—Minister and Commissioner—the building is there, grass is growing on it and it could be used as the Police Youth Club in Tabaquite.


Mr. Chairman: Member for Naparima, are you okay? Item 007, Households, page 335. I recognise the Member for Naparima.

Mr. Charles: Item 02, Compensation—I take it—to the Estates of Members of the Protective Services. Is this in relation to the $1 million that is paid for officers who die in the line of duty?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Yes, it is.

Mr. Charles: So it means that only three could be paid.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: No, it does not mean that.

Mr. Charles: $3 million.


Mr. Chairman: Okay. The Minister of Finance will clarify.
Mr. Imbert: During this fiscal year, the Commissioner of Police made a request to the Minister of Finance for a transfer from other Votes to compensate the families of police officers who had died in the line of duty and the request was accommodated. So I am certain that in 2018, whatever is required will be accommodated by way of a transfer, if necessary.

Mr. Charles: Agreed and that is excellent. Could the Minister tell us how many officers—families of officers who are eligible to access this loan remain outstanding at this moment?


Mr. Chairman: Item 009, Other Transfers, page 335.

Hon. Member: Page 336.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, my apologies. Member for Tabaquite, proceed.

Dr. Rambachan: I just want to ask the Minister whether given that we have the million dollars and so for police officers who died in the line of duty—and I commend that, that is something I recommended highly at one point in time—I want to know whether the Minister is considering or has considered a wider insurance scheme to cover police officers in general, in terms of in their line of duty for injuries as well as death, an insurance scheme that covers them?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: There are other areas that handle compensation for officers who get injured in the line of duty. There are a number of different areas where that is covered under in the police regulations.

Mr. Chairman: Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Chair. Hon. Minister, I heard complaints outside and I just want to know if whatever is in place, is it adequate or is it something that the Ministry can improve upon?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: The compensation for officers who are injured in the line of duty.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Which one of the compensations? There are various compensations. Is it the million-dollar compensation? You are talking about injuries and so on?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Yes.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: I have had no complaints about that.

Mr. Chairman: Member for Naparima.

Mr. Charles: Minister, I am aware that the Police Credit Union has a—.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Which line Item?

Mr. Charles: I am referring to 02.

Mr. Chairman: Members, we are on page 336.

Mr. Charles: Oh, it is not here.

Mr. Chairman: Right. So, Member for Caroni East, we are on page 336, Households.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Yes. Following up on the question from my colleague, would the Minister or his Commissioner of Police contemplate having an insurance plan that will deal holistically with any member who becomes injured and to assist in that rather than paying out individually?

Mr. Chairman: Member, Member, we dealt with insurance and medical expenses. We are now on page 336, with regard to the specific line Item.

Dr. Gopeesingh: I am dealing, Chair, on 007, 02, Compensation to the Estates of Members of the Protective Services. I am asking the Minister if he will ever contemplate have a policy or a plan, an insurance plan, to deal holistically with
compensation for officers on the line of duty rather than just this one million, one million.

**Mr. Imbert:** Mr. Chairman, the operative word in this line Item is the word “Estates”, this means the person is deceased so injuries do not come into play when you are deceased.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Okay.

**Mr. Imbert:** Okay.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Sure. But that is in the line of duty. So is there a holistic plan to compensate? [Desk thumping]

**Mr. Imbert:** That is not in this line Item. That is not in this line Item. [Crosstalk] This is not in this line Item.

**Mr. Chairman:** Members. Item 009, Other transfers, page 336. [Crosstalk]

**Mr. Imbert:** Could we move on, please?

**Mr. Chairman:** You are not satisfied with the answer you received?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** That is all right. I do not expect anything else from the Member.

**Mr. Chairman:** No, no, Member. As the Chairman, I am asking you the question. We will move on. We will move on.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** I will move from there.

**Mr. Chairman:** Item 009, Transfers, page 336. Member for Caroni East, proceed.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Could the hon. Minister and possibly the Commissioner, whoever, indicate to us what is the nature of this academy, what is involved? Are there personnel involved? What is the nature and the function of the academy, in brief? Not the Minister of Finance, eh.
Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: As it says there, the Trinidad and Tobago Police Academy. It is a training academy, so it is used for the developmental training and promotional training for members of the police service.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Is that the academy that looks to train recruits and move them on to become full police officers?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: It is all part of that training cycle. It moves from recruit all the way up.

Dr. Gopeesingh: And could you indicate how many personnel you have within that department of the police academy?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: I will have to provide you with that at a later stage.

Dr. T. Gopeesingh: And could you give us the rankings of the personnel involved in the training?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: There will be various levels of training. What do you want? All the levels of training?

Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Yes, well the number of officers with the various levels of training in that academy.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: I want to be clear as to what you are asking, so that I can provide you with the necessary answers.

Dr. Gopeesingh: You may have different personnel from a higher level to a lower level. Would you be able to give us the various areas and how many personnel involved? And while I am on that, could I ask you now, the police academy at the moment, how many recruits do they train on a yearly basis as far as you are aware?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: It changes because the batches—you do not get the same size of batch every time you recruit, so it is different.

Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Let us say for 2017. How much—
Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: What do you want? For 2017, how many batches of recruits were trained and how many people passed through the academy? That is what you want to find out?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Yes, I would get an understanding.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: That will be provided to you.

Mr. Chairman: Will be provided, Member.

Mr. Lee: Thank you, Chair. To the Minister: where is the location of the Trinidad and Tobago Police Academy?


Mr. Lee: The allocation increase of $2 million, in this academy, do they have a shooting range?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: In the Academy? No, no, they do not have a shooting range in the Academy.

Mr. Lee: And the $2 million, what would it be used for?


Mr. Lee: An allocation increase of $2 million?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: That is to deal with training, the training programme in the police service for 2018.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, we will now move on to the Draft Estimates of the Development Programme, Sub-Head 09, Development Programme; Consolidated Fund, page 142 of the Development Programme booklet. I recognize the Member for Naparima.

Mr. Charles: Item 001, Improvement Works to Police Stations on page 142. I am seeing an estimate of $1.5 million. Given the challenges we face with Government buildings and the maintenance and rapid deterioration, is this adequate?
Mr. Chairman: Mr. Minister?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: When you say is it adequate, I am not so sure how to answer that question, but what is provided—

Mr. Charles: Meaning, will this keep the police stations in a functional position? Because normally they say it is 10 per cent of the asset to be used annually for upkeep and maintenance.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: The allocation is consistent. If you look at the 2017 allocation, same, it is $1.5 million. The same as 2018.

Mr. Karim: Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Chairman. Hon. Minister, line Item 022, Upgrade of the Police Hospital, an allocation of $500,000. Could you give us some details of this allocation, please? Where is that facility going to be?


Mr. Karim: And what is expected of it?


Mr. Karim: This is a new initiative?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: No, it is a question of upgrading the hospital right now.

Mr. Karim: So, the hospital exists?


Mr. Karim: So it is just an allocation to upgrade it?

Mr. Chairman: No, Member for Oropouche East, hold on. Member for Chaguanas East.

Mr. Karim: Line Item 038, Establishment of new Facilities for Traffic and Highway Patrol Branch. Could you tell us where these new facilities are going to be relocated?
Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: We are, in fact, exploring different areas right now to locate that facility.

Mr. Karim: Is the current facility still located at the Freeport Police Station?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: At the?

Mr. Karim: The current facility, the highway patrol, is it located at one of the locations at the Freeport Police Station?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: It is, in fact, located in many locations including Freeport right now. So we are looking at a facility now to establish a new facility.

Mr. Karim: I have more, but afterwards.

Mr. Chairman: I recognize the Member for Oropouche East.

Dr. Moonilal: Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Chairman. Just about two or three questions in the same area. Upgrade of Police Administration Building, line Item 012, page 142. I am looking at the column 2018 estimates—you are with me?—$1,500,000. Now, Upgrade of Police Administration Building, could we either now or at some other time soon get an assessment of what is this money for in 2018? What type of upgrade you estimate will cost, more or less, $1.5 million and which Police Administration Buildings that you are going—is there a scope of work already in place? To me, it looks like a very small sum for upgrading administration buildings.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: There is one Police Administration Building at the corner of Sackville Street and Edward Street.

Dr. Moonilal: So this is a typographical error, “Buildings”?


Dr. Moonilal: Okay, sure. So is the Police Administration Building—

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: At the corner of Sackville Street—
Dr. Moonilal: And what do you plan to do with the $1.5 million in the coming fiscal?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: We plan to do works on the third floor and the fourth floor of that building.

Dr. Moonilal: Okay. The next matter is—


Dr. Moonilal: So it is one building you are talking about.


Dr. Moonilal: Well, fine. I saw “buildings” there I wanted to just clarify.


Dr. Moonilal: Administration buildings?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Sorry, it is building.

Dr. Moonilal: Yes, so you just take note of that. 022, Upgrade of the Police Hospital, if we could get something in writing and not an extempo response, but something in writing—

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: You did not get an extempo response, you got a definite response that the building—.

Dr. Moonilal: If we can get a more comprehensive definite response.

Mr. Imbert: What is the question?

Dr. Moonilal: But, Mr. Chairman, I am engaging the hon. Minister of National Security.

Mr. Chairman: Members. Listen, Members, one second, please. According to the procedure, each member has five minutes in order to make a comment and then get into the question. As the Chairman, I will decide as we go forward. Right? So, Member, kindly proceed and come to your question. .

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Dr. Moonilal: Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Chairman. I forgot we have all of five minutes. I will take my time.

Mr. Chairman: Member, proceed.

Dr. Moonilal: The question is, on this matter of upgrade of the Police Hospital, if the Minister can tell us either now or in writing, a note to us, as to where the hospital is? How long has the hospital been in existence? What is currently done there? What will be done with this $500,000 estimate for the Police Hospital? Because what I am seeing is over 2016/17 both the estimate and revised estimates for 2017, there is no expenditure there, but for 2018, there is an estimate. There is no explanation in the appropriate column, so it suggests to me that there is something that was not happening or not being done. So, you can tell us what is exactly there. I could not help but notice the Member for St. Joseph concern as well on the Police Hospital when we heard it, an assessment of that.

Mr. Chairman: Member, let us get the question now, please.

Dr. Moonilal: So the question is please tell us either now or in writing, the work of this Police Hospital and what you intend to do with the $500,000 being provided? Could I go to my next question?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: The Police Hospital has been there, in fact, from since colonial times. It has always been a hospital. When you say a hospital, it is not like the Port of Spain General Hospital, a medical facility that treats with officers and, therefore, that treats with officers, retirees, recruits and other authorized service personnel. It is a facility that is most relied upon by serving recruits and people within the barracks and other police officers. The Police Hospital is located at the St. James Barracks Compound and it has always been there from time immemorial. It has always been there.

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Dr. Moonilal: Could you indicate why there was no allocation for it at all over the last two years?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Not may be, over the last five or so years, it might not been, but there is a need right now to do an upgrade.

Dr. Moonilal: The five years are not before us.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: There is need to do an upgrade now, hence the reason why money is allocated now to treat with the issue. [Desk thumping]

Mr. Chairman: Next question, Member for Oropouche East.

Dr. Moonilal: My next five minutes revolve around 038. One of the facilities here, Minister, you might be aware, is the Debe facility in the constituency of Oropouche East that is in need of some measure of repair and refurbishment.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: 038 you said?

Dr. Moonilal: 038. I notice here that you have your line Item, which is a line Item, Establishment of New Facilities for Traffic and Highway Patrol Branch.


Dr. Moonilal: Now, if this is a line Item is it every year you are looking for new facilities? The point I am making is that there an intention to remove the Traffic Branch from the Debe area so that we can go to something much better than that because the refurbishment that is required, I put it to you, for that one centre, is in excess of what is budgeted.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: There is a plan, as I mentioned a while ago, to establish a new facility for the Highway Patrol. Right now, it is scattered across various police stations.

Dr. Moonilal: Would the Minister be prepared to share that plan with us?

Dr. Moonilal: Okay. Thank you.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Chair. I have several questions, Minister. The first one—

Mr. Chairman: Line Item.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: The first one is line Item 001, Improvement Works to Police Stations, I just want to know if any works have been identified for Manzanilla. You do not have to give it to me now. You know, just to ask that question.

Mr. Chairman: Next one, please.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: The second one, line Item 22, sorry 25, Upgrade of the Police Training Academy, I notice there is no allocation. I was wondering if the current facility is adequate in light of the fact there are new crimes coming up—you have cybercrime and so forth—and if the current facility is adequate hence the reason there is no allocation.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: There are separate units dealing with cyber security and so on. They are housed differently. And your first question, under consideration.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Under consideration?


Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Line Item 048, Establishment of the Juvenile Booking Stations, that is on page 143. Will these booking stations be located within the current police stations or will they be entirely new entities, new and separate infrastructure?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: They are already established in several police stations throughout Trinidad and Tobago pursuant to legislation.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: All right. And will they be operationalized according to
guidelines mandated by the Children’s Authority?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** They are already operationalized.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Okay.

**Mr. Chairman:** I recognize the Member for Princes Town.

**Mr. Padarath:** Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair. Hon. Minister, line Item 051, Supplemental Works—Phase I Police Stations.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** 051 you said?

**Mr. Chairman:** 051, page 143.

**Mr. Padarath:** They are identified as new projects, the Supplemental Works—Phase I Police Stations. Could you indicate whether or not or which stations have been identified that will fall within this remit?

**Mr. Chairman:** Could that list be provided now, Sir, Mr. Minister?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** This will include, phase I, the new Piarco Police Station.

**Mr. Chairman:** The new Piarco Police Station.

**Mr. Padarath:** That is the only one that has been identified?

**Mr. Chairman:** That is right. That is what he said.

**Mr. Padarath:** Sure. And then, if you look at line Item 55, Establishment of Facilities for Divisional Command Centres, an estimate of $1 million. Could you give us some background with respect to these Divisional Command Centres?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** The intention is to have command centres in all the Divisions. There are nine divisions in Trinidad and one in Tobago and, therefore, in order to give the divisional commanders the tools and the equipment to command and control the various divisions, there is an intention to place command centres within each division. And, of course, they will all be interconnected to the overarching command centres at Police Headquarters.
Mr. Padarath: So the reporting in terms of the synergy among them is to the Police Headquarters?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: It is just giving the divisional commanders some use in technology to give them command centres where they could see and hear and get a sense of what is happening in the various divisions. So they have these command centres in their divisions which really is what you call management by getting the kind of information required throughout the various divisions. So we are giving them the tools and equipment to do so, because remember we have already charged the divisional commanders with a certain amount of responsibility, now we are giving them some additional equipment to be in control of their divisions and, again, those are geographical divisions. Right?

Mr. Charles: Purchase of Vehicles for Police Service, $1.5 million allocated, which really boils down to about six vehicles. Are we to understand that those are replacement vehicles, additional vehicles?


Mr. Charles: So, therefore, it is not replacement, new.


Mr. Charles: Okay. Item 041, Establishment of Police Youth Clubs.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: This is beyond what is in the recurrent expenditure, so there are new vehicles for 2018.

Mr. Charles: Okay.

Mr. Chairman: 041, now.

Mr. Charles: 041, Establishment of Police Youth Clubs and that is an excellent initiative in the police service, but I see $500,000, half a million dollars, and I am just asking: are these for buildings? Are these for setting—what facilities mean in
In this context and, therefore, how will the $500,000, half a million, be allocated?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** It is in fact, if you recall, the Member for Tabaquite mentioned there are buildings that require repairs, there are some buildings that require repairs, but there are also administrative things to do with the Police Youth Clubs. So there is a combination of things, including repairs to certain buildings that they are occupying and so on.

**Mr. Karim:** Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair. Hon. Minister, with respect to 051, line Item, I recognize what you had answered just now, but can I ask for you to give us any update with respect to the commitment to construct the Enterprise Police Station?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** I cannot answer that under this line Item.

**Mr. Karim:** So is there any—so it is not at this time on any of your list? Let me ask the question properly for the records. Is the Enterprise Police Station down for any expenditure item in this new fiscal year?

**Mr. Imbert:** Mr. Chairman, what line Item is that? Where are you?

**Mr. Chairman:** Member, you identified, line Item 051.

**Mr. Karim:** I saw new projects.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** You saw new phase police station.

**Mr. Imbert:** You were told this is Piarco.

**Mr. Karim:** I know, he said that.

**Mr. Chairman:** Minister? Minister? Right. On that line Item.

**Mr. Karim:** So there is no commitment at all with respect to the Enterprise Police Station?

**Mr. Imbert:** Mr. Chairman—

**Mr. Chairman:** On that line Item. Minister?
Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Mr. Chairman that Enterprise Police Station does not come under new phase I police stations.

Mr. Imbert: He answered him twice.

Mr. Karim: Can I therefore ask with respect to line Item 047—

Mr. Chairman: 07?

Mr. Karim: 047, Purchase of Equipment, if you can tell us, what is involved in this expenditure of $4.5 million?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: It includes public order equipment such as canister grenades, projectiles, water cannon and so on. There are a number of different equipment what you call public order equipment. I can go down the whole list for you, but I do not think—public order equipment, you understand what that means.

Mr. Karim: I do not want you to go into the whole list. I am just asking to give us some—I sense globally as to what is involved.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: It also includes mobile tracking units and so on.

Mr. Karim: Mobile meaning as mobile phone also.


Mr. Karim: Okay. I understand what you said.

Mr. Chairman: Member for Couva South, I now recognize you.

Mr. Indarsingh: Thank you, Chairman. My colleague dealt with 055, but I just want to get a little insight into 029, Refurbishment of Riverside Plaza. In 2016 there was an actual of $4,998,157—

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: What page is that?

Mr. Chairman: We are on page 142, 029, Refurbishment of Riverside Plaza. We are on the same item.

Mr. Indarsingh:—in 2017, $5 million and then 2018, $3,600,000. Could the
Minister give us an idea of what is happening at Riverside Plaza and when the refurbishment will come to an end?

**Mr. Chairman:** Minister?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** Riverside Plaza is being upgraded to deal with different kinds of entities the police service has at Riverside Plaza. So the upgrade is there. We have to provide the kind of environment for them to do their job effectively and efficiently. So it is an ongoing process. I cannot tell you when it will be completed. We are creating the environment so that they can do their job effectively and efficiently since they occupy Riverside Plaza.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Thanks, Deputy Chair. I have a couple questions. The first one, line Item 046, Purchase of Vehicles, I just want to know if Cumuto Police Station will be getting a new vehicle, Sir?

**Mr. Chairman:** Member, that question was asked and he identified it for the purchase of vehicles and did not go on to specify where the vehicles will be allocated.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** And that is why I am asking if he can specify?

**Mr. Chairman:** Mr. Minister, will you be able to say where the vehicles will be allocated?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** No.

**Mr. Chairman:** Next question, please.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Line Item 050, I notice there is an expansion of facilities for homicide in Cumuto and I would like to find out from the Minister—I am happy to hear it and I just want to know how will the expansion of these facilities impact on the increase in crime? And, finally, I asked this question but I did not get an answer, and that is line Item 048. I am asking again, is the Juvenile Booking
Appropriation (Financial Year 2018) Bill, 2017
Standing Finance Committee (cont’d)
Head 64 Trinidad and Tobago Police Service

Stations working within the guidelines mandated by the Children’s Authority?

1.25 p.m.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Yes, they are. They are created by us by law so they must work within the guidelines created by the Children’s Authority.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: They are not, but thank you. Thank you.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: And the Homicide, East—Cumuto is developing the facilities there.

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Chairman, just on 046, I did not raise this matter before not knowing that there would be multiple returns to this Head, but the Member should know that this $1.5 million is not the only sum allocated for the purchase of vehicles for the police. In recurrent, there is a sum of $14 million which has to be added to this, okay.

Mr. Chairman: Thank for the clarification. Member for Caroni Central.

Dr. Tewarie: Yes, Chair, two questions, one on 051 and another on 055. On 051, which has to do with supplemental works at the police station the Minister identified as Piarco, I just wanted to—that is a new police station, it was perhaps opened, I “doh” know, maybe two years ago, and I just wanted to know what was the nature of this supplemental works.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: The supply and installation of flag poles, the replacement of locking devices, paving works, and so on, yeah. At all, the paving works, and so on, is at eight new phase one police stations, right. All right, let me break it down for you, supply, installation of flag poles and replacement of locking devices at the eight phase one new stations. The flag poles were not—

Dr. Tewarie: So it is not just one station.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: No, not just one. All right. And the paving works at
Piarco.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Okay. And 055, this is just for my understanding, if you can help me to clarify. There are nine divisions in the country—

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

**Dr. Tewarie:**—and each division has a person in command, a senior police officer, and there are a number of stations, but that commander is at one particular station. When you say, establishment of facilities for divisional command centres—I know you said it is support equipment, and so on, do you mean that at the station where the commander is stationed there would be support elements that would help that commander to be more in command of the stations around him or her?

**Mr. Chairman:** Minister.

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** Now in the command centres, in some instances, it may not be the station that he is located, all right, because in some areas you have a physical command centre’ in some areas it would be where he is located. But what it is, it is giving him that sense of presence, that area, so he has the information, the command and control element, whether information flow, the CCTV, the cameras, so he can understand and see what is happening throughout his division. So we are giving him those tools and equipment so to do. So it is a command centre within the division that gives the divisional commander—

**Dr. Tewarie:** So it is information and deployment capabilities, is that what it is?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** Exactly. He has the information to deploy. He has the information to treat with, and if need be he can also bump it up or across, or sideways, as the case may be, because they are all interlocking.

**Dr. Tewarie:** But it could be in any location but accessible to the commander, is that what you are saying?

Mr. Chairman: Member for Chaguanas West.

Mr. Singh: Mr. Chairman, my question was asked by my colleague.

Mr. Chairman: Great. Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Could we get an appreciation, line Item 001, of how many police stations have been identified for improvement work, and the follow up to that.

Mr. Chairman: Member.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Yes.

Mr. Chairman: Member, that question was asked already and an answer was given.

Dr. Gopeesingh: No. I said how many have been identified for improvement work.

Mr. Chairman: Yes. So I will need to move on. Member for Tabaquite. Members, in the interest of time we need to ensure that we get through the items identified today. Member for Tabaquite.

Dr. Rambachan: Two questions—

Mr. Chairman: Line Item?

Dr. Rambachan: Line Item, together 27, 28, and 31, it has to do with canine facilities. I considered that the use of dogs—[Crosstalk]

Mr. Chairman: Hold on. Member for Couva South, are you saying something?

Mr. Indarsingh: I was just asking—something.

Mr. Chairman: No, Member, and you see this is the same reason why we have duplication of questions and the Ministers having to clarify certain things. So let us listen, please. Member for Tabaquite.

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Dr. Rambachan: Items 27, 28 and 31, I am a firm believer that the use of dogs is very important in the fight against crime, particularly at the airports and sea ports, and so on, with respect to drug interdiction, and what have you. However, I find it very strange that the establishment of canine facilities in Caroni, which is a very important area, nothing in 2017, nothing in 2018. The establishment of canine facilities in Tobago, nothing spent in 2017, although $1 million was allocated, nothing in 2018, and Tobago, as you know, has had several murders, and what have you. An expansion of the training facilities at the canine unit, Cumuto, $517,000 spent in 2017, nothing allocated for 2018. I would like to ask two questions, why is it that there is this look, almost like de-emphasis on the canine facilities? And, secondly, how many dogs do we have now, and do we have a sense of what is the complement of dogs we need in the country?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: I can provide you with the complement of dogs at a later stage.

Dr. Rambachan: But why is it that we are not emphasizing more in terms of resources into what I consider to be a critical area in the fight against crime?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Well, we are. We are in fact at the stage right now where we are purchasing additional dogs, and we do a complement of dogs for various, different kinds of activities. They have been used quite effectively and we continue to use them.

Dr. Rambachan: You said you are about to purchase dogs, right?


Dr. Rambachan: More dogs?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Yeah, that is correct, because we use dogs for drugs, for arms, for ammunition, different, different, different categories of dogs.
Dr. Rambachan: Yes. Would it be wise to ask you how many dogs do you intend to purchase?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: It is ongoing right now, but it is more in the area of 10 to 11 dogs.

Dr. Rambachan: Okay. Second question, I am all for the facilities for the Divisional Command Centres, Item 55, okay, but I want to ask a question. We have given facilities, we have given resources to the police service in very large quantities, to say the least, what kind of performance goals are set for the divisional commanders? And if they are set, do divisional commanders provide a strategic action plan as to how these goals are going to be achieved? And, thirdly, how often does the Commissioner of Police himself analyse the performance or appraise the performance? How regular is that done of the divisional commanders and with what kinds of the outcomes of those performance measures and appraisals?

Mr. Chairman: Mr. Minister.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: The Commissioner of Police has his meeting with the divisional commanders every week, and during those meetings the divisional commanders are asked to respond to state in terms of performance of the various divisions.

Dr. Rambachan: But, Mr. Minister, I go back to my basic question, are performance goals quantified in cases where they can become quantified, because you will have quantifiable and non-quantifiable? Are they quantified for the divisional commanders? And can we—I do not expect you to show me, but the question is, can someone see evidence that there is in writing a strategic action plan to deal with the achievement of these goals?
Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Yes, there is. The police has, in fact, based on their strategic plan, has done an operational plan, which throughout the length and breadth of Trinidad and Tobago, and they are miserable, and they are evaluating criteria that the Police Commissioner use that he can report in any particular year.

Dr. Rambachan: So then I have the third question, the police keep reporting in the statistics that there has been a decline in serious crimes—I have no problem with that. That is the police statistics. My belief is a lot of people not reporting crimes at all again, but I want to ask—

Mr. Chairman: Member for Tabaquite, one sec, now I am giving you a little leeway, right, the line Item really speaks to Facilities. Now, based on the Minister’s answer, I will say I would give you a little leeway. Let this be the last question along that line, because the line Item is on facilities, but, as a result, of the answer given by the Minister you are able to expound on the question you are now asking. So, go ahead.

Dr. Rambachan: Well my question might not be a very palatable question, because it was going to ask, despite all of this, and despite what the Minister and Police Commissioner confirms that it is being done with performance goal, why is the detection rate so abysmally low?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: The detection rate is not low right now. In place and in terms after you do a historical, it is 31 per cent. [Interruption]

Mr. Chairman: Minister of Finance, hold on, hold on, hold on, hold on. Right. Minister of Finance, you need to clarify something that the Minister said?

Mr. Imbert: No, I would like to ask a general question. If we are dealing on this line Item—

Mr. Chairman: Mr. Minister, I am moving on. We are move on now.

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Mr. Imbert: From this line Item?

Mr. Chairman: We are moving on. Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services, page 144. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla. [CrossTalk]

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Deputy. Line Item, Hon. Minister, 001, the Development of a Computer System for the Police Service, will this system be utilized to record each request that would come from citizens, and particularly businessmen for licenses, for firearms, so you would have proper record?


Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: For the development, 001, of a computer system for the police service, will this computerized system allow for persons who make requests for licenses to own a firearm? Will this computerized system allow for such requests so you can have a system whereby it can be recorded, and therefore persons can follow along as to where their application has reached?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: The intention is to computerize almost all the transaction businesses within the police service at the end of the day, so I cannot tell you what stage the firearm reach, but the intention is to computerize all the data collections, and so on.

Mr. Chairman: Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Line Item 003, Transformation of the Police Service, could you just briefly indicate some of the areas that you have been doing and what you would want to continue to do in your transformation process?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: The transformation has to do with increase in terms of community relations, also institutional development, and also with respect to issues pertinent to the police band, issues pertinent to the police youth club. So those are some of the areas in terms of transformation that the Commissioner is targeting
right now in a general sense.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** You have a unit itself for transformation?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** A transformation unit. There is a team, a transformation team that operates based on the objectives.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** And the direction and policy of that transformation team is established by whom, the hierarchy of the police service?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** By the Police Commissioner and his team, they sat together and developed—they have a strategic plan, and following out from that plan you have the transformation taking place.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** All right. Okay.

**Mr. Chairman:** Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Thank you, Deputy Chair. Hon. Minister, same line Item 003, I mean, a significant portion of the police officers are held by very fine officers, does the transformation of the police service include removing the criminal element that tarnishes the entire police service? Will it include that?

**Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:** Well, in fact, we remove criminal elements from any jurisdiction, or any part, whether the police service or otherwise. There would always be an attempt to move criminal elements from any area of operations, whether in the police service, whether in politics, or otherwise.

**Mr. Chairman:** Infrastructure Development Fund, page 242; Item 004, Social Infrastructure, page 242.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Head 64 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.*

**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you, Mr. Minister. Thank you, Commissioner of Police, and other members of your technical hierarchy. Thanks for coming.

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Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, we will now proceed to Head 65, the Ministry of Foreign and Caricom Affairs. Welcome, Mr. Minister, Senator. Welcome to your Permanent Secretary, and also to the other members of your hierarchy, the technocrats at the Ministry of Foreign and Caricom Affairs.

Head 65: Ministry of Foreign and Caricom Affairs, $267,972,000

Mr. Chairman: I will now invite the Minister of Foreign and Caricom Affairs to make a brief opening statement not exceeding five minutes. Over to you, Mr. Minister.

Hon. Moses: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Against the backdrop of a dynamic regional and global environment, and unprecedented natural disasters affecting our Caribbean community, the focus of the Ministry’s mandate over the past year has remained the ongoing management of this country’s relations with other states and with the international entities. The provision of political and consular services, and functioning as the main interlocutor that generally guides and executes Trinidad and Tobago’s foreign policy. These activities of the Ministry of Foreign and Caricom Affairs are operationalized through the activities of the Ministry’s staff at headquarters, its network of 19 missions, and its honorary consulates.

Mr. Chairman, in 2017 the Ministry continues its thrust towards the realigning of its operations to ensure consistency with Government’s policy objectives as highlighted in the official policy framework. In this regard, in the area of trade and export promotion, the Ministry and many of its missions, partnered with the Ministry of Trade and Industry, ExporTT, InvesTT, the Chambers of Commerce and other business groups to strengthen our economic diplomacy, cognizant of the fact that trade continues to be an important drive of
economic growth, poverty reduction and sustainable development. Accordingly, the Ministry has supported trade and energy initiatives with Chile, Guatemala, El Salvador, Venezuela and Ghana, including the facilitation of partial scope trade agreements.

The Ministry’s role as facilitator was also manifested in our support of security initiatives spearheaded by the Ministry of National Security. Further, it is to the credit of the Ministry’s steadfast efforts, both here at headquarters and at or permanent mission to the United Nations in New York, and vigorous lobbying, notwithstanding our limited budget that Trinidad and Tobago realize the successful selection of one of its nationals to the commission on the limits of the continental shelf. Mr. Chairman, the Ministry also facilitated official visits by senior officials to various jurisdictions. These included visits by the hon. Prime Minister, the Speaker and Deputy Speaker of this honourable House, and Ministers of Government.

In view of the many natural disasters that have occurred in this year, the Ministry has worked assiduously with its diasporic networks to maintain contact with nationals in affected territories in order to provide assistance where it is needed. Following the passage of Hurricane Irma, followed by Hurricane Maria, the Ministry partnered with the Ministry of National Security and its branches, such as the coast guard and the air guard, the Office for Disaster Preparedness, Immigration Division, National Helicopter Services and Caribbean Airlines to efficiently and effectively facilitate the provision of assistance for our Caribbean neighbours, as well as to render assistance to our nationals.

Mr. Chairman, these unfortunate incidents have provided an opportunity for citizens to appreciate how critical it is to utilize our registration system for our

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appropriation (financial year 2018) bill, 2017

standing finance committee (cont’d)

head 65 ministry of foreign and caricom affairs

nationals abroad which was fully launched in this year, 2017. the system sets a new standard for our consular services by allowing nationals who are abroad or going abroad to register the details of their stay online. the ministry can then use this information to contact or provide assistance to nationals who may be in a jurisdiction where a crisis may occur. conscious of the country’s current economic challenges, mr. chairman, and the need to be financially prudent, yet focused on its mandate, the ministry and foreign and caricom affairs is in the final stages of its voice over internet protocol project, which would enhance the connectivity between headquarters and the missions. the project has already yielded crucial cost reductions and has also enhanced the efficacy of the ministry’s overall communication and strategy network.

mr. chairman, in closing, i wish to underscore that the ministry remains steadfast in its commitment to the objectives of securing trinidad and tobago’s interest and achieving its goal in the regional and international environment. the ministry of foreign and caricom affairs will seek to continue to strategically direct its work such that the objectives of vision 2030 are realized and can redound to the benefit of the people of our dear republic, trinidad and tobago. i thank you.

[desk thumping]

question proposed: that head 65 stand part of the schedule.

mr. chairman: hon. members, the sum of $267,972 for head 65, ministry of foreign and caricom affairs is comprised of monies proposed for expenditure under the following sub-heads, and items to be found in the draft estimates of recurrent expenditure and the draft estimates of the development programme.

we now proceed to consider the draft estimates of recurrent expenditure, and we go to sub-head 01, personnel expenditure, page 338; item 001, general

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Administration, and I recognize the Member for Tabaquite, page 338.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, a very simple question, under Item 01, Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance, we have said over and over that there have been agreements established for the people who work in the Ministries, and what have you, but in 2017 the salaries and cost of living amounted to $19 million, and in 2018 it is also stated as $19 million, is it that we have not catered for the increases in line with what the agreements with the unions have established?

**Mr. Chairman:** Minister.

**Hon. Moses:** Mr. Chairman—

**Mr. Chairman:** Proceed.

**Hon. Moses:** Many thanks. I am not fully seized of the thrust of the question, but, dare I say, within the current constraints—and within the current constrains and the agreement which was referenced, the figure in our view is appropriate.

**Dr. Rambachan:** But does this mean that you are going to have a same complement of workers, given that you will have an interest in the bulk of the salaries to be paid with the increase according to the agreement? Or is it that you are going to be shedding members of the workforce, or not renewing contracts, or what have you, or what? What is going to happen here? Is your complement of staff going to be decreased to accommodate the very same amount? You see, I have been making the point—

**Mr. Chairman:** Member, I think we got the question, right, complement of staff in terms of decreases. Mr. Minister.

**Hon. Moses:** Mr. Chairman, a while ago I mentioned my uncertainty relative to agreement, there is no outstanding agreement as far as I am aware, so I am unable

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to respond as—

**Dr. Rambachan:** But you do have three-year agreements, and every year there is an increase to be applied, but if you tell me $19 million in 2017, the same $19 million, obviously you are not explaining about whether there is a 4 per cent increase to be included in that, or what have you, that is all I am asking.

**Mr. Chairman:** Well, the Minister said that there is no outstanding agreement.

**Dr. Rambachan:** We know there might be no outstanding agreement, but there are agreements that have been reached for which conditions have to be implemented, and it seems to me that this does not take care of what has to be implemented, unless the Minister of Finance can advise.

**Mr. Chairman:** Any addition to that with your statement, Mr. Minister?

**Hon. Moses:** Mr. Chairman, I think we are operating outside of the thrust of that question.

**Mr. Chairman:** Okay, fine. Member for Naparima.

**Mr. Charles:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Could the Minister tell us, with respect to 01, what is the complement of staff to which this is applicable? And how many vacancies are there at the professional level, and I am speaking here of the IROs and FSOs?

**Mr. Chairman:** Line Item 04, Mr. Minister.

**Hon. Moses:** Mr. Chairman, with your permission, I am pleased to detail that there is a total of 270 persons in the permanent category, 134 of such posts are filled. There are 39 without bodies and 97 with bodies, bringing it to a total of 270 contract positions, 46 filled of a total of 70. The total, permanent and contract, comes to a total of 340, of which 180 are filled. I perhaps should add for further information, not to pre-empt any further questions, that there has been no
meaningful change in the level of contract employees at the Ministry of Foreign and Caricom Affairs, and, indeed, the subsidiary, the missions abroad.

**Mr. Chairman:** Member for Princes Town—you have a subsequent question, Member for Naparima? Okay, so, Member for Naparima.

**Mr. Charles:** I just want to find out, could the Minister give us an idea when these vacant posts, and I take it that we are talking about 30 or more—sorry, 60—160—when these vacant posts will be filled?

**Mr. Chairman:** Mr. Minister.

**Hon. Moses:** Which posts, 160, you said, the number, please, through you, Mr. Chairman.

**Mr. Chairman:** You need to be more specific, Member for Naparima.

**Mr. Charles:** Yes, he said there are 270 permanent posts and 134 filled, right, that is my understanding, and that leaves about 130 unfilled vacancies—136 vacancies, your information—

**Hon. Moses:** Mr. Chairman, the details made available a short while ago were that 39 of these positions are without bodies and 97 are with bodies.

**Mr. Chairman:** So the 39, could you identify them? Is it possible to?

**Hon. Moses:** The 39 that are without bodies operating within the constraints and the need for prioritization and financial management of the limited resources we have, we are involved in recruiting some of these positions, but not to the extent as this number would indicate, meaning the number 39.

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

**Mr. Padarath:** Mr. Deputy Chairman, through you to the hon. Minister. Minister, in light of what you have just said, just a follow-up with respect to line Item 01, can you indicate with respect to our diplomatic missions abroad, how
many of our diplomatic missions are without rank of ambassador, consul generals and/or high commissioners?

**Mr. Chairman:** Mr. Minister.

1.55 p.m.

**Hon. Moses:** Mr. Chairman, I can make this information available in writing. Dare I say that, to a large extent, we are succeeding in placing competent persons with the requisite qualifications and experience in our missions, but I certainly will be delighted to provide the information in writing.

**Mr. Chairman:** Additional question?

**Mr. Padarath:** Yes, Mr. Chairman. Also, Minister, in light of your willingness to provide that information, if you could also indicate at this stage which ones we are currently seeking agrément for?

**Mr. Chairman:** Seeking what?

**Mr. Padarath:** Agrément.

**Hon. Member:** What?

**Mr. Padarath:** It is a diplomatic term, Mr. Chairman—agrément. [Crosstalk]

**Mr. Chairman:** Members.

**Hon. Moses:** Mr. Chairman, through you, that question is posited on my revealing details that should ultimately prove less than convenient, because we are treating with other countries, international organizations and we cannot second guess what the responses—if indeed there are outstanding responses to requests for agrément as the hon. Member would have asked.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Mr. Chairman, does the hon. Minister not realize that you could google and find out where we have ambassadors and where we do not have ambassadors and consulate generals? The Minister is saying, with due respect, that
Hon. Moses: Mr. Chairman, perhaps to alleviate any fears and to demonstrate how earnest and forthright I am, perhaps I can enlighten the hon. Member by informing this House that when requests for agrément are made to foreign countries, it is in the purview of such countries to respond as they see fit. My informing or providing information to which countries such as would have been directed, I think it is not appropriate given that it resides with the country to respond how they see fit. So if I indicate in this House to which countries we would have made such requests, it can be delicate for obvious reasons. [Desk thumping]

Mr. Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Minister.

Dr. Rambachan: Well yes, I am finished with that.

Mr. Chairman: Item 001.

Dr. Rambachan: I thought we moved to 002.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, Item 002, Overseas Missions, same page 338.

Dr. Rambachan: No. 01. Mr. Minister, in the newspapers about two to two and a half months ago, it was reported that the local staff at the High Commission in India, they walked off their jobs and they were unwilling to work and what have you, due to the fact that they had not received salary increases for a number of years. If I recall the newspaper article correct, 10 years. Have we sorted out that problem and are those increases included in this Item here, Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance?

Hon. Moses: Certainly, I dealt with it. Mr. Chairman, I am not aware of members of staff, locally recruited or otherwise, at our High Commission in India walking
off the job, and while I am wary to respond to reports cited in newspapers, I can tell you that we do not have such a problem. Thank you.

**Mr. Chairman:** Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla, and then I will go to the Member for Caroni East.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Hon. Minister, line Item 01, Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance for Overseas Missions. How does the Minister cope with the shortage of foreign exchange and payment to our members of staff who are overseas? And how does this figure that is quoted here, in fact, the amount allocated, provide for fluctuations in the rate of exchange?

**Mr. Chairman:** Minister, are you in a position to—

**Hon. Moses:** I can respond. We are operating in a prudent way. Our financial management of the system is such that we are doing reasonably well, given that we have included any such concerns in our outlay of foreign currency to cover the less than optimal staffing of our establishment across the board.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Minister, there have been some reports of former senior personnel of the various missions overseas who have not received their allowances that were supposed to be paid to them.

**Mr. Chairman:** Remember we have to zero in to line Item also, Member.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Yes, the line Item is 04. Does that line Item include consideration for the payment of these allowances which have been owing to these former heads of missions?

**Hon. Moses:** 04 contemplates payment with regard to foreign service and related allowances payable to heads of mission and home based staff at our missions abroad.

**Mr. Chairman:** And no problems anticipated, according to the Member?
Hon. Moses: So the answer is yes. It is a composite question, I just would have responded fully to one part of the question at least. Sometimes it becomes so convoluted when there is a strong and [Laughter] long narrative that the choice—

Dr. Gopeesingh: Can I shorten it, hon. Minister?

Hon. Moses:—is such that I provide answers as it comes to me. But I can also answer the other part, with your permission.

Mr. Chairman: Sure.

Hon. Moses: I take it that reference—and I am being liberal here, I hope not in a misplaced way—that the allowances referred to or outstanding payments with respect to payment in lieu of earned vacation leave. My recall is that in some of the individuals, substantial overpayments would have been made to them and there are also some, perhaps, irregularities that we are trying to resolve against the backdrop, of course, of prioritization and the stringency attached to our use of resources. Thank you.

Dr. Gopeesingh: So just a final one.

Mr. Chairman: Member for Caroni East, a follow-up question?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Yes. So from your answer I gather that there is active consideration of the issue, yes?

Mr. Chairman: Active consideration of?

Dr. Gopeesingh: The issue of the non-payment to or allowances being owed to former heads of mission.

Hon. Moses: Mr. Chairman, we are cognizant and very attentive to all matters coming under the purview of the Ministry of Foreign and Caricom Affairs. Thank you.

Dr. Gopeesingh: All right. Thank you.
Dr. Rambachan: Chairman, a while ago the hon. Minister stated that he was unaware of any problems in India. I am going to ask, is the hon. Minister aware that there was an article in the Express of August 19th, entitled:

Envoy tackling pay woes at Trinidad and Tobago embassy in India—in which—High Commissioner to India, Dave Persad said that he had officially complained about the lack of response from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs over the salaries of workers at the Trinidad and Tobago Embassy.

And he did so by way of a release stating that he had met on July 14th during his vacation, with Minister Dennis Moses and Acting Permanent Secretary Jennifer Daniel to complain about the lack of response from the Ministry.

Mr. Chairman: And the question is?

Dr. Rambachan: Is he aware now about that meeting that Mr. Dave Persad had with him, over the position that the protests that the local staff staged on 7th, 8th, 10th and 11th of August in India?

Hon. Moses: Mr. Chairman, the representation made a while ago of what I actually said is patently otherwise. I did not say that there are no problems at our High Commission in India. Across the board with our missions, we have issues that come up from time to time relative to labour relations, staff member problems and so on, and we treat with them in a way befitting our concern for our staff members and within the strictures within which we operate.

Dr. Rambachan: Well, just one follow-up. Then, is the Minister in agreement or disagreement with Mr. Dave Persad, the High Commissioner, as he said that he was—

Mr. Chairman: Member, I will not entertain that question.

Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, page 339; Item 001, General
Mr. Charles: Thank you. Item 63, Repatriation of Nationals and the figure, the estimate is only $40,000. Given the fact that we have nationals, families right now in Iraq, and the cost of airfare would be much more than the family and the numbers they have indicated, there are 10 or 12 or so, is the $40,000 in Item 63 adequate to repatriate our nationals or those expected—

Hon. Moses: I am just trying to locate repatriation.

Madam Chairman: Line Item 63, 340, Repatriation.

Hon. Moses: 63, yes I have got it.

Mr. Charles: Is the $40,000 adequate, given the numbers we are hearing about in countries like Iraq and Syria who are awaiting repatriation to Trinidad and Tobago, or does this speak to a different category of nationals abroad?

Hon. Moses: Mr. Chairman, this Item, Repatriation of Nationals, the allocated amount relates to provision to meet the cost of ad hoc requests, that is, to repatriate nationals from countries experiencing strife, war, national disasters and the like. Once again, with our fortunes as they are, this is the figure that we can afford.

Mr. Charles: The Government of Iraq is reported to have said that they are in contact with the Government of Trinidad and Tobago regarding the repatriation of citizens now being held. Has this discussion taken place and are we budgeting for a circumstance such as this?

Madam Chairman: It is the same question put differently, Member for Naparima, or is it a different question?

Hon. Moses: Mr. Chairman, perhaps, I can by way of a response, inform this House that only but recently we would have made a commitment as a Government to repatriate the remains of two persons from St. Martin, who would have lost their

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lives in that unfortunate passage of the hurricane there, and it did in fact wipe out or completely exhaust the provision. So we try our best, and this is just but another attempt to see what we can do. Certainly during the course of the year, should the exigencies or the demands are such, we would endeavour to see to what extent we can oblige in increasing the sum. Thank you.

Dr. Tewarie: Just a quick question on the same subject, 63. Minister, are there many requests by other countries for the repatriation of Trinidad and Tobago nationals who are in their country or is it limited to a small number, and what are those countries?

Hon. Moses: Mr. Chairman, through you, the answer is no.

Mr. Padarath: Mr. Chairman, to the hon. Minister, line Item 21, Repairs and Maintenance of Buildings, an increase of almost $5.9 million. Could the hon. Minister indicate which overseas missions are earmarked for repairs and maintenance with respect to this allocation, and also whether or not there are any other missions that have been earmarked with respect to purchases of those facilities?

Hon. Moses: Are we on overseas missions? Where are we?

Mr. Chairman: We are on Overseas Missions, 002.

Hon. Moses: Yes.

Mr. Chairman: Line Item 21, Repairs and Maintenance of Buildings and the allocation is $5.8 million, line Item 21.

Hon. Moses: Under Goods and Services, Repairs and Maintenance of Buildings—

Mr. Chairman: Yes, and he enquired about overseas missions, the possibility of any purchases or rental arrangements and so on.

Hon. Moses: The proposed allocation for this fiscal of $12 million, is that it?
Madam Chairman: The estimates, but there is an increase of $5.8 million, and you know the question.

Hon. Moses: The question, I will be much obliged if you can repeat the question.

Mr. Padarath: Sure. Minister, with respect to repairs and maintenance, under line Item 21, could you indicate which missions have been earmarked for utilization of this particular vote, and also if you can provide us with the information of whether or not any other missions or whether those where you have repairs and maintenance to the buildings are being earmarked for future prospects of purchase?

Hon. Moses: Mr. Chairman, through you once more, this allocation is primarily focused on the Chancery at our High Commission in London.

Mr. Padarath: That entire allocation of $12 million, you are saying, Minister, just to get you right, is for the London High Commission?

Hon. Moses: No, but in the main yes it is.

Mr. Padarath: The question really was, which ones in terms of which missions would these funds be utilized for. Now, you have indicated mainly for the London High Commission. If it is not in total, then there must be other missions that have been earmarked to utilize this particular vote. So separate and apart from London, which other ones are you looking at?

Hon. Moses: As required in a contingent fashion, but primarily, the allocation is for Chancery at our High Commission in London.

Mr. Padarath: And do you have an idea out of this allocation of $12 million, how much would be utilized for that London High Commission?

Hon. Moses: Mr. Chairman, the response is no. We can take it for all intents and purposes that this figure is for refurbishment, maintenance of the Chancery at our

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Mr. Padarath: So it is $12 million for London?

Hon. Moses: The response we can take it as yes. I would be more definite.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. On the same line Item, I just want to ask, in light of the fact with limited foreign exchange is this expenditure necessary at this time?

Hon. Moses: Perhaps by way of elucidation I can proffer, even at this stage, that the average annual figure is even more pronounced than that one. We are treating with an historical building, an old one, and, with your permission, perhaps I can give you a figure for the average. So we talking about $15 million, $13 million, $16 million and $23 million and $16 million as of the fiscal years 2011, 2012 coming all the way to 2015, 2016. So it is an expensive enterprise and undertaking, and those are the figures, actual expenditure levels that would have been incurred relative to our Chancery High Commission in London.

[MRS. ANISETTE-GEORGE in the Chair]

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: Hon. Minister, line 23. What do these fees represent?

Hon. Moses: Line 23?

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: Yes.

Hon. Moses: Those would be related to fees for software licences.

Madam Chairman: Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, page 341; Item 001, General Administration; Item 002, Overseas Missions; Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies, page 342; Item 001, Regional Bodies; Item 002, Commonwealth Bodies; Item 003, United Nations Organizations; Item 007, Households; Item 009, Other Transfers; Item 010, Other Transfers Abroad, page
344.

**Dr. Tewarie:** 009, Ma’am.

**Madam Chairman:** Line Item?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** 04. From what it seems here the National Reparations Committee is not funded for 2018. I just want the Minister to confirm that that is so and if he can explain why.

**Madam Chairman:** So, Member, the question is why it is not funded for 2018?

**Dr. Tewarie:** Yes.

**Hon. Moses:** Chair, initially this sum of $500,000 was allocated towards the establishment of a secretariat, to cover costs associated with rental of office space, outfitting the office and payment of personnel. It has not materialized and in our changing circumstances it was deemed appropriate to utilize the funds elsewhere. Notwithstanding, we continue to persevere and endeavour to continue with that initiative.

**Mr. Imbert:** Madam Chairman, what the Budget’s Division has told me is that the committee is not operational at this point in time. So I guess if it becomes operational during the year a transfer can be made.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 010, Transfers Abroad, page 344.

**Mr. Lee:** Thank you, Madam Chair. To the Minister, line Item 08, Contribution to Disaster Relief. 2017 we had an estimated budget of $1.3 million, and we did not spend anything, and then 2018 there is no allocation. What was the thinking behind estimating for it in 2017, and where that would have been applied to and why no such contribution or estimate for 2018?

**Hon. Moses:** There was no allocation in respect of 2017.

**Mr. Lee:** Yes, $1.3 million; there was an allocation.
Hon. Moses: The revised figure was zero. Yes, the revised is zero.

Mr. Lee: What was the idea behind it in 2017, the Disaster Relief Fund?

Hon. Moses: The zero figure in 2017?

Mr. Imbert: I think we can investigate that for you and determine, Budgets is not able to tell me immediately, but I will find out for you.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Members, we will now move on to the Draft Estimates of the Development Programme. Sub-Head 09, Development Programme, Consolidated Fund, page 146; Item 005, Multisectoral and Other Services, pages 146 and 147.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, line Item 009, can you indicate what this policy is, and also 019 which is a new project, what do you hope to achieve by establishing this unit?

Madam Chairman: 09 and what is the other one, Member?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: 19, it looks as though they are interlinked hence the reason why I put it together.

Madam Chairman: You want to know what happened to 009?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: I would like to know what the policy is, the development of the policy, and the establishment of the National Diaspora Unit. It is a new project. What is the hope of the Ministry to achieve?

Hon. Moses: Chair, the policy is on diaspora. The sum expended thus far relates to the public education campaign, television ads and the like. And what comes out of a stakeholder engagement process, that would contribute towards the finalization of the policy and the unit would be the focal point of undertaking the work that comes out of this policy. The unit is a new project and that is why it comes as a separate project number, meaning 019. So that is the unit that will be
charged with undertaking the recommendations that come out of the national policy on diaspora, and the outstanding element to complete that policy would be the stakeholder engagement exercises.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Is this establishment working alongside this unit working alongside the Ministry of Tourism?

**Hon. Moses:** The answer is not in an overt way. Perhaps I can add that the Ministry of Planning and Development would be the instance concerned for collaboration with the Ministry of Foreign and Caricom Affairs in this instance.

**Mrs. Robinson-Regis:** Madam Chairman, may I? This is a direct result of a manifesto undertaking. As you know, the manifesto is Government policy. This is a direct result of that manifesto undertaking. In addition to that, the Economic Development Advisory Board has been working with us on developing this diaspora policy and the unit, and Vision 2030 also has this as one of its pillars. So this is all part of ensuring that connection with the diaspora. And the Ministry of Foreign and Caricom Affairs will be charged with the responsibility of engaging the diaspora.

**Mr. Karim:** Hon. Minister, with respect to line Item 058, I recall last year I had raised this matter with respect to the embassy. First I had indicated Saudi Arabia, but you had mentioned that the decision was to locate it in the United Arab Emirates. I notice in 2017 there was an allocation of $1.5 million and nothing was utilized in 2017, and again a similar allocation in 2018. Might you be able to give us an update with respect to the establishment of this new embassy and trade office in the United Arab Emirates?

**Hon. Moses:** Certainly. There were some difficulties involved in establishing in an outright fashion with clarity the status of relations between Trinidad and
Tobago and countries in that area. Such has been clarified and regularized and we are now in a position to actually enter to make an onsite visit with a view of establishing the embassy in the UAE and the subsidiary mission the consulate in Dubai.

2.25 p.m.

Mr. Karim: Through you, Madam Chairman, do you have a projected date by which you may start some actual work on that location; and if you have a projected date, what might be the expected completion, based on your projection?

Hon. Moses: Chair, by way of added information, we are also involved in the establishment of a High Commission in Barbados and we have, in fact, undertaken an onsite visit and we have, in a rather detailed way, information that would allow us to open such a Mission. In a similar vein, such is the approach that would be taken in respect to the UAE.

Mr. Karim: Madam Chair, I just wanted to get a clear idea as to, do think it will commence in fiscal 2018?

Hon. Moses: Madam Chair, I can respond with a degree of certainty and precision which is being demanded, I am unable to fulfil such a request.

Madam Chairman: Infrastructure Development Fund, page 244, same book, Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services.

Hon. Members, the question is that the sum of $267,972,000 for Head 65, Ministry of Foreign and Caricom Affairs stand part of the Schedule.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 65 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Madam Chairman: Thank you, hon. Minister, Madam PS and your other technocrats.
Appropriation (Financial Year 2018) Bill, 2017
Standing Finance Committee (cont’d)
Head 75 Equal Opportunity Tribunal

Head 75: Equal Opportunity Tribunal, $2,570,600.

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

Hon. Imbert: Madam Chairman, the Equal Opportunity Tribunal is set up under the Equal Opportunity Act as a superior court of record to handle complaints with respect to discrimination and other matters relating to equal opportunities.

Question Proposed: That the sum of $2,570,600 for Head 75, Equal Opportunity Tribunal stand part of the Schedule.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Members, the sum of $2,570,600 for Head 75 Equal Opportunity Tribunal is comprised of moneys proposed for expenditure under the following Sub-Heads and Items to be found in the Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure. We now proceed to consider the Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure.

Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure, page 382; 001, General Administration, page 382. Member for Tabaquite.

Dr. Rambachan: I just wanted to know, Madam Chair, how many persons are involved in the Equal Opportunity Tribunal? How much staff?

Hon. Imbert: Twenty-five.

Dr. Rambachan: Twenty-five.

Hon. Imbert: More or less.

Mr. Karim: More or less.

Hon. Imbert: That is a term of art, it means approximately.

Mr. Karim: Yeah. I know.

Hon. Imbert: Okay. As long as you know.

Madam Chairman: Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, page 382. Member for
Tabaquite.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Does that include under Item 16 that 25 are those under Contract Employment?

**Hon. Imbert:** Yes.

**Dr. Rambachan:** What is the nature of the persons’ qualifications or the persons who are employed under Contract Employment and what functions do they perform? [**Crosstalk**] You take over from the Minister of Finance now?

**Hon. Imbert:** Okay. Administrative and manipulative staff and some professionals, it is just a few.

**Dr. Rambachan:** I was looking for a line Item to ask how many cases are there before the tribunal, but I cannot find a line Item.

**Hon. Imbert:** Good. [**Laughter**] So we can move on.

**Madam Chairman:** Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, page 384; 001, General Administration, page 384.

Hon. Members, the question is that the sum of $2,570,600 for Head 75, Equal Opportunity Tribunals stand part of the Schedule.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Head 75 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.*

**Madam Chairman:** I thank you, representatives from the EOT. You all are discharged.

**Head 48:** Ministry of Trade and Industry, $163,260,400.

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

**Hon. Gopee-Scoon:** Thank you, Madam Chair. The Ministry of Trade and Industry is responsible for leading and overseeing the implementation of
government policy for business development, trade, investment and consumer empowerment. Our work is aligned to supporting the measures and targets defined in the Vision 2030 under Theme IV, Building Globally Competitive Businesses.

During fiscal 2017, the Ministry of Trade and Industry successfully executed a number of initiatives related to reforming the institutional environment for the ease of doing business; advancing the diversification agenda; growing exports and facilitating investments. And I will elaborate more on the Ministry’s achievement during my contribution in the budget debate in the Senate.

Based on the Draft Estimates of Expenditure for the fiscal 2017/2018, the Ministry of Trade and Industry has been allocated TT $113,414,760 for recurrent expenditure and $50,200,000 has been allocated under the Development Programme. And with this allocation there are a number of goals that we will be working with. Goal one, support development of competitive businesses; goal two, to increase investments; goal three, to expand the exports; goal four, to enhance the protection and empowerment of consumers and; goal five, to transform the Ministry of Trade and Industry for enhanced service delivery and performance.

In addition, during fiscal 2018, the Ministry of Trade and Industry will continue to improve its efficiency and strengthen its institutional capacity with the focus on the development imperatives of good governance, value for money and service excellence. Thank you, Madam Chair.

Question proposed: That Head 48 stand part of the Schedule.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Members, the sum of $163,260,400 for Head 48 the Ministry of Trade and Industry is comprised of moneys proposed for expenditure under the following Sub-Heads and Items to be found in the Draft Estimates of

We now proceed to consider the Draft Estimates of Recurrent Programme.

Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure, page 303; Item 001, General Administration, page 303. Member for Tabaquite.

Dr. Rambachan: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Minister, happy Divali to you.

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: Shubh Divali to you as well.

Dr. Rambachan: Under Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance—[Crosstalk] That is very personal.

Hon. Member: Eh, eh!

Dr. Rambachan: Madam Minister, how do you measure under salaries, how do you measure the efficiency and effectiveness of your Ministry’s performance to justify these salaries? In other words, do you feel that your Ministry is giving to this country value for money with respect to the expenditure of these salaries?

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: Yes.

Dr. Rambachan: And in your tenure for this year, for last year what measures can you elaborate to us that you have put in place that you say “I measured X, Y and Z”?

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: Well, as you know as with regard to staff and salaries and so on annually the staff would be assessed, and based on that I can have an idea of the individual—I am dealing with the line Item, so I am dealing with the salary per person, I can have an idea of the performance levels of the members of staff and weigh that against our achievements overall and the department’s achievements as
well.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Is the attraction of foreign investment to the country under your portfolio?

**Hon. Gopee-Scoon:** Yes, it is.

**Dr. Rambachan:** And if so, is that a measure that you have used to justify these salaries as to the value for money?

**Hon. Gopee-Scoon:** But these salaries that you are speaking to under 01—

**Dr. Rambachan:** General Administration.

**Hon. Gopee-Scoon:**—the salaries under 01 have to do with members of staff who are on the establishment. It has nothing to do with InvesTT or so.

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

**Dr. Tewarie:** Okay. Just a couple of questions, Madam Chair. Item 08, Vacant Posts—Salaries, et cetera, I see that there is an allocation for that in 2018. Can you indicate what type of posts these are, in other words, what the people will come on to do when you hire them?

**Hon. Gopee-Scoon:** Okay. That kind of detail I will have to give you in writing, but these are provisions for appointments by the DPA.

**Dr. Tewarie:** No. No. I appreciate that. I just wanted to know what the—

**Hon. Gopee-Scoon:** The level of the detail you require I will have to furnish it to you in writing.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Okay. So you will provide in writing.

**Hon. Gopee-Scoon:** Yes.

**Dr. Tewarie:** And Item 14, Madam Chair—

**Hon. Gopee-Scoon:** Remuneration.

**Dr. Tewarie:** No. I just wanted to find out what were, in fact, the Cabinet

**UNREVISED**
appointed committees?

**Hon. Gopee-Scoon:** There is one committee under that, and that is the National Trade Facilitation Committee.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Trade facilitation?

**Hon. Gopee-Scoon:** That is right.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Okay.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 002, Weights and Measures Inspectorate, page 303.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, line Item 01, can you indicate how many positions are in this post for Weights and Measures, the Inspectorate, how many are vacant, and do they now have the requested qualifications—because I remember that sometime ago there was an issue with that?

**Hon. Gopee-Scoon:** That is right. And so you would know that weights and measures really now—all of the issues concerning weights and measures that is all now covered under the Metrology Act and issues related with that. So there are four officers that are still within the unit and two of these officers are due to retire in 2018, and the other two officers will retire in 2019.

And as I said before, all of the functions are being subsumed by the TTBS in accordance with the Metrology Act. So, quite frankly, I do not think the full amount will be utilized.

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

**Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, what are really the current—

**Hon. Gopee-Scoon:** Would you tell me the line Item first, please?
Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: Same Weights and Measures Inspectorate I am dealing with. So I just need to know, 002, what are the current functions of that inspectorate; and two, what tangible benefits have been accrued to the Ministry as a result of the work of those inspectors?

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: As I said to you, all of the functions under the Weights and Measures unit it is now all subsumed under the TTBS the Trinidad and Tobago Bureau of Standards under the Metrology Act. So, in other words, all of this is being phased out.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: So prior to it being subsumed was there any tangible benefits?

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: You are asking me to report on a previous period.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: Okay.

Madam Chairman: Well, I am not going to allow that, I think the explanation we are getting from that is last year.

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: Yeah.


Dr. Tewarie: Yes. I just wanted to ask, Chair, the division, Research and Planning, in terms of the Ministry of Trade and Industry, what generally is its focus?

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: Consumer affairs and consumer empowerment. So we will be researching new ways of empowering the consumer as well.

Dr. Tewarie: Okay. So it is doing the research to provide information to consumers—

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: That is right.
Dr. Tewarie:—to help them to make decisions?

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: Is right, consumer empowerment.

Madam Chairman: Items 005, Consumer Outreach and Protection Unit, page 304. Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Madam Minister, could you just give an appreciation of how many positions that are being paid for there? And an extension to the question is, are you—the Consumer Protection Unit, are you comfortable with, based on what is happening at a national level in terms of citizens needing the protection at all times in terms of consumer issues, are you comfortable with your unit, or is there a need for increased staffing to help more citizens?

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: Thank you. So with regard to the question as to the number of staff members, I am going to have to give that to you in writing. I do not remember the particular number. As to whether or not I feel that they are doing what is required having regard to the advancements in the world of consumer protection, I want to say we have done a complete review and overhaul of this department, and recommendations have been formulized, and it is at the level of the Cabinet at this time.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Do you foresee an expansion of it?

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: It may very well include some kind of expansion, but that will be addressed by the next fiscal. Let us, you know, as I said, it is a complete overhaul that we are looking at including new legislation.

Dr. Gopeesingh: I look forward to seeing that.

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: Thank you.

Madam Chairman: Member for Couva South.

Mr. Indarsingh: Thank you, Madam Chair. This unit, Minister, has the
responsibility of monitoring VAT in the country in terms of the imposition or the re-imposition of VAT on 7,000 food items?

**Hon. Gopee-Scoon:** The consumer division does, in fact, look after the monitoring of prices. Prices in some areas will be plus VAT, in some supermarkets it will be plus VAT, some without VAT, but we do monitor prices and, as you know, this is displayed on the Ministry’s website monthly and quarterly in the national newspapers. But monitoring is done every month and published.

**Mr. Imbert:** I would just like to say, Madam Chairman, the monitoring of VAT payments is the responsibility of the Board of Inland Revenue.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Yes, Mr. Minister of Finance, but I could remember the Minister of Trade and Industry indicating to the national community that she had established a hot line as it relates to taking calls from the national community in relation to the re-imposition of VAT and price gouging and so on, and that is why I am seeking to get some clarification from the Minister what has been the success rate of this particular unit in addressing the issue of price gouging and so on.

**Hon. Gopee-Scoon:** I have answered you already. Yeah.

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

**Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, how many complaints were made to this unit and how many were dealt with?

**Hon. Gopee-Scoon:** I will have to give you that in writing. All complaints received are dealt with, but I will give you the exact number in writing.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** It is okay. It was, more or less, answered—how effective is the unit?
Madam Chairman: Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, page 305; Item 001, General Administration, pages 305 to 306. Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.

Mr. Lee: Thank you, Madam Chair. To the Minister I have three questions, three line Items 08, Rent/Lease Office Accommodation, I see you are budgeting for $1 million increase.

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: Where are you? Sorry.

Mr. Lee: 08, Rent/Lease Office Accommodation and Storage.

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: Yes.

Mr. Lee: You have budgeted for $1 million increase to $11 million. Could you state, what is the reason for that? Do you expect a rent increase wherever you are leasing presently? And could provide a list of the rentals of the different places of the Ministry of Trade and Industry?

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: I could give you now.

Mr. Lee: Sure.

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: Okay. Our total rental is really about $11,734 million. The rent for September is outstanding for Nicholas Tower and the TTMA building, so that has to be paid in 2017/2018. To give you an idea of our rental spaces, Nicholas Tower where we have seven floors; the Trade zone; the Trinidad and Tobago Manufacturers’ Association building which houses our trade licensing unit. Then we also rent car park spaces at Chacon Street for employees, Chacon storage, and also level 19 for Consumer Affairs Division when they came across from Legal Affairs division.

Mr. Lee: And my second question, I would like to tie in line Item 16, Contract Employment.

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: Line Item 16.
Mr. Lee: And line Item, Short-Term Employment, could you state how many people are employed in these two sub categories?

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: Okay. Under Contract Employment, line Item 16, you are saying? Right. Ninety-three persons in all and that includes 14 or so under the SEW division, but 38 of these 93 positions are vacant.

Mr. Lee: And the short term, 22?

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: Line 22 therefore, four persons in there, four persons on short-term contract.

Mr. Lee: Could we get a listing of their monthly income, please?

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: The four persons or the—

Mr. Lee: Yeah. On short term.

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: The short term?—sure.

Madam Chairman: Member for Caroni Central.

Dr. Tewarie: This is just follow up question on the Contract Employment. I just want the Minister to confirm that this Contract Employment here refers to existing vacant posts in the Ministry. Did I hear you say that?

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: You are talking about the 93?

Dr. Tewarie: Yes.

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: Of course. Yes. In the Ministry across different divisions.

Madam Chairman: Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.

Mr. Lee: Thank you, Madam Chair. To the Minister in line Item 27, Official Overseas Travel.

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: 27, hold a sec.

Mr. Lee: 27, could you provide a listing of the travels throughout the last 12 months or so?
Hon. Gopee-Scoon: You would like to hear it now?

Mr. Lee: No. You could give us in writing.


Madam Chairman: Okay. So Item 002, Weights and Measures Inspectorate, page 306; Item 003, Consumer Affairs Division, pages 306 and 307; Item 004, Research and Planning, page 307; Item 005, Consumer Outreach and Protection, page 307; Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, page 308; Item 001, General Administration, page 308; Item 003, Consumer Affairs Division, page 308; Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies, page 308; Item 001, Regional Bodies; Item 003, United Nations Organizations; Item 004, International Bodies; Item 007, Households; Item 008, Subsidies; Item 009, Other Transfers, pages 308 and 309. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, at line Item 29, Trinidad and Tobago Creative Industries Company. In light of the fact that the hon. Minister of Finance indicated that the creative industries—

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: Sorry. Hon. Member, could you just tell me which line Item you are on?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Twenty-nine—23, it is 23.

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: Twenty-three. I lost you there.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Twenty-three, in light of the fact that the hon. Minister of Finance indicated in his budget statement that the creative industries would be one of the pillars that will be focused on for diversification, I noticed that there is a decrease in the allocation. Could the hon. Minister indicate, why is this so?—seeing that this industry is geared towards diversification?

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: Yeah. It is just a small decrease of $425,000, but I tell you
what we are doing right now and we will implement is a rationalization of the structure. We find this structure way too cumbersome and too expensive for the output that we are getting from it now. So we have actually done the rationalization and we feel that this is going to be enough for the recurrent expenditure.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Caroni Central

**Dr. Tewarie:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Financial assistance to export.

**Hon. Gopee-Scoon:** Where are we?

**Dr. Tewarie:** It is 01.

**Hon. Gopee-Scoon:** Yeah.

**Dr. Tewarie:** —to exporTT, can you explain what the assistance is targeted at? What it is for?

**Hon. Gopee-Scoon:** Sure. So there is a variance there in the plus of $3 million and it is to address increase in salaries and also outstanding areas due to wage negotiations that are due, and also the filling of critical posts in the context of our export thrust as well. It is imperative that we ramp up our export activities, and we envisage and we are planning to increase in staffing levels as well.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Okay. So the increase in staffing is really to support your export thrust, is that it?

**Hon. Gopee-Scoon:** Yes.

**Dr. Tewarie:** And that, of course, has to do with the exporting companies that are private sector basically?

**Hon. Gopee-Scoon:** “Uh hmm.”

**Dr. Tewarie:** All right. I noticed the continuing support for the Betting Levy Board, and I mean racing is an industry that can be profitable. Is there any—I
know that this has been sore point over many administrations and I just wanted to ask you, is there any discussion at all with the racing body to wean themselves off of this?

**Hon. Gopee-Scoon:** Well, really it is an in and out transfer, as you know and this moratorium that they have put themselves onto. Really if we had gotten this Gambling (Gaming and Betting) Control Bill out of the way and gotten the support of it and passed it, then we would be able to deal with these industries comprehensively. But in the meantime, I have had discussions on both sides, the TTRA and Betting Levy Board, and I do believe that they can find themselves in a position to help the industries. But we need support for this Gambling (Gaming and Betting) Control Bill, and I think with that we would be able to put these agencies on the right footing.

**Dr. Tewarie:** All right. 06, Venture Capital, I realize that this programme is no longer in existence.

**Hon. Gopee-Scoon:** No. And that is because the facility was unused for several years and the programme has been wound up.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Right. So is there some alternative that you have or contemplating?—I know the Minister mentioned something in the budget.

**Hon. Gopee-Scoon:** Yes. The Minister of Finance did speak to a start-up, a programme for start-ups, and there are some other initiatives as well. When I come to the Senate I will be elaborating on those.

**Dr. Tewarie:** It will be established under your Ministry?

**Hon. Gopee-Scoon:** That will be detailed to you.

**Dr. Tewarie:** All right.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.
Mr. Lee: Thank you, Madam Chair. To the Minister, line Item 19, Single Electronic Window for Trade and Business Facilitation. Could you just explain what those funds are for even though you have an increase of $1 million this year? What were the funds utilized for in 2017, and how it will be utilized in 2018?

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: This fund—and you will see this Single Electronic Window also mentioned in the DP as well. So this aspect of it is really for the training of stakeholders and for filling critical posts as well. So it includes all sorts of operational costs including salaries and so on, but when I say training of stakeholders, I speak to all of those agencies that are involved in the projects under the SEW as well. And of course the front-end users it includes collaboration and stakeholder consultation with all the front-end users I am talking about, customs brokers, et cetera, et cetera.

2.55 p.m.

You know, as a matter of fact, because of the funding constraint, we were not able to do as much as we would have liked to do, but this year we are pressing ahead with it.

Madam Chairman: Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Line Item 03—

Madam Chairman: Excuse me, Member for Caroni East, could you kindly speak—it is strange for me to ask you to have to raise your volume.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Yes, I would come closer. [Laughter]

Madam Chairman: Thank you.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Well, that is stranger for me. The Betting Levy Board, line Item 03.

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: We dealt with that already.
Dr. GopeeSingh: Yeah. Following on Member for Caroni Central, there was an allocation estimated in 2017 for $82 million, but the revised estimate nothing shows there, is it because the information has not come to hand as yet, or what has happened to that?

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: Literally there has been no exchange. You know what is supposed to happen is 50 per cent of the taxes collected should come into the Ministry and then we give it back under the so-called moratorium, but there has been no exchange.

Dr. GopeeSingh: So that 82 that was estimated that you were going to—

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: There was no exchange at all?

Dr. GopeeSingh: You were going to give them that in exchange?

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: Well, that could have happened but I will tell you something. All along the while I was hoping that we could have this piece of legislation dealt with and that would put an end to all of these matters, but again we are in your hands.

Dr. GopeeSingh: All right.

Madam Chairman: Member for—

Dr. GopeeSingh: No, just last question on this.

Madam Chairman: Sorry.

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: Sure.

Dr. GopeeSingh: On 19, following from my colleague. The Single Electronic Window, where are we in terms of the efficiency and effectiveness of that in terms of moving up the scale to facilitating business easily and quicker? The Single Electronic Window?

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: Well, I think you can address that up the DP. There is a line
Item for it there.

Dr. Gopeesingh: All right. Okay.

Madam Chairman: Member for Princes Town.

Mr. Padarath: Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, several—

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: What line Item?

Mr. Padarath: First let us—I would have some questions with respect to the DP, I think would better be addressed under line Item 19, so I would wait for that. But with respect to line Item 17, Trinidad and Tobago Manufacturers Association, earlier one of my colleagues spoke about the FDI with respect to how much foreign direct investment has been bought in over the past year, with respect to the allocation for Trinidad and Tobago Manufacturers Association, we have signed several partial scope agreements and MOUs with several Latin American countries. Does the Ministry have an ongoing programme with Trinidad and Tobago Manufacturers Association in terms of assessing new products going into these markets where we have assigned MOUs as well as partial scope agreements?

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: To put it simply, yes. It is an ongoing and healthy relationship between the Ministry of Trade and Industry, exportTT and the Trinidad and Tobago Manufacturers Association.

Mr. Padarath: Can you give us an idea of a degree of success that you have seen in new markets, especially in the Latin American areas where we have signed partial-scope agreements and MOUs in the past year?

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: Okay, I can give you that in writing because I would like to do it country by country and I can give you. I would have to get that from exportTT as well.

Mr. Padarath: Sure. Also, if we could look at line Item 26, NAPA, with respect
to the hoteliers, you know this has been an—

**Hon. Gopee-Scoon:** Wait. Where are you?

**Mr. Padarath:** On the other page.

**Hon. Member:** Page 310.

**Hon. Gopee-Scoon:** Yes, thank you.

**Mr. Padarath:** As you know this has been an ongoing saga with respect to the hotel there. Could you indicate to us whether or not there is any definitive plans with respect to a service provider for the hotel?

**Hon. Gopee-Scoon:** No. This is recurrent, so that matter will be dealt with under the DP. So here we are with this, what was it $700,000? And that is for security and janitorial services. The question of the operator could be dealt with elsewhere.

**Mr. Padarath:** No problem. Sure.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** My question was answered already.

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

**Mr. Lee:** [*Inaudible*]

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

**Dr. Tewarie:** Line Item 14, 009/14: Trinidad and Tobago Coalition of Services. This institution is no longer supported by trade?

**Hon. Gopee-Scoon:** Well, I would not put it like that. What I would say to you is, and you would know the genesis of this, I am certain. The organization was set up some time in 2003, and the intention was that it would receive operational financing for six years. Of course, that has long gone.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Certain time has crossed?

**Hon. Gopee-Scoon:** Yes. So, it ought to be self-sufficient. Notwithstanding, we
recognized the value and purpose of the TTCSI and you would see that, under the DP again—it is under the DP or the line there—there is a provision for a particular project, and I have actually called in the TTCSI members. Maybe about two months we have had some discussions to look at the way forward, how they can cut expenses and repackage themselves. There is a role for the TTCSI and their services.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Are they involved in the IDB services export programme through the Ministry of Planning and Development?

**Hon. Gopee-Scoon:** Are they? Yes, they are. I am told that they are.

**Dr. Tewarie:** All right.

**Mr. Imbert:** Madam Chairman, I just want to make the point. I heard the Member ask whether Trade is no longer supporting this organisation, but there is an allocation of $1 million.

**Hon. Gopee-Scoon:** Yes.

**Mr. Imbert:** Is it there? Yes, it is there.

**Dr. Tewarie:** No.

**Mr. Imbert:** Under 14, $1 million.

**Hon. Gopee-Scoon:** There is an allocation.

**Mr. Imbert:** One million dollars.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Okay. I may have been looking for it under the line with industries.

**Mr. Imbert:** It is there, yes.

**Madam Chairman:** Member, okay so can we go on? Item 010, Other Transfers Abroad, page 309. Okay, we now go on to Sub-Head 06, Current Transfers to Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies; 004, Statutory Boards, page 310. Do Members have any questions under this Head?
Okay. So, Members we now move on to the *Draft Estimates of the Revenue and Expenditure of Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies*, and we have no questions there, so we can now go on to DP. Sub-Head 09, Development Programme.

**Hon. Gopee-Scoon:** Just a minute please, Madam?

**Madam Chairman:** “Hm mm”. Consolidated Fund, page 128. Minister, it will take us a little time—

**Hon. Gopee-Scoon:** Page 1—

**Madam Chairman:** 28. Item 003, Economic Infrastructure, pages 128 and 129. Member for Mayaro.

**Mr. Paray:** Thank you very much, Madam Chairman. Minister, line Item 017, New Economic Zone Development for Moruga, can you enlighten us as to what are the specific areas of economic activities that you all are planning to engage in that area in Moruga there?

**Hon. Gopee-Scoon:** Yes, sorry. So, ideally it is for agro-processing and agribusiness including fish processing. It is an acreage of about 18 acres, and it is under development, the project will be ready in January 2019.

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

**Mr. Padarath:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, line Item 019, 021, 023.

**Hon. Gopee-Scoon:** 019—

**Mr. Padarath:** 021 and 023 on page 128. These are listed as new projects, respectively the music industry $1 million, film industry 2.5, fashion industry 4.5. Can you indicate what are the Ministry’s plan with respect to these industries seeing that we have had a plethora of other programmes having been commenced, whether it is under your administration, or different administration that has...
happened in the past but without seeing these industries really advance in any meaningful way, what new will happen with respect to these new projects?

**Hon. Gopee-Scoon:** Let me just say as briefly as I can, that I too had my concerns—from the time I came into office—with this particular agency, in that to me operated without a plan, and that is precisely what we have done. So, part of the achievements for fiscal 2017 with regard to music and with regard to fashion, we actually completed a strategic plan. So, there are achievements under either of those, and the strategic plan with regard to film, they would be ready in December. So, I think it is only with a plan that you can move forward.

So, in the meantime there have been attempts to do projects. There have been projects. The public identifies with particular projects, some more successful than others, but we really have to be very strong with our efforts and this agency, especially as it deals with diversification. So, this is a very serious agency which has to do with the commercialization of film, fashion and music, and therefore, our approach is a very serious one. So, we are moving forward with some of the projects which were successful from the past, but we have definitive projects which would bring us to the place where we are actually exporting.

So it has to do with the commercialization where persons involved in these industries can in fact be paid for their work which they do, and which in the past—and I am talking about for ages in Trinidad and Tobago they have not been. They have not been recognized, they have not been earners of substantial income and so on. This is the place we want to go to, and where we can export these areas as well, film and fashion and music. That is the plan. I have further details on which I will elaborate on in the Senate.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Caroni East.
Dr. Gopeesingh: Hon. Minister, with the Government’s thrust—and of course, this is what we want—for increased export, and more investment, and support to enable competitive business, can I refer you to—

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: Member, sorry, I cannot hear you.

Madam Chairman: Member, we are not hearing you.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Something is wrong with this mike, you know.

Madam Chairman: Well, maybe you could switch on the mikes on the side.

Dr. Gopeesingh: I am surrounded by ladies, I have to be soft in my—in line Items 304, 001 and 011, Madam Minister—

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: 304?

Dr. Gopeesingh:—304—

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: Ah ha.

Dr. Gopeesingh:—001 and 011, which incorporates the issues of export capacity, investment promotion and support to enabling competitive business in T&T, this is much desired from a national perspective in terms of bringing in more revenue and increased competitiveness and so on, but your allocation for these are very small, and where there should be a greater thrust, we see a whittling down of the allocation. Well, $500,000 for export capacity building. In my humble opinion, I feel that is not sufficient at all. And the investment promotion, you have brought it down from $5 million to $3 million, and to enable competitive business, the estimate last year was 1.5, there is none for it now. Could you give us some picture as to what is really happening, whereas you should be putting more thrust on these areas, we seem to be not supporting it as much?

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: You know, this is a very long explanation. I would really like you to listen in the Senate, when I would really go into each one of these in
detail. If you would like, I can detail all the projects that we are doing under each one. I can in fact send it to you in writing. Would you like me to do that?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Put it in writing to the committee.

Hon. Goppee-Scoon: I shall put in writing all of the projects.

Dr. Gopeesingh: You know, I listen to you attentively at all times—

Hon. Goppee-Scoon: I thank you so much. [Laughter]

Madam Chairman: Member for Mayaro.

Mr. Paray: Thank you very much, Madam Chairman. [Crosstalk] Minister, under Item 021—

Hon. Goppee-Scoon: 02?  

Mr. Paray: Yes, 021: Development of the Film Industry. Has there been any effort on the part of your Ministry to engage foreign film producers to see Trinidad and Tobago as a more attractive destination for some of the production facilities? I ask that in context of, I remember a conversation when the producers were looking for locations for the filming of Pirates of the Caribbean, there was some challenges with regard to the high cost of the importation of their movie equipment, customs duties, taxes and so on, have there been any conversations so far in your Ministry to see if we can do better at attracting international film producers into Trinidad and Tobago?

Hon. Goppee-Scoon: Well, definitely that is the final objective, but of course what we have had to do, the main attraction really is the rebate programme which this Government had put in place a number of years ago and we have had to reengineer it to ensure that it becomes effective, and so that we can have optimum efficiency and success with it. It is as it is, I think, reengineered and quite attractive on its own, and this is what we will be using. I do have some details of actual films that
will be shot in Trinidad and Tobago, there is a 90 per cent perhaps likelihood that these would be shot, and I can always detail these and send them for you. But, there are some, I can give you further details.

Madam Chairman: Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.

Mr. Lee: Thank you, Madam Chair. To the Minister, I just want to go back to line Item 17, The New Economic Zone, Moruga. This 2017 incurred $2.6 million for something. Could you tell us what you all did in that economic zone in Moruga this year?

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: What line Item you are talking about again?

Mr. Lee: 017, Moruga, New Economic Zone.

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: 017—going back and forth.

Madam Chairman: Just above the music industry.

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: So, 2,622 is really intended for the master plan, and the master plan would have included all the stakeholder analysis and so on. So, we have reached the point where—

Mr. Lee: Just the master plan cost $2.6 million roughly?

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: But it is not only that at all. You have to procure the master plan, so we actually engaged Desal Designs Limited. We did a lot of community sensitization, as I said stakeholder involvement. The master plan has been handed in, I have not had sight of it yet, but it has just been handed in, I believe yesterday or today, and then we are beginning to move ahead with the geotechnical work at the same time.

Mr. Lee: Okay, then the follow-up question, the 13.3 that is budgeted for this year would be based on the master plan, I am assuming, the expenditure for 13.3?

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: Well, the funding for this project is a $69 million project, and
is partially funded by the PSIP and also e TecK, and from funds held at e TecK. So, together with the projected 2018 figure of 13—the two point something, e TecK is going to put their $13 million in at that point, and by the time we get to the end of this fiscal year we will in fact come back for remainder, which is going to be around $24 million.

Mr. Lee: Okay. All right, thank you.

Madam Chairman: Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Madam Chair. Just going back to a line Item 021, which is the film industry, I remember the animated industry was highly sought after and Disney World has in fact looked at Trinidad and Tobago. Is that a consideration in your development plan?

Madam Chairman: I think the Minister already said she would supply a list of those various projects which are likely to come on stream in this fiscal. Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Hon. Minister, you had referred me to the Development Programme when I asked about the enhancement of the Single Electronic Window, a $15 million increase funded by the IDB, could you give us—

Hon. Goppee-Scoon: What line Item?

Dr. Gopeesingh: 016. Could you give us an appreciation and an understanding of what is proposed to do to help to improve the efficiency of this aspect of trade?

Hon. Goppee-Scoon: Okay. There are 16 consultancies to be conducted under this $25 million loan. So, we have already issued—we have short listed firms for several consultancies within those. I can tell you what the components are. I can give you the details after, but there are three components, and the first one will be enhancing and expanding the services of the SEW; and the second one, enhancing
the interoperability of TTBizLink; and component three, modernizing the governance of SEW and the institutional framework. As I said, there are several consultancies under that. For instance, under component three, you would have business accessory engineering and developing change management strategies for several agencies and Ministries as well. So, something like this I would have to give you in writing. I have it here, but I do not think there is enough time for me to detail all 16—all of the consultancies that we are dealing with at this time.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Can I ask, in all of this what is your main objection in terms of your ease of doing business and quickness of trade facilitation, is it?

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: Again, it is to generally improve the entire framework for trade and business, to ensure that it is easy, even for the countries with which we do business as well that there is greater interoperability. So that there are countries that would have the same SEW system, and those are a lot of the Latin American countries have the same system so that the interoperability is going to work well, it is going to be easier, faster, more efficient. And within this as well you would have heard us talk—heard me talk and certainly the Ministry, about the construction permitting process which is going to be automated, and the pilot for that will actually be completed for Port of Spain in April 2018. The work is extensive and the results are going to be good, generally for trade and business facilitation.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Last question on that. When do you expect to see some tangible results of all the—

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: This is a five-year plan. As I have just said, for instance, with construction permitting you will have the pilot programme completed hopefully by April 2018. I have dates, end dates for all of these projects. I can
provide those to you.

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

**Mr. Padarath:** Madam, on the same line Item 016, with respect to support for this venture in terms of reform and upgrade, can you indicate whether or not for this Single Electronic Window—again for upgrade and reform—there will be an expansion of the trade licence unit in the Ministry of Trade, provide support for this particular area?

**Hon. Gopee-Scoon:** My PS has advised me that that too is included under the institutional governance structure improvements.

**Mr. Padarath:** Okay. So, therefore we can see a further enhancement of this particular unit to provide support?

**Hon. Gopee-Scoon:** That is right.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services, pages 129 and 130. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, line Item 216, Procurement of Equipment for the Implementation of the Metrology Act 2004. Could the hon. Minister advise if this equipment was in fact procured and implemented?

**Hon. Gopee-Scoon:** And this is 216, Procurement of Equipment. Yes, they have already begun the procurement of equipment.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** So it has not been in fact purchased and implemented, it is just in the procurement stage?

**Hon. Gopee-Scoon:** No, it has gone beyond procurement. In some areas, there are different kinds of machinery and equipment. Some of it has already been utilized. So, we have gone around to all of the supermarkets to check all of the
weighing, the devices. All of those exercises have been done, but there is continuing work, and then there is this big machinery called the mas-comparator facility. It is a little bit delayed, but it is going to be completed pretty soon, and that is for measuring large pieces of equipment to the minute point and calibration, and so on.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** And it would be calibrated, I would think, on a regular basis?

**Hon. Gopee-Scoon:** I am sure that there is a programme for doing that on a regular basis.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Do you have an after sales service where you have training that accompanies this?

**Hon. Gopee-Scoon:** Yes, considerable training is done. That is a feature. That is an integral component of the work of the Bureau of Standards.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** How many persons will be trained on this programme?

**Hon. Gopee-Scoon:** I can send that to you.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Okay, thanks.

**Madam Chairman:** Okay. So we will go on now to Infrastructure Development Fund, same book, page 234. Infrastructure Development, page 234. Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services page 235. [Crosstalk] Hon. Member for Pointe-a-Pierre, do you have a question?

Hon. Members, the question is that the sum of $163,260,400 for Head 48, the Ministry of Trade and Industry stand part of the Schedule.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Head 48 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.*

**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you, hon. Minister, Mr. PS and other representatives of
the Ministry of Trade.

*Head 35: Ministry of Tourism, $78,564,500.*

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

**Hon. Cudjoe:** Thank you, Madam Chairman. The development of the tourism sector is critical to the diversification, expansion and sustainable growth of our national economy.

The Ministry of Tourism is responsible for the general tourism policy development, facilitating growth in the tourism sector, promoting awareness, building stakeholder relationships, and for monitoring and evaluating the country’s performance. As you are well aware, the Tobago House of Assembly has responsibility for the development of tourism in Tobago. In fiscal 2016, the Government undertook an evaluation exercise with an aim to improve our strategy and performance in the sector. This exercise resulted in the Cabinet’s decision to reengineer the institutional arrangement towards more effective management of the sector.

To this end, a new tourism entity, Tourism Trinidad Destination Management Company, also known a Tourism Trinidad Limited was established, and in fiscal 2018 this entity will be operationalized. The entity is mandated to develop and market Trinidad’s tourism offering, lead and facilitate marketing and promotion of the destination, lead in attracting tourism investment in Trinidad, promote tourism business development, promote education awareness and cooperation in advancing the economic expansion through tourism, and encourage a tourism friendly approach through well-defined and coordinated marketing strategies, inclusive of all social media and all other technology-based platforms.
In fiscal 2018, the Ministry has identified the following critical objectives: to provide competitive legislative framework, effective evidence-based tourism policy; to promote regionally and internationally the destination; to promote our different niches in tourism to development our tourism facilities, and to build a more competitive sector. To this end, we have expanded and extended our room upgrade programmes and the government loan guarantee programme as a part of our 2018 Development Programme under Head 35. The Ministry will further the upgrade and refurbishment of community-based sites and attractions across the country, and we will revise our national tourism policy and strategic development plan. Thank you, Madam Chairman.

*Question proposed:* That Head 35 stand part of the Schedule.

**Madam Chairman:** Hon. Members, the sum of $78,564,500 for Head 35, Ministry of Tourism is comprised of moneys proposed for expenditure under the following Sub-Heads and Items to be found in the Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure and the Draft Estimates of the Development Programme. We now proceed to consider the Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure. Sub-Head 01: Personnel Expenditure, page 241, Item 001: General Administration, page 241.

**Mr. Paray:** Thank you very much, Madam Chairman. Minister, Item 14, Remuneration to Members of Cabinet Appointed Committees. Can you tell me how many of these Cabinet Committees exist, and what specific area that they look at in terms of assisting the Ministry at this time?

**Hon. Cudjoe:** We have two of these committees, the Tourism Standing Committee, which helps the Ministry in liaising with the stakeholders to develop a tourism policy. In fiscal 2017, they would have worked on a tourism road map for
the sustainable development of tourism in Trinidad.

Mr. Paray: Just a follow up, in terms of the interaction with the two new units that are coming, one for Trinidad and one for Tobago, under the Ministry, how do you emphasize the interaction between those committees and those agencies in the direction that they would be going? Do you see synergies, and if there are, what most likely would they be?

3.25 p.m.

Hon. Cudjoe: Well, of course, there will be synergies like there always have been. The Tobago House of Assembly has responsibility for tourism development in Tobago and had always been since the inception of the Assembly, since tourism is a Schedule Five item under the Tobago House of Assembly Act. So the House of Assembly would have its Tobago Tourism Agency while Tourism Trinidad would interact and liaise with the agency also. We have established, which is the second committee, a Tourism Task Force in order to coordinate joint initiatives and joint marketing initiatives of that nature.

Madam Chairman: Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, page 241; Item 001, General Administration, pages 241 and 242; Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases; Item 001, General Administration, page 242; Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies; Item 001, Regional Bodies, page 243; Item 003, United Nations Organization, page 243. Member for Caroni Central.

Dr. Tewarie: I see under Item 04 here, Chair, Tourism Trinidad Destination Management Company Limited, an allocation of $16 million. I just wanted to ask the Minister, what is the focus, what is the idea behind the creation of this company, what will it actually do?

Hon. Cudjoe: Through you, Madam Chairman, I would have listed the objectives
of the entity in my opening statement. You want me to repeat?

**Dr. Tewarie:** Yeah. Do you mind?

**Hon. Cudjoe:** Sure.

**Madam Chairman:** This is under 011, Transfers to State Enterprises.

**Dr. Tewarie:** 04, yes.

**Madam Chairman:** All right. So I do not think I called that. So just that everybody would be on the same page, we are now at Item 011, Transfers to State Enterprises, page 243; we are now considering Item 04.

**Hon. Cudjoe:** So, the entity’s mandate is to develop and market Trinidad’s tourism offerings; to lead and facilitate the marketing and promotion of the destination; to lead in attracting tourism investment; to promote tourism business development; to promote education awareness and cooperation in advancing economic expansion through tourism; to encourage a tourism-friendly approach through well-defined and coordinated marketing strategies, inclusive of all social media and all other technology-based platforms.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Okay, from what you say, Minister, I mean, the main role is a marketing role for both tourists and for tourism investment. But, I mean, it has nothing to do with the development of local destinations, does it?

**Hon. Cudjoe:** Yes, it does have to do with the development of the local destination also because we have to develop the product. So product development is a part of the responsibility of the entity.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Okay, I may ask another question.

**Hon. Cudjoe:** Okay.

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

**Mr. Karim:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, can you tell us what will
be the staffing complement of this new organization?

**Hon. Cudjoe:** The staffing complement of the new organization—well, we are at the point right now where we are finalizing the structure, and that is still taking place at this time, but we anticipate no more than 50 people.

**Mr. Karim:** Fifty, okay. How do you think it will be different from its predecessor—intrinsically or strategically?

**Hon. Cudjoe:** There are several ways it would be different from the predecessor, from the structure to the different responsibilities based on what I am seeing right now and based on what would have come out of the preliminary report that we would have received. But I do not want to pre-empt the results of the report. However, the previous entity would have been responsible for Trinidad and Tobago and now having two separate entities, Tobago, which is responsible for tourism development in Tobago will focus specifically on Tobago. I think Tourism Trinidad places a new focus on Trinidad in developing areas and tourism products that would have been overlooked before, so the focus is on improving the product and then marketing it.

**Mr. Karim:** This might be a rhetorical question, but do you see any potential areas of conflict between the two entities operating in the two separate islands?

**Hon. Cudjoe:** No. I do not see areas of conflict because we then have the committees that are established in order to coordinate peaceful and harmonious relationship. You see, we cannot take for granted or overlook the position that Tobago has responsibility and has always had responsibility for tourism development in Tobago. Tobago would have had its own overseas representatives and doing its own product development. You would remember in your time when the former Minister of Culture wanted to go and hold a carnival in Tobago and he
ran into some problems with that, because the Tobago House of Assembly is responsible for these items in Tobago. Yes?

**Mr. Karim:** Madam Chair, just on line Item 02, the TDC. Do you have any outstanding contingent liabilities that you need to address with respect to that organization?

**Hon. Cudjoe:** That will be a matter more for the Ministry of Finance.

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

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Madam Chair, my colleague from Chaguanas East raised a number of the issues that I wanted to raise, but I just wanted to ask the Minister if all the settlement packages for the former employees of the TDC, have they been fully settled with respect to—

**Hon. Cudjoe:** I am not sure which line Item you are relating to, one; and two, that would be a matter for the Ministry of Finance.

**Madam Chairman:** Is that not the same thing as the outstanding contingent liabilities? Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, line Item 04, Tourism Trinidad Destination Management Company Limited. Is there—will the management company internally use their internal resources to promote destination Trinidad or does the management company intend to source the services of a company to manage it locally or internationally?

**Hon. Cudjoe:** The Minister of Foreign and Caricom Affairs would say I did not seize the thrust of your question. The question you are asking is, if we are going to use our internal resources? I would say, we would utilize the best resources possible to give Trinidad and Tobago value for money and to properly promote destination awareness and market the destination.

**UNREVISED**
Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Okay. In line with your opening statement where you indicated that you would utilize whether it is ads on social media and so forth, this is why I was asking if it is the—

Hon. Cudjoe: Right. Okay. Marketing would not be limited to social media, because when you look at, you would, of course, need overseas marketing representatives—

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Obviously.

Hon. Cudjoe:—and different markets call for different kinds of marketing—Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Absolutely.

Hon. Cudjoe:—but social media, the digital platform, of course, technology would have changed the whole environment as it relates to tourism and we must employ the different technological advancements in order to properly promote the destination. Now we are talking about Uber, about Expedia, TripAdvisor, all these items are now central to tourism advancement, and if we are not doing that then we are out of the game, we are no longer relevant. So we will be exploring all the necessary media, all the necessary resources to properly promote and market Trinidad and Tobago with an aim to improve arrivals, visitor expenditure and all the good stuff that tourism has to offer.

Madam Chairman: Member for Caroni East. Hon. Members, we will now move on to—oh sorry, I did not see you, Member for Caroni Central.

Dr. Tewarie: Just on 04 again, Tourism Trinidad Destination Management Company Limited. Minister is it, I mean, am I correct in saying that the $16 million here allocated for 2018 is really to cover salaries, travel and promotions?

Hon. Cudjoe: No. The operational costs: You have Salaries, Rental, Electricity, Telephone and these things.
Dr. Tewarie: Okay. But that is what I meant, you know.

Hon. Cudjoe: All the recurrent expenditure.

Dr. Tewarie: So it is really going to be caught up in operations. All right, I am clear.

Hon. Cudjoe: Okay.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Members, we will now move on to the Draft Estimates of Development Programme. Sub-Head 09, Development Programme Consolidated Fund, page 92—different book. Item 003, Economic Infrastructure, page 92 to 93. Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.

Mr. Lee: Thank you, Madam Chair. To the Minister, line Item 032, Tourism Agency—Trinidad, $10 million. What is this about? Could you elaborate, Tourism Agency? It sounds like a travel agency, I do not know.

Hon. Cudjoe: Where are you?

Mr. Lee: 032—

Madam Chairman: Page 92.

Hon. Cudjoe: 032. That is a Tourism Trinidad. That is the same Tourism Trinidad. That is the development programmes under Tourism Trinidad Limited. So that would deal with—we spoke about the expansion of the room upgrade programme where the stakeholders, the hoteliers and so on, will be getting a refurbishment of 50 per cent that they would have spent to upgrade, that would come under the new entity. The quality programmes from start to hospitality assure to ensure proper customer service throughout the sector, that will come under this vote also. Basic standards, such as the certification programme for the industry; that comes under this too. Environmental conservation to keep our beaches and our hotels and so on green, to green the industry; that would come
under this also. There is also a new project that is proposed under this vote which is to help stakeholders with the digital marketing side of the product.

Mr. Lee: This is another follow-up question. The new entity, there is one in Trinidad and one in Tobago, correct?

Hon. Cudjoe: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Lee: So this line Item of 032 which says that Tourism Agency - Trinidad will only refer to the Trinidad end?

Hon. Cudjoe: Yes, because remember, the Tobago House of Assembly has responsibility for Tobago’s tourism. Therefore the entity for Tobago falls under the division of Tourism and Culture in Tobago. So the layout of their plans and the details of their allocation would be under the Tobago House of Assembly’s allocation. So when they come here on Thursday I am sure you will have the opportunity to ask your questions then.

Madam Chairman: Member for Chaguanas East.

Mr. Karim: Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, line Item 019, could you give us an idea as to what are these tourism sites and attractions for upgrade?

Hon. Cudjoe: Okay, Item 019, Tourism Sites and Attractions Upgrade. Now, the Ministry of Tourism has, first and foremost, five sites that are under the remit of the Ministry that—let me find it—Las Cuevas, Manzanilla, Vessigny, Maracas and La Brea Pitch Lake. So, of course, our priority would be first and foremost to those sites and attractions. Earlier in this year we would have done meetings with the different regional corporations asking for their recommendations and their proposals to have work done in their areas and we got response from four. So we are still working with regional corporations and different community groups in order to select and go with the items that are ready to go, but our priority first and
foremost is the five sites that are under the remit of the Ministry of Tourism.

**Mr. Karim:** Madam Chair, just a follow-up, on line Item 027—

**Hon. Cudjoe:** 027.

**Mr. Karim:** If you can give us an idea or a status of the Tourism Baseline Survey.

**Hon. Cudjoe:** Okay, the Tourism Baseline Survey, the focus for the survey right now is primarily on Tobago, because we would have completed the two segments of the Trinidad side of the survey. We started one in Tobago, and you probably would have seen the enumerators at the port and at the airport asking questions and having the surveys done and we are moving on to part two of the baseline survey where we are going to be working with the business entities in the tourism sector in Tobago.

**Mr. Karim:** Just a final with respect to the baseline survey. When you are fully completed with the survey, both from the individual entities and the business communities or whichever stakeholder interest groups, by what time do you expect that would be completed? What you intend to do with the results of that baseline survey? In other words, the impact assessment.

**Hon. Cudjoe:** Right. In order to measure your growth you have to start somewhere. So we have never had a baseline survey done before. So this would give us a platform or a place to start from as it relates to seeing the performance of the sector and its direct impact on the people employed within the sector, on the businesses in the sector.

**Mr. Karim:** So by what time, “estimatedly” so, you might want to have the findings be made public?

**Hon. Cudjoe:** The Trinidad side has been completed. So this fiscal year we are working on the Tobago side. So I would say by the end of this fiscal year.

**UNREVISED**
Mr. Karim: No, but the Trinidad side, have the results been of the baseline survey?

Hon. Cudjoe: We have a draft report on the Trinidad side.

Mr. Karim: So by what time you estimate we might be able—the public—

Hon. Cudjoe: To have a national report?

Mr. Karim: Yeah.

Hon. Cudjoe: I would say by the first—let us say by the second quarter in this year.

Mr. Karim: Okay.

Madam Chairman: Member for Caroni Central.

Dr. Tewarie: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. The Tourism Sites and Attractions Upgrade you mentioned—

Madam Chairman: 019.

Dr. Tewarie: Yes, but there are—except for the Pitch Lake they are all ocean sites, they are all beaches. I wondered what was the differentiating factor for Trinidad as opposed to Tobago.

Hon. Cudjoe: Well, the Tobago House of Assembly would have to speak for the Tobago side of how they are going to go about their product development in Tobago, how we are going to go about that. We would have ideas and interact and work closely with the Tobago House of Assembly, but at the end of the day we have to respect the will of the people of Tobago—

Dr. Tewarie: No, but—

Hon. Cudjoe:—and they would choose their sites and work on those.

Dr. Tewarie: No, I mean, the point I am making is that, I mean, I know that you are doing an upgrade in Maracas and these are sites for upgrading and they are all
ocean sites; they are all beaches basically. So I just wondered if there is another dimension to the development of tourism in Trinidad.

**Hon. Cudjoe:** Well, of course, we have different niches as it relates to event tourism, conference tourism, even culinary tourism, eco-tourism, and the new entity would be working specifically with the stakeholders in that regard.

**Dr. Tewarie:** But I do not see anything funded in that direction.

**Hon. Cudjoe:** And that is under the TTL. The 019 you are talking about is under the Ministry.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Okay.

**Hon. Cudjoe:** Right? And that specifically, sites and attractions under the Ministry. Now, as it relates to other items, the niche market development is under the development programme of the entity. Right?

**Dr. Tewarie:** All right, fine.

**Mr. Imbert:** And I would also make the point that those local sites and attractions are the responsibility of the regional corporations and not the Ministry of Tourism.

**Hon. Cudjoe:** The regional corporations. Yes, you are right.

**Mr. Imbert:** So it would not appear here at all.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Okay.

**Mr. Imbert:** So we could stop talking about that.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Well, I do not see why I should stop talking because you feel so.

**Madam Chairman:** Are you finished, Member?

**Dr. Tewarie:** No, I have some other questions. The establishment—028, Establishment of Trinidad and Tobago Tourism Regulatory and Licensing Authority. This is a new entity. This is going to be another state entity?

**Hon. Cudjoe:** Okay, well right now we are conducting the consultations with the
stakeholders on the development, on the proposed development, of a regulatory authority. So those consultations are happening right now. As you are probably aware we are the only destination who claims to be serious about tourism that does not have mandatory standards and regulations for the sector. So this is moving towards establishing and enforcing mandatory standards in the sector.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Okay, and—

**Hon. Cudjoe:** The entity that is working on this item should complete its report by the end of December 2017, so we will see what the recommendations are and then see what is the next best step to take.

**Dr. Tewarie:** The Caribbean Small Tourism Enterprises Project (STEP), how do you envisage that?

**Hon. Cudjoe:** Okay, that is the STEP programme. It is a regional programme that we have partnered with CTO and the OAS has also been a part of this initiative. It has been very successful in Trinidad and Tobago to the point that the Trinidad and Tobago programme has been used as the template throughout the region and it works with small tourism operators to help them in accounting, getting their books ready, more so programmes like how to decorate on a small budget—

**Dr. Tewarie:** Helping them survive.

**Hon. Cudjoe:**—helping the entities that have five and less rooms, even 20 rooms. People who are interested in becoming bigger players in the tourism industry but need some hand-holding. It also helps with other entities that do not probably see themselves as directly related to tourism but we help them to understand how everybody has a role to play. Tourism is everybody’s business. And looking at the business development side of tourism for the small man or for people who are interested in small-business development.
Dr. Tewarie: Okay. I am fine.

Madam Chairman: Member for Oropouche West.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: Thank you, Madam Chair. I am not sure if my colleague had asked 030?


Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: Hon. Minister what exactly does this entail? And, is there a separate committee going to be established to set up this policy and is there a commencement date?

Hon. Cudjoe: No. A separate committee would not be established for this. This is the kind of work where you pretty much work with the Tourism Advisory Unit alongside a consultant to help us improve our tourism policy. The last tourism policy for Trinidad and Tobago was developed in the years 2007/2008 and this is 10 years later. Our tourism master plan was developed in 1995 when I was in second form and I think it is high time for us to review these plans and policies for something more modern, more timely and more relevant for this day and age.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: And is there a time for implementation?

Hon. Cudjoe: Well, of course, even before we get to implementation, the review of the policy has to be done. So the Ministry is right now working on developing the scope of works to bring on a consult—to advertise and to bring on a consultant and to get the ball rolling so that this work could be done in this fiscal year.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Madam Chair. Continuing on the line of question for 030, I do believe that there was a policy being developed and I do remember that there was a sector, and I am asking if the Minister has considered this? There is a sector being developed for the disabled community which accounts for 7 per cent of world travel and therefore I just want to ask if the
Minister will in fact continue building on that sector in light of the fact that it was considered during the term of the PP, the Partnership. And also—

**Madam Chairman:** What Item are we on?

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Development of the National Tourism Policy.

**Madam Chairman:** Oh, so you are really asking that the disabled community be considered in the policy?

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Absolutely.

**Hon. Cudjoe:** I want to assure the Member that we have continued to build on this policy which has been a policy of the Caribbean Tourism Organization and we would have done some work even down at La Brea to get to build a ramp for the differently-abled and now in the development of a site. We are ensuring that the differently-abled are considered and working also with stakeholders so that they could craft and develop the programmes and the tours that they offer to suit the elderly, to suit the differently-abled also. So it is a Caribbean initiative that is being supported by this Government and we are working on it.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** I am glad to hear this continued. Also on line Item 019, Tourism Sites and Attractions Upgrade. I know Minister you had identified several areas that would be receiving this. I am asking if you would consider at all two sites—

**Hon. Cudjoe:** The Bat Cave?

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Two sites in my constituency of Cumuto/Manzanilla—

**Hon. Cudjoe:** The Bat Cave?

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** You know I have to make a plug. Yes, definitely for the bat cave which is, of course, you know it is indigenous—white, white bats, which *National Geographic* holds us, you know, in high regard; and also we have a
nesting turtle site in Fishing Pond and I am asking if during the course of your tenure if you can consider those two sites, please.

**Hon. Cudjoe:** Okay. As you would have been informed earlier most of these sites would really fall under the agreement of the regional corporations but we in the Ministry of Tourism would work with the different entities—

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Absolutely.

**Hon. Cudjoe:**—in order to help develop these sites.

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

**Mr. Padarath:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, just to build on a point you made earlier on line Item 028—

**Hon. Cudjoe:** 028.

**Mr. Padarath:** With respect to the Establishment of Trinidad and Tobago Tourism Regulatory and Licensing Authority, you spoke about the regulating of industry standards. I know with respect to sanctions that in other countries they use an avenue that is available to them in the industry called Grading Licences. How do you intend to treat with this particular issue of sanctions when it comes to regulating the industry standards?

**Hon. Cudjoe:** Well, we are at a very early point in the development of proper standards. Of course, we would have worked with the TTBS, the Trinidad and Tobago Bureau of Standards to implement the TTTIC, the Trinidad and Tobago Tourism Industry Certification programme, but that is voluntary. So we need to at least first make the very basic standards mandatory and then we can go to a grading system, but it is really a hand-holding process for most of our stakeholders and as we continue to interact with them and consult with them we have to implement a programme that is fitting so that nobody gets left behind and we can
truly bring the standard of the product up to scratch.

Mr. Padarath: Minister, while I agree with you, I think there must be an approach where there is both happening at the same time with respect to the mandatory standards but also looking at the issue of regulating the industry when it comes to the sanctions. So I would like to point in the direction of the Grading Licences as well as some of the other benchmarks that have been used in this particular way that would be able to assist in the thereafter as well.

Hon. Cudjoe: I am sure that is something we could consider and we could liaise with the experts that are doing the consultation and working on this matter right now in order to get the very best that the whole system has to offer.

Mr. Padarath: Sure. As you are on the point of those who are involved in the process, have you or are there currently consultants working on these policy documents?

Hon. Cudjoe: They are working on the consultations right now as we speak and then they would propose a way forward for the Ministry.

Madam Chairman: Member for Naparima.

Mr. Charles: Hon. Minister, I am referring to 030, Development of the National Tourism Policy—

Hon. Cudjoe: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Charles: I am just asking whether there is a communications component to that and if so when we will begin to see advertisements abroad in the international media? At least one advertisement. We hear about the Turks and Caicos—

Hon. Cudjoe: You are not referring to 030. I am sorry, you missed that under recurrent.

Mr. Charles: No, this development of the policy and I am asking about the policy
with relation to communications.

**Hon. Cudjoe:** No, what you are talking about is overseas marketing. That is under Vote 62, you missed that under recurrent.

**Mr. Charles:** So you are saying the policy does not have a component of communications?

**Hon. Cudjoe:** No, I am saying that you missed Vote 62 under recurrent.

**Mr. Charles:** I missed it.

**Madam Chairman:** Okay, Item zero—[Crosstalk]

**Hon. Cudjoe:** You were probably outcast.

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

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Madam Minister, line Item 021, the Cruise Tourism Initiative. There is no funding that has been put for that in the midst of your recent thrust on the increase in tourist arrivals.

**Hon. Cudjoe:** Okay, the Cruise Tourism Initiative would be handled by the new entity. So that is in that line Item for the new entity.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** The new entity that is going to come on?

**Hon. Cudjoe:** Yes, Sir.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Okay.

**Hon. Cudjoe:** Yeah, even when you look at port upgrades and so on would have in the past come under this vote, but now the port has its allocation for the upgrade of the quayside and upgrading the port. So the state enterprise no longer handles that part of it.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Okay.

3.55 p.m.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services, page 93 and
Mr. Karim: Thank you, Madam Chairman. Hon Minister, line Item 031—

Hon. Cudjoe: 031?

Mr. Karim: Yes. Page 93, 031, Certification of Tourism Programme Operators. Could you say how many persons are certified? Who certifies them, and how are they distinguished or recognized?

Hon. Cudjoe: 031?

Mr. Karim: 031.

Hon. Cudjoe: What page are you on, please?

Mr. Karim: Page 93.

Hon. Cudjoe: Oh, yes, okay, TTTIC? The TTTIC Programme is a partnership between the state enterprise and the TTBS, the Bureau of Standards. So the Bureau of Standards is primarily responsible, or assists the state enterprise in doing that.

Mr. Karim: And who awards certification?

Hon. Cudjoe: The Bureau of Standards.

Mr. Karim: And how many such operators certified by the Bureau do we have?

Hon. Cudjoe: I could provide that to you in writing, but I know during the last fiscal year we would have done some work with the taxi drivers and so on, within Trinidad and in Tobago.

Mr. Karim: And how do people at these various ports identify them? Are they easily identifiable as being certified as operators?

Hon. Cudjoe: They have a certificate, but we are not yet at a place of having a sticker just like the black London Cab in Europe would have. And that is what the work of the regulatory authority is geared towards, improving the enforcement.
Mr. Karim: If I may just make a comment and a suggestion. It is the line Item, eh, because I know the Minister of Finance will want to come at the line Item. Given the circumstances in terms—as we are facing now in our country, it will be better for those who are entering the country to easily identify these certified operators.

Hon. Cudjoe: Yes, of course. So the development of trademarks and stickers, and so on, so that they would be easily identifiable would be a part of the programme to be carried out by the regulatory authority.

Mr. Karim: Thank you very much.

Madam Chairman: Okay, so Members, Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services? Yes, Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla, and thereafter Member for Caroni East.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Madam Chair. If the hon. Minister can clarify Line 035 and 053, please.

Hon. Cudjoe: 035 and which one?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: And 053.

Hon. Cudjoe: 035 and 053. Let us go first with 035. That is Safety and Security. That has to do with working alongside with the police. It also has to do with the work we are doing with CARPHA in order to ensure health and safety standards in food management and so on. We would have done some significant work both in Trinidad and in Tobago in public awareness and working with the service providers in health and safety measures with CARPHA and we continue to work with CARPHA in that regard.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: And 053?

Hon. Cudjoe: 053 is a Visitor Relations Management System. This is a
programme that would have been—being developed by the TDC. It is a programme that they were partnering with the Government of Bahamas to have a proper record of the visitors that come and to really keep a track of them, what they are doing and how they are enjoying their stay while they are in Trinidad and Tobago, and even afterwards, in order to ensure return visits. But if you pay close attention to your document, Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla, you would see there is no allocation for 2018. So you are asking me then to report on the previous year. All these Items that were previously executed by the TDC would be considered by the new entity.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: All right. So therefore what you are saying is that having accomplished the Tourism Safety and Security Project, and this other visitor relationship, you have concluded your matter and there is no need to go forward? Or is it that you have come up with a—

Hon. Cudjoe: No, I am saying this is under that line. You recognize that is a Line Item—

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Yeah, right.

Hon. Cudjoe:—of $10 million. All these Items will be taken into consideration under that vote.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Okay.

Madam Chairman: Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Line Item 011. The Incentive Upgrade of Hotel—

Hon. Cudjoe: Incentive Upgrade of Hotel, yes.

Dr. Gopeesingh: There is no more funding for it in the 2018.

Hon. Cudjoe: I do not know if you missed it but it was the very first Item that the Member for Pointe-a-Pierre would have raised, and that falls under the new entity.
Dr. Gopeesingh: And how is that different from what the Minister of Finance spoke about in his budget presentation?

Hon. Cudjoe: That is what the Minister of Finance spoke about.

Dr. Gopeesingh: All right, thanks. Just one more. The Maracas Beach Community Tourism Initiative, what has happened to the initiative to have the work and the whole Maracas Beach upgrade completed? Where is that in relation to this? This is $300,000 for an upgrade and that was a major upgrade that has been thwarted over a period of time.

Hon. Cudjoe: Member, I am of the belief that you are mixing up the two projects.

Mr. Imbert: Let me handle it. The Maracas Beach project is being handled by Nidco not by the Ministry of Tourism. So they no longer have responsibility for that project.

Dr. Gopeesingh: So both are initiatives for upgrade of Maracas Beach—

Hon. Cudjoe: No, it is two different facilities.

Mr. Imbert: Completely different things.

Hon. Cudjoe: Further down the road from the bigger project is a little fishing site that we are working with the fishermen and the member of that community to develop that site. So they would have asked for a gazebo, and to upgrade the parking facility, because they want to do small weddings and so on there, and we have worked with them and continue to work with them in that regard. The bigger project that I think you are referring to is under the Ministry of Works and Transport now.

Mr. Imbert: The river separates the two projects, if you are familiar in the beach at all. So this side of the river would be the project the Minister is speaking of, and on that side of the river is the larger project being handled by Nidco.
Dr. Gopeesingh: And it is continuing?

Mr. Imbert: Yes, almost finished. When last you went?

Madam Chairman: Member for Chaguanas East.

Mr. Karim: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Hon. Minister, line Item 017, NTQSI. Could you give us an update on it?

Hon. Cudjoe: That is the Item I had spoken about before which is National Standards and Quality of Service. So the STAR programme that was previously implemented by TDC, that would be considered here but what we are doing under this programme in this fiscal year is implementing and expanding the regional service programme called Hospitality Assured where we are trying to get as many of our properties hospitality-assured certified in this fiscal year.


*Question put and agreed to.*

*Head 35 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.*

Madam Chairman: Thank you, Minister. Thank you, Madam PS and other representatives from the Ministry of Tourism.

*Head 38: Environmental Commission, $6,283,900.*

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

Hon. Imbert: Madam Speaker, the Environmental Commission is a superior court of record established under the Environmental Management Act. Its purpose is to resolve environmental disputes.

*Question proposed:* That Head 38 stand part of the Schedule.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Members, the sum of $6,283,900 for Head 38,
Environmental Commission is comprised of moneys proposed for expenditure under the following Sub-Heads and Items to be found in the Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure. We now proceed to consider the Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure. Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure, page 249; Item 001, General Administration, page 249; Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, Item 001, General Administration, pages 249 and 250; Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases; Item 001, General Administration, page 251.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 38 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Madam Chairman: I thank the representatives from the Environmental Commission. You all are now discharged.

Head 05: Parliament, $131,463,500.

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

Hon. Imbert: Madam Chairman, the Parliament supports the legislative branch of the State.

Question proposed: That Head 05 stand part of the Schedule.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Members, the sum of $131,463,500 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: Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure, Item 001, General Administration, page 26; Item 002, Office of the Ombudsman, pages 26 and 27; Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, page 27; Item 001, General Administration, pages 27 to 28. Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.

Mr. Lee: Madam Chair, page 28, Line Item 97, Expenses of the Office of the
Leader of the Opposition was decreased by $195,000.

**Hon. Imbert:** That is just a round number. It will be supplemented—

**Mr. Lee:** Well, why did you not round it back up to $3.5 million that was there in 2017?

**Mr. Imbert:** We rounded in the millions.

**Member:** Say you will give it—

**Mr. Imbert:** I said I will give it back. Why are you behaving like this?

**Mr. Lee:** Okay, sorry. Thank you. You will give it back. Okay.

**Hon. Imbert:** You could listen to Princes Town.

**Mr. Lee:** Okay. We will get it back, $195,000—$3.5 million. Thank you.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 002, Office of the Ombudsman, pages 28 and 29; Sub-Head, 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, Item 001, General Administration, page 30; Item 002, Office of the Ombudsman, page 30; Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies, Item 002, Commonwealth Bodies, page 30; Item 004, International Bodies, page 31.

Hon. Members, we will now move on to the *Draft Estimates of the Development Programme*—different book. Sub-Head, 09, Development Programme, Consolidated Fund, page 9; Item, 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services, page 9; Infrastructure Development Fund, page 192—same book; Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services, page 192.

*Question put and agreed to.*

**Head 05 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.**

**Madam Chairman:** I would like to thank Madam Clerk and the other representatives for the Parliament. You all are discharged.

Hon. Members, the Standing Finance Committee is suspended to Thursday,
the 19th day of October, 2017 at 1.30 p.m.

4.10 p.m.: Standing Finance Committee suspended.
Madam Chairman: The meeting of the Standing Finance Committee is now resumed and we are now considering Head 15, the Tobago House of Assembly.

Head 15: Tobago House of Assembly, $2,175,683,000.

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

Hon. Robinson-Regis: Thank you very much, Madam Chairman. Madam Chairman, without prejudice to section 75(1) of the Constitution, the Tobago House of Assembly shall, in relation to Tobago, be responsible for the formulation and implementation of policy in respect of the matter set out in the Fifth Schedule. The Deputy Chief Secretary and Secretary for Finance and the Economy in his budget presentation for the fiscal 2017/2018 indicated that the budgetary proposals were predicated on the following thematic areas: building economic resilience, fostering innovation and creativity, supporting our tourism industry, revitalizing our agricultural sector, developing our human capital, providing housing opportunities, enhancing health care delivery, fostering and stimulating rural development, holistic development of young adults, preserving our pristine natural environment, and empowering and building communities.

Divisions were realigned and one new division created for greater efficiency.
and achievement of the strategic mandate using the existing complement of staff. The staff complement is as follows: total number of the public officers, 1,707; total number of vacant positions, 1,075—551 with bodies, 524 without bodies; total number of contract employees 1,827; total number of short-term employees, 266; total number of daily rated, 7,725.

Madam Chairman, a consultant has been engaged to perform performance management systems, increase in the internal audit staff, establishment of the procurement unit in anticipation of the procurement legislation, and assessing proposals for the Assembly’s accounting framework. All financial statements of the Tobago House of Assembly, up to financial year ended September 30, 2016, have been submitted to the Auditor General. The Tobago House of Assembly is also being asked to share in the burden of adjustment, and reductions will require the THA to suppress expenditure and utilize the facility of virement and transfers of funding to meet critical needs to address any shortfalls in areas which are critical to the revitalization strategies.

Madam Chairman, we would also like to indicate that the Tobago House of Assembly is particularly pleased that in the statement made by the Minister of Finance that consideration is being given to the THA being allowed to borrow on its own and not through the Government of Trinidad and Tobago.

Thank you very much, Madam Chairman.

*Question proposed:* That Head 15 stand part of the Schedule.

**Madam Chairman:** Hon. Members, the sum of $2,175,683,000 for Head 15, Tobago House of Assembly, is comprised of moneys proposed for expenditure under the following Sub-Heads and Items to be found in the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditures*, the *Draft Estimates of the Revenue and Expenditure of the Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies and of the Tobago House of Assembly*, and
We now proceed to consider the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure*. Member?

**Dr. Rambachan:** Can we ask the question of something that the Minister said in her presentation for clarification?

**Madam Chairman:** Well, I would think that if maybe you could tie it to a line Item, I would have no difficulty. Okay? Sub-Head 06, Current Transfers to Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies which is page 64, but I would want to suggest Members that we go straight to the *Draft Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure of Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies of the Tobago House of Assembly* for the very reason that the first thing is just a summary and the details are in the *Draft Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure* and we are at page 11, Division 01 - Assembly Legislature. Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure, page 11; 001, General Administration. Member for Caroni Central.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Yeah, one simple question. Can you tell me the number of employees directly hired by the House of Assembly?

**Hon. Imbert:** We had given that information last year. What is the category of employees you wish?

**Dr. Rambachan:** The full—

**Hon. Imbert:** No, but what do you want?

**Mr. Charles:** Permanent, contract and daily-paid workers.

**Hon. Imbert:** All right. I will give you the information that we have. Total number of public officers 1,707; total number of contract employees 1,827; total number of short-term employees 266; total number of daily rated workers, 7,725.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Caroni Central. Okay, Member for Naparima.

**Mr. Charles:** Thank you very much. Would the Minister care to tell us what
percentage of workers in Tobago are employed directly first by the THA, given these figures, and indirectly subsequently.

**Hon. Imbert:** I do not think we can provide that kind of information.

**Mr. Charles:** Is it 70 per cent, 80 per cent?

**Hon. Imbert:** We cannot provide that kind of information. I can provide you the number of employees in the Assembly which I have done, and that is what we can do.

**Mr. Charles:** So, as Minister of Finance you have no sense of what proportion of the population—

**Hon. Imbert:** That is not relevant to the line Item under discussion.

**Mr. Charles:** It is because it is part of the planning in Tobago, but—

**Hon. Imbert:** Well, I will defer to the Chairman on this, but I cannot speak about the demographics of Tobago, the population of Tobago.

**Mr. Charles:** But you must have a sense—

**Hon. Imbert:** Madam Chairman, I will defer to you on this.

**Madam Chairman:** Member, I think that is information that maybe somebody could get from CSO as far as the total population and then do their calculations. Member for Naparima, you are okay?

**Mr. Charles:** Yes.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Tabaquite. Okay, so we go on to Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, page 11; 001, General Administration, pages 11 and 12. Sub-Head 03—Member for Caroni Central?

**Dr. Tewarie:** 02.

**Madam Chairman:** Head 02, 001, General Administration.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Yes, just two questions. One has to do with 28, Other Contracted Services—no, no, sorry. My error. Janitorial Services and the reason I ask is that I
noticed in most of the other entities that we have examined we have seen an increase for this Item and I just wanted the amount—although there is no increase I just wanted the amount explained. And the second issue is that I wanted to understand if there was a constituency office—this is line Item 64—for each Assemblyman who has a ministerial or a secretarial portfolio?

**Hon. Imbert:** Well, Madam Chairman, I am a little confused on the first Item because there has been no change. I am not sure, therefore, what the question is; and the second question was not clear either. What exactly is the issue with constituency offices?

**Dr. Tewarie:** No, I just wanted to know if this is representing the cost of all the secretaries in the—

**Hon. Imbert:** No, this would be just like the national Parliament. This would be a provision to deal with the elected Members of the House of Representatives.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Yes, so it is their offices?

**Hon. Imbert:** Elected. Just as the same way that local government representatives have offices in Trinidad, Members of Parliament have offices, then in addition, the elected members of the House of Assembly would have offices.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Okay. So it would be for each. All right.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Under Contact Employment, I noticed that the salaries under personnel is $4.3 million, but Contract Employment amounts to $2 million, why is Contract Employment so high? Madam Chair, I know we did not deal with the summary pages, but the Contract Employment in the summary page is $220 million. That is the page we skipped before we came to page 11. So my general question: Why is Contract Employment so high in the Tobago House of Assembly?

**Hon. Imbert:** I can answer that. The number of vacant positions at present is
1,075. So that there is a delay in the appointment of public officers as applies in Trinidad as well.

**Madam Chairman:** Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, page 12; 001, General Administration. Member for Tabaquite.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Item number 66, under General Administration, Hosting of Conferences, Seminars and other Functions, I noticed that the amount spent was 1.488 and the estimate was 1.5.

**Madam Chairman:** Member, we are at Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases; 001, General Administration.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Okay, I will come to it again.

**Madam Chairman:** Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies, page 12; 007, General Administration, page 12. Division 02 - Office of the Chief Secretary; Sub-Head, 01, Personnel Expenditure, page 13; 001, General Administration, page 13. Member for Tabaquite.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Under Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance, that 01, is the salary of the Chief Secretary and the Assemblymen in that $4.5 million?

**Hon. Imbert:** No.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Where would one find it?

**Hon. Imbert:** Under Legislature.

**Dr. Rambachan:** In this very document?

**Hon. Imbert:** This book. [Hon. Imbert displays book]

**Dr. Rambachan:** Where?

**Hon. Imbert:** In this book. [Hon. Imbert displays book] When we get to that we could deal with it.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Sorry?

**Hon. Imbert:** When we get to that Item, we could deal with it.
Dr. Rambachan: Sure. No problem.

Madam Chairman: Member, when we looked at Division 01 - Assembly Legislature, Sub-Head 002, Information, page 14. Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.

Mr. Lee: Thank you, Madam Chair. To the Minister, line Item 34, University Graduate Recruitment Programme. I see a decrease of $1 million, but throughout all other Heads you had allocated to maintain this line Item in the different Heads, but in Tobago House of Assembly I see it has been done away with.

Hon. Imbert: I am somewhat confused at what you said. There is no increase.

Mr. Lee: No, I said that you have decreased it. It is no longer a line Item for 2018.

Hon. Imbert: It has been removed.

Mr. Lee: Yes, it has been removed, but in the other Heads that we have done so far it has been maintained even though the Government of the day has not done anything about it or instituted it.

Hon. Imbert: The House of Assembly is a semi-autonomous body. They can address this issue in the way that they deem appropriate. They do not have to follow Trinidad.

Mr. Lee: Okay, they do not have to follow Trinidad.

Hon. Imbert: No.

Mr. Lee: They are a law unto themselves.

Hon. Imbert: Semi-autonomous. They are not a law unto themselves. That is a bad statement you just made.

Dr. Rambachan: Under Official Overseas Travel, No. 27, I would like to find out what overseas travel was involved for the $400,000 fully spent—completely spent.

Madam Chairman: Okay Member, we are still on 002. I know the print is quite fine. Okay, so are we finished with 002? And if so, I will go on to 007, Public Administration. Member for Tabaquite, you can now ask your question. We are on

UNREVISED
page 15.

**Dr. Rambachan:** All right we have gone fast, so they got away. But you see, Madam Chair, with your permission, going through the Items like this is important, I agree, but in the summary pages the real expenditures of the Tobago House of Assembly can be seen. When you look at individual Items of Contract Employment, on each one of these categories of the different Secretariats that is one thing, but when you look at page 4 and you see Contract Employment in 2017 of $220 million and the Minister says there are 1,075 persons employed under Contract Employment I am trying to equate $220 million with 1,075 persons, and that is where my difficulty is coming. So if I am a little behind, it is because I am trying to reflect and see how are these figures tallying because $220 million on Contract Employment is in my view a very large sum for a place like Tobago.

**Madam Chairman:** But your question just now was in respect to overseas travel?

**Dr. Rambachan:** Yeah, but that has gone. You had gone past that. So I am now on page 15 with you and I am back to Contract Employment, and here you have Contract Employment of $5 million and now a budget of 3.3, and I ask the question again because I cannot reconcile 1,075 persons—unless I have something missing—to that very bigger figure of $220 million.

**Hon. Imbert:** We are not speaking about that. We are on page 15, line Item—

**Dr. Rambachan:** Line 16.

**Hon. Imbert:**—16, which is a figure of $3.3 million. So I do not know why you are using a different number.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Maybe I should have sought the permission of the hon. Chairman to really deal with the summary pages where the breakdown of Estimates are given in total so you would have a total view of what is happening in the Assembly and not this disparate way.
Madam Chairman: But Member, may it help you then if you ask how many people are employed under this—

Dr. Rambachan: I asked that and that is the whole question. I asked that and he said 1,075.

Hon. Imbert: No, I did not say that. I said there are 1,827 contract workers.

Dr. Rambachan: All right. So even 1,875 total.

Hon. Imbert: 1,827.

Dr. Rambachan: Right. Good. And even that in total of the contract workers that should equate to the $220 million being spent on Contract Employment as given on page 4 of the Assembly document and I am finding it difficulty reconciling it, and therefore, I am saying that a clear enough picture is not being given to the taxpayers of this country, and Tobago, who are contributing to the expenditure of Tobago under the law.

Hon. Imbert: Madam Chairman, may I ask what line Item is the Member on?

Madam Chairman: The Member is on Item 16 on page 15.

Hon. Imbert: And the figure there is $3,329,000, not $200 million.

Madam Chairman: Member, would it assist you if you found out how many people were engaged—

Dr. Rambachan: Madam Chair, I would move on, but I find it disconcerting that we cannot deal with the global figure which reflects really what the expenditure on Contract Employment is in Tobago unless there is some other explanation. So I will move on.

Mr. Charles: Thank you, Madam Chair. I am looking at Item 16, Contract Employment and Item 22. The first one is $3.3 million and Short-term Employment 837, and I am trying to understand, Madam Chair, why this reliance on contract and short-term employee? Is there something that we do not
understand?

**Hon. Imbert:** I answered that. I said the Public Service Commission has been tardy in filling the posts on the establishment hence the need to hire people on contract—I explained that—and that there are 1,075 vacancies on the permanent establishment that have not been filled by the service commission.

**Dr. Rambachan:** So the follow-up question—and it would not be allowed, I know—is that why do we not correct that problem if we have a problem that creates this situation? And we are asking the question why this—because it cannot be an optimal way of operating a public service, and I go on.

**Hon. Imbert:** Perhaps you want to move on to the next Item?

**Mr. Lee:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Let me just ask on Item 16, Contract Employments for the $3.3 million, how many individuals this applies to and also the Short-Term Employment? If we can get that in writing or you have it now.

**Hon. Imbert:** We will get it for you.

**Mr. Lee:** Thank you.

**Madam Chairman:** Minister of Finance, we have the answer?

**Hon. Imbert:** No. I said I will provide it for him.

**Madam Chairman:** In writing?

**Dr. Rambachan:** Yes, yes. Of course.

**Madam Chairman:** Okay. We did not understand that.

**Dr. Rambachan:** I am sorry.

**Madam Chairman:** That is all right. 008, Tobago Emergency Management Agency, pages 15 and 16. Member for Princes Town.

**Mr. Padarath:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Minister, just a follow-up on a question that was asked by the Member for Caroni Central under line Item 37 on page 16. I just wanted to have a sense, Minister. We have an increase here by 50,000, but I
wanted to have a sense whether—similarly with other Ministries and agencies we saw that there were outstanding bills that accounted for increases under this particular vote across the board and when I look further down, which we will come to, it is a similar pattern developing here at the Tobago House of Assembly, can you indicate whether or not this is MTS, whether these are private service providers, and whether or not these increases represent moneys or funds to be utilized for outstanding bills?

**Hon. Imbert:** Private contractors.

**Mr. Padarath:** Hon. Minister, can we then have a list of who these private contractors are?

**Hon. Imbert:** It will be provided for you.

**Mr. Padarath:** And the values of these contracts and the time period, please.

**Hon. Imbert:** Okay. Yes.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 009, Occupational Safety and Health, page 16; Item 010, Information Systems Department, page 17. Member for Naparima.

**Mr. Charles:** Item 16, Contract Employment. The question is: Could we ask for all, the contract employees?

**Hon. Imbert:** Yes.

**Mr. Charles:** Right. And in response to the Minister, in Trinidad all the other Ministries—if the problem is the service commission, why do we not see a profusion of contract employees in the other Ministries, like Foreign Affairs, for example? He is in charge, so go ahead. We will deal with it. He is in charge.

**Madam Chairman:** So Minister, no response?

**Hon. Imbert:** Madam Chair, the point is the Government has no control over the Public Service Commission. It is an independent body under the Constitution appointed by His Excellency in his discretion. The Government has no locus,
cannot influence the service commission in any way in terms of filling positions. And as the hon. Attorney General has reminded me, there are Privy Council decisions to this, and therefore, it is wrong of the Member to imply that the Government could somehow compel the service commission to fill these vacancies.

Mr. Charles: You clearly did not understand what I said. I did not say to compel.

Dr. Rambachan. And that is why I have asked for this—

Mr. Charles: I just asked why it is not applicable to Trinidad.

Hon. Imbert: Madam Chairman, I do not know why the Member is behaving this way. I am simply explaining very calmly. There is no need to get on like that, and that is why I have asked since this is the work—

Mr. Charles: Let us move on. Let us move on, Madam Chair.

Hon. Imbert: No, no, no, you had your say. Madam Chair, he had his say, I will like to have mine.

Mr. Charles: Can I have my say after you have your say?

Hon. Imbert: And therefore, can we move on, please?

Madam Chairman: Members, let us move on. Minister of Finance, I think after having that comprehensive answer, I am sure this question is now resolved. Sometimes we need to all be reminded.

Hon. Imbert: I agree.


Mr. Padarath: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, through you, to the hon.
Minister, line Item 04. With respect to the decrease in the area of Minor Equipment for TEMA I know up to today TEMA has had to address several issues, could the hon. Minister indicate whether or not this would affect the operations of TEMA in terms of delivery to the people of Tobago with respect to emergency case situations?

Hon. Imbert: What exactly is the—could you repeat that?

Mr. Padarath: What is the operations of TEMA? We have a decrease of Other Minor Equipment of $700,000. I noted that up to today that TEMA has been involved in several emergency cases in Tobago and I am wondering how this would affect their operations.

Hon. Imbert: The Tobago House of Assembly gets its funding in a block vote and they have their authority to move money around between Heads. I am certain if they require equipment, perhaps a vehicle or something like that, they will make the appropriate adjustments. It is not a large sum. In the context of a $2 billion allocation, 87,000 is not a huge sum. I am sure they can find that money from another Head if it is necessary.


Dr. Tewarie: Can I ask, Madam Chair, if the powers made available by the planning and facilitation Bill have been transferred to the House of Assembly?

Hon. Imbert: That would have required proclamation of the relevant section. I am not aware that that was done.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: Madam Chairman, I would like to say that that section of Bill has not been proclaimed. The only sections that have been proclaimed thus far dealt with the development of the administration. So that question is not relevant.

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Hon. Imbert: He knows that.

Madam Chairman: Member for Caroni Central, you have another question?

Dr. Tewarie: No, I would just respond by saying the question cannot be deemed to be not relevant. I got the answer.

Madam Chairman: Thank you. 012, Land Management, page 20; Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies, page 20; 005, Non-Profit Institutions. Member for Naparima.

Mr. Charles: Would the Minister care to tell us what is this partnership for political and economic? It does not continue, so I would imagine—the budget is 04 and it is 300,000. I just want to know what it is.

2.00 p.m.

Hon. Imbert: You want to know what that is?

Mr. Charles: Yes. What does that expenditure relates to?

Hon. Imbert: Apparently this is expenditure related to the new arrangements for Tobago in terms of internal self-government and so on. So it is part of that process.

Mr. Charles: Okay. And with respect to 005, Non-Profit Institutions, could we just get a list of the organizations involved subsequently?

Hon. Imbert: Yes.

Mr. Charles: Thank you.

Madam Chairman: Member for Tabaquite.

Dr. Rambachan: No, it was asked, Madam Chair.

Mr. Padarath: Madam Chair, to the hon. Minister, line Item 01, similarly, a follow-up to Naparima and Tabaquite, not only a list, but also if we can be provided with the amounts that have been given to these non-profit organizations over the past financial year. And 02, if you could provide some clarity in terms of what is the role, function, operations of this Ecclesiasties Desk.
Madam Chairman: Minister, are you in a position to give a response with respect to the nature of the Ecclesiasties Desk?

Hon. Imbert: Assistance to churches. Assistance to religious bodies.

Mr. Indarsingh: Madam Chair, I have a question under 007.

Madam Chairman: No, we have not reached there as yet. Member for Tabaquite.

Dr. Rambachan: Item 03, what is meant by Representation office and who are the beneficiaries of this annual amount of $250,000? Tobago freeness. Freeness, free money.

Hon. Imbert: I am advised that this is an allocation to assist with minor upgrades to constituency offices.

Mr. Padarath: Madam Chair, just to go back to line Item 02, the Ecclesiasties Desk, I would like to have some further clarification on this. Is it an operational unit that is involved at the THA or is this sum of 250—quarter of a million dollars representative of contributions that have been made to religious organizations? And if so, if we can have a provision of who these organizations were and the sums that were allocated over the past fiscal year totalling $250,000.

Hon. Imbert: Donations, so we will give you a list.

Mr. Padarath: Donations. Okay.

Hon. Imbert: You will recall that your Government did that as well in an effort to win the 2015 election which failed. [Laughter]

Madam Chairman: Member for Couva South, you still have a question?

Mr. Indarsingh: Yes, I have a question under 007.

Madam Chairman: 007, we have not reached there as yet. Are we finished with 005, Non-Profit Institutions? Okay, so we are moving on to 007, Transfers to Households. Couva South.

Mr. Indarsingh: Thank you, Madam Chair. Could we have a clarification of 33,
Urgent Temporary Assistance? What is that and how is this $1 million going to be spent in 2018?

**Hon. Imbert:** This is what is colloquially known as “food cards”. Conditional cash transfer I believe is the official name and also known as “food cards” for needy people.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** So, Mr. Minister, if I could just follow through with, through the Chair, the criteria for such in Tobago falls under or falls in line with the Ministry of Social Development’s criteria?

**Hon. Imbert:** In accordance with the Tobago House of Assembly Act, this is one of the delegated authorities to the Assembly.

**Madam Chairman:** 009, Other Transfers, page 21. Member for Chaguanas East.

**Mr. Karim:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I suspect 01 line Item is incomplete so I do not know what it means, Establishment of Comprehensive Economic what? And could you tell us what that money—the moneys have been allocated so far for the last two years, what have been the outcomes, the achievements of it and what is $1.6 million going to be used for again? So I do not know what is the economic something, it is missing.

**Hon. Imbert:** Well, that is a very long question. The answer is very short. This is for strategic planning. The THA is constantly trying to improve itself and to generate economic activity in Tobago.

**Mr. Karim:** So the THA, they are spending $4.8 million in three years to do a strategic plan? Is that what you are saying?

**Hon. Imbert:** It is for strategic planning.

**Mr. Karim:** Yeah, strategic planning, yes I know. Strategic planning, I understand, $4.8 million.

**Hon. Imbert:** I got the question and I will deal with that in context now. I think
the gentleman to your left could have spent a couple hundred million dollars on this same exercise in Trinidad.

Mr. Karim: I am asking you the question.

Hon. Imbert: Strategic planning.

Mr. Karim: $4.8 million?

Hon. Imbert: That is essential in a $2 billion budget. To spend four—and not even $4 million, “yuh have it wrong”; $1.6 million to plan strategically how to use $2 billion is money well spent.

Mr. Karim: You know the mathematics well, I am doing the addition so—and you are very good at that. Madam Chair, can I go on to line Item 02, please?

Madam Chairman: Yes.

Mr. Karim: To get some details as to what this information technology limited for $5 million has been allocated to do? I am saying it slowly, $5 million. If we could get an idea as to the impact of it?

Hon. Imbert: That is something that we are seeking to pursue in Trinidad as well, the use of call centres as an area to generate activity and employment. This for a call centre—establishment of a call centre in Tobago and Tobago has really been quite successful in this area.

Mr. Karim: Might you be able to indicate, through you, Madam Chair, if it has been quite successful, how many persons have been able to—

Hon. Imbert: No, they have attracted a call centre. That is why you have the $5 million there for 2018. Obviously, there is nothing in 2017 so you could not have done anything before.

Mr. Karim: I was just using the English language that you used.

Hon. Imbert: All right, thank you.

Mr. Karim: But I could get a sense as to what is the projected amount of jobs that
this $5 million allocation—

**Hon. Imbert:** Okay, you want the number of jobs. What else? That is all, jobs? Anything else?

**Dr. Tewarie:** The amount of investment?

**Mr. Karim:** No, he said $5 million allocated.

**Hon. Imbert:** We will give you the information on the number of jobs and the kind of work being done.

**Mr. Karim:** Okay.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Tabaquite.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Thank you. Back to the Establishment of Comprehensive Economic, I suggest—is the last word “plan” or is the last word “planning”.

**Hon. Imbert:** I beg your pardon?

**Dr. Rambachan:** Under 009, 01, is it Establishment of Comprehensive Economic planning or plan?

**Hon. Imbert:** Yes.

**Dr. Rambachan:** No. Is it plan or planning?

**Hon. Imbert:** Plan.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Is there a document that has been produced that therefore reflects the plan?

**Hon. Imbert:** Yes, yes, I have seen it.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Is this a document that has been done internally or by consultants?

**Hon. Imbert:** A combination of both.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Who are the consultants and will the Minister care to name the consultants?

**Hon. Imbert:** Anything else you want to know?
Dr. Rambachan: Minister, I do not want to engage in any tit for tat with you, but you know you made a statement here just now—

Hon. Imbert: Madam Chairman—

Dr. Rambachan: No, no, hold on—suggesting—

Hon. Imbert: What this is all about? Why is he haranguing me? Why is he haranguing me?

Dr. Rambachan: You see, if you make a statement, you must allow us to respond to the statement.

Hon. Imbert: What is this all about?

Dr. Rambachan: No, but, Madam Chairman, there is fairness involved in this.

Hon. Imbert: Fairness in what?

Madam Chairman: All right, I just want to say this to all us of here. I think we are still in the season of light and I think we are engaged in a process of bringing light and therefore, if we could all take a little look at our individual attitudes and see how much lighting, not lightening, how much lighting there is. Please, so I would ask all Members.

Hon. Imbert: In view of the fact that the Member has a long list of questions, we will provide the answer in writing and this is why I am asking you, is there anything else you want to know. So that the scribes will take note of your questions and you will get a written answer. [Crosstalk] The scribes, the scribes, the people who are recording what is going on.

Dr. Rambachan: No scribes took note of the questions asked by the casino workers outside of your house yesterday.

Hon. Imbert: You sent them?

Madam Chairman: Again, Members, remember I talk about the—[Crosstalk] Excuse me? We move on. Division 03 - Finance and the Economy: Sub-Head 01,
Personnel Expenditure, page 22; General Administration, page 22. Member for Caroni Central.

Dr. Tewarie: Ma’am, I really wanted to ask a question on the section before 009, would you allow me?

Madam Chairman: On this one occasion.

Dr. Tewarie: Yes.

Madam Chairman: And therefore, as again, I said, if we—and I am not accusing anybody, but if we try and focus, I think we will all get far. Okay? And this is the only question I am allowing us and we are moving on.

Dr. Tewarie: Yes, and I want to preface this by saying to the Minister of Finance that the question is asked not in mischief, I am just trying to establish something.

[Crosstalk] No, it is not in mischief. If it is in mischief, I would ask it.

Madam Chairman: Member, I take you at your word.

Dr. Tewarie: Yes. The $5 million here is for the Tobago Information Technology—[Interruption]

Madam Chairman: You are on 002?

Dr. Tewarie: Yes. And when he asked what questions would you like answered, the Member for Chaguanas East said employees and I said investment and he acted as if it is not an appropriate—I am interpreting—question. But the reason I wanted to ask is because this is a state investment of $5 million and I wanted to know if there was any—he said that there was a company, there were workers, so I wanted to know if there was a private sector investment also attached to this. That is all.

Madam Chairman: Thank you. So I think that is by way of clarification, okay, so I think that the Minister would have got—Minister, are you in a position to answer that?

Hon. Imbert: Yes, I can answer and the answer is no.
Mr. Singh: A follow up on that question.

Madam Chairman: Okay, and as I said, this is the last thing we are taking on this.

Mr. Singh: Yeah, sure. What was the procurement process for the acquisition of that private investor?

Hon. Imbert: I said there was not one.

Mr. Singh: “Was not one, or.”

Hon. Imbert: Was not. The answer is no. No means no, it does not mean yes.

Madam Chairman: Okay, Division 03 - Finance and the Economy: Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure, page 22; 001, General Administration, page 22. Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.

Mr. Lee: Thank you, Madam Chair. I have a question in 003, Customs. Can I ask that question?

Madam Chairman: No. We are at 001, General Administration; 002, Finance and Accounting; 003, Customs. Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.

Mr. Lee: Thank you, Madam Chair. To the Minister, I am taking line Item 01 under 003 Customs and 03 together. I am assuming it is inter-related? Salaries for 01 for Customs, I am assuming these are Custom Officers? Is that correct?

Hon. Imbert: Yes.

Mr. Lee: So 01, the salaries for Custom Officers at $380,000 estimated for 2018. First question is, how many officers this applies to and then line Item 03, the overtime for these same officers of $4.5 million in overtime. Why is there such a wide disparity between overtime and the actual salary? Eleven times higher in the overtime than the actual salaries of the officers.

Hon. Imbert: First Item is for administrative staff, second Item is for the actual officers themselves who get paid for working on weekends, beyond normal working hours, on public holidays, et cetera, as occurs in Trinidad.

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Mr. Lee: Yeah, I know. So 01 is administrative staff, it does not apply to Custom Officers.

Hon. Imbert: Yes, office staff. The overtime is paid to the officers who actually do the Customs inspection, same as Trinidad.

Mr. Lee: Yeah. So their salaries of overtime would not apply to the Trinidad allocation under the Ministry of Finance for Customs?

Hon. Imbert: The Tobago House of Assembly has delegated authority under the Tobago House of Assembly Act under the Fifth Schedule. Check it out.

Mr. Charles: I thought National Security—

Hon. Imbert: This is the Ministry of Finance, to the Member for Naparima who is talking over there. Customs is a division of the Ministry of Finance, not National Security. Comprendre? [Laughter]

Mr. Lee: I did not ask for national—I was dealing with the Minister of Finance, Naparima, you would have to, you know. So can I get how many officers this overtime applies to, please?

Madam Chairman: Would the answer be provided in writing?

Hon. Imbert: Certainly.

Madam Chairman: Okay. Member for Pointe-e-Pierre, are you finished? Okay, so can we go on to 004, Inland Revenue, page 23; Co-operatives, page 23; Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services; 001, General Administration, pages 23 and 24; 002, Finance and Accounting, page 24; 003, Customs, pages 24 and 25; 004, Inland Revenue, page 25; 007, Fiscal Policy Research Unit, page 25; 008, Budget Division, page 26; 011, Business Development Unit, page 26. Member for Tabaquite.

Dr. Rambachan: Under Contract Employment in the Business Development Unit, I would like to know whether under those officers, are there any officers employed
to give the Tobago House of Assembly advice on the loans that they now have permission to borrow?

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

**Dr. Rambachan:** Line Item 16.

**Hon. Imbert:** No.

**Madam Chairman:** 012, Consumer Affairs, pages 26 and 27; 013, Co-operatives; 015, Financial Literacy Secretariat, pages 27 and 28. Member for Tabaquite.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Under Item 16, what do these people do in this Financial Literacy Secretariat and how many persons have benefited from this Unit of $1.751 million?

**Hon. Imbert:** Going backwards? “Yuh gone back to another page?”

**Dr. Rambachan:** No, page 27.

**Hon. Imbert:** Page 27. Yeah, but what line Item are you on?

**Dr. Rambachan:** 16.

**Hon. Imbert:** Contract Employment?

**Dr. Rambachan:** This is the Financial Literacy Secretariat. I want to know what are these people doing, these contract employees.

**Hon. Imbert:** Fifty thousand dollars?

**Dr. Rambachan:** $1.5 million. Contract Employment.

**Hon. Imbert:** Okay. This is an outreach programme assisting businesses and individuals to become financially literate and these contract employees engage in training and other outreach efforts.

**Dr. Rambachan:** And I suppose you could provide us with a comprehensive list of the number of programmes held, the number of persons who benefited.

**Hon. Imbert:** Sure.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Thank you, Madam Chair. You are finished with Financial
Literacy Secretariat?

**Madam Chairman:** Okay. So we are now calling 016, Youth Energised for Success, page 28. Couva South.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Yes, Madam Chair. Could the Minister tell us what is this Youth Energised for Success focused on and under Contract Employment, how many persons are employed and under the Short-term Employment? Because I see Contract Employment, there is an allocation of $148,000 and Short-term Employment, there is an allocation of $1.5 million.

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

**Mr. Indarsingh:** What is the focus of Youth Energized for Success?

**Hon. Imbert:** We will put it to you in writing. But I want to make the point, Madam Chairman, this is not new. These programmes have been here for years and this same question was asked last year and an answer given, but we will do it again.

**Mr. Karim:** Thank you, Madam Chair. If the hon. Minister of Finance could add to that to tell us for this investment of $2 million for the last fiscal, how many youths have been successfully energized? So we could know the return on the investment.

**Hon. Imbert:** I will let you know how many youths were energized. You want it in energy levels too? [*Laughter*]

**Madam Chairman:** 017, Emergency Social—Member for Princes Town, do you have a question under 016?

**Mr. Padarath:** Yes, Madam.

**Madam Chairman:** Yes, please.

**Mr. Padarath:** Hon. Minister, going back again on the areas of Short-Term Employment, line 22 and Contract Employment, line 16, the Youth Energised for
Success, what is the mandate? But more importantly, what benchmark do you use in terms of measuring these mandates in terms of the success of it?

**Hon. Imbert:** I have just indicated we will provide you with details on the programme, purpose, intent, successes, et cetera. So we will give you a document that will explain all of that.

**Madam Chairman:** 017, Emergency Social and Medical Assistance Unit; 018, Communication Unit, page 29. Member for Couva South.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Thank you, Madam Chair? Could the Minister just give us under 28, Other Contracted Services, what this $1.4 million—$1,468,000 is being spent on?

**Hon. Imbert:** We will send you that in writing.

**Madam Chairman:** 019, Economic Management and Research Unit, page 29; Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, page 30; 001, General Administration, page 30; 002, Finance and Accounting; 003, Customs; 004, Inland Revenue; 007, Fiscal Policy Research Unit; 008, Budget Division; 011, Business Development Unit, page 31; 012, Consumer Affairs; 013, Co-operatives; 015, Financial Literacy Secretariat; 016, Youth Energised for Success, page 32; 017, Emergency Social and Medical Assistance Unit; 018, Communication Unit; 019, Economic Management and Research Unit; Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies, page 32; 005, Non-Profit Institutions. Member for Tabaquite.

**Dr. Rambachan:** I would like to know, Madam Chair, the Contribution to Non-Profit Organizations, which organizations and in what amounts benefited from the $2 million and for what purposes.

**Hon. Imbert:** In writing. It will be provided to you in writing.

**Dr. Rambachan:** And I would also like to find out as a subsequent question, are these transfers or subsidies given en block or is it based upon expenditure of these
organizations or do you just give them a blank cheque as it were and you have no way of auditing and accounting for what has been given.

**Hon. Imbert:** Blank cheques are not given.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Do you audit or do they have to submit accounts for what was spent and how it was spent?

**Hon. Imbert:** Yes.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Maybe we need a forensic audit into the THA to find out if that is true.

**Hon. Imbert:** No. So you do not believe what I am saying?

**Dr. Rambachan:** I do not trust you.

**Hon. Imbert:** What? Madam Chairman, please.

**Madam Chairman:** Members, Members.

**Hon. Imbert:** I am simply—

**Dr. Rambachan:** No, if he wants to behave like that, I could behave like that worse, “yuh” know.

**Hon. Imbert:** No, Madam Chairman, I want to make a point. As Minister of Finance, there are many entities that do not have a line Minister. It is the responsibility of the Minister of Finance to provide the answers at these sessions provided by the technical staff. The technical staff have told me that there are audits and there is proper accountability. I have no reason to doubt them and I take great offence to that comment made by the Member for Tabaquite. I am simply repeating what the technical staff of the THA have told me and I believe them.

**Madam Chairman:** And Member for Tabaquite, I am certain you did not mean it in any way as insulting. But what I would want to say to Members is that if we allow ourselves to let the banter get beneath our skins, we may find ourselves in some sort of difficulty. [Interruption] Just one thing. I know this is a very trying
process but I just want to remind Members, this is the first of eight and therefore, we all will have to exercise great restraint in the course of today. Let there be light. Let us move on.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Madam Chair, on the basis—about light, I understand what you are saying but let us also appreciate, Madam Chair, that for years, the Tobago House of Assembly did not present audited accounts which we could have verified and therefore, one has to ask the question, the context of the performance and auditing of statements.

**Madam Chairman:** All right and I hear what you say, Member for Tabaquite. But I think I do recall in the brief opening statement that there was a comment with respect to the audited accounts and while I cannot remember the year, I think it did strike me that they were up to date.

**Hon. Imbert:** Up to 2015. Sorry, 2016. So please take that back.

**Madam Chairman:** All right, okay. So Members, we are now—

**Hon. Imbert:** Madam Chairman, I just want to put on the record and repeat. I think sometimes, as you have correctly said, these things need to be said. I am advised that all financial statements of the Tobago House of Assembly, up to the financial year ended September 30, 2016, have been submitted to the Auditor General and all statements up to 2015 have been audited.

**2.30p.m.**

**Madam Chairman:** All right, so now that we have been provided with some information that should guide us, we move on to 007, Households, page 33. Member for Caroni East.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Good day, 03 line Item, Payment of Superannuation Benefits to Former—whom? That is a typo there. To former whom for $2 million?
Hon. Imbert: What is the question?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Line Item 03.

Hon. Imbert: I know, but what is the question?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Former whom?

Hon. Imbert: Members of the THA.

Dr. Gopeesingh: No, but it is not stated there.

Hon. Imbert: Okay, well I am stating it now.

Dr. Gopeesingh: All right, so former Members of the THA.

Hon. Imbert: Correct.

Dr. Gopeesingh: So you have got to fill in the typographical error that was made?

Hon. Imbert: Yes, we will.

Dr. Gopeesingh: All right, okay.

Madam Chairman: I think maybe it is because the space allocated was not sufficient with some of the descriptions.

Dr. Gopeesingh: I just wanted some clarity.

Madam Chairman: Okay.

Dr. Gopeesingh: That is fine.

Madam Chairman: So let us move on. Anybody else on 007, Households? We move on to 009, Other Transfers, page 23. Member for Caroni Central.

Dr. Tewarie: Yes. Item 15, Madam Chair. What is the project?—Interest on Project Financing Repayment. What is the project?

Hon. Imbert: At Studley Park. This is interest payments on financing for the operations at Studley Park.

Dr. Tewarie: At?

Hon. Imbert: Studley Park.

Dr. Tewarie: Studley Park. Okay.
Madam Chairman: Member for Caroni Central, are you all right?

Dr. Tewarie: Yes. I am okay.

Madam Chairman: Can I move on? Member for Tabaquite.

Dr. Rambachan: Item 17, Tobago Cassava Products Limited. Is this a company owned by the Tobago House of Assembly?

Hon. Imbert: Yes.

Dr. Rambachan: And is it a producing company? Are they producing products, and if so, how many people are employed and what is their income?

Hon. Imbert: Well, you will notice that there is no allocation. It is being transferred to another division. And what do you want to know? How many people are working there?

Dr. Rambachan: I want to know, yes.

Hon. Imbert: And what else?

Dr. Rambachan: What kind of income they have been earning because you have given them $3 million every year.

Hon. Imbert: So you want to know how many people work there and the revenue that they generate?

Dr. Rambachan: Yeah.

Hon. Imbert: Sure. The information would be provided.

Dr. Rambachan: Sure.

Madam Chairman: Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Thank you. Hon. Minister, Item No. 15, the Interest on Project Financing Repayment of Studley Park, in 2017 it was $10 million and you have estimated for 2018 to be $7.4 million. Could you give an understanding of what was the cost of the project so that these payments are being made and how many payments again got to be made on interest and principal? If you do not have it,
could you provide it in writing?

Hon. Imbert: Yes.

Madam Chairman: This is Item 15?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Yes.

Madam Chairman: All right, I believe Minister had undertaken to provide the details of that.

Hon. Imbert: I told him yes to his question.

Madam Chairman: Okay.

Dr. Gopeesingh: No, just one more, Madam Chair. The Studley Park Escrow Account, in 2017, $10 million was allocated. We are not able to see what has happened with the Escrow Account under the revised estimates. Could the Minister indicate if that $10 million is still in the Escrow Account or if it has been paid and there is $5 million being placed in 2018. So, in 2017 it was $10 million and in 2018, $5 million. Two questions.

Hon. Imbert: In 2017 it was zero.

Dr. Gopeesingh: In 2017?

Hon. Imbert: It was zero.

Dr. Gopeesingh: So what has happened to the money that was there?

Hon. Imbert: No money was put into the Escrow Account in 2017.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Yes, and it still remains there?

Hon. Imbert: No money was—there is a dash. No one money was put in.

Dr. Gopeesingh: All right, fine. The rest explains itself. Thanks.

Hon. Imbert: Well clearly, and the dash explains itself too.

Dr. Gopeesingh: That is all right. I got the answer that I needed.

Madam Chairman: Member for Naparima.

Mr. Charles: Thank you, Madam Chair, Item 27, Venture Capital. There is a
$500,000 decrease. Is this not an area that you would want to encourage, you know, to develop new businesses in terms of diversification?

**Hon. Imbert:** Well, the Venture Capital programme in Trinidad has not been successful since it was initiated some 20-plus years ago. These types of programmes come and go. The THA has an allocation of $1 million for 2018. If it needs to be supplemented, it will be.

**Mr. Charles:** Could you give us an idea of the projects that benefited?

**Hon. Imbert:** We will give you a list.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Mayaro, did you want to ask a question?

Member for Couva South.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Madam Chair, just under 26, Project Financing Repayments, I see that there is an increase in this line Item of $9,277,534. Could the Minister just clarify for our benefit?

**Hon. Imbert:** This is for the building at the corner of Shirvan Park and Milford Road. It is a Division of the House of Assembly, built using a BOLT arrangement and payments fluctuate.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Tabaquite.

**Dr. Rambachan:** On 26, does the liability for these payments therefore rest with the Government of Trinidad and Tobago and not the Tobago House of Assembly?

**Hon. Imbert:** The Tobago House of Assembly gets its funding in the main from the central government. You know that.

**Dr. Rambachan:** So it is still indirect. So then my next question comes. Given that in the opening statement the Minister stated that the Tobago House of Assembly will now be able to borrow money on their own, would the Government still be liable for the payment of those moneys borrowed by the Tobago House of Assembly?
Hon. Imbert: It will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis. In some cases the House of Assembly has indicated it would have the ability to service the debt itself. In other cases, they might come to the central government and we will make a decision with respect to whether we will provide the funding for debt servicing as the case may be.

That is simply an opportunity for them to get their projects moving, to allow them to approach the market. They have a credit rating of their own. The Assembly went out on its own and got an international credit rating, which now allows them to borrow.

Dr. Rambachan: But would you agree that that credit rating was based upon the assumption that the Trinidad and Tobago Government would provide the support and the guarantees?

Hon. Imbert: No. It is without a Government guarantee.

Madam Chairman: Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.

Mr. Lee: Thank you, Madam Chair. Line Item 25, Establishment of Public Private Partnership Unit, $2 million I am assuming was spent in 2017, thereabouts. What is this unit about and is it just for administrative or is it just for finding projects, or?

Hon. Imbert: Over the last two years, with the advent of this PNM administration, there has, quite naturally, been a far better relationship between the Minister of Finance and the Tobago House of Assembly and the central government as a whole. The THA is exploring options, in terms of its development programme, in terms of achieving development in Tobago, and private/public partnership is one of those options. So that this money is to develop the policy and create the bureaucracy and the infrastructure necessary to successfully execute private/public partnerships.

Mr. Lee: So, could the Minister at least give us in writing how this $2 million was
spent and what the 1.5 will be spent on next year?

Hon. Imbert: Yes.

Mr. Lee: Thank you.

Hon. Imbert: Yes.

Mr. Lee: Thank you.

Hon. Imbert: Yes.

Mr. Lee: Thank you.

Madam Chairman: Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: The same line Item 26, Project Financing Repayments. Could the Minister indicate the total cost of this project that he spoke about, and over what period of time the financing repayments would be made? We saw you spent $5.7 million in 2017, and you expect to spend $15 million in 2018. What is the total cost of that project that you said at the corner of Shirvan Road and whatever, and how long do you expect that this project financing repayment will continue for and the value, the total value for it?

Hon. Imbert: You have asked the same question twice.

Dr. Gopeesingh: No.

Hon. Imbert: But the answers is yes to both of the same questions twice.

Dr. Gopeesingh: What is the answer, Minister?

Hon. Imbert: You asked us whether we would provide in writing, the value, the cost and the tenor of the facility.

Dr. Gopeesingh: All right.

Hon. Imbert: I am putting it into proper language.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Well, I just wanted to—

Hon. Imbert: You asked that twice.

Dr. Gopeesingh: I wanted a definitive answer.
Hon. Imbert: And I will answer “yes” twice to those two questions.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Good, so I wanted a definitive answer.

Hon. Imbert: So, “yes” is not definitive?

Madam Chairman: Member for Princes Town.

Mr. Padarath: Madam Chair, through you to the hon. Minister, and I just wanted really to get this right, at least in my mind. Line Item 25, with respect to Establishment of Public Private Partnership Unit, is the Minister saying that after spending $2 million, we are still at the establishing phase, or are there any plans in place or any expression of interest with respect to public/private partnerships, with respect to product or market development?

Hon. Imbert: Still in progress with the assistance from the Caribbean Development Bank.

Mr. Padarath: Are there any, at this point, expressions of interest?

Hon. Imbert: They are not at the point where they would invite proposals for PPPs. They are still in the developmental stage.

Mr. Padarath: So we are saying, after $2 million, nothing in effect?

Hon. Imbert: I am not saying that. I am saying that they are developing the capacity to engage successfully in private/public partnerships. That is something. That is not nothing.

Madam Chairman: Division 04 - Food Production, Forestry and Fisheries: Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure, page 34; 001, General Administration; 002, Agriculture; 003, Marketing; 004, Natural Resources and Forestry; 005, Marine Resources and Fisheries; Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, page 35; 001, General Administration, pages 35 and 36; 002, Agriculture, pages 36 and 37. Member for Caroni Central.

Dr. Tewarie: Yeah. Could I ask a general question about agriculture? I mean, it is
difficult to find a line Item. I just wanted to find out if there was any increase in agricultural production that is aligned to the hotel industry in Tobago? Any increase over, let us say, the last year or two years.

**Hon. Imbert:** Could you just attach that to a line Item, please? Well, if you cannot, I cannot assist you.

**Dr. Tewarie:** All right, I will find the appropriate line Item.

**Hon. Imbert:** Sure, and I will assist you then.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Right.

**Madam Chairman:** 003, Marketing, page 37; 004, Natural Resources and Forestry, page 38; 005, Marine Resources and Fisheries, pages 38 and 39; Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, page 39; 001, General Administration; 002, Agriculture; 003, Marketing; 004, Natural Resources and Forestry; 005, Marine Resources and Fisheries, page 41; Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies, page 41; 005, Non-Profit Institutions; 007, Transfers to Households; 008, Subsidies. Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.

**Mr. Lee:** Just for some information from the Minister of Finance. Both subsidies of 150 and subsidies for fishermen of 450, what are these subsidies about?

**Hon. Imbert:** Boats and fishermen.

**Mr. Lee:** Yeah, but what does it, the details of it, what kind of subsidy? What would a boat qualify for, for the subsidy?

**Hon. Imbert:** All sorts of things associated with a boat, an engine.

**Mr. Lee:** So would your boat or anybody’s boat qualify? I do not know. I am just trying to find some clarity in what would the qualification be.

**Hon. Imbert:** Fishing boats, pirogues, artisanal fishermen.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Madam Chairman, I see the Minister is getting angry.

**Hon. Imbert:** I am not.
Mr. Lee: No, he is not getting angry.

Hon. Imbert: I am simply responding. I am telling him artisanal fishing. I am sure he knows what that means.

Mr. Lee: And the subsidy for fishermen, what qualification or how would one qualify to access that subsidy?

Hon. Imbert: You would have to be a bona fide fisherman or fisherwoman.

Mr. Lee: Thank you, Minister.

Hon. Imbert: You are welcome.

Madam Chairman: Member for Caroni Central.

Dr. Tewarie: Yes. Thank you, Madam Chair. On subsidy 008, Item 04, Agricultural Incentive Programme; has this Agricultural Incentive Programme helped the agricultural sector to provide increased supplies based on demand by the hotel industry in Tobago?

Hon. Imbert: You want a long answer or a short answer?

Dr. Tewarie: You know what I want. I want a very good answer. That is all.

Hon. Imbert: I am told, I am advised, by the technocrats that the answer is yes.

Dr. Tewarie: Can it be quantified, Madam Chair?

Hon. Imbert: Well that is kind of difficult, you know. To link a subsidy to production is kind of quantum physics, you know. Quantum physics. But we will see what we could do for you.

Dr. Tewarie: I want the island to make progress in self-sufficiency.

Hon. Imbert: We will see. We all do. We all do. We all do. We are all interested in this. We would see what we can provide for you in greater detail.

Madam Chairman: 009, Other Transfers, page 41; Division 05, Tourism, Culture and Transportation; Sub-Head, 01, Personnel Expenditure; 001, General Administration, page 42; 002, Tourism. Member for Caroni East.
Dr. Gopeesingh: Line Item 01 and 02, under salaries, could we have an appreciation of how many people are employed for those salaries with the Tobago aspect of the tourism sector? And under wages of $17 million, how many are employed to pay the wages for $17 million? So, both salaries, how many there, and for wages how many personnel for the $17 million in the THA tourism sector?

Hon. Imbert: We gave a breakdown of the total for the Assembly. If you want a breakdown by Division we can do that. Okay? So we will do that.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Right, thanks.

Madam Chairman: 007, Culture, pages 42 and 43; Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services; 001, General Administration, page 43. Member for Caroni.

Dr. Gopeesingh: The same on line Item 16, if the Minister would be kind enough to provide the information on the amount of personnel under Contract Employment, under Culture?

Hon. Imbert: We would do it for all. You would get a list for all.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Thank you.

Hon. Imbert: So no need to ask each one.

Dr. Gopeesingh: No, I would not ask anymore. If you said all, that is fine.

Hon. Imbert: That is the second time I have said all.

Dr. Gopeesingh: No, well. Repetition is good for the soul.

Hon. Imbert: I never heard that.

Madam Chairman: Member for Princes Town.

Mr. Padarath: Thank you, Madam Chair. Sorry to repeat, hon. Minister, but similarly as a concern raised by the Member for Caroni East. Line Items 37 and 43, again, very astronomical allocations in the area of janitorial services and security services. So across the board, in all divisions, instead of having to repeat and annoy you, if you can provide the service providers and the details of these service
providers, in relation to existing contracts.

Hon. Imbert: Are you on page 44, Item 37?

Mr. Padarath: No, I am on page 43, Items 37 and 43.

Hon. Imbert: Page 43? Five hundred thousand is astronomical?

Mr. Padarath: Yeah.

Hon. Imbert: No man. Come on.

Mr. Padarath: Well, my main concern with respect to Janitorial and Security Services is that I would like to find out who are the service providers, seeing that you have indicated that they are private service providers. What existing contracts, and the details of the contracts with respect to these service providers? Because when you look across the THA and in other Ministries as well you see very high figures for janitorial services and security services. We were advised that in other Ministries this was with respect to outstanding bills. But again, these high costs are seen under the THA. And if it does not reflect outstanding bills and it is really for private service providers, I think we would like to have an idea of who these service providers are and the details with respect to the contract details and values.

Hon. Imbert: You know, the typical wages of the security personnel now. You talking about 12 people? You find that is terrible and huge and enormous? Twelve people?

Mr. Padarath: Astronomical.

Hon. Imbert: Twelve people is astronomical? Come on, be serious. These are small amounts of money.

Mr. Padarath: Madam, it still does not change the fact that I would like the details.

Hon. Imbert: You would get the details of the 10 or 12 people.

Mr. Padarath: Right, it could be 10, 12 or 100, we still want the details. These are
private service providers.

Madam Chairman: The details would be provided in writing. Yes? Okay, so can we move on? 002, Tourism, page 44. Member for Tabaquite.

Dr. Rambachan: Item No. 62, what accounted for the $22 million increase in 2017, under Promotions, Publicity and Printing?

Madam Chairman: Page 44, Item 62.

Dr. Rambachan: Which, for this division as $41.1 million on the whole, nevertheless.

Hon. Imbert: As you would know, the mainstay of the Tobago economy outside of the House of Assembly is the tourism sector and, therefore, it is necessary to spend money on marketing Tobago as a tourist destination, and that is what this expenditure is for.

Dr. Rambachan: So you allocated $8 million and you spent $30 million.

Hon. Imbert: We have to rebuild the Tobago economy. What is wrong with you? “Yuh doh like tourists?”

Dr. Rambachan: It is good the country is hearing your insults and your refusal to answer.

Hon. Imbert: You could say what you want, you know, but you know that Tobago depends on tourism and I would not allow you to deny them that opportunity.

Madam Chairman: Member for Naparima.

Mr. Charles: Item 62, the same Item. Could the Minister indicate in that $30 million, which was spent in 2017, whether—and you talk about destination, Promotions, Publicity and Printing—are there any advertisements abroad about the greatness about Tobago and the uniqueness about Tobago?

Hon. Imbert: Yes.

Mr. Charles: Could you indicate on which television stations abroad?
Hon. Imbert: We will provide you with a list.

Madam Chairman: Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Hon. Imbert: I am being told here they have television programmes in the United Kingdom. They use billboards. They use all forms of advertising.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Madam Chairman: Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, in the same line Item, would you be able to provide value for money, in terms of how many visitors we receive from utilizing this methodology, in terms of, okay when persons come in you would be able to say that they read this or they got this information from the television, so that you are able to see whether the publications and the materials that you are using are in fact impacting?

Hon. Imbert: To do that sort of research would require some expenditure. We would have to hire an agency. But I would say that every dollar spent on promoting Tobago is a dollar well spent.

Madam Chairman: 006, Transport; 007, Culture, pages 45 to 46. Member for Princes Town.

Mr. Padarath: Madam, line Item 89 and 90, Cultural Programmes 90, Folk and Arts Festivals, an allocation of 1.5 in line Item 89, 90, Folk and Arts Festivals, $3million. If we can just have a list of the cultural programmes, the target areas and the breakdown of expenditure there. Similarly with the folk and artist festivals, whether or not these are for organizations or whether these are really for projects under the THA as well. If that point could be clarified, I would be grateful. If it is whether this allocation is for organizations who apply or whether or not these are programmes that are actually put on by the THA?

Hon. Imbert: Well, I invite you to come to the next Heritage Festival so you can
see that these are programmes put on by the Tobago House of Assembly, indigenous programmes.

**Mr. Padarath:** But are there, in this allocation, included in the subventions for organizations that are involved in that exercise?

**Hon. Imbert:** No.

**Mr. Padarath:** So this expenditure of $4.5 million is under THA for culture for the Tobago Heritage Festival?

**Hon. Imbert:** It is for—I invite you to spend a little more time in Tobago. There are series of festivals throughout the year. The Heritage Festival is just one of them.

**Mr. Padarath:** Okay, and, therefore, with these allocations, I would like to have an idea of which ones, hon. Minister, so I could familiarize myself maybe, in anticipation of a visit.

**Hon. Imbert:** We would send you a comprehensive list.

**Mr. Padarath:** Thank you.

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

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** The same line Item, but Sub-Head 91, the Tobago Heritage Festival of $20 million and the explanation is given there of $20 million being spent for the Tobago Heritage Festival; $8 million Tobago Folk Festival, $3 million and Tobago Music Festival, $1 million. Could the Minister indicate who manages this expenditure? Is it the Assembly or is it the Ministry of Tourism or is it the Ministry in the area of culture? Could you just give us a simple explanation? This expenditure of $20 million on festivals, who is responsible for that expenditure?

**Hon. Imbert:** Under Schedule 5 of the Tobago House of Assembly Act, this is a delegated authority of the Assembly.
Dr. Gopeesingh: Could you just indicate which organization or who it has been delegated to, if you have the answer?

Hon. Imbert: No, no, no, no. Within the nation state of Trinidad and Tobago—

Dr. Gopeesingh: Yeah.

Hon. Imbert:—these matters are delegated to the Tobago House of Assembly by the Parliament.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Fine, thank you. But I am just asking.

Hon. Imbert: You never looked at the Act?

Dr. Gopeesingh: No, I am asking: Is it the Tobago House of Assembly that manages the expenditure of the $20 million?

Hon. Imbert: All right, let me explain what the word “delegate” means in this context. Under the Tobago House of Assembly Act, there is a Schedule of matters, of activities, of projects, of programmes that the Tobago House of Assembly has responsibility for. They have delegated authority to manage and operate these programmes under the House of Assembly Act. So it is the THA itself that is managing these activities.

Madam Chairman: Member for Princes Town.

Mr. Padarath: Madam, may I remind the hon. Minister of Finance that this Government is a PNM Government and the THA is controlled by the PNM. Is it that there is one policy for the central government and another one for the THA? And I ask that in relation to if we look at the Tobago Heritage Festival, the Tobago Museum, Tobago Folk Festival, Tobago Music Festival, Carifesta, $20 million, and the Minister wants to tell us that the rationale is that THA is a separate entity and that there is no continuity, in terms of central government and THA, even though they are both PNM controlled, how do you then rationalize $20 million is being spent for all these festivals in Tobago and you give $500,000 for Divali? Is it
that you are saying there is a separate policy?

**Hon. Imbert:** Madam Chairman, this is ridiculous. This is ridiculous!

**3.00 p.m.**

**Madam Chairman:** I am not going to allow that question.

**Hon. Imbert:** Ridiculous. These are festivals in Tobago.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Naparima.

**Mr. Charles:** Give me a chance please, please. I am just asking, line 94 and there is no malice in this, I am just asking if we can just get an idea, because it may be a good idea, and we in Trinidad could learn from Tobago, that this Tobago Indigenous and Traditional Art Academy, if it is being conceptualized within COSTATT or it is a stand-alone et cetera, so that you could inform us and help us in Trinidad. So "doh" quarrel.

**Hon. Imbert:** Madam Chairman, really, I object. You just have to ask the question. You do not have to insult at the beginning of the question. This academy is being established by the Assembly in collaboration with the tertiary education institutions in Trinidad and Tobago.

**Mr. Charles:** And can you make the results of this thing available to us so that we in Trinidad could benefit from what I think is a good idea.

**Hon. Imbert:** Yes, but it is at 2018. No, no, no. A wrong impression has been created by the Member. There is no allocation prior. This is a 2018 allocation.

**Mr. Charles:** When the project is finished, that we would, you know, benefit from whatever comes out of this idea? We can move on, Madam Chairman.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Tabaquite. I am just asking if you can remind me, is it Mahatma Gandhi who said "if we operate at an eye for an eye we will all end up blind"? Thank you. Let us proceed. Member for Caroni Central.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Simple question, Madam Chairman, to the Minister of Finance for
clarification. I heard the Minister just say that the $20million here is a new Item. When I saw the blank—

**Hon. Imbert:** No, I never said that.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Did you say that?

**Hon. Imbert:** No.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Okay. So, is it—as I understood, before that it was simply elsewhere and transferred here?

**Hon. Imbert:** It is simply the reorganization and realignment of the divisions in the same way when you have a change of Government. You have different Ministries, different Departments go here and there.

**Dr. Tewarie:** That is what I understood. I was just surprised that I heard you say; I may have been wrong—

**Hon. Imbert:** You are wrong. I never said it was a new Item.

**Madam Chairman:** Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, page 46; 001, General Administration; 002, Tourism; 006, Transport; Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies; 005, Non-profit Institutions; 007, Households; 009, Other Transfers. Member for Chaguanas East.

**Mr. Karim:** Thank you, Madam Chair, I am on line Item 13, the Rolling Three-Year Tourism Plan. Could the hon. Minister indicate when this plan is expected to be completed? And what would have been the final cost over the period of time? I know it is rolling so that it continues, but if you can give us the period—

**Hon. Imbert:** Madam Chairman, if the Member knows it continues then you know that it continues, so do not ask when it will end, it continues.

**Mr. Karim:** Could you tell us then. Madam Chair, could the hon. Minister indicate so far, if he can give us the calculations on how much have been spent on this
Appropriation (Financial Year 2018) Bill, 2017

Standing Finance Committee

rolling plan?

**Hon. Imbert:** Is that not in the document?

**Mr. Karim:** Yes, I just want you to give me—if you could?

**Hon. Imbert:** Is it not in the document?

**Mr. Karim:** So, it will be $61 million plus $30 million, 91 million so far? Has been spent with an allocation of $40 million in 2018. Which will be $131 million? Is that—am I calculating correctly there, Sir?

**Hon. Imbert:** All the numbers are there.

**Mr. Karim:** So the question is, for the last two fiscal, including the projected estimates for 2018. This three-year rolling plan would have cost the taxpayers $131 million? Am I correct?

**Hon. Imbert:** All the information is there. But, you should know, that this includes the cost of airlift to Tobago which is an essential ingredient in the tourism sector in Tobago. Airlift is not cheap.

**Mr. Karim:** Would the hon. Minister be kind enough to let us know, what are the components of this three-year rolling plan, please? And the problem?

**Madam Chairman:** All right, can we then move.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Madam Chair, can I get your attention.

**Madam Chairman:** We can all get there. I have noted you. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Thank you Madam Chair, line Item 15 and 19. 15, how many small properties were able to benefit from this programme? And also 19 is the Zip Line the sole responsibility of the THA or is it a PPP arrangement?

**Hon. Imbert:** It is the THA’s responsibility and we will provide you with the numbers in writing.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Caroni East.
Dr. Gopeesingh: Could the Minister indicate whether this expenditure for 2016, 2017 and proposed for 2018 of what my colleague—

Madam Chairman: Under which line Item, please?

Dr. Gopeesingh: 13 of $131 million on the three-year tourism plan, 61 million then $70 million—

Madam Chairman: What is the question please?

Dr. Gopeesingh: The question I want to ask is: Does that include this one for $40 million for 2018? Is there any area inside there for the Sandals project?

Madam Chairman: Member, I believe the Minister said that he will give all the components of this Item.

Hon. Imbert: I will, but the answer is no.

Dr. Gopeesingh: All right, but can I ask while I am still—would you permit me. Madam Chair, Item 17, the Tobago Tourism Festivals, here we see another $18 million allocated for 2018, and we saw for Tobago Heritage Festival on page 46, $20 million, which he explained just a while ago. So in addition to this $20 million for Tobago Heritage Festival, this additional $18 million estimate for 2018 that is $38 million that we see for festivals for Tobago. Could the Minister explain this $18 million for Tobago Tourism Festivals as separate and distinct for the Tobago Heritage Festivals of $20 million that is $38 million in festivals for Tobago, Minister?

Madam Chairman: Minister of Finance.

Hon. Imbert: Yes, I can explain. You have the jazz festival and the culinary festival.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Could you then Minister, give us an idea—what has been spent on the Tobago Jazz Festival for '16, '17 and what you propose to spent on '18, for the Tobago Jazz Festival?
Hon. Imbert: Yes.

Dr. Gopeesingh: And could you indicate the value of the investments brought in as a result of the Tobago Jazz Festival?

Hon. Imbert: That again will be akin to quantum physics, I can give you the amount spent—

Dr. Gopeesingh: That is nothing to do with physics, it is quantum, but quantity of dollar. [Desk thumping]

Hon. Imbert: I have answered their question.

Madam Chairman: Member for Princes Town—

Dr. Gopeesingh: If you are, if you are—

Madam Chairman: Member, Member.

Mr. Padarath: Madam respectfully, it is the same question that the Member for Caroni East is asking. What is the expenditure? But also what is the amount of revenue that has been derived from these events the jazz festival and the culinary festival?

Hon. Imbert: Certainly.

Madam Chairman: Can the—Member for Naparima.

Mr. Charles: Item 19, my colleague from Cumuto/Manzanilla had asked a question. I just want to make sure my question is. Is there a justification for State involvement in Zip Line Management? If I understand this to be moving from one place to another place on a line. What is the justification?

Hon. Imbert: I suggest you ask the Member for Caroni Central, who established a zip line at Chaguaramas during the UNC tenure, ask him.

Dr. Tewarie: Yes, but it was not State sponsored. It was a private sector investment.

Hon. Imbert: It is currently funded by the CDA as it was under your time.
Madam Chairman: Member for Chaguanas East.

3.10 p.m.

Mr. Karim: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Dr. Tewarie: I started it, but it was a private investment.

Mr. Karim: Madam Chair, it is just with respect to line Item 20, if we could get some information with respect to this Tobago Tourism Agency Limited.

Madam Chairman: The question from Chaguanas East on Item 20.

Mr. Karim: Yes, just to get some information with respect to this new line Item, this Sub-Item really of $1 million.

Hon. Imbert: You heard that we are separating tourism promotion, marketing, et cetera, into an agency in Tobago and an agency in Trinidad. This is for the Tobago Tourism Agency Limited.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Would the Minister—based on what he promised to give us, the detail of the expenditure of $38 million for festivals in Tobago: Would he say that it works out to $760 per individual in Tobago of 50,000 people for a festival—$760 per person for a festival in Tobago per year?

Hon. Imbert: What is the question?

Dr. Gopeesingh:—50,000 people into $38 million.

Hon. Imbert: What is the question?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Would you agree that it is costing the Tobago House of Assembly $760 per person for festivals in Tobago?

Hon. Imbert: No.

Dr. Gopeesingh: It is. The calculation is correct?

Hon. Imbert: There is a lot of tourist traffic that comes from Trinidad and other parts of the world, so your maths is wrong. You cannot just look at a notional figure of the residential population of Tobago. There are lots of visitors that come
to Tobago for these festivals as part of the overall tourism effort, and you know that because you go there.

**Madam Chairman:** All right. Division 06, Education, Innovation and Energy, page 49; Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure, 001, General Administration, page 49; 002, Primary, Secondary and Vocational Education. Member for Caroni Central.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Minister, I just wanted to understand the allocation here on 002, 01 which is $115 million in relation to what is allocated to the central Government. This is the Division of Education under the Tobago House of Assembly, is that correct?

**Hon. Imbert:** Yes.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Okay.

**Hon. Imbert:** Again, delegated authority under the Tobago House of Assembly Act.

**Dr. Tewarie:** I just wanted to clarify.

**Hon. Imbert:** Well, I am glad you know.

**Dr. Tewarie:** I just wanted to clarify.

**Hon. Imbert:** “Let them others fellas know nah.”

**Madam Chairman:** 003, Library services; 004, School Feeding Programme; 005, Sport; 007.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Madam Chair.

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

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** I hope the hon. Minister will give us an appreciation of how many personnel under line Item 2.

**Madam Chairman:** Where are you, Member?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** 005, Sport, line Item 02, Wages and C.O.L.A., $22 million spent
or estimated to be spent in 2017, 2018 no estimates for the—

**Hon. Imbert:** Because it has gone somewhere else.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Could you give us an indication of how many personnel in the Sporting Division to account for the $22 million per year in expenditure under Wages and COLA?

**Hon. Imbert:** But, you know, Madam Chairman, for the fourth time to this particular Member, I said I would give a breakdown of every single division and I asked, I pleaded with the Members do not after I have done that, when we come to each Division, ask for a breakdown of individual divisions. We are giving you all.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Minister, based on your track record—[Crosstalk]

**Madam Chairman:** Member, Member, let us do not go there. Okay, please. 007, Happy Haven School Tobago Council, page 50; 008, Tobago School for the Deaf, Speech and Language; Head 02, Goods and Services, page 51; 001, General Administration; 002, Primary, Secondary and Vocational Education, pages 51 and 52; 003, Library Services, page 52 and 53; 005, Sport; 006, Youth, pages 53 and 54; 007, Happy Haven School, pages 54 and 55; 008, Tobago School for the Deaf, Speech and Language, page 55; Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases; 01, General Administration, page 55; 002, Primary Secondary and Vocational Education, page 56; 003, Library Services, page 56; 008, Tobago School for the Deaf, Speech and Language; Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies, page 56; 005, Non-Profit Institutions; 006, Educational Institutions, page 57. Member for Chaguanas East.

**Mr. Karim:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, through you, Madam Chair, line Item 20, can we get a sense as to how many schools—these private secondary schools—and how many students are engaged in this fee for students and if you have an idea as to the cost per student? So the number of schools, the number of
students and the cost per student.

Hon. Imbert: Yes. And while we are on that, I am advised by the Parliament that the THA always provides the answers to the questions and, therefore, it is wrong as several Members have continuously said to falsely state that the answers are not provided.

Mr. Karim: Madam Chair, can I continue to get an idea as to what—if we can get an explanation of line Item 21, Tobago Science and Technology Tertiary Education, what is that really?

Hon. Imbert: Again, delegated authority for tertiary education, higher education. Just like secondary and primary. They do have higher education in Tobago, by the way, for your information.

Mr. Karim: The UNC started it. [Crosstalk]

Madam Chairman: 007, Households; 009, Other Transfers, pages 57 and 58. Member for Naparima.

Mr. Charles: Item 01, just an explanation of Basic Grants, and you could do that in writing.

Mr. Karim: Thank you, Madam Chair. Line Item 01, Households, School Feeding Programme. Will the Minister or the THA be able to tell us how many contractors and how many meals are provided? You could give it to us in writing, no problem.

Hon. Imbert: No problem, but coming back to the earlier question from the Member for Naparima, those are grants for the assisted schools. You know you have denominational, government, that kind of thing. Those are grants for assisted schools. With respect to school feeding, do you want the number of people who are fed, children that are fed and the number of contractors?

Mr. Karim: I do not know if you will be able to tell, hon. Minster, are all of these contractors paid up-to-date or are they owed?
Hon. Imbert: We will provide as much information as we can within reason.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Line Item 09, Early Childhood Care. In 2017, $3 million was spent but there is a decrease of 2,500. So only $500,000 is allocated this year for Early Childhood Care as opposed to $3 million spent in 2017. Is there an explanation why there is the decreased in spending on ECCE, which your Government says is the bedrock of education which we anchored? Line Item 09, why you have a decrease?

Hon. Imbert: Whatever is required will be provided.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: Madam Chairman, if I may be allowed to add to what the Minister just said, there was a loan negotiated from the IDB for Early Childhood Centres. Five were supposed to be built in Tobago; under the last administration, they built none.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Do not say that.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: They built none in Tobago.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Minister, do not go there.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: And so we are in the process of renegotiating the loan in order to engage the IDB to ensure that we get the five schools built in Tobago, and that is why there is a decrease in the amount because the IDB will be funding the loans. Not one of the five schools were built in Tobago. [Crosstalk]

Madam Chairman: Member, please. Member?

Dr. Gopeesingh: I want to correct the record.

Madam Chairman: Member?

Dr. Gopeesingh: The IDB had engaged in discussions with the THA and they had—

Madam Chairman: Member for Caroni East. Member for Caroni East, I am not recognizing this. All right. Member for Naparima.
Mr. Charles: This Building Grants to Assisted Schools, only $150,000. That seems to be pretty small.

Madam Chairman: Item 02?

Mr. Charles: Building Grants to Assisted Schools.

Madam Chairman: You have gone on to 009?

Mr. Charles: Or sorry, sorry.

Mr. Imbert: We could go there, you know.

Madam Chairman: Okay? So we are now going on to 009, Other Transfers, pages 57 to 58. Member for Naparima.

Hon. Imbert: I think he asked the questions. I just want to repeat. The Tobago House of Assembly gets a block allocation every quarter, and they have the authority to vire and transfer and if additional funding is required for this, it will be found.

Madam Chairman: Division 07 - Community Development, Enterprise Development and Labour: Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure 001, General Administration, page 59; 002, Community Development; 003, Culture, Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, 001, General Administration, page 60; 002, Community Development, pages 60 and 61; 003, Culture, pages 61 and 62; 004, Labour; 005, Occupational Safety and Health, page 63; Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, 001, General Administration, page 63; 002, Community Development; 003, Culture; 004, Labour, page 64; 005, Occupational Safety and Health; Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies, 005, Non-Profit—

Dr. Gopeesingh: Madam Chair, no, no, 04.

Madam Chairman: Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies; 005, Non-Profit Institutions—

Dr. Gopeesingh: No, Madam Chair, I want to ask two questions on 04, Current

UNREVISED
Transfers and Subsidies—

Madam Chairman: And Member—

Dr. Gopeesingh: Yeah, I put up my hand, but I am not recognized. Or, you are now there. Okay. Thank you.

Madam Chairman: Member, there is no way I can fail to recognize you. [Laughter and desk thumping] 005, Non-Profit Institutions, page 64 to 65. Yes, Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you for the recognition always, appreciated. The Regional Complexes, line Item 16. Could we get an appreciation of what these Regional Complexes are? Is that the main complex?

Hon. Imbert: You want a list? A list you want?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Well, what are the regional complexes, if you want to just tell us that?

Hon. Imbert: So you want to know where they are, the names, that kind of thing.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Not in all that detail, just give an idea.

Hon. Imbert: Okay, we will provide you with those details.

Dr. Gopeesingh: All right.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, line Item 01, Small Grants. What does that entail and how does one qualify to get a small grant?

Hon. Imbert: Assistance to cultural groups.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: What did you say, hon. Minister?

Hon. Imbert: I said this provision is for assistance to cultural and community groups to develop the art form, et cetera. It is done in Trinidad. Your government did it.

Madam Chairman: 007, Households. Member for Naparima.
Mr. Charles: Item 22, under 04, Developing Communities through Heritage. This is in addition to the $20 million for the Tobago Heritage Festival. I am just asking what does that mean.

Hon. Imbert: I think this is self-evident. The Heritage Festival is in a particular location. This is a community programme.

Mr. Charles: But does it not involve community presenting in that?

Hon. Imbert: Yes, but this is outreach in the community itself. You are not familiar with community programmes in the community?

Mr. Charles: All right. Let us go on.

Hon. Imbert: You are not aware of that?

Madam Chairman: 007, Households; 009, Other Transfers; Division 08, Infrastructure Quarries and the Environment; Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure, 001, General Administration, page 66; 002, Maintenance of Roads; 003—Excuse me?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Madam Chair, I hope the Minister will provide—if he wants to say it for the fifth time—the number of personnel that is responsible—

Madam Chairman: I think we do have that, Member.

Dr. Gopeesingh: —02 for $171 million.

Madam Chairman: We do have that. 003, Maintenance and Buildings.

Hon. Imbert: Terrible, terrible repetition.

Madam Chairman: 004, Transport; 005, Electrical Inspectorate; 007, Mechanical Workshop, page 67; Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, 001, General Administration, pages 67 and 68; 002, Maintenance of Roads; 003, Maintenance of Buildings, page 69; 004, Transport Division; 005, Electrical Inspectorate, page 70; 007, Mechanical Workshop; 009, the Environment; Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, page 71; 001, General Administration; 002, Maintenance of
Mr. Lee: Madam Chair.

Madam Chairman: Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.

Mr. Lee: Under Other Transfers, 01, Studley Park Enterprises Limited, $10 million. It appears to be a new Sub-Item. Could the Minister enlighten us what this—I keep seeing Studley Park throughout. Studley Park Enterprises, what is that?

Hon. Imbert: My understanding is that they are going to convert the quarry into a body corporate. So this is to create the company organization and structure to make them more efficient.

Mr. Lee: So the quarry was in another—

Hon. Imbert: It is a division.

Mr. Lee: It is a division. So now you are creating a corporate entity?

Hon. Imbert: A body corporate.

Mr. Lee: A body corporate. And this is start-up funding?

Hon. Imbert: Yes, seed capital. You are done?

Mr. Lee: Thank you so much.

Madam Chairman: Division 09 - Agriculture, Marine Affairs, Marketing and the Environment: Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure, 001, General Administration, page 74; 002, Agriculture; 003, Marketing; 004, Natural Resources and the Environment, page 75; 005, Marine Resources and Fisheries; Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, 001, General Administration, page 76; 002, Agriculture, page 77; 003, Marketing, pages 77 and 78; 004, Natural Resources and the Environment;
005, Marine Resources and Fisheries, pages 79 and 80; Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, page 80; 001, General Administration; 002, Agriculture; 003, Marketing; 004, Natural Resources and Environment; 005, Marine Resources and Fisheries; Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies, page 81; 005, Non-Profit Institutions; 007, Households; 008, Subsidies.

Division 10 - Health, Wellness and Family Development: Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure, page 82; 001, General Administration; 002, Hospitals; 003, Health Centres; 004, Public Health and Environment; 005, Social Services, page 83. Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: 004, Public Health and the Environment. Sorry. I will pass on that.

Hon. Imbert: Why you so?

Dr. Gopeesingh: I do not want to annoy you.

Madam Chairman: Under what Head?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Excuse me?

Madam Chairman: Okay.

Dr. Bodoe: Thank you, Madam Chair. Through you to the Minister. With regard to Item 16, Contract Employment, I note that from 2016, an expenditure of $8,000 you have gone up to $600,000. Can the Minister indicate what sort of contract employment this will entail?

Madam Chairman: Member, you are under what Head? Excuse me? Health Centres?

Dr. Bodoe: Health Centres?

Madam Chairman: Okay.

Dr. Bodoe: At line Item 16. Just to have an idea of what is involved in this expenditure.
Hon. Imbert: I will get back to you in writing.

Dr. Bodeo: Sure, thank you.


Dr. Bodeo: Thank you, Madam Chair. Item 28, Other Contracted Services. Again, I notice a decrease from 2016, $22 million to $10,000,400, just to get an understanding of what this expenditure would entail.

Hon. Imbert: We are going forward into 2018 and the figure is almost the same. So what is the issue?

Dr. Bodeo: Sure. But I am just asking what—

Hon. Imbert: We discussed that last year. You asked that question last year.

Dr. Bodeo: Did I?

Hon. Imbert: Yes.

Dr. Bodeo: Thank you, I will check the record.

Hon. Imbert: We will provide you with information. Again, we will provide it again.

Madam Chairman: 005, Social Services; 007, Probation Services; 008, Litter Eradication Programme; 009, Gender Affairs; Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, page 86; 001, General Administration; 003, Health Centres; 004, Public Health and the Environment; 005, Social Services; 008, Litter Eradication Programme; 009, Gender Affairs; Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies, page 88; 005, Non-Profit Institutions. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Madam Chairman: 007, Households. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, can you advise at line Item 06, the Children’s Authority, what aspect of the Children’s Authority will be established in Tobago?
Hon. Imbert: It has not been established yet. It is being established, work in progress.

Mr. Charles: I am looking at Households 003, Assistance for the Aged. I see it is only $30,000. Do you have any data on the number of elderly persons this $30,000 relate to homes or is it one home?

Hon. Imbert: It is a consistent sum, but, I mean, we can provide you with some details.

Mr. Charles: Yes, I have a concern for the elderly.

Hon. Imbert: So you should.

Mr. Charles: And you too.

Hon. Imbert: We all do.

Madam Chairman: 009, Other Transfers. Member for Fyzabad.

Dr. Bodoe: Thank you, Madam Chair. Minister, the allocation, the other transfer to Tobago Regional Health Authority, I notice a decrease of $36.3 million in the 2018 allocation. Can the Minister indicate how this is expected to affect the health care services provided by the TRHA?

3.40 p.m.

In particular, will any services be cut, for example?

Hon. Imbert: It has a symbiotic relationship with the THA with respect to the TRHA. We will deal with it if it is necessary.

Dr. Bodoe: Does that mean for that allocation, Minister, I am trying to understand?

Hon. Imbert: If it is necessary.

Dr. Bodoe: Okay.

Madam Chairman: Division 11, Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure, page 90; 001, General Administration; 002, Settlements; Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services;
001, General Administration, pages 90 and 91; 002, Settlements. Member for
Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, I am noticing
line 002, Settlements, coming up, is it a new line Item? Can you identify what this
will in fact be used towards?

Madam Chairman: Travelling and Subsistence.

Hon. Imbert: There were no travelling officers associated with this subdivision
before. You know travelling officers get travelling allowances and benefits.

Madam Chairman: Item 003, Labour; Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment
Purchases, page 92; 001, General Administration; 002, Settlements; 003, Labour,
page 93; Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies; 005, Non-Profit
Institutions, page 93; 007, Transfers to Households, page 93. Division 12 -
Planning and Development: Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure, 001, General
Administration, page 94; Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services; 001, General
Administration, pages 94 and 95; 002, Planning; 004, Land Management, page 96;
Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, 001, General Administration; 004,
Land Management. Division 13 - Sport and Youth Affairs: Sub-Head 01,
Personnel Expenditure, page 97; 001, General Administration; 002, Sport;
Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services; 001, General Administration, pages 97 and 98;
002, Sport; 003, Youth, page 99; Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, page
100; 001, General Administration; 002, Sport; Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and
Subsidies; 005, Non-Profit Institutions; 007, Transfers to Households.

Hon. Members, we now move on to the Draft Estimates of the Development
Programme. Different book. Sub-Head 09, Development Programme, Consolidated
Fund, page 20; Consolidated Fund, page 20; Item 002, Productive Services; Item
003, Economic Infrastructure, pages 21 to 31; Item 004, Social Infrastructure,
Madam Chairman: I would like to thank the representatives of the Tobago House of Assembly for their assistance.

Head 16: Central Administrative Services, Tobago, $43,617,000.

Madam Chairman: Head 16, Central Administrative Services Tobago, $43,617,000. I now invite the Minister of State in the Office of the Prime Minister to make a brief opening statement not exceeding five minutes.

Hon. Webster-Roy: Thank you, Madam Chair. Central Administrative Services Tobago is a Department of Government responsible for coordinating and administrating central government services in Tobago. CAST comprises of the following units: administrative services, Weights and Measures Inspectorate, Registrar General and Meteorological Services. CAST aims to be an innovative, technologically-driven service organization propelled by a highly skilled workforce facilitating a sustainable development of Tobago. For fiscal 2018, CAST received an allocation of $43,617,000, $33 million on the recurrent and $10,617,000 under development. Our allocation would be used to complete those initiatives we started last fiscal year in our thrust to contribute to sustainable development of Tobago and the empowerment of the people.

Until the Metrology Act is fully enforced, the Weights and Measures Inspectorate will continue to work towards ensuring all weighing and measuring instruments in Tobago are accurately calibrated so that the people of Tobago receive value for money. The Met Office in Tobago can now boast of operating a new state-of-the-art facility that is outfitted to serve as a shelter in the event of a natural disaster. MET is currently working towards regularizing staff and
introducing different services that would benefit our farmers, marine interests and other stakeholders. In that regard, MET will install additional automatic weather stations across the island and produce educational videos for school outreach. The Registrar General’s Office will be giving Tobagonians access to computers to facilitate members of the public doing online land researches. In addition, the office of the Registrar General will continue the public education and sensitization efforts regarding insertion of names on birth certificates for those Tobagonians who were not registered at birth. Thank you.

Question proposed: That Head 16 stand part of the Schedule.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Members, the sum of $43,617,000 for Head 16, Central Administrative Services Tobago is comprised of moneys proposed for expenditure under following Sub-Heads and Items to be found in the Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure and the Draft Estimates of Development Programme. We now proceed to consider the Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure. We are at page 66, Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure; Item 001, General Administration; Item 002, Trade and Industry; Item 005, Meteorological Services, page 67; Item 007, Registrar General; Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, Item 001, General Administration, pages 68 and 69; Item 002, Trade and Industry; Item 005, Meteorological Services, pages 69 and 70; Item 007, Registrar General; Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, page 77; Item 001, General Administration; Item 005, Meteorological Services; Item 007, Registrar General, page 72; Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies; Item 005, Non-Profit Institutions, page 72; Item 011, Transfers to State Enterprises, page 72. Hon. Members, we will now move on to the Draft Estimates of the Development Programme. We are at page 48. Sub-Head 09, Development Programme, Consolidated Fund, page 48; Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services, page 48.
Question put and agreed to.

Head 16 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Madam Chairman: I would like to thank the representatives from CAST, safe journey back.

Head 77: Ministry of Land, Agriculture and Fisheries, $771,704,362.

Madam Chairman: We now move on. Head 77, Ministry of Land, Agriculture and Fisheries, $771,704,362. We are now at page 386 of the Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure, Head 77, Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries, $771,704,362. I will now invite the Minister of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries to make a brief opening statement not exceeding five minutes. Minister.

Hon. Rambharat: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, in the hours after the delivery of the budget, there were reports and discussions on the reduced allocation to the Ministry, and the sum of $544 million was the sum being quoted. I just want to clarify, as I open, that the $544 million represents the recurrent expenditure to be funded out of the Consolidated Fund. But the Ministry is funded out of different accounts, and previously the media gave an account of it, the combination of the recurrent that comes out of consolidated and the transfers and subsidies, and the allocation for the development programme comes up to $795 million. The reforestation project which is a major project of the Ministry which crosses the 41 constituencies in the country is funded out of the Unemployment Fund, $98 million in the last fiscal.

There is in the Ministry of Finance allocation, an allocation to ADB of $50 million for this fiscal and an allocation of $2.6 million for the Seafood Industry Development Company. There is in the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government an allocation for $6 million for the Moruga port for which the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries is the ultimate beneficiary. There is an
allocation in e TecK for the Moruga Agro Industrial Estate, an allocation of $69 million for which the Ministry is the ultimate beneficiary, and based on previous announcements by the Government the allocation for CEPEP of $350 million for this year, the Ministry is supposed to share in one-third of that in the approximate sum of $116 million. That brings us to $1.136 billion, Madam Chair, and I have not included in that the allocation for EMBD for recurrent for this year, Caroni 1975 Limited and Palo Seco Agricultural Enterprises Limited, which was transferred to the Ministry towards the end of September. The philosophy of the Ministry remains to have a manageable PSIP and to focus on priority areas. In this fiscal year, our priority areas are land administration and the continued investment in the Ministry’s IT infrastructure.

I just want to make a comment on the budget and the way it works, because I know, for example, my colleague, the Member for Mayaro, has made some comments on the spending of the Ministry, and I guess I would address it during the discussions on the allocation. But notwithstanding what is allocated through the budgetary process, spending is dependent on the cash flow and it is dependent on the work that is done in the Ministry through its contractors, and I would comment on it, I am sure, as we go along. And I will close by saying, a very important part of the work of the Ministry is the work that is done across the country for farmers and fishermen, and this Ministry has been hampered in some way by having 20 per cent of its public service positions vacant. Out of an establishment of 2,010 there are 404 public service vacancies, and I guess that every current Minister and every past Minister understands that there is only so much you could do to get those vacancies filled, and I look forward to having the full complement of the Ministry so that we could get the business of our fisherfolk and our farmers, our state-land users done across the country. Thank you.
Question proposed: That Head 77 now stand part of the Schedule.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Members, the sum of $771,704,362 for Head 77, Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries is comprised of moneys proposed for expenditure under the following Sub-Heads and Items to be found in the Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure, the Draft Estimates of the Revenue and Expenditure of Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies and the Tobago House of Assembly, and the Draft Estimates of the Development Programme. We now proceed to consider the Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure. Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure, Item 001, General Administration, page 386. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, line Item 14, can you indicate how many Cabinet-appointed committees are there and what their functions are, please?

Hon. Rambharat: Member, I would have to give you that response in writing. There are several standing committees of the Cabinet and they have various functions of the Ministry, many of them are statutory functions.

Madam Chairman: Item 002, Agriculture, page 387. Member for Couva South.

Mr. Indarsingh: Thank you, Madam Chair. The Minister just indicated that there are 404, I think, vacancies within the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries, and I see that there has been an increase of $1 million for Wages and COLA. Could you provide an explanation what has accounted for this increase of $1 million?

Hon. Rambharat: Well, the increase, in most cases, covered those increases in statutory costs, or increases which were negotiated by the trade unions. In this case it would, most likely, be the increase in statutory costs.

Mr. Indarsingh: You sure is an increase in the statutory costs?
Hon. Rambharat: Yes, I could verify it and provide the response to you in writing.

Madam Chairman: Member for Tabaquite.

Dr. Rambachan: Thank you, Madam Chairman. Minister, under Agriculture you have an allocation of $41.5 million for Salaries and COLA and $77 million under Wages and COLA, you could say about $118 million, when you open your statement you said that your goals were IT, infrastructure and land management, the focus, what goals have you set for the agricultural sector in terms of increased food production to justify these kinds of expenditures in Salaries and COLA and Wages and COLA?

Hon. Rambharat: From the outset, my appointment, I have made the point that it is not just to set a production target for food production. The first thing we have to accept is that we have food production. People talk about diversifying into agriculture; agriculture has long been an economic contributor. What has happened over time is that the significance of it as contributed to GDP has declined, but we have production. The key thing we have to do is to effect a behavioural change in the case of individuals in this country who have a preference and a habit of purchasing imported products, imported products that we produce here, in some cases fresh fruit and vegetables that our farmers produce, and it is offered for sale, and, in some cases, processed food that can be substituted with local production. So the target we have set is to effect the behavioural change in this country by putting produce and production closer to consumers, making it available, and promoting the idea of supporting local production through changes in consumption patterns.

Dr. Rambachan: Your Wages and COLA does not support people actually producing agricultural products? Your people in the Ministry of Agriculture, Land
and Fisheries do not actually go and plant, except for forestry and seeds?

Hon. Rambharat: Exactly.

Dr. Rambachan: Is this a reference to those people?

Hon. Rambharat: Well, this is something you understand as well as I do, that we have inherited a structure. In the case of the permanent establishment from the public service, we all inherit a structure, and in the daily-paid establishment we have workers who are on the payroll. One of the ways in which we can help food production generally is by increasing the productivity of the workers, and I am sure you have heard me across the country; in your time as Minister you would have been doing the same thing, appealing to them. We have limitations in what we can do as Ministers, and the Permanent Secretary and the directors of the Ministry have a responsibility to ensure that people show up for work and they are productive. But when I was here last time before the Standing Committee, and we discussed livestock, for example, I made the point that the Ministry is too inward-looking. In other words, our resources on labour and feed, and so on, go towards tending a flock, tending our own livestock, and what we should be doing is putting those resources behind getting the right skills and the right people to support the production of the farmers. That would not happen overnight, and last year before the Standing Committee, I talked about a review that we had commissioned and the final report was delivered at the end of August, and in this fiscal year we will implement it. That report recommends, in some of the areas of the Ministry, a consideration of private/public partnership. Because we have assets, we have Mora Valley, we have Aripo, we have Mon Jaloux; we have physical assets placed in the hands completely or partially of the private sector that would reduce the burden on the Ministry, but also provide the boost in food production that we need when it comes to livestock, for example.
Dr. Rambachan: Minister, one final question, are you therefore suggesting that you are not getting value for money out of the spending of this $118 million now at the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries as you would expect to get in boosting even further food production?

Hon. Rambharat: I would answer it in this way: given a completely free hand to reorganize how we spend that wage bill, how we utilize that, I would not be doing it in this way. We ought to be spending it behind high quality technical people, paid well and highly motivated to do the job, and it is a flexibility that we do not have, so it takes a lot longer to get certain changes done within the Ministry.

Madam Chairman: Member for Couva South.

Mr. Indarsingh: Thank you, Madam Chair. I just heard the Minister refer to the Aripo Farm, are you willing to provide us with a suggestion on this particular farm?

Hon. Rambharat: Well, I could provide you with—the status in what context?

Mr. Indarsingh: Well, its present state of operation.

Madam Chairman: Might I ask what line Item we are under, Member for Couva South?

Mr. Indarsingh: In terms of wages and salaries, and so on.

Hon. Rambharat: Well, I could provide that to you in writing in terms of the different categories of livestock up at the farm and the cost of the labour at the farm, but I could also say that Aripo, that particular asset is one that presents itself for the infusion of private sector interest, and it is something that the Government intends to explore.

Mr. Indarsingh: So you are telling us that the Government is pursuing a policy of private sector participation in the operations of that farm?

Hon. Rambharat: Of that farm and any other asset of that nature in which there is
private sector interest, and in which we believe that we would be making a better contribution to the farmers by working the way in which we deal with the asset—of course, anything like that would be based on a public advertisement of the interest.

Mr. Indarsingh: Okay. And the Government will return the majority shareholding, or—

Madam Chairman: Member for Couva South, what line Item are we under? We are at Item 002.

Mr. Indarsingh: Yes, Madam Chair, based on what the Minister is revealing to the meeting, I am just seeking some additional information and clarification.

Madam Chairman: And again I ask, under what line Item?

Mr. Indarsingh: Madam Chairman, we are on wages and salaries, and I am very concerned whether people at this farm and other farms may be sent home, and so on, within the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries.

4.10p.m.

Madam Chairman: We are at page 387. What I am seeing is an increased allocation under both Heads for 2018 estimates, 01 and 02. Both allocations have been increased. So are there any other questions under 002, Agriculture?

Item 003, Animal Production and Health, pages 387 and 388.

Dr. Rambachan: Minister, similar to what we spoke about under agriculture, again, we are spending $34.5 million under Animal Production and Health. What I am concerned about is the spending of the money yes, but spending of the money should be in relation to some targets, and I am looking at 01 and 02 under Animal Production—I am separating health for a moment, animal production—and asking whether you have set targets in terms of increasing the amount of kilograms of pork, lamb, chicken, goat, duck, the number of heifers available that you are
breeding and so on? Have you set targets for this year that will cause an increase in animal production and meat?

**Hon. Rambharat:** As I said before, the target that we have set is the implementation of recommendations in the report that we commissioned. In implementing those recommendations, the recommendations call for reduction of the Ministry’s activities in certain areas, the removal of duplication, the focus on certain types of activities in relation to private livestock farmers and so on. So the implementation of that report will lead to a greater focus on private sector production, and that is what we are working towards.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Mr. Minister, could you clarify for us, in the context of animal production is there a livestock board in relation to this—

**Mr. Imbert:** Madam Chairman, could I ask what line Item that is, please?

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Madam Chairman, I am asking this in the context of Animal Production.

**Mr. Imbert:** Madam Chairman, may I ask what line Item it is please? Which line Item in Animal Production?

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Wages and Salaries.

**Mr. Imbert:** How could a board be associated with Wages and COLA? You should know better than that as a union man and a former Minister of Finance. You should know better than that. [*Laughter]*

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Couva South, I will give you an opportunity to find the question that you would like to relate to a line Item.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Item 01. Mr. Minister, under this Item salaries, you would have a number of highly paid technical people working for you, experts in the field. Are you using these experts, in any way, to resuscitate the buffalypso in Trinidad?

**Hon. Rambharat:** I would not say resuscitate because we do have the buffalypso.
The problem with the buffalypso, something that we have lived with for about 14 years now, is brucellosis and, again, we have to make the decision to accelerate the culling of that herd in Mora Valley. Mora Valley is maybe 90 per cent a brucellosis herd. So we will only deal with brucellosis in the country, and we will only be able to grow the buffalypso herd if we get rid of the animals and if we expand the herd on a farm that is free from buffalypso, and that is the direction we have to go.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 004, Horticulture, page 388; Item 005, Land and Marine Resources, page 389.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Mr. Minister, horticulture provides a very lucrative market in terms of export earnings and foreign exchange. What are you doing, again, using wages and so on, $13.57 million plus $1.9 million, that is about $16 million, in order to boost horticultural production so that we can earn foreign exchange? Do you have a programme, a mapped out programme over time that you are going to implement?

**Hon. Rambharat:** The most important thing we did as a Government, because when I came in I was told by the local producers that the administration that preceded us did not show a particular interest in having local flowers used in floral arrangements sourced for government functions and so on, particularly anything relating to the line of Balisier flowers. So what we have done is one of the most important things we have done is to ensure that public spending—when we spend the taxpayers’ money on floral products, it is from local production. That is one. And two, that horticulture Vote covers not only floral production, it covers the maintenance of the Botanic Gardens, the Savannah and ornamental production and so on. There is renewed interest in local horticulture production. Some of the people who went out are getting back in, and it is an interest that we continue to encourage.
Madam Chairman: Item 005, Land and Marine Resources; Item 006, Surveys and Mapping.

Mr. Singh: Thank you, Madam Chair. To the hon. Minister, I do not know whether this is within Surveys and Mapping or in the next category, Land Management. Under Salaries and allowances, Item 01, whether the surveys have been completed in the Munroe Road area for the allocation of lands? So I do not know whether it is this Heading or the next one.

Hon. Rambharat: It is a combination of the two, and the fact is that—

Mr. Singh: 01, surveyors within the Ministry.

Madam Chairman: 01 is Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance.

Mr. Singh: Yes, you have employees of the Land and/or the Survey and Mapping Department.

Madam Chairman: Yes, and what is your question?

Mr. Singh: Whether they have completed the surveys at the Munroe Road area for the allocation of that?

Hon. Rambharat: They have been completed.

Mr. Singh: So the next question that follows off really, consequentially, when will there be allocation in that area?

Hon. Rambharat: I hope soon.

Mr. Singh: It is dependent upon the State Solicitor Department?

Hon. Rambharat: Yes.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Hon. Minister, line Item 08, Vacant Posts. Can the hon. Minister indicate how many qualified persons in mapping currently hold positions in this unit?

Hon. Rambharat: Madam Chair, I will have to provide that answer in writing.

Madam Chairman: Can we go on now. Item 007, Land Management, page 390.

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Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, under line Item 01, Salaries and cost of living, can you identify how many persons are in fact employed in the land management? And I have a subsequent question.

Hon. Rambharat: Madam Chair, I will have to provide that in writing.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: When the hon. Minister provides it in writing I would like to also find out if the number of persons employed would be enough to deal with the need to process land tenure and regularization of farmers, please.

Madam Chairman: Item 008, Fisheries; Item 010, Forestry.

Mr. Paray: Minister, line Item 14, Remuneration to Cabinet-Appointed Committees. Can you provide us in writing the members of that committee; and if you can give us an idea of what is the function of that committee; and three, is this a new committee since I saw no spending was made in 2017 on that committee?

Hon. Rambharat: Madam Chair, I will provide the information in writing.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Hon. Minister, line Item 02, Wages and COLA. The estimate for 2018 is $52 million, Forestry Division. Could you give us an appreciation of where most of these personnel are allocated for employment, whether it is in the reafforestation programme or the nursery programme? Give us a little idea of the different areas.

Hon. Rambharat: Well, this Item deals with daily-paid workers who are deployed in forestry across the country. It is not the National Reforestation Programme which is a programme where we use contractors. These are daily-paid workers working at the conservancies all over the country.

Dr. Gopeesingh: At the?

Hon. Rambharat: At the forestry conservancies all over the country.

Dr. Gopeesingh: And where do workers for nurseries and so on? That is another contracted area?
Hon. Rambharat: The nurseries are in eight areas across the country and we have daily-paid workers at those nurseries too.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Does that come under this Item?

Hon. Rambharat: Yes, it does.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Is there any move to increase the amount of nursery products across the country, because there is always a shortage, and the private sector chips in, but it is very expensive for the people?

Madam Chairman: Member, I will not allow that under Salaries and Wages. Do you have any other question under—

Dr. Gopeesingh: No, no, no, that was my main question.

Madam Chairman: Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, page 391; Item 001, General Administration.

Mr. Paray: Minister, Item 08, Rent/Lease Office Accommodation and Storage. Can you identify if this is the building that is being rented for the Forestry Division? Where is it currently located, and if you can identify if this building contract would have been renewed in fiscal 2017?

Hon. Rambharat: I will have to provide that response in writing, Madam Chair.

Madam Chairman: Item 002, Agriculture, page 393.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Madam Chair. Line Item 117, Training. Hon. Minister, in light of the fact that we had to destroy 200,000 citrus plants, would you not think that there would be need for adequate training and this amount here allocated is in fact very low?

Hon. Rambharat: I do not think it is very low, particularly for what you have identified as a training need. I think the allocation is sufficient because we have allocations for training throughout the Ministry.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: I noticed that it is in fact decreased by $171,000 in general
admin and there is no line Item in the Animal Production and, again, with what you just indicated with the culling of the buffalypsoes, I mean, you would need training to help persons understand what they are dealing with and to also bring about a new understanding of the various diseases that may impact upon the industry.

**Hon. Rambharat:** As I said, I think across the Ministry the allocation and the resources for training and for dealing with citrus greening and the buffalypso, the resources exist.

**Madam Chairman:** Are we on page 393, Member?

**Mr. Paray:** Are we still under Sub-Item 02, Goods and Services?

**Madam Chairman:** We are under Item 02, Item 002. So we are on page 393. Item 003, Animal Production and Health, page 394; Item 004, Horticulture, pages 394 and 395; Item 005, Land and Marine Resources, page 395; Item 006, Surveys and Mapping; Item 007, Land Management; Item 008, Fisheries, page 398; Item 009, Agricultural Land Administration Division; Item 010, Forestry, page 399 to 400; Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases; Item 001, General Administration; Item 002, Agriculture; Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies; Item 002, Commonwealth Bodies; Item 003, United Nations Organizations; Item 005, Non-profit Institutions.

**Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh:** Hon. Minister, I am in line 04, SFC, Sugarcane Feed Centre. What is the status of this institution, is it still in tilapia production? And with respect to the fingerling production, what is the status?

**Hon. Rambharat:** The SFC continues to operate aquaculture projects, livestock projects and abattoir and other activities relating to agriculture.

**Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh:** Is it still into tilapia production?

**Hon. Rambharat:** Yes it is.

**Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh:** And what is the quantity or the amount produced
Hon. Rambhart: I would have to give you that in writing.

Dr. Rambachan: Is the Sugarcane Feed Centre breaking even?

Hon. Rambhart: It is not.

Mr. Paray: Minister, Item 01, Caribbean Fisheries Training and Development. I notice there is a $500,000 reduction in the funding for that training and development. In lieu of the importance of the diversification into the fisheries, what impact do you think that that reduction could have on that area in the development process?

Hon. Rambhart: We do not anticipate any problems with the reduction. The reduction is based on the CFTDI focusing on what we believe that they are good at, and that is the training part of their activities.

Mr. Indarsingh: In relation to the Sugar Cane Feed Centre, Mr. Minister, is it involved from a research and development point of view, in the area of dairy.

Hon. Rambhart: No, it is not.

Mr. Indarsingh: Okay.

Mr. Charles: Item 06. Given that the age profile of farmers, at least in the Naparima constituency, are over 50 or in many cases over 60, the country should be trying to get a new generation of farmers and to encourage people, because law, engineering and medicine are the areas they want to go in. If in Item 06, 4H Young Farmers Club, in 2017 $500,000 was allocated, but only $256,000 was spent, and given the allocation of $400,000, do you not think this is an area we want to emphasize? I know in the colonial days every primary school had a garden outside and students were encouraged to join clubs like these.

Hon. Rambhart: We believe the allocation for 4H is sufficient because we have other activities in the Ministry and its agencies directed toward youth, and we have
a new programme coming on this year that we believe will make the desired impact.

Mr. Charles: Not disagreeing, are you satisfied—and this is from a country standpoint—that younger people are being encouraged to take up farming?

Hon. Rambhart: I believe the young people who have grown up in farming families have an interest in farming. I also have said publicly that I believe security of tenure of land is a big factor in keeping them interested.

Mr. Indarsingh: Madam Chair, going back to the Sugar Cane Feed Centre, 04, Mr. Minister, is this there any outstanding liabilities for the employees of the Sugar Cane Feed Centre?

Hon. Rambhart: I cannot yes or no. To my recollection no, but I could provide the response in writing.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: Hon. Minister, line 05, Rural Women Producers Network. What does this entail, because I am seeing only an allocation of $25,000? How far would $25,000 take this network?

Hon. Rambhart: The Rural Women Producers Network is essentially a private organization working with women across the country. They receive funding from other agencies, and this is the contribution that the Ministry on behalf of the taxpayers make to them, and they seem very well satisfied with it.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: And how many women?

Hon. Rambhart: It is women across the country. I could find out from the network how many women they work with. I could provide a response in writing.

Madam Chairman: Members, it is not 4.30. It is agreed that we will take the suspension now. We will resume at five o’clock.

4.30 p.m.: Standing Finance Committee suspended.

5.00 p.m.: Standing Finance Committee resumed.
[MR. FORDE in the Chair]

Mr. Chairman: We resume after tea. We are under Sub-Head 04, Current Transfer and Subsidies, and we are at Item 007, Households, page 402 of the Recurrent Expenditure. We will go with the Member for Mayaro first.

Mr. Paray: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Minister, under line Item 01, Agricultural Incentive Programme, can you give us an idea what is the outstanding sums owed to farmers under this particular programme?

Hon. Rambharat: We estimate it is about $19 million.

Mr. Paray: And what provisions are being put in place to settle these sums?

Hon. Rambharat: There is an allocation for this year, $12 million that would go towards settling what we have already, and we will deal with any shortfall in the mid-year.

Mr. Paray: Just to expand on the subsidies, the issue around the rice farmers. They are still complaining that they have not received their full backpay and so on from the rice mills and so on. Can you give us an idea of what is the outstanding amount and what provisions your Ministry is putting in place to settle those amounts this fiscal year?

Hon. Rambharat: I will have to give you that in writing, but I know that it is payment to the rice farmers for the 2017 crop.

Mr. Paray: One more question, Minister. Under line Item 04, Relief for Flood Damage, any idea of the amount that is owed to farmers in terms of their claims for past damages, and taking note of the extensive flooding today, what can you put in place or what will you put in place to deal with— I am sure that quite a number of claims are going to be coming fast and furious at your Ministry, based on just the flooding alone today?

Hon. Rambharat: Well the farmers are very familiar with the process for
compensation for flood damage. The Ministry’s officers have been out since yesterday and into today, and as fast as the claims come we will deal with it. But I will tell you this, by October 27th, we would begin the payment of $12 million in compensation to 663 farmers arising out of Bret and the special arrangements the Government made for Bret.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Hon. Minister, line Item 01. You indicated that there is $19 million owing and yet you have here $12 million in your 2018 estimates, that means therefore there will be a huge shortfall. How does the Minister plan to disburse and differentiate and determine who will get payment and who would not?

Hon. Rambharat: The Minister does not disburse. The Ministry disburses based on a well-established process. This figure will go towards settling some of what we currently have on hand to pay.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: The new incentive programme that you have put forward, where young farmers will be getting $100,000, would this be coming out from line Item 02 or 01?

Hon. Rambharat: No, that is a different line Item.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Is the line Item here at all?

Hon. Rambharat: It is in the provisions, yes.

Mr. Charles: Would the Minister be kind enough to give a breakdown of the recipient of this $12 million, and in particular, how many would come from my constituency, if that is possible?

Hon. Rambharat: Sure, we will provide it in writing.

Mr. Chairman: Item 008, Subsidies; Item 009, Other Transfers. I recognize the Member for Chaguanas East.

Mr. Karim: Hon. Minister, I am on line Item 05, Tourism Development Facilities.
Over the last two fiscal years, you may have consumed about over $3 million. Just for information, could you indicate what are these facilities, where they are?

**Hon. Rambharat:** The Ministry has a few what we call “tourism development facilities”. They include the Diego Martin Water Wheel, the Lopinot Visitor Centre and facilities of that nature, and every year we do some maintenance work on all these facilities.

**Mr. Karim:** Any in central Trinidad or South?

**Hon. Rambharat:** Well, not under this line Item, but Caroni Bird Sanctuary is in Central Trinidad and that is one of the areas that we have resources that we put towards the maintenance.

**Mr. Karim:** Mr. Deputy-Chair, just a follow-up question on line Item 02, the Youth Apprenticeship Programme in Agriculture. I recognize that you had allocation in 2017 of $1 million, but a very small amount was utilized. Could you indicate what was the reason for that, the low level of utilization?

**Hon. Rambharat:** That is because of an assessment we made on YAPA, and having spoken to past participants, including the Parliamentary Secretary who is a past participant, the general concern is, coming out of the programme with some training but not a lot, not having access to land and not having access to financing. And earlier I referred to a new project that we launched in this fiscal year, which combines access to land, financing from ADB and the training, and we tie it into the incentive programme announced in this year’s budget up to $100,000 for those who qualify. We put all four together, and we believe we have a package that would be an incentive to young people in people in particular who are serious about agriculture.

**Mr. Karim:** So this would be a subset of that?

**Hon. Rambharat:** It is, yes.
Mr. Chairman: Item 010, Other Transfers Abroad, page 403. Member for Couva South, you are with us. Item 010, Transfers Abroad, page 403?

Mr. Indarsingh: No, Deputy Chair. I had my hand up as it relates to 009, Other Transfers.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, I will give way to you, proceed

Mr. Indarsingh: 01, Livestock and Livestock Products Board. Mr. Minister, could you give us a status on the functioning of this particular board?

Hon. Rambharat: There was a delay in the appointment of this board, as I previously referred to study commissioned on the livestock sector and the work that has been done. We intend to appoint the Livestock and Livestock Products Board as soon as we believe there will be a role for that board to play.

Mr. Indarsingh: So at the moment there is no timeline?

Hon. Rambharat: There is to timeline.

Mr. Chairman: Member for Mayaro, you okay?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Line No. 03, Expansion and Development of Farmers Market. Can the hon. Minister expand on what is this?

Hon. Rambharat: We have farmers markets across the country. The main driver of the farmers markets is at NAMDEVCO, and this allocation is to supplement in instances where the Ministry itself wants to do something on a farmers market.

Mr. Karim: Hon. Minister, with respect to line Item 03, I notice that the farmers market in Chaguanas is being held at the Ministry’s head office by the Divali Nagar. But is there any intention in the future to utilize the NAMDEVCO facility which was earmarked for a farmers market at Woodford Lodge?

Hon. Rambharat: I have asked NAMDEVCO, based on a request by the mayor recently to discuss with the corporation the use of that facility in Woodford Lodge as a wholesale market, and NAMDEVCO is already doing designs for a designated
space east of the new building in Chaguana
s to house a permanent farmers market.

5.10 p.m.

Mr. Chairman: Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you. 06, is there is functional land survey board?

Hon. Rambhartat: Yes, there is.

Mr. Chairman: Item 010, Other Transfers Abroad, page 403; Item 011, Transfers to State Enterprises, page 404; Sub-Head 06. Minister, you have something? Sub-Head 06, Current Transfers to Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies, page 404; 004, Statutory Boards, page 404. Member for Mayaro.

Mr. Paray: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Minister, can you give a status on the ASTT in terms of whether they are fully funded? I understand that they are—

Mr. Chairman: Line Item to be specific, Member.

Mr. Paray: Sorry. 08, Mr. Chairman, Agricultural Society of Trinidad and Tobago. I understand that there were some challenges with their office space and vehicles and so on. What is the status of that organization?

Hon. Rambhartat: Well, there was no challenge under this administration. I believe the challenges arose under the previous administration and we have actually granted a very small increase this year to the ASTT.

Mr. Chairman: Okay. Members, we now proceed to Draft Estimates of the Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies and the Tobago House of Assembly for the financial year 2018.

Hon. Members, we will now move on to the Draft Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure of the Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies and of the Tobago House of Assembly. 08, Agricultural Society of Trinidad and Tobago; Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure, page 515; 001, General Administration, page 515; Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, page 515; 001, General Administration, page
515; Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, page 515; 001, General Administration, page 515; 09, National Agricultural Marketing and Development Corporation; Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure, page 520; 001, General Administration, page 520; Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, page 520; 001, General Administration, pages 520 to 521; Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, page 521; 001, General Administration, page 521. Sub-Head—Member for Couva South.

Mr. Indarsingh: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair. Under Current Transfers and Subsidies, Other Transfers, 02, Support for Agro Packing Houses (NAMDEVCO). Mr. Minister, I see that you have virtually no allocation under the 2018 Estimates, so does that mean that the packaging house at Brechin Castle will remain closed and not be utilized for the benefit of the stakeholders within the agricultural fraternity?

Mr. Chairman: Minister.

Hon. Rambhart: Member, in response to a question asked by you in the House, I did indicate that the packing houses at Brick Field and Brechin Castle are going to be the subject of a request for expressions of interest issued by NAMDEVCO for the purpose of exploring private/public partnership in those two facilities. The zero allocation is simply based on the fact that NAMDEVCO is allowed to hold PSIP funds from previous years and they hold a surplus in relation to that line Item.

Mr. Indarsingh: And just to follow up, with your permission, Mr. Deputy Chair, if this expression in what we would call public/private partnership does not become a reality as we have seen with the Couva Children's Hospital—

Mr. Chairman: Let us stay on stream, please.

Mr. Indarsingh:—what is the Ministry's position?

Hon. Rambharat: I think we have to take the step of exploring, issuing the
expressions of interest, and based on the outcome of that, we would determine what happens next.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Thank you.

**Mr. Chairman:** 10, Cocoa and Coffee Industry Board; Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure, page 528; 001, General Administration, page 528; Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, page 528; 001, General Administration, page 528; 11, Zoological Society of Trinidad and Tobago, Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure, page 533; 001, General Administration, page 533; Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, page 533; 001, General Administration, page 533; Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, page 534; 001, General Administration, page 534; Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies, page 534; 007, Households, page 534.

Hon. Members, we will now move on to the Draft Estimates of the Development Programme and we now go to the development programme booklet, and we now go to page 170. Sub-Head 09, Development Programme, Consolidated Fund, page 170; Item 001, Pre-Investment, pages 170 to 171; Item 002, Productive Sectors, pages 171 and 172. Member for Mayaro.

**Mr. Paray:** 003 as yet, Mr. Chairman?

**Mr. Chairman:** We are now coming to that one.

**Mr. Paray:** Okay. Item 003, Economic Infrastructure, pages 172 to 177. And I recognize the Member for Mayaro.

**Mr. Paray:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Minister, line Item 287, Upgrade of Fish Landing Sites, can you identify which of the sites are proposed to be subjected to upgrades in fiscal 2018?

**Mr. Chairman:** Member, you could provide that information now, Minister?

**Hon. Rambharat:** I would provide the information in writing.
Mr. Chairman: Okay. Will be provided in writing. Item 004, Social—Okay. Sorry. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: That is okay. That is okay. 038 on page 173. Can the hon. Minister indicate what exactly will this $200,000 be used for in terms of whether it is for research, breeding, tracking? What can the hon. Minister indicate what this would be utilized for?

Mr. Chairman: Minister, 038, line Item. What will be the—

Hon. Rambharat: Sustainable Management of Wildlife Resources?

Mr. Chairman: Yes. Sure.

Hon. Rambharat: That is for the ongoing work being done to review the Conservation of Wild Life Act with a view to bringing to Parliament a Bill for amending that piece of legislation.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: So it is more or less consultation fees.

Hon. Rambharat: It is. It is work in relation to the redrafting of that piece of legislation.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Is this internal or is it an external source providing this service?

Hon. Rambharat: At this time, it is internal.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Okay. Thank you.

Mr. Chairman: Member for Mayaro.

Mr. Paray: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Minister, line Item 040, Upgrade of Recreational Facilities at Caura River Recreation Site. I do recall that at some point of time there was the conversation about that site being managed by public entities to be self-sufficient, in that they are going to start charging for using the service. Can you tell us who specifically will be responsible for managing that facility, and where would the funds go in terms of whether it is going to go back to continue the
improvement of the facility or does it go back to the State?

**Hon. Rambharat:** Well, at this time that facility is managed by the Forestry Division of the Ministry. At this time there is no plan to introduce user fees for the facility. The facility does not lend itself for the charging of fees or anything like that at this time.

**Mr. Chairman:** Member for Chaguanas West. No, Chaguanas East, sorry. My apologies.

**Mr. Karim:** Mr. Chairman, I am on page 173, line Item 033.

**Mr. Chairman:** Proceed.

**Mr. Karim:** Hon. Minister, could you give us some more information with respect to the $500,000 allocation to Outreach, Community Empowerment and Mobilization Planning Project.

**Hon. Rambharat:** That is in relation to the environmental bus that goes around the country supporting education in schools.

**Mr. Chairman:** Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Thank you, Deputy Chair. Line Item 536, Establishment of Community Based Aquaculture Programmes, could the hon. Minister identify where these establishments would be based; and what exactly will they be responsible for in terms of the programmes?

**Hon. Rambharat:** I will provide the locations in writing.

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

**Mr. Chairman:** Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.

**Mr. Lee:** Thank you, Chair. Line Item 538 to the Minister. In 2017, I think it was part of the whole budget, it was the establishment of the one of these packing houses for fresh produce. Could you say what happened to this project and why it is not continuing or is it off the radar?
Mr. Chairman: Minister.

Hon. Rambharat: I just answered in response to the Member for Couva South to say that the packing house is going to be—the two are going to be the subject of expressions of interest, and there is no provision there because NAMDEVCO, which is responsible for the packing house, holds in its account a surplus on account of previous funds allocated.

Mr. Chairman: Item 004, Social Infrastructure, pages 177 and 178; Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services, pages 178 to 180, Infrastructure. Member for Mayaro.

Mr. Paray: Mr. Chairman—

Mr. Chairman: What page are we on?

Mr. Paray: We are on page 179.

Mr. Chairman: Item?

Mr. Paray: General Public Services, Items 205, 206, 207, 208. Minister, when you first started your contribution, you referred to a comment that I made in terms of the ability of the Ministry to spend money and that you would expound on that at some point in time when you make your contribution in the Senate. What I want to ask and I am looking at these four Items, eh, and Mr. Chairman, if you permit me just to read them out.

Upgrade of the Cadastral Management Information System. In 2017, there was a $1 million estimate; nothing was spent in 2017. Item 206, Development of Land Management System, $500,000 estimated, nothing spent in 2017. Line Item 207, Reestablishment of State Agricultural Land Information System, a million dollars was estimated in 2017; again, nothing was spent. Line Item 208, Development of an Electronic Document Management System for State land, $500,000 estimated; nothing was spent.
And looking at these four Items, Minister, looking at the criticality of what are the end results of these systems that are deployed in terms of land tenure, land management, I still stand by my comment that I feel that there is something hindering either you or your Ministry or your ability to get these projects going based on the fact that allocations were made—barring that funding is made available, but really we should be trying harder to fight for that funding, taking note of the criticality of this. Any explanations as to why these things would not have been dealt with in the last fiscal year, Mr. Minister?

Mr. Chairman: Minister.

Hon. Rambharat: Well, Member, there was a JSC dealing specifically with the issue of state land allocation in food production which the report was laid and the Ministry has prepared its response. And the point I wanted to make is that some of these projects have to go through a cycle of—we are talking about an issue of state land management that dates back to 1962, a massive backlog of more than 30,000 files in relation to agriculture alone.

So that what we did in the last fiscal was to work on the development of the project. Some of the hardware and software that were required were purchased under the general IT allocation under the PSIP. And in this fiscal where we have to bring bodies in on a project basis to do, for example, to accelerate the Electronic Document Management System, and to do some of the other work, the allocation would be used for that in this fiscal. But since we had the allocation under the general IT spend, the hardware and software were procured in the last fiscal under that Item.

Mr. Chairman: Economic Infrastructure fund, page 255; Item 003, Economic Infrastructure, pages 255 and 256. I recognize the Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.

Mr. Lee: Thank you, Chair. To the Minister line Item 289, could you provide a
listing of the upgrades of the different fishing facilities that you have targeted for 2018?

**Hon. Rambharat:** Well, I could tell you that the allocation is meant to deal with the Carenage fishing facility which would come on stream at the end of this calendar year, and for the beginning of work on the proposed Alcan fishing facility on Alcan Bay, and that is what allocation is for.

**Mr. Lee:** Nothing for Claxton Bay? I thought I saw something where I read the Claxton Bay fishing depot was in the budget.

**Hon. Rambharat:** You did?

**Mr. Lee:** Yeah.

**Hon. Rambharat:** That is what the allocation is for.

**Mr. Chairman:** Member for Mayaro.

**Mr. Paray:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Minister, as we are on line Item 289, fishing facilities, can you just give me an update as to where we are heading with the Galeota fishing facility and whether we are making any progress for the Ortoire facility?

**Hon. Rambharat:** The Ortoire facility we expect to commission soon, and the Galeota facility, the Guayaguayare fishing facility we have some additional items which are going to be delivered to that facility in the next few weeks in support of what the Government has committed to do to support value-added in that particular area. We have some additional facilities that are going to be delivered to Guayaguayare.

**Mr. Chairman:** Item 004, Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla, you have a question?

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Thank you. One question: 001, is it “J. Other Services”? Is it there? Right? Could hon. Minister indicate, what is the Food Basket Road Programme all about?
Mr. Chairman: Minister.

Hon. Rambharat: That Item is for infrastructure works or repair works in what is called the “food targeted food baskets’ in the country where, beyond what we have allocated for road repairs under the recurrent and under the PSIP, that is a specific Item in the event we have to do work in one of the targeted areas.

Mr. Chairman: Item 004, Social Infrastructure, page 256.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 77 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you Mr. Minister and junior Minister and Permanent Secretary, thanks for coming, and the other technocrats. Do have a good evening.

Head 61: Ministry of Housing and Urban Development, $1,496,600,504.

Mr. Chairman: So as I welcome the Minister of Housing and Urban Development. Head 61, Ministry of Housing and Urban Development, $1,496,600,504. You are all set, Mr. Minister? Welcome, Mr. Minister. Welcome Permanent Secretary and welcome to the other senior technocrats in the Ministry. I will now invite the Minister of Housing and Urban Development to make a brief opening statement not exceeding five minutes. Mr. Minister.

Hon. Mitchell: Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Chair. The Ministry of Housing and Urban Development is responsible for the formulation and execution of Government’s policy in the housing and urban development sectors.

The Ministry has overall responsibility in the implementation of relevant policy through its various units and affiliated agencies. The Ministry’s core areas of responsibility include the provision of affordable housing solutions; home improvement and emergency repair grants; regularization of tenure for squatters under the State Land (Regularisation of Tenure) Act; land settlement; urban development.
There are eight affiliated organizations or agencies which implement and promote the Ministry’s policies, plans, programmes and projects: the Trinidad and Tobago Housing Development Corporation; the Urban Development Corporation of Trinidad and Tobago; the Trinidad and Tobago Mortgage Finance Company Limited; the Sugar Industry Labour Welfare Committee; the Land Settlement Agency; East Port of Spain Development Company Limited; East Side Plaza; and New City Mall. Mr. Deputy Chair, thank you.

Question proposed: That Head 61 stand part of the Schedule.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, the sum of $1,496,600,504 for Head 61, Ministry of Housing and Urban Development is comprised of moneys proposed for expenditure under the following Sub-Heads and Items to be found in the Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure, the Draft Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure of the Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies and of the Tobago House of Assembly and the Draft Estimates of the Development Programme.

We now proceed to consider the Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure and we go to page 312. Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure, page 312; Item 001, General Administration, page 312; Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, page 312; Item 001, General Administration, pages 312 to 313; Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, page 313; Item 001, General Administration, page 313; Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies, page 314; Item 009, Other Transfers, page 314. I recognize the Member for Oropouche East.

Dr. Moonilal: Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Chair. To the Minister, I am focusing here on Current Transfers and Subsidies.

Mr. Chairman: Line Item?

Dr. Moonilal: Line Item 01, Trinidad and Tobago Housing Development
Mr. Chairman: Proceed.

Dr. Moonilal: Yeah. Minister, we take note here that the 2017 estimate would have been $354 million. There was a revised estimate for 2017 of $636.7 million; this represents in a revised estimate for the same fiscal an increase of 80 per cent on that budgeted. Could I have an indication as so why this was revised by such a figure to 80 per cent—you are dealing with $282 million, more or less—and why was there need in the first place to increase by 80 per cent to $282 million for the HDC in the fiscal 2017? I will come to another question on the matter.

Mr. Chairman: Okay. Mr. Minister.

Hon. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chairman. To the hon. Member, you would recall in 2014 and 2015 the HDC would have contracted about $1.2 billion in loans from ANSA Finance. The increase is allocated for the repayment of those loans.

Dr. Moonilal: Okay. Could the Minister confirm to me that the money in the Trinidad and Tobago Housing Development Corporation Transfer of Subsidies 01, $282 million in excess, was to pay outstanding loans for the HDC? Is that what you are saying?

Hon. Mitchell: The increase? Yes. The increase is for the repayment of loans.

Dr. Moonilal: So therefore, a transfer to state enterprises at number 14 HDC interest payment on that—

Mr. Chairman: Member, Member, what line Item have you gone to?

Dr. Moonilal: Well, let me stay on the Housing Development Corporation.

Mr. Chairman: You are going ahead of the meeting at this time.

Dr. Moonilal: Could I then ask, for the 2018 you have an estimate of 672, which is a $35 million increase from 2017. Would this be sufficient to meet the demands of
the programme outlined both in the budget and in your contribution earlier in the debate, particularly the $50 million incentive programme—would that be found in here as well?

Mr. Chairman: Mr. Minister.

Hon. Mitchell: You are speaking about the new housing initiatives?

Dr. Moonilal: Yes, correct.

Hon. Mitchell: Yes. That is an incentive provided for in the Ministry of Finance, but I can tell you that this subvention will take care of the HDC’s recurrent expenditure, as well as the repayment of the loans.

Dr. Moonilal: But in this subvention at 01, this includes the accelerated housing programme?

Hon. Mitchell: No. It does not.

Dr. Moonilal: It does not include the accelerated programme? Okay. But the $50 million is coming from this or separately from the Ministry?

Hon. Mitchell: That is from the Ministry of Finance.

Dr. Moonilal: Sure. Could I ask therefore, on the Housing Development Corporation, what has been the experience with the public/private partnership programme for the last fiscal?

Hon. Mitchell: Which line Item is this?

Dr. Moonilal: The same one for the expenditure of the HDC because it is a major HDC initiative.

Hon. Mitchell: Well, it is a major HDC initiative, but it does not form part of the HDC’s expenditure.

Dr. Moonilal: The public/private partnership.

Hon. Mitchell: No. It does not.

Dr. Moonilal: So there is absolutely no expenditure out of the HDC on that
programme?

**Hon. Mitchell:** Well, the administration of the partnership is done within the normal recurrent expenditure, it is an administrative action.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Sure. Does the Government, through the HDC, pay in a private partnership any expenditure to contractors for land development?

**Hon. Mitchell:** No.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Is there a guarantee by the Housing Development Corporation and/or the Ministry of Finance for the private/public partnership?

**Hon. Mitchell:** No.

**Dr. Moonilal:** The private provider of homes under the PPP is expected to secure a loan with their own guarantee?

**Hon. Mitchell:** Yes.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Okay. Thank you. Everybody else, I want to move to another area.

**Mr. Chairman:** Hold on, I am coming there, I am coming there. Item 011, Transfers to State Enterprises, pages 314 and 315. Member for Oropouche East.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Minister, concerning the UDeCOTT transfers and payment of loans, I am looking at the bridge loan facility for UDeCOTT. Could you indicate whether this would include the moneys outstanding on payments for Magnificent Seven projects?

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

**Dr. Moonilal:** 05.

**Hon. Mitchell:** No. I cannot at the time. I can get that to you in writing.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Okay. Then could you provide in writing—because I suspect that you would not be able to for the others as well—from 01 to 23, could you just provide a small brief on what exactly those projects are meant to be paid back for?—both principal and interest.
Mr. Chairman: Member, Member, you said 23, but clearly identify the specific numbers, please, for the record?

Dr. Moonilal: For 01.

Mr. Chairman: Right.

Dr. Moonilal: The 05, that is what I asked just now, 06, 07, 08, 09, 10, 11, 12, 14, 15, that would be it, to 12.

Hon. Mitchell: The matter you first asked, was concerning Item 05?

Dr. Moonilal: Correct.

Hon. Mitchell: Yeah.

Dr. Moonilal: Okay.

Hon. Mitchell: 05 was for the Couva Children’s Hospital, Penal hospital, Ministry of National Security, police stations phase one.

Dr. Moonilal: Phase one. Would you have answers for the rest or do you just want to take a note and—

Hon. Mitchell: Yeah. Yeah. I will provide it in the interest of time.

Dr. Moonilal: Could I ask as well, has the UDeCOTT issued a contract for the completion of works at Stollmeyer’s Castle?

Mr. Chairman: Minister.

Hon. Mitchell: Which line Item is this?

Dr. Moonilal: It is on the borrowing because the UDeCOTT has borrowed on that project.

Hon. Mitchell: Whether the UDeCOTT has borrowed, well when I provide you with the information you will see.

5.40 p.m.

Mr. Chairman: Sub-Head 06, Current Transfers to Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies, page 315.
Hon. Members, we will now move on to the Draft Estimates of the Revenue and Expenditure of the Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies and of the Tobago House of Assembly. Head 18, Sugar Industry Labour Welfare Fund Administration: Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure, page 461; 001, General Administration, page 461; Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, page 461; 001, General Administration, page 461; Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, page 462; 001, General Administration, page 462; 54, Land Settlement Agency, Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure, page 470; 001, General Administration, page 470, Sub-Head 02—

Dr. Moonilal: Could I? You moved from 64 to 70? Page 470 you are on?

Mr. Chairman: We are at 54, Land Settlement Agency, Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure, page 470.

Dr. Moonilal: You have finished Sugar Industry Labour Welfare?

Mr. Chairman: Yes. I have been calling it through.

Dr. Moonilal: Member, there is a graph I want to ask one question on, but it is not under a heading so I did not know that you had moved. Could I just ask one question?

Mr. Chairman: What page you are on, Member?

Dr. Moonilal: 466. It is just a quick question that would require—

Mr. Chairman: 466?

Dr. Moonilal: Page 466, is it Details of Expenditure?

Mr. Chairman: And you are on Statutory Board and Similar Bodies?


Mr. Chairman: Page 466, go ahead.

Dr. Moonilal: Minister, the development work for the Sugar Industry Labour Welfare Fund, I am seeing estimate for 2017 here as $63 million, and revised estimate for 2017 at $8 million, suggests that you were budgeting for work at $63
million, and then you were revised that you did not need that type of money. But what explains this, if you could just tell us now or put it in writing?

**Mr. Chairman:** Mr. Minister.

**Hon. Mitchell:** We took some time to appoint a board at SILWIC, so that would account for it.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Let me understand. You did not spend about $55 million because you took some time to appoint a board?

**Hon. Mitchell:** Yes.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Okay.

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

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Chairman. Could the Minister advise at this meeting if there are any sums of moneys being owed in terms of a refund to ex-employees of Caroni (1975) Limited?

**Mr. Chairman:** Line Item, Member.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** In terms of you all—

**Mr. Chairman:** Page?

**Mr. Indarsingh:**—administrative expenses of the Sugar Industry Labour—

**Mr. Chairman:** Member! Member, there is a clear procedure, page and line Item. Under what? You are under the Sugar Industry Labour Welfare Fund Administration.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Yes.

**Mr. Chairman:** Based on that Item, we need to be specific in terms of your line Item, the comment and question.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Page 466, Mr. Deputy Chair, Administration Expenses.

**Mr. Chairman:** Okay. Right, question?

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Could the Minister inform this meeting if there are any sums of
moneys that are being owed to former employees of Caroni (1975) Limited in relation to down payment on lands that they would have been entitled to via the closure of Caroni (1975) Limited?

**Mr. Chairman:** Mr. Minister, can you assist?

**Hon. Mitchell:** Yes. Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chairman. As I just told the hon. Member, the hon. Member would have written to my colleague the Minister of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries—the Minister of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries is not the line Minister for SILWC, so that matter has recently been passed on to me, and I am looking into that matter. So, I can confirm later in writing to you.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** So, that would be dealt with by the newly appointed board in terms of relinquishing the liability?

**Hon. Mitchell:** The matter has just been passed on to me, I am investigating it, and I will report to you.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Thank you very much.

**Mr. Chairman:** Okay, fine. 54, Land Settlement Agency. Land Settlement Agency we are going to.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Yes, we are going to Land Settlement Agency.

**Mr. Chairman:** Right, okay, let me just read it. Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure, page 470; 001, General Administration, page 470. You are on that page or you need me to continue?

**Dr. Moonilal:** I am on page 468, Personnel Expenditure.

**Mr. Chairman:** Just now, Member—

**Dr. Moonilal:** Land Settlement Agency. Deputy Chair, I do not know if we have the same book?

**Mr. Chairman:** Oh, that is the summary page, Member.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Yes.
Mr. Chairman: And the details come next, which will be coming up on page 470.

Dr. Moonilal: Sure, well I will wait.

Mr. Chairman: So, just follow with me so that you would be able to identify your question.

Dr. Moonilal: Sure.

Mr. Chairman: So, General Administration, page 470; Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services.

Dr. Moonilal: My question was on 01, Personnel Expenditure.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, proceed.

Dr. Moonilal: Yes, sure. Minister, from Remuneration to Board Members, there is 100 per cent increase between 2016 and 2017 for the Land Settlement Agency, there will surely be an explanation. Could we have it?

Mr. Chairman: Line Item 06, Mr. Minister.

Dr. Moonilal: Personnel Expenditure, 01—well, sorry. Yes, 06.

Hon. Mitchell: I will have to give that to you in writing.

Dr. Moonilal: The 06?

Hon. Mitchell: Yes, 06, Remuneration to Board Members.

Dr. Moonilal: Remuneration to Board Members, 100 per cent increase from 2016 to 2017. Okay, thank you.

Mr. Chairman: Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, page 470; 001, General Administration, page 470; Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, page 471; 001, General Administration, page 471; Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies, page 471; 007, Households, page 471; 009, Other Transfers, page 471.

Hon. Members, we will now move on to the Draft Estimates of Development Programme. Development Programme, Sub-Head 09, Consolidated Fund, page 132 of the new book. Page 132, Consolidated Fund; Item 004, Social

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Infrastructure, page 132 to 135. Member for Oropouche East.

**Dr. Moonilal:** If I could just ask the Minister on the Development Programme. Again, there was a revised estimate here from $86 million to 117—

**Mr. Chairman:** Line Item.

**Dr. Moonilal:** I am at 09 breaking down to 236, Regularization and Regeneration of Communities Greater Port of Spain area. The question is, this is deemed to be a new project, a new line Item, could you indicate exactly what work would be done here as opposed to the Port of Spain East Development Company in this new line Item of 236? But also at 235 you have Rural Housing and Village Improvement Programme, $5 million, it is a new project. Could I ask for both 235 and 36, some explanation as to what exactly is that, that both together they take $10 million?

**Mr. Chairman:** Mr. Minister.

**Hon. Mitchell:** With respect to line Item 236, these are squatting communities, designated sites in the Port of Spain area. Emergency infrastructural works will be done in these areas over the next fiscal year.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Minister, could you just clarify for me. When we say squatter sites, these cannot be HDC buildings or HDC centres. This is what, squatter sites under the LSA?

**Hon. Mitchell:** Yes.

**Dr. Moonilal:** So this here deals with LSA, Land Settlement Agency?

**Hon. Mitchell:** Yes, Land Settlement Agency.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Fine. And 235?

**Hon. Mitchell:** And 235, this is indeed a new programme that deals with the reduction or the elimination of poverty housing in areas all across Trinidad. It is similar to the grants that the Ministry presently offers.

**Dr. Moonilal:** So, is it a grant programme?

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Hon. Mitchell: It is a grant programme. It will be done using the Aided Self-Help approach where persons can apply, get grants, but it is targeted towards the elimination of poverty housing.

Dr. Moonilal: Could you give us an example of a Village Improvement Programme that could be funded under the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development Grant Programme now?

Hon. Mitchell: There are Ministries all over. Sorry, there are rural villages all over Trinidad, in Sangre Grande, in Moruga, different areas.

Dr. Moonilal: And what would be the quantum of this grant?

Hon. Mitchell: We have not identified the details of the programme as yet.

Dr. Moonilal: Okay.

Hon. Mitchell: Within two months.

Dr. Moonilal: So, we expect in the coming days to have some type of outlined policy—

Hon. Member: He said in about two months.

Dr. Moonilal:—on the nature of the programme, the quantum of money to be provided, the policy for distribution.

Hon. Mitchell: Yes.

Dr. Moonilal: You will give that in about two month?

Hon. Mitchell: Yes.

Dr. Moonilal: If it is possible, could you remember in two months to supply us with a copy?

Hon. Mitchell: I certainly will.

Mr. Chairman: Thanks Member. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you. Just want to ask line Item 234. What replaced the Land for the Landless Programme, if anything replaced it?
Mr. Chairman: Mr. Minister.


Dr. Moonilal: Could I ask—

Mr. Chairman: Just now, hold on, hold on. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla, you did not hear? Okay, Mr. Minister.


Mr. Chairman: Member for Oropouche East.

Dr. Moonilal: Thank you very much, and my colleague from Cumuto/Manzanilla touched on the issue that I would like to follow up on. Indeed, in your contribution in the budget we heard about this Aided Self-Help Housing Programme announcement. Could you direct me where here funding is provided for that programme?

Mr. Chairman: Mr. Minister.

Hon. Mitchell: There is no line Item that treats with the programme. The programme would be administered through the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development and the LSA. But there is not additional funding.

Dr. Moonilal: Or there is no funding for that programme?

Hon. Mitchell: For that programme, no.

Dr. Moonilal: Because, as you can follow with me here, the Land for the Landless has no funding for 2018, because you have terminated by Cabinet decision?

Hon. Mitchell: All right. But this particular vote treats with moneys paid to contractors for the development of the lots that were—

Dr. Moonilal: Which particular vote? Just tell me the line Item?

Hon. Mitchell: This particular vote, 234, Residential Lots Programme, Land for the Landless.

Dr. Moonilal: Of which nothing is budgeted in 2018.

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Hon. Mitchell: No, because we have closed the programme.

Dr. Moonilal: It is closed?

Hon. Mitchell: Yes.

Dr. Moonilal: So, I am asking now, so therefore having closed that, with no budget for Land for the Landless properly done, you have also in place no budget for the Aided Self-Help Housing Programme?

Hon. Mitchell: This particular Vote is for the payment to contractors for the development of the lots, the Land for the Landless Programme. Those lots have now been developed. The Aided Self-Help Programme will be funded by the normal Recurrent Expenditure within the Ministry of Housing and the LSA.

Dr. Moonilal: I understand that thoroughly. So there will be no new land development in the coming fiscal under the Aided Self-Help Housing Programme?

Hon. Mitchell: As I indicated in my budget contribution, we presently have 1,500 lots to be allocated in the first cycle and in the second cycle we will identify surplus EMBD lots, and other lots all across Trinidad for allocation in the second cycle.

Dr. Moonilal: Minister, could you provide in writing—because you clearly would not be able to now—a breakdown of those 1,500 lots? Where they are? If they are completed or yet to be completed, those 1,500 lots?

Hon. Mitchell: Sure.

Dr. Moonilal: And also, the lots that you are intending to take from the EMBDC, where those are? Are they finished? Completed? And when would you be in a position to distribute these lots that have been completed?

Hon. Mitchell: Sure.

Dr. Moonilal: Could I go on? My colleague has—

Mr. Chairman: You have another question? I will deal with you one time you
know, Member. You go ahead and then I will go to the Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Dr. Moonilal: Deputy Chairman, you are threatening to deal with me one time?

[Laughter]

Mr. Chairman: Proceed. Proceed.

Dr. Moonilal: Yes. I am accustomed to that. Anyway, Mr. Deputy Speaker, 293. Line Item 293. Could I ask a question? We are seeing also a new project Item here, Minister, it is Home Ownership 101, if I am not mistaken?

Hon. Mitchell: Yes.

Dr. Moonilal: Could you just indicate briefly, what really is Home Ownership 101 that you will need $1 million to execute?

Mr. Chairman: Minister.

Hon. Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chairman. Home Ownership 101, I would have indicated this new programme in my budget contribution. This is basically a manual. The $1 million is estimated, an estimated cost to produce the manual. This is a manual that will treat with all matters related to home ownership that would be made available for citizens.

Dr. Moonilal: Matters like what, for example?

Hon. Mitchell: Matters in terms of house construction, in terms of approvals, in terms of legislation, the landlord and tenant matters, in terms of real estate, agencies, in terms of mortgages. So, it is a manual that is aimed at educating the public.

Dr. Moonilal: Sure.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Member.

Dr. Moonilal: At 292, Minister, you have the Emergency Shelter Relief Fund.

Hon. Mitchell: Yes.
Dr. Moonilal: I see head office here, this is the DP we are looking at. In 2017, you had $1 million revised and you go for the same thing, could we have an account in writing of the 2017 fiscal, what has been done under the Emergency Shelter Relief Fund, homes provided, whatever it is that used—

Hon. Mitchell: The grants.

Dr. Moonilal:—the grants?

Hon. Mitchell: Yes.

Dr. Moonilal: And could you—to refresh our memory—put in writing as well, the policy guidelines for the Emergency Shelter Relief Fund?

Hon. Mitchell: Sure.

Dr. Moonilal: I will refresh your memory.

Hon. Mitchell: Sure.

Mr. Chairman: Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair. Hon. Minister, just following up on my colleague with the Aided Self-Help Housing Programme, you have a list of questions to be put in writing, and if you can also include in that, what is the process? Because there are a number of persons who would have gone through a lottery system and would have been entitled and qualified already, and therefore what would happen with those persons who would be waiting for their allocation? And also, if you can expand on line Item 237, please? Thank you.

Mr. Chairman: That would be provided in writing, Minister?

Hon. Mitchell: Sure.

Mr. Chairman: Lovely. Member for Couva South.

Mr. Indarsingh: Thank you, Deputy Chair. Mr. Minister, this programme that replaced the Land for the Landless Programme is Aid for what again?

Dr. Moonilal: Aided Self-Help Housing Programme.
Mr. Indarsingh: Could you—

Mr. Chairman: Member! Member for Couva South, you continue to do it. Line Item, so that we would not have the toing and froing.

Mr. Indarsingh: I am sorry, Deputy Chair. Line Item 234.

Mr. Chairman: Residential Lots Programme.

Mr. Indarsingh: Yes. Is there any plan on the part of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago to take sites which are being prepared for the distribution of lands that are being owed to the ex-Caroni workers for distribution for residential purposes, and incorporate them into this new programme?

Hon. Mitchell: No.

Mr. Indarsingh: Thank you very much.

Mr. Chairman: Member for Oropouche East.

Dr. Moonilal: Thank you, Chairman. If I could take the Minister to 086. In 086, Minister, you will notice that there was no estimate for 2017, but there was a revised estimate for $1.2 million for Fence Line Communities. Are these Fence Line Communities work under the Sugar Welfare, the LSA, or the HDC?


Dr. Moonilal: Sugar Welfare. Minister, could I ask then, if you could give us, in writing, at a later time, the breakdown of works done, and also some type of analysis of the—I dare say—contractors being owed moneys? I do not need cheques necessarily, but if you could give us some indication of how much has been paid, and what are the outstanding sums to contractors in the Sugar Industry Labour Welfare Fund who have done fence line work and are yet to be paid? If we can see it in writing?

Hon. Mitchell: Certainly.

Mr. Chairman: Minister. Right, will be provided.
Hon. Mitchell: Certainly.

Mr. Chairman: Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services, page 135.

Dr. Moonilal: Yes.

Mr. Chairman: Member for Oropouche East.

Dr. Moonilal: We are on 135. Minister, public buildings, 002. There is a new project here called Development and Management of Property. Would you care to—

Hon. Mitchell: Where is this? I am sorry, where is this?

Dr. Moonilal: 002. I am on page 135. You with me?


Dr. Moonilal: At 002, a new project, Development and Management of Property. Could we just get an indication of what really is this business?

Hon. Mitchell: Right. If you know Independence Square, just next to the New City Mall, there is a shell of a building. That is 43 Independence Square. It is owned by the Government, and the particular line Item, the allocation is for the refurbishment of that property, and for the creation of an incubator facility, similar to East Side Plaza and New City Mall.

Dr. Moonilal: But, Minister, if that is what you say, you just have to put refurbishment of property at Independence Square. Why is it named Development and Management of Property that gives a generic feel that there is some work to be done throughout the country managing property and developing property? It is one property you are going to develop.

Hon. Mitchell: Yes. I am sorry. Hon. Member, I am sorry, I do not write these terms, or these headings, or these titles.

Dr. Moonilal: Maybe as your Ministry, you should get involved in it.

Mr. Chairman: Okay.
Dr. Moonilal: Could I continue?

Mr. Chairman: Next question?

Dr. Moonilal: Yes. The upgrading to East Side Plaza, $2 million. [Interruption] Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am hearing some mutterings from the Member for Laventille West there and he is disturbing my train of thought. He is saying something about cheques and so on.

Mr. Chairman: Okay. Members!

Mr. Hinds: I am entitled to contribute in this Committee. The Member for “Oropeach” East suggested—[Crosstalk]—Oropouche East suggested to the Minister of Housing and Urban Development that he get involved in the HDC affairs and I simply advised my colleague, do not accept no cheques on behalf of no contractors.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, thank you. Member for Oropouche East, question? Point?

Dr. Moonilal: Question, I can reply.

Mr. Chairman: No, no, no.

Dr. Moonilal: Let me continue. Could I continue?

Mr. Chairman: Member for “Oropeach” East, we are on page 135.

Dr. Moonilal: I want to take objection to “Oropeach” East and so on. I think there should be more respect. We would like some more respect for the constituency from all Members. [Desk thumping] Yeah. I think it is a sign of contempt for the people of—

Mr. Chairman: Member! Member for Oropouche East. [Interruption] Member for Oropouche East, let us go on with the people’s business.

Dr. Moonilal: Thank you. Might be race or something. Upgrading of East Side Plaza, could I indicate, Minister, if we can get in writing at some time a sense of the $2 million, what was done in 2017 with the upgrading of East Side Plaza? Just
a sense of what was done with the expenditure allocated there.

Hon. Mitchell: Sure.

Mr. Chairman: Member for Pointe-a-Pierre, you have a question on page 134?

Mr. Lee: Yes. To the Minister, 002, line Item, Social and Economic Programme for East Port of Spain. You spent $5 million in 2017, could you provide a listing of the programmes and the quantum?

Hon. Mitchell: Certainly.

Mr. Chairman: Infrastructure Development Fund, page 237; Item 004, Social Infrastructure, page 237.

Dr. Moonilal: Yes.

Mr. Chairman: Member for Oropouche East.

Dr. Moonilal: Under the Infrastructure Development Fund, Mr. Deputy Chairman—Mr. Deputy Chairman, I am aware I have five minutes to ask a question but I will take less. We have here the Accelerated Housing Programme specifically.

Hon. Mitchell: Specifically.

Dr. Moonilal: Right. Thank you. And we have had an increase in the 2017 estimate from 160 to 216, I just wanted to have an indication of what would have contributed to that in the Accelerated Housing Programme? So, I do not think it would be repayment of loans per se here?

Hon. Mitchell: These are for ongoing construction works.

Dr. Moonilal: Could you list now, or put in writing, the ongoing construction works that would have accounted for this increase of about 61—

Hon. Mitchell: I can tell you now there are about 23 developments under construction, so these are for the ongoing construction works.

Dr. Moonilal: You could tell me now or you could put it in writing. If you want to
tell me the 23.

**Hon. Mitchell:** You want each project?

**Dr. Moonilal:** Yes, please.

**Mr. Chairman:** Would be provided.

**Hon. Mitchell:** Are there any projects that you are particularly interested in, or you want all?

**Dr. Moonilal:** If it is 23, it is not that much. Is it?

**Hon. Mitchell:** Yes, many.

**Dr. Moonilal:** So, you could put that in writing, and tell us the new projects? Could you indicate what are the new projects started from 2016 as opposed to ongoing projects? Because your 23 you said were ongoing projects. The new projects started for turning of the sod, from 2016 under the Accelerated Housing Programme, you could put that in writing as well, if you so choose?

**Hon. Mitchell:** Sure.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Under Accelerated Housing Programme, could I also have from you, Sir, a status—you can give it now, because it is something I think you may know off hand—on the Mount Hope, I believe, public/private partnership HDC initiative involving NH International? What is the status of that project?

**Hon. Mitchell:** That does not form part of the Accelerated Housing Programme.

**Dr. Moonilal:** What does it fall part of?

**Hon. Mitchell:** That is the PPP programme.

**Dr. Moonilal:** That is outside of the HDC?

**Hon. Mitchell:** No, it is outside of the Accelerated Housing Programme.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Okay. Sure, no problem. Could I ask in the period 2016 to 2017 to date, which we are looking at, has the HDC started and completed and distributed any housing from a housing project?
Mr. Chairman: Mr. Minister.

Dr. Moonilal: Yes or no.

Hon. Mitchell: You would get that in writing.

Dr. Moonilal: Well, it is yes or no.

Hon. Mitchell: You would get it in writing.

Dr. Moonilal: Okay, you would put yes or no in writing?

Hon. Mitchell: I will.

Dr. Moonilal: Okay, sure. Minister, could you indicate to us in writing, if you so choose, what is the new policy for home distribution, housing unit distribution?

Hon. Mitchell: I am not sure if that is relevant to the Housing Construction Programme.

Dr. Moonilal: But, the distribution of public goods and services built by taxpayers' money is a serious policy issue emanating from the expenditure of public funds.

Hon. Mitchell: But, I am not seeing it in the line Item. I do not see how it is relevant to the line Item.

Dr. Moonilal: The Accelerated Housing Programme is to build house, we are asking you on what—

Hon. Mitchell: It is the Housing Construction Programme.

Dr. Moonilal: Yes. And when you construct is to distribute goods and services to citizens and so on. So, if you feel that this is not within the line Item, I am fine with that. That is something—

Mr. Chairman: Member! Minister, you know all that you have to provide. Consider it part of the manual. [Crosstalk] All right, let us move on, Member.

Dr. Moonilal: Minister, under the Accelerated Housing Programme, the Housing Construction Programme, in the last fiscal, I believe you completed the Victoria Keys Housing Estate, could we have either now or in writing, the policy used by
the HDC to distribute those units?

**Hon. Mitchell:** Sure.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Could we also indicate, in doing that, the cost and the total—I would like to get, please, the total applicants, all persons who applied for units at Victoria Keys, as part of the distribution—

**Hon. Mitchell:** Okay. Sure, no problem.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Well, the colleagues in front are disturbing my questioning.

**Mr. Chairman:** Do you have any more question, Member for Oropouche East?

**Dr. Moonilal:** Yes, Sir.

**Mr. Chairman:** Members! Members!

**Dr. Moonilal:** I am not hearing now.

**Mr. Chairman:** What is that?

**Dr. Moonilal:** I am not—the Minister is occupied with the colleagues.

**Mr. Chairman:** Yes, Member, go ahead.

**Dr. Moonilal:** I do not have the attention of the Minister.

**Hon. Mitchell:** You have my full attention.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Thank you. Minister, for Victoria Keys, I would like the names of all applicants. The names of the successful applicants [*Crosstalk*] and the cost per unit.

**Hon. Mitchell:** Mr. Deputy Chairman, let me just repeat. The Accelerated Housing Programme is the Housing Construction Programme. Out of this line Item, moneys are allocated and utilized for the payment of contractors for the construction of homes. It has nothing to do with the allocation of Victoria Keys.

**Mr. Chairman:** Next question.

**Dr. Moonilal:** I expect the Minister to clarify—you will talk about the construction of homes, but you are not prepared to talk to the distribution of
housing units. You are not prepared to talk about the—

Mr. Chairman: Member! Member, let us move on.

Dr. Moonilal: That is fine. Could I also ask the status of construction of three housing estates, the Fair Field, Union Hall and Cypress?

Mr. Chairman: Member—

Hon. Mitchell: Mr. Deputy Chairman.

Mr. Chairman:—the Minister said he would provide all 23 as identified, there is no need to ask for any specific housing. He would provide it.

Dr. Moonilal: Could I also, in relation to that, ask for the list of outstanding payments owed to contractors in the HDC?

Mr. Chairman: What line Item?

Dr. Moonilal: On Accelerated Housing Programme, it is a construction programme.

Mr. Chairman: Minister, that could be provided?

Dr. Moonilal: Could I ask the Minister to provide information on outstanding payments owed to contractors—

Mr. Chairman: What period?

Dr. Moonilal:—during the period 2016 to 2018? The Ministers in front are shouting no, no, no.

Mr. Chairman: Member, you proceed. You proceed.

Dr. Moonilal: But they are interfering with my line of questioning to the Minister.

Mr. Chairman: I hardly doubt.

Mr. Young: The answer is no. That is currently under investigation.

Dr. Moonilal: Hold on. Could I then ask the Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann’s West, the Housing Development Programme, the list owned to contractors, that is under an investigation by who?
Mr. Young: Everything at the HDC under your tenure is under investigation.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, Members, Listen—[Desk thumping]

Dr. Moonilal: Mr. Deputy Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: Listen, Members—

Dr. Moonilal: Well then everything I asked about the HDC, the Minister just—well, the Minister was not forthright. He promised certain information to me, and now I am hearing that I cannot get any information at all because every single thing at the HDC is under investigation.

Mr. Chairman: Member! Member!

Dr. Moonilal: Mr. Deputy Chairman, what is—this is happening—

Mr. Chairman: Member! Member, hold on. [Crosstalk] Rest assured, whatever has been identified by the Minister to provide, will be provided. [Crosstalk]

Dr. Moonilal: The Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann’s West must say that.

Mr. Chairman: Anymore questions?

Dr. Moonilal: He said that everything at the HDC is under—

Mr. Chairman: Member! Member for Oropouche East, anymore questions?

Dr. Moonilal: Mr. Chairman, quite frankly, I do not think I could ask anything given this position of the gentleman.

Mr. Chairman: So that means no.

Hon. Mitchell: Thank you very much.

Dr. Moonilal: There is nothing again I want to ask.

Mr. Young: Mr. Chairman—

Mr. Chairman: Hold on. Hold on. Hold on. Hon. Members, the question is that the sum of $1,496,600,504 for Head 61, Ministry of Housing and Urban Development stand part of the Schedule. [Crosstalk] Members?

Question put and agreed to.

UNREVISED
Head 61 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Mr. Chairman: Mr. Minister, I thank you. Permanent Secretary and the senior technocrats at the Ministry, do have a good evening.

6.10 p.m.

Mr. Chairman: Head 28, Ministry of Health. I will just give the Minister of Health and his technocrats time to come in.

Head 28: Ministry of Health, $5,302,113,490.

Mr. Chairman: We go to page 192, Members, in the recurrent expenditure. Welcome, Mr. Minister. Welcome to your senior staff. I will now invite the Minister of Health to make a brief opening statement not exceeding five minutes. As soon as you are ready, Sir.

Hon. Deyalsingh: Thank you, Chairman. First of all, on behalf of our side, I think I should congratulate our colleague, the Member for Couva North for giving birth to her second child. [Laughter and desk thumping]

Chairman, the Ministry of Health and the RHAs have made some significant progress in the past two years. In making that progress, we realize that there is still a very long while to go before the taxpayers of this country get value for money for the $6 billion plus that goes into the Ministry of Health.

Some of our major accomplishments have been the reduction of maternal mortality rates in Trinidad and Tobago; a positive impact of infant mortality rates; the clearing up of backlogs for some surgeries, but I think the game-changer, and if I had to borrow a term from the budget presentation, “Shifting the Paradigm”, has to be the launch implementation of the Non-Communicable Diseases Plan which is long, long overdue in Trinidad and Tobago. The reduction of NCDs is critical because if we do not get a handle on NCDs—diabetes, hypertension, high cholesterol and some cancers—no Government will be able to pour enough money
into health to treat. This Government has a Cabinet approved NCD plan and the aim is to change the culture of Trinidad and Tobago from one of treatment of disease to one of prevention of disease.

In coming to a close with my opening comments, I want to say that I, and I am sure that I speak on behalf of all my colleagues, stand firmly behind and with the Minister of Finance in this budget. This is not a Colm Imbert budget, this is a budget of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago [Desk thumping] and we stand with our Prime Minister, we stand with our Minister of Finance, who is the principal architect, and we stand with our Minister of Planning and Development. This is a budget that will secure the long term future of all workers in Trinidad and Tobago, their children and their grandchildren. I thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

*Question proposed:* That Head 28 stand part of the Schedule

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Members, the question is that the sum of $5,302,113,490 for Head 28, Ministry of Health is comprised of moneys proposed for expenditure under the following Sub-Heads and Items to be found under the *Draft Estimates of the Revenue and Expenditure of the Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies and of the Tobago House of Assembly* and the *Draft Estimates of Development Programme*. We now proceed to consider the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure*. Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure; Item 001, General Administration, page 192, and I recognize the Member for Fyzabad.

**Dr. Bodoe:** Thank you, thank you Mr. Chairman, to the Minister, line Item 14, Remunerations to members of Cabinet-Appointed Committees.

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** “Oh”, so we have moved to 14.

**Dr. Bodoe:** No, no. Sorry, same page, page 192.

**Mr. Chairman:** Page 192. Line Item 14.

*UNREVISED*
Hon. Deyalsingh: Sure.

Dr. Bodee: If you could indicate how many Cabinet-Appointed Committees that are currently functioning?

Hon. Deyalsingh: Sixteen.

Dr. Bodee: Okay. So the increase of $1 million reflects an increase for the same number of committees?

Hon. Deyalsingh: Well, you have to remember that many of these committees were not fully operationalized under your tenure. Under our tenure, we have actually reinvigorated a lot of these committees, so that is the reason.

Dr. Bodee: Can you indicate the committees in writing and the membership? Thank you.

Hon. Deyalsingh: Sure. Council of the Pharmacy Board of Trinidad and Tobago; Clinical Assessment Committee; Private Hospitals Board; Pesticides and Toxic Chemicals Control Board; Drug Advisory Committee; Food Advisory Committee; Opticians Registration Council; Psychiatric Hospital Tribunal; Council for Professions related to Medicine; Council for Medical Board of Trinidad and Tobago; Antimicrobial Resistance Coordinating Committee—a brand new one; Nursing Council of Trinidad and Tobago. Those are some of them.

Dr. Bodee: Thank you.

Hon. Deyalsingh: You are welcome.

Mr. Chairman: Chaguanas West.

Mr. Singh: Thank you, under line Item 01, Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance. Minister, there are newspaper reports of a lot of young doctors who are unemployed. Under this Item, can they be utilized in the primary health care?

Hon. Deyalsingh: When you say young doctors, what are you referring to? Interns?
Mr. Singh: Those who have now come out of internship.

Hon. Deyalsingh: Interns? Okay. The Government took a decision recently to approve new positions for interns and I am happy to say that as far as interns are concerned, almost all the people qualified as interns have in fact been employed at the RHAs. The last batch received their letters for a cycle starting in October. So we have done that. I can give you the breakdown. Cabinet by 2004, had approved 176 positions; Cabinet 2010, 120 positions, giving you 297. This Government, hearing the plights of those interns took a decision in July of 2017 to approve 75 more positions, giving you a grand total of 372.

Mr. Singh: So I take it now that all of those interns are accounted for?

Hon. Deyalsingh: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: Item 004, Vertical Services, page 193. Member for Fyzabad.

Dr. Bodoe: Thank you, Chairman. Minister, with regard to Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance, 01, I am just trying to find out, with regard to the appointment of the director of women’s health, under which Head that a payment has been made and the staff of the director of women’s health.

Hon. Deyalsingh: That was earlier. Member, this particular Head 004, Vertical Services, director of women’s health does not fall under Vertical Services.

Mr. Singh: Can you indulge me Minister, and indicate where it fall? [Crosstalk] I am just trying to find out the line Item.

Hon. Deyalsingh: So what I am saying, the director of women’s health does not fall under this line Item. [Interruption]

Mr. Imbert: And he answered a question in Parliament about this that you asked already. So you very well know too.

Dr. Bodoe: Thank you. It will be under other line Item.
Madam Chairman: Okay, 005, North West Regional Health Authority, page 193. Member for San Juan.

Dr. Khan: Just one question to the Minister. 005/01, Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance. And it transcends all the Regional Health Authorities.

Hon. Deyalsingh: Sorry. Sorry?

Dr. Khan: My question transcends all the other Regional Health Authorities, about the house officers who have not been employed. If you could just give us some information on that.

Hon. Deyalsingh: Well, this particular line Item has to do with Ministry of Health public officers, if I am correct—you are referring to 01, Salaries and COLA?

Dr. Khan: No, I am just using that, the Salaries and Cost of—005/01, the Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance. I know it is related to the—

Hon. Deyalsingh: Yes.

Mr. Imbert: This is internal Ministry staff.

Hon. Deyalsingh: This is internal Ministry staff.

Mr. Imbert: That question is not relevant.

Hon. Deyalsingh: It does not apply to this line Item.

Mr. Imbert: Not a relevant question.

Dr. Khan: All right.

Hon. Deyalsingh: That is why—

Dr. Khan: I was just asking it in advance.

Mr. Imbert: This is internal Ministry staff. Wait until we get to the correct line Item. Behave.

Hon. Deyalsingh: We will deal with it in the correct line Item.

Madam Chairman: 006, North Central Regional Health Authority; 007, Eastern Regional Health Authority; 008: South West Regional Health Authority; 009,
National Alcohol and Drug Abuse Prevention, which is at page 199. Sub-Head 03; Minor Equipment Purchases, page 200.

**Hon. Member:** She skipped.

**Madam Chairman:** Okay, sorry, Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, page 196; Item 001, General Administration; Item 004, Vertical Services.

**Dr. Khan:** One question on that.

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** What—

**Dr. Khan:** Just on sub-heading 39, Drugs and Other Related Materials and Supplies. There is a $630 million subvention. Could you just indicate— and there is an increase of $65 million. Could I just get an indication of what that is—

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Okay. So this allocation relates to NIPDEC, the PAHO Strategic Fund and the EPI, for pharmaceutical and non-pharmaceutical items.

**Mr. Imbert:** And you should note that the allocation is less than the original allocation for 2017. What was actually spent in 2017 was less than the original and this is also less than the original.

**Dr. Khan:** That is why there is a shortage of drugs then.

**Mr. Imbert:** No, no, at all. There is efficiency, cutting out waste, mismanagement and corruption.

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** There is efficiency.

**Hon. Member:** From “all yuh”.

**Mr. Imbert:** Creating more for less, more for less.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Baratarya/San Juan.

**Dr. Khan:** Finished.

**Madam Chairman:** Okay. Item 005, North West Regional Health Authority; Item 006, North Central Regional Health Authority; Item 007, Eastern Regional Health Authority. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla. Page 198.

**UNREVISED**
Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: No, no. Go ahead.

Madam Chairman: Item 0—

Dr. Khan: There is one question on the 008/01 and 01 in all the others, 005, 006, 007. Have the travelling officers received their moneys that they were supposed to have obtained for their VAT payments and motor vehicle tax on travelling officers? Minister.

Hon. Deyalsingh: By information, once they have applied, the answer is, yes.

Dr. Khan: They have been getting it. Okay. Well, at least they are paying something. [Crosstalk]

Mr. Imbert: These thousands of travelling officers, they get exemptions.

Madam Chairman: Item 009, National Alcohol and Drug Abuse Prevention.

Dr. Khan: Just one question on that. 009/66, Hosting of Conferences, Seminars, et cetera. I am just looking here, there is no allocation at all for any Hosting of Conference, Seminars for NADAPP. Any special reason why?

Hon. Deyalsingh: We will revisit this for the mid-year review, Sir. [Crosstalk]

Dr. Khan: The reason is that drug addiction is a serious problem and I think they do not agree—

Hon. Deyalsingh: We also use the Ministry’s hosting.

Mr. Imbert: We can move things around.

Madam Chairman: Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, page 200; Item 001, General Administration; Item 004, Vertical Services; Item 009, National Alcohol and Drug Abuse Prevention; Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies, page 201; Item 001, Regional Bodies; Item 003, United Nations Organizations; Item 001, International Bodies; Item 005, Non-Profit Institutions, pages 201 and 202. Member for Fyzabad.

Dr. Bodoe: Thank you, Madam Chair. Minister, with regard to Item 20—
Hon. Deyalsingh: Yes.

Dr. Bodoe: Contribution to Non-Profit Institutions. Can you indicate perhaps in writing how these funds will be allocated, the $18,969,000?

Hon. Deyalsingh: Yes. Will do.

Dr. Bodoe: Which body is involved and the amount of allocation?

Hon. Deyalsingh: Sure.

Madam Chairman: Member for Princes Town.

Mr. Padarath: Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, on the same line Item, could you indicate whether or not there are any applications that are currently pending to be considered for contributions for Non-Profit Institutions with respect to Ministry of Health?

Hon. Deyalsingh: Yes.

Mr. Padarath: Can you indicate which ones?

Hon. Deyalsingh: I will do that in writing for you, Sir.

Mr. Padarath: Okay, and in terms of what is the process to be considered and whether or not there would be additions subsequent to this listing?

Hon. Deyalsingh: Will do.

Mr. Padarath: Thank you.

Hon. Deyalsingh: Thank you.

Madam Chairman: Item 007, Households. Member for Barataria/San Juan.

Dr. Khan: Minister, 01, Medical Treatment of Nationals in Institutions—

Hon. Deyalsingh: Yes, Sir.

Dr. Khan:—has been decreased by $12 million. Is that the APP Programme?

Hon. Deyalsingh: Yes, it is.

Dr. Khan: It has been decreased?

Hon. Deyalsingh: Yes. For good reason we are now focusing on efficiency and we
are not outsourcing services to the private sector. We are doing a lot more in the public sector.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 009, Other Transfers, Member for Fyzabad.

**Dr. Bodoе:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Minister, with regard to Item 01, Regional Health Authority—

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Yes.

**Dr. Bodoе:** The expenditure of $161,900,000 and I see the breakdown here. Of particular interest is the Vacant Posts and an allocation of $20 million. Can you indicate, maybe in writing, what those Vacant Posts might be?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Sure.

**Dr. Bodoе:** Also, in addition to that, with regard to Item (iii) and (iv), Paediatric Cardiac Surgery—

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Yes.

**Dr. Bodoе:** And Gynaecological Cancer Screening and Surgery, can you indicate the expected number of cases in these allocation will fund?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Will do.

**Dr. Bodoе:** And with regard to Item (ix), Legal Settlement, just out of interest, with the 2017—can you give me the 2017 allocation or expenditure with regards to that Legal Settlement in the Ministry?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** That will be provided.

**Dr. Bodoе:** Thank you.

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Thank you.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Barataria/San Juan.

**Dr. Khan:** On the same heading, Regional Health Authority in number (v), Vacant Posts, I think we can bring in the question here about the number of House Officer positions that are available and how many House Officers have not been employed
as a result of decreased posts?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** I can give you that.

**Dr. Khan:** Or will that take care of it.

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** I can give you that now.

**Dr. Khan:** Yeah, sure.

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** So as far as House Officers are concerned, the number currently employed; South West Regional Health Authority, 460; North West, 198; Eastern 122; North Central, 419; giving you a total of 1,199.

**Dr. Khan:** Can I ask Minister, is there any house officers who have applied, have not been employed?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Yes.

**Dr. Khan:** What is the figure?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Some house officers declined the positions for a variety of reasons. One, they do not get into the particular specialty that they want; two, some find that the distance travel is to far; some want a Priority Bus Route pass because they are afraid of traffic and so on.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Fyzabad.

**Dr. Bodoe:** Minister, can you indicate in those categories, the numbers. Do you have a total of those numbers?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** I can get that for you, Sir.

**Dr. Bodoe:** And the second point would be, how many house officers remain to be employed?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Sure.

**Dr. Bodoe:** Who have applied and you have no reason to decline a position?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Sure.

**Dr. Bodoe:** Can you provide that figure now—
Hon. Deyalsingh: Yes.

Dr. Bodee:—or in writing.

Hon. Deyalsingh: No, not now. In writing.

Dr. Bodee: Thank you.

Madam Chairman: Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Madam Chair, and hon. Minister you mentioned that there were 122 for Eastern Regional Authority, and I just wanted to know, not now, if all the positions are filled by whatever?

Hon. Deyalsingh: I could get that for you.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you.

Hon. Deyalsingh: I have it here on a spreadsheet. I will send it for you.

Madam Chairman: 010, Other Transfers Abroad, PAHO; 011, Other Transfers Abroad, National Health Service Company Limited. We are now on page 204.

Mr. Imbert: Wow.

Madam Chairman: We now go on to Sub-Head—[Crosstalk]

Dr. Khan: [Crosstalk] Current Subsidies.

Mr. Imbert: No, we are not going back.

Dr. Khan: Behave yourself, “nah”.

Madam Chairman: Wait, just one minute. [Crosstalk] One minute. We went, 010, Other Transfers Abroad, PAHO, which is at the bottom of 203. [Crosstalk]

Dr. Khan: I want to speak a little bit about 04, 009, 03, 04, 05 and 06. Why is there such a decrease—[Interruption]

Mr. Imbert: Madam Chairman, we finished that.

Madam Chairman: Yeah, but what happened is—

Dr. Khan: No, what happened here?

Madam Chairman: We were at 009, Other Transfers which included all of those,
01, 04, et cetera. [Crosstalk]

Dr. Khan: I am just asking that we revisit it. If it is no problem, well no problem. I mean—

Mr. Padarath: The expenditure is so large.

Dr. Khan: It is just that the decrease is so large.

Madam Chairman: Just one minute. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla, where are you?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: 203. I have questions on 03 and 09, line Items.

Madam Chairman: All right, so Members just one minute. Are there any questions on 10 and 11 which is PAHO and National Health Service Company Limited, which is at the bottom of pages 203 and 204? No?

Dr. Khan: There are no questions.

Madam Chairman: Okay, fine. So I realize that we must be getting a little tired. So I will allow us—“we” collectively. So I will allow us—I am allowing the Member for Barataria/San Juan two questions and I am allowing you one question.

Dr. Khan: Just one question.

Hon. Deyalsingh: Sure.

Dr. Khan: The decrease of the regional health authority is significant. Any special reason why, rather than the usual rhetoric that the Minister of Finance gives.

Hon. Deyalsingh: Okay. Under the North West Regional Health Authority—[Interruption]

Mr. Imbert: Madam Chairman, I object to that.

Hon. Deyalsingh: I will explain—[Interruption]

Mr. Imbert: No, wait, wait, wait. Stop, stop, stop, stop, stop. I object to that. The Member cannot say the usual rhetoric. There are reasons for these things. It is not rhetorical. It is factual.

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Hon. Deyalsingh: For the North West Regional Health Authority, in fiscal 2018 they are not obligated to pay any salary arrears for the monthly staff. That is a big chunk of it. Two, reduction in security cost of approximately $6 million annually, we have discovered a lot of things there. Reduction of rental facilities, we are negotiating with private patient suppliers to reduce cost in treating patients. We are also, as I explained to you, with the EPP and so on, and other cost saving strategies. Yesterday, we saved seven to $10 million alone at North Central by providing 53 surgeries in three and a half days, whereas Eric Williams traditionally will do eight per year. That is the type of the savings and efficiencies we are bringing across all the RHAs.

Madam Chairman: That is why I allowed you two.

Dr. Khan: I only had one so far.

Madam Chairman: Yeah, that is why I allowed you two.

Dr. Khan: I have one more.

Mr. Imbert: And Madam Chair—

Madam Chairman: Just one minute.

Dr. Khan: The National—

Mr. Imbert: Hold a minute, hold a minute.

Madam Chairman: Just a minute. The Minister of Finance wants to add some—

Mr. Imbert: “Hoold.”

Madam Chairman:—clarification.

Mr. Imbert: To understand some facts. The back pay that we paid in 2017 in the regional health authorities was in the vicinity of $500 million. That is no longer required in 2018. So the decrease is far less than $500 million, which means more allocations are being made to the RHAs in reality rather than less. So do not accuse me of rhetoric.
**Hon. Deyalsingh:** And just to say, in the case of Eastern, with that explanation, they are actually getting an increase of $56.7 million.

**Mr. Imbert:** Increases across the board, man.

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** So there are net increases.

**Dr. Khan:** I am allowed one more question, Minister. National Cancer Registry, I see you have $0.7 million. Do you have a director for that?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Not as yet.

**Dr. Khan:** Okay.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, line Item 09, School Health Programme. Can the hon. Minister indicate how many schools or children will benefit from this programme and how does the Ministry intend to target—what criteria will be used to target the schools?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Okay, these are to target children for hearing tests, audio testing and eye glasses. I could provide you with the list of schools, but that is what it is for.

**Madam Chairman:** So hon. Members, we now go on to Sub-Head 06, Current Transfers to Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies. And if we can go to the *Draft Estimates of the Revenue and Expenditure of the Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies and of the Tobago House of Assembly*. We are at page 179. 14, Princess Elizabeth Home for Handicapped; Sub-Head 01, Personal Expenditure; 001, General Administration, page 179; Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, 001, General Administration, page 179; Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies; 007, Households, page 179.

Hon. Members, we will now move on to the *Draft Estimates of Development Programme*, new book. Sub-Head 09, Development Programme Consolidated

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Fund, page 77; Item 004, Social Infrastructure, pages 77 to 79; Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services, page 79. Member for Fyzabad.

**Dr. Boodoe:** I am sorry, Madam Chair, page 78, Item 018.

**Madam Chairman:** Are we on Multi-Sectoral? Are we on Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services?

**Dr. Boodoe:** No Ma’am. I was under Other Services. I did not realize you had moved on so quickly.

**Madam Chairman:** All right. [*Crosstalk*] So we will take Fyzabad and then we will move on to you. And I will just ask Members, you know, I know the print is very small and that might trip us up, so that is why I have called the pages. Member for Fyzabad.

**Dr. Boodoe:** Thank you, thank you, Madam Chair. Minister, line Item 018. We are on page 78.

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Page 78.

**Dr. Boodoe:** With regard to the Establishment of a Renal Dialysis Centre, can you give us an update as to—is this referred to the two Renal Dialysis Centre? Can you give us to an update as to what is the status?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** I will give you an update in writing.

**Dr. Boodoe:** Thank you.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Barataria/San Juan.

**Dr. Khan:** Item 005, 234, Hospital Refurbishment Programme, $45 million. Do you want to expand on that Minister?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Sure. I have a whole spreadsheet here. Would you like me to go it through item by item?

**Dr. Khan:** Précis it.

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Hospital Refurbishment, okay. Page what?
Dr. Khan: Page 79, 005, 234.

Madam Chairman: Under C.

Dr. Khan: Under C, C 234.

Hon. Deyalsingh: Right, Hospital Refurbishment. North West: electrical upgrade for St. Ann’s Hospital, a roll-over project from last fiscal into the next fiscal; renovation of Ward 202 and construction of a second operating theatre at the Port of Spain General Hospital; renovation of the Allied Building to include the Bio-Medical Department; supply of four generators for Success Laventille Health Centre; Upper Laventille Health Centre, St. George Central Head Office and St. George West CMOH Building.

Eastern Regional Health Authority: completion and construction work on central stores and pharmacy building; air-conditioning; upgrade works including supply in installation of centralized air-conditioning system; lower floor facility of accident and emergency department; upgrade of the electrical system including refurbishment of the kiosk room, repainting of interior and exterior wall; replacement of gypsum ceiling at the Rio Claro Health Centre; upgrade of the Sangre Grande Hospital Network Refurbishment Programme; construction, renovation of staff quarters within close proximity to the Grande Riviere Outreach Centre; a dedicated operating theatre for the maternity unit at the Sangre Grande Hospital, it is in the design phase. Replacement of air-condition units in ward one and ward two.

Under the South West Regional Health Authority: to supply a new 180 ton chilled water air/cold unit; upgrade of the labour ward; phase three is now in progress; labour ward roofing, including the NICU, the Neo-natal Intensive Care Unit; conversion of old Ward 14 area to house the Hemodialysis Unit; upgrade of the Regional Administration Centre. Would you like me to give it to you in writing.
or call out—

**Dr. Khan:** No, no, I am happy. Could you just tell me if the electrical services of Sangre Grande Hospital is there?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** We will supply it to you in writing.

6.40 p.m.

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

**Mr. Karim:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, I am on Line Item 250, Health Services Support Programme. Can you indicate to us what it involves, please?

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** 250? Okay. Health Services Support Programme, this has to do with the NCD project which I spoke about earlier. It has to do with component one, implementation of the strategic plan to battle non-communicable diseases. That is what that is for. It will include the Diabetes in Pregnancy Programme, which is a very important programme; the Healthy Schools Initiative across all schools in Trinidad and Tobago.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Barataria/San Juan.

**Dr. Khan:** Just one question, Minister. We have been speaking about a linear accelerator for St. James.

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Yes.

**Mr. Karim:** But I am seeing nothing there in 2018 for that.

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** Well, if you would look under 001, Equipment and Vehicles, that has now been moved to another line Item because we have got past the tender stage and we are going to go into the award and—

**Dr. Khan:** They say “purchase”, you know. This line Item is “purchase”. So basically that is why I am throwing it out.

**Hon. Deyalsingh:** No problem. Okay.

Dr. Khan: Minister, just a little bit on the National Oncology Centre. Number one, it is only $5 million being given to that. Could you give me the status of that, or do you want to give us in writing?

Hon. Deyalsingh: The National Oncology Centre is before the Finance and General Purposes Committee.

Dr. Khan: And also the construction of the Couva Hospital, nothing has been given and I understand that you were going to—have you finished construction of that hospital?

Hon. Deyalsingh: My information is the construction as originally designed is finished, but there are certain deficiencies that need to be addressed.

Dr. Khan: No, I say nothing was given in the Line Item.

Hon. Deyalsingh: Yes.

Dr. Khan: Okay.

Madam Chairman: Member for Fyzabad? Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services, page 210. Member for Barataria/San Juan.

Dr. Khan: 003, Re-development of Port of Spain Hospital. Is that the central block?

Hon. Deyalsingh: Yes, Sir.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 28 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Madam Chairman: Thank you, Minister of Health and other officers.

Head 17: Personnel Department, $57,740,000.

Madam Chairman: We are at page 74. I now invite the Minister of Finance to make a brief opening statement not exceeding five minutes.
Hon. Imbert: The Personnel Department includes the Office of the Chief Personnel Officer who sets terms and conditions for public officers.

*Question proposed:* That Head 17 stand part of the Schedule.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Members, the sum of $57,740,000 for Head 17, Personnel Department, is comprised of moneys proposed for expenditure under the following Sub-Heads and Items to be found in the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure* and the *Draft Estimates of Development Programme*. We now proceed to consider the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure*. Sub-Head 01, Personnel, page 74. Item 001, General Administration. Member for Naparima.

Mr. Charles: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Item 01, Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance, and I see $15 million has been allocated. And the question I would like to ask—and this is in the context of what we heard this morning when we asked the question about what was the reason for the large number of contract officers in the THA. The Minister of Finance indicated that because there was a problem in the Personnel Department, in terms of—

Hon. Imbert: I did not say that. You are mistaken. Wrong Head. Wrong Item. That is the Service Commission. That is not this Item.

Mr. Charles: Okay. I withdraw the question.

Hon. Imbert: Thank you. [*Laughter*]

Madam Chairman: Member for Couva South.

Mr. Indarsingh: Thank you, Madam Chair. 08, Vacant Posts. Salaries and COLA, we have an estimate of $1 million. Could we get some clarification what vacant posts are existing out there and what will be filled by this $1 million allocation?

Hon. Imbert: We will provide that to you in writing.

Madam Chairman: Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services; Item 001, General Administration, pages 74 to 75. Member for Oropouche West.
Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, how many officers do we have as travelling officers who get travelling and subsistence? And what are some of the benefits that accrue to them?

Hon. Imbert: Which Head is that?

Madam Chairman: 02, 01.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: Yes, Travelling and Subsistence, which is 01.

Hon. Imbert: 01? Where are you?

Madam Chairman: 02, 001, 01.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: Page 74.

Hon. Imbert: You gone back there?

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: No, we did not go back.

Madam Chairman: In Goods and Services, General Administration.

Hon. Imbert: You want to know how many travelling officers there are?

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: Yes, and what are some—

Hon. Imbert: Okay, we will provide that in writing.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: And any benefits accrued to them with respect to purchase of vehicles and so?

Hon. Imbert: You will get that in writing.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: Thank you.

Madam Chairman: Member for Couva South. Do you have a question? Member for Chaguanas East.

Mr. Indarsingh: Thank you, Madam Chair. 02, 001, 16, Contract Employment. In terms of the increase in allocation to $5 million, could the meeting be advised of how many posts will be created in terms of Contract Employment?

Hon. Imbert: As you are aware, there is a problem throughout the service with the filling of vacancies. This is designed to partially deal with that problem. With
respect to the contract positions within the Personnel Department, we will provide that in writing.

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

**Mr. Karim:** Thank you, Madam Chair. With respect to line Item 28, Minister, might you be able to give us some details as to what will constitute Other Contracted Services for $3 million?

**Hon. Imbert:** That is just purchases of a general nature.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, line Item 23, Fees. Can the Minister indicate what accounts for this increase—this big increase for fees?

**Hon. Imbert:** That is for propriety licences for software.

**Madam Chairman:** Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, page 76; Item 001, General Administration; Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies; Item 001, Regional Bodies, page 76; Item 004, International Bodies.

Hon. Members we will now move on to the Draft Estimates of Development Programme, page 50. Sub-Head 09, Development Programme, Consolidated Fund; Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services, page 50. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Thank you. If the hon. Minister could please advise on line Items 034, 036, 037, 038, how it will be conducted; if it is a local company or international and what was the procurement process, please? Thank you.

**Hon. Imbert:** Different—I was going to say “different strokes for different folks”, but it is different types of consultancy for different ones. We could give you a list and explain which one is local, foreign, et cetera.

*Question put and agreed to.*

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Head 17 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Madam Chairman: Thank you, CPO, and members of the Personnel Department. You all are discharged.

Head 09: Tax Appeal Board, $4,762,660.

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

Hon. Imbert: Thank you, Madam Chairman. The Tax Appeal Board is a superior court of record which handles appeals on assessments of tax.

Question proposed: That Head 09 stand part of the Schedule.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Members, the sum of $4,763,660 for Head 09, Tax Appeal Board is comprised of moneys proposed for expenditure under the following Sub-Heads and Items to be found in the Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure and the Draft Estimates of Development Programme. We now proceed to consider the Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure. We are at page 48. Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure, page 48; Item 001, General Administration, page 48. Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services; Item 001, General Administration, pages 48 and 49; Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, Item 001, General Administration, page 50.

Hon. Members, we will now move on to the Draft Estimates of Development Programme. Sub-Head 09, Development Programme, Consolidated Fund, page 15; Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services, page 15.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 09 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Madam Chairman: I thank the representatives from the Tax Appeal Board.

Head 04: Industrial Court, $25,165,108.

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

**Hon. Imbert:** The Industrial Court is established by law to handle industrial disputes.

*Question proposed:* That Head 04 stand part of the Schedule.

**Madam Chairman:** Hon. Members, the sum of $25,165,108 for Head 04, Industrial Court is comprised of moneys proposed for expenditure under the follow Sub-Heads and Items to be found in the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure* and the *Draft Estimates of Development Programme*. We now proceed to consider the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure*. We are at page 21. Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure; Item 001, General Administration, page 21; Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services; Item 001, General Administration, page 21 and page 22.

**Member for Couva South.**

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Thank you, Madam Chair. 16, Contract Employment, could the Minister tell us in what areas will this increase of $390,000 be utilized from the point of view of contract employment?

**Hon. Imbert:** This is simply to ensure that adequate funds are available for contract officers in the Industrial Court. It is not an increase in the complement of contract officers, it is simply to make sure that everyone who is employed is paid. You may recall in the mid-year review we had to do a supplementary allocation. So, we do not want to repeat that exercise.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** It is good to know that you are looking after the salaries of employees.

**Hon. Imbert:** Definitely. We always do.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 002, South Office, page 23; Item 003, Tobago Office, page 23; Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, page 24; Item 001, General Administration.
Hon. Members, we will now move on to the *Draft Estimates of Development Programme*. Sub-Head 09, Development Programme, Consolidated Fund, page 7; Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services, page 7.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Head 04 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.*

**Madam Chairman:** I thank the members of the Industrial Court. Reach home safely.

Hon. Members the Standing Finance Committee is suspended to Friday, 20\textsuperscript{th} of October, 2017 at 10.00 a.m.

*7.00 p.m.: Standing Finance Committee suspended.*
10.00 a.m.

Madam Chairman: Good morning everyone. Kindly have a seat. Hon. Members, I am advised that I do not have as yet a quorum, so might I suggest that we wait another five minutes and see if we do get the numbers. Do we have one now? Okay. So I think maybe in five minutes we will get one. Welcome Minister, sorry to keep you back. I will rise and I will come back in five minutes.

10.31 a.m.: Standing Finance Committee suspended.

10.33 a.m.: Standing Finance Committee resumed.

Madam Chairman: I wish to announce that the Leader of the Opposition, Mrs. Kamla Persad Bissessar SC MP, Member for Siparia; Mr. Rushton Paray MP, Member for Mayaro, have both asked to be excused from today’s meeting of the Standing Finance Committee.

Hon. Members, you would recall that the start time for Monday, October 23, 2017, is still to be determined. Whip, have you had discussions? Okay, so it is agreed?

Mr. Lee: I still have to talk to the Leader of Government Business.

Madam Chairman: All right. So we will determine that later in the day.

Head 40: Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries, $118,856,290.

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

**Hon. Khan:** Thank you very much, Madam Chairman. It is a pleasure to be in this House to articulate the budget of the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries. As you are aware, this is a small Ministry. We do not spend much on personnel expenditure, recurrent expenditure and/or capital. Most of the serious investment in the energy sector comes through the private sector, which is the energy companies and the state companies, Petrotrin and the NGC.

On the revenue side, which we will not be dealing with today, we are a collector of significant revenue, both in terms of royalties, the petroleum impost and the petroleum levy. We manage the subsidy budget, and you will realize that pre-judging the situation, the subsidy budget has been dropped from $503 million to zero, based on the increase in the diesel and super fuel prices.

So I am here at your disposal to ask any question, to present any level of the clarification you may need, and hope that me and my staff will do the Ministry well and to do the Government well. So I thank you very much, Madam Chairman.

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

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

**Madam Chairman:** Hon. Members, the sum of $118,856,290 for Head 40, Energy and Energy Industries, is comprised of moneys proposed for expenditure under the following Heads and Items to be found in the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure* and the *Draft Estimates of Development Programme*. We now proceed to consider the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure*. We are at page 263. Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure, Item 001, General Administration, page 263. Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.

**Mr. Lee:** Thank you and morning, Madam Chair.
Madam Chairman: Morning.

Mr. Lee: To the Minister, line Item 14, Remuneration to Members of Cabinet-Appointed Committees. In 2017 you had a revised figure of $700,000; nothing for this year. Could the Minister indicate what committees utilized that $700,000? And he can provide in writing at a later date who sat on those committees and the remunerations of the individuals on those committees.

Madam Chairman: Member, you are looking back, or do you want to know what committees have been disbanded?

Mr. Lee: Well yes, what the $700,000 in 2017 was utilized for.

Hon. Khan: Some of the committees are as follows: the joint steering committee on the unitization of the cross-border hydrocarbon reserves with Venezuela. There is a Cabinet-appointed committee and the technical and the ministerial level that deals with the cross-border gas, primarily Loran-Manatee; there is a power requirements committee; there is the extractive industries transparency committee; there is a major mineral advisory committee because mining licences are not granted without the approval coming through this committee for onward forwarding to Cabinet; there is another important committee called the permanent local content committee, that you would realize the energy sector, while it is highly capital intensive with significant foreign direct investment, a lot of that money goes back to the United States in particular because of the nature of the industry. So the local content committee tries to capture as much value to the local economy; and finally there is the energy efficiency services companies committee which monitors energy efficiency.

Mr. Lee: Follow-up question to the Minister. In writing you could provide the list of the members who sat on those committees, please.

Madam Chairman: So Member, you are really looking back? You are not looking for this year?

Mr. Lee: No, there is nothing for this year.

Hon. Khan: There is nothing for this year.

Madam Chairman: Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, Item 001, General Administration, pages 264 and 265. Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.

Mr. Lee: Thank you, Madam Chair. To the Minister, line Item 08, Rentals/Lease Office Accommodation and Storage. There is an increase based on the revised estimate of 2017 of $2.3 million, could the Minister indicate what are the plans? Is it new accommodations, or is it an increase in prices, or is it arrears?

Hon. Khan: No. That is for some new accommodation in the Valencia area where we have a lot of mining inspector staff that have to be housed down there because we are on a drive to bring greater level of regulation on the mining industry, so that that staff is very much needed; and we would also be on a drive to clamp down in a serious way on illegal mining in north-east Trinidad.

Mr. Lee: So these officers will be based in the north-east area?

Hon. Khan: Yes, in the north-east area.

Dr. Tewarie: Yes, good morning. Minister, through you, and through the Chair, Item No. 16, Contract Employment. There is a significant increase there, can you advise us what it is for?—and what—well, that is the first question.

Hon. Khan: As you know, or probably you do not know, but the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries just had a renewed structure approved by the PMCD and the Service Commissions because we really need to beef up our technical capability in the Ministry because it calls for significant monitoring of the oil companies, and with that new structure 26 contract positions were created which we hope to implement in this fiscal year. Most of it are for engineers, chemical
engineers, petroleum inspectors, geologists, geophysicists, and what have you. So this is money, if I can say so myself, well spent, or will be well spent.

Dr. Tewarie: Yes, I agree that you do need greater technological capability there in the Ministry. Most of this will be for monitoring of oil production, and therefore, revenues due to the country?

Hon. Khan: Revenues, contract management, and compliance which is an important aspect in the industry, and the level of ministerial oversight will be—

Dr. Tewarie: Will be greater.

Hon. Khan: Yeah.

Dr. Tewarie: This includes quarrying, or just the oil side?—oil and—

Hon. Khan: No. It includes quarrying also.

Dr. Tewarie: So it is oil, gas and quarrying?

Hon. Khan: And quarrying.

Dr. Tewarie: Okay. Thanks.

Madam Chairman: Sub-Head—Member for Chaguanas West.

Mr. Singh: Thank you, Madam Chair. Good morning everyone. Item 28, Other Contracted Services. I see that there is an increase by $2.6 million, I just wanted to enquire as to whether this increase has to do with the desilting or the dredging of the route of the LPG vessel that brings that commodity to Sea Lots at the NP compound because that is a problem that we are facing.

Hon. Khan: When you look at the development programme you would see that money budgeted there. It is $22 million, but this additional sums, that the variance is around $3 million—2 point something—is basically— Apart from existing contracted services, there are two important contracts that will be awarded this year. One is the—well, I do not want to say the Ryder Scott Report because Ryder Scott is a company, but the natural gas reserves audit which is due this year. The
last one expired last year. So that will be a major contract to again quantify the natural gas reserves of Trinidad and Tobago which is very, very fundamental to the planning process and to the national economy. There is also a major claim before the committee for the limits of the Continental Shelf in Trinidad and Tobago.

Now, the population is not very aware of this, but right now we have a presentation towards the commission for the extension of the Continental Shelf, which is part of the law of the sea, which will define our international boundaries beyond the 200 miles exclusive economic zone. That has some significant consequences especially on the Atlantic side, where we share borders with Barbados, Suriname and Guyana, and you know that whole basin there is proving to be quite attractive for hydrocarbon exploration. So this is a significant thing. We have somebody on the commission right now as we speak. She is a senior geophysicist at the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries and she is doing yeoman service, and this could have very, very far-reaching economic consequences for the country and we are working assiduously on this.

**Mr. Lee:** To the Minister, line Item 58, Medical Expenses. Normally this is a small item. I noticed in 2017 it went up to $275,000.

**Hon. Khan:** Well, yours truly. It is medical expenses you—

**Mr. Lee:** For the Minister? Meaning for you?

**Hon. Khan:** Most of that was spent on me for my operation, yeah.

**Dr. Tewarie:** We are glad that it was successful.

**Hon. Khan:** Well, praise the Lord for that.

**Madam Chairman:** Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases; Item 001, General Administration. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, if you can advise, what type of vehicle is expected to be purchased using this allocation?
Hon. Khan: Most of it will be pickups for the quarry sector because on the oil and gas sector where we monitor the various companies, a lot of the engineers are travelling officers who use their own vehicles, but in the mining sector, in particular, where we have to go through this rough terrain in the north-east Trinidad, that is where most of that money will be spent.

Madam Chairman: Member for Caroni Central.

Dr. Tewari.: Would you mind if I ask a question on 28? It is really to provide some information to the Minister really.

Madam Chairman: Member, but this is contract services?

Dr. Tewarie: Yes.

Madam Chairman: To provide information?

Dr. Tewarie: Yes, because he made a point about the seabed expansion.

Madam Chairman: And you think it is really necessary that we go back?

Dr. Tewarie: Well, fine, I can also tell him outside.

Madam Chairman: Thank you so much. Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies; Item 001, Regional Bodies; Item 004, International Bodies. We are on page 266. Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.

Mr. Lee: We are on Households?

Madam Chairman: Item 007, Households, page 266. Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.

Mr. Lee: Thank you, Madam Chair, to the Minister. Based on the shortfall in subsidy resale of petroleum products, nothing is budgeted for this year, so is it safe to say that there are no more subsidies on petroleum products?

Hon. Khan: No, no. There is still some residual subsidy which is 21 cents on diesel per litre and 29 cents on super, but that money will be met by the petroleum production levy because remember the oil companies are taxed their levy to assist
in the subsidy. The estimate for that tax this year is $264 million and that very likely will cover the cost of the residual subsidy that still exists on liquid fuels. And I am advised hereby there are subsidies on LPG also.

Mr. Lee: And that will be met by the same—

Hon. Khan: By the $264 million coming from the petroleum production levy.

Madam Chairman: Member for Chaguanas West.

Mr. Singh: Madam Chair, I am on 009, Other Transfers.

Madam Chairman: Okay. I am now moving to Item 009, Other Transfers. Member for Chaguanas West.

Mr. Singh: Thank you, Madam Chair. Line Item 07, Natural Gas Export Task Force. An allocation of $2.2 million—what is the remit of this body and what is the composition and what is the expected outcome of this task force?

Hon. Khan: You realize that there is a Natural Gas Master Plan that was presented recently. It was tabled in Parliament. It is a very comprehensive document, making some very, very far-reaching and serious recommendations to be implemented. This Natural Gas Export Task Force is a body that was set up to assist in that implementation process and to provide professional advice. Through it, we do take on a lot of international consultants to further advise on some of the main strategic issues as it relates to the international trade of gas. So that is what this money is allocated for. The National Gas Export Task Force is chaired by former Minister of Finance Mr. Wendell Mottley and I could probably provide the names of the other members for your edification as a written response.

Mr. Singh: Is there a time period for their report and will the report—

Hon. Khan: No, no, there is a continuous work in the process.

Mr. Singh: Continuous.

Hon. Khan: Yeah.
Dr. Tewarie: Is this committee going to be involved in negotiations with the companies, or is it just advice to the Ministry?

Hon. Khan: Well, it is basically advice. They do not involve in direct negotiations because we have to be very careful who has the core responsibility to perform that job. But they work extremely closely with the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries and with the Cabinet Standing Committee on Energy.

Madam Chairman: Item 011, Transfers to State Enterprises, page 267. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Nnewallo-Hosein: Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, line Item 01, the Establishment of the Quarries Authority. Is this authority functional at the moment?

Hon. Khan: No, it is a proposal which we have budgeted some money for. From a policy point of view, I think I want to review that whether we really do need a quarries authority, but it is budgeted there and a decision will be made on that shortly.

Mr. Lee: Thank you, Madam Chair. To the Minister, line Item 04, Equity Injection - ALUTECH Limited, 2017 estimate, the original estimate was $661,000. In 2017, they had a revised estimate of $35,171,000 and this year it is 661. Could the Minister explain, what was the cause for this extraordinary injection in 2017, which was not originally budgeted for?

Hon. Khan: As you are aware, the former PNM administration had a policy position to become deeply involved in the aluminium industry. That is the basis for the using of the gas for the aluminium smelter plant in Point Lisas. That was the basis and the rationale for the building of the TGU plant in La Brea. As we speak, we are very much exposed in the electricity grid system for paying for unused power in take-or-pay arrangements with the power generation companies.
That project was cancelled largely because of—I think, the Opposition, if I should say so myself. However, we still feel that we can salvage a downstream aluminium industry based on imported ingots, and that is the rationale for the Sural initiative because in the first plan we would have been producing our ingots for downstream work at the e TecK Park in Tamana. We still feel there is the potential. The work is still being done for a downstream aluminium industry especially for aluminium wheels because strange enough, over this time of depressed commodity prices, one of the few prices in the world that has not been depressed is aluminium and that is largely because of the motor car industry and aluminium wheels which has now become ubiquitous throughout the motor car industry. So that is the rationale for that.

Mr. Lee: Just a follow-up question, Madam Chair. Seeing that you injected 35 million this year and a small amount budgeted for 2018 of 661, do you envisage another equity injection, more than 661?

Hon. Khan: Well, Sural is a joint venture partnership, so the partner has to invest some equity now. There is some kit that exists, as we speak, down at the e TecK Park in Tamana, and then there is a building that will be used by the company. So all this we hope should take some traction and pick up some speed this year.

Mr. Lee: Just another last point. Minister, it is interesting—but nothing was mentioned, at least I missed it—no statement was made about this in the budget statement for 2018.

Hon. Khan: Well, I mean, in the grand scheme of the budget it is a small investment. The major investment was in the smelter plant and that has been scrapped for reasons better known to you all.

Dr. Tewarie: Okay, as I understand it, therefore, this is an injection in a company that will produce basically mag wheels, is that it?
Hon. Khan: Yes, it is.

Dr. Tewarie: The state equity ownership is how much?

Hon. Khan: I have been advised it is 60/40—60 for the State and 40 for Sural.

Dr. Tewarie: Okay. Would that $35 million injection, that would have been within the ambit of the 60 per cent ownership?

Hon. Khan: Uh?

Dr. Tewarie: It would have been within the framework of the 60 per cent ownership, or would that have increased the equity participation?

Hon. Khan: It is capital to progress the project.

Dr. Tewarie: As a 60 per cent partner?

Hon. Khan: Well, that is the framework.

Dr. Tewarie: All right. Okay. One more—sorry.

Dr. Rowley: Let me clarify something here because I do not want it to be misunderstood and then come back. There is some settlement with respect to the closure of the project where the minority partner would have had claims against the State. Those matters are still in negotiation. However, both partners had agreed to go forward, and some of that settlement consideration would be taken into account. So that $35 million is not directly into investment going forward. It will contribute in some way to whatever comes out in the settlement of the claims. There is a figure. A small figure, $5 million? There were a number of arbitration proceedings which were triggered—

Dr. Tewarie: I am aware of that.

Dr. Rowley:—by the closure of the project by the last administration. Those arbitrations have been concluded. We have settled them, but the partners have agreed to go forward into a new business on the 60/40 arrangement. So I want you to have that in your mind as we go forward.
And while I am on this subject, Madam Chair, let me add something else. This is not the end of it. We are in discussions with the Chinese Government with respect to settlement of another claim with respect to the closure and abandonment of the smelter project. As a matter of fact, that is a much larger sum we have been dealing with and that is still in the pipeline. As a matter of fact, only tomorrow morning, or is it today?

**Mr. Young:** Today.

**Dr. Rowley:** Today, we have a meeting with the Chinese on that matter. So that is in the pipeline. It is not in the budget, but it is on the table.

**Dr. Tewarie:** One more question, on the 01, the quarries issue. Minister, you said that you are going to review this to determine how you are going to go forward, but you know at the present time based on the auditor’s report of 2016 only five quarries basically have legitimate contracts with the State, and the other 50-plus quarries are in fact either waiting for contracts to be renewed or in fact are not registered at all as quarrying enterprises under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries. So this is a matter that really requires attention because it is a bleeding of revenue from the State.

**Hon. Khan:** We are very much seized of that, Sir, and all steps are being put in place to regularize that in the shortest possible time.

**Mr. Singh:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I want to ask a question on Item 03, but I want to follow up on this Alutech matter. I was of the opinion that because of the failure of Sural to make their equity injection in Alutech, that is one of the reasons for the failure of the company. So I just want to—so you can respond to that down the road. With respect to Item 03—

**Dr. Rowley:** Madam, Madam—

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Diego Martin West.

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Dr. Rowley: Yes, thank you very much. Those statements are completely incorrect and I do not wish that that position be advanced as anything serious. There is no such position. The failures, and the arbitrations, and the liabilities that we are dealing with and facing now are as a direct result of the UNC shutting down the aluminium project which started with a smelter and down-streaming. What I just mentioned about the Chinese Government has to do with the UNC closing down the smelter. That was being funded by the Chinese Exim Bank. We have liabilities there in the approximation of about US $100 million.

The Alutech was the down-streaming from that. So once we stopped that project, Alutech could not go forward. The Alutech equipment, US $40 million worth of it, has been in a warehouse ever since. What we are trying to do now is to restart that project so as to save the down-streaming side based on imported ingots since we have killed the smelting side of it. That is one of the conditions in the conversation with the Ghanaians who had a smelter. We were hoping that we would get ingots from them or from the open market.

10.30 a.m.

What is in front of us is the possibility of sourcing aluminium ingots from the open market and having a downstream industry restarting the Alutech end of it. So what you have said there is completely incorrect and the opposite of what happened. This is the outcome of the country under the UNC shutting down the aluminium industry starting with the smelter. So we have no smelter on the table now but we are looking at ingots for down-streaming, and that is where the Alutech, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago joint venture partnership is still going on, on a 60/40 basis. [Desk thumping]

Mr. Singh: Thank you. Prime Minister, perhaps out of an abundance of caution and in the interest of transparency, there ought to be an appreciation given to the
Parliament and to the country of Sural’s equity injections in whatever the incarnations are throughout that whole process from the smelter to Alutech.

Dr. Rowley: Well I mean, there is transparency. There is nothing more transparent than the shutdown of that project. [Desk thumping] I have just said that as a result of that, it triggered certain arbitrations which have gone on, which have been completed. The State has liabilities which we are in negotiations with but the partners have agreed to continue to try to and salvage the downstream of it. There is nothing else to say.

Mr. Singh: No, I am merely asking, through you, Chair, of the equity injections by Sural in whatever company incarnations with respect to the smelter and Alutech. I am asking for that.

Dr. Rowley: You want to close that down too?

Madam Chairman: Okay, Members. In terms of—

Dr. Rowley: Madam Chairman, I want to make it very clear here that I do not know what he is telling me. We just said we are proceeding to try to get a company on a 60/40 to salvage what has been damaged before. So there is nothing that is being hidden, so the word transparency is not on the table. There is nothing more to say at this point in time. If we agree—

Mr. Singh: We are making an equity injection and there is a partnership and there a consortium of Trinidad and Tobago together with Sural. We are making an equity injection and I want to know: What is Sural’s equity injection? That is a simple matter for me.

Dr. Rowley: But it might be simple for you but I do not want you to mislead the public. I just told my colleague from Caroni Central that as we deal with the 60/40 arrangement, the liabilities which we are exposed to arising out of the arbitrations which we have lost, will form part of that discussion. Did you get that clear?
Appropriation (Financial Year 2018) Bill, 2017
Standing Finance Committee

Dr. Tewarie: Yes.

Dr. Rowley: And that is where the matter is at the moment.

Dr. Tewarie: But I understood that. I mean, if I think—

Madam Chairman: One minute, Member, in terms of I am recognizing Chaguanas West. I think you have finished with 04. I think you have a question with 03.

Mr. Singh: Yes.

Madam Chairman: Do you wish to pursue that?

Mr. Singh: Yes, I will pursue that, Madam Chair.

Madam Chairman: Okay, I will come back to you, Caroni Central.

Mr. Singh: 03, Environmental Indemnity to the Power Gen. Company of Trinidad and Tobago. There is an allocation in this line Item of $3.7 million. Could the Minister indicate as to what stage of the dismantling of this power plant, what progress has been made and whether or not there is—what is the projected cost of this environmental indemnity?

Mr. Young: Madam Chair, thank you very much for the opportunity. Chaguanas West, and for the benefit of the public, this is a very important point that needs to be made. It seems that in 2014, under the UNC administration, the then Cabinet took a decision to wholly indemnify the shareholders and foreign holders of PowerGen for any environmental claims, any works that needed to be done to dismantle it. So we were shocked when we came in and saw that you all, as a Cabinet, added language in terms where it made it express and clear that the Government and the taxpayers of Trinidad and Tobago have to pay all of the costs for dismantling this plant, that the foreign shareholders of PowerGen would have made profits for over the years, expatriated their profits back to wherever it is and you all, as a Government, instead of protecting the taxpayers, put us under an
express indemnity and liability for all of the costs and so far, the cost has been estimated, I think at over $10 million just for the environmental clearance and the removal.

So we questioned why would a Government that is supposed to protect the taxpayers and the public of Trinidad and Tobago, take a position to take on the liability for foreign shareholders who have only expatriated profit, made money off of us, and taken their money outside. Why would the then Cabinet have taken a decision to put—and I repeat it for the public of Trinidad and Tobago—express language that says, we, the people of Trinidad and Tobago, would pay for all of the dismantling, any environmental cost, anything that changes, et cetera and not protect us, the taxpayers. Thanks for the opportunity.

Mr. Singh: It is my understanding, through you, Madam Chair, and I would like the Minister of Energy to respond to this. The 1994 power purchase agreement—it is my understanding that the 1994 power purchase agreement included a clause dealing with the whole question of indemnity in the event, so that therefore, if there is an addition, I would like the Member to provide that to the Parliament to the clause.

Mr. Young: Madam Chairman, again, I thank the Member for Chaguanas West for that because it shows yes, in the initial agreement, there was a clause that could have been interpreted, because what the clause said is if there is any change of law, any environmental issue that arises, the Government would pay for it. But then when a decision was taken in 2014 via a Cabinet Note, taken in 2014, to dismantle—and they never told the public that they were going to be dismantling the Wrightson Road plant—they added additional language. So we would be pleased to bring the additional language. They had took it out of the 1994 language to now say when we are dismantling going forward in the future as we
plan to, we will pay all of the cost. So we did not even have an opportunity because we examined it to see if we had an opportunity to protect the taxpayers, but because of the express, clear, unambiguous language added in 2014 that expressly dealt with that particular circumstance, they saddled the taxpayers of Trinidad and Tobago with tens of millions of US dollars once again whereas it should have been—it is a little ironic. We were just talking about equity and sharing equity with partners. They did not do that. They put all on us, the taxpayers.

Hon. Khan: Madam Chair, let me just add something. I have the Cabinet Minute here and it specifically states undertaking environmental remediation work, not only at facilities in Wrightson Road, you know, in Point Lisas and in Penal. So every year we get a bill. Good? And the date of this is December 05, 2014. We were sitting on that side then. So in other words, apart from the Wrightson Road decommissioning, we get bills annually, sometimes in a million, a million and a half, two million, for remedial work in Penal, for remedial work in Point Lisas, only to the account of the Exchequer.

Dr. Rowley: Madam Chairman, I would think that this conversation could end with a simple answer to a simple question. Why would the Government of Trinidad and Tobago have done that?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Madam Chairman. I come back to line Item 04, hon. Minister and my question is Sural could not have provided any documentation, any agreement as to the injection of any funds on their part. They could not have provided anything except to say that—

Madam Chairman: Member, is that a question?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: It is. I am allowed five minutes, not so, as a preamble? Okay. Yeah, so I am continuing. The only thing they could have provided was a
verbal agreement that the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, at that time, would inject 100 per cent of the cash injection. My question is: Why is it that the Government fostered that burden on the population of Trinidad and Tobago and why would they have taken the decision to pay US $40 million for a project that has not been proven and why would you continue to inject equity into a project that will not bear fruition?

Hon. Khan: Madam Chair, I think the Prime Minister adequately answered all matters pertaining to Alutec. The money has to do with settlement of litigation and/or reviving the project. To say the project is not proven is wrong. What is there to be proven? That you can take aluminium ingots and make motor car wheels. There is nothing to prove in that. So I think the Prime Minister has adequately answered it and I have nothing more to add.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Madam Chair, can the Minister—

Madam Chairman: Member, Member, I have allowed some background about the 2017 Estimates, what we are really looking at is 2018 Estimates which is a $5 million figure. Okay? So I would also suggest that further interrogation is always permitted under another forum. Okay? Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Madam Chair, just to ask the Minister based on what the Prime Minister indicated, the Prime Minister indicated that moneys were here to pay back—the moneys that were assigned, so I just want to know where is the written agreement that there is in fact—

Madam Chairman: And all I am saying, Member, that is something under the 2017 Estimates and I am saying that you are allowed an opportunity to interrogate that further if you wish but I would not allow it in this forum. Okay. Member for Caroni Central.

Okay, so hon. Members, we now move on to the Draft Estimates of

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Development Programme. We are going to another book, page 106. Sub-Head 09, Development Programme, Consolidated Fund, Item 005, Multi-Sectoral Services, page 106. Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.

Mr. Lee: Thank you, Madam Chair. To the Minister, line Item 003, Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Initiatives. In 2017, we budgeted $18 million, $1 million was spent in 2017, and 2018, a budget amount of $7 million. Could the Minister state what the status of the project in respect to energy efficiency initiatives is? Because there has been a lot of talk in the last two years or so under your Ministry. And what is the strategic plan for this project going forward?

Hon. Khan: The Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries obviously has to champion the cause for renewable energies. We are signatory to the Paris agreement where we are committed to generate 10 per cent of our power by 2021. Now, having said that, the Ministry’s budget for renewables is not specifically for renewable energy projects, it is for education, it is for smaller projects like solar lighting on grounds and a couple of matters like these.

But on the major renewable initiative, we have proposals coming through the national energy for some wind farms in south-east Trinidad, and we are a little handicapped by solar because solar’s footprint is so large, it calls for one megawatt of power, it calls for a hectare of land for solar panels. But I just want for clarification purposes to say that we have, right now, invitations for proposals for a waste to energy project which will be placed at the Beetham landfill, and that will use municipal waste to generate electrical power. While sensu stricto that is not classified as renewable, it comes close in a real way.

And the other thing I need to say is that Trinidad and Tobago has been championing the cause for CNG. Okay? So again, whilst CNG is not technically classified as renewable, it is the cleanest form of fossil fuels. All our power-
generating capacity comes from gas from turbines. We are one of the few countries in the world like that, outside of the Middle East. And with our major thrust in CNG, we have taken a decision at the Cabinet that all Government vehicles, by next year, we have a target of 30 per cent, will be CNG and all new purchases will also have to have the CNG conversion kit.

We are going to expand the gas station network for CNG. You all famous Couva roundabout fiasco where you built a lot of things resembling tanks there, I do not know what they are. We will be converting that into a flagship CNG station. We have a CNG station carded for Tobago, because there are some CNG buses that will be placed in Tobago and we are starting to market Tobago in a greener way, so that will be there also. So I think we are coming close to our target of 10 per cent of renewables and I think if we can get the wind farm project going which has the capacity to generate 50 megawatts of power and to sell on the national grid, that will be a help.

I have one caveat to say. Again, based on—it is a corollary to the Alutrint project because we have—there was a time just under the last year of UNC regime, we were paying—T&TEC was paying TGU $45 million a month in a take-or-pay contract for unused power. We have spare capacity in this country now to take us until 2021. So if we bring in a big renewable project and buy power, we still have to pay for power that we are not using. “So yuh understand.” When you take a decision, it has consequences, serious consequences. So it is not only affecting Sural and downstream and aluminium smelter “eh yuh know”, we have a big plant in TGU. As a matter of fact, we have cut down the $45 million deficit. You know why? Because of the Gandhi Village substation, we are now taking most of the power from TGU because they have more efficient generation of power in using less gas to generate electricity and we are paying the take-or-pay component of it
Mr. Lee: This is a follow-up question to the Minister. As far as renewable energy and the legislation is, what is the status with that, as respect to T&TFC?

Hon. Khan: We have been working on that. That is the feeding tariff for grid connections of non-utility scale distribution of electricity and the FITs and that is in progress.

Dr. Tewarie: My question was on the renewable energy sector there but I would not pursue the matter now.

Mr. Singh: Thank you, Madam Chair. Part of my question was asked by the Member for Pointe-a-Pierre and answered by the Minister with respect to the feeding tariffs and the necessary legislation. But I want to deal with the issue of this waste to energy. I saw your RFP and I was taken aback by the fact that you had a very short time period, October 30th. But the point I want to ask: What is the extent of the subsidy that the Government will be providing for a waste to energy plant?

Because it is my understanding that it costs around 41 cents to produce a waste to energy, 8 cents with natural gas and about 12 to 15 cents for solar production of energy. So when you embark on a plan to create a waste to energy plan, that requires the whole separation of waste and so on, that is all very well for the society environmentally. The question is that, having regard to the subsidy required for that to be economically effective, what is the extent of the subsidy that will be provided?

Hon. Khan: Well, I think that question is premature because the requests for proposals are now out, it will be concluded at the end of this month. You have to see what models, economic and/or technical models, that are being presented for the waste to energy facility and then you start to talk that language. But to talk
about the extent of subsidy, if there would be any at all, is extremely premature at this time, Member for Chaguanas West.

**Mr. Singh:** Through you, Madam Chair, so hon. Minister, you are telling me that having regard to the worldwide overall cost associated with waste to energy plants and I am not dealing with the toxic ash disposal issue, as against in which we have a natural gas base power generation taking place, and in which we have the potential for solar, which is much cheaper, you are saying that you are depending upon the RFPs to come in and then you will see?

**Hon. Khan:** Yes, well we will have to.

**Mr. Singh:** Okay.

**Mr. Imbert:** I would just like to make a point. There is a point of view that renewable energy is cost effective; it is not. Renewable energy is far more expensive than energy produced by hydrocarbons, it is far more expensive. The technology is continuing to evolve. But in Europe where there was a big drive among the EU, in fact, they have agreed to 20 per cent of energy from renewable sources by the year 2020. They have had to give tremendous subsidies for wind power, for solar power and so on. So that it is not the panacea that people think it is, the technology is improving but it is more expensive than energy from conventional hydrocarbon sources and I think people need to know this. There is a view that it is equivalent and it is cost effective; it is not at this time.

In fact, I had seen a presentation made to the Ministry of Housing some years ago to produce a solar energy pack for a house, a typical HDC house and it was upward of a million dollars per house to provide the solar panels and so on for a HDC house. You will agree this is not cost effective to put solar energy equipment on a HDC house costing a million dollars just for that, it is not cost effective. So whereas there is a drive, we must look at the ozone layer, we must
look at global warming, do not believe that renewable energy is cheaper than conventional energy.

Mr. Singh: Well, Minister, I think we are both speaking from the same hymn book because I am dealing with the issue of the subsidy and with respect to environmental issues, the cleanest burning fuel is natural gas. So it is not a problem with respect to ozone layer in the context of Trinidad. So my question was and like yours, it is very expensive to engage in renewable energy although it may be the flavour of the period.

Hon. Khan: Yeah, if I should say so myself, well said.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, line Item 005, Extractive Industries Transparency Initiatives. Will this initiative address the issues of A&V fake oil issue?

Hon. Khan: The Extractive Industries Transparency Initiatives deals with—they are an independent group voluntary, that is the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries on behalf of the Government and all the major oil companies and certain NGOs are signatories to. What they do? They track Government revenue as it relates to supposed revenue that came from the oil companies. And I am pleased to report that their last report did, in fact, indicate that it was very, very little variation from the revenues that the Government said it received from the energy sector and from what the energy sector actually said that it paid the Government. And I think that we were one of the few countries in the world where there is virtually 100 per cent congruence in that regard.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: In light of the fact that you are looking at saving and protecting, regarding the same A&V issues, what will be done to prevent further issues like that arising in the future?

Madam Chairman: What Item are you on?

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Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Item 005.

Madam Chairman: But 005, I think the Minister explained it was extractive industries which said nothing with respect to what you are speaking about.

Hon. Khan: There is absolutely no relationship between the two Items.

Madam Chairman: All right, so might we go on? Member for Naparima.

Mr. Charles: Thank you, Madam Chair. 007, the Environmental Policy Grant Project from the EU, I see no money has been allocated, but I recall earlier this year that the EU representative indicated that we stood to lose $18 million because we had not developed certain policy initiatives with respect to sustainable development and environmental policy. Could the Minister give us a status report on whether we were able to access that $18 million?

Miss Olivierre: Now, there are a number of aspects on this EU grant policy. In one case, we did benefit from the EU consultant helping us to develop a roadmap for the renewable energy sector and the handover ceremony for that was early in September. Might have been September the 5th, I stand to be corrected on the date. But also in the mineral sector. So there was an initiative that the Ministry would have spearheaded where we committed to developing an automated system for monitoring some of the work done in the mineral sector and we were able to have that IT work completed in time at the end of last year, so that we were able to access some of the funding on the EU grant.

Mr. Charles: So you are saying specifically that $18 million has been accessed?

Miss Olivierre: Yes.

Mr. Charles: Thank you.

Madam Chairman: Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.

Mr. Lee: No, I am okay.

Madam Chairman: So hon. Members, we will now move on to Item 003,
Economic Infrastructure, this is at page 221, same book; Item 003, Economic Infrastructure, Infrastructure Development Fund. Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.

**Mr. Lee:** Thank you, Madam Chair. To the Minister, 001, under Industry, Development of Industrial Sites, $20.6 million was spent in 2017 and 58.6 is budgeted for 2018. Could the Minister, if he does not have it now, in writing—

[Interruption] Or, sorry, sorry. So $21 million is identified this year. Could the Minister in writing or if he does not have it now, identify those locations?

**Hon. Khan:** No, I can answer now. I think I want to preface what I say. For those of you who are familiar with budgets in the past, especially during the so-called “better” years, you would have seen where through the PSIP, the Government funded a lot of the development of industrial sites. Okay. Based on our economic constraints now, we have taken a decision that the investment and the development of industrial estates, which falls under the remit of the NGC group of companies through the national energy, they will have to fund that from an economic basis because it is a business they are in. Our money will be better spent on other utilities in the country. So the development of industrial sites here, this $21 million is a residual cost largely to deal with the relocation of people in the La Brea area which is at the Union Estate in what is called a buffer zone where you cannot be within a certain radius of the industrial estate and this $21 million, I think, is to relocate around about 60 families outside.

**Mr. Lee:** Six zero?

**Hon. Khan:** Yeah.

**Mr. Lee:** And it is specifically for La Brea?

**Hon. Khan:** Yeah, for the Union Estate.

**Mr. Charles:** Thank you, Madam Chair. 011, the Dredging of the Sea-Lots Main Channel and Turning Basin, does that have to do specifically with the NP vessels?
Hon. Khan: Yes, it is specifically—

Mr. Charles: And nothing to do with Galicia or anything?

Hon. Khan: No, nothing to do with Galicia. [Crosstalk] Yeah, it has to do with the NP turning bay and that is to bring fuel from Pointe-a-Pierre and lubes in particular for the lube plant.

Mr. Charles: Thank you very much. Could you indicate the procurement process that has taken place or could you name the contractor?

Hon. Khan: No, that contract was awarded, I think, since in UNC time from my understanding. I am not sure who the contractor is.

Mr. Charles: So it is not an annual renewal, it is a roll-over contract?

Hon. Khan: No, no, it is a roll-over contract. Yeah.

Mr. Charles: You are assuring the House of that?

Hon. Khan: Yes, it is.

Mr. Charles: Could I continue? In terms of Item 005, Development of New Port Facilities, I see $15 million. This is with respect to the Moruga port?

Hon. Khan: No, no, no. This, again, what I said before, most of these port developments that fall under the national energy, which is the Brighton Port which is in La Brea and Port Galeota which is in Guayaguayare. Again, there is a major development plan for Port Galeota. This is some partial funding, again, for some residual cost. I have instructed the National Gas Company, through the national energy, that they have to fund these projects from a commercial and economic point of view. There seems to be good traction now with the Port of Galeota in terms of the people are coming with proposals because based on our dynamics with the Guyanese, there is serious consideration for using Port Galeota as the base to service, at least in the initial stages, the offshore operations in Guyana. That is supposed to begin in 2019, 2020.

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11.00 a.m.

Madam Chairman: Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, line Item 011, the dredging. Is there a commencement date?

Madam Chairman: Member, I think from the response—

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: He said it was a rollover and it is a continuation of the—[Interruption]—I know, but he said that there is going to be the dredging and the dredging does not happen all the time. If it did, then you would not have—

Madam Chairman: You want to know the actual date when—

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Yes.

Madam Chairman: Minister, would you be able to provide that in writing?

Hon. Khan: Yes, I will provide that in writing.

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

Dr. Tewarie: I was just going to ask on the Galeota Port, I imagine the $15 million is allocated for that. What remains to be done there?

Hon. Khan: The Galeota Port services the east coast. Because of the depth constraint and the draught, it was only smaller vessels could operate out of Galeota. Galeota has operated since in the days of AMOCO to service the offshore operations. The trend in the service boats operation now with offshore facilities, especially where the drilling is now further and further offshore which is not shortfall trips, it calls for larger vessels because the economics of making the trip is something prohibitive. So that will call for some dredging and building of new piers and what have you. And then when you are looking at Guyana you are saying that it is estimated that the trip out of Galeota to the offshore facilities in Guyana will take 23 hours which is not particularly bad.

Madam Chairman: Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.
Mr. Lee: I withdraw.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 40 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Madam Chairman: Thank you, Minister. Thank you, PS.

Hon. Khan: Thank you very much, Madam Chairman.

Head 18: Ministry of Finance, $5,651,049,870.

Madam Chairman: We are going to page 78, and in the interest of time, we then go to page 105, in the Statutory Boards. [ Interruption ] No, no, no, I am just calling out the pages. Yes, he is but in the interest of time. I will now invite the Minister of Finance to make a brief opening statement not exceeding five minutes.

Hon. Imbert: Thank you Madam Chairman, I am very pleased to hear that the Member for Caroni Central, purporting to speak on behalf of the Opposition, is not asking any questions. [ Interruption ] Well, that is what I heard.

The Ministry of Finance is responsible for the collection of revenue and the release of funds to Government Ministries, Departments, statutory authorities and state enterprises in order to service the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. Now, in the past I have used this technology, “in the service of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago”, and it appears that Members opposite through—I believe know better, seem not to understood what that means. To service the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago simply means, to make funds available to pay inescapable commitments, such as salaries, pensions, gratuities, social welfare payments, debt servicing and also to make transfers, subsidies and other payments to all of the agencies of the State that together provide service to the people of Trinidad and Tobago. So the main responsibility of the Ministry of Finance is to collect revenue and release funds in the service of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago.

Question proposed: That Head 18 stand part of the Schedule.
Madam Chairman: Hon. Members, the sum of $5,651,049,870 for Head 18, Ministry of Finance, is comprised of moneys proposed for expenditure under the following Sub-Head and Items to be found in the Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure, the Draft Estimates of the Revenue and Expenditure of the Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies and of the Tobago House of Assembly and the Draft Estimates of Development Programme. We now proceed to consider the Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure. We are at page 78, Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure, 001, General Administration.

Hon. Imbert: This is the part where they have no questions?

Madam Chairman: Sub-Head 01, Item 002, Budget Division, page 79; 003, Customs and Excise Division, pages 79 and 80; 004, Inland Revenue Division, page 80. Member for Caroni Central.

Dr. Tewarie: Yes, 003, Customs and Excise Division—

Madam Chairman: We are at 004, Inland Revenue Division.

Dr. Tewarie: Did we pass 003? I had a question, Ma'am.

Madam Chairman: Yeah, we passed 003 some time ago and I called the pages.

Hon. Imbert: And the Chairman was very explicit.

Dr. Tewarie: I had a question on page 80. Can I ask the question, Ma'am?

Madam Chairman: 004? We are at 004, Inland Revenue.

Dr. Tewarie: All right, 004, 01. How does this $1 million increase take into account the Revenue Authority issue and the property tax?

Hon. Imbert: There is no connection.

Dr. Tewarie: There is no connection?

Hon. Imbert: No. This is the Inland Revenue Division, which is completely separate and distinct entity from the proposed Revenue Authority, and therefore the Revenue Authority is not in any way connected to this line Item.
Madam Chairman: 005, Treasury Division, page 81; 008, Investment Division, page 81; 009, Central Tenders Board, page 82. Member for Caroni Central.

Dr. Tewarie: Central Tenders Board, 009. Did the Central Tenders Board engage in any way with the following projects:

- the highway to Manzanilla; and
- the road to Toco?

Hon. Imbert: No.

Dr. Tewarie: No?

Hon. Imbert: No.

Dr. Tewarie: Could I ask how they—what is the source of funding for the highway to Manzanilla?

Hon. Imbert: What line Item would that be?

Dr. Tewarie: I was following up on your answer.

Hon. Imbert: I am just asking what line Item would that be?

Dr. Tewarie: I am still on the Central Tenders Board.

Hon. Imbert: And since I said that the Central Tenders Board was not involved then I cannot see how you could ask the supplementary question. They are not involved. You should have asked that in the Ministry of Works when that was being examined.

11.10 a.m.

Madam Chairman: 010, Evaluation Division, page 82. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, line Item 08. Can you identify how many posts are presently vacant for this line Item?

Hon. Imbert: Yeah, we will provide that for you in writing but, however, you
should note that the implementation of the Public Procurement and Disposal of Property Act is now contingent on the appointment of the Procurement Regulator by His Excellency the President. I want to make that clear because there is a misconception, pervasive misconception, which I see in editorials and so on, that the Government or the Parliament is somehow holding up the implementation of the public procurement Act.

The Act that was passed by this Parliament requires His Excellency the President, in his own discretion, to appoint the Procurement Regulator. The Office of the President advertised the post and received applications at the end of August. It is my understanding that the Office of the President is now in the process of evaluating the applications and will make that appointment in due course. Until then, the Act cannot be proclaimed any further because without a Procurement Regulator you cannot proceed and, therefore, we have to maintain the Central Tenders Board until the Regulator is appointed and the Procurement Board can come into effect.

In that case, even though there is an Item here—and it is very small, as you can see—it is unlikely that any vacant posts in the CTB, the Central Tenders Board, will be filled in this fiscal year because we expect in 2018, the procurement Act will become operational, and that repeals the Central Tenders Board and removes the Central Tenders Board from our procurement system.

Madam Chairman: Member, Vacant Posts was under Valuation.

Hon. Imbert: Oh, I am terribly sorry. I apologise profusely, but I am glad everybody is giving me the chance to say what I just had to say. We will send you the information in writing.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: And also the classifications.

Hon. Imbert: Certainly.
Dr. Tewarie: Could I ask a follow-up question?

Madam Chairman: Yes.

Dr. Tewarie: Do these vacant posts have anything to do with the assessment of properties related to the property tax?

Hon. Imbert: Yes, it is for 50 persons dealing with that exercise.

Mr. Chairman: All right, Member for Caroni Central?

Dr. Tewarie: Yeah, I am fine.

Mr. Chairman: Okay. So 011, National Insurance Appeal Board Tribunal, page 83; Financial Intelligence Unit, page 83; 017, Office of Supervisor of Solvency, page 84. Member for Caroni Central.

Dr. Tewarie: I notice there was no allocation for 2017—sorry, not no allocation, no expenditure, and I just wanted to find out what happened.

Hon. Imbert: We will look into that because we did have somebody acting in the position. A new person has now been appointed by the Public Service Commission, somebody from the Treasury, so we will let you know what went on there, but we are now building that office because Service Commission has appointed an Inspector of Solvency, finally.

Mr. Chairman: Okay. Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, 001, General Administration, pages 84 to 86. Member for Caroni Central.

Dr. Tewarie: Sub-Item 16, Contract Employment. Are these contract employees on the establishment and you intend to hire more or is it something else?

Hon. Imbert: Yes. There is a provision for 16 additional—sorry, not 16, there is a provision for additional persons in our IT unit, our building management unit and the legal and advisory sections of the Ministry.

Dr. Tewarie: Okay. No. That is another item. Under Goods and Services, I wanted to ask, under 28, which is Other Contracted Services, what are those for?
Hon. Imbert: Legal and advisory.

Dr. Tewarie: Legal and advisory?

Hon. Imbert: We have a lot of legal matters.

Mr. Chairman: There is an explanation in the explanation column.

Madam Chairman: Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you. The Member already asked the question. Thanks.

Madam Chairman: Item 002, Budget Division, page 86. Member for Caroni Central?

Dr. Tewarie: No, I had another question under the Item you just left.

Hon. Imbert: I have no problem answering the question but go ahead, if you do not mind, Madam Chairman.

Dr. Tewarie: Just two questions really: one is on 36, Extraordinary Expenditure. I just wanted to—

Hon. Imbert: But there is no provision for it eh, and there has been none since 2016.

Dr. Tewarie: Okay. I notice—I am going to raise this Minister because I see it as a pattern, which I will draw to your attention which is the increase in Janitorial Services, 37 and the increase in Security Services, 43. So you can either respond or—

Hon. Imbert: I will explain. A collective agreement was signed with MTS workers and it has taken effect.

Dr. Tewarie: All right. So this is an increase in salaries for existing, and this is both janitorial and security?

Hon. Imbert: No, just security. Janitorial is still outstanding. We are working on that right now.
Mr. Chairman: 002, Budget Division, page 86; Item 003, Customs and Excise Division, pages 87 to 88. Caroni Central.

Dr. Tewarie: Yes on 28, Other Contracted Services, just an example, is it the Items identified on the right here?

Hon. Imbert: Yes.

Dr. Tewarie: All right. I will not pursue that, Minister.

Hon. Imbert: Well, let me just say because it is important. We are going to this year, finally, as long as there is no further obstacle, operationalise the scanners, the container scanners. That is what that is about. I say as long as there is no further obstacle. [Crosstalk] I think you are aware. I think you are aware.

Mr. Chairman: Item 004, Inland Revenue Division, pages 88 and 89.

Dr. Tewarie: I will just—I know you gave an explanation just now. You said negotiations on Janitorial Services, I note the increase, $1.1 million. Is that for the same matter Minister, anticipating negotiated increases?

Hon. Imbert: Yes.

Dr. Tewarie: All right. Okay.

Madam Chairman: Item 005, Treasury Division, pages 89 and 91; Item 00—Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you Madam Chair, line Item 15, Repairs and Maintenance. Can the hon. Minister indicate how much equipment is expected to be repaired when you do repairs and is there a listing?

Madam Chairman: Member, where are you?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Page 90.

Hon. Imbert: What line Item?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: 15, Repairs and Maintenance—

Madam Chairman: Repairs and Maintenance—Buildings, Item 21? Item 21?
Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: 15.

Madam Chairman: Item 15, Repairs and Maintenance—Equipment?

Hon. Imbert: Member, this is labelled in a funny way, but what it is, it is the upgrade of the Integrated Human Resource Information System, which is very, very important. At the present time, the present antiquated system only allows one payroll cycle per month. So if you have an extraordinary requirement to pay at the middle of the month or whatever, you cannot use the IHRIS system for that. So we are upgrading the software to bring it to best in class, best practice. So that is what that is for.

Madam Chairman: Member for Caroni Central.

Dr. Tewarie: Yes, 02, on page 89.

Hon. Imbert: On page 89, we passed there, man. Madam Chairman, what is that? What is he doing me?

Dr. Tewarie: Items 37 and 43, the increases there for Janitorial Services and Security are quite substantial.

Hon. Imbert: You are talking about Inland Revenue?

Madam Chairman: Members, at page 90?

Hon. Imbert: He is saying 89.

Madam Chairman: At page 90, 37 and 43.

Hon. Imbert: That is where he is?

Madam Chairman: Yes, please, and that is where we all are.

Hon. Imbert: I heard 89, but it is the same thing.

Dr. Tewarie: No, but they are more substantial than could be accounted for by negotiating settlement or—

Hon. Imbert: No. We have additional facilities. Come on, we have a big Government Campus across the road.
Dr. Tewarie: So it is additional employees?

Hon. Imbert: We have additional responsibilities in terms of Security and Janitorial Services because the new buildings, Customs and Board of Inland Revenue. It is a big building, it demands more.

Madam Chairman: 008, Investments Division, page 91. Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.

Mr. Lee: Thank you, Madam Chair. Line Item 28, Other Contracted Services. The budgeted amount is $70 million. The footnote says:

“Includes provision for divestment of State Enterprises and Special Audits.”

Hon. Imbert: What we are doing is what should have been done years ago. We are going to be taking a critical look at the efficiency of state enterprises. So we will be doing a number of special audits of the hundred-odd state enterprises for the first time to look at them to see where we can achieve savings and greater efficiency. So that is what that is for.

Mr. Lee: And the other first part of that footnote was “divestment of State Enterprises”.

Hon. Imbert: Well, we have a plan in the coming year, for example, we were looking at a public/private partnership with respect to VMCOTT. It is in the conceptual stage at this point in time, and you need specialist expertise to do these things, you cannot do it by vaps.

Mr. Lee: So VMCOTT is the only state agency on the table right now?

Hon. Imbert: Well, I mean, a public offering is a form of divestment, you know, when you do the divestment of shares in FCB, in TTNGL and then we are also looking at divestment of equity in TGU and so on. You need specialist expertise to do these things, you cannot just do it arbitrarily. We do not want to fall into the trap that your Government fell into with the FCB IPO. Our IPOs have been clean.
They have been clean.  *[Laughter]*

**Mr. Lee:** Thank you so much, Minister.

**Madam Chairman:** Might we proceed please? 009, Central Tenders Board, page 92; 010, Valuations Division, page 93; 011, National Insurance Appeal Board Tribunal, page 94; 014, Financial Intelligence Unit, pages 94 and 95. Member for Naparima.

**Mr. Charles:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Item 16, Contract Employment, I see the significant sum of $6 million. I know what the Minister said yesterday about employment, permanent employment, but given the sensitive information available in the Financial Intelligence Unit, and the fact that somebody could be employed for three years and then at the end of the contract, he goes into the private sector and whatnot and he has knowledge of that kind of information. Is it the best practice to have a significant number of bodies—and perhaps you can give us the number—employed as contract officers and having access to sensitive information on citizens of the country?

**Hon. Imbert:** The inability of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago to compel the Public Service Commission to fill vacant public service posts has not changed in the last 24 hours. We are still constitutionally unable to compel the Public Service Commission to fill public service posts in the timeframe that we would like.

**Mr. Charles:** Mr. Minister—

**Hon. Imbert:** All we can do is ask, we can meet with them.

**Mr. Charles:** The question is—

**Hon. Imbert:** No, but I am making a point. Yesterday this came up and nothing has changed between yesterday and today. We are still constitutionally unable to compel the Service Commission to appoint people.
Mr. Charles: Have you enquired what the blockages in terms of output are? Could it be that the Service Commissions are not fully resourced and, therefore, that may be the bottleneck? So, therefore, to say that you have no responsibility whatsoever is to me unacceptable.

Hon. Imbert: I did not say we had no responsibility. Hon. Prime Minister.

Dr. Rowley: Madam Chair, just to clarify. It is not being said at all that we have no responsibility. We just do not have the authority. On the contrary, depending on the posture of the commission, they may or may not meet with us. There are commissions and chairmen who took the position that they are an independent body and, therefore, they do not have to speak to the Government.

On the other hand, the current board I, as Prime Minister, in following up on exactly what you are talking about, requested to meet with them. We met with them, it bore some fruit but, of course, the tree is the problem. The whole question of the role of the Service Commission as managers and suppliers to the public service is a fundamental problem which has to be addressed away from this exercise.

Madam Chairman: Item 017, Office of the Supervisor of Insolvency, page 95. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, line Item 01, Travelling and Subsistence. I notice there was nothing spent in 2017, but there is an allocation of $50,000. Just to enquire, I know you had indicated earlier that there is supposed to be an increase in staff and so forth. Is this allocation in anticipation of—you intend to employ more staff?

Hon. Imbert: Yes.

Madam Chairman: Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, page 96; 001, General Administration; 002, Budget Division; 003, Customs and Excise Division;
Dr. Rambachan: Item 12, Caribbean Catastrophe Risk Insurance Facility. I notice that there is a substantial decrease of nearly $15 million in 2018 over 2017. That is the first question. Why? And, secondly, have we ever benefited from this insurance scheme? For example, are people who are suffering currently from losses from the floods, would the country be able to benefit from this and distribute to people?

Hon. Imbert: I am advised that last year there was a one-off payment to include extraordinary rainfall in this catastrophe risk insurance coverage. It was not there before. So that last year we took a decision—this Government took a decision—to include extraordinary rainfall as a risk within this insurance policy. I am told that the country has benefited from this insurance cover in the past, and we are currently looking to see whether it is applicable to current periods of heavy rainfall.

Dr. Rambachan: So, while this was paid in 2017—well, it will be 2016/2017—is it then that we may not have or do we have coverage for 2017/2018 that would include, for example—

Hon. Imbert: Obviously we do. If we paid it last year, obviously we do.

Dr. Rambachan: We do?

Hon. Imbert: Obviously. We paid it last year.

Dr. Rambachan: So, just to clarify, you are saying that it is possible that those
who are experiencing losses from the floods now, through this facility through the Government, can be compensated?

**Hon. Imbert:** You have to understand the raison d’être behind this insurance coverage. This was set up in the Caribbean really to deal with the effects of hurricanes, tropical storms, earthquakes and catastrophic events of that nature. The extension of the policy towards, you know, heavy rainfall, is something that we are exploring right now—let us say, the extension of payments to countries, as a result of losses suffered from heavy rainfall is something we are currently exploring with the insurance provider to see whether Trinidad and Tobago can get some money out of this insurance to assist with damage caused by heavy rainfall. For the first time this is being done.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Right. I think it is good, it is commendable that we have bought insurance for floods because, obviously, we have been having an unusual amount of floods over the last couple of years, last three years in particular. I think that we should have, in fact, invested again or invest again next year.

**Hon. Imbert:** No. Member, you have got to listen very carefully. I said it was a one-off payment to include rainfall and now we are covered for rainfall in this year. To get into that is like you want to join a Members Club—let me use that analogy—you pay an entry fee and then you pay an annual subscription. So we pay the entry fee, the analogous entry fee, to have the coverage extended to extraordinary rainfall, and now we pay an annual subscription where coverage for extraordinary rainfall is now a routine item in the policy.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Right. But Minister, in 2017, you paid $23,625,000. Okay? And you are paying the same $23,625,000 in 2018. You just said that you have to pay, in addition to your entrance fee as it were, you now have to pay a maintenance fee on the insurance for rainfall. I do not see that maintenance fee as it were
included under the $23,625,000.

**Hon. Imbert:** Member, let me just clear up any misunderstanding you may have. We are now covered for extraordinary rainfall.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Okay.

**Hon. C. Imbert:** Clear?

**Dr. Rambachan:** Okay.

**Hon. Imbert:** Thank you.

**Mr. Charles:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Item 04, 01, Contribution to the Caribbean Development Bank. I am seeing an increase of $15.5 million. The question I am asking is, I am seeing various contributions by Trinidad taxpayer to institutions of the Caribbean. For example, CSME, I saw some moneys allocated, the Caricom Secretariat, UWI, CARPHA, IMPACS, et cetera. Do we have a sense of the total amount of money that the taxpayer is putting out to this enterprise called Caricom, so we could have a sense of what Trinidad and Tobago is doing in a beneficial manner for Caricom? Because we tend to hear that we do trade and how we depend on their trade, and I do not think there is a counter-narrative about how much we do for Caricom.

**Hon. Imbert:** Before I answer that, let me just deal with something that has come up. The cover for extraordinary rainfall was effective from the first part of this year, 2018. I am told in the first quarter of 2018, we became eligible for that—sorry, 2017. Actually, I am now being told 2017. So I just want to make that clear. So we are covered as of now. As we speak, we are covered for that, but what it means is something that has to be looked at. It is the interpretation. It is really for catastrophic events.

With respect to Caricom, I am afraid I am not qualified to deal with that matter. That question should be directed to the Minister of Foreign and Caricom
Affairs. I can only deal with payments made by the Ministry of Finance, but our membership in Caricom—what we get out of it, the sense of it, the whole spectrum, I am not qualified to answer that. I direct that question to the Minister of Foreign and Caricom Affairs.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 002, Commonwealth Bodies, page 100; Item 003, United Nations Organizations; Item 004 International Bodies, pages 100 and 101. Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.

**Mr. Lee:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I guess I can go over to page 101 under Treasury Division, line Item 03, Expense in connection with International Financial Institutions. Firstly, just a sense of appreciation, what those expenses are for? In 2017, we had budgeted $36.9 million. In 2018, we budget $43.2 million, but in 2017, revised estimates, we only spent or contributed $67,000. I am just trying to understand this new amount of $7 million-plus from the budgeted to the estimates.

**Hon. Imbert:** One of the—well, I do not want to use the word “bad”—consequences of being a member of the Inter-American Development Bank, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund and so on is that from time to time some of the poorer member countries ask for additional relief from these institutions, and a request is then made to all Member States to increase their capital contribution to these bodies, and it is really by majority vote. So, as Minister of Finance, from time to time, I would get a request to vote as a governor of the World Bank, for example, with respect to increase capital contributions, but we really do not have any say in this. Even if we say no, it is carried by the majority of members in the World Bank. The choice you have is you drop out or you go with it, and I think there are far more benefits to this country to be continuing as members of the World Bank, the IDB and so on. So this is increased

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capital contributions. The $7 million is the IDB in particular.

**Mr. Lee:** A follow up. So is it fair to say that we were able to save $36 million as projected in 2017, because you did not contribute?

**Hon. Imbert:** We did not have to.

**Mr. Lee:** Okay.

**Hon. Imbert:** We dodged that bullet.

**Mr. Lee:** Okay.

**Hon. Imbert:** Okay?

**Madam Chairman:** Item 005, Non-Profit Institutions; Item 007, Households, page 102. Member for Tabaquite.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Thank you. Minister, under VSEP, Item 17, Central Tenders Board, there is a new Sub-Item. What is the intention of this VSEP?

11.40 a.m.

**Hon. Imbert:** Well, if you took a look at the Procurement Act, you would see that the CTB workers have options, just like the RHA situation 20 years ago. They can opt to be separated. They can opt to be seconded. They can opt to be transferred. They can opt to be redeployed within the public service in some other position. So this is simply to give the workers of the Tenders Board the option if they want to be separated to pay their separation package, but it is optional to them.

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

**Mr. Lee:** It was answered, thank you.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 009, Other Transfers, page 103. Member for Caroni Central.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Item 39, Office of Procurement Regulation, I see the allocation there to establish the office. So, Minister, based on what you said previously, given that we might have a procurement regulator as determined by His Excellency
the President, we can assume proclamation of the legislation and establishment of the office.

Hon. Imbert: But we are targeting this fiscal year, because we have done a lot of forward planning. All Ministries and agencies have been asked to determine the type of procurement unit they should have because large Ministries would have fairly large units, small entities, like the Parliament, for example, might just need a couple of people. In some cases, you know, they can take staff from within. In fact, we are promoting that, we do not want to increase the size of the public service so where you can redeploy people from within. So this is all in the expectation that once a procurement regulator is appointed by His Excellency, we can move swiftly to implement the Act.

Dr. Tewarie: Thank you. Item 41, Madam Chair, Business Stimulus Programme, can I take it that this $50 million is related to your budgetary—

Hon. Imbert: Yes, it is exactly what I announced in the budget. We put these programmes in the Ministry of Finance. For now, we are going to disburse. We would not be doing the evaluation per se, but we have the funds here. So as soon as the other entities do their evaluation, we will disburse. We just put the money here for now. Okay. It may find its way into other Ministries in due course.

Dr. Tewarie: Okay. So this will be a multiple Ministry—

Hon. Imbert: No, no, no, no, no. We are setting up the programme, as I indicated, we are going to use a group of successful private sector entrepreneurs and businessmen to evaluate applications for the $100,000 grant for the small businesses, and once the group of entrepreneurs say, well, this is a good idea, it then goes to a ministerial committee just to make sure it is consistent with Government policy, and then an application would be made to the Ministry of Finance for disbursement. So the funds are just residing in the Ministry of Finance
for disbursement, okay.

Madam Chairman: Member for Tabaquite.

Dr. Rambachan: Caricom Development Fund, Item 23 under Transfers. There was $140 million allocated but not actually given, according to the Revised Estimates, and now you are allocating $70 million. How do you decide on what is the quantum that you are allocating?

Hon. Imbert: This again is another agency, like the IDB, the World Bank, and they asked for additional contributions and additional capital contributions all the time.

Dr. Rambachan: Is there a reason why the $140 million was not given?

Hon. Imbert: We were able to reschedule, you know, because of our budgetary constraints we were able to reschedule and we would do it in tranches rather than in one lump sum.

Dr. Rambachan: Yeah. Can you explain the G. Pan Patent, please, an additional $3.954 million in this year?

Hon. Imbert: Well, to maintain the patent you have to pay. If you do not pay—all patents come with a cost. It is an annual fee.

Dr. Rambachan: And this is worldwide?

Hon. Imbert: That is my understanding.

Dr. Rambachan: Okay.

Madam Chairman: Item 011, Transfers to State Enterprises, page 104. Member for Chaguanas East.

Mr. Karim: No, Madam Chair, I was just going to ask whether you were calling Treasury Division, because I had a question under there.

Madam Chairman: No, anything could have been done once we were under the Item. We said we were not calling the Sub-Items when we initially set the table
with respect to our procedure. Okay? So once I called the Sub-Head and the Item, you were able to call anything, and that is why I have been calling pages. So we are now at 011, Transfer to State Enterprises, page 104. Member for Naparima.

**Mr. Charles:** Item 87, Government Information Services Limited, $19 million. I take this, this is separation package estimation?

**Hon. Imbert:** Yes.

**Mr. Charles:** Okay.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, line Items 42 and 57, if you can, not necessarily now, but in writing, indicate what this allocation specifically will deal with in these two entities. Thank you.

**Hon. Imbert:** It is for subsidy of the air bridge.

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

**Mr. Karim:** Thank you, Madam Chair. So I am safely on 104, 011. Hon. Minister, may we get some clarification or some explanation with respect to line Items 40 and 42 please, SMCL and Caroni (1975) Limited? The allocations are for what?

**Hon. Imbert:** I will deal with 42 now. As you know, Caroni (1975) Limited is still existing because there are a number of matters that still have to be resolved, such as disposal of property, and things like that. So this is to pay the operating cost of that company as it continues on its long pathway towards final closure.

**Mr. Karim:** I know you said something just now, but might you be able to give me some examples of the 14 million going to be used for, because it is quite a sum of 14.4 million that you allocated to Caroni?

**Hon. Imbert:** Well, Caroni has long-term debt, eh, so there is debt service involved.
Mr. Karim: And with respect to SMCL, 40?

Hon. Imbert: Same, same thing. That is another company. The Ministry of Finance has—Trintoc is still on our books, for example, because, you know, when you go to move to wind up these companies, some of them have all sorts of matters in the court, pending litigation, claims, mortgages, loans. It is a long tedious process, and successive governments have had to grapple with this challenge. As I said, I use Trintoc as an example, Trintoc went out before I even came into this Parliament, as far as I know, and they are still trying to deal with residual debts and obligations of Trintoc. It is a very laborious exercise.

Madam Chairman: Member for Chaguanas West.

Mr. Singh: Thank you, Madam Chair. With respect to page 104, Item 70, and then I have another follow-up. Alutrint, Operating Expenses, could you explain this Operating Expenses for Alutrint?

Hon. Imbert: That is the minimal operating expenses of the company, like board fees and office accommodation. It is a small number, as you could see.

Mr. Singh: So it is still operational?

Hon. Imbert: It is the same problem, we have litigation.

Mr. Singh: Okay.

Hon. Imbert: I think the political leader, the Prime Minister, was very clear on the litigation that you have gifted us with respect to the Alutrint matter, and gifted the country.

Mr. Singh: Then that follows up—

Dr. Rowley: Let me clear that up again, the operation of the company was closed down but the company was not shut down because the company is engaged in its business, as per what I discussed earlier on. Alutrint still exists.

Mr. Singh: Okay. And that raises the other issue, line Item 88, Madam Chair,
Alutech Limited. There is no allocation, but there is an allocation as we saw previously under Energy. There is an allocation under the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries for the equity injection of $35 million last year and 661,000—

**Hon. Imbert:** That is because that is an active company. The distinction is that Ministry of Finance is given the responsibility to wind up and close inactive companies. So that an allocation for an inactive company would be in Finance, but an allocation for an active company would be Energy, in this particular case.

**Mr. Singh:** Okay. Thank you for the clarification.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Tabaquite.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Agricultural Development Bank, I see there is an allocation of $95 million in 2017 that was not released or used and now there is $50 million in 2018. Is this money for capitalization of the bank for lending purposes? What is this money?

**Hon. Imbert:** This is—listen—sorry, “doh leh me” use that terminology. As you well know, the loans at the ADB are heavily subsidized, and this is for subsidy. The ADB had enough money last year to meet the subsidy requirements. This is for this year. Okay. So they did not need to rely on the Ministry of Finance to give them money last year to subsidize loans to farmers.

**Dr. Rambachan:** Okay. And similarly, Trinidad and Tobago Mortgage Finance Company, the $45,837,000 that you are giving this year, is this also to subsidize the 2 per cent and 5 per cent loans?

**Hon. Imbert:** Yeah, definitely. Those are heavily subsidized loans and that is what that is for. The Government pays the difference between the commercial rate and the subsidized rate.

**Dr. Rambachan:** And finally 57. Caribbean Airlines, this $37 million that you are allocating, how much of this is fuel subsidy really when in fact fuel prices have
49
Appropriation (Financial Year 2018) Bill, 2017  2017.10.20
Standing Finance Committee

fallen?

Hon. Imbert: I will answer you, none,

Dr. Rambachan: Sorry?

Hon. Imbert: None.

Dr. Rambachan: So, why are we continuing to subsidize Caribbean Airlines?

Hon. Imbert: We are not subsidizing them. We subsidize the costs of providing a transportation service between Trinidad and Tobago, for example.

Dr. Rambachan: Oh, this is the Trinidad and Tobago service.

Hon. Imbert: Caribbean Airlines provides the service for—

Dr. Rambachan: I know, but I am just clarifying, this is specifically in the air bridge?

Hon. Imbert: I think I have said that twice. Shall I say it three times?

Madam Chairman: Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, back on line Item 57, where you indicated it was for fuel subsidies. With the removal of the fuel subsidies, I do not know if it impacts on jet fuel as well, and if it does, do you anticipate the Government increasing the cost of travel on the air bridge?

Hon. Imbert: Let me just clear this up. The passenger pays three hundred dollars, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, this Government, and the one before, your Government, pays $100, so Caribbean Airlines gets $400 for every passenger that travels on the air bridge. Jet fuel is not subsidized, okay.

Madam Chairman: Member for Caroni Central.

Dr. Tewarie: The Agricultural Development Bank issue, you clarified the issue for the Member for Tabaquite, but in the Budget you had an agri-business allocation, where will that reside?

Hon. Imbert: All three, the housing construction initiative, incentive money, we
put that in Finance. The Small Business Development Incentive Funding in Finance. The Farmers Incentive Programme, we put the money in Finance, but of course, it is going to be the agricultural people who will assess the applications from the farmers, and so on. Okay.

**Dr. Tewarie:** And, secondly, Item 68, I see for the IFC we have an increase in allocation of about $18 million and—

**Hon. Imbert:** Well, it seems that the IFC is finally beginning to see some light at the end of the tunnel in terms of business processing, outsourcing, which is really a fancy term for things like call centres, and also providing, what they call back-office services, shared services, and so on. So the TTIFC has told me that they intend to make a major thrust into attracting international companies to come to Trinidad and Tobago to use Trinidad and Tobago as a centre for business processing, outsourcing, and that is what that funding is for.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Okay, so, basically, the focus will be on business process—

**Hon. Imbert:** No, we are continuing to try to attract an international bank to set up headquarters in Trinidad and Tobago to realize the objective of the International Financial Centre, but in the meantime, the IFC is pursuing other initiatives to more or less achieve the same thing, but more from a ground-up level; a bottom-up rather than a top-down level.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Okay, fine.

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

**Mr. Karim:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I want to just go back to line Item 57, Caribbean Airlines Limited. Hon. Minister, you indicated that this was the subsidy for the air bridge to Tobago. The question I want to ask is, is Caribbean Airlines subsidized for any other route, including your responsibility through the Tobago House of Assembly? Any other route of Caribbean airlines in addition to the—

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Hon. Imbert: Not at all, and that is one of the challenges faced because you took all Caribbean Airlines money to buy planes and then you mortgage the planes, and tell Caribbean Airlines pay the loan.

Mr. Karim: So Caribbean Airlines, you do not give them any money to subsidize any route, including that on behalf of the Tobago House of Assembly to any destination in North America? To any destination in North America via TAB? If you want, I will repeat the question.

Hon. Imbert: I understand. In the discussion yesterday, we spoke about THA’s allocation for airlift. It is the Tobago House of Assembly that pays these foreign carriers to bring tourists to Tobago, and that they have an allocation for that, for airlift. As far as I am aware, Caribbean Airlines does not subsidize any other route, or make any payments on behalf of the House of Assembly, or anything like that.

Mr. Karim: Can I just, again, for clarity of the records, ask, specifically, from your knowledge, the Tobago House of Assembly does not use any financing to subsidize any route for Caribbean Airlines out of Tobago?

Hon. Imbert: I am not aware that the THA makes any payments to Caribbean Airlines for flying anywhere. You may have information that I “doh” have.

Mr. Karim: Okay. You might want to check the routes that maybe Caribbean Airlines use through Tobago to a North American destination.

Hon. Imbert: Okay.

Madam Chairman: Sub-Head 014, Loans to Other Governments, page 105. We now go to, Member for Chaguanas East.

Mr. Karim: Thank you, Madam Chair. Minister, just a quick one, when I asked the question earlier on, on line Item—

Madam Chairman: Where are you?
Mr. Karim: I am on page 105, line Item 04, Caroni (1975) Limited.

Madam Chairman: You gone back?

Mr. Karim: No, no. Page 105.

Madam Chairman: All right. Okay.

Mr. Karim: Can I go ahead?

Madam Chairman: Just let me call the Item.

Mr. Karim: Okay. Sorry.

Madam Chairman: All right. Thank you very much. We are now at Sub-Head 06, Current Transfers to Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies, page 105; Item 004, Statutory Boards. Member for Chaguanas East.

Mr. Karim: Okay. Thank you, Madam Chair. When I asked the question earlier on, on line Item 42 on page 104, the hon. Minister indicated that that allocation was for debt servicing, but I am seeing here again, 04, Caroni (1975) Limited, Debt Servicing. Might you be able to give us some details as to what this facility was secured for and how long again it has to go?

Hon. Imbert: Some old loans. If you want a list, a list of the old loans of Caroni, it is no problem.

Mr. Karim: You could put it in writing so we could take a look.

Hon. Imbert: That is what I said, if you wish to get it, these are loans going back 20, 30 years, you know, but if you want to get it, no problem.

Mr. Karim: Okay.

Madam Chairman: As we are here let me just call, because the Member took us to 07, Debt Servicing. So let us just deal with it as we have already begun. 07, Debt Servicing. So 001, Interest, Local Loans; 009, Interest on Overdraft, page 106; 011, Principal Repayment, Local Loans, page 106. Okay, so we are at Sub-Head 06, Current Transfers to Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies; 004
Statutory Boards. And we are going to the other book, *Draft Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure of Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies of the Tobago House of Assembly*; 07, National Lotteries Control Board. We are at page 147, Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure. Page 147, 001, General Administration. Member for Pointe-a Pierre.

**Mr. Lee:** Can I go down to Good and Services in that same page?

**Madam Chairman:** 001, General Administration, Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services; 001, General Administration, pages 147 and 148. Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.

**Mr. Lee:** Thank you, Madam Chair. To the Minister, line Item 36, Extraordinary Expenditure of $3 million.

**Hon. Imbert:** We will find out for you.

**Mr. Lee:** Also, Contract Employment, line 16, I noticed in 2017 you did not do much Contract Employment, only $63,600, but this year you budgeted 4.3.

**Hon. Imbert:** Well, if you look at the original allocation—

**Mr. Lee:** I know, it is 4.4.

**Hon. Imbert:**—it was 4.4, so there is always an intention to try and beef up the staff, but it does not always materialize. So there is another intention this year.

**Mr. Lee:** Okay. So could you just indicate in writing what those positions might be?

**Hon. Imbert:** Proposed.

**Mr. Lee:** Proposed.

**Hon. Imbert:** Sure. Yeah. Okay.

**Madam Chairman:** Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, page 149. Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.

**Mr. Lee:** Madam Chair, I do not know if the Minister might guide me, I am not
seeing a line Item, but I would just ask a general—is there any debt by say, lottery agents, or—

**Hon. Imbert:** You really have to refer to a line Item, you know. I cannot give you that kind of leeway.

**Mr. Lee:** Yeah, I understand. Okay, I will pass, Madam Chairman.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Naparima.

**Hon. Imbert:** Item 83, Money for Prizes On-Line Games, and I see a decrease of $25 million. Is this that they anticipate less business?

**Madam Chairman:** Member, you have gone back. We are at Sub-Head 03.

**Mr. Charles:** I am on page 148.

**Madam Chairman:** We are on page 148 but we are at Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases. I believe you have gone back to General Administration.

**Hon. Imbert:** It is just as a point here, the arithmetic seems to be wrong.

**Mr. Charles:** There is a decrease in the allocation.

**Madam Chairman:** Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies, page 148; 007, Households; 009, Other Transfers.

Hon. Members, we will now move on to the *Draft Estimates of Development Programme*. We are at page 52. Sub-Head 09, Development Programme, Consolidated Fund, page 52; Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services, pages 52 to 54. Member for Caroni Central.

**Dr. Tewarie:** I would just like to ask the Minister of the progress on the project Development of an Integrated Financial Management Information System.

**Madam Chairman:** Item, could you give us, Member?

**Dr. Tewarie:** Item 017.

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

**Hon. Imbert:** Well, we are continuing to upgrade the infrastructure. In terms of
completion date, and so on, that is what you are looking at?

Dr. Tewarie: Yeah. I know this has been going for some time.

Hon. Imbert: This, again, is a very laborious exercise. We are hoping to finish it within the next two or three years. It is very, very difficult, because you are changing out your software across the entire financial system in every Ministry, and so on. It is not an easy exercise. Governments have been trying to do this for many, many years—

Dr. Tewarie: I know that.

Hon. Imbert:—as I am sure you will appreciate.

Dr. Tewarie: But it would make so much more difference, you see.

Hon. Imbert: I could not agree with you more. We will get real-time information in terms of revenue, expenditure, overdraft. We are really pushing hard for this.

Madam Chairman: Member for Chaguanas West.

Mr. Singh: Thank you, Madam Chair. I am at Item 059 on page 53, Implementation of Property Tax Regime. There is an allocation of $15 million estimate. Could the Minister explain what will this allocation be utilized for?

Hon. Imbert: Well, it is essentially for accommodation, staffing, and I would say ancillary services. We are trying to do all of this in-house at this point in time. If we have to outsource, we may come in the mid-year for a supplementary allocation. But we have recruited over 100 persons, and we would be recruiting more in 2018 to do the valuation. That is the most difficult thing in all of this. The starting point is the valuation of properties, so you have to get that done, the assessment and the valuation, before you could proceed to collect the tax. So that is the focus in 2018, to complete that valuation exercise.

Mr. Singh: And I see in Item 063, Establishment of the Gaming Commission, the—
Hon. Imbert: Well, that depends on you, waiting for your support and your vote. You have been very supportive so far, but we hope that support continues. We want to bring that to the Parliament before the end of this calendar year and get this Gaming Commission Act passed, and we expect your support for that. [Interruption] But it is your legislation.

Mr. Singh: Minister, me and my colleagues make our presence felt progressive, in that sense, at the Joint Select Committee as you are aware.

Hon. Imbert: I know, but it has been in a committee for a year and we had attempts to have meetings, and for one reason or another, Members were not available. We kept trying. We eventually had meetings in September. I would really urge Members opposite to work with the Government and let us get this gaming commission established. You see what is going on outside there, unregulated casino gambling. You see it for yourself, so let us work together to get this done.

Mr. Singh: Lest the national community think otherwise, Madam Chairman, my colleague, the Member for Couva South and I have attended all meetings of the Joint Select Committee.

Hon. Imbert: I know, but it has been going on for one year. That is enough time, we need to get this thing done, so I am pleading with the Opposition, work with the Government to pass the Gaming Control Bill.

Madam Chairman: Okay, Members. Member for Chaguanas East.

Mr. Karim: Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, line Item 057, allocation of $15 million.

Hon. Imbert: What is the question?

Mr. Karim: Line Item 057, just to get a little update with respect to that allocation.
Hon. Imbert: Our plan is to establish the revenue authority in fiscal 2018, so that is what that is for. That is the plan, otherwise again we will have problems with revenue collection if we do not do this.

Madam Chairman: Member for Caroni Central.

12.10 p.m.

Dr. Tewarie: 059, Property Tax Regime. I just wanted to ask the Minister if there was any intention to bring the 2009 legislation for revision to the Parliament.

Hon. Imbert: No.

Dr. Tewarie: The answer is no? The 2009 tax remains? The 2009 legislation remains?

Hon. Imbert: The waiver or the amnesty as the case may be, if that is what you are asking about, of the imposition of property tax expired at the end of 2015. We do not have any plan to extend that amnesty, if that is your question.

Dr. Tewarie: And which legislation will govern the implementation of the property tax?

Hon. Imbert: The current one with some tweaking.

Dr. Tewarie: So it will come to Parliament? That is what I am asking.

Hon. Imbert: The current one with some tweaking, yes.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Madam Chair. Public Buildings, can I ask on that?

Madam Chairman: Yes, you can.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Line Item 114. I notice there is not really an allocation for the refurbishment of the Trinidad House. Can the Minister indicate—

Hon. Imbert: They are moving out.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: All right. Hon. Minister, I am not seeing a line Item for it, but I am not seeing anything with the refurbishment of the Parliament, the Red
House.

**Hon. Imbert:** That is not a matter for the Ministry of Finance.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Naparima? We thought you vacated. We got that indication; we do not know why, but we are sorry.

**Mr. Charles:** No, I am asking on 045, Whistleblowing Technology. My question is, what is that? And I note in 2017, $1 million was estimated, none spent and there is a reduced allocation this year. Has the Government lost interest in whistleblowing, given experiences that are taking place currently?

**Hon. Imbert:** At all.

**Mr. Charles:** So therefore, what is this technology?

**Hon. Imbert:** That is to set up the database.

**Mr. Charles:** And why is it reduced? Why was it not spent in fiscal year 2017? Can I assume that you have lost interest?

**Hon. Imbert:** Well, it is not a Ministry of Finance matter, but I have some limited understanding of what transpired. My understanding is that the Whistleblower Bill was sent to a Joint Select Committee and got stuck, because it did not receive the support of the Opposition. That is my understanding.

**Mr. Charles:** That is not so.

**Hon. Imbert:** That is what I was told.

**Mr. Charles:** My understanding is that you have lost interest along the way.

**Hon. Imbert:** At all.

**Mr. Charles:** So you are saying, you are giving a commitment to the national community that whistleblowing is a high priority for this Government—

**Hon. Imbert:** Yes, it is.

**Mr. Charles:**—and we could look forward to the $500,000 being spent this year?

**Hon. Imbert:** I would hope so, and it is the highest priority.

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Question put and agreed to.

Head 18 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Madam Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Minister. Thank you, Mr. PS and all the other technocrats from the Ministry. You all are discharged.

Head 02: Auditor General, $37,188,250.

Madam Chairman: Members, we are now at page 5. I will now invite the Minister of Finance to make a brief opening statement for a maximum of five minutes.

Hon. Imbert: Madam Chairman, the Office of the Auditor General is the supreme audit institution for Trinidad and Tobago with the responsibility to audit public expenditure.

Question proposed: That Head 02 stand part of the Schedule.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Members, the sum of $37,188,250 for Head 02, the Auditor General, is comprised of moneys proposed for expenditure under the following Sub-Heads and Items to be found in the Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure and the Draft Estimates of Development Programme. We now proceed to consider the Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure. We are at page 5, Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure; Item 001, General Administration.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, 01, Salaries and Cost of Living. I notice there is a decrease. Is this office adequately staffed?

Hon. Imbert: No. There has been a problem. When I was Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee of Parliament in Opposition, there has been a problem. It is the same problem with the Service Commission not appointing permanent public officers to posts. So, you know, the Auditor General’s office continues to try its best to get the Service Commission to make the appointments and uses its best efforts now with the staff that it has.
Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Has this impacted on the effectiveness and efficiency of the Auditor General being able to generate the reports on a timely basis?

Hon. Imbert: What we discovered when we were in the Public Accounts Committee is that it hampered the ability of the Auditor General’s Department to do what is called “value for money audits” which is the modern trend. They are limited in terms of the number of value for money audits they can do. They do financial audits as a matter of course, but in terms of the number of value for money audits they can do with the resources that they have, they are limited. So that is an area that even then I was looking to see how we could support them to increase their capability to do value for money audits.

Mr. Singh: Consistent with that, Minister, could the Auditor General give us some appreciation of the number of vacant posts that need to be filled? You can provide it in writing for purposes of speed.

Hon. Imbert: Fifty-three at this point in time.

Mr. Singh: Fifty-three out of a complement of how many?

Hon. Imbert: Three hundred. There are 22 staff on contract, we are trying to fill the gap.

Madam Chairman: Item 002, Tobago Services, page 5; Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, page 6; Item 001, General Administration, pages 6 and 7.

Mr. Singh: Under Item 36, Extraordinary Expenditure, I know that there was a ruling by the Equal Opportunity Tribunal against the Office of the Auditor General, not the current incumbent, the previous holder of the office, and that there were damages to be paid in the sum of $500,000. Is it under Extraordinary Expenditure? I see no allocation for that.

Hon. Imbert: Treasury is handling that.

Mr. Singh: Treasury is handling that?
Hon. Imbert: Yes.

Madam Chairman: Item 002, Tobago Services, page 7; Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, page 8; Item 001, General Administration; Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies; Item 001, Regional Bodies; Item 002, Commonwealth Bodies; Item 004, International Bodies, page 9.

Hon. Members, we will now move on to the Draft Estimates of Development Programme, we are at page 2. Sub-Head 09, Development Programme, Consolidated Fund, page 2; Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Madam Chair, I can go to Administrative Services right?

Madam Chairman: Excuse me?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: 001, Administrative Services.

Madam Chairman: Yes, we are on page 2 and everything there is under 005.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you. Hon. Minister, I just want to ask what process is being utilized to strengthen the Auditor General’s Department.

Hon. Imbert: I am advised that they are in the process of accessing a grant from the European Union to reorganize the division and to make it best in class, best practice. We are getting the best available advice from international specialists.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 02 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Madam Chairman: I want to thank the Auditor General and the other members from the Auditor General’s office for coming. Thank you.

I am going to call one more Head before we break for lunch.

Head 20: Pensions and Gratuities, $ 100,000,000.

Madam Chairman: We are at page 123. I will now invite the Minister of Finance to make a brief opening statement for a maximum of five minutes.

Hon. Imbert: The Pensions and Gratuities Department is responsible for the
assessment, evaluation of applications and claims for the payment of pension and gratuities and the actual payment of these items. That is it.

**Question proposed:** That Head 20 stand part of the Schedule.

**Madam Chairman:** Hon. Members, the sum of $100,000,000 for Head 20, the Pension and Gratuities, is comprised of moneys proposed for expenditure under the following Sub-Heads and Items to be found in the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure*.

Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies, page 123; Item 007, Household, pages 123 and 124.

**Mr. Charles:** Thank you very much. Item 19, Heads of Mission. I would just like to make the point that I was paid all my benefits under the caring Government of the Member for Siparia, but those Heads of Missions who retired, who demitted office after the last general election, 90 per cent of them have not been paid a single cent. In fact, the last payment they received was the salary for the month in which they left. So the question is: Could the Minister explain what is the delay in paying pensions to these ex-diplomats?

**Hon. Imbert:** There is no special relationship between ex-diplomats and delays; delays are across the board. As I have said in this Parliament before, and let me just repeat, in the 2014, 2015, 2016 period, there were a number of protests by the Public Services Association, shutting down the various Government Departments that deal with the calculation of pensions on the grounds of occupational safety and health and that sort of thing. So that for months at a time these Departments were closed down, and as a result there was a tremendous backlog that has built up. I can speak for parliamentarians.

When I came in here as Minister of Finance, many parliamentarians approached me to assist them with getting their gratuity payments. In my own
case, my documents had gone to the department from the Parliament since around August of 2015, and I did not get my own gratuity as a Member of Parliament for a year. There were a lot of other Members in the same position. It is because of the tremendous backlog. But additional staff has been hired, and this is an area of focus for the Ministry of Finance to try and break that backlog, and get pension and gratuity payments back on track. So it is not confined to diplomats, it is across the board.

It is one of the things as Minister of Finance I have to deal with all the time. I get letters and requests all the time to assist people to get their pension and gratuity. And I must say, the Treasury reacts very quickly as soon as I ask them to deal with it, but there is a big backlog.

Mr. Charles: Minister, this is just for information. This problem has been ongoing prior to the work stoppage that you alluded to. It seems to me, and I ask the question, why do public servants have to wait two years in some instances to get—when we know they are going to retire so therefore the information—

Hon. Imbert: I will explain that. I will use a Member of Parliament to explain that. The Member of Parliament is not here at this time, this is Couva North. The Member for Couva North has had some difficulty in getting benefits from her previous position as a Minister, because she had moved from Ministry to Ministry to Ministry to Ministry, maybe four or five different Ministries. In order to pay the pension or the gratuity, as the case may be, you have to get the pension and leave records from each Ministry, and it is a cascading effect. So you have the first one before you get the second one, before you get the third one and before you get the fourth one, and the records in the public service generally are in such bad shape that sometimes you would get three out of the four Ministries, because public servants move around, they do not just stay in one place.
So you get three or four Ministries that a person has been in. In the case of missions, someone might be posted in one country and then come back to head office, and then be posted to another country, and you have to get the pension and leave records from all these different places. In some cases, it is a manual system wherever it is; in some cases it is automated. It is really a very, very difficult situation. I am hopeful that when the integrated financial information system’s software and infrastructure is fully modernized and fully upgraded, we can finally bring an end to this problem. But that is the reason. People do not stay in one place. They move from one area of the public service to another, and the recordkeeping in each area is different unfortunately.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Thank you, Madam Chair. It was answered for 01 and 02 through the extensive explanation by the Minister.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Head 20 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.*

**Madam Chairman:** Thank you very much, Minister. Hon. Members, I now suggest we take the suspension for lunch. We will resume at 1.30 p.m.

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

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

**Head 13:** Office of the Prime Minister, $250,074,590.

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

**Hon. Webster-Roy:** Thank you, Madam Chair. The Office of the Prime Minister as the centre of Government is committed to being the hallmark of excellence in the public service. OPM’s strategic plan focuses on achieving operational efficiency, while building and enhancing the ability of the office to provide the
necessary support to the Prime Minister, the Cabinet and the public service in achieving our agreed mandate.

For fiscal 2018, OPM received an allocation of $303,764,590; $242,184,590 under recurrent, $7,890,000 under the Consolidated Fund, $53,690,000 under IDF. These allocations will go towards achieving the following: One, restoration of our historical buildings; two, promoting and protecting the rights of our children, women and men; three, reducing the level of child abuse and gender-based violence; four, improving the management and operation of our community residences and reducing the incidence of HIV. To this end, OPM will continue to meaningfully engage all stakeholders. Thank you.

Question proposed: That Head 13 stand part of the Schedule.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Members, the sum of $250,074,590 for Head 13, the Office of the Prime Minister, is comprised of moneys proposed for expenditure under the following Sub-Heads and Items to be found in the Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure and the Draft Estimates of Development Programme. We now proceed to consider the Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure, and we are at page 58.

Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure, page, 58 Item 001, General Administration; Item 002, Gender Affairs; Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, Item 001, General Administration, pages 59 to 60.

Mr. Padarath: To the hon. Prime Minister. Hon. Prime Minister, line Items 05, 19 and 27. When the hon. Prime Minister spoke in the budget debate, he provided us with some figures with respect to these particular line Items from all the way 2012 to present day. Madam Chair, the question that I would like to ask with respect to these particular line Items is that the figures that were provided to us by the Prime Minister in his budget contribution is inconsistent, what appears to be
inaccurate and inconclusive, in that if we take line Item 05 first, the *Hansard* would reflect that the hon. Prime Minister indicated that we were bringing that particular Vote from $120 million to $35 million. However, when you look at the 2017 Revised Estimates, it was only $1.6 million in General Administration, and $30,000 in the Gender Affairs Division. How then did the Prime Minister amount to moving to $35 million, when right here in black and white it says $1.6 million plus $30,000?

Then we look at—

**Hon. Young:** Taking one question at a time.

**Mr. Padarath:** Sure.

**Hon. Young:** To start with that question, assuming that the Member for Princes Town is accurate in what he is reflecting, it actually reflects well on the Office of the Prime Minister, because if these are the estimates, they are much, much lower. So once again we have incurred significant savings.

What I can say about the historical information that was provided at the time, that information was compiled from the telephone bills, and we did not worry to particularize at that time the telephone bills for various advisors to the then Prime Minister, various questionable office holders to the Prime Minister, and the types of bills we saw of $90,000 a month on some occasions for cell phones for some people who sit here now currently, but those figures are at $90,000 a month on some occasions.

Those figures that are here now as you are aware, these are the estimates versus the actual. So this is what we estimate to spend this year under the telephone Item, and it also included arrears.

**Mr. Padarath:** Madam, when we look at these figures that were provided, even the past figures—

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Madam Chairman: Which one are you on, Telephones?

Mr. Padarath: We are on the same one. The Prime Minister said in 2011, $163 million for the Office of the Prime Minister. The actual figure was 2.3. When you look at—

Madam Chairman: Member—

Mr. Padarath: Madam, the point that I am trying to make—

Madam Chairman: Member, wait please. What we have before us are 2016 Actual, 2017 Estimates, 2017 Revised Estimates, 2018 Estimates. I have nothing with 2011. But in any event what we are discussing here are 2018 Estimates. I may allow some discussion if you want to ask some reason with respect to movement from 2017 to 2018, but I am certainly not going to allow 2011.

As I have told Members before, there are other opportunities to interrogate any other information available to Members, but not in this meeting. So you want to go on to Item 19 now, within the confines that I have set out?

Mr. Padarath: Yes, Ma’am. Madam, Official Entertainment under Item 19. With respect to the 2017 expenditure, we see $3 million in 2017 under Total Entertainment, whereas the 2017 Revised Estimates indicate 1.26.

Hon. Young: Sorry, I think it is $3.6 million was the actual for 2016.

Mr. Padarath: 2017.


Mr. Padarath: Sorry, yes, you are correct.

Madam Chairman: Member, you mind therefore if I go on and come back to you, to give you an opportunity to identify your figures exactly.

Mr. Indarsingh: Thank you, Madam Chair. Just a bit of clarification. In terms of this 2018 Estimates from the point of view of Telephones of $2 million, does this cover all the offices under the Office of the Prime Minister?
Hon. Young: Yes.

Mr. Indarsingh: Could you give us a breakdown in terms of the respective officers that this $2 million will be allocated to?

Hon. Young: Office of the Prime Minister.

Madam Chairman: What is actually the question? You want to know what offices are covered by this or you want to know each office and each sum.

Mr. Indarsingh: Under the purview of the Prime Minister.

Madam Chairman: You just want them to identify the offices?

Mr. Indarsingh: Because there is the perception out there that probably, I do not know, if just the Prime Minister is using telephones to this particular sum.

Madam Chairman: The Prime Minister or the office?

Mr. Indarsingh: Office of the Prime Minister. So I want to know what the different agencies are and so on.

Hon. Young: Ma’am, the perception is a correct perception. There is one Office of the Prime Minister and $2 million has been estimated for the Office of the Prime Minister, the different arms that may fall under the Office of the Prime Minister. For example, the Cabinet Secretariat, for example; Gender Affairs, for example; the National Security Council. It is actually very much, Madam.

Madam Chairman: Is that not in the public domain in a Gazette?

Hon. Young: It is, and it covers all of those.

Mr. Indarsingh: So it covers a range of offices?

Dr. Rowley: Madam Chairman, and the Member knows that, eh.

Mr. Indarsingh: I have a responsibility under this meeting, Madam Chair, to ask. If people are offended or Members are offended—

Madam Chairman: Member, just, okay. All right.

Mr. Indarsingh:—Madam Chair, that is their responsibility.
Hon. Young: Nobody is offended.

1.40 p.m.

Madam Chairman: Member, just hold up. Hold up. Let us—[Crosstalk]

Mr. Indarsingh: I am not wasting—[Crosstalk]

Madam Chairman: Member for Couva South. Member for Couva South. Member for Couva South [Crosstalk] and other Members, I just remind you all, again, about light. Okay? I have said, Member, in terms of this you are entitled to ask the question if it covers all the Offices of the Prime Minister, which I think it was answered. In terms of asking for a detailed listing of that, I am not allowing that because that is in the public domain in the Gazette. Okay? You have another question?

Mr. Indarsingh: Certainly.

Madam Chairman: Please, proceed.

Mr. Indarsingh: Under Head 31, Expenses of Prime Minister’s Establishment, Madam Chair, in 2018 it is estimated to be $9 million and an increase in the allocation of $1.8 million. Could we get some clarification on this particular Head?

Hon. Young: Yes, that increase is really to deal with some capital expenditure that we expect to incur with the maintenance of both the Office of the Prime Minister and the Diplomatic Centre.

Madam Chairman: Member for Couva South.

Mr. Indarsingh: And under 43, Madam Chair, Security Services, there is an increase to this particular line Item to $3.5 million, an estimated increase of $1,200,500.

Hon. Webster-Roy: That will include some of the safe houses that will come on stream.
Mr. Indarsingh: Safe houses.

Hon. Webster-Roy: Some of the safe houses, as well as the security at Tower D in addition to the head office.

Mr. Indarsingh: Security at Tower—

Hon. Webster-Roy: Tower D.

Mr. Indarsingh: Tower D.

Hon. Webster-Roy: And some of our safe houses to come on stream.

Mr. Indarsingh: Okay. There is no special security unit at the Office of the Prime Minister existing?

Hon. Young: Madam Chair, as the Member is very aware and is actually reflected here where you see it dropping from over $3 million previously to these figures. When the current Prime Minister came into office he reversed the previous decision. Actually Cabinet took a decision to reduce expenditure and we now utilize the Office of the Prime Minister and the Diplomatic Centre and residence—now utilize the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service and the Trinidad and Tobago Defence Force which has resulted in substantial savings to the taxpayers, and that is what is being reflected there.

Madam Chairman: Member for Chaguanas East.

Mr. Karim: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Hon. Prime Minister, line Item 16, Contract Employment, could you indicate to us that substantial sum of $13 million? How many persons we are talking about and in what capacities? I have a follow-up question.

Hon. Young: Yes. Under Contract Employment, Head Office, there are 117. The number of contract officers, there are 117 positions under the contract establishment available. The number of contract officers are 43, so leaving a vacancy of 74. Under Gender and Child Affairs, there are 93 contract positions

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and there are 49 positions filled, leaving a vacancy of 44. So a total of 210 in the contract establishment with only 92 being utilized, which is less than half, leaving a number of vacancies of 118.

Mr. Karim:  Madam Chair, just a follow-up. The next line Item, Item 17, Training. There has been a marked increase from 17 to 18 in terms of training. Could you indicate to us what this figure is being used for?

Hon. Young:  Well, it is not—we have the training programme. When you say it is a marked increase, it is an increase of—

Mr. Karim:  Under 2017 Estimates and the actual was 344, so there was an increase in the amount that was allocated, and that was more or less increased, not by very much, by $55,000.

Hon. Young:  Correct, $55,000.

Mr. Karim:  So I just want to get a sense of—

Hon. Young:  The Office of Prime Minister has taken a decision to make sure that the public officers and all of those personnel that fall under the Office of the Prime Minister are given sufficient opportunities for training and to better themselves, so we think it is worth the extra $55,000 for the year to do so, which works out to less than $5,000 additional a month.

Mr. Karim:  This training will be tenable locally or will it be foreign or both?

Hon. Young:  The vast majority, in fact, I am not seeing any that is foreign, all of it is local.

Madam Chairman:  Member for Princes Town.

Mr. Padarath:  Thank you, Madam. Hon. Minister, line Item 27, Official Overseas Travel. What I am trying to get at similarly with respect to when I raised line Item 05 is whether or not the Estimates in this book—the figures are correct or the figures given by the hon. Prime Minister in his contribution were correct?
Which one? When you look at line Item 27—

**Madam Chairman:** Member. Member, just one minute. Just now. In terms of—these are Estimates and I think for the number of days that we have sat here, what I have heard is that these are Estimates to be spent.

**Mr. Padarath:** There is a vast difference in terms of what was told to us and what we are seeing here.

**Madam Chairman:** Estimates for 2018? Is there a vast difference to the Estimates for 2018?

**Mr. Padarath:** The expenditure of 2017.

**Madam Chairman:** Well, we are interpolating here the Estimates for 2018. What I have said is if you wanted to look at 2017 actual to maybe interrogate 2018 in terms of, “is this realistic?” “How yuh come up with it?”—that kind of thing. I will allow it. If it is you want to interrogate the figures past for some other reason, I am saying that you have another opportunity to do that, but not here. Okay?

**Mr. Padarath:** Okay. The 2018 figure for line Item 27, I note that we spoke about the gazetting, and on 17 occasions for the past 24 months, it has been noted that the Prime Minister has travelled on 17 occasions.

**Madam Chairman:** This is Item 27?

**Mr. Padarath:** Yes. For 2018, Madam, we see—

**Hon. Young:** If I may correct that. The Member persists in trying to get this imaginary figure of 17 travel trips by the Prime Minister—

**Mr. Padarath:** It is gazetted, Minister.

**Hon. Young:**—and that is not so. [Crosstalk] As you would know or maybe it was different under your time, but when this Prime Minister travels on personal trips, he pays for it. I do not know what went on previously. So whilst his being out of the country—what I assume you are saying is gazetted—is there is then

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appointed an Acting Prime Minister. Those are not paid for under the Office of the Prime Minister, any personal trips this Prime Minister makes.

The figure that you are seeing here reflected, and actually the only figure you see here that is an actual figure is the figure for 2016 where the Office of the Prime Minister only spent $2.1 million. And we have heard during the same budget debates that you have referred to some of the fruits that have been born for the taxpayers, for example, negotiation of gas deals and other things that have come to fruition for the country of Trinidad and Tobago for these cost items.

So I do not know what you are talking about 17 trips. I think that was properly corrected that the number of official trips, if I remember correctly, is somewhere closer to the number seven.

Mr. Padarath: Thank you, hon. Minister, for confirming that the Prime Minister has travelled 17 times since he has become Prime Minister.

Hon. Young: I am not confirming that—[Crosstalk]

Mr. Padarath: Similarly, when the past Prime Minister travelled—

Madam Chairman: All right, Members.

Mr. Padarath:—17 times he has been out of the country in 24 months.

Madam Chairman: And, Member for Princes Town, as I said, in terms of that kind of interrogation, I think it will be better done under another avenue that is available to you.

Dr. Rowley: Madam, I crave your indulgence to correct the record and to save the public from the excesses of the Member for Princes Town. That misinformation ought not to be on the public record, and all that is in this budget for analysis is the official business of the Estimates—

Mr. Padarath: Madam, what line Item are we on? [Crosstalk]

Madam Chairman: No. No. No. No. Member for Princes Town, please, let us all
try, let all of us try to restrain ourselves. Okay? And let us all try, [Crosstalk] I am speaking. Let us all try to conduct ourselves in a particular kind of way. It may not be a sitting of the House, but this is a committee of the House. Okay? Prime Minister.

**Dr. Rowley:** I just would like to have the record not reflect the inaccuracies as presented by a Member of this House, for whatever purpose the misrepresentation is regretted.

**Madam Chairman:** And I would have thought, Minister Young would have cured that. Okay?

**Mrs. Robinson-Regis:** Madam, may I just reiterate that I was the one who clarified that in my budget contribution. It was not the Prime Minister, I am the one who clarified it and it was not 17 trips, but he insists on stating that and it is not correct.

**Madam Chairman:** And as I say, we discontinue now and we move on to something else. Member for Caroni Central.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Madam Chair, through you, just a simple request based on line 65 which is that, could we have the list of Cabinet-appointed committees that cover the $28 million of 2017 and the membership? And the list of potential committees to be covered by the $15 million, $15.250 million, for 2018? I am quite aware that membership would not probably have been addressed in many of them.

**Hon. Young:** Thank you very much. Madam Chair, the figure is actually not $15 million. What the Member is looking at, that is the increase. The figure is actually $43.250 million for 2018. If he looks across in the Explanatory Note, it says very clearly there, this is for the National Security Council, $42.2 million, and then for commissions and committees just $1 million has been provided.

The commissions and committees, if I may, that are covered there is the
sub-committee of Cabinet to provide oversight for the implementation of restoration and refurbishment works to historical buildings, and it is not that anyone on that committee is being paid for that work, because as you are aware, that committee is chaired by the Prime Minister, includes the hon. Minister of Planning and Development, the Minister of Finance, the Attorney General and myself.

Then there is a Reports Review Committee to provide technical support to Cabinet which is comprised of Members of Parliament from the Government, and then a committee to make recommendations for the creation of office of the Head of Public Service. Again, so those are the items that are covered under the expense of Cabinet-appointed bodies.

**Dr. Tewarie:** And these are the only committees?

**Hon. Young:** Yes.

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

**Mr. Singh:** Thank you, Madam Chair. With respect to line Item 65, it provides for this additional amount of $43.25 million—the additional $15 million, so the cumulative sum is $43.25 million. What is—I noticed in the explanation, National Security Council $42.25 million. What is the composition of this expense of $42.25 million?

**Hon. Young:** Madam Chair, I cannot give the exact Items that that is for, but it is that certain apparatus that form part of the national security dimension in Trinidad and Tobago are covered under the National Security Council. So payment of certain bills, et cetera, for certain items that they operate.

**Mr. Singh:** Because I am trying to get an explanation and understanding. At the time of the presentation by the Minister of National Security, he indicated that $50 million, as part of the presentation here, $50 million is to be spent on SSA, and the
question was, the accountability. And his answer was that the PS in the Ministry of National Security and the National Security Council under the chairmanship of the Prime Minister would have oversight over that money.

**Hon. Young:** Correct. That is something that is completely separate. As you may be aware, under the National Security Council, things like IMPACS and regional bodies that form part of the security apparatus for the region, for Caricom, et cetera, fall under the stewardship of the National Security Council. So payment for those fees, our contributions to these regional security bodies are covered here.

**Mr. Singh:** Would the payment to forensic experts be within this allocation?

**Hon. Young:** I do not know what forensic experts you are talking about.

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

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Thank you, Madam Chair. My colleague from Chaguanas West raised a number of the issues, but could I just ask, because I see the breakdown of $42.25 million for the National Security Council. In 2017, what was the allocation to the National Security Council?

**Hon. Young:** We have seen the Revised Estimates, it was $28 million.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Twenty-eight. So it does not include committees and so on in 2017?

**Hon. Young:** Well, you mean you want to know, out of the $28 million—

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Yeah.

**Hon. Young:**—how much was for the National Security Council?

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Yeah.

**Hon. Young:** I do not have that information.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Could you forward it in due course?

**Hon. Young:** I am certain we can.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Thank you.
Madam Chairman: Member for Princes Town.

Mr. Padarath: Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, line Item 43, Security Services. I see an increase of over $1.2 million, can you indicate whether or not MTS is responsible for security services with respect to the OPM, or is it a private service provider, and if so, who?

Hon. Young: As we had just touched on this a short while ago, we see a drop from $11.3 million being actually spent in 2016. I explained how we have reduced that all the way down to 3.5 now by using the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service and the TTDF. This figure that you are seeing of 3.5 would include private security contractors for the Gender Affairs Division, not for the Office Prime Minister head office itself or for the residence, et cetera, and the firm that is utilized is Amalgamated Security Services, and at Tower D there may also be security at safe houses.

Madam Chairman: Member for Princes Town.

Mr. Padarath: Thank you, Ma’am. Just to make sure that I have it correct. You are saying that there are officers from the TTPS and the Defence Force that are utilized in different arms of the Office of the Prime Minister?

Hon. Young: Not in different arms. As I said a short while ago, the Cabinet took a decision to utilize the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service and the Trinidad and Tobago Defence Force at the headquarters of the Office of the Prime Minister on St. Clair Avenue, as well as the Diplomatic Centre and residence.

Mr. Padarath: Minister, then how do you rationalize that, with what the Minister of National Security told us, that these officers could not be used in offices and so on because they were better served in terms of law enforcement on the ground?

Hon. Young: You would—well, surely this administration recognizes the significance and the importance of the Office of the Prime Minister and in
particular the residence, which is an official residence, which is where this Prime
Minister resides. He does not hold two residences with persons and personnel. My understanding was, previously the TTDF officials and the TTPS being somewhere in Philippine, which when I have looked at the register under the OPM, I have not seen what residence the Office of the Prime Minister has in Philippine in south.

Mr. Padarath: So you are confirming that there is one policy with respect to national security and there is another for the OPM and there is no—

Madam Chairman: I would not allow that. Member for Couva South.

Mr. Indarsingh: Thank you, Madam Chair. Under 58, Medical Expenses, there is a projected increase of $407,000 with an overall allocation of $700,000 for 2018. Could we get some further clarification on this?

Hon. Webster-Roy: Okay. Member for Couva South, that would include medical expenses for all past and present Prime Ministers.

Mr. Indarsingh: All past and present?

Hon. Webster-Roy: Yes.

Madam Chairman: So, we move on. Item 002, Gender Affairs Division, page 60. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, line Item no. 16, Contract Employment, I notice there is a decrease. Will this decrease impact on the delivery of services of the Gender Affairs Division?

Hon. Webster-Roy: It is not projected to impact on the different services. We actually started recruiting more officers for the unit.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: How many persons are currently employed and what is the complement?

Hon. Webster-Roy: At the Gender Affairs we have number of offices 93, number
of contract officers 49, number of vacant 44. But as I mentioned we have already started recruiting.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** I understand that you have started recruiting, but you do not have an increased budget. You have a budget that is more or less same throughout 2017 and coming into 2018. So I just wanted to find out, is it that you are going to seek more allocation from the Minister of Finance?

**Hon. Webster-Roy:** What we will do is, if we need to do that, we will do that, but we will make internal arrangements as well.

**Madam Chairman:** Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, page 61; Item 001, General Administration; Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies; Item 003, United Nations Organizations, page 61; Item 005, Non-Profit Institutions. Member for Naparima.

**Mr. Charles:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I am looking Items 09 and 010, taken together, there has been a meagre increase of $30,000 for St. Jude’s Home for Girls and a half a million dollar decrease from the 8.5 spent in 2017. And given the challenges we face with at-risk youth, unresolved issues with gangs, violence in schools as reflected in social media, et cetera, should we not be putting more resources into this area rather than withdrawing?

**Hon. Webster-Roy:** Member for Naparima, this St. Jude’s where it is currently located, we will have to move from there. Right?

**Mr. Charles:** Okay.

**Hon. Webster-Roy:** Apart from that, parts of the facility will no longer be under the remit of the Office of the Prime Minister, Gender and Child Affairs. But the reason we have this reduction is because we are moving the institution.

**Hon. Young:** And if I may add, Member for Naparima, this administration takes very, very seriously and under the exemplary stewardship of the hon. Minister to
my left, all issues related to children and all those who are at-risk, and we are very, very mindful of providing whatever levels of support that are necessary. So I can give an assurance that should these sums not prove to be sufficient during the course of the year, they will be addressed either at midterm or via applications virements.

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

**Mr. Singh:** Madam Chair, really on page 62 under Transfers to State Enterprises, so when you reach there.

**Madam Chairman:** Okay. Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.

**Mr. Lee:** Thank you, Madam Chair, to the hon. Prime Minister, 05 St. Dominic’s Children’s Home, I am heartened to see an increase of 4.6, but could you just enlighten us what sort of improvements or the 4.6 would be used for?

**Hon. Webster-Roy:** St. Dominic’s Home was able to do their strategic plan and there is a programme in place to improve their situation. Apart from that, we are hoping to use that particular facility to cater for children with special mental health needs. So that will be the dedicated facility to cater for those children who may not be able to cope in other settings.

**Mr. Lee:** Very good. Thank you.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Thank you. Just a follow-up, well I have my own question, but a follow-up, to Member on the St. Dominic’s Children’s Home, do you have a system by which the children who will be newly adopted into this system, *Crosstalk* when I say “adopted” I do not mean the physical adoption, I mean who will be taken into the home to assist with their special needs. Is there a policy document that you will be preparing to assist with how you determine which children will be—the targeted children whether it is from poor income families

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Hon. Webster-Roy: All children entering into community residences would go through the Children’s Authority. Right? And there are care plans and assessments done, and based on that, we will know what is the ideal situation to place a child.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: And it will be at no cost to the parent?

Hon. Webster-Roy: No. No.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: All right. Okay. My question coming to 09, coming back on my colleague, I know that $30,000 is really a very insignificant amount, but how does the Government intend to ensure that whatever moneys are allocated to the boys’ home are, in fact, ensuring that the well-being and the safety of the young vulnerable boys are being adequately met? How are you dealing with—there are a lot of issues in the public domain on what is happening at the St. Michael’s School for Boys. It is very, very, very disturbing. We are allocating moneys. What is the state, what is the Government doing to ensure that these most vulnerable young men that their well-being and their safety are, in fact, given number one priority? When they go in, Madam Chair, we are supposed to expect that when they come out—

Mr. Imbert: Madam Chairman, what is the relevance to the line Item?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:—that they are better coming out as opposed to being—

Madam Chairman: Okay. So, Member, I think your question or your statement or the concern, while it may be an important one, you have not tied it to what is here before us on the figures.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thirty thousand dollars is being assigned additional to the St. Michael’s School for Boys which I am in total agreement, I think it is inadequate. But what is the Ministry doing to ensure that the children’s needs are,
in fact, being met? We are putting moneys into the St. Michael’s School for Boys, but what is being done to ensure that the establishment really impacts upon our young boys who are going in there who are very vulnerable that they are impacted positively?

Mr. Imbert: Madam Chairman, how is this related to this line Item?

Dr. Rowley: It came from heaven.

Madam Chairman: Okay. So—

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Because we are looking at value for money, Madam Chair.

Mr. Indarsingh: She is entitled to five minutes and she utilized it well.

Madam Chairman: So, Member, [Crosstalk] well, while that may be so, I do not think that we should all just take the five minutes for granted, Member for Couva South. We need to really use it well, as you said. Okay? Member, you want to find out how does the $30,000 impact on the performance of the school?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: On the performance of the school. I am dealing with people-centred development, this is what I am looking at, not the establishment, not the institution —[Crosstalk]

Madam Chairman: Yeah. But, okay. All right. All right.

Hon. Young: Madam Chairman, maybe I could answer it so we could move on.

Madam Chairman: Members, please. Member, I think that that question even if it were allowed under normal questions it would be a question on notice for a written answer. Okay? So that I cannot allow that here. All right? Do you have another question? [Crosstalk] Member, please.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: I would like to find out on 10, St. Jude’s Home for Girls.

Madam Chairman: You want to find out, Item?


Madam Chairman: 10?

Madam Chairman: Yes.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: I just wanted to understand with the moving, how will it impact upon the young girls who are at risk? In your moving, is there going to be any fallout in terms of how many of the young girls will be able to access the services of this home?

Hon. Webster-Roy: No. And we do not work towards placing children in St. Jude’s. That is not the ideal situation.

Madam Chairman: Okay. Member for Princes Town.

Mr. Padarath: Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, line Item 01, Ecclesiastical Bodies, I was wondering whether or not these are standing subventions or these are actual application-based? And if so, will you be able to provide us with a list of all those that would have received a benefit from this particular Vote?

Hon. Webster-Roy: We will, in writing.

Madam Chairman: In what year, 2017?

Mr. Padarath: Yes, please.

Madam Chairman: Okay.

Mr. Padarath: But if you could indicate at this point whether or not these are standing subventions or these are applications for funding?

Hon. Webster-Roy: Applications.

Madam Chairman: Member for Couva South.

Mr. Indarsingh: Thank you, Madam Chair; my colleagues raised the issues. So I will pass.


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Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Madam Chair. Line Item 03, can the hon. Minister identify the projects to be undertaken by the authority that will improve and bring about—I mean, a number of legislation that has been passed, and how far have they moved ahead with this implementation?

2.10 p.m.

Madam Chairman: Member, this money—this allocation here is for the Children’s Authority, and what is the question you have asked?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: To identify the projects to be undertaken. I know there are a number of issues, a number of projects to be undertaken and I want to know how far they have reached with it.

Madam Chairman: Would this not be operational costs to fulfil the objectives and mandates of the—I do not know, maybe I might be—.

Hon. Young: You are right, Madam Chairman.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Then can the hon. Minister indicate what the $55 million is for, please?

Madam Chairman: Exactly that, the operating expenditure of the Children’s Authority. [Crosstalk]

Madam Chairman: Members, please! Member for Princes Town.

Mr. Padarath: Thank you, Madam. Hon. Minister, with respect to line Item 01, the Adoption Board Expenses, and this expenditure really—and the question has to do really with policy. Can you indicate whether or not this expenditure would be involved in any reform of the policy on adoption in terms of making it more amenable in terms of the current day situation with respect to adoptions taking so long and are languishing in the public domain?

Hon. Young: No.

Mr. Padarath: So there will be no reform at this point?
Hon. Young: No, your question was does this cover that? The answer is no; that would be covered under Government policy, change of policy. That would be looked at by LRC and other areas.

Mr. Padarath: Can I ask then, hon. Minister, whether or not it is the intention of the Government to reform the adoption process for Trinidad and Tobago?

Madam Chairman: And I would not allow this having regard to the answers that were given and the Item that you are looking at. Item 009, Other Transfers, page 62; Item 011, Transfer to State Enterprises, page 62. Member for Chaguanas West.

Mr. Singh: Thank you, Madam Chair. Item 01, Golden Grove Buccoo Limited. Earlier on with the Minister of Finance’s presentation, there was an allocation of $1 million in 2017 and there is now an allocation of $5 million in 2018, and there has been a transfer of this state enterprise from the Ministry of Finance to the Office of the Prime Minister. The question is the rationale for the transfer, one? And two, what is this $5 million going to be utilised for?

Hon. Young: That $5 million, as you are aware, is an estimate. This is the special purpose vehicle that has been set up, and the lands for the Sandals project have been vested in this special purpose vehicle and this is the vehicle that will be utilised for the project going forward. So, as you would expect, there would be certain expenses to be incurred by the vehicle—surveying of lands, et cetera—and that is what it is going to be utilised for.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Members, we will now move on to Draft Estimates of Development Programme. We are on to another book, page 17. Sub-Head 09, Development Programme, Consolidated Fund, page 17; Item 004, Social Infrastructure, pages 17 and 18. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Madam Chairman. Line Item No. 085. Can the hon. Minister indicate what assessment centre is this?
Madam Chairman: C085.

Hon. Webster-Roy: The Authority is now working towards having an assessment centre established in Tobago in collaboration with the Tobago House of Assembly. [Interruption] I know. [Interruption] I know, but the work was already started under the last fiscal.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Hon. Chair. Hon. Minister, there is an issue currently in Trinidad and Tobago with the assessment centres not being in the correct mandate as established by the Children’s Authority, is it that this assessment centre—

Hon. Webster-Roy: The line Item, this is a specific assessment—

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:—will it work according to what was mandated by the courts when you are customising it?

Hon. Young: Yes, we will manage it properly.

Hon. Webster-Roy: Yes.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: And therefore, would you be able to rectify what is happening in Trinidad before we reach Tobago so it can be in alignment?

Hon. Webster-Roy: That was not aligned to that particular Item.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: Madam Chairman, if I may just intervene here with regard to the questions being asked on 085. As you would notice for 2018, there is no money being assigned to this line Item. The work was already started, and the work that is being done is being done based on what we had allocated for 2017, and the question, therefore, does not arise, Madam Chairman.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you.

Madam Chairman: Do you have any more questions? Member for Princes Town.

Mr. Padarath: Thank you, Madam. Hon. Minister, line Item 088, Establishment of a National Children’s Registry. When you look at the 2016 figure, you see an
actual of $95,514, the estimate for 2017 being half a million with nothing spent. However in 2018, there is an allocation for $1 million, can you indicate what significant progress is intended to be made over the next year, seeing that the UN has asked for us to conform with respect to this National Registry by 2019?

**Hon. Webster-Roy:** We will conform.

**Mr. Padarath:** Madam.

**Madam Chairman:** You have another question?

**Mr. Padarath:** While I look forward to the Minister conforming, we see that based on the figures, in 2016, $95,000; estimate in 2017, $500,000 yet nothing was spent. How do we then intend to conform if we are not putting the systems in place by not actually putting the infrastructure? Because you are seeing nothing was spent by the Revised Estimates of 2017, so therefore what comfort do we have, and that is why I am asking of the advancement and the progress with respect to this particular issue?

**Hon. Young:** Madam Chairman, the Minister has said it will be done. It is 2019—we have a little bit of time to get it done. It is not that difficult, and it is being done.

**Mr. Padarath:** Is it an admittance that nothing has been done so far?

**Hon. Webster-Roy:** No, work was done.

**Mr. Padarath:** Well, that is what I was asking, what has been done?

**Madam Chairman:** Members! Members, there is no admission, let us go on. Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.

**Mr. Lee:** Thank you, Madam Chair. To the hon. Prime Minister, line Items 084 and 090. Are there any linkages between the two line Items or are they separate?

**Hon. Webster-Roy:** They are separate.

**Mr. Lee:** Okay. So, line Item 090, Establishment of Places of Safety, where—
know it might be very confidential and stuff—not where—but what kinds of individuals would that involve?

**Hon. Webster-Roy:** I will give that in writing.

**Mr. Lee:** Okay. Thank you.

**Madam Chairman:** And we now go on to Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services, page 18; 005. [Interrupted] Yes you can, under 005.

**Mr. Charles:** What was the Strengthening of the Strategic Threat Assessment?

**Hon. Young:** Madam Chair, my colleagues may recall that this Item had come up previously. This is being housed out of the national security secretariat, and it is exactly as it says, strategic threat assessments. The country and the national security apparatus are consistently doing threat assessments to various sectors for the whole country, so this is strengthening it by additional training and by additional resources.

**Madam Chairman:** Infrastructure Development Fund, 196, same book. You have a question?

**Mr. Padarath:** Yes.

**Madam Chairman:** Yes, Member for Princes Town. I am sorry.

**Mr. Padarath:** Madam, line Item 001, page 18. If we look at the estimate under this particular line Item, we would see that $2 million was identified, $2 million having been spent by the Revised Estimates but, in 2018, we see an allocation of $1 million. Can the hon. Minister indicate to us what scope of work in terms of IT infrastructure in the Office of the Prime Minister this is being spent on?

**Hon. Young:** Ma’am, this is an estimate for any work that needs to be done with respect to the IT infrastructure. Hopefully and currently there is no scope of works.

**Mr. Padarath:** So, there is no project; it is maintenance?

**Hon. Young:** Correct.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Madam Chair. Line Item 002 to the hon. Minister—

Hon. Webster-Roy: 002?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:—if you can identify, what do you mean by the modernization of the St. Michael’s Home for Boys? And again, how will it improve the lives of the young men?

Hon. Webster-Roy: Okay. As again, the ideal situation is not for children to be in these institutions. However, we are going to upgrade four dormitories at St. Michael’s, and by upgrading the dormitories we will have them in a more hospitable environment so they would be able to function properly.

Madam Chairman: Item—Member for Naparima.

Mr. Charles: Thank you. 008, you had indicated previously that there were challenges—infrastructure—at St. Jude’s School for Girls?

Madam Chairman: Member, I think what the Minister said is that they are going to be moved.

Mr. Charles: Oh, moving.

Madam Chairman: And there is no allocation there.

Mr. Charles: Oh, no allocation.

Madam Chairman: I think I do recall that.

Mr. Charles: Okay.

Madam Chairman: Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services, page 197. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you. Line Item 008, Restoration to the Red House,
can the hon. Minister indicate what is the status of the restoration?

**Hon. Young:** Certainly. As you are aware, the restoration is being supervised at a Government level by the same restoration committee chaired by the hon. Prime Minister and the Members of Cabinet. I alluded to earlier, work is progressing. The public would have seen public tenders going out. Those tenders have been awarded as and when, and work is progressing quite well. So we hope to keep the date—I believe it is 2018—November 2018. So, work is progressing at the Red House.

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

**Mr. Karim:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Prime Minister, line Item 011. Could you indicate what was done with that $500,000 allocation in 2017? And what you expect to be done with the $5 million allocation in 2018? What will be the full cost of this construction, and by when is it expected to be completed?

**Hon. Webster-Roy:** In response to the first part of your question: the $500,000 was used to demolish the building, as I would have mentioned.

**Hon. Young:** With respect to the rest of your questions, this is an ongoing project, the costs are still being looked at. We are managing the cost in a downward movement. Through UDeCOTT, this $5 million would presumably be to get the—once the contract is awarded—project moving forward, and we hope that it will be completed within 12 to 18 months.

**Mr. Karim:** Okay. Madam Chair, just another question. With respect to the restoration of the Red House, the $7 million that was utilized, if you could indicate what was done? What will the $25 million be used for? And again, by when might we be expecting the full restoration to be completed and at what cost? If you have any estimates.

**Hon. Young:** I had just indicated that the full restoration is expected to be
completed by November 2018. The $7 million would have been used for work that was done during the course of this year. A number of contracts were awarded; for example, to treat termites, to also deal with the roof and these types of things. The $25 million would be, if I remember correctly, I believe there are about 13 packages to be awarded, and there would be the mobilization and the completion of work under those packages.

**Mr. Karim:** Line Item 001, is it that all works to the restoration of Stollmeyer’s Castle have been completed, since there is no allocation 2018?

**Hon. Young:** There is an allocation, I think, I was looking at it of $44,000—no. Sorry, yes. Yes, the work has been practically completed. Yes. So very soon you all will be—the scope and use of Stollmeyer’s Castle would be announced to the public once Cabinet has taken a final decision.

**Mr. Karim:** You know, this is a question that you might be able to answer off the bat. Cabildo Retrofit, 012, could you give us a sense of the—?

**Hon. Young:** The Cabildo Retrofit is—when we came in as an administration, we met an astronomical budget, if I remember correctly, of almost half a billion dollars for the restoration of the Red House. That also included the construction of a new companion building. The decision that this Government, this administration took, was to reduce cost, to manage the cost, and what we decided was Cabildo Chambers, which is right opposite the Red House on St. Vincent Street, will be cleared and that would be utilized as the companion building, so as to reduce the cost and not have to construct a new companion building for the Parliament at the Red House, when it is put into use. So, this $2 million would be to retrofit and to provide the same type of facilities that are provided here at this building at Cabildo for parliamentarians, for the staff, and other areas in a companion building.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Princes Town.
Mr. Padarath: Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, with respect to line Item that deals with the Stollmeyer’s Castle and/or the restoration of the Red House, can you indicate at this point, whether there are any discussions to have the Prime Minister’s office be at Stollmeyer’s Castle or at the Red House?

Hon. Young: No, there are none.

Mr. Padarath: None.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 13 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Madam Chairman: Thank you, Ministers. Thank you, Mr. PS, and the other technocrats.

Head 68: Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs, $302,407,827.

Madam Chairman: Members, we are now going to page 362 of the Recurrent Expenditure. I will now invite the Minister of Sport and Youth Affairs to make a brief opening statement for a maximum of five minutes.

Hon. Smith: Thank you, Madam Chairman. The Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs is the Government’s lead agency for the achievement of national goals related to sport and youth development.

Madam Chair, our Prime Minister and our Cabinet have been focused, especially in our tenure, on youth development which has been ignored for several years, and we have put that on the front burner. With regard to sport, we are focused as in our policy from our manifesto to focus on the grassroots and development level of young people of Trinidad and Tobago. We are focusing on women in sport, and we have mandated that all NGB’s, all Government bodies focus on these elements, including sports, that facilitate handicap aspect of it, the masters aspect of sport, and, of course, we want to ensure that our Elite Athlete Programme and our athletes that represent Trinidad and Tobago at the highest level.
are supported as best as possible.

This year, Madam Speaker, despite the challenges that we have had economically, and the cuts that we have had from the previous regime, we are told by several quarters, including the sport company, at the Ministry that this has been the best year that we have had in sport. So far, we have also been pushing the sport tourism drive to try to diversify the country from the oil and gas dependency, of which we have hosted the most international events in terms of sport, and the highest level of sport in the country, and we continue in that vein as we move on to 2018. I thank you, Madam Chairman.

Question proposed: That Head 68 stand part of the Schedule.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Members, the sum of $302,407,827 for Head 68, the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs is comprised of moneys proposed for expenditure under the following Sub-Heads and Items to be found in the Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure and the Draft Estimates of Development Programme. We now proceed to consider the Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure.

Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure, page 362; Item 001, General Administration, page 362. Member for Princes Town.

Mr. Padarath: Thank you, Madam Chair. Minister, with respect to line Item 01, can you indicate to us what is the current complement of staff at the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs?

Hon. Smith: Madam Chair, through you, the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs currently has 562 members of staff: established, 398; and, on contract, 164.

Madam Chairman: Member for Princes Town.

Mr. Padarath: Thank you, Madam. Minister, line Item 14, Remuneration to Members of Cabinet-Appointed Committees. Can you indicate to us at this point
how many Cabinet-Appointed Committees there are with respect to Sport and Youth Affairs, and what is the specific mandate?

**Hon. Smith:** Madam Speaker, we will submit that information in writing.

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

**Mr. Padarath:** Thank you, Madam. Madam, at this stage, can I ask the hon. Minister, off the top of your head, can you say at least how many Cabinet-Appointed Committees there are?

**Hon. Smith:** No.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 002, Physical Education and Sport Division, pages 362 and 363; Item 005, Youth Affairs, page 363; Item 006, National Youth Development and Apprenticeship, pages 363 and 364. Member for Chaguanas East.

**Mr. Karim:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, with respect to line Item 01 under 006, the NYDAC, could you indicate for this level of expenditure—$6.6 million—how persons are employed at each of these centres, and the enrolment of trainees at each of these NYDAC, if you have them? For example, if you could tell me at Chatham Youth Camp, how many persons are employed, and how many trainees do you have; at Persto Praesto, if you could take those as two examples?

**Hon. Smith:** Persto Praesto, we currently enrol in terms of students, 31 students currently at Persto Praesto. And Chatham right now we are doing some repairs to that facility which was not completed. It was shoddily done in 2014/2015.

**Mr. Karim:** What do you mean?

**Hon. Smith:** Shoddily done meaning inhabitable. So, we are working on that now to get that back up and running.

**Hon. Karim:** Okay, so do you have any trainees at Chatham?
Hon. Smith: No, not currently.

Mr. Karim: What about the other centres?

Hon. Smith: Yes, I just said we had 31 enrolled at Persto Praesto.

Mr. Karim: No, do you have any—you do not have any other—

Hon. Smith: No, it is only two we have: Persto Praesto and Chatham, and our development at Persto Praesto—

Mr. Karim: How many employees at Persto Praesto and at Chatham?

Hon. Smith: We will give you that in writing.

Mr. Karim: Okay, thanks.

Madam Chairman: Sub-Head—Member for Princes Town.

Mr. Padarath: Thank you, Madam. Minister, same line Item 01, Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance, a decrease of $100,000. In this area, do you foresee that there will be a cut with respect to staffing, or is it that contracts will not be renewed? Does this account for that decrease?

Hon. Smith: As I said before, we are working on getting the Chatham situation sorted out, so that is where you are seeing the reduction there with regard to the salaries.

Mr. Padarath: So therefore, Minister, you are anticipating that it would take one entire financial year to deal with that situation—because pretty much that is what your rationale is?

Madam Chairman: Member, I do not think that is a fair question from the response that was given.

Hon. Smith: Madam Speaker, under the last tender with NEDCO, with regard to the project that was done there, there are some serious issues that we have to go back and deal with, with the facilities there for 2014. So, that is the situation we are in.
Madam Chairman: Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, Item 001, General Administration, pages 364 and 365. Member for Princes Town.

Mt. Padarath: Thank you, Madam. Madam, line Item 16, Contract Employment, again a decrease of $2.7 million. Could the hon. Minister advance an explanation for this decrease of $2.7 million in the area of Contract Employment?

Hon. Smith: Madam Speaker, I think—Madam Chair, this was discussed in most of the other Ministries that we actually were mandated to reduce in terms of the number of contract employees. I think this has been repetitively said in all the Ministries that we have gone through for the past few days.

Mr. Padarath: When you look at line Item 22, Short-Term Employment, there is also a decrease there. Is it that the hon. Minister is then saying that the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs, similarly to his explanation for other Ministries, will have an impact in terms of employees’ contracts not being renewed? Am I just getting that rationale correctly, that he is saying across the board there will be cut in Ministries similar to the one in his own with respect to Contract Employment and Short-Term Employment?

Hon. Smith: Madam Chair—

Mr. Imbert: Just a minute, Minister of Sport and Youth Affairs. I will just make a general comment: we have to make do with—do more with less. It is as simple as that. So the Ministries have been mandated to be efficient. That is all.

Madam Chairman: Item 002, Physical Education and Sport Division. You have another question?

Mr. Padarath: Yes.

Madam Chairman: Sorry, Member for Princes Town.

Mr. Padarath: Thank you, Madam.

Madam Chairman: You are still on Item 001, right?

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Mr. Padarath: Correct. I am looking at line Item 27, Official Overseas Travel, with an increase of $315,000. Could the Minister indicate, one, whether or not overseas travel would also mean Tobago travel; and also if we could be provided with an update with respect to the list of trips that have been taken under this Vote in the last fiscal year?

Madam Chairman: I will not allow the first question. Member, I think at this level we need to respect our physical—our viewing audience. What is the second question?

Mr. Padarath: Madam, the second question is whether or not he could provide us with the list of Official Overseas Travel for the last financial year?

Hon. Smith: Yes, we could provide it, Madam Chair.

Mr. Padarath: All I am asking is if Tobago is included in these arrangements?

Hon. Member: This is Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Imbert: Madam Chairman, just for clarity. [Crosstalk] No, no, no, just for clarity, as the Member will know, since he has access to the overseas travel Vote in the Ministry of the Prime Minister in the millions of dollars. It is for overseas travel. Trinidad and Tobago is a unitary State. Tobago is not considered to be overseas.

Mr. Padarath: The expenditure of $98,000; it could be—.

Mr. Imbert: That is about the same as your phone bill for the month when you were there. [Crosstalk]

Hon. Member: Two million dollars to carry handbag. [Crosstalk]

Madam Chairman: Okay, so, having had an opportunity to vent, I am sure we could now get back to order and to business. Item 002, Physical Education and Sport Division, page 365; Item 003, Dwight Yorke Stadium, page 366; Item 004, Youth Centres, pages 366 and 367. Member for Princes Town.
Mr. Padarath: Thank you, Madam. Madam, line Item 37. Again, we see and a point I have been making across the board, large increases in the area of Janitorial Services. Could the Minister indicate whether or not these are private service providers? And if so, what would have accounted for the increase by $230,000 in this area; and whether or not he could provide us with the details of the service providers?

Mr. Imbert: I am advised, this is again related to MTS and the recent collective agreement.

Madam Chairman: Item 005, Youth Affairs. Member for Princes Town.

Mr. Padarath: Madam, line Item 16, Contract Employment, a decrease of $915,000 in the area of Youth Affairs. Could the hon. Minister indicate which areas of Contract Employment will be affected by this in terms of the operations of the Youth Affairs areas?

Hon. Smith: We would provide that in writing, Chairman.

2.40 p.m.

Madam Chairman: Item 006, National Youth Development and Apprenticeship Centres, page 368. Member for Princes Town.

Mr. Padarath: Thank you, Madam. Line Item 21, Repairs and Maintenance-Buildings, an increase of $105,000. If the hon. Minister can indicate to us which buildings are earmarked for repairs and maintenance and the scope of works? And if we also look at line Item 28, Other Contracted Services, an increase of $49,000, if we can have an idea of what that $49,000 entails. And, line Item 40, Food at Institutions, another large increase of $95,000. If he can indicate what would have accounted for this increase at the service providers and whether there are existing contracts with service providers with respect to line Item 40, Food at Institutions.

Hon. Smith: Madam Chairman, that is three different line Items with a lot of

UNREVISED
information with regard to our facilities. So we could provide the works to be
done with regard to the repairs in writing. It is minor repairs, pretty much, Madam
Chair, that will be done with regard to plumbing, electrical, general maintenance.
We want to ensure that our buildings and facilities are kept up to scratch, and that
goes for the youth buildings. In terms of 40, which is Food at Institutions, we are
catering for trainees at these various centres at Persto Praesto, Madam Chair. So
the meals that they get there.

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

**Mr. Padarath:** Thank you, Madam. Minister, with respect to line Item 66, an
increase of $47,000 with respect to Hosting of Conferences, Seminars and other
Functions in the area of National Youth Development and Apprenticeship Centres.
Can you indicate to us at this point what conferences, seminars and other functions
are earmarked for the next fiscal year with respect to this Expenditure being
increased by $47,000.

**Hon. Smith:** Thank you, Madam Chair. As you know, we will be focusing
heavily on the young people. We have started doing that from 2015 and we have a
number of graduation ceremonies with the programmes that we host at a number of
these various facilities that we have and this figure represents the graduations that
we will be having.

**Madam Chairman:** Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, page 369; Item
001, General Administration; Item 002, Physical Education and Sport Division;
Item 003, Dwight Yorke Stadium; Item 004, Youth Centres, page 370; Item 005,
Youth Affairs, page 370; Item 006, National Youth Development Apprenticeship
programme, page 370; Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies, page 371;
Item 002, Commonwealth Bodies; Item 005, Non-Profit Institutions. Member for
Princes Town.
Mr. Padarath: Thank you, Madam. Line Item 01, Assistance to Sporting Organizations. Here we have an allocation of $450,000. If the hon. Minister can indicate to us through writing, he might not have the information available now, but if we can get the list of sporting organizations to which financial support would be provided and whether or not this will be like a subvention in terms of standing subventions or whether or not there will be an application process.

Hon. Smith: Madam Chair, it is a lot so I will provide in writing.

Madam Chairman: Member for Princes Town.

Mr. Padarath: Thank you, Ma’am. Line Item 02, Boxing Board of Control. I know the Minister in his budget statement, he indicated that there will be some reform in this particular area—if he would be able to provide us with some explanation in writing, possibly, in terms of how the reform with respect to the Boxing Board of Control.

Hon. Smith: You would have heard the Minister of Finance speak about a Sports Commission. We are in talks with regard to—even before our tenure here—doing some changes to the boxing board to completely have all the different hand-combat sports incorporated and the Cabinet is looking at that now to have a decision with regard to moving forward under the Sports Commission.

Madam Chairman: Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Madam Chair. Just following up on line Item 01—I have another question, as well, but following up on 01, will this assistance also include assistance to groups who will be preparing for the Olympics? So is this allocation here to assist with persons or organizations? And, if not, if you can identify the line Item?

Madam Chairman: Line Item for what, please, Member? Because what the Minister undertook is that he would give a listing.
Hon. Smith: I already said I will give a listing.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: So you will include Olympics?

Madam Chairman: He will include in the listing what this pertains to.

Hon. Smith: Line 01.

Madam Chairman: Okay? Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: It is in 007 when you go there.

Madam Chairman: Member for Princes Town.

Mr. Padarath: Thank you, Madam. Line Item 32, Contributions to Non-Profit Institutions with respect to Youth Organizations, an estimate of $250,000. Similarly, if the hon. Minister can indicate whether these are standing subventions to Youth Organizations or whether or not these are applications. And if these are applications, what has been the disbursement for the last fiscal year with respect to this particular Vote?

Hon. Smith: No problem. Again, we will send it in writing; it is a list.

Mr. Padarath: And also, Minister, as we are close by, line Item 33, Trinidad Youth Council, an increase of $50,000 this year, can you indicate whether or not there is any synergy with respect to the national unemployment policy document that is being prepared? Is it in collaboration with the Trinidad Youth Council?

Hon. Smith: Yes. Right now we are actually in the process of doing a new youth policy for the first time in four or five years and all that will be incorporated in this. We are working together to ensure that we work with the unemployed youth as well.

Mr. Padarath: Can you say if these policies are before the Cabinet or when could we expect it to be made public.

Hon. Smith: We launched the consultation process two months ago.

Mr. Padarath: So it is still in its—
Hon. Smith: Yes, yes. But in 2018, it will be sent to the Cabinet for approval.

Madam Chairman: Item 007, Households. Member for Couva South.

Mr. Indarsingh: Thank you, Madam Chair. With respect to the Severance Benefit, could the Minister give us some information in terms of who would be entitled to this allocation? I see from the point of view of the Hosting of Vacation Camps, there is an increase of $500,000. Could you provide whether this will be done on a constituency by constituency basis? And also, the National Mentorship Programme which has been transferred from the Ministry of National Security, how his Ministry intends to administer this particular programme?

Hon. Smith: Madam Chair, they are three questions. In terms of the Severance Benefits, that is the daily-paid and retirees. In terms of 03, Hosting of Vacation Camps, we did it successfully last summer with youths—eight or nine of our youth facilities across Trinidad and Tobago hosted camps for 400-plus youths around the country and we will continue doing that next year as well. The Mentorship Programme, as I said, we will finalize it with our youth policy and that is a major part of us moving forward with our youth policy which the Mentorship Programme will be part of that.

Madam Chairman: Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you. Hon. Minister, you answered part of my question which is in 04, Mentorship. Will there be a monitoring and evaluation unit attached so you can actually measure your level of—?

Hon. Smith: Yes, for the first time the youth aspect of it will be monitoring and evaluating, including sport as well. That is something that has been lacking in the past.

Madam Chairman: Member for Chaguanas East.

Mr. Karim: Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, I was going to further the
question on Item 04, how this programme is going to be delivered, but you indicated it is going to be part of a policy. Can you say by what time the policy might be expected to be completed so we can know how this is going to be disbursed?

**Hon. Smith:** Actually, we move earlier with the youth policy than it is anticipated and expected. It expires this year, fiscal year, but we move early to ensure that we can get it started, the process. I think we have done five or six consultations so far and it is hopefully within this quarter before December we will be taking it to the Cabinet to have it—so we could launch it early in January.

**Mr. Karim:** Okay.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Naparima.

**Mr. Charles:** Thank you. Item 03, Hosting of Vacation Camps. You said these were held at eight of our youth facilities. Are any of these located within the constituency of Naparima or close to the constituency of Naparima? And if they are excluded, could you tell us what attempts will be made to access the 25,000 young people in the constituency of Naparima? [Crosstalk]

**Hon. Smith:** All are invited to attend.

**Mr. Charles:** No, no, no. Are any of your facilities in proximity—?

**Hon. Smith:** Well, we do not have any in Naparima—

**Mr. Charles:** Or close to—?

**Hon. Smith:** The closest one will be which one, “boy”.

**Mr. Charles:** No, I am just asking.

**Hon. Smith:** Los Bajos, Tableland will probably be the closest.

**Mr. Charles:** Well, that is about 20 miles.

**Hon. Smith:** San Fernando.

**Mr. Charles:** No. So I am asking, would attempts be made in [Crosstalk] the
interest of equity—Minister of Finance, please. [Crosstalk] Madam, I ask for your protection.

Madam Chairman: Members, please. Members, I recognize the Member for Naparima.

Mr. Charles: Nicely so. Thank you, Madam Speaker. Would you make attempts in the interest of equity to ensure that the 25,000 young people under 30 in the Naparima constituency, at least one, will access it in this $500,000 budget?

Hon. Smith: We have one in San Fernando, Madam Chair, which is not that far. However, there are 41 constituencies, we only have eight of these youth facilities. I am sure all the other MPs will also want to have a facility put in their location, but this $500,000 does not represent fitting a facility in Naparima.

Mr. Charles: Madam Chairman, may I ask that you advertise it nationally, so all of us can have an equal chance of accessing it, and it would not favor those in areas where the facilities are located.

Hon. Smith: Madam Chair, I will try my best and this Government to reverse the inequity that was given under the last regime in Naparima. [Desk thumping]

Mr. Indarsingh: You make me laugh there.

Madam Chairman: Member for Princes Town.

Mr. Padarath: Thank you, Madam. Line Item 03 and 04. My question on these two line Items is the same, Madam. If you look at 03, an allocation of $500,000; National Mentorship Programme, $2.3 million. Madam, my question to the hon. Minister is with respect to these two Items, whether or not there has been any exploration of public/private partnerships, or gaining international subventions? I know the UN and the Commonwealth, as well as the Asian Development Bank, have programmes like these where countries can access those subventions. Similarly, other countries like ours have accessed these, whether these have been

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explored, together with public/private partnerships.

**Hon. Smith:** Madam Chair, we are looking at that.

**Hon. Member:** What line Item is that?

**Mr. Padarath:** Madam Chair, just to follow up, again on 03 and 04—

**Madam Chairman:** The Member is looking at 03 and 04.

**Mr. Padarath:**—is it that the hon. Minister is saying that in the future it will be looked at and currently it is not on the cards?

**Hon. Smith:** It is currently being looked at.

**Mr. Padarath:** And could you indicate at what stage is it at?

**Hon. Smith:** We are doing a new youth policy, Madam Chair, for the fifth time, which will incorporate all these issues that we have.

**Mr. Padarath:** Madam, could I ask the hon. Minister whether or not any advances have been made towards these international organizations that I have named, which have subventions for these? Has there been any advances—

[Interruption]

**Mr. Imbert:** But what this have to do with this line Item?

**Madam Chairman:** I think the answer was, it is being looked at, and it would be considered under the new youth policy. I am sure the Minister, most probably, recognizes that you are pointing in a direction for more funding and he would take that into account.

**Hon. Smith:** Yes, Madam Chair, we are aware of it.

**Madam Chairman:** I think that is what I believe from the responses.

**Mr. Padarath:** Thank you for your assistance, Madam. I just really wanted to get the point as to whether or not it is being done or it will be done.

**Mr. Imbert:** Madam Chairman, that is about the fourth time he has made that line Item.
Madam Chairman: The Member is just summarizing what he said, Member, please.

Mr. Imbert: For the fourth time.

Mr. Padarath: Thank you, Madam.

Madam Chairman: Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Madam Chair. Just to ask the hon. Minister on the same line Item 04, in his statement he had indicated that there were consultations—[Interruption]

Mr. Imbert: How many times you are allowed to visit a—?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: If the hon. Minister can identify—[Interruption]

Mr. Imbert: Madam Chairman, may I ask as a point of clarification, how many times is a Member of Parliament allowed to visit the same Sub-Head?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: 100 times.

Mr. Imbert: Once, twice, three times, four times, five—because that is the sixth time that Member has gone on that Sub-Item.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: “Hmm”, if the hon. Minister could—[Interruption]

Madam Chairman: Member, could you kindly ask your question? I recognize you, please.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you. Just to identify with whom the stakeholders that the Ministry has consulted with. That is all. Thanks.

Hon. Smith: I did not hear the question, Madam Chair.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: You indicated that you had extensive consultations to develop this policy and not in the process.

Hon. Smith: We started the consultation process. They had the first one in Tacarigua and we are continuing with staff throughout Trinidad and Tobago.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: I just need to know—[Interruption]

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Hon. Smith: It is ongoing.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Okay, and if you can identify the stakeholders that you have been consulting with, you have started with and ending with.

Madam Chairman: There has only been one consultancy.

Hon. Smith: But apart from that, what that has to do with the line Item, Madam Chair?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Because it is a policy being developed.

Madam Chairman: Yes, but what the Member said, because there is not anything here mark youth policy.

Mr. Imbert: Yes, there is nothing to do with that policy here. Nothing.

Madam Chairman: But the Member offered it in terms of certain suggestions that were given from the other side that it will be considered with the policy. So, as I said, maybe your question will be facilitated in another forum. We move on.

Item 009, Other Transfers, page 372. Member for Chaguanas West.

Mr. Singh: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Item 04, The Sport Company of Trinidad and Tobago, an allocation of $80.2 million. I would like to find out the principal items associated with this allocation? And secondly, whether or not Walker Park falls within the ambit of this allocation for refurbishment and attention?

Hon. Smith: Madam Chair, we have a number of facilities that we are looking at. So I do not have it in front of me for Walker Park. Every MP has a facility that once worked, but I could tell you what the $80 million is. As you know we—last year fiscal year we opened several new facilities as well, including the Brian Lara Cricket Academy and we have a number of others to open. And this number here relates to the maintenance and running of those facilities.

Madam Chairman: Member for Chaguanas West.
Mr. Singh: Follow up, Madam Speaker. I would inform the Minister, as Member, that the Walker Park has a historical legacy.

Hon. Smith: Yes, I am aware of the Park. I am aware of the Park.

Mr. Singh: Very well, so that therefore it ought to be included in your planning. The second question I have is with respect to Item 13, National Football Development Plan. This allocation of $50,000, what is it meant to do?

Hon. Smith: Madam Chair, this is a small figure that we are working at with the Grassroots development that we are doing, that we are working with the TTFA. We are going to be looking at working with the schools and so on with this.

Mr. Singh: So this is just merely a kind of inception funding?

Hon. Smith: Yes.

Madam Chairman: Member for Couva South.

Mr. Indarsingh: Thank you, Madam Chair. In this $80,200,000, Mr. Minister—

Madam Chairman: What Item number?

Mr. Indarsingh: 04, Madam Chair. Is any allocation there for the Ato Boldon Stadium in Couva?

Hon. Smith: Madam Chair, as I said before, this figure represents all the facilities that we utilize, that we own and that we maintain and run on a daily basis. So, I think I answered that in the first. Ato Boldon is part of the stadiums that we run.

Madam Chairman: Member for Couva South.

Mr. Indarsingh: So this means that part of this allocation will be utilized to complete a security review of the operations of that stadium?

Hon. Smith: Yes.

Mr. Indarsingh: When will it be completed?

Hon. Smith: They are finalizing it now.

Mr. Indarsingh: So we expect the stadium to be reopened for the use of persons
in the Couva area?

**Hon. Smith:** The stadium is open for the whole world to come to.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** No, no, no, Mr. Minister—

**Hon. Smith:** We have just hosted a game against the US there.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** We are speaking about the people who utilize the stadium for keeping fit and walking—

**Hon. Smith:** Oh, the people who use the roadway?

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Not the roadway, do not be rude and arrogant.

**Madam Chairman:** Member, Member, please.

**Hon. Members:** “Whey!”

**Mr. Imbert:** Madam Chairman.

**Hon. Smith:** What is that—

**Madam Chairman:** Member, Member.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** I am the Member of Parliament for Couva South—

**Madam Chairman:** Member!

**Mr. Imbert:** Why is he shouting?

**Mr. Indarsingh:**—and I do not expect you to be rude and arrogant to the people out there.

**Hon. Smith:** Do these people use the Ato Boldon Stadium? Do they use inside the stadium?

**Mr. Indarsingh:** They use the stadium—

**Mr. Imbert:** Save yourself.

**Hon. Smith:** Inside the stadium?

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Inside of the stadium.

**Hon. Smith:** No, they do not, Madam Chair.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** They do.
Hon. Smith: They do not use the inside of the stadium. They use the car park and the pavements outside.

Mr. Indarsingh: You are rude, arrogant and out of place.

Madam Chairman: Member, Member.

Mr. Imbert: Oh, no, no, Madam Chairman, come on.

Madam Chairman: Member.

Mr. Imbert: We cannot have this.

Mr. Hinds: Put him out.

Madam Chairman: Member, that is uncalled for.

Hon. Smith: They “doh” go inside the stadium.

Mr. Indarsingh: Madam Chair—

Madam Chairman: Member—

Mr. Indarsingh: Madam Chair, I was elected to advocate on the issues affecting the people of Couva South and environs and I will do so. Nobody will stymie me in pursuing my responsibility.

Mr. Imbert: No, this is unacceptable behaviour. Rude and obnoxious.

Madam Chairman: Member for Diego Martin North/East, please. [Crosstalk] Member for Diego Martin North/East, Member for Naparima.

Madam Chairman: Member for Couva South, I really think it is unfortunate that you took the response in that kind of way. It could be that the Member did not understand what you were asking, because from where I sit it was a really very broad question. So nobody is stopping you from your “representative” capacity. Okay. So all I will ask you to do is to just recoil a bit, okay. Nobody here is being arrogant, rude, nobody. Okay. We may sometimes misunderstand each other—but you see the Member for Tabaquite told us something yesterday, if we do not remember, but it is worth us recalling, that each of us took an “eye for an eye, we
will all be blind”. All right. So let us recoil. Nobody is being rude, we striking that. Could you ask the question you want the answer for?—because you did not ask that question and I was sitting here.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Madam Chair, I ask the—

**Hon. Smith:** And dealing with the line Item.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** This kind of—

**Madam Chairman:** Member, Member.

**Hon. Member:** “Oh God.” [Crosstalk]

**Madam Chairman:** Member, Member, you are well seasoned here. Okay. So ask the question that you want to ask.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** To my good friend, the Minister of Sport and Youth Affairs.

**Madam Chairman:** I like that.

**Hon. Member:** Good start.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Based on the completion of the security review, I am simply seeking an answer of when the stadium will be reopened for the benefit of the people of Couva and environs?

**Hon. Smith:** As soon as possible, Madam Chair.

**Hon. Member:** Say tomorrow, “nah”.

**Madam Chairman:** Nicely, we move on. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, line Item 11. Could the hon. Minister indicate the number of disputes before the board and how many have in fact been—

**Madam Chairman:** That is 009/11?

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:**—amicably resolved.

**Hon. Smith:** Madam Chair, for the first time, we will be doing this in Trinidad and Tobago, a Dispute Resolution Centre and we are working on that and
finalizing that. This quarter it will be started and athletes, coaches whoever, any disputes that they have in sports will be able to go to a facility and do it behind closed doors rather than airing it out in the public. So this quarter it will be done.

Madam Chairman: Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you. Therefore, I saw that there was allocation in 2016, what was that for?

Hon. Smith: Getting things ready and doing—we did consultations at the Radisson and other places. We have been discussing and so on to get it going.

Madam Chairman: So Item 011, Transfers to State Enterprises, page 372. Member for Princes Town.

Mr. Padarath: Thank you, Madam. Madam, to the Minister, line Item 01, the First Citizens Bank Limited—Repayment of Loan-Brian Lara Cricket Stadium. I see under the 2018 estimates, $67,872,986. Could the hon. Minister indicate at this point going into 2018 what is the outstanding amount on this loan agreement?

Hon. Smith: My team, my financier will put that in writing for you. They do not have it with them here.

Mr. Padarath: Okay.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Members, we will now move on to the Draft Estimates of Development Programme. Sub-Head 09, Development Programme, we are now at page 162, new book, Consolidated Fund. Item 004, Social Infrastructure, pages 162, 163 and 164. Member for Princes Town.

Mr. Padarath: I am on page 163, under Youth Development. If the hon. Minister would provide some clarity with respect to line Items 008, 009 and 010 which are all identified as new projects, but as you can see it just says implementation of the national youth policy, refurbishment of the training facilities, Youth Development Apprenticeship Centres and particularly though interested in 008 with respect to
the implementation of the youth policy with an allocation of 1.5. If the Minister can, at a later date if not now, but flesh out really what is the intention of the national youth policy and what are the implementation measures? Secondly, 009, the Refurbishment of the Youth Training Facilities. Which facilities are these, what is the scope of works and similarly with line Item 010 with an allocation of $4 million as a new project?

**Hon. Smith:** Madam Chair, I take the Member for Princes Town’s advice and it is a lot so we will put it in writing.

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

**Mr. Padarath:** Looking at line Item 096 on page 162, we see the upgrade of swimming pools at a cost of $2 million, an estimate there for 2018. Could the hon. Minister indicate which swimming pools, what are the locations and the scope of works for each, please?

**Hon. Smith:** Madam Chair, again it is a long list that we have. I could provide it in writing. There are several that we have done.

**Mr. Padarath:** Great. And also if we look at 117, Improvement to Indoor Sporting Arenas. Similarly, I know that that information may not be at your fingertips, Minister—[Interruption]

**Hon. Smith:** Yeah. I have it here but it is a lot.

**Mr. Padarath:** Sure, if you can provide it in writing and line Item 123, I was particularly concerned about this particular line Item to Conduct a National Sport and Recreational Census. What will be the objective of this census and how do you intend to utilize this information with respect to the data in improving the quality of service and delivery in the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs, considering all the problems that they have been plagued with over the past year?

**Hon. Smith:** Well, I think his timing is wrong. We did not have many problems
the last year; we had that the previous six years. But nevertheless, the recreational census is for us to work with regard to, if you would have noticed there are a number of facilities that are lit throughout Trinidad and Tobago and a number of parks that are not being utilized and these lights are burning through the night. We are looking to do a census to see what the uses are and how we could get those facilities being used at the Grassroots level.

Madam Chairman: Member for Naparima.

Mr. Charles: Thank you. 096, Upgrading of Swimming Pools; 124—construction of Diego Martin Sporting Complex and I am looking at Item 14, Refurbishment of Youth Training Facilities.

Hon. Smith: Madam Chairman,—

Madam Chairman: All right, we taking them one at a time.

Mr. Charles: All I want to do, all I want to know is, yes. If any of these improvements, name one related to Naparima constituency.

Hon. Smith: Chairman, let us move on.

Madam Chairman: Member—

Mr. Charles: So that I can go through them individually.

Madam Chairman: Member, might I say right, as the representative, upgrading means it exists.

Mr. Charles: Yes.

Madam Chairman: So I hope you know whether a swimming pool exists there.

Hon. Member: So, five years—

Mr. Charles: Yes and he knows too.

Madam Chairman: All right. So you are not asking that question?

Mr. Charles:—one by one or we deal with it collectively. I seek your guidance. Because all I am asking him is to name one, solo uno.
Hon. Smith: Madam Chair, I was hoping that between 2010 and 2015 the inequity that was shown to Naparima, we have three more years, hopefully we could fix that.

Mr. Charles: So the answer is zero.

Hon. Smith: Zero based on 2010 to 2015.

Mr. Charles: Zero facility. Thank you.

Madam Chairman: Member for Princes Town.

Mr. Padarath: Thank you, Madam. [Crosstalk]

Madam Chairman: It was intended, Member for St. Joseph, to be a light moment. All right.

Mr. Padarath: Let there be light.

Madam Chairman: The Member for Naparima just intended that to be a light moment.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Boring behaviour, man.

Madam Chairman: Member, as I said, he just intended it to be a light moment.

Mr. Deyalsingh: 41 constituencies—

Hon. Smith: In two years.

Madam Chairman: Member.

Mr. Charles: He is completely out of control. [Laughter]

Mr. Imbert: What line Item is this, Madam Chair?

Mr. Padarath: They take pattern from their Leader.

Hon. Member: Look how cool Terry is.

Mr. Imbert: May I ask what is the line Item we are dealing with?

Hon. Member: We move on, we move on.

Mr. Imbert: That has caused all of this.

Madam Chairman: Member for Princes Town.
Mr. Imbert: Misconduct on the part of the Opposition.

Mr. Padarath: Thank you, Madam, I will try not to annoy my colleague from St. Joseph, but just one more line Item. Line Item 008, Installation of Wide Area Network, on page 164, with an allocation of $1 million. We saw an expenditure of $898,379 in 2016. If the hon. Minister can indicate with respect to this particular programme, under Administrative Services, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services—

3.10 p.m.

Hon. Smith: She did not call that. The Chairman did not reach there.

Madam Chairman: So we are now going to—

Mr. Padarath: Page 164.

Hon. Smith: “Yuh jump de gun.”

Madam Chairman: Yes. We are now going to Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services, page 164. Member for Princes Town.

Mr. Padarath: Thank you, Ma’am, my apologies. Line Item 008, I am looking at, the Installation of Wide Area Network. As I said, an allocation there in 2016, $898,000 having been spent, similarly in 2017 and now we are seeing in 2018 an allocation of $1 million. We would like some details with respect to the Installation of Wide Area Network. I am guessing this is an ICT programme. If we can find out which areas are being targeted as it is very vacuous with respect to this wide area network.

Hon. Smith: Madam Chair, that is what the term is called “wide area network”. But nevertheless, most of our facilities had no internet access prior. Of course, a number of young people go there. They do homework, and so on, so it is something that we are doing—a programme throughout the country—where we are going to be having all of our facilities have this network.

Mr. Padarath: So, Minister, the Member for Naparima can take comfort that it
will be affecting Naparima in a positive way?

**Mr. Imbert:** It is so wide, it must affect Naparima.

**Hon. Smith:** It is very wide.

**Mr. Padarath:** Thank you, Minister.

**Madam Chairman:** Infrastructure Development Fund. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla, are you still on Consolidated Fund? This is Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services. Please proceed.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Thank you. Hon. Minister, 009, Develop a Domestic Sport and Research Database, if you can expand on that, please.

**Hon. Smith:** Yes. Madam Chair, as you know when we came in, this was part of our mandate—our manifesto—to do database and make decisions based on proper information, analysed data and we are continuing this process in 2018 and it has been working very well so far.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** How does this differ from the census?

**Hon. Smith:** This is more micro-information rather than the macro. So we are going in-depth with regard to the various sports. We have been working with all the NGBs to get that information in, all the youth organizations to get that information in, so we could make proper decisions moving forward.

**Madam Chairman:** Infrastructure Development Fund, page 250, the same book. Item 004, Social Infrastructure, pages 250 and 251.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Head 68 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.*

**Madam Chairman:** Thank you, Minister, thank you PS and all the other technocrats.

*Head 30: Ministry of Labour and Small Enterprise Development*—[Crosstalk]

**Madam Chairman:** Okay, so we now resume [Laughter] and what took place in
the little break remains in the break.

**Head 30**: Ministry of Labour and Small Enterprise Development, $372,450,800.

**Madam Chairman**: I will now invite the Minister of Labour and Small Enterprise Development to make a brief opening statement not exceeding five minutes.

**Madam Minister.**

**Hon. Baptiste-Primus**: Thank you very much, Madam Chair, and good afternoon to this honourable House. Madam Chair, we are indeed grateful for the opportunity to meet with the distinguished Members of this House, the Standing Finance Committee, to discuss our budgetary allocations for the fiscal year 2017 to 2018. Madam Chair, it is well known that this Government is forced to do more with less and ensuring value for money in not only this Ministry but all Ministries. When I assumed the responsibility as Minister of Labour and Small Enterprise Development, I sought to inculcate these values and to promote the mindset that we must harness our internal resources and maximize our partnerships with stakeholders and international organizations to fulfil the mandates of this Ministry.

Madam Chair, I am very pleased to say that we, as a Ministry, have been doing remarkably well with the limited resources provided. This is also attributed to the innovation and creativity of the executive team and staff at this Ministry and their commitment in going beyond the call of duty. Madam Chair, we have been seeing the fruits of our collective efforts reflected in the developments in the labour market. For example, there has been a progressive and incremental decline in the unemployment rate from 4.4 per cent at the end of the second quarter of 2016, to 4.0 per cent in the third quarter of 2016, and then 3.6 per cent at the end of the fourth quarter of 2016.

So that, Madam Chair, over the past year we have made significant progress in our labour legislative and policy agendas as well as in the area of small
enterprise development. We have held national stakeholder consultations on nine pieces of labour legislation to date and submitted four draft policy position papers to Cabinet on the amendment of the Industrial Relations Act, the amendment of the Retrenchment and Severance Benefits Act, the Co-operative Societies Act and the Cipriani College of Labour and Co-operative Studies Act, respectively.

Cabinet approved the policy position paper on the amendment of the Cipriani College of Labour and Co-operative Studies Act and it was referred to the Ministry of the Attorney General for the preparation of a Bill, and I am duly informed that a first draft from the hon. Attorney General’s Office has been received by this office and we are currently reviewing that draft Bill.

Madam Chair, over the past year we have also revised and obtained Cabinet’s approval for two major policies. That is the National Policy on Cooperatives and the National Workplace Policy on HIV/AIDS.

I am also pleased to report that we have made significant strides in the transitioning of the On-the-Job Training Programme from the National Training Agency to the Ministry of Labour and Small Enterprise Development, and that target was achieved effective May 31, 2017. As part of this process, we have sought to restructure this programme to place greater focus on the quality of training provided to trainees in line with their areas of interest.

Madam Chair, our initiatives in the past year with respect to small business development included rationalization of the roles of the various entities such as NEDCO and the Enterprise Development Division at the Ministry, to avoid duplication of efforts and to enhance efficiency, preparation of Fair Share clients and to embrace the new procurement legislation.

Madam Chair, in the fiscal year 2017 to 2018, we will undertake critical work in keeping with the National Development Strategy, 2016 to 2030 and the
National Performance Framework, 2017 to 2020. Our top priority in this Ministry is to accelerate work on the labour legislative agenda with the intention of reaching the stage of legislative amendments to keep pieces of legislation such as the Industrial Relations Act of 1972 as amended, the Retrenchment and Severance Benefits Act, the Workmen’s Compensation Act and the Occupational Safety and Health Act. Additionally, we will work on developing three important national policies, namely: a Labour Migration Policy, a Policy for the Prevention and Elimination of Child Labour in Trinidad and Tobago and a National Workplace Policy on contract employment in Government ministries, departments and statutory authorities.

Madam Chair, emphasis will be placed on improving the reach and accessibility of the services offered by this Ministry. For example, the newly occupied Tobago Campus of the Cipriani College of Labour and Co-operative Studies will be properly outfitted to afford the same high quality tertiary education to our brothers and sisters in Tobago as in Trinidad. The San Fernando and Tobago offices of the Occupational Safety and Health Agency will be relocated to more conducive environments.

In closing, Madam Chair, we look forward to a fruitful and productive session here this afternoon that will redound to the benefit of the people of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. It is within that context that we therefore avail ourselves to this esteemed House for the conduct of the exercise this afternoon.

I thank you, Madam Chair. [Desk thumping]

*Question proposed:* That Head 30 stand part of the Schedule.

**Madam Chairman:** Hon. Members, the sum of $372,450,800 for Head 30, the Ministry of Labour and Small Enterprise Development, is comprised of moneys proposed for expenditure under the following Sub-Heads and Items to be found in

We now proceed to consider the Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure and we are at page 206. Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure, page 206, Item 001, General Administration; Item 002, Co-operatives. Member for Couva South.

Mr. Indarsingh: Madam Chair, you taking any questions on 01?

Madam Chairman: No, we have reached item 002, Co-operatives. I called out the page and I was extremely pointed in asking the question, awaiting. I actually looked at you over my glasses because I felt you would have been asking a question. So we are at Item 002, Co-operatives.

Mr. Indarsingh: All right. I will come back.

Madam Chairman: Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla. I will come back to you, Member for Couva South.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Item—Okay, next one.

Madam Chairman: Member for Couva South, Item 002, Co-operatives? Or can we move on? Item 003, Friendly Societies. Member for Couva South.

Mr. Indarsingh: Under 06, Madam Chair, Remuneration to Board Members, I see an increase of $477,000. Could the Minister provide clarification on how this is being disbursed?

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: Madam Chair, quite simply, we were able to make good a commitment given to the stakeholders belonging to the Friendly Societies that we will reconstitute the Friendly Societies Council after a period of six years, and that is what we did. So that the increase is to take care of the payment of remuneration for those board members. [Desk thumping]

Mr. Indarsingh: I see that there was an allocation of $177,000 for 2017. So that
means, Minister, you were not able to reconstitute it in 2017.

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: Madam Chair, I repeat for the benefit of my friend. The council was reconstituted in 2017.

Mr. Indarsingh: So in the revised estimate, the allocation of $177,000, was it fully utilized?

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: No, no.

Mr. Indarsingh: What percentage?

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: We have not utilized any. That means we have not paid any board remuneration.

Mr. Indarsingh: So there was no reconstitution in 2017.

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: There was—

Madam Chairman: I think that question was answered by the Minister already. Okay? Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla, are you asking a question?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Could the hon. Minister indicate—in fact, how many members are on the board, please?

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: There are nine members on the Friendly Societies Council.

Madam Chairman: Item 004, Occupational Safety and Health Authority. Member for Chaguanas West.

Mr. Singh: Thank you, Madam Chair. The Occupational Safety and Health Authority, I would like to find out—because there is perhaps a legacy—what is the status of the employees, now that you have the Occupational Safety and Health, of the Factory Inspectorate that served in the Ministry of Labour?

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: I do not understand in what context you are asking that question, in terms of their status.

Mr. Singh: Is there existing a department called the Factory Inspectorate in the
Ministry of Labour and Small Enterprise Development?

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: Well, Member for Chaguanas West, with the coming on stream of the Occupational Safety and Health Authority, they would have taken over the role played by the old Factory Inspectorate. So that is why I wanted you to contextualize your question.

Mr. Singh: My question is really, you had an establishment in the public service of Factory Inspectorate personnel. Is that eliminated and there is a new designation?

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: Oh, indeed, it was abolished. With OSHA coming on stream that old division was abolished.

Madam Chairman: Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, Line Item 06, could you tell me how many persons are on the board and how does the board impact upon improving the—

Mr. Imbert: You got that answer already.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: She said nine.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: No, no, no.

Mr. Indarsingh: Why all yuh bullying—

Madam Chairman: Member for Couva South, please—

Mr. Indarsingh: Allow her to ask her questions.

Madam Chairman: Please. I am allowing her to ask the question. Okay? Member, your question is?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Just for the Government who did not hear, nine is for the previous remuneration.

Madam Chairman: Member, ask your question, please.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: For Line No. 06, how many members constitute the
board—wait—and also—

**Hon. Baptiste-Primus:** There are 16 members assigned to this board.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** And how does this board contribute to the betterment of OSHA in Trinidad and Tobago?

**Hon. Baptiste-Primus:** Actually, Madam Chair, it was this present board that has sought to strengthen the workforce within the OSH Authority and brought a higher level awareness of workplace responsibility to Trinidad and Tobago through the various arms of the media and social media.

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

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Thank you, Madam Chair. In terms of the composition of the board, I would expect that there are representatives of Government, labour and the business community, Madam Minister—

**Mr. Imbert:** Madam Chairman, could I intervene here? The board is a function of statute. It is in legislation and that is in the public domain, so there is no need to speculate about it.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** I am asking a question in relation to the Remuneration to Board Members, Madam Chair.

**Mr. Imbert:** Remuneration to Board Members is handled by the Ministry of Finance.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** But there is a Line Item.

**Mr. Imbert:** As you know, since you were a Minister in that ministry. So you know that the Ministry of Finance classifies entities such as this and puts them into a category for the payment of fees. You know that. You did that. So “doh” ask things that you know.

**Madam Chairman:** All right. The question is?

**Mr. Indarsingh:** I am asking whether in terms of the composition of the board,
Appropriation (Financial Year 2018) Bill, 2017

Standing Finance Committee

Madam Minister, is there a labour representative in keeping with the—being the most representative as defined by the International Labour Organization?

Mr. Imbert: It is in the public domain.

Madam Chairman: Member, would the Act not define the various disciplines for the Members?

Mr. Imbert: I just said that.

Mr. Indarsingh: The Act may define—

Mr. Imbert: May?

Mr. Indarsingh: You see, Madam Chairman, if I am allowed to finish my presentation. In another board that fell under the Ministry of Labour and Enterprise Development, representatives of labour had to go to court to ensure that there was a representative on the board, most representative of labour as defined by the International Labour Organization. And that is my simple inquiry here this evening, but the Minister of Finance seems to be hell-bent—

Mr. Imbert: So what is the question?

Mr. Indarsingh: I already asked the question.

Mr. Imbert: What is it?

Madam Chairman: So the question is, is the member of labour certified under the—

Mr. Indarsingh: No, no, no. In terms of the composition of OSH Authority board, is there a labour representative. most representative of labour as defined by the International Labour Organization?

Mr. Al-Rawi: There is compliance with the statute.

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: Madam Chair, through you, yes.

Mr. Indarsingh: And could I ask who is that representative, Madam Minister?

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: The representative was Mario Als, and he has since been
replaced—NATUC would have forwarded. I cannot recall the exact name but NATUC would have forwarded another name.

**Mr. Imbert:** NATUC’s nominee.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** And if you are so kind to advise me in writing.

**Hon. Baptiste-Primus:** I do not have to—Madam Chair, I already provided the answer to the hon. Member of Parliament. I see no need to reduce it in writing.

**Mr. Imbert:** It is in the public domain.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Madam Chair, am I making, what I would call, an illogical request?

**Mr. Imbert:** Yes!

**Mr. Indarsingh:** To have the information forwarded to me as a Member of this meeting in writing?

**Mr. Imbert:** It is in the public domain.

**Madam Chairman:** Member, is this matter in the public domain?

**Mr. Imbert:** Of course, it is.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Madam Chair, I am asking—the Minister said she cannot recollect and I am simply trying to avail myself of the information.

**Madam Chairman:** And I am just asking you whether this would be information in the public domain.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** I do not know if the board has been fully filled by the Cabinet and so on, and this is why I am seeking the information.

**Madam Chairman:** Yes. What I have been told by the Minister, it is a matter in the public domain, but I will also tell you if it is not, if you cannot find it, you will have another opportunity to get what you want. Okay?

**Mr. Indarsingh:** And I hope, Madam Chair, that you will certainly play your role in fulfilling that request on my behalf.
Madam Chairman: Item 005, On-the-Job Training Programme, page 207. Member for Chaguanas East.

Mr. Karim: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, with respect to Line Item 01, Salaries and COLA, can you indicate, since the programme is now at your Ministry and you indicated successfully transferred from the National Training Agency on May 31, 2017, can you say how many workers are permanently employed; how many are on contract and how many are on short-term employment? I see the Minister of Finance telling you—

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: Pardon me?

Mr. Karim: How many are permanent employees; how many contracts and how many short-term?

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: Consistent with the decision of the Cabinet to realign the On-the-Job Training Programme, under the current OJT programme—the current staff complement of the OJT Programme is as follows: You have 42 contract workers, 20 on the establishment with one vacant position.

Mr. Karim: Can I just—I do not know if I have the correct number. The previous count would have been about 116 before it was transferred.

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: Pardon me?

Mr. Karim: Previous to this realignment, would there have been 116 persons on the establishment?

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: Oh, you are asking if—

Mr. Karim: Yes, I am just asking, just to compare.

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: What was the previous employee population prior to the transitioning?

Mr. Karim: Yes.

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: There would have been 107 former employees.

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Mr. Karim: Okay. Of those 107, Hon. Minister, can you say how many of those were retained or reemployed?

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: In keeping with best practices, all 42 contract positions were advertised. All former employees of the On-the-Job Training Programme were encouraged to apply for those positions. They were all interviewed and at the end of the interviewing process—a very transparent process, I must say—22 of those former members are currently employed in the programme.

Mr. Karim: And how many would have been on the permanent establishment and rehired? Would they have been on permanent establishment? Did you have any?

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: Well, I am not aware that there were permanent employees. Member for Chaguanas East, as the former line Minister with responsibility for this programme, you would be well aware that all those positions were contract positions.

Mr. Karim: I just want to know, maybe what happened since I had left.

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: Well, they were transitioned under the Ministry of Labour and Small Enterprise Development.

Mr. Karim: Can I ask what is the position that continues to be vacant?

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: Pardon me?

Mr. Karim: Can I just ask—you said there was one vacant.

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: Yes.

Mr. Karim: What is that position that continues to be vacant, and how long has it been vacant?

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: The Monitoring and Evaluation officer and that position is a contract position.

Mr. Karim: Okay. Thank you very much.

Madam Chairman: Member for Couva South.
Mr. Indarsingh: Thank you very much, Madam Chair, to the Minister again. If I could recollect, you said that 22 former employees are now in the reconstituted programme—have been employed in the reconstituted programme.

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: Twenty-two former employees, yes. They were successful at the interview process.

Mr. Indarsingh: And you said that there were 107 in the previous entity.

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: Indeed.

Mr. Indarsingh: Of that 107 in the previous entity, could you inform this meeting how many applied to become employed in this new entity?

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: Out of 107 members—

Madam Chairman: Member, under what Item are we?

Mr. Indarsingh: On the On-the-Job Training Programme, Madam Chair.

Madam Chairman: What Line Item are we?

Mr. Indarsingh: Salaries and Cost of Living, Madam Chair.

Mr. Imbert: Chairman, may I ask for which year? Which year are you referring to, 2018?

Mr. Indarsingh: 2018, because there is an allocation of $950,000 for Salaries and Cost of Living, Madam Chair, and I am simply, in the interest of transparency and good governance, I am asking in terms of this allocation how many persons in the old entity would have applied back in the new entity for employment?

3.40 p.m.

Madam Chairman: The Minister has already said how many from the former entity are now employed, and the former entity was not under this Ministry.

Mr. Imbert: This Item, yes. It was somewhere else.

Mr. Indarsingh: It was somewhere else, but it was a reconstituted—

Mr. Imbert: Not in this line Item.
Mr. Indarsingh:—programme—

Mr. Imbert: It was in Science and—

Mr. Indarsingh: It falls under—

Madam Chairman: All right, Members.

Mr. Indarsingh: It falls under the same On the Job Training Programme.

Mr. Imbert: Not on this Item.

Madam Chairman: All right. So, Member for Couva South, I will allow you if you have another question to ask. If not, I will move on to Member for Chaguanas East.

Mr. Indarsingh: I feel like we do not want the country to know how many people reapplied for these jobs.

Hon. Member: Plenty.

Mr. Indarsingh: It is a cover-up on the part of the Government.

Madam Chairman: Member? Member, I just want you to be careful again with what you say, because you as well as I know there are opportunities to get that kind of information that you wish—okay?—but not under the process in which we are currently engaged. Okay? Member for Chaguanas East.

Mr. Karim: Thank you, Madam Chair. Just a very quick one. Hon. Minister, with respect to this allocation in 2018, is it correct to say that one of the persons who is currently on the establishment, the director, would have been that very director before you had the transition?

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: Yes.

Mr. Karim: Okay. Thank you.

Madam Chairman: Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, page 208; Item 001, General Administration, pages 208 and 209; Item 002, Co-operatives, page 209; Item 003, Friendly Societies, page 210; Item 004, Occupational Safety and Health

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Mr. Indarsingh: Madam Chair, you are on 004?

Madam Chairman: 004, Occupational Safety and Health Authority, pages 210 and 211.

Mr. Indarsingh: Thank you, Madam Chair. Under 08, Rent/Lease - Office Accommodation and Storage, could the Minister advise if the building that currently houses the Occupational Safety and Health Authority is fully OSHA compliant?

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: Madam Chair, I would like to enquire from the hon. Member of Parliament which one of the buildings to which he refers?

Mr. Indarsingh: In terms of the main building.

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: I do not follow the hon. Member.

Mr. Singh: Where is your headquarters located?

Mr. Indarsingh: Where are your headquarters located?

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: From my information—[ Interruption] Are you referring to the building on Duke Street or Alexandra Street?

Mr. Indarsingh: Madam Chair, I do not have jurisdiction over the Ministry. I am simply asking the questions. I expect the Minister to tell me where her head office is and which office is OSHA compliant and so on. I am not in charge of the Ministry, Madam Chair.

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: With regard to Alexandra Street, we are awaiting the fire certificate.

Mr. Indarsingh: So it is unfit in terms of OSHA compliant?

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: I do not agree with your perspective.

Mr. Indarsingh: So the building has not been fully certified by the fire services?

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: Madam Chair, the OSH Authority is awaiting the
certificate from fire services, and the feedback is that that certificate is expected anytime because the building is compliant.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** How long has the Ministry been awaiting this particular report?

**Madam Chairman:** Member, I will not allow that under this Item.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Okay. Could I find out, Madam Chair, what is the status at the Duke Street office?

**Hon. Baptiste-Primus:** I am duly informed that the fire service certificate will cover Alexandra Street and Duke Street.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Okay. Madam Minister, so the employees of both institutions are not fully covered by the OSHA Act?

**Hon. Baptiste-Primus:** I do not understand what you mean not fully covered by the OSHA Act. Which aspect of the Act are you making reference to?

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Madam Chair, based on the difficulty the Minister is having, I rest my case.

**Hon. Baptiste-Primus:** Madam Chair, I am not having a difficulty at all. I am merely responding to the hon. Member of Parliament.

**Madam Chairman:** I think the Member of Parliament has just conceded he is no longer interested in finding out the information. [*Laughter*] Okay? We now move on to Item 005, On The Job Training Programme, pages 211 to 212. Member for Chaguanas East.

**Mr. Karim:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, line Item 08, Rent/Lease - Office Accommodation and Storage.

**Hon. Baptiste-Primus:** Just a minute.

**Mr. Karim:** Yes, sorry.

**Hon. Baptiste-Primus:** Yes.

**Mr. Karim:** Yeah, page 211, line Item 08. Can you say what are these locations
that are being rented and the cost of it if you have it?

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: The individual cost?

Mr. Karim: Yes.

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: What I can share with you is that the payment is for rent for three properties.

Mr. Karim: Which are these?

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: 31 Sackville Street, Port of Spain; 3 Freeling Street, San Fernando; and 16 Warner Street, St. Augustine.

Mr. Karim: Hon. Minister, are these properties currently being utilized?

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: No. With the realignment of the OJT Programme to the Ministry of Labour and Small Enterprise Development, we are in the final stages of arranging warehousing to store the furniture from these three offices.

Mr. Karim: Can you say, therefore, how long now these offices are not being used but rent is being paid?

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: I would say for approximately a three-month period. Four months.

Mr. Karim: Four months.

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: Yes.

Mr. Karim: You have an idea as to what that total cost might be, just on the average, that are being expended—

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: No.

Mr. Karim: Okay. Might you be able to give us that in writing?

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: Certainly.

Mr. Karim: Okay. The new locations you plan to go to, do you have an idea as to where they will be?

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: Actually, in integrating the On The Job Training
Programme into the Ministry of Labour and Small Enterprise Development, it is now a Division of Labour and Small Enterprise Development. So that we are utilizing the Ministry’s satellite offices. However, the Head Office remains for the time being on Connector Road.

Mr. Karim: Oh, it stays at Connector Road? Okay. Just another question, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, might you be able to say how many trainees would have applied to be placed on the OJT Programme in 2017 by levels; how many; and how many in fact were placed?

Madam Chairman: Item?

Mr. Karim: Item No. 17, Training.

Madam Chairman: Thank you.

Mr. Karim: Sorry, Madam Chair. The number of applicants by levels, and the number placed for 2017 by levels.

Madam Chairman: This is for what year, 2018?

Mr. Karim: No, 2017. Well if you do not have it, well—You would have just been completed the transition, so you might have idea as to what it is because in May you moved, the transition.

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: Well, with regard to the current situation, the programme is still being integrated with a very interesting scenario emerging—a rather interesting scenario emerging—but what I can share with you, I cannot tell you at this point in time the placement for the period June 2017 to present, but I can share with you the period 2016 to 2017.

Mr. Karim: You have those, or you want to supply it in writing?

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: In the central region, the number of persons who were placed—I can give you it by regions.

Mr. Karim: But I would like to have number of people who applied as well. So
the number of applicants, the number placed. You see, that would give me a sense as to the responsiveness of the programme

**Hon. Baptiste-Primus:** I cannot give you at this point in time the number of persons who would have applied; the number of young persons who would have registered for the programme.

**Mr. Karim:** Well, can you undertake to supply it in writing, the number applied by levels and the number placed by levels?

**Hon. Baptiste-Primus:** Madam Chair, we will—we cannot provide that information with immediacy because the programme, there is a verification exercise on the way. We have identified a number of ghost trainees in this programme, and therefore, we will have to await the outcome of the verification exercise.

**Mr. Karim:** Madam Chair, what I am asking for, and I want to repeat what I am asking for. All I am asking for is that you can do your audit. I am not asking about the consequence of the audit.

**Madam Chairman:** But that will be under Training.

**Mr. Karim:** But under Training, that same Item, I would like to find out how many persons applied by levels and how many were placed?

**Mr. Imbert:** Hold on a second, please. This line Item is Training.

**Mr. Karim:** Yes.

**Mr. Imbert:** So you are dealing specifically with Training?

**Mr. Karim:** Yes, Sir.

**Mr. Imbert:** Nothing but Training?

**Mr. Karim:** The allocation is $212 million. I mean, Minister of Finance, you were a Minister of Science and Technology too. You were in charge of the OJT Programme, and all I am asking for is an undertaking—
Mr. Imbert: Are you dealing just with Training?

Mr. Karim:—to give us some data. If you want me to ask the question further now, I will ask the question for you to tell us. Out of this allocation, how many persons you intend to hire for this amount of money for 2018? [Desk thumping]

Mr. Imbert: How many persons you intend to train?

Mr. Karim: You must have a projection, man. As a Minister, I would have had a projection.

Mr. Imbert: Madam Chairman, the Member is being very belligerent.

Mr. Karim: No, no, no, please, I am not.

Mr. Imbert: You mean the trainees? What do you mean? Because they are being trained, they are not being employed, and you should ask your colleague down there what is the difference between employment and training. Are you referring to the trainees? Yes or no?

Mr. Karim: Yes.

Mr. Imbert: So now you could deal with him.

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: Madam Chair, the OJT Programme aims to place approximately 5,000 persons at the end of fiscal 2017 to 2018.

Mr. Karim: Right. Right. That is one of the answers I am looking for, and later on, after that when you do your analysis, I will be able to ask you to tell me by levels. So what I am asking now is before this. Can you say, since you transitioned as of the 31st of May, can you give me some data for 2016, 2017, as to how many persons applied by levels and regions, and how many were placed by levels and regions? That data is readily available.

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: Well, you will be able to get the information how many were placed by levels. As I indicated, Madam Chair, this is a programme riddled with a lot of—[Crosstalk]
Madam Chairman: Members. Member for Chaguanas West—

Mr. Karim: East.

Madam Chairman: East, sorry. East—there is no allocation under this Item for 2016 or 2017, whether Actual Estimates or Revised Estimates. So that I think I have allowed you sufficient time to exhaust this discussion. Again, I feel that you can pursue this in another forum. Member for Couva South.

Mr. Indarsingh: Thank you, Madam Chair. My colleague, the Member for Chaguanas East, raised a number of issues under 17. With respect to Contract Employment and the allocation of $6 million, Madam Minister, could you tell us how many persons will be hired as contract employees and in what categories please?

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: Madam Chair, I repeat, there are 42 contract employees under the On The Job Training Programme, with one vacant position.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, I am a little bit confused with line Item 17. The Minister of Finance was asking the question if we were asking how many persons were trained, or how many persons were placed? So it begs the question, does it mean that persons who are trained may not necessarily be placed?

Madam Chairman: Ma’am, I am not going to allow that question under Training 17, which is a 2018 estimate. I do not think the Minister could answer for the future based on what we have here. Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, page 212; Item 001, General Administration, page 212; Item 002, Co-operatives, page 212. Member for Couva South.

Mr. Indarsingh: I withdraw.

Madam Chairman: Item 003, Friendly Societies, page 213; Item 004, Occupational Safety and Health Authority, page 213. Sub-Head 04, Current

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Mr. Indarsingh: Thank you, Madam Chair. I see that under 03, there was an allocation of $1 million in 2017 to the National Trade Union Centre and under 07 to an allocation again of $1 million to the Joint Trade Union Movement, and I am not seeing any allocation for 2018. Is there any particular reason that there is no allocation; and did the Minister or the Ministry receive any grant for the Federation of Independent Trade Unions?

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: Madam Chair, that is a question I would suggest that the hon. Member direct to the hon. Minister of Finance.

Madam Chairman: Minister of Finance.

Mr. Indarsingh: Ma’am, I cannot direct the Minister of Finance.

Madam Chairman: Minister of Finance, can you assist?

Mr. Imbert: Could you just summarize your question, please, in a few words, without a preamble.

Mr. Indarsingh: Thank you, Mr. Minister. I do not know if—because in terms of the line Items 03 and 07, allocations were there for 2017. Any particular reason there is no allocation for 2018, and was any application for any support came from the Federation of Independent Trade Unions?

Mr. Imbert: Just a second, Madam Chairman. [The Member for Naparima leaves the Chamber] The Member for Naparima is playing some video game and he has gone now. Madam Chairman, there was a provision in previous years.

Mr. Indarsingh: Madam Chair, we are dealing with what year?

Mr. Imbert: I said in previous years there was a provision—

Mr. Indarsingh: Okay.
Mr. Imbert:—and one of the groups that was identified declined to accept the subvention, and the other one there were discussions and so on. As we move forward into 2018, we have to be aware of our challenging financial circumstances. It is as simple as that.

Mr. Indarsingh: Thank you, Mr. Minister.

Mr. Imbert: You are welcome.

Madam Chairman: Member for Chaguanas West.

Mr. Singh: Madam Chair, whilst I am on the same page, I am on 009. So I will wait.

Madam Chairman: Okay. Item 007, Households. Member for Chaguanas East.

Mr. Karim: Thank you, Madam Chair. I noticed that this line Item has a decrease of 235. Hon. Minister, can you say these numbers we have here from ’16 and ’17 what were they used for? Because the question I had asked before indicated that you did not have jurisdiction, but if you can tell me what these numbers were used for.

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: Which numbers are you referring to?

Mr. Karim: From ’16, ’17, under line Item 03, On The Job Training Programme.

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: You are referring to 347—

Mr. Karim: Plus 280, plus 235, yeah.

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: And you wanted to find out the reason for the decrease?

Mr. Karim: Yeah. No, the allocation and the reason for the decrease.

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: What I can share with you is that since the OJTP was integrated as a division of the Ministry with effect from June 01, 2017, Cabinet agreed to the establishment of a sub-accounting unit staffed by established public service positions, and therefore, a new Item No. 005 has been created with regard to accounting for the expenses of the OJTP.
Mr. Karim: So you had responsibility for the OJT Programme since that time?

Mr. Imbert: Let me clarify. With the change of administration, the On The Job Training Programme was transferred from the previous Ministry of Tertiary Education and Skills Training to the Ministry of Labour and Small Enterprise Development, but it was being administered by the National Training Agency. So it was not a direct division of the Ministry of Labour and Small Enterprise Development. So the Ministry of Labour and Small Enterprise Development had responsibility in a contextual sense, but the programme was managed by the NTA. It is now being managed directly by the Ministry as a division of the Ministry. That is the difference.

Mr. Karim: So is it correct to say, Minister of Finance, that these figures represent some measure of responsibility on the part of the Ministry of Labour and Small Enterprise Development for the OJT Programme?

Mr. Imbert: These figures represent the allocations given to the Ministry of Labour and Small Enterprise Development for onward transmission to the National Training Agency in the prior years, and now in this year as a division of the Ministry.

Mr. Karim: And, therefore, would have been—

Mr. Imbert: I think you are asking answers.

Mr. Karim: No, I just wanted to clear it just to make sure—

Mr. Imbert: I mean, clearly the allocation is in the Ministry of Labour and Small Enterprise Development. What are you asking?

Mr. Karim: So therefore, they have responsibility for the programme since that time.

Mr. Imbert: But clearly it is an allocation to the Ministry of Labour and Small Enterprise Development.

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Mr. Karim: Right.

Mr. Imbert: It is not in the Ministry of skills training.

Mr. Karim: Therefore, it confirms the question I was asking before. Anyway, I will end the question here.

Mr. Imbert: Why are you asking something that is obvious?

Mr. Karim: I will end the question here.

Madam Chairman: Item 009, Other Transfers, page 214. Member for Chaguanas West.

Mr. Singh: Madam Chair, Item 01, National Entrepreneurship Development Company. There is an allocation of $20 million in 2018 and an expenditure of $24 million in 2017, I would like to find out how many persons benefited from this allocation in 2017, the allocation of $24 million?

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: Are you enquiring how many persons applied for loans?

Mr. Singh: Applied, and how many loans were granted?

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: Approximately 500-plus loans were granted for the period 2016 to 2017.

Mr. Singh: And how many applicants were there?

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: I am informed that the applications would be just slightly over 500 which indicate the majority.

Mr. Singh: Could the hon. Minister undertake to provide a list of the applicants, a list of the persons who were granted loans, and the quantum and the nature of the business associated with those loans?

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: Madam Chair, I am being reminded of the confidentiality of such records.

Mr. Singh: No, but this is state moneys, this is taxpayer allocation, there is no confidentiality associated when you access that. Maybe the part about the nature
of the business, but certainly not the quantum and the beneficiary.

**Mr. Imbert:** Madam Chairman, the Member for Chaguanas West is an experienced Member. Banking information is confidential. [Crosstalk] Leakage of confidential information can cause someone to lose their job, you know. We had no less than a Governor of a Central Bank being involved in that, you know, leaking information.

**Mr. Singh:** He is taking you to court, so that is a separate issue. He is taking you to court. Madam Chair, this is an allocation by the taxpayer of $24 million. [Desk thumping] This is moneys being allocated by not a bank. This is moneys being allocated by a state enterprise, and that therefore public funds being allocated by a state enterprise, the quantum must be and the persons who are the beneficiaries of this.

**Mr. Imbert:** This is confidential information.

**Mr. Padarath:** You could apply through the FIA.

**Mr. Imbert:** Exactly.

**Mr. Singh:** No, it is the FIA will—anyway—

**Mr. Imbert:** Exactly.

**Mr. Singh:** So that therefore, we ought to have an enquiry. Okay.

**Mr. Lee:** Thank you, Madam Chair. 01, National Entrepreneurship Development Company and the Shark Tank concept that was in the budget, is it correlated to this company?

**Mr. Imbert:** No.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Yes, Madam Chair. On Other Transfers, 01, just to follow up on the question posed by the Member for Chaguanas West. In terms of the pronouncement by the Minister of Finance, could he advise this meeting under what authority he is acting in relation to withholding that information from this
meeting?

Mr. Imbert: Madam Chairman, I think we have dealt with this issue effectively.

Mr. Indarsingh: So, Madam Chair, if I could ask, NEDCO falls under any special legislation that allows the Minister of Finance to make this broad pronouncement?

Mr. Imbert: I think that question has been asked and answered.

Madam Chairman: Sub-Head 06, Current Transfers to Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies. Members, we will now go to the Draft Estimates of the Revenue and Expenditure of Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies and of the Tobago House of Assembly. We are at page 185. 17 - Cipriani College of Labour and Cooperative Studies; Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure; 001, General Administration, page 185. Member for Couva South.

Mr. Indarsingh: Thank you, Madam Chair. Under 01, Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance, could the Minister advise this meeting as it relates to what the increase of $1,683,000 reflects?

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: Would you repeat that? With regard to what?

Mr. Indarsingh: Under 001, General Administration; 01, Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance, the increase of $1,683,000 what does it reflect?

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: One second please, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, I am informed that it represents arrears of salaries with regard to the bargaining units.

Mr. Indarsingh: Madam Chair, that will lead me, based on what the Minister has indicated under 12, Settlement of Arrears to Public Officers. So $1,683,000 is being utilized for settlement of arrears, and we see another $2,974,000.

4.10 p.m.

What is this being utilized for and for what period of collective bargaining? “Ah kinda confuse.”
Hon. Baptiste-Primus: Madam Chairman, I am informed that the outstanding periods 2008 to 2010; 2011 to 2013, and 2014 to 2016.

Mr. Indarsingh: Madam Minister, so which Head fully disposes of the settlement to officers? Because you told me it was covered under 01 and I am seeing under 12.

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: Well, I am informed that the increase in allocation is meant to cover possible increases in wages and salaries for the two bargaining units at the college, the academic and non-academic staff.

Mr. Indarsingh: So which allocation will cover that?

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: The allocation under 2018.

Mr. Indarsingh: But which Sub or Item description, Madam Minister?

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: 01.

Mr. Indarsingh: 01 will cover possible salary increases?

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: Yes. Sorry.

Mr. Indarsingh: Okay. And 12 will cover settlement of arrears to public officers?

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: That is correct.

Mr. Indarsingh: And there is no liability to any of the bargaining units?

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: For the period 2008 to 2010, we have not been able to fulfil that obligation for the non-academic staff.

Mr. Indarsingh: So could you quantify how much is being owed?

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: Madam Chairman, we undertake to provide that information in writing.

Mr. Indarsingh: Okay. And there is no other period there is any liability?

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: There is an outstanding obligation to the contract employees to pay them increases. We have not been able to make that obligation
as yet.

Mr. Indarsingh: And the daily-paid bargaining unit, Madam Minister, you said—

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: There is no daily-paid bargaining unit.

Mr. Indarsingh: Well, if I could recollect, you—

Mr. Imbert: Chairman, may I ask what line Item this is, please?

Mr. Indarsingh: Mr. Finance Minister, 01 and 12.

Mr. Imbert: And what is the relevance of daily-paid bargaining unit here?

Mr. Indarsingh: I am trying to get a qualified response from the Minister.

Mr. Imbert: If there is none, what is the relevance?

Mr. Indarsingh: No, no. I am coming back—she said that there was an outstanding. The Minister said that there was an outstanding sum of money for the period 2008 to 2010 and she said that it will be quantified. I am trying to find out if this was for the period 2008 to 2010, what really is affecting the full settlement of liabilities for this period.

Mr. Imbert: “Let de man talk.”

Mr. Indarsingh: We are in 2017. That is all I am trying to find out, Mr. Finance Minister.

Mr. Imbert: Thank you very much for that very lucid explanation. Minister, you could answer that?

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: For the period 2008 to 2010, was signed this year. There was a situation where one of the bargaining units did not submit any proposals for a new collective agreement, but signalled verbally that that particular union was prepared to accept what the other union had bargained for.

Madam Chairman: Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services; 001, General Administration, pages 185 and 186. Member for Couva South.

Mr. Indarsingh: Under Contract Employment, 16, Madam Minister, there is a
decrease of $2,521,000. Does this mean employees have not been rehired at the college and if so, how many?

**Hon. Baptiste-Primus:** Firstly, let me point out that the part-time lecturers at the college make up 75 per cent of the college’s teaching staff and the college proposes to seek to monetize its facilities to close that gap.

**Madam Chairman:** Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purposes, 001, General Administration, page 186; Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies; 007, Households; 009, Other Transfers.

Hon. Members, we will now move on to the *Draft Estimates of Development Programme*. We are on page 81. Sub-Head 09, Development Programme, Consolidated Fund; Item 003, Economic Infrastructure, pages 81 and 82; Item 004, Social Infrastructure, pages 82 to 84; Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services, pages 84 to 86. Member for Chaguanas East.

**Mr. Karim:** Madam Chair, I know you said pages 84 to 86, but when you get to General Public Services, Admin Services, I would like to ask a question.

**Madam Chairman:** You could ask it now.

**Mr. Karim:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, I am on line Item 085, Delinking the On the Job Training Programme from the National Training Agency. In 2017, there was an allocation of $2 million, nothing was used and this allocation is now reduced to $1.5 million. Could you say what this money was not used for and what it is going to be used for now? What was it allocated for that it was not used and what is it now being allocated—?

**Hon. Baptiste-Primus:** Are you referring to the 1.5?

**Mr. Karim:** Yeah, the 1.5 2018 list.

**Hon. Baptiste-Primus:** Are you referring to the $1.5 million?

**Mr. Karim:** Yes, hon. Minister.
Hon. Baptiste-Primus: That will be used to procure and install a PBX system, procure and install a CCTV system and procure and install video conferencing.

Mr. Indarsingh: Thank you, Madam Chair. Under 065, Establishment of a Social Dialogue Process in Trinidad and Tobago. I see that there was an allocation of $400,000 for the Revised Estimate of 2017, and under 2018 Estimate, there is zero. So what that tells me is that the Ministry of Labour will not been pursuing any social dialogue initiative.

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: Madam Chair, just have the Member exercise a little patience while I locate—okay. Given that the social dialogue process has been established within the National Tripartite Advisory Council, that project would have come to an end and a new project has been submitted and it is referred to as the operationalization of the NTAC for which funding has been allocated.

Dr. Tewarie: Yes, Item 071, Labour Migration Policy, Minister. Was a labour policy done in 2017? I see that there is an allocation and then a reduced allocation in 2018. You did not use the money. Did you do a Labour Migration Policy?

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: This Ministry sought Cabinet’s approval for the establishment of an inter-ministerial committee for the development of that policy and the Note was deferred in December 2016 to the Finance and General Purposes Committee, and we are actively working towards identifying the various Ministries, line Ministries, for which that collaborative effort would be brought to fruition through approval.

Mr. Singh: “They park it up.”

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: No, no, no. It is, I mean this is very high in our priority list for 2017 to 2018.

Madam Chairman: Member for Caroni Central.

Dr. Tewarie: Yeah, labour, when you talk of a Labour Migration Policy, do you
mean to Trinidad and Tobago or from Trinidad and Tobago or both ways?

**Hon. Baptiste-Primus:** Both ways would be examined.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Okay. So the Canadian initiative with the truck drivers would have been sort of a forerunner to this?

**Hon. Baptiste-Primus:** No, that would have lied within the context of the 10-point plan.

**Dr. Tewarie:** Okay. Was it successful?

**Hon. Baptiste-Primus:** Well, we did have some exploratory discussions but our investigations indicate that the person with whom we were engaging, we did not want to finalize such arrangements with.

**Dr. Tewarie:** All right.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Under 075, Minister, the Development of a Register of Domestic Employees, there is no allocation in the 2018 and so on. What is the status? This has been completed?

**Hon. Baptiste-Primus:** The register was established in 2012, as you are aware because you were assigned to the Ministry during that period, hon. Member for Couva South.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** No, I am asking in the context of an allocation too of $197,093 in 2016.

**Hon. Baptiste-Primus:** I am in the process of responding.

**Madam Chairman:** Yeah, but Member, the Minister has not yet given a response.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** I did not say anything in relation to 2012, Madam Chair, that is why I was a bit perplexed and that is why I attempted to bring it back to 20—the figures and the line Item before us.

**Mr. Imbert:** We are not dealing with 2012.
Madam Chairman: Member, if you would just give the Minister an opportunity to develop her answer, please, and I think then you may ask a further question. Minister.

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: Thank you, Madam Chair. These issues always carry a bit of historical context and it is in that vein that I was sharing with the hon. Member for Couva South that the register was established in 2012 while he was there at the Ministry and since then, the work has been ongoing to populate the register. To date, 100 domestic workers have registered. There are challenges in domestic workers coming forward to register for fear of their job security and other reasons. Madam Chair, and persons on the register benefit from knowing their rights and responsibilities of the Ministry. As a matter of fact, I am sure the hon. Member may recall that this Ministry highlighted the fact that domestic workers are workers through television ads for which the National Union of Domestic Employees, with whom this Ministry is working closely, was very, very appreciative and continues to collaborate with us in terms of addressing the multiple challenges faced by that sector.

Mr. Indarsingh: Madam Chair, under 083, Nationwide Awareness of Workplace Rights and Responsibilities, there is a programme that is called—I see it on the television—Labourville. Is this covered under this particular line Item and if so, how much has been expended in this particular programme?

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: Madam Chairman, Labourville yes, and I am happy to know that my Member of Parliament has been viewing the work of the Ministry in that context.

Madam Chairman: Couva South, are you finished?

Mr. Indarsingh: No, I just asked how much does this Labourville programme cost in terms of under the allocation.
Hon. Baptiste-Primus: We do not have that figure readily available but we undertake to convey it in writing.

Mr. Indarsingh: That is why I continue to ask for some things in writing, too.

Madam Chairman: Infrastructure Development Fund, page 212; Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services, page 212, in the same book.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Head 30 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.*

Madam Chairman: Thank you, Madam Minister. Thank you, PS and the other technocrats of the Ministry.

Hon. Baptiste-Primus: Thank you, Madam Chairman. Thank you, Members of this honourable House. Do have a blessed weekend.

*Head 11:* Registration, Recognition and Certification Board, $4,500,000.

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

Hon. Imbert: Madam Chairman, the Registration, Recognition and Certification Board is established by statute and is responsible for the certification of trade unions, as well as matters relating to decertification and the other issues related to the certification of trade unions.

*Question proposed:* That Head 11 stand part of the Schedule.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Members, the sum of $4,500,000 for Head 11, Registration, Recognition and Certification Board is comprised of moneys proposed for expenditure under the following Sub-Heads and Items to be found in the Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure. We are now at page 52, Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure, Item 001, General Administration, page 52. Member for Couva South.

Mr. Indarsingh: Just a very simple question to the Minister. Under 06,
Remuneration to Board Members. Mr. Minister, does this mean that there has been an addition to the board in terms of the complement of board members?

**Hon. Imbert:** No.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** So what is the 47,000 increase? Has the board been reclassified?

**Hon. Imbert:** No.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** So what is the justification for the increase?

**Hon. Imbert:** It is just an appropriate allocation to deal with the expected expenditure to the board, to members of the board. Sometimes you have more than you require, sometimes you have less than you require, sometimes you have exactly the correct amount. So it is an appropriate allocation to deal with the expenditure of the board. That is all.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** So you could foresee in terms of how many board members attend meetings going forward, Mr. Minister? Because this deals specifically with Remuneration to Board Members you know.

**Hon. Imbert:** But the difficulty I am having, the Revised Estimate for 2017 was $528,000, the Estimate for 2018 is $575,000. The difference is only $47,000. So what is the problem?

**Mr. Indarsingh:** I am just asking a very simple question.

**Hon. Imbert:** The Budgets Division of the Ministry of Finance in consultation with this entity has determined that this is an appropriate allocation for this Head. What is the problem?

**Mr. Indarsingh:** It is not a problem, I am just seeking clarification, Mr. Minister, in the context of whether there has been an addition to the board in terms of the numbers. That is all. Nobody is in any way having any problems with the board.

**Hon. Imbert:** We are of the view that this is an appropriate allocation for the
payments to members of the board. We believe so. Okay?

**Mr. Indarsingh:** And that is final because you believe so.

**Hon. Imbert:** And any surplus funds, if such exist, will be returned to the Consolidated Fund.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Okay and you are committed to value for money. Thank you.

**Hon. Imbert:** There is no problem, “we happy with this”.

**Madam Chairman:** Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, page 52; Item 001, General Administration, pages 52 and 53; Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, page 53; Item 001, General Administration, page 53.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Head 11 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.*

**Madam Chairman:** I thank the representatives of the board and I thank the Minister.

Hon. Members, I wish to commend you for your cooperation, tenacity, steadfastness over this week. May I wish you all a peaceful and peace-filled weekend. This Standing Finance Committee is suspended to Monday, the 23rd of October, 2017, at 1.30 p.m. I thank you, Minister of Finance. Pleasant weekend everyone, reach home safely.

**4.36 p.m.:** *Standing Finance Committee suspended.*
Madam Chairman: Before we start, could Members please ensure that their devices are on silent.

I now call this Standing Finance Committee meeting to order. Under announcements, Hon. Members, Mr. Rushton Paray, MP Member for Mayaro; Dr. Bhoendradatt Tewarie, MP Member for Caroni Central; and hon. Shamfa Cudjoe, MP Member for Tobago East have asked to be excused from today's meeting of the Standing Finance Committee.

So we shall resume and we are at Head 67: Ministry of Planning and Development, $368,620,740.

*Head 67:* Ministry of Planning and Development, $336,852,740.

**Madam Chairman:** I would now invite the Minister of Planning and Development to make a brief opening statement not exceeding five minutes. Madam Minister.

**Hon. Robinson-Regis:** Thank you very kindly, Madam Chairman. Madam Chairman, the Ministry of Planning and Development is a collaborative Government Ministry, responsible for providing the necessary policy, guidance and development, technical support, advice and feasibility assessment for national advancement. The Ministry leads a development planning process and is central to
public policy formulation. The mandate is national development concentrated on four main pillars which are: economic development, social development, spatial development and environmental development.

Madam Chairman, as you and others would recall from the budget package for fiscal 2018, the Ministry of Planning and Development produced four publications, which set a new course for sustainable, economic and social development. These documents are the *National Development Strategy*, our Vision 2030; the *National Performance Framework 2017—2020*, designed to track our performance in the short-term; the *Public Sector Investment Programme 2018*, which is aligned to national goals and strategies and the *Tobago Public Sector Investment Programme 2018*, which is focused on Tobago development.

Madam Chairman, the Ministry is responsible for the Public Sector Investment Programme, which is the Government's development programme to support the nation's social and economic transformation agenda.

Like last year, the programmes and projects selected for funding were guided by the Vision 2030 and have met the following criteria: projects that make a transformational difference, projects that generate employment and projects that generate revenue.

Madam Chairman, the agencies which fall under the purview of the Ministry are: the National Trust, the Advisory Town Planning Panel, the Environmental Management Authority, the Institute of Marine Affairs, the Chaguaramas Development Authority, the Economic Development Advisory Board, the Central Statistical Office and CARIRI.

The Ministry is also the focal point for all the international development institutions that operate in Trinidad and Tobago, that is to say, the United Nations Development Programme, the European Union, the Inter-American Development
Bank and the Caribbean Development Bank.

Thank you very kindly, Madam Chairman.

*Question proposed:* That *Head 67:* Ministry of Planning and Development stand part of the Schedule.

**Madam Chairman:** Hon. Members, the sum of $336,852,740 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 Expenditure*, the *Draft Estimates of the Revenue and Expenditure of Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies and of the Tobago House of Assembly* and the *Draft Estimates of Development Programme*.

We now proceed to consider the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure*. We are at page 346, Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure, Item 001, General Administration. Member for Couva South.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Thank you, Madam Chair. To the Minister, 001/14, Remuneration to Members of Cabinet-Appointed Committees. There was no allocation in the Revised Estimates for 2017. Could the Minister provide the meeting with the information of the number of committees that are now, or will exist, based on remuneration and for what purpose?

**Hon. Robinson-Regis:** The committees that—okay. There are two committees and that is the Vision 2030 Task Force and the San Fernando Waterfront Executive Committee.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Okay, thank you.

**Hon. Robinson-Regis:** You are welcome.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 003, Technical Co-operation; Item 004, Central Statistical Office. Member for Naparima.

**Mr. Charles:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Salary 01, Salaries and Cost of Living
Allowance. I read somewhere today, that the Ministry is giving consideration to the establishment of a national statistical institute. First question, is this correct, and if it is, is the intent to transfer the salaries here, or the jobs here, to that institute, or is it something distinct?

**Hon. Robinson-Regis:** This announcement was made several years ago, that we are working on a national statistical institute of Trinidad and Tobago in order to make the CSO an independent institution. So that information that you did read is correct.

In addition to that, what we have done is set up a committee that is examining how the transition will take place and it will entail some examination of the jobs that would be needed for the statistical institute. But throughout this task force operation, we have had the union on board with the Government. So it is being examined thoroughly.

**Mr. Charles:** So the intent is a smooth seamless transition from the CSO?

**Hon. Robinson-Regis:** A smooth seamless transition, yes, to the National Statistical Institute.

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

**Mr. Lee:** Thank you, Madam Chair. To the hon. Minister, line Item 22, Short-Term Employment, 2018 estimate is a small amount of $200,000.

**Hon. Robinson-Regis:** 22?

**Mr. Lee:** Line Item 22, under short-term.

**Madam Chairman:** Under Central Statistical Office?

**Mr. Lee:** Yes. Page 351? No.

**Madam Chairman:** No, no, no.

**Hon. Robinson-Regis:** We are not there yet.

**Mr. Lee:** Sorry.
Madam Chairman: I am sorry.

Mr. Lee: Sorry, Madam Chair.

Madam Chairman: Okay. Member for Couva South.

Mr. Indarsingh: Thank you, Madam Chair. Again, I listened to the Minister, and based on the question my colleague would have posed from Naparima, the $2 million increase in the 2018 estimates, under 01, salaries and cost of living, will cater for? This $2 million increase will cater for what?

Hon. Robinson-Regis: The increased allocation is to facilitate newly-appointed officers.

Mr. Indarsingh: Newly-appointed officers.

Hon. Robinson-Regis: Newly-appointed officers.

Mr. Indarsingh: Under the CSO?

Hon. Robinson-Regis: Under the current system.

Mr. Indarsingh: Okay, thank you.

Madam Chairman: Member for Princes Town.

Mr. Padarath: Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, just a follow-up to the Members for Naparima and Couva South on line Item 01. I know you have been speaking about this for quite a while, a project that, really, you have inherited. But can you say at this point whether or not there is a target date with respect to actual implementation?

Hon. Robinson-Regis: Mid-2018, and it is not a project that I inherited. It is a project that was started under the last administration that went—very little was done during the last five years and now I am restarting the project.

Mr. Padarath: So you are looking at 2018.

Hon. Robinson-Regis: Yes.

Mr. Padarath: As a year of implementation?

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Hon. Robinson-Regis: Yeah.

Mr. Padarath: Thank you.

Madam Chairman: Member for Naparima.

Mr. Charles: Follow-up question. The question about reliable statistics. Given the salary allocation, do you think, in your view and this is not a trick question just a—[Interruption]

Hon. Robinson-Regis: Member for Naparima, before you go any further, you cannot trick me. So go ahead.

Mr. Charles: And there is no intent to trick you, Madam Speaker.

Hon. Robinson-Regis: Okay, yes.

Mr. Charles: Where are we, in your view, if we say one to 10, and 10 is the ideal timely statistical information that could help us in planning, where are we at this stage?

Hon. Robinson-Regis: Okay. Unfortunately, there had been some drawbacks that occurred during the previous administration, when you know that the CSO did not have a home for a little while and that sort of thing. What the CSO has been doing now is bringing itself up to international standards. So we have been using the UN. We have had assistance from the IDB. We have had assistance from Sweden, Statistics Sweden. So we are moving in that direction. And we have rebased the GDP. So we are moving closer to a 10. I would not say that we are—I would say we are probably around a six. And we are also looking at core indicators. We have moved the core indicators up-to-date, like the GDP, as I said before, and the labour force indicators. So we are moving consistently in a positive direction.

Mr. Charles: Just for clarification. Did the interaction with the UN not start during our time?

Madam Chairman: Member, I am not going to allow that question under salaries
and cost of living. Member for Couva South.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Again, to the Minister. In the context of 01, where you said that this $2 million increase will deal with additional staff, the recruitment, if I am to recollect what you said correctly, and under 08, Vacant Posts, there is an increase in the 2018 allocation of an additional $1 million, how much staff does the CSO intend to recruit or how many vacant posts?

**Hon. Robinson-Regis:** Let me clarify. The increased allocation is to facilitate newly-appointed officers who were previously under contract or delegated authority. So that is what the $2 million is for.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** So how many you would recruit with—[Interruption]

**Hon. Robinson-Regis:** Just now. With regard to 08, it is—[Interruption]

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Just now. If I could ask you, would the $2 million now, and you say they are moving from contract to within the permanent establishment, how many persons will come on board, 10, 15, 20?

**Hon. Robinson-Regis:** One hundred and eleven members of staff were regularized.

**Mr. Charles:** Were regularized.

**Hon. Robinson-Regis:** Yes, yeah, from years of being under delegated or short-term appointments and they have been appointed now as public officers, hence the increase to facilitate the payment of salaries.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Okay.

**Hon. Robinson-Regis:** And with regard to 08, it is to facilitate the movement of staff from short-term delegated authorities similarly into regularized posts on the establishment of the CSO.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** And how many under this line Item?

**Hon. Robinson-Regis:** I do not have that figure in front of me right now. But if
you wish—if you do not mind, Madam, I can come back to that if I can get the figure?

Mr. Indarsingh: Certainly. No problem.

Hon. Robinson-Regis: Okay. Thank you.

Madam Chairman: 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 02, Goods and Services; Item 001, General Administration, pages 349 to 350; Item 002, Library Service Unit; Item 003, Technical Co-operation; Item 004, Central Statistical Office. Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.

Mr. Lee: Thank you, Madam Chair. To the Minister, line Item 22, Short-Term Employment, 2018, you have a small amount of $200,000 allocated, but the revised figure for 2017 was $4,250,000. The question I am asking is, these individuals who were employed on short term, what they did at the CSO and what became of them presently?

Hon. Robinson-Regis: That is the same regularized staff that I spoke about earlier. The same staff that was regularized, that is the same people.

Mr. Lee: Okay. Thank you.

Madam Chairman: Item 005, Urban and Regional Planning; 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 at page 355; Item 001, General Administration; Item 002, Library Service Unit; Item 003, Technical Co-operation; Item 004, Central Statistical Office; Item 005, Urban and Regional Planning Division; Item 006, Green Fund Executing Unit; Item 008, Project Planning and Reconstruction Division; Item 009, Environmental Policy and Planning Division; Sub-Head 04,
Mr. Charles: Thank you, Madam Chair. Item 12, United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, $100,000 allocated. Could the Minister tell us if and when the climate change agreement is going to be ratified to facilitate benefits arising out of this expenditure?

Hon. Robinson-Regis: We have recommended to the Cabinet that it can be ratified based on our assessment of what Trinidad and Tobago will have to do with regard to climate change recommendations, the recommendations of Paris 21 and that Note will be before the Cabinet shortly for the Cabinet's adjudication.

Madam Chairman: Item 004, International Bodies; Item 005, Non-profit Institutions; Item 006, Educational Institutions; Item 007, Households. Member for Couva South.

Mr. Indarsingh: Thank you, Madam Chairman. Under 03, Settlement to Cane Farmers Re: transition 2007, in 2017 there was an estimate of $50 million, then it was revised to $13,250,000 and in 2018, back up to $15 million. Madam Chairman, in relation to, through the line Minister, under this particular transition, could you indicate to the meeting how many cane farmers have accepted this settlement so far and how many are still to accept?

Hon. Robinson-Regis: Thank you Member for Couva South. The total number of cane farmers is 3,481. The total number of cane farmers who were paid under $12,000 in tranche one, or who were owed under $12,000 in tranche one are 1,153. Thirty-six contracts have been processed and paid in full. The total number of cane farmers in tranche one who are owed over $12,000 is 2,328. One hundred and twenty-eight contracts have been processed with partial payment. Two
hundred and twelve are yet to accept the agreement. The total number of cane farmers in tranches two and three are the same 2,328. Four hundred and ninety-one contracts have been processed and paid in full. The total number of cheques that have been created is 655. The total payout value is $14,424,760.13.

Mr. Indarsingh: Follow-up, Madam Chair. In relation to this particular settlement to the cane farmers, is there any matter pending before the courts of Trinidad and Tobago?

Hon. Robinson-Regis: Not as far as we know.

Mr. Indarsingh: Not as far as you know?

Hon. Robinson-Regis: Not as far as we know, no.

Mr. Indarsingh: And have cane farmers been asked at any point in time to accept any quantum of money less than what they had advocated for?

Hon. Robinson-Regis: We have told the cane farmers that there is a certain amount that is available to be accepted, and some of them have come in and have accepted what we have indicated.

Mr. Indarsingh: Okay.

Madam Chairman: Item 009, Other Transfers; Item 010, Other Transfers Abroad.

We now go to Sub-Head 06, Current Transfers to Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies. And if we can go to the Draft Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure, Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies and of the Tobago House of Assembly, page 497. 02, Institute of Marine Affairs; Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure; 001, General Administration; Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services; 001, General Administration, pages 497 and 498; Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, page 498; 001, General Administration; Sub-Head, 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies; 007, Households.

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We now go on to 49, Chaguaramas Development Authority, page 506. Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure; 001, General Administration; Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services; 001, General Administration; Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsides; 007, Households; 009, Transfers.

Hon. Members, we will now move on to the Draft Estimates of Development Programme. We are at page 149. Sub-Head 09, Development Programme, Consolidated Fund; Item 001, Pre-investment, page 149 to page 152. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, line Item 003, can the hon. Minister indicate how many regions of our country have now benefited from this exercise initiated in 2013, and how many more are to be covered and when is the projected completion date?

Hon. Robinson-Regis: Okay, this is the seismic micronization project we are talking about. This is a 10-year project which commenced in 2013, being done in collaboration with UWI. The objective of the project is to perform micro-tremor measurements and seismic refraction tests in selected areas in Trinidad and Tobago for the creation of microzonation maps for use in land use planning and disaster management.

Mapping for the Cities of Port of Spain and San Fernando is complete. The 2018 estimate is for payment of salaries workshops, advertisements and continued tests for the mapping of densely populated areas. As I said, it started in 2013 and it is a 10-year project.

Madam Chairman: Member for Naparima.

Mr. Charles: Thank you very much. Item 006, Relocation of Squatters, $5 million. Could you tell us who, what, when, why, where and how?

Hon. Robinson-Regis: Yeah. This is for San Fernando Waterfront
Redevelopment Project and the sites are to be identified for the temporary relocation of squatters, following which the funds will be used for site planning, physical structure development, construction of homes, and the sites have not been identified as yet, but they are still being negotiated with the Land Settlement Agency.

**Mr. Charles:** Right. And this is scheduled to start next year, mid-next year.

**Hon. Robinson-Regis:** Yeah, this year.

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

**Mr. Lee:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Line Item 007, Relocation of PTSC Maintenance Facilities, $5 million. I am just curious why that would fall under—

**Hon. Robinson-Regis:** The entire San Fernando redevelopment project is under the Ministry of Planning and Development and it is being executed by UDeCOTT. There are other agencies which are involved. So PTSC is involved. The Ministry of Housing and Urban Development is involved, but the Ministry of Planning and Development is the overarching Ministry that will be pushing this San Fernando Waterfront Redevelopment Project.

**Mr. Lee:** Second question, line Item 008, Upgrade of Plaza San Carlos, $5 million.

**Hon. Robinson-Regis:** Sorry, I did not hear what you said.

**Mr. Lee:** Or Kings Wharf also?

**Hon. Robinson-Regis:** All in San Fernando, yes.

**Mr. Lee:** Okay.

**Hon. Robinson-Regis:** We are redeveloping the entire San Fernando waterfront and it is a whole project for that area.

**Mr. Lee:** So then can I jump to the next page, Madam Speaker, as we are talking about San Fernando?
Madam Chairman: Once you are within the same Item.

Mr. Imbert: Madam Chairman, could I just express some shock that the Member of Parliament for Pointe-a-Pierre does not know that Plaza San Carlos is the waterfront in San Fernando? I am just a bit shocked, Madam.

Madam Chairman: Member for Pointe-a-Pierre, once you are within pages 149 to 152.

Mr. Lee: Yes, Madam Chair. Thank you, Minister of Finance. To the Minister of Planning and Development, line Item 001, Minister. I see a feasibility study expenditure allocated for 2017. Just for my clarity, is a feasibility study still going on given that—?

Hon. Robinson-Regis: No, the feasibility study was completed in 2014, and the project is now at implementation stage.

Mr. Lee: So these costs that are allocated to line Item 001, is it just arrears of the feasibility plan or—it is on page 150.

Hon. Robinson-Regis: Page 149?

Mr. Lee: No, page 150, line Item—

Madam Chairman: 001?

Mr. Lee: Yeah.

Hon. Robinson-Regis: There is no money.

Madam Chairman: There is no money there.

Hon. Robinson-Regis: No money there.

Mr. Lee: Sorry, the Minister of Finance have me a little bit rattled there.

Madam Chairman: Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, just to come back to the line Item 006 to 008, you indicated that it is the San Fernando Waterfront Project.
Hon. Robinson-Regis: Yes.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: I heard you mention UDeCOTT in all those different state companies.

Hon. Robinson-Regis: Sorry, I am not hearing you clearly. Can you repeat?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: I heard you mention that UDeCOTT and a number of other state agencies. Does that mean that there is no PPP sector involved? It is not a—

Hon. Robinson-Regis: At this time, no.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Okay.

Madam Chairman: Member for Couva South.

Mr. Indarsingh: Just in terms of the monetary allocation under 006, 007 and 008, all are related to the San Fernando water project.

Hon. Robinson-Regis: Waterfront Redevelopment Project.

Mr. Indarsingh: Project. These sums, under these line Items are final sums or could they increase in the future?

Hon. Robinson-Regis: These are sums that are expected to be expended within this fiscal. It may carry over, but this is for this fiscal.

Mr. Indarsingh: Okay.

Madam Chairman: Member for Oropouche West.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: Thank you, Madam Chair. Just to follow-up again with line 006 to 008, Relocation of Squatters. Have you all identified any area where these squatters will be located?

Hon. Robinson-Regis: Yes, that is what I said. The sites have not been identified as yet.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: Okay, thank you.
2.00 p.m.

Madam Chairman: Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, hon. Chair. Is page 153 included?

Madam Chairman: No, we have not reached page 153 as yet—

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: All right, okay. When you reach 153.

Madam Chairman: Member for Caroni East, did you have your hand up?

Dr. Gopeesingh: No, no.

Madam Chairman: Okay, all right, so we now go on to Item 003, Economic Infrastructure. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Madam Chair. Item 004, line Item 016, Development and Revision of Core Economic Indices. Could the hon. Minister indicate what is this allocation—

Hon. Robinson-Regis: Where are you?

Madam Chairman: We are at page 153.

Madam Chairman: We are at page 153, M. 016.

Hon. Robinson-Regis: Okay.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: What does this allocation do exactly? And I will ask the other question when you tell me.

Hon. Robinson-Regis: This is for CSO research.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Okay, and what result is anticipated from the research?

Hon. Robinson-Regis: Well, as the name suggests, it is to determine what are the core indicators of economic development and so on, and that is the research that we will be doing. In addition to that, as I said, we are updating the GDP, we are
Appropriation Bill, 2017 (cont’d)  
Standing Finance Committee (cont’d)

updating the labour force so these are the core economic indices of Trinidad and Tobago.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Is it that you are utilizing a foreign entity, local, is the UN involved?

Hon. Robinson-Regis: No, it is the CSO, the CSO, but of course the UN has been working with us on making sure that we are at an international standard, but it is the CSO itself that is doing this.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Okay.

Madam Chairman: Item 004, Social Infrastructure, pages 153 to 156. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, hon. Chair. Hon. Minister, line Item on page 153, 050, the Establishment of the Planning Unit. Again, when will this project start? And when would it be in fact—

Madam Chairman: You have gone back?


Madam Chairman: Okay, all right, go ahead please. Sorry.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, thank you Chair. So when will this project start? And how will the results of the survey affect policy?

Hon. Robinson-Regis: This unit will be set up in this quarter, the fourth quarter of this year, and thereafter we will do the—sorry, let me make sure I am saying the right thing—it is for the various censuses that have to be conducted, and we will start in 2018. We will be starting in the first quarter of 2018.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: And line Item 051, can you explain this project and its value please?

Hon. Robinson-Regis: The Development of Trade in Services, that one?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: The Development—yes, Trade in Services Statistics.

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Hon. Robinson-Regis: First of all, that—well. What has happened is that there are a number of new service areas that have been coming on stream and also existing service areas. So we need to have a list of statistics as it relates to the trade in services by industry and by products. Because that has not been done before, we have it patches around the country but the CSO itself does not have a database from which it can work.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: So if you currently have policies regarding other trade in services, it means that it will—it may impact in terms of changing whatever current policies that your Government may have?

Hon. Robinson-Regis: Well, the thing is that right now as I said it is not located in one area. There are different industries and different services and different economic indices that exist in different parts of the industry. But we want to make sure that the CSO has a database of all the trade in services, in particular the service industries and the various trades.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you.

Madam Chairman: Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services, Infrastructure Development Fund, page 246; Item 003, Economic Infrastructure, pages 246 to 247; Item 004, Social Infrastructure; Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 67 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Madam Chairman: Thank you, Madam Minister. Thank you PS.

Head 26: Ministry of Education, $5,472,977,967.

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

Hon. Garcia: Thank you very much, Madam Chairman. It is my distinct honour to participate in this discussion on the 2018 budgetary allocation of the Ministry of
Education. The Ministry of Education was allocated almost $843 million for capital and other developmental projects under the Public Sector Investment Programme and the Infrastructure Development Fund, and a little over $5.1 billion under Recurrent Expenditure. This allocation is evidence of the importance that this Government places on education and rightfully so. Madam Chairman, the Ministry of Education is committed to providing quality inclusive education for all of our students from early childhood level to the tertiary level.

A major initiative being rolled out this year is a project entitled Creating a Culture of Student Achievements. This project has two components: The first is a primary school Standard 5 remedial initiative which seeks to identify students who are at risk of underperforming at the Standard 5 level and treat with the causative factors such as learning disorders or psychosocial factors. The second component of this project, referred to as the Form 1 Initiative, will provide remediation and support for the 1,367 students, who scored lower than 30 per cent in the 2017 SEA exam, and who were assigned to secondary schools.

Fiscal 2018 will also see the roll-out of the student monitoring system to support and to promote teaching and learning at the primary level. This will replace the primary level national test.

2.10 p.m.

Madam Chairman, the Ministry will continue its construction, maintenance and upgrade programme at the nation’s institutions of learning at all levels. The Morvant/Laventille Project which commenced in fiscal 2017, will receive continued focus in fiscal 2018. The Ministry, with input from the Ministry of Health, has developed a project to provide targeted intervention for students with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, also known as ADHD, and a Note will be submitted to Cabinet shortly for its consideration.
I should add, Madam Chairman, that in keeping with its policy of equity and inclusiveness, the Ministry has an ongoing focus and the provision of special education services to students diagnosed with special education needs. The Ministry has also been on a drive to regularization and rationalize its human resources where several endemic problems exist. This will continue in fiscal 2018. In the interest of time, Madam Chairman, I will stop here.

I thank my colleague, Minister Dr. the hon. Lovell Francis, my Permanent Secretaries, the Chief Education Officer and other senior staff of the Ministry who are with me today to provide support in answering any questions which may arise. Thank you, Madam Chairman.

*Question proposed:* That Head 26 stand part of the Schedule.

**Madam Chairman:** Hon. Members, the sum of $5,472,977,967 for Head 26, Ministry of Education is comprised of moneys proposed for expenditure under the following Sub-Heads and Items to be found in the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure*, the *Draft Estimates of the Revenue and Expenditure of the Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies and of the Tobago House of Assembly* and the *Draft Estimates of Development Programme*. We now proceed to consider the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure*. We are at page 172. Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure, Item 001, General Administration; Item 005, Secondary Education. Member for Caroni East.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Hon. Minister, through you, may I say a special hello to your technical officers and your technocrats of the Ministry. I want to say a warm welcome to them.

Under Item 32, under 005, you have a very small expenditure for substitute teachers. In 2016, only about three-quarter million; 2017, $800,000 and in 2018 now you have only $300,000 for substitute teachers. Have you abandoned that
issue of having substitute teachers in schools? Could you give us some comment on that?

**Hon. Garcia:** Madam Chairman, that idea or that initiative has not been abandoned. It is simply that we are in the process of employing as many trained and qualified teachers as possible that will not give rise to a large number of substitute teachers.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Thank you.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 006, Primary Education; Item 010, General Administration; Item 011, Eastern Caribbean Institute of Agriculture; Item 012, Technical/Vocational Education. Member for Caroni East.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Hon. Minister, would you—if you cannot do it now—be kind enough to give an appreciation of how many employees there would be in the tech/voc education system and how many you have at the different centres for tech/voc training and education?

**Madam Chairman:** That would be under 01?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Yes. Sorry, 012. I might have probably gone beyond you.

**Madam Chairman:** Yes, 012, 01. That is what I am asking.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Yes, Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance.

**Hon. Garcia:** Member, you wish to be provided with? Could you tell me again, please?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Could you tell me the number of employees you have in the tech/voc areas and the different time—

**Hon. Garcia:** Throughout the system?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:**—they would have been employed? If you do not have that now, it is all right. You could provide it in writing.

**Hon. Garcia:** All right. We will make that available to you.

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Dr. Gopeesingh: Right, okay.

Madam Chairman: Item 014, National Examinations Council; Item 016, Scholarships and Advanced Training Division. Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: I am on 02, under Goods and Services.

Madam Chairman: We are moving on to there now. Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services; Item 001, General Administration. Are you there, Member for Caroni East?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Item 08, Rent/Lease—Office Accommodation, I see $7.7 million. Those are for buildings still rented outside of the main administration building—you still have some centres outside of the main area of the Ministry of Education? You are paying some rent for what area of the Ministry of Education now?—since I thought everything would be encapsulated in the Ministry of administration’s new building.

Hon. Garcia: Yes, we have some buildings that we are still paying rent for. You would like a list of those buildings?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Just give a simple explanation, where they are and what it houses?

Hon. Garcia: All right. We still have some, for example, the Teachers Credit Union that houses the Port of Spain Education Division. We have Broadway Properties, we have N. Dharrie and Company Limited, Coastal Winds Limited, Henry Patrick Smak Limited and these are really to house certain areas that we have not yet been able to accommodate in the new towers.

Dr. Gopeesingh: All right. Thank you, Minister.

Madam Chairman: Item 005, Secondary Education; Item 006, Primary Education; Item 007, District Services Division, page 179; Item 008, Rudranath Capildeo Learning Resource Centre; Item 09, Early Childhood Care and Education
Dr. Gopeesingh: Item 22, Short-Term Employment under ECCE, could you just give a little explanation of that, the Short-Term Employment under ECCE, $3.5 million?

Hon. Garcia: Under ECCE, you will realize Member that we are trying desperately to ensure that all our ECCE teachers are trained. In some instances, where for some reason or the other, either one of those teachers proceed on maternity leave or sick leave, we are bringing persons on Short-Term Employment.

Mr. Lee: Thank you, Ma’am. We are on page 186?

Madam Chairman: We are moving to Item 009, Early Childhood Care and Education Unit.

Mr. Lee: What page is that?

Madam Chairman: That is page 180. Item 010, General Administration, pages 180 and 181. Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Item 16, under Contract Employment, can I make a similar request for an understanding of where these contract officers will be? How many and where they are placed under TEST? Your TEST here means Tertiary Education and Skills Training. Is it? TEST in this book is Tertiary Education and Skills Training?

Hon. Garcia: TEST is really the accounting unit that was a separate Ministry before, but since we still have two different accounts units then we have it under TEST. Okay?

Dr. Gopeesingh: All right. Just the number of officers under Contract Employment and what areas.

Hon. Garcia: You will be provided with that list.

Dr. Gopeesingh: And instead of duplicating the questions, hon. Minister, there
are a number of areas all through the education system where you have Contract Employment, instead of myself repeating the same questions, could you help by providing the number of employees under Contract Employment and where they are positioned?

**Hon. Garcia:** Okay. We will supply you with that.

**Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh:** Thank you, Madam Chair. 001, Eastern Caribbean Institute. Have you reached there, page 181?

**Madam Chairman:** Are we finished with 001, General Administration? Item 011, Eastern Caribbean Institute of Agriculture and Forestry. Member for Oropouche West.

**Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, under 01, Travelling and Subsistence, how many officers have we now at ECIAF? Is this institute—what is the status of this institute? Are they pursuing degrees or diplomas now?

**Hon. Garcia:** Let me answer your first question. Under ECIAF, we have 97 positions there. You asked how many positions we have there.

**Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh:** That 97 is for both agriculture and forestry? I am asking about the travelling officers.

**Hon. Garcia:** Travelling officers? Okay, I will have to give you that information. And your next question?

**Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh:** If the course that is being pursued in both agriculture and forestry, if it is diploma now or is it that they have moved on to the degree programme? That is the same thing with the travelling with ECIAF, Madam.

**Madam Chairman:** Yeah, but is it coming under Travelling and Subsistence?

**Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh:** Yes, because we have officers who conduct those
Hon. Garcia: What was the line Item there?

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: The same Travelling and Subsistence with the officers.

Hon. Garcia: That line Item does not talk about that.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: Yes, I am talking about the officers, and officers conduct those courses. So I am asking if the course is—

Hon. Garcia: Under which line Item?

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: 01, Sir.

Madam Chairman: But this is Travelling and Subsistence.

Hon. Garcia: Exactly.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: Okay, we will move on.

Hon. Garcia: Travelling and Subsistence.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: We will move on, you are in slumber. Madam Chairman: Item 014, National Examinations Council, page 182. Member for Naparima, are we under 014, National—

Mr. Charles: Yes, 014, line Item 01. How many vacancies exist in the National Examinations Council? Oh, we passed that. Okay. Sorry.

Madam Chairman: We are under Travelling and Subsistence.

Mr. Charles: Sorry.

Madam Chairman: Okay. So we are moving on. Item 015, Spanish Secretariat; Item 016, Scholarships and Advanced Training Division. Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: The same request for Contract Employment that I mentioned earlier under Item 16, if you can provide that.

Hon. Garcia: Yes, the same information will be provided to you.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Thanks, Minister.
Madam Chairman: Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases. We are at page 183. Item 001, General Administration. Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeseengh: Under Item 04, Other Minor Equipment, there is a substantial increase of $59 million. Could you just indicate what is that meant for? Is it for the laptops? Is it for textbooks? What is it for, the $59 million?

Hon. Garcia: Yes, that increase is for the procurement of laptops.

Dr. Gopeseengh: All right, thank you.

Madam Chairman: Member for Couva South.

Mr. Indarsingh: My colleague asked the question, Madam Chair. I will pass.

Madam Chairman: Item 006, Primary Education; Item 007, District Services Division; Item 008, Rudranath Capildeo Learning Resource Centre; Item 009, Early Childhood Care and Education Unit; Item 010, General Administration (TEST), page 184; Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies; Item 001, Regional Bodies. Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeseengh: The Caribbean Examinations Council, hon. Minister, there is a revised estimate of an increase of $11 million. Could you just give an appreciation of what is responsible for us paying more to the Caribbean Examinations Council from $10 million to $21 million? What accounts for that?

Hon. Garcia: The $11 million here would represent fees that were owed. So this allocation is an effort to pay those fees that were owed.

Dr. Gopeseengh: Thank you.

Mr. Charles: Are we on 004?

Madam Chairman: No, we have not reached there as yet. 04, Current—or you are talking about 004? We are under Sub-Head 04, we are now at Item 002 which is Commonwealth Bodies. Item 003, United Nations Organizations; Item 004, International Bodies. That is where you are at, Member for Naparima?

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Mr. Charles: No. You go ahead.

Madam Chairman: Item 006, Educational Institutions, pages 186 and 187. Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.

Mr. Lee: Thank you, Madam Chair. To the hon. Minister, line Item 35, Direct University Services—Current. In 2017—well, the question will be: what is that? And the second part of the question, you have a $46 million increase for 2018 over 2017, what would be the rationale for that increase please, or what was responsible for the increase?

Hon. Garcia: I will get back to you in a minute. Okay? We will come back to this in a while.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Item 29. Hon. Minister, could you give us an idea of the —well I am very happy to see that there is increased funding for private special schools, but could you give us a little explanation of the increase of $13 million?

Hon. Garcia: I am having a difficulty in hearing you. Could you—?

Dr. Gopeesingh: All right. Could you give us an appreciation of the reason for the increase in the funding for the private special schools? I am very happy to see that, but I just want to get an idea, from $12 million to $25 million, an increase of $13 million, is that for fees owed before or—?

Hon. Garcia: Well, one new school was added and that school resides in Rio Claro, so that would have incurred additional expenses. In addition to that, when our school supervisors and other officers of the Ministry of Education did their audit, it was revealed that there are some outstanding sums that we had to pay and this is why we had to increase the allocation.

Dr. Gopeesingh: That is the one I had asked you the question about in Parliament that you had to—anyway, do not worry about that. That is good. That is good. Madam Chair, can I ask under Item 34, Grants for the Expansion of Universal
Madam Chairman: Yes you may.

Dr. Gopeesingh: There is a reduction of $2 million from $20 million—$2.7 million. Just give a little explanation on that if you can.

Hon. Garcia: This is an arrangement that we are looking at very carefully. What we have found is that a number of the persons who are conducting these private ECCE centres, they have indicated that they are no longer interested. In addition to that, on the other hand, we have some persons are charging exorbitant fees, in spite of the fact that they are getting subventions from the Government and we are looking at it. We are going to do an audit to determine how we can proceed further.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Okay. So that is a rationalization process.

Hon. Garcia: Exactly.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Okay. Thank you. Council of Legal Education, Item 38, the increases for that. Is it because you are opening the south campus?

Hon. Garcia: Where are you? Where are you again, please?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Item 38. Council of Legal Education. From $17.9 million to $20 million. Are you having more students coming in or is it an increase in salaries or what?

Hon. Garcia: This is because of the increase in recurrent expenditure.

Dr. Gopeesingh: All right. Thank you. And while I am there, Madam Chair, may I have your permission for Items 41 and 44, which relate to Eric Williams Medical Sciences Complex. Item 41, $27 million for the complex, but under Item 44 you have Subsidies Mt. Hope Students, which I understand and appreciate. Could you give—the 41—and tell us how many students now you are subsidizing at the Mount Hope Medical Complex under student subsidies in 44?

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Hon. Garcia: That information will be given to you subsequently.

Dr. Gopeesingh: All right. You cannot give it now. All right.

Madam Chairman: Item 007, Households.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Sorry. Madam Chair, 006 on the other page. I did not realize you—can I just ask some short questions there?

Madam Chairman: Educational Institutions?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Yeah. Under NTA—Minister, you would remember we had made some noise last year about the reduction. You still continue to decrease it for the National Training Agency. Why? Why is there a decrease in the subvention for that?

Hon. Garcia: Again, to quote your own words, it is a rationalization of the whole tertiary education sector. What we have found is many of these tertiary education institutions are providing the same service, and in an effort to save, we have decided to rationalize the services that have been provided at these tertiary education institutions.

Dr. Gopeesingh: So, I was asking you the questions on 48 which is UTT. All right. Item 51 is a separate question. The decrease in funding under the Higher Education Loan Programme. You moved it down from $16 million to $10 million, $6 million less where the students now might find much more difficulty and they may require more help than before.

Hon. Garcia: That was a budgetary cut we received.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Yeah, but if there are more applicants for it, you will seek the intervention of the Minister of Finance?

Hon. Garcia: Of course. And if it is necessary we will have to vire money and in our mid-year review we might have another look at it.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Right, thank you. Another, Health Economics Unit, Item 52,
there is an increased subvention. This is something that we need the intervention of the Health Economics Unit in the health sector, but you have that under—well, it is under tertiary education now. You could give us an idea? Are you planning to introduce a new system? The Health Economics Unit, are they going to come in to give some assistance in the Ministry of Health? There is an increased subvention here.

**Hon. Garcia:** Well, as you know Member, we are working in close collaboration with the Ministry of Health in the provision of these services. So we will be collaborating with my fellow Minister, the Minister of Health, in order to ensure that this sector is well taken care of.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** It is something that we need in Trinidad to bring—the Health Economics Unit—to start a programme for.

**Hon. Garcia:** And, Member, you will realize that one of the initiatives that we have embarked on with the Ministry of Health is the reduction of sugary drinks in our schools.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Yeah, I applaud you on that. That is good.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Item 63, Student Nurses Stipend, Mr. Minister, is a new line Item and in this allocation of $3,870,000, does that cater for any outstanding stipend?

**Hon. Garcia:** No, it does not cater for outstanding stipends, it caters for stipends that are supposed to be paid to our student nurses.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Absolutely, this will cater for an ongoing payment going forward?

**Hon. Garcia:** Yes.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Thank you.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Through you, Madam Chair, there was nothing allocated under

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2017. Is it now you are starting the School of Nursing, or why was there no allocation in 2017 when we thought that the School of Nursing was going ahead and we were training nurses? There is nothing under Nurses Stipend as well for ’17.

Hon. Garcia: This is for COSTAATT, eh. COSTAATT is one of the agencies that is providing training for our nurses.

Dr. Gopeesingh: So that comes under the COSTAATT budget?

Hon. Garcia: Yes.

Dr. Gopeesingh: But you have it now under Educational Institutions. Why you have it now under this item? It is a new Sub-Item. Why you brought it there? It is no longer under COSTAATT.

Hon. Garcia: I will provide you with a detailed explanation.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Right. Okay.

Mr. Charles: Thank you. Item 48, Minister, UTT. Given that there is almost—there is $200 million allocated and given almost $162 million cut in the last two years, can you give us an idea of which campuses and/or programmes will be affected by this reduction?

Hon. Garcia: Well, at present, we are having some discussions with the board of UTT to decide how best they can make full use of the resources that they are given. So, at this point, I am unable to say which campuses will be cut or which programmes will be cut.

Mr. Charles: Okay. And Item 46, National Training Agency. I see again, there is a $25 million cut in two years and the question is: Is there some plan, long-term plan for the NTA, whether to close it down or retrench staff or hold it at some viable option?

Hon. Garcia: As I explained a while ago, we are in the process of rationalizing
tertiary education services. That is one. And two, again, NTA is looking at areas where they can provide their own sources of funding and this is the reason why we have a reduction in the allocation.

**Dr. Bodeo:** Thank you, Madam Chair, my questions were asked by my colleague, the Member for Caroni East.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** I am on the next page, 188.

**Madam Chairman:** Member, could you kindly speak in the mike?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Sorry, I am going on to 188. You have not reached there yet.

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

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Madam Chair, with respect to the Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago, line Item 50, could the Minister indicate for the period, let us say between September of 2015 to 2017 currently, how many institutions, tertiary level that is, have been accredited by the said council and what are these institutions?

**Hon. Garcia:** We have had one within the recent past and that is ROYTEC.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** One?

**Hon. Garcia:** Yes.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** And between 2010 and 2015, you have that information?

**Hon. Garcia:** I do not have that information at hand. That could be provided to you.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Thank you very much.

**Mr. Lee:** The question was asked, Madam Chair. It is okay.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 007, Households. Member for Caroni East, page 188.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Items 15 and 18. The Student Support Services, hon. Minister there was almost $7.3 million allocated in 2016 for the Student Support Services Programme, but in 2018 you only have $2 million, so it is a reduction of nearly

**UNREVISED**
$5.3 million over the two-year period. Can you tell us what has accounted for this reduction on a very important programme that you speak about and the country speaks about and the necessity for it?

**Hon. Garcia:** This allocation dealt with the Homework Centres and we have seen a reduction in the number of Homework Centres, and this is the reason why we only have an increase of $1 million over the 2017 figure.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** But Minister, we had 404 Homework Centres, but this cannot account for—this Student Support Services Programme, is it for the Homework Centres or is it for the Guidance Counsellors, Guidance Officers, School Social Workers, et cetera. Are you mixing it up?

2.40 p.m.

**Hon. Garcia:** In addition to the Homework Centres, which I just explained, this Vote is used for funding diagnostic testing for students and programmes to help students, in addition to the Homework Centres.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** All right, I would like to see the reintroduction of those 404 Homework Centres, it will help the students tremendously. And Item 18, the TTHTI, Trinidad and Tobago Hospitality and Tourism Institute, from $18.6 million in 2016 now down to $6 million, is there a reduction in the number of students coming in, or the reduction of the programmes in the hospitality institute?

**Hon. Garcia:** That is an area where we are seeking the advice and the input of our Attorney General. There are some problems associated with the TTHTI, and we are moving ahead to have those resolved.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Okay.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Naparima.

**Mr. Charles:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Item 09, Early Childhood Care and Education, $20 million allocated in 2018, and I am asking, Minister, is this for
salaries, training of staff, or does this involve the buildings? And if it involves the buildings, is Ben Lomond Early Childhood Centre and—

Hon. Garcia: It does not involve buildings.

Madam Chairman: Member for Couva South.

Mr. Indarsingh: Thank you, Madam Chair. Just for the benefit of the meeting and the national community, 19, Retraining Programme for Displaced Workers. Minister, could you advise the meeting, or can you say how and where displaced workers can apply to be trained?

Hon. Garcia: I will get that information to you, subsequently.

Mr. Indarsingh: And the displaced workers who apply, under this particular line Item, will they be paid or entitled to some form of stipend, and so on?

Hon Garcia: That is a question I am unable to answer at this point.

Madam Chairman: Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Minister or Ministers, from line Items 19 to 32, with a few exceptions, there have been marked reductions in the allocations from 2016 to 2018 in programmes like Helping Youth Prepare for Employment Programme, MuST, that is the Multi-sector Skills Training Programme; Servol, Servol’s Human Development, National Commission for Higher Education, Bursaries. So in all these there were very appropriate funding in 2016, for instance, Retraining Programme for Displayed Workers, $18 million down to $9 million. The Helping Youth Prepare for Employment Programme was $37 million in 2016, now $14 million; the MuST Programme was $49 million in 2016, now $20 million, et cetera. Could you tell us why there is reduction in the programme when these are extremely necessary now based on what is happening in the country, and we need to step up on tech-voc training and education?

Madam Chairman: Member, I will only allow your comparison between last
year, because looking at these figures, when you look at 2016 as against 2017, the very categories you have called, there were significant reductions in 2017, in the estimates, so that I am certain you would have asked that then. So if you want to compare—

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** No.

**Madam Chairman:** I am not going to allow 2016 to 2018 on these Items.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** All right. Okay. If I can ask, under the Revised Estimates for 2017 you would see massive reductions in the expenditure, therefore massive reductions in the programmes. If we look at the 2017 Revised Estimates, in fact, that is the amount of money that basically has been spent. Could you just indicate what is really happening there?

**Hon. Garcia:** When we look at the Revised Estimates for 2017 and we compare it with the Estimates of 2018, what we see, in fact, is an increase. We are not seeing a reduction.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** A small amount but it is drastic in comparison to 2016.

**Hon. Garcia:** But we are seeing an increase. We are not comparing 2016.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Well, the Chairman indicated that, but I wanted to draw to your attention that that is a significant area that you, as a Government and a Ministry of Education, should be paying much more attention and having much more resources in those areas.

**Mr. Imbert:** Madam Chairman, could I just come in here on a general point? Could the Member suggest areas that we should cut in order to increase these Votes?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Well, that is your job, Minister. You cannot ask me to do your job.

**Mr. Imbert:** No, I am asking you since we are short on funds.

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Dr. Gopeesingh: You are the Minister of Finance, you know the overall.

Mr. Imbert: Could you tell us what area we should cut in order to provide additional allocations to these areas?

Dr. Gopeesingh: When we come back there across on that side—

Mr. Imbert: So you have no ideas? So you do not know where to get the money from? Okay.

Madam Chairman: So Item 009, Other Transfers. Member for Couva South.

Mr. Indarsingh: Madam Chair, I wanted to ask under 07, but—

Madam Chairman: Member, I think we have to go on to Other Transfers, 009.

Mr. Indarsingh: But you would not allow me one final question?

Madam Chairman: I allowed you many final questions. Item 009, Other Transfers. [Laughter] Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: I am looking at 011, which is further ahead, you want to go there?

Madam Chairman: No, just let me ensure that there is nobody under 009. Member for Naparima.

Mr. Charles:—at 011.

Madam Chairman: 011, Transfer To State Enterprises. Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Under line Item 02, National Schools Dietary Services Ltd., NSDSL, there is a marked decrease of $43 million from the 2017 Revised Estimates which was $200 million, and the estimates for 2018 is now $156 million. There is a decrease of $43 million, is it that there is going to be a reduction on the number of meals served and the number of students receiving the meals of $43 million? That is a very significant and important aspect of the education system.

Hon. Garcia: I can give you the assurance—and indeed the national community— that there will be no reduction in the provision of breakfast meals
and lunches to be served.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** But, Minister, if there was $200 million spent in 2017 under your revised estimates, and 156 is given this year you will be short of $43 million.

**Hon. Garcia:** There is the amount of $32,172,933 that was owed.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Right. And that was paid in 2017?

**Hon. Garcia:** Some of it was paid in 2017, yes.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** So are you carrying over debt from 2017 into 2018?

**Hon. Garcia:** No, but let me reiterate, as with everything else we have received some budgetary cuts, however, we had been assured by the National Schools Services Limited that everything is going to be put in place so that our children, those who are in need, will not be disadvantaged. We are determined not to reduce the quantum of meals that will be served. We are going to ensure that in discussions with our caterers they are going to use every means possible to ensure that there is value for money.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Sure, they do a great job, but do you have anything outstanding for these caterers for last fiscal year?

**Hon. Garcia:** Yes. The last time these persons received their stipend was towards the end of May in 2017, and we are looking forward to paying the caterers.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** All right, but you have to acknowledge that there is a marked cut of $43 million for the school feeding programme, and what you are going to do leaves a lot—we would have to ask the questions later on.

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

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Thank you, Madam Chair. To the Minister, under 08, Youth Training and Employment Partnership Programme Limited, YTEPP, Mr. Minister, you have decreased the allocation for 2018 by $9,383,600. Is this a signal that there will be retrenchment in this particular programme? And if so, how many,
and which centres, and so on, are to be closed?

**Hon. Garcia:** You are asking a question and you are providing answers, and those answers are not accurate. There will be no retrenchment.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Well, could you provide some information as it relates to the decrease in the allocation, what is the reason?

**Hon. Garcia:** If you look—[Interruption] Yes, if you want to find out—

**Mr. Indarsingh:** If the Prime Minister wants to make an intervention we will allow him, you know.

**Hon. Garcia:** No. No. The Prime Minister is coaching me. That is part of it too. That is his responsibility.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** However, that is the reason for his presence.

**Hon. Garcia:** Ask the question again, Sir?

**Mr. Indarsingh:** I am simply asking, Mr. Minister, there is a decrease of $9,383,600, you said there is no retrenchment, no centres will be closed, could you provide an explanation or rational for the decrease?

**Hon. Garcia:** The board of management of YTEPP has indicated that they are going to ensure that we get value for money in what is being done in those centres. I have first-hand information where that is concerned, where those YTEPP centres are concerned, and, of course, there are areas where we can ensure that efficiency would be the hallmark of their operations.

**Madam Chairman:** Okay. So we move on to—Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.

**Mr. Lee:** Thank you, Madam Chair. To the hon. Minister, line Item 09, National Energy Skills Centre, in 2017, $18.1 was spent and budgeted; 2018, $18 million. Could the Minister state if any NESC centres have been closed and where are they located if any was closed?

**Hon. Garcia:** There are three NESC centres that are earmarked for closure, and
the reason for that is simply because there is a drastic drop in enrolments. In one centre the enrolment is one, and the other two the enrolment is three each.

**Mr. Lee:** And where are those locations?

**Hon. Garcia:** One in La Brea, one in Point Fortin and one in Moruga.

**Mr. Lee:** Thank you.

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

**Mr. Singh:** Could the hon. Minister explain as to why this drastic drop and what outreach measures are being taken to capture a student cohort for these areas?

**Hon. Garcia:** NESC was originally established to provide support for the energy industries, and, as a result, the training that is offered, or that has been offered would be at the higher end of the tech-voc ladder. In other words, the level three training was that which was earmarked upon. What we have noticed and what we have been told is that in those areas the great majority of persons who needed training, and who are interested in being trained, they were train over the years. However, the need now is for us to revisit that programme and look at the lower level training so that persons will have the requisite skills at levels one and level two.

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

**Mr. Lee:** A follow-up question to the Minister in this same line Item, could the Minister state how many years the centres at Point Fortin, NESC, was in existence, and also Moruga?

**Hon. Garcia:** I do not have that information.

**Madam Chairman:** How many years they were in existence?

**Mr. Lee:** Yeah, these centres that they are now contemplating closure.

**Mr. Imbert:** What line Item is that, please?

**Hon. Garcia:** That is a question I am unable to answer at this point.
Mr. Imbert: No, no, hold on, Minister. What line Item is that, please?

Mr. Lee: Line Item 09.

Mr. Imbert: And is that relevant to the 2018 appropriation?

Mr. Lee: Yes.

Mr. Imbert: How?

Mr. Lee: Because he is contemplating closure.

Mr. Imbert: How you know that?

Mr. Lee: He said so. He said so just now. [Crosstalk]

Dr. Rowley: He was not supposed to be talking to you about that. That was not written in the budget.

Mr. Lee: It is a line Item, Prime Minister.

Dr. Rowley: It is not written in the budget. There is not a thing in the budget about closure; that is a speculation. [Crosstalk]

Madam Chairman: Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Are you on 06?

Madam Chairman: No.

Dr. Gopeesingh: All right.

Madam Chairman: Sub-Head 06, Current Transfers to Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies. We are going on to the book, Draft Estimates of the Revenue and Expenditure of Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies and the Tobago House of Assembly, 01, National Institute of Higher Education, Research, Science and Technology; Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure; 001 General Administration, page 155. That is where you are, Member for Caroni East?

Dr. Gopeesingh: I am on the book now. No, that is all right, Madam Chair.

Madam Chairman: Sub-Head 001, General Administration, Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services; 001, General Administration; Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment
Purchases, page 156; 001, General Administration; Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies, page 156; 007, Households; 12, Board of National Training, page 161; Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure; 001 General Administration; Sub-Head 001, General Administration. Member for Naparima?

Mr. Charles: I wanted to ask, what page is that?

Madam Chairman: We are on 12, Board of National Training.

Mr. Charles: 001?

Madam Chairman: Yes.

Mr. Charles: Just for my information, what is the Board of Industrial Training, what does it do?

Madam Chairman: The Board of National Training?

Mr. Charles: The Board of Industrial Training.

Madam Chairman: Okay.

Mr. Charles: I have heard this and I am a bit lost.

Hon. Garcia: That is an agency that has been in existence for quite some time that was supposed to supervise on tech-voc training. Over the years we have had the emergence of other training institutions. NTA, in particular, was given that job, and, again, as I have stated previously, we want to rationalize this, but at this point the Board of Industrial Training is not in active operation.

Mr. Charles: Okay.

Madam Chairman: Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services; 001, General Administration, page 161; Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies; 009, Other Transfers; 13, Trinidad and Tobago Commission for UNESCO; Sub-Head 01; 001, General Administration. Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services; 001, General Administration; Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases; 001, General Administration; 56, College of Science, Technology and Applied Arts of Trinidad
and Tobago, page 171; Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure.

Mr. Charles: Item 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies, a reduction of $7 million, it this what this reduction entails?

Hon. Garcia: Which line Item again?

Mr. Charles: Item 04, Current Transfers—

Madam Chairman: No. No. We are now at 01—

Hon. Garcia: We are not there as yet.

Mr. Charles: Oh, okay.

Madam Chairman: Okay?

Mr. Charles: Okay.

Madam Chairman: Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, page 171. Member for Caroni East, 001, General Administration.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Yeah. Item 16, under Contract Employment there is a $7.8 million reduction under Contract Employment, just a little explanation, please, hon. Minister, for COSTAATT.

Hon. Garcia: As with many other departments at the Ministry of Education we are trying to ensure that the posts that are on the establishment, those positions are filled and, therefore, it would negate the need for contractual employment.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Basically, how many people you feel are going to be affected? Let us say somebody had a three-year contract, how many people would be affected for non-renewal?

Hon. Garcia: That is information that I do not have at hand.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Would you be kind enough to provide it?

Hon. Garcia: We would try to get that for you.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Thanks. You have any idea about how many positions—permanent positions—are to be filled at COSTAATT?

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Hon. Garcia: That is information I would get for you also.

Dr. Gopeesingh: All right, thanks.

Madam Chairman: Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases; 001, General Administration; Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies; 006, Educational Institutions; 007, Households.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Madam Chair—

Madam Chairman: Member for Caroni East, you are aware we are at 007, Households?

Dr. Gopeesingh: “Oh God”, you ran a little fast there for me, but anyway. Can I go back to 006?

Madam Chairman: You are aware?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Item 006, just one question there on the School of Nursing.

Hon. Member: The Chair has passed there already.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Yeah. A $7 million reduction for the School of Nursing from $25 million to $18 million, when the Minister indicated that—

Madam Chairman: Any question?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Yeah. Is that as a result of decreased intake of students, or why you have a $7 million reduction for the School of Nursing?

Hon. Garcia: It is not a reduction, what had happened previously is that COSTAATT was paying out of its allocation the stipend for the students, the student nurses who operated from the University of the Southern Caribbean. COSTAATT is no longer required to do that.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Are there going to be a programme at the University of the Southern Caribbean or there is no programme?

Hon. Garcia: The University of the Southern Caribbean is a private institution, and we are looking at that because stipends have been paid in the past for students
who were enrolled at a private institution, and we want to find out what is the rationale behind this. So this is something that we are looking at very carefully.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** So if there are students there now, hon. Minister, what would happen to the fate of those students?

**Hon. Garcia:** We have not taken a decision as yet, we are looking at it very closely, bearing in mind the important thing is that it is a private institution.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** But, hon. Minister, I am aware that the University of the Southern Caribbean had received about $90-something million from the last PNM administration before 2010.

**Madam Chairman:** But, Member, we are under Households, School of Nursing, so I think you have asked the questions as relate to that. Okay.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Just let me clarify this, if you would give me a—

**Madam Chairman:** Yeah, but I am not allowing questions about the University of the Southern Caribbean.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** All right, the School of Nursing, so the School of Nursing would be concentrated on which campuses now or where?

**Hon. Garcia:** COSTAATT has a School of Nursing in El Dorado.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Right. That alone?

**Hon. Garcia:** Yes, that is COSTAATT, the former girls’ camp.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Right. We are aware of that, which Minister Karim implemented.

**Hon. Garcia:** Not at all.

**Mr. Imbert:** “Doh try dat.”

**Hon. Garcia:** Not at all, a PNM administration.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** You were Minister in 2002. [Crosstalk]

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Caroni East, are you finish? Hon. Members, we
will now move on to the *Draft Estimates of Development Programme*. We are at page 70, Sub-Head 09, Development Programme, Consolidation Fund; Item 003, Economic Infrastructure, page 70; Item 004, Social Infrastructure, pages 71 to 74.

Member for Chaguanas West.

**Mr. Singh:** Thank you, Madam Chair. With respect to Educational Services, Item 002, Scholarships, President’s Medal and Non-Advanced Level Examinations and 003, Scholarships/Full Pay Study Leave for Teachers, my question is, when is the scholarships for the academic year 2017/2018, arising out of CAPE, going to be announced?

**Hon. Garcia:** I do not want to tell you the exact date, but we are working on it. The reason for the delay is the fault of CXC. We only got the required information from CXC last week. And, as I speak, officers of the Ministry of Education are working assiduously in an effort to have these scholarships issued as soon as possible. Now, a Note has to be presented to Cabinet for Cabinet’s approval. So we are hoping that this can be done as quickly as possible.

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

**Mr. Singh:** Thank you for the clarification, Minister. As a follow-up, just a ballpark figure, what would be the number of scholarships, both open and additional, and further additional?

**Hon. Garcia:** Cabinet had taken a decision two years ago that we will have a cap on scholarships, and that cap stands at 400.

**Mr. Singh:** Four hundred?

**Hon. Garcia:** Yes.

**Madam Chair:** Member for Naparima.

**Mr. Charles:** Item 005, because I did not hear when you moved to G, and the question is refurbishment and customizing of the Waterloo facility, and I see no
allocation for 2017 and 2018, is this facility earmarked for closure?

**Hon. Garcia:** There was no allocation because it was completed.  
**Mr. Charles:** No, this is Waterloo. This is Waterloo.

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

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Item 003—

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Caroni East, Item?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Item 003, Scholarships/Full Pay Study Leave for Teachers, there is no allocation for 2018, does it mean that you are not giving any scholarships for teachers anymore, and what will happen with the retraining programme, and so on?

**Hon. Garcia:** The majority of persons, those who are student/teachers sent on scholarships to UTT have completed their programme, and they completed their programme in June 2017.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Thanks for PP, the PP Government.

**Hon. Garcia:** Okay. A few are awaiting final results, or have requested deferral for various reasons. No request was made for funding.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** So we have the full complement now because of the PP Government ensuring that the primary schools have all certified teachers with bachelor’s degree.

**Hon. Garcia:** You know, if I go to answer that question—

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Thank you, Minister, “doh” worry, “doh” worry. I just have one more, Programme of Development Scholarships.

**Madam Chairman:** Number, please.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Item 008, and 009, Post Graduate Scholarship, reductions there as well for Programmes of Development Scholarships and Post Graduate Scholarship; $3 million reduction of Post Graduate scholarship, and $1 million reduction on Programme of Development Scholarships. Is the Government
emphasis not continuing for development scholarships? And also, why is there a reduction for post-graduate scholarships? What is the policy of the Government on those two areas?

Hon. Garcia: Okay, let me answer by first stating that funds will be allocated to the payment of 15 scholars’ entitlements. There were no new scholarships awarded in 2016/2017. And with respect to post-graduate scholarships, funds will be allocated to the payment of 98 scholars’ entitlements; 24 additional persons are expected to access post-graduate scholarships awarded in October 2016/2017. No new awards were made under this programme in 2017 for start-up in 2017/2018 fiscal year.

Dr. Gopeesingh: And what would be your criteria for the award of these post-graduate scholarships now?

Hon. Garcia: Well, first of all we are looking at the developmental needs of the country, and that is one of the things that we are looking at.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Okay, I agree with that, but the other aspect, there was a policy where people over 50 were entitled to do post-graduate, were given post-graduate scholarships, which I think your Government has decided not to do anymore, so what is the rationale for your scholarships now?

Hon. Garcia: Is that a line Item, Sir?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Yes, Post Graduate Scholarship, 009.

Hon. Garcia: No, when you talk about people over 50 being granted scholarships, I do not know what line Item you are referring to.

Dr. Gopeesingh: That falls under the Item. What is your policy now for giving post-graduate scholarships to account for the $10 million that you are giving?

Hon. Garcia: The policy with respect to the GATE has been explained over and over, and I am sure you are fully aware—
Mr. Imbert: And in the budget statement.

Hon. Garcia: Yes.

Madam Chairman: This is not the page, this is Post Graduate Scholarship.

Dr. Gopeesingh: This is Post Graduate Scholarship, this is not GATE.

Hon. Garcia: Madam Chairman, the Member is a bit confused, I can understand why.

Mr. Imbert: Always.

Dr. Gopeesingh: My brain is as alert as ever.

Hon. Garcia: He is confused. [Crosstalk]

3.10 p.m.

Madam Chairman: Item 005.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Hon. Minister, line Item 003 under (g), following up on the Member for Caroni East. You indicated for 003 that there were no applications for scholarships for full pay study leave for teachers. I am asking, if there are requests, would the hon. Minister consider in light of the fact there is no allegation?

Hon. Garcia: If there are requests for?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Requests for scholarships for full study leave for teachers?

Hon. Garcia: In keeping with our operations, certainly we will consider it. That does not mean that at this point I am making a definite statement that we are going to grant it. We will give it active consideration.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you.

Madam Chairman: Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services, pages 74 and 75; Infrastructure Development Fund, page 204.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Madam Chairman, 74.

Madam Chairman: Item 004, Social Infrastructure, pages 204 to 207; Item 005,
Question put and agreed to.

Head 26 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Madam Chairman: Thank you, Minister; thank you PS and other representatives of the Ministry of Education.

Head 23: Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs, $263,953,450.

Madam Chairman: Members, we go to page 157. I will now invite the Attorney General to make a brief opening statement not exceeding five minutes.

Hon. Al-Rawi: Madam Chair, the Office of the Attorney General and Ministry of Legal Affairs is now a combined ministerial entity, pursuant to the Government’s policy for merger of Government Ministries in an effort to achieve cost saving measures.

As is the case, the Office of the Attorney General conducts a range of affairs prescribed properly under Gazette and also pursuant to constitutional roles, in the civil law, the criminal law and a number of entities that are supervised by the Office of the Attorney General—there are 15 in total—and also as coordinate function for courts of superior record. Thank you.

Question proposed: That Head 23 stand part of the Schedule.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Members, the sum of $263,953,450 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.

We now proceed to consider the Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure, page 157, sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure, Item 001, General Administration.

Dr. Gopreesingh: Hon. Attorney General, there is a reduction under Item 23 of
Salaries and Direct Charges, a reduction of $17 million from the $27 million in 2017. What is the explanation for that?

Hon. Al-Rawi: Sure. I thank the hon. Member for hitting the nail on the head. This particular reduction you would see actually has a ripple effect. If you were to turn to page 160, you would see a new Head called the Criminal Law Department. It is under Head 009, and you will see that there is provided some $18,657,000. What we sought to do is, in view of the importance of the Office of the DPP, we have, for the first time, created a new Head to govern and perhaps provide the gap between a sort of a semi-autonomous understanding between the Office of the Attorney General and the Office of the DPP, and therefore you would see reductions across a number of areas, all of which flow into this new Head 009.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Did this need any type of parliamentary intervention to create this new department?

Hon. Al-Rawi: No, Sir. The Criminal Law Division falls under the ambit of the Attorney General’s Office and has for years. What has gone on is that they have been stymied in their operation because moneys were fungible, insofar as they were pooled into one pot. By doing a disaggregation this way, it really signals out the importance of the Office of the DPP from the AG’s perspective.

Dr. Gopeesingh: So these would be basically payment for salaries for officers of the DPP?

Hon. Al-Rawi: All of the Head Items under the new Head 009, across the various Sub-Heads, Minor Equipment, et cetera, are captured there.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Thanks for the explanation.

Mr. Charles: Item 14, Remuneration to Members of Cabinet-Appointed Committees, 2016, $64,000, Revised Estimates 2017, $60,000, and it has not been increased. Are there new Cabinet committees established or there is an increase in
pay to existing?

Hon. Al-Rawi: No. What happened was, you recall that we had merged the two ends of Legal Affairs and the Attorney General’s Office, so the harmonization has now really been brought to bear. So there are no new committees per se, and this is just really bringing it to account.

Madam Chairman: Item 002, Law Commission.

Mr. Charles: Item 06.

Madam Chairman: We have not reached that as yet, but—

Hon. Al-Rawi: Under 02, remuneration—

Madam Chairman: We are under Item 002, Law Commission. You are on page 158? Yes, Remuneration to Board Members? Okay, sure.

Mr. Charles: Can the Minister explain the increase of $130,000?

Hon. Al-Rawi: Again, it is just really to bring the sums to book. So there has been no de facto or de jure change, it was really just a matter of applying the correct ranges and salaries to this across the board, so it is the sum that fits the purpose.

Madam Chairman: Item 003, Equal Opportunity Commission; Item 004, Legal Affairs; Item 005, Law Revision Commission; Item 007, Intellectual Property Office; Item 009, Criminal Law Department; Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, page 161; Item 001, General Administration.

Mr. Lee: To the Attorney General, line Item 16. I want to take line Items 16 and 22 together, Madam Chair, to the Attorney General.

Hon. Al-Rawi: Sure.

Mr. Lee: 2017 estimate was $27.5 million in Contract Employment, line Item 16, but the expenditure for 2017 was $40.9 million, a very substantial increase there. Could the Attorney General account for what was that over budgeted amount?
Hon. Al-Rawi: Well, actually it was the sum brought to book at the mid-year review, so the original estimate that you would see at 2017 of 27.5 was underestimated, and in an effort to maintain full employment in this end of the Ministry, at the mid-year we sought the appropriation of further sums of money. You recalled that the Attorney General’s Office was one of those, and Legal Affairs, and therefore, this represents the ability to keep on staff 1,062 bodies, in particular, 142 legal staff at permanent basis and 98 at contract, and in the non-legal staff, temporary at 434, contract at 242 and short-term at 144 bodies.

Mr. Lee: Follow-up question to the same line Item 16, Attorney General. I have to go back to 2016, actual was $28 million. The estimate for 2017 was $27 million. The question I have to ask, are these new hires in 2017 mid-term review?

Hon. Al-Rawi: Sure. No they are not. In fact, if you were to claw back the actual number of bodies in 2015, there were 1,142 bodies. In 2016, there were 1,132 bodies and, in 2017, there were 1,062 bodies. What happened was, we lost 165 people in 2016 as a result of the phenomenon now referred to as ghost gangs, persons who lacked qualifications. There was an inability to trace their employment status, there was no physical presence or attendance at work. Twelve persons were offered long-term contracts and therefore they moved from that particular position, and at the Attorney General’s end, no persons were terminated. So this represents the value for money figures as they were cleaned up.

Mr. Lee: Help me clarify, Attorney General. I am just trying to look at the numbers here. If you say there is no increase in employment or bodies for 2017 mid-year review, but the actual salaries for 2016 was $28 million, what accounted for—is it new salaries or—

Hon. Al-Rawi: It was the merger of the two Ministries.

Mr. Lee: Or, the merger of the two Ministries. Also line Item 22, Short-Term
Employment, would that also account for that?

**Hon. Al-Rawi:** Yes.

**Mr. Charles:** Item 23, Minister. Fees—do these fees relate to external legal advice or do they relate to the auditors who are completing the audit? And I have a follow-up question depending on your answer.

**Hon. Al-Rawi:** The fees represented there are the total fees at the Ministry end? I actually have a breakdown of the fees here. The actual amount identified here, you would notice in 2016 we started with $68-odd million; in 2017 we went to $50 million. We were at $47 million as the revised estimate, and now at 2018 we have gone down to $40 million.

That actual amount of $50 million will in fact have been spent by the year end. It represents a payment of $38-odd million to external entities, specifically for the DPP’s office. So roughly $40 million of the $50 million was spent at the DPP’s office in specialized work that the DPP is funding, which we put in priority to the AG’s office, and the AG’s office itself spent approximately $10 million, and of that $10 million we started clearing arrears. So we cleared $1.43 million of arrears of inherited fees and, in essence, we then spent roughly $8 million for the year in external fees, which represents approximately 6 per cent of the year on year spending of my predecessors.

So we have managed to drop the spend on external fees by 94 per cent on local attorneys, by using the Solicitor General’s and Chief State Solicitor’s Offices more efficiently.

**Mr. Charles:** Would the Minister state if the audits that are being conducted, if the moneys were allocated from this sum?

**Hon. Al-Rawi:** Again, no I would say. Let me put that clearly. There are audits at the DPP’s Office in particular in relation to the Clico matter that are funded
under the $40-odd million that the DPP’s Office has spent, so there would be sums included there. Are you referring to audits under the current investigative climate?

**Mr. Charles:** Yes.

**Hon. Al-Rawi:** There are some audit sums, yes, Sir.

**Mr. Charles:** If that is the case, could you indicate who are the auditors and the sums paid to them?

**Hon. Al-Rawi:** Just give me a moment, I actually have it here. It is PricewaterhouseCoopers and Ernst & Young. The Ernst & Young total spent was $14,196.32, and the PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) sum spent was $340,267.50 spread across two particular matters involving again a linkage into criminal investigations and not necessarily civil investigations.

**Mr. Charles:** Would the Minister state the agencies, Ministries, state enterprises that are being audited by these audit companies?

**Hon. Al-Rawi:** I would prefer not to. It is the subject of ongoing investigation and litigation.

**Mr. Imbert:** Just let me come in here. You should really have asked this question when the Ministry of Finance was being examined. We have a figure of $50 million for special audits of state enterprises.

**Mr. Charles:** So you are not prepared to say which agencies are being audited?

**Hon. Al-Rawi:** It would be improper for me to disclose too prematurely.

**Mr. Imbert:** But the Ministry of Finance will be auditing all?

**Mr. Charles:** May I just ask—you say it would be improper—

**Hon. Al-Rawi:** At this stage.

**Mr. Charles:**—but an audit is an audit. It gives you a basis for determining whether things were done wrongly in it.

**Hon. Al-Rawi:** I will draw the distinction between an audit by an auditor for the
purposes of section 66 of the Constitution provisions, as opposed to an audit for corruption or for other matters. For instance, at the EMBD and other areas where there were massive allegations of corruption and significant misbehaviour in public office, et cetera. So those matters, some of them are now in the public domain and there is a lot more to come as well. So it would be premature to speak to the litigation and criminal investigation side of it just yet.

**Mr. Charles:** Well, the other side that is not criminal and litigation, would you care to give us any info?

**Hon. Al-Rawi:** The other side we have no part of. The section 66 Auditor General issues fall under the Auditor General’s Head or the Ministry of Finance.

**Mr. Charles:** Could you tell us how many audits have been completed, or is that premature at this stage?

**Hon. Al-Rawi:** That has no business under the Attorney’s General Office, Sir, sorry. You mean, audits under the section 66 route?

**Mr. Charles:** That are being conducted by the Auditor General’s Department.

**Hon. Al-Rawi:** That is not my Head, Sir.

**Mr. Charles:** Okay.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 002, Law Commission; Item 003, Equal Opportunity Commission; Item 004, Legal Affairs.

**Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh:** Hon. AG, I am using lines 12, Materials and Supplies, 16, Contract Employment, Other Contracted Services, 28, and 22. I am linking all these to ask you one question. I am seeing all these, no allocation. We have no allocation for 12, 16—

**Hon. Al-Rawi:** There is an allocation, it is just under a different Head.

**Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh:** The question I am asking, is it then that at one time we used to get deeds maybe in four weeks, and I am looking at all the decreases.

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Hon. Al-Rawi: But there is no decrease here, Ma’am. The explanation is that all of these have now moved. As we have merged the Attorney General’s Office and Legal Affairs into one Ministry, all of this bracketed 004 has now moved across under General Administration under 001. So it is all provided for.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: Under Legal Affairs?

Hon. Al-Rawi: This Head 004, Legal Affairs, is now merged into General Administration, Head 001.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: Okay, I will ask it then.

Madam Chairman: Item 005, Law Revision Commission; Item 007, Intellectual Property Office; Item 008, National Centre for Dispute Resolution; Item 009, Criminal Law Department; Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases; Item 001, General Administration.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Under 03, Minor Equipment Purchases. Hon. Minister, can you advise on line Item 04, if Other Minor Equipment includes recorders, SIM cards and phones?

Hon. Al-Rawi: I fail to understand an iota of logic in that question.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: It is either it includes it or not, Minister.

Hon. Al-Rawi: The heading is Minor Equipment.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: I do not know. I am asking. I do not know what other line Item I would find it under.

Hon. Al-Rawi: I cannot even identify a scintilla of logic in that question.

Madam Chairman: Item 002, Law Commission. Member for Caroni East, is your hand up?

Dr. Gopeesingh: No.

Madam Chairman: Item 003, Equal Opportunity Commission; Item 004, Legal Affairs, page 168; Item 005, Law Revision Commission; Item 007, Intellectual
Property Office; Item 009, Criminal Law Department, page 169; Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies; Item 005, Non-profit Institutions.

**Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh:** Hon. AG, I am looking at 01, Legal Aid and Advisory Authority, and the estimate of $28 million. Does this allocation include payments for attorneys, both civil and criminal?

**Hon. Al-Rawi:** The Legal Aid and Advisory Advice Authority is regulated by statute. The primary purpose under law is for exactly that. Why would it be anything else but that?

**Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh:** How many attorneys?

**Hon. Al-Rawi:** Sorry, I do not want to be pejorative. Forgive me, Member for Oropouche West, I did not mean to come across that way, but it is just it was a little obvious. I was trying to understand.

**Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh:** That is okay. I know you do not want to be supercilious here. [*Laughter]*

**Hon. Al-Rawi:** That is a very nice word, Member for Oropouche West. That is a lovely word. The number of attorneys on staff, just give me a moment. Regrettably, I do not have it on hand. If you want I can look for it for you, but it depends upon the number of matters that actually go, so it is a moving target. It would be on a needs be basis. There is a pre-approved panel of attorneys that are actually selected, and then matters are assigned. So it is a number which is constantly in flux.

**Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh:** I am not sure if you could answer this, hon. AG, but is there any intention or plan to increase the payments with respect to criminal attorneys, because sometimes criminal matters take one month, murders especially?

**Hon. Al-Rawi:** There are two things that drive the answer to that. Firstly, that
there was an interpretation summons recently put in court on the part of the Law Association and other persons as to the application for the understanding behind how attorneys should be paid on the maximum end of $30,000 per matter or not. It was related to the experience in the Dana Seetahal excursion in the matters that she handled.

That judgment is currently being further considered, and that also ties into the second limb which is the reform that we are doing for legal aid and advice. We are proposing to build out a national centre where we morph the Legal Aid Authority into a public defenders department. We are far advanced on that. It does not involve legislation per se as it is currently formulated, it is a structural change. And so with those two limbs in gear, it may very well be that that is the consideration and it is under active watch.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Hon. Minister, on the same line Item, 01, Legal Aid. Would you be able to advise how many persons access legal aid and how many cases were successfully defended? You do not have to give me now.

Hon. Al-Rawi: Sure, we can get that for you. I actually have it on my computer but, unfortunately, not printed out.

Madam Chairman: Item 007, Households; Item 009, Other Transfers.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: Madam Chair, we are at 170? I just missed it.

Hon. Al-Rawi: Page 170, yes.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: Police Complaints Authority, 01. Hon. AG, how many complaints we have thus far at the PCA.

Hon. Al-Rawi: That is the subject of their annual report and they have reported, and it is laid in Parliament.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: Do you have a—

Hon. Al-Rawi: I do not. It is submitted to Parliament pursuant to its obligations.
Mr. Charles: A follow-up question on Police Complaints Authority. That $700,000, I think the person in charge of the Police Complaints Authority has complained about resources, staffing and empowered. Is this $700,000 likely to alleviate the kinds of problems that he has?

Hon. Al-Rawi: Hopefully so. It is a combination of better arrangement and utilization of facilities. For instance, some of it will come about by way of legislative amendments which we hope to bring in the coming weeks concerning the PCA; and, secondly, just by the sheer fact of doing more with less.

Mr. Charles: So what is this $700,000 going to do?

Hon. Al-Rawi: It will provide additional funding to them.

Madam Chairman: Item 010, Other Transfers Abroad.

Hon. Members, we will now move on to the Draft Estimates of Development Programme. Sub-Head, 09, Development Programme, Consolidated Fund, page 66; Item 004, Social Infrastructure, pages 66 and 67.

Mr. Lee: To the hon. Attorney General, line Item 018, Strengthening Information Management of the Registrar General’s Department; $50 million was allocated in 2017, 2.5 was spent, and I guess the balance of $30 million, which is an IDB loan—Could the Attorney General state what is the status of the strengthening in 2017, and what are the plans for 2018 to spend that?

Hon. Al-Rawi: Sure, thank you, hon. Member. This is one of the major points of activity at the Legal Affairs end of the Ministry. We have road mapped the work to be performed, so we are digitizing all of the records at the Registry. We have finished the records on the—as you would know, there are two types of registration instruments. There is the Real Property Ordinance and there is what we call the old law of title instruments.

We have done the RPO, the Real Property Ordinance digitization from 1970
upwards, and that is complete. We are now doing the pre-1970 records. What we have done is we have processed mapped out approximately 470 deeds under the old law system, and having then processed, mapped them out, we are now in a position, having retained a consultant, put on board more bodies to do scanning, et cetera. We are now in a process of working the arrangement forward.

It will have to be supplemented, because we are accelerating five years of work into one, and we have come up with conservative estimates to complete the digitization of approximately those 500,000 deeds, so that we can have a fully digitized registry, which would, of course, do two things: improve the ease of doing business but, more particularly, allow for the identification of fraud and evasion at the Registry. So this is a huge and very important project that has the utmost priority of the Attorney General’s Office.

Mr. Lee: When do you feel that this project will be completed?  
Hon. Al-Rawi: The project itself, both that which is already approved under the IDB side which is the RPO side of it, we are hoping in the next 18 months to be far advanced, if not complete. But the other side of it, we are hoping to complete it within a 12-month period from start. It is of utmost importance, and it anchors into the follow the money transactions.

If I can just be permitted one last word on this. It is revolutionary, ground-breaking and has the potential to crack the back of criminality in this country.

Madam Chairman: Member for Chaguanas West. [Desk thumping]  
Mr. Singh: Thank you for the desk pounding. I am dealing with, on page 67, Item 005, under Public Buildings, Establishment of a Chaguanas District Office. Could the hon. Attorney General explain what is this?
3.40 p.m.

Hon. Al-Rawi: Sure. It is tied in to the legal aid end, so it is for the district office for the Legal Aid and Advisory Authority which is why you would see a relatively modest sum there; it is meant as a satellite receiving office for the Legal Aid Authority.

Mr. Singh: Okay.

Madam Chairman: Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Item 003 on page 67, Attorney General.

Hon. Al-Rawi: Yes, Sir.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Refurbishment of Magistrates’ Courts.

Hon. Al-Rawi: Yes, Sir.

Dr. Gopeesingh: We do not see any allocation whatsoever at all—

Hon. Al-Rawi: Because we have taken it under the Judiciary’s heading instead.

Dr. Gopeesingh: So when we come to Judiciary—

Hon. Al-Rawi: Yes, Sir.

Dr. Gopeesingh: —we will get an explanation for it?

Hon. Al-Rawi: Yes. And that work has, in fact, commenced and it may very well need to be supplemented as we work out the value-for-money questions there.

Dr. Gopeesingh: When we come to there, we will—

Hon. Al-Rawi: Sure.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Yeah.

Madam Chairman: Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.

Mr. Lee: Thank you, Madam Chairman. To the Attorney General, page 68. I want to take line Items 012, 013 and maybe part of 014, about the DPP’s—

Hon. Al-Rawi: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Lee: —Outfitting of Accommodation. Based on the legislation that you have...
brought to Parliament over the past 12 months or so, and it talked a lot about improving the human resource capacity and the office structure of the DPP, I see very small allocations here of $500,000, and then during the course of 2015, the only major work I am assuming that would have been done in the DPP was in Tobago of $2.3 million. Could you explain what is really happening with the DPP—

**Hon. Al-Rawi:** Absolutely. Apart from—

**Mr. Lee:**—or is it just talk?

**Hon. Al-Rawi:** Far from talk, my friend. Let me put it into context for you. Firstly, you would have seen the creation of a new Sub-Item, Head 009, for the Office of the DPP. Secondly, you would have seen that we took 90 per cent of our legal fees and we prioritized it to the Office of the DPP. Those two are a first in the history of Trinidad and Tobago and demonstrate the commitment of a Government that is serious about the Office of the DPP.

Thirdly, it is in the public domain that we have improved the staff complement of the DPP by factors never experienced before.

Fourthly, the DPP is currently sitting upon two very important matters which he will no doubt bring to fruition shortly. Firstly, the first limb, the appointment of officers by way of promotion in the Office of the DPP. We are awaiting the DPP’s sign-off on those positions. As soon as they are signed off, the staff complement, again, improves and that is entirely in the DPP’s hand. We remind him approximately every Monday, every week, of every month.

And secondly, it is in the outfitting of the offices of the DPP. The three offices now provided for the DPP are awaiting his signature in respect of the south office and the north office. The buildings have been allocated, their outfitting has
been arranged. We are awaiting the DPP’s sign-off of those plans. We did receive the sign-off of the DPP’s office for Tobago, and the Tobago department has, in fact, had significant advance.

The Property Management Division is currently in final negotiations for a certain bit of those aspects. There is more. There is also the fact that we have introduced a computerized environment for the first time for case management in the DPP’s Office, and the advancement of case management officers in conjunction with the Criminal Procedure Rules. Again, this is ground-breaking, never-before-done-before attention to the Office of the DPP, so this is far from just talk.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Head 23 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.*

**Madam Chairman:** Thank you, Attorney General, Madam PS, and the other technocrats.

*Head 03:* Judiciary, $336,636,750.

**Hon. Al-Rawi:** Madam Chair, we will be sharing this Head, the Minister of Finance and I. In his desire to create the autonomy for the Judiciary, the Minister of Finance is deeply involved in this exercise.

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

**Hon. Imbert:** I will defer on that to the Attorney General.

**Madam Chairman:** Attorney General.

**Hon. Al-Rawi:** [Laughter] Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, the Judiciary of Trinidad and Tobago needs little introduction insofar as the separation of powers principle is involved. But this year the Judiciary of Trinidad and Tobago has excellent, ground-breaking and revolutionary news in its achievements which
find themselves in these Heads of Expenditure in particular in the operationalization of reforms at the criminal side of the equation with the Criminal Procedure Rules and the with the legislative amendments that they have supported via the Parliament’s introduction of Bills debated.

And secondly, by achieving a first of its kind in the introduction of the Family and Children Division of the court which is an in-tandem exercise between the Government of Trinidad and Tobago and the Office of the Attorney General with the Judiciary. Put into simple form, the Judiciary in conjunction with the Government’s very aggressive and accomplished legislative agenda will have passed the Family and Children Division Bill; implemented all protocols; secured the location of two buildings to function as courts in Trinidad and Tobago; amended 18 pieces of laws; coordinated with international agencies and local agencies; and have received approximately 13,000 applications for persons to fill positions.

To have achieved all of that in a 15- to 16-month period has never happened in the history of Trinidad and Tobago, and for that the Government wishes to express its profound gratitude to the hon. Chief Justice and to the Judiciary for a job most well done. Thank you.

Question proposed: That Head 03 stand part of the Schedule.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Members, the sum of $336,636,750 for Head 03, Judiciary is comprised of moneys proposed for expenditure under the following Sub-Head and Items to be found in the Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure and the Draft Estimates of Development Programme. We now proceed to consider the Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure, we are at page 11.

Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure, Item 001, Judiciary - Trinidad, page 11; Item 002, Judiciary - Tobago, page 12; Item 003, Judiciary - Family Court,
page 13; Item 004, Judiciary - Children Court, page 13. Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, page 14; Item 001, Judiciary - Trinidad; Item 002, Judiciary - Tobago, pages 14 and 15; Item 003, Judiciary - Family Court, pages 16 and 17; Item 004 Judiciary - Children Court, page 17. Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.

Mr. Lee: Thank you, Madam Chair, 04 Judiciary, line Item 08, $3 million. It is a new line Item, new Head, sorry. Where is the location of this Children Court and the rent and—where is the location of the Children Court?

Hon. Al-Rawi: They are—

Hon. Imbert: Opposite the Queen’s Park Oval.

Mr. Lee: Queen’s Park Oval.

Hon. Al-Rawi: There are two Family Courts, two Family and Children Courts. There is one in Fyzabad and there is one in St. Clair on Elizabeth Street. So those are the two offices. One is referred to as our south court and the other one is our north court. You would note in all of Items that we have just traversed, I should point out for the record, that these are brand- new Items for children and for family division; this is a first in the budgetary cycle for Trinidad.

Hon. Imbert: Could I just clarify, are you on page 13?

Mr. Lee: No. Page 17. Yeah. We have passed 13 already.

Hon. Imbert: So you are on Goods and Services?

Mr. Lee: Yes.

Hon. Imbert: Okay. So one is there by the Oval and the other one in Fyzabad.

Mr. Lee: Correct. And the other question is: When would we see these courts opening?

Hon. Al-Rawi: The Fyzabad court is ahead of the Port of Spain court right now. We were hoping to have them operationalized for the month of October. As a result of some budgetary constraints, we were not able to have that done, but we
are certainly hoping for openings this year in both locations.

Mr. Lee: So we do not have a time?

Hon. Al-Rawi: This year. We have November and December this year. This will be a landmark event for Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Lee: You have a lot of landmarks there.

Hon. Al-Rawi: Yes, Sir. Very much so, for the first ever.

Madam Chairman: Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, Item 001 Judiciary - Trinidad; Item 003, Judiciary - Family Court; Item 004, Judiciary - Children Court; Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies, page 19; Item 002, Commonwealth Bodies; Item 009, Other Transfers.

Hon. Members, we will now move on to the Draft Estimates of Development Programme, we are at page 4. Sub-Head 09, Development Programme, Consolidated Fund; Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services, pages 4 to 5; Infrastructure Development Fund, page 190; Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services, page 190.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 03 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Madam Chairman: Thank you.

Head 62: Ministry of Community Development, Culture and the Arts, $371,603,900.

Madam Chairman: I will now invite the Minister of Community Development, Culture and the Arts to make a brief opening statement not exceeding five minutes.

Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: Thank you, Madam Chairman. The Ministry of Community Development, Culture and the Arts has a mandate to build resilient, culturally rich communities. Our focus is citizen-centred development of our human capital upon which the strength of our nation rests. To this end, the work of

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the Ministry of Community Development, Culture and the Arts involves programmes focused on policy formation; skills training; artist development; community entrepreneurship; community and performance infrastructure; immersion in culture and the arts; personal development; support for community initiatives; heritage preservation and support and development of the cultural tourism product.

The staff and executives at the Ministry of Community Development, Culture and the Arts continue to work assiduously to do more with less and deliver quality programming to the deserving citizens of Trinidad and Tobago. Thank you, Madam Chairman.

*Question proposed:* That Head 62 stand part of the Schedule.

**Madam Chairman:** Hon. Members, the sum of $371,603,900 for Head 62, Ministry of Community Development, Culture and the Arts is comprised of moneys proposed for expenditure under the following Sub-Heads and Items to be found in the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure*, the *Draft Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure of the Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies* and the *Tobago House of Assembly*, and the *Draft Estimates of Development Programme*. We now proceed to consider the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure*. We are at page 317. Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure; Item 001, General Administration, page 317. Member for Princes Town.

**Mr. Padarath:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Minister, line Item 14, Remuneration to Members of Cabinet-Appointed Committees, with an allocation of $100,000. Could the Minister indicate at this point, how many Cabinet-Appointed Committees fall under this particular Vote, and if she would also indicate what is the mandate of these Cabinet-Appointed Committees?

**Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly:** Madam Chairman, there is one Cabinet-appointed
committee, the Artist Registry and that committee is mandated to be a registrar and a repository for all the artists registered in the country, and that gives them their bona fides and it also runs the Mentoring by the Masters Programme.

Mr. Padarath: Thank you. Minister, could you also indicate what are the number of persons on this one Cabinet-appointed committee?

Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: Twelve persons.

Madam Chairman: Member for Couva South.

Mr. Indarsingh: Thank you, Madam Chair. Could the Minister just provide some kind of explanation as it relates to 01? What is the reason for the $1.3 million or approximately $1.4 million increase?

Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: We have staff that have to come on and that provision is made for the staff that comes on.

Mr. Indarsingh: How many staff will come on, Minister, and what is the process that this staff will be recruited by?

Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: All staff are recruited by advertisement in the paper and they go through the normal processes.

Mr. Indarsingh: And how many?

Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: Also through Service Commissions. We do not have a number at this point in time.

Mr. Indarsingh: Would you be so kind to probably provide in writing the numbers and provide a breakdown in terms of the classification?

Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: Under General Administration the number of staff to be hired?

Mr. Indarsingh: Well, yeah. What type?

Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: If the Member so requests.

Mr. Indarsingh: Well, I so request.
Madam Chairman: Item 002, Community Development Division. Member for Princes Town.

Mr. Padarath: Thank you, Madam. Minister, line Item 08. Could you indicate at this point what is the current complement or the total number of staff at the Ministry and how many vacancies there are with respect to on the establishment?

Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: We have 514 members of staff and we have 257 vacant positions. Sorry. Established officers, we have 183 vacant positions.

Madam Chairman: Item 006, Item 007, Item 008, page 318; Item 008; Item 009, page 319. Member for Oropouche West.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: Madam Chair, under 05, Goods and Services and 02, with Telephones, 05.

Madam Chairman: We have not reached Sub-Head—you are under Sub-Head 02?

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: Yes.

Madam Chairman: We have not reached there as yet.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: Sure.

Madam Chairman: Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services; Item 001, General Administration. This is where you are, Member for Oropouche West?

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: Yes.

Madam Chairman: Yes, please.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: Hon. Minister, I am looking at 05, Telephones, and $720,000. Could you give a reason for such a high bill or allocation?—$720,000

Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: This is the bill for the entire Ministry and we have, as I would have stated, 514 staff. We have over 21 offices country-wide, and I do not think that this is an exorbitant bill.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: What is the Ministry’s policy with respect to the
use of phones when officers go abroad?

**Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly:** There is a government policy for the use of cell phones and we comply with that policy.

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

**Mr. Padarath:** Thank you, Madam. Minister, line Item 16, Contract Employment. We see an increase of $1.3 million in this particular area, a total estimate of $9,780,000 with 6.7 having been spent in 2016. One, can you indicate to us how many persons are on contract employment in the Ministry; which areas you intend to increase with this allocation of $9.7 million, two; and three, whether or not there are existing contracts that are up for renewal in this financial year; and how that will impact on this in terms of whether or not those contracts will be continued or whether or not these will be additional persons being brought in?

**Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly:** We have a total of 454 contract positions at the Ministry. The increase in that Vote is to satisfy the procurement unit, sorry, which has to come on—a total of 13 persons. We also have a number of positions being filled mainly at the National Academy for Performing Arts, both the north and south campus, and that is to be able to satisfy those needs.

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

**Mr. Padarath:** Thank you, Madam. Hon. Minister, line Item 09, Rent/Lease - Vehicles and Equipment, an increase by $176,000. If you can give us an idea with respect to the rent/lease part, at least, how these funds will be utilized and which particular locations are you looking at for such an increase?

**Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly:** Okay. That Vote covers our photocopiers and all other equipment like that across the divisions. And if you would notice, Member, in 2016 the expenditure was just shy of $500,000, it went down to 400 in 2017, and so the increase really is just an estimate of what we will use, it is not necessary that
we will use all of that, but it is just an estimate given for what we will use.

Madam Chairman: Member for Princes Town.

Mr. Padarath: Thank you, Madam. Similarly, Minister, line Item 10, Office Stationery and Supplies, an increase of almost a quarter of a million dollars, which seems to be a steep increase in this particular area. What would have accounted for such an allocation?

Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: Again, the same estimate applies. This is an estimate as was seen; the entire allocation was not utilized for that in the last fiscal, and so this is just an estimate as to what we will need in the rest. If we do not use all, it just remains lower than it should be.

Mr. Padarath: Minister, then would you agree with me, if you look at some of these Items, Office Stationery and Supplies on line Item 10, 09, Rent/Lease and so on, if we were to take your logic that some of these moneys will not be utilized and these are really estimates therefore, why are we seeing significant decreases in other substantial areas where these areas are actually seeing increases?

Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: Which line Item are you on?

Mr. Padarath: The logic does not follow.

Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: Which line Item are you on?

Mr. Padarath: 09 and 10.

Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: But those are not decreases. You have mentioned decreases. Which line Item are you referring to with the decreases?

Mr. Padarath: When we go along, I will raise it.

Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: Please do.

Madam Chairman: Item 002, Community Development Division. We are at page 321; Item 005. Member for Princes Town, are you aware?

Mr. Padarath: I am on 328, the brought forward, Madam, from page 319 on to
Madam Chairman: Okay. So I will ask you to stick with us, please.

Mr. Padarath: Sure.

Madam Chairman: You are still under General Administration?

Mr. Padarath: Yes, Madam.

Madam Chairman: Item number?

Mr. Padarath: Line Item 21 under 001, General Administration brought forward on to page 320.

Madam Chairman: Your question.

Mr. Padarath: Yes. Madam, if we look at line Item 19, there is an increase with respect to Official Entertainment. Could the hon. Minister indicate what anticipation in terms of Official Entertainment we are looking at for line Item 19 to warrant an increase of $700,000 if we are looking at value for money and saving and all of that in the area of Official Entertainment.

Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: Madam Chairperson, through you. We are not looking at any particular increase, it is an estimation given if there is to—if we have to, in any case, entertain official guests. As you would notice, we are very focused on value for money and ensuring that we spend money very wisely. You would notice the spend in 2017 was a very low $20,000.

Madam Chairman: Member for Princes Town.

Mr. Padarath: Thank you. Minister, line Item 21, Repairs and Maintenance – Buildings, an increase of $425,000. If you would be kind enough to indicate to us which buildings are we referring to under this Vote Item?

Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: We have offices at Jerningham Avenue, as well as St. Ann’s that require work done on their sewer systems and so on and this is to cater for that.
Madam Chairman:  Member for Princes Town.

Mr. Padarath:  Madam, I am on line Item 27, Official Overseas Travel, an increase of $100,000.  If the Minister would be kind enough to indicate over the last fiscal year what were the official overseas travel that occurred in her Ministry, and for the purposes?  And if we can get a similar approach with respect to fiscal year 2017/2018?

Madam Chairman:  You want it in respect of 2017/2018?

Mr. Padarath:  Last fiscal year and what projections are there for 2018?

Madam Chairman:  And what are planned for this year?

Mr. Padarath:  Yes.

Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly:  There were three overseas trips by the Ministry, two were taken by myself, one by the PS, and for 20—three, four because it was CARIFESTA, there was one to Bahamas, and there was one to Abu Dhabi to a parliamentary conference, and the PS took one to Paraguay; those were the four that were covered under this Vote.  And for 2018, there are no trips planned at this time.

Madam Chairman:  Member for Princes Town.

Mr. Padarath:  Thank you, Madam.  Madam Minister, line Item 37 and 43, and it is something that I have raised continuously.  Again, if you can provide explanation, I see a heavy increase of $355,000 for Janitorial Services, Security Services, a quarter of a million dollar increase.  Are these for outstanding bills, and/or whether or not these are private service providers or whether or not this is MTS?

Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly:  Some would be to pay outstanding bills.  We have quite a number; with 21 offices you would imagine that we have quite a number of service providers, MTS being one of them, and there are various number of
janitorial services and security that perform services at our offices.

**Mr. Padarath:** Thank you. Madam, in that case would you be able to provide us with the list of service providers including MTS and the values of those existing contracts?

**Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly:** We can provide that in writing.

**Mr. Padarath:** Sure.

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

**Mr. Padarath:** Madam, line Item 62, Promotions, Publicity and Printing, $270,000 increase. Could the hon. Minister indicate at this point what plans and programmes are being set up in the Ministry that would account for such an increase of over a quarter of a million dollars in the area of Promotions, Publicity and Printing?

4.10 p.m.

**Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly:** This Vote covers all of the Ministry’s advertisement for contract positions, various bulletins and so that we have to cover. Again, Member, the allocation is made, and every effort is made within the Ministry to ensure that we get value for money as much as possible, so the allocation is there, it is an estimate.

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

**Mr. Padarath:** Thank you. Minister, line Item 99, Employee Assistance Programme, I just really wanted to have an idea of how many employees have accessed this particular Vote?

**Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly:** Hon. Member, we do not have the actual numbers available to the entire Ministry. If the Member would like it in writing, we can provide that.

**Mr. Padarath:** Sure, that will be helpful.
Madam Chairman: Member for Couva South.

Mr. Indarsingh: Thank you, Madam Chair. The Minister just informed this meeting in relation to 22, Short-Term Employment, $1,710,000. How many persons will be employed via this line Item, and how they are utilized throughout her Ministry?

Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: We have 74 short-term employees that appear on that Vote. They span across the National Theatres Company, the National Academy for Performing Arts, both north and south campus, and that is being regularized at the moment by the executives of the Ministry.

Madam Chairman: Item 002, Community Development Division; Item 005, Mediation Centres. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, 08 line Item. Just to ask a couple questions: First of all, how many centres are there and the locations? And what are the success rates in terms of how many persons have actually accessed the Mediation centres?

Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: Member, in so far as this deals with rent/lease, I do not know if the success rates fall under this line Item. I can give you the number of centres that we have around the country—Mediation Centres. Just one minute. [Hon. Minister peruses document] So we have centres established in the Port of Spain, San Juan, Cunupia, Couva, Point Fortin, Tunapuna, Arima and Penal-Debe.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Is there any intention to establish more?

Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: Yes, we do have more that have been approved by Cabinet, and we would do our best to see if they can be established on a phase basis.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Okay, and can you identify where those proposed sites will be?
Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: At this time we do not have any of those that are actually on the way to being established, so I would not want to give an undertaking that we are establishing in any particular area.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Okay, and is it that these Mediation Centres were located based on a need in those areas?

Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: They were located to service the entire country, so they were located all over in different districts.

Madam Chairman: Member for Princes Town.

Mr. Padarath: Madam, my question leads into probably what—

Madam Chairman: What line Item?

Mr. Padarath: Yes, line Item 66—leads into probably the issues raised by the Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla and expanded on in answer by the Minister of Community Development, Culture and the Arts. Line 66, Minister, an increase of $147,000 under this particular Vote, and my question really—and you sort of pre-empted that, by speaking about the expansion of these centres. Could you give us then an idea, because then the success rates will really follow in terms of what the Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla was asking, that if we are expanding—as you have indicated—

Madam Chairman: Member, one minute, is 66 you said?

Mr. Padarath: Yes.

Madam Chairman: This is Hosting of Conferences, Seminars and other Functions?

Mr. Padarath: Yes, Ma’am. I am speaking about increases here, and in terms of the increasing role of these additional centres, I am trying to raise with the hon. Minister. Whether or not this will cater for those that we are seeing the increase here under this particular Vote in tandem with what is to come, or these are for the
existing centres?

**Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly:** This Vote really deals with the thrust of the mediation department to do community empowerment sessions in conflict resolution, anger management, and so on throughout the country, as well as sensitization series which would indicate to our citizens what services are available under the mediation division.

**Mr. Padarath:** So therefore, Madam Minister, the increase that we are seeing here for $147,000, it could be that with the expansion of these mediation centres that the allocation here, the increase, could really account for these other centres that would be forthcoming over the next—

**Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly:** No, this increase is to deal with the empowerment series as well as the sensitization series that they are undergoing right now.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Thank you. Hon. Minister, same line Item 66. When you spoke about the empowerment, if you are empowering persons—I am coming back again—what is the success rate like? Can you indicate, through the Empowerment Programme?

**Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly:** I do not know what success rate the Empowerment Programme should have. This programme it goes out, and people come to the programme in order to learn things about conflict resolution, anger management, and so on.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** In other words, Chair, through you, do you have a monitoring and evaluation programme? How would you be able to determine if this Empowerment Programme is in fact impacting? I mean, you are having—

**Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly:** That is determined by the number of persons that would access mediation services, the programme itself, over the year.
Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Okay. So, would you determine therefore if there is a mediation programme that has been followed through, would you say that if there is a return of that particular individual, because there is a recurrent problem, would you determine that the first mediation was in fact not successful? How do you measure it?

Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: Madam Chairperson, I am not sure that this question falls to this line Item. I think I have explained sufficiently that this line Item deals with two specific programmes, and others of the mediation department, which involves empowerment series, anger management, conflict resolution, and also sensitization series, encouraging persons to use the mediation division and their services as an alternative to the courts.

Madam Chairman: Member for Princes Town.

Mr. Padarath: Thank you, Madam. Madam, line Item 66, the hon. Minister indicated that this Vote will be used to encourage persons through sensitization, et cetera, to utilize these services. Minister, really, from my own information, can you really give us an idea of which specific locations you had given in the past few minutes in terms of those where the centres are identified? In terms of where do you see the highest participation rates?

Madam Chairman: This is under conferences?

Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: Is this under—again, Madam Chairperson, I am very glad about the interest to the mediation division, but I feel as though there are other avenues to get that type of information. I also remind the Member that I would have sent letters to each office asking them to engage in the series. [Interruption] The sensitization series. So, maybe there is another mechanism by which they can get the information they are seeking. I do not see it ties to this line Item.

Mr. Padarath: I shall be grateful.

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Madam Chairman: Okay, so we are moving on. Item 006, Best Village.

Mr. Padarath: Thank you, Ma’am. Line Item 43, the issue of Security Services, an increase of $50,000. Again, under Best Village, whether or not this is MTS, or whether or not this is private security? And if it is private security, if we can get the details with respect to the service providers and the values of these contracts?

Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: We would have to provide that in writing.

Madam Chairman: Member for Princes Town.

Mr. Padarath: Madam, line Item 62, Promotions, Publicity and Printing under Best Village. With respect to an increase of $115,000, could the hon. Minister indicate with respect to the Best Village Programme, why such a large increase?

Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: Madam Chairperson, under this Vote comes the marketing of the Best Village Programme and, as the Member may know, $115,000 increase, when we are speaking about doing ads, doing social media thrust and so on, really is not a large increase. But we are intending to push the Best Village Programme a lot more into areas that do not traditionally participate in the Best Village Programme. We see that programme as a very important one for our young people in engaging them in positive activity. So we want to ensure that we allocate just a bit more here to be able to do more in pushing this programme across the country.

Mr. Padarath: Minister, is it then that through the Best Village Programme over the next year we will not only see additional target areas in terms of geography, but we will also see additional areas in terms of talent and so on?

Madam Chairman: This is for Promotions, Publicity and Printing?

Mr. Padarath: Yes.

Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: Again, the question is little bit tangential. However,
Member, thorough discussion of the categories of Best Village cannot be had under this line Item, but we can have that on another forum.

**Mr. Padarath:** Okay. Minister, as you raised it in some form, I was just trying to get an idea of whether these are some of the plans of the Ministry that we will see forthcoming.

**Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly:** You can certainly raise it under another line Item—a responding.

**Mr. Imbert:** Is this the correct line Item?

**Mr. Padarath:** Yes, it is.

**Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly:** No, it is not. [Laughter]

**Mr. Imbert:** I did not think so. I think you are trying something there.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 0007, Arts and Multi-Culturalism; Item 008, Culture Division; Item 009, National Diversity; Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, page 326; Item 001, General Administration; Item 002, Community Development Division; Item 005, Mediation Centres; Item 006, Best Village; Item 007, Arts and Multi-Culturalism; Item 008, Culture Division; Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies; Item 005, Non-Profit Institutions. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Under 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies, line Item 06. I just want to ask the hon. Minister, does this allocation take into account the operationalization of the Plum Mitan Community Centre?

**Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly:** No, it does not. This is an open Vote where community centres in need would be able to get assistance with their light bill and their operational activities. So, the Plum Mitan Centre, not directly for the Plum Mitan Centre, but the Plum Mitan Centre, we expect to be operationalized in fiscal 2018, and therefore any assistance to that centre in terms of their operating expenditure is

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

Mr. Padarath: Thank you, Madam. Madam, line Item 05, Contribution to Community-Based Organizations, there is an allocation of $7.3 million for 2018, an increase of 2.3, almost $2.4 million. Could the hon. Minister indicate, with respect to these Community-Based Organizations, over the last financial year, those who would have benefited, and whether or not these are standing Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) or whether these are based on applications, actual applications?

Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: Notwithstanding the name given to this line Item, this line Item really deals with the programming of the Community Development Division, specifically the Community Education Programme, the community development days, community festivals, the craft markets, and so on. So, this does not deal with that kind of funding that you are referring to.

Mr. Padarath: Sure. And if we look at line Item 15, Madam Minister, Contribution to Cultural Organizations, an allocation of $8 million with a decrease of $1 million. Again, this particular Vote, whether or not these are standing contributions, or whether or not these are based on actual applications, and what would have accounted for the decrease in this particular area?

Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: These are based on applications, and the decrease in this area would be as a result of our constrained economic circumstances, and that is how it would be.

Mr. Padarath: Can we ask the hon. Minister to provide, Madam, through you, on line Item 15, those who would have applied over the last financial year, together with those who would have been successful and how much was actually granted to
these organizations?

Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: Certainly, we would provide that in writing.

Madam Chairman: Member for Princes Town.

Mr. Padarath: Madam, line Item 19, the National Museum and Art Gallery, an increase of $1 million—and I do not mean to be facetious about this at all. But when you look at the allocation of $3.5 million under this particular line Item, could the hon. Minister indicate what would have accounted for this particular increase, whether or not it would have to do with any additional pieces of art that are being purchased at this time?

Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: No.

Mr. Padarath: No. Okay.

Madam Chairman: Member for Fyzabad.

Dr. Bodoe: Minister, with regard to Item 04, Original Complexes, could you provide, perhaps in writing if you want, the complexes and the allocations for 2017 and the projection for 2018?

Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: This deals with the staff and the operational costs for the complexes. You want for all 17 centres, you want these?

Dr. Bodoe: Yes, thank you.

Mr. Imbert: You do not really want that.

Dr. Bodoe: Well, I actually—

Mr. Imbert: You really want the fund, you do not really want that, all complexes.

Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: All complexes—the staff of all complexes are paid by the Ministry under that line Item, and their operational cost.

Mr. Singh: If you could put that information in writing, please.

Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: You want for all 17 centres, you want the breakdown that goes for each centre?

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Mr. Imbert: You do not really want that.

Mr. Singh: But we will take it.

Madam Chairman: Member for Chaguanas West?

Mr. Singh: Thank you, Madam Chair. Item 007, 09, Music Schools.

Madam Chairman: All right, we have not reached 007 as yet, but we will take you there. Item 007, Households. Member for Chaguanas West.

Mr. Singh: Yes, Madam Chair. Item 09, Music Schools in the Community, an allocation of $1.5 million seems to be a new project and I would like to find out the location of those Music Schools, because I am supportive of the idea.

Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: “Hmm mm.” It is not a new project. It has been going on for quite a number of years, and it is located in five regions around the country. We will provide it in writing to you.

Madam Chairman: Member for Princes Town.

Mr. Padarath: Minister, line Item 08, Hosting of Cultural Camps, an increase of $200,000 from the last financial year. Could the hon. Minister indicate which target areas we are looking at in terms of geography with respect to the hosting of these cultural camps for 2018? And, also, with respect to the last financial year, those that would have operated, the locations for those?

Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: These cultural camps are camps run by private persons. They apply for funding—for assistance from the Ministry, and it is a nationwide call, and the Ministry responds by vetting the camps that apply, and they happen all over the country. What it is you are requesting? So, we cannot give you for 2018, because, obviously that call has not been made.

Mr. Padarath: The list for 2017, last financial year, in terms of which particular locations these cultural camps were located in? And as we are on that as well, hon. Minister—and having said this is really pretty much a subvention to private—
Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: No, it is not a subvention, it is a grant.

Mr. Padarath: Well, as a grant, can you also indicate what the criteria for this grant is?

Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: When the call comes out—we can indicate for 2017 the schools that came in and the call that was made at that time for you.

Mr. Padarath: So it is free money?

Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: Free—

Mr. Padarath: You cannot say who you give it to and what the criteria is.

Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: No, no, no.

Madam Chairman: But, Member—

Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: I indicated to you—

Madam Chairman: Member, that is not correct. The Member said she would provide the listing.


Madam Chairman: Member for Tabaquite.

Dr. Rambachan: Thank you, Madam Chair. I know a question was asked on number 09, Music Schools in the Community. I see it is a new Item. I would like to understand whether these are schools that will be set up by the Ministry, or these are existing schools, and how are they going to access this $1.5 million if it is existing? What is the philosophy and thinking behind this please?

Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: These are schools that are existing. Some of them are pan yards that are existing, and in five locations around the country where classes are offered in music literacy, both in steel pan as well as they have one instrument that goes with that, and they learn that, and then they do a performance, and that is what happens. It has happened for the last five years, I believe. So, that is how it is organized.
Dr. Rambachan: Okay. Is the Minister aware that there are other music schools that deal with other types of music? For example, East Indian music, and there are music schools which equally need funding, and not just pan schools?

Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: The music school in Central actually learns the pan as well as the dolak and the tabla and they perform—it is a very nice performance. I am sure they may have invited their MPs to come along, and I did not see any of their MPs there at the performance in NAPA, but it was quite lovely to hear the fusion of the steel pan along with the dolak and the tabla. [Desk thumping]

Madam Chairman: Member for Tabaquite. [Crosstalk]

Dr. Rambachan: You know, there seems to be some problem with me asking that question?

Madam Chairman: No, no—

Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: Certainly not. [Crosstalk]

Madam Chairman: Please, Members!

Dr. Rambachan: But I have no prejudice in asking the question.

Madam Chairman: Member!

Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: I have not shown any prejudice. I am just saying that it is a lovely fusion.

Dr. Rambachan: But as if something was wrong in asking the question. [Interruption] But, for example, there is the Shivnanan School of Music in Penal that hosts about 300 children a year.

Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: Member, we are well aware that there are other music schools in the country. And as a matter of fact, we are establishing our links with the neighbourhood music schools as we want to have a closer link with them. But you asked about this programme and I explained what this programme is about. [Desk thumping]

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Dr. Rambachan: So this programme is specifically for pan?
Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: No, it is not.
Hon. Member: She just said no it is not.
Dr. Rambachan: Let me get my clarification, “nah”. [Crosstalk]
Mr. Charles: He is asking if it offers a diverse—
Madam Chairman: Member for Naparima, I am recognizing the Member for Tabaquite. [Interruption] Member for Diego Martin North/East.
Dr. Rambachan: Thank you, Madam Chair, no more.
Madam Chairman: No more? Okay, so we go on. Item 009, Other Transfers. Member for Princes Town.
Mr. Padarath: Thank you, Madam. Madam, line Item 09, the National Philharmonic Orchestra, an increase of $100,000. Could the hon. Minister give us an indication of what is the state of play with respect to the National Philharmonic Orchestra? What are the future plans for the utilization of it?
Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: The National Philharmonic Orchestra, the members are part-time. They are not full-time members of the Ministry. They play the traditional orchestra instruments, and they have been over the past few years contributing to the national landscape with respect to the classical music and the orchestra type music, and the plan for 2018 is to continue to have them do just that.
Madam Chairman: Member for Princes Town.
Mr. Padarath: Madam, just as a follow up to the Minister. I remember last year the Member for Tabaquite enquired whether or not additional instruments were being utilized in the National Philharmonic Orchestra, and the Minister had indicated at that point that there was an attempt. Can the hon. Minister indicate what other instruments have been incorporated into the National Philharmonic Orchestra?
Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: Madam Chairperson, I am sorry, but I do not recall that answer being there being an attempt. The National Philharmonic Orchestra has always had the normal chamber orchestra instruments, and that is how it remains.

Mr. Padarath: So, there is no additional components, whether it is the African drumming, or the East Indian drumming, nothing like that?

Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: Not additionally. A philharmonic orchestra usually has certain type of instruments, and that is what it is.

Madam Chairman: Item 011, Transfers to State Enterprises. Member for Princes Town.

Mr. Padarath: Madam, thank you. Line Item 01 under Transfers to State Enterprises, the National Commission for Self-Help Limited. An increase of 2.3, almost $2.4 million, and I am sure that many in the national community would be particularly interested in this particular line Item, Madam Minister, with respect to all the floods that are occurring. Can the hon. Minister indicate those that would have applied during the last financial year, how many of those applications have been processed and been successful? But also we can have as well, how many actually applied for the last financial year?

Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: Madam Chairperson, this deals with the staffing of the National Commission for Self-Help, and they actually received at the last count $9.6 million for 2017, and therefore the increase that is registered here really is not so much of an increase. It is just a matter of a snapshot at that point in time. This deals with their staff.

Mr. Padarath: Okay.

Madam Chairman: Sub-Head 06, Current Transfers to Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies, let us now go on to the Draft Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure of the Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies of the Tobago House of
Assembly. We are at page 477; 20, Queen’s Hall, Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure, page 477; 001, General Administration; Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, 001, General Administration; Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, 001, General Administration, page 478; Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies, 007, Households; 21, Naparima Bowl, page 483; Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure, 001, General Administration; Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, 001, General Administration; Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, 001, General Administration; Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies, 007, Households.

We go on to 22, the National Carnival Commission of Trinidad and Tobago. We are at page 489. Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure, 001, General Administration; Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, 001, General Administration; Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, 001, General Administration; Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies, page 490; 007, Households; 008, Subsidies; 009, Other Transfers.

Hon. Members, we will now move on to the Draft Estimates of Development Programme. Sub-Head 09, Development Programme Consolidated Fund, we are at page 137. Page 137. Item 004, Social Infrastructure, pages 137 to 140. Member for Princes Town.

Mr. Padarath: Thank you, Madam. Minister, line Item 006, Museum of the City of Port of Spain, Carnival Museum. Can the hon. Minister indicate how far we have reached with this project, and what progress has been made seeing that an allocation of $1 million is being put in place in this particular Vote for the next financial year?

Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: Madam Chairperson, at this time that allocation is given to refurbish the building. There are a number of areas that need refurbishment, and
that is the allocation for this.

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

**Mr. Lee:** Thank you, Madam Chair. To the Minister, page 138, line Item 051, Refurbishment of Queen’s Hall. In 2017, you spent $2.8 million, and we have identified you spent $4.5 million this year. What sort of major refurbishment is going on at Queen’s Hall that requires this kind of expenditure?

**Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly:** Madam Chairperson, as you know, Queen’s Hall is one of our very seriously utilized performance spaces, and so they routinely undergo quite a number of upgrades, and they have a three-year plan which they are upgrading the seats, the audio and lighting, and various other aspects of the facility. So this would cover some of that.

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

**Mr. Padarath:** Thank you, Madam. Minister, line Item 044, Upgrade of Facilities at the National Auditorium. I think this meant to be the National Academy for the Performing Arts. Yes, this particular Vote, $1.5 million, could the hon. Minister indicate what scope of works is intended for the next financial year, and what areas were targeted in the last financial year?

**Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly:** Madam Speaker—sorry, Madam Chairperson, as you would know, the auditorium was closed in 2014 and continues to be so. Substantial works were done to be able to reopen the building and have it available for use, but there are quite a number of areas that need to be refurbished. So, for example, there was some work done on the car park to make it easier for the patrons to get into the car park, especially in the rainy season; work done on the railings to ensure that the differently-abled can get into the building as well; work done on some the kitchen areas to bring them up to speed; some of the seating also, the stage, the audio and lights. All of those are works that are being undertaken at
Madam Chairman: Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, line Item 052 on page 38. I notice there is no allocation. I just wanted to know if the Establishment of the National Cultural Information System is in fact disbanded or is it put on hold.

Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: In light of our economic circumstances, Madam Chairman, we have, we prioritized this project. It remains important, but we have other priority projects in front of it at this point in time.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: If the hon. Minister could indicate, what would this system achieve? What is the projected—

Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: I do not have this before us.

Madam Chairman: Member for Princes Town.

Mr. Padarath: Line Item 056, Hosting of Carifesta 2019, and it is listed as a new project of $500,000. Does the hon. Minister envisage that there will be a variation in terms of additional sums needed for the Hosting of Carifesta beyond $500,000?

Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: This year we are concentrating on the Carifesta plan and the establishment of the Secretariat. That would be sufficient at this time, if more is needed it would be provided.

Mr. Padarath: So, Madam Minister, this is really for the Secretariat in putting the plans in place and this is not really the actual “hosting cost” that we will be looking at?

Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: Certainly not, Member. Carifesta is 2019 and that cost will be dealt with in the subsequent budget.

Mr. Padarath: And therefore, if you have a plan, is your projection of what the
budget will be for Carifesta 2019.

Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: That is not under this Item.

Madam Chairman: But that is not in this budget.

Mr. Imbert: That is not in this budget; that is in next year’s budget. You are a “seer man”? You looking in the future. [Crosstalk]

Madam Chairman: Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you. Hon. Minister, same line Item, 056, I noticed there was an allocation in the Tobago House of Assembly. Is this the same Carifesta? Is it—?

Mr. Imbert: No, there is more than one.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: All right, good. I just wanted—

Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: There is usually one Carifesta for the region. [Crosstalk and Laughter]

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: So therefore, is it a duplication? This is what I am trying to find out.

Madam Chairman: Member, I am sure when we were dealing with the Tobago House of Assembly and other Heads before, we were told about the schedule, Items under the Assembly Act and what the Assembly is responsible for. And I remembered considerable issues and questions were raised about funding for these various festivals, Carifesta, et cetera, for the Tobago House of Assembly.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: I understand that, hon. Chairman. I was just wondering, you know, with the $38 million that was assigned there, what it is that we were doing on this side, if there was you know—

Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: I think I addressed the question.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Okay.
Madam Chairman: I believe the Minister of Finance wanted to add some clarification.

Mr. Imbert: I would also make the point the allocation in the Ministry of Community Development, Culture and the Arts is for the national effort. Tobago being a semi-autonomous entity would also have its own contribution and participation in Carifesta. So the two are not related. There is only one Carifesta though, they “doh” have two.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: I am glad to hear that. Thank you.

Madam Chairman: Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services, page 140; Infrastructure Development Fund, page 239; Item 004, Social Infrastructure, pages 239 and 240. Member for Princes Town.

Mr. Padarath: Thank you, Madam. Madam Chair, line Item 03, Construction of Community Centres, an allocation of $30 million in this particular area. If the hon. Minister can indicate whether or not there are areas earmarked for these construction of the community centres and as I follow directly, 005, Refurbishment of Community Centres, an allocation there as well. If the hon. Minister can indicate which ones are being earmarked to be refurbished and constructed in the next financial year?

Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: Madam Chairman, we are formalizing that list and as soon as we have, we will share it with the Member in writing.

Madam Chairman: Member for Princes Town.

Mr. Padarath: Madam, line Item 010, Construction of a Children’s Homework Centre in Carenage, identified as a new project, $4.7 million. Could the hon. Minister indicate what process was used with respect to selecting this particular area of Carenage as opposed to any other area in Trinidad and Tobago and whether or not this will be the only one that will be constructed in this financial year?
Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: Madam Chairman, this line Item is very specific as to Carenage. That area is an area that needs—and we all know we have quite a number of areas in this country that need attention and it is important for all children in this country to be able to have a homework centre at which they can focus on their homework. We are very glad to afford the children of Carenage that opportunity and I am certain that as funds become available other areas of the country will also benefit from homework centres and we know that there are homework centres already operating around the country and so we are concentrating this effort, this fiscal on Carenage.

Madam Chairman: Member for Princes Town.

Mr. Padarath: Madam, I am very happy to hear all that the hon. Minister had to say, but she dodged the main question really, which I would like a response to.

Madam Chairman: Member, what is the question you want to ask?

Mr. Padarath: How did we arrive as one new project under 010, the only construction of a homework centre will be in Carenage in the constituency of Prime Minister, Diego Martin West. What about the rest of Trinidad and Tobago?

Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: I dealt with it, Madam Chair—[ Interruption ]

Madam Chairman: I believe the Member—

Mr. Padarath: So is it that the children of Diego Martin West are important but the rest—

Hon. Members: “Oh Lord!”

Madam Chairman: Member for Princes Town.

Hon. Member: “Wheey!”

Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: The children all around this country are important. Just like the sports people of Siparia are very important, because there are two stadia right next to each other. [ Crosstalk ]
Madam Chairman: Enough. The Member has answered the question. Member for Chaguanas West.

Mr. Imbert: Madam Chairman.

Mr. Singh: The question was asked all ready.

Mr. Imbert: Let me just make a general comment, please, Member for Princes Town. Member for Princes Town in this year’s budget the best effort has been made to be as equitable as possible. There have been years in the past, under your administration, where not a single nail, a grain of sand, cubic metres of concrete, blade of grass was touched in my constituency. So we are being equitable as opposed to your inequity. [Crosstalk]

Madam Chairman: Members, can we—Member for Caroni East, can we resume some order please. Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Items 003 and 005. Can we get a listing, hon. Minister, which community centres—

Madam Chairman: 005?

Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: That was asked.

Madam Chairman: We dealt with that already.

Dr. Gopeesingh: No, no, no. I want to get the listing of—

Hon. Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: That was asked and the commitment was made already.

Madam Chairman: That was dealt with already.

Dr. Gopeesingh: All right, okay, good.

Madam Chairman: Okay, good. [Crosstalk] Hon. Members, [Crosstalk] hon. Members, [Crosstalk] hon. Members, the question is, that the sum of $371,603,900 for Head 62, Ministry of Community Development, Culture and the Arts stand part of the Schedule.

Question put and agreed to.
Head 62 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Madam Chairman: Thank you, Madam Minister. Thank you Madam PS and the other technocrats.

Mr. Indarsingh: Madam Chair, when are you giving us tea?

Madam Chairman: All right. Members, there is agreement, we are going to do Head 06 and Head 37 before we take the break. [Crosstalk] So Members, we will be doing Service Commissions and then Integrity Commission.

[MR. FORDE in the Chair]

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, as agreed by both the Leader of the House and the Chief Whip, we have a change in the order of the various Heads. We will now be doing the Integrity Commission—[Crosstalk]—Minister of Finance, are you with us here? We will now be doing the Integrity Commission, then Service Commissions and then we will go to the Ministry of Public Administration and Communications.

Head 37: Integrity Commission, $11,261,800.

Mr. Chairman: Head 37, Integrity Commission, $11,261,800. I will now invite the Minister of Finance to make a brief opening statement not exceeding five minutes. Minister of Finance.

Hon. Imbert: The Integrity Commission of Trinidad and Tobago is a creature of statute established by an Act of Parliament. It has three main purposes: to make provisions for the prevention of corruption by persons in public life by providing for public disclosure of assets and liabilities and so on; to regulate the conduct of persons exercising public functions; and to preserve and promote the integrity of public officials and institutions among other things.

Question proposed: That Head 37 stand part of the Schedule.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, the sum of $11,261,800 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 to consider the Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure. Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure, page 245; 001, General Administration, page 245. Member for Tabaquite.

Dr. Rambachan: How many persons are employed at the Integrity Commission that reflects Salary and Cost of Living of $850,000?

Mr. Chairman: Line Item for the records.

Dr. Rambachan: Line Item 01, Sir.

Hon. Imbert: The number of public officers on payroll at the Integrity Commission, 12, at this time, but there are vacancies.

Dr. Rambachan: Twelve. So this $850,000 annually is correct?

Hon. Imbert: In these estimates, under this particular Head, this always refers to public officers on the establishment. The rest of the staff will be found under Contract Employment, Other Contracted Services, Short-Term Employment and so on. I am answering a specific question. This particular Head refers to monthly paid officers on the establishment, 12.

Dr. Rambachan: I saw it there. Sure. I saw $6.8 million and I am just trying to be clear on what is reflected.

Hon. Imbert: The answer is 12.

Dr. Rambachan: Thank you.

Mr. Chairman: Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: I was moving to page 246 if there are no more questions there.

Mr. Chairman: We have not reached page 246 yet. Member for Naparima.

Mr. Charles: This is just a point of clarification. Given that it is the Ministry of Finance that allocates money, and I am talking 001, Salaries and what not, what
steps are taken to ensure that there is an arm’s length relationship between the Integrity Commission and the Ministry of Finance?  [Crosstalk] No, it is a question.

**Hon. Imbert:** Well, the accounting officer at the Integrity Commission would make a request to the Budgets Division or the Permanent Secretary in the Minister of Finance for a release of funds. The Minister of Finance only gets involved in the Infrastructure Development Fund. As you may appreciate it, it would be impossible for the Minister of Finance, on a daily basis to look at every single request from every single Ministry or agency in Trinidad and Tobago under Items across the board. It is impossible.

So, the Minister of Finance only gets involved with the Infrastructure Development Fund, which is projects managed by state enterprises and statutory authorities and so on. So I would not, as Minister of Finance, I would not see a request coming from the Integrity Commission, unless there is a requirement for supplementary allocation or something like that where I would have to make some sort of arrangement to give the Commission additional funds. So it is beyond arm’s length. I am completely disconnected from the process.

**Mr. Charles:** Thank you.

**Mr. Chairman:** Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, page 245. Member for Caroni East.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Yes, Item 16, Contract Employment of $6.68 million. Could we get an understanding of how many contract officers are there and if there are vacancies existing in that area?

**Mr. Chairman:** 001, General Administration, pages 245 and 246, and you are on line Item 16, Contract Employment.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Yes, how many officers, personnel and how many vacancies, if
there are, to be filled?

**Hon. Imbert:** I am advised that they have 14 persons on contract at this time, but they are presently making the necessary requests and arrangements to hire another 36 contract officers. If that answers your question.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** If there is a request for another 36 officers, where is the additional subvention for that?

**Hon. Imbert:** What Item are you on?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** 16, Contract Employment.

**Mr. Chairman:** 16, Contract Employment.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** If you said that they need 36 more, you will need subvention for it. So where is that subvention?

**Hon. Imbert:** I am seeing here $6.6 million.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Yes, but you said that there are 14 officers now and there is an intention to have 36 more. So is this $6.686 being paid for the 14 officers?

**Hon. Imbert:** No. Obviously $6.6 million will hire more than 14 people.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Well, how many they hired? That is what the question is.

**Hon. Imbert:** The Commission has a plan to increase its complement of contract officers, so they have told me, from 14 to approximately 50.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** How many are employed at the moment and—

**Hon. Imbert:** I just said 14 are currently employed.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** And I am asking you if this $6.6 million is for the 14 or would it include the 50—36 plus 14.

**Hon. Imbert:** All right. I will try my best to be as clear as possible although I thought I was. The provision is for all; currently they have 14.

**Mr. Chairman:** Okay, I would like to move on. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. And also if the hon. Minister can

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identify line Item 22—

**Mr. Chairman:** Line Item 22, short-term.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** I saw that there is a marked decrease. Is it that you have—

**Mr. Chairman:** Increase or decrease?

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Decrease.

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

**Mr. Chairman:** 22, page 246. What is the reason for the decrease, short-term? Minister.

**Hon. Imbert:** The intention is to move people out of short-term employment into contract employment. As has been stated by many Ministers who have come here in the last week or so, you do not want to keep people on Short-Term Employment because they do not have proper terms and conditions of employment in terms of benefits. So you always want to move people out of short-term into more permanent positions.

**Mrs. Newallo-Hosein:** Can the hon. Minister indicate how many persons are on short-term contract at the moment?

**Hon. Imbert:** Six.

**Mr. Chairman:** Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, page 247; 01 General Administration, page 247. Member for Caroni East.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** No, no, not as yet.

**Mr. Chairman:** Okay. Hon. Members, we will now move on to the *Draft Estimates of Development Programme*. So we go to the Development Programme booklet, Consolidated Fund, page 96. Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services, page 96. Member for Caroni East.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** 002, can we get an appreciation of the Reform of the Integrity
Commission? And if—just $500,000 for that, for the Reform of the Integrity Commission, what does it entail?

**Hon. Imbert:** It is a project that involves recommended amendments to the Integrity in Public Life Act. I think $500,000 is enough to pay a lawyer to do that. You want to pay more?

**Mr. Chairman:** Thanks, Mr. Minister.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Head 37 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.*

**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you, Madam from the Integrity Commission and your senior technocrats. Do have a good evening.

Hon. Members, we now move on to Head 06, Service Commissions. I would like to welcome the Minister and the Permanent Secretary from the Ministry and your senior technocrats.

**Hon. Member:** DPA.

**Mr. Chairman:** DPA, Director of Public Administration.

*Head 06: Service Commissions, $77,164,500.*

**Mr. Chairman:** I will now ask the Minister to give brief opening remarks not exceeding five minutes.

**Hon. Young:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. The Service Commissions are set out constitutionally and play a very important role as per the Constitution of Trinidad and Tobago. The primary function of the Department is to provide support, services to enable the four Service Commissions: the Public Service Commission, the PSC; the Teaching Service Commission, the TSC; the Judicial and Legal Service Commission, JLSC and the Police Service Commission, to discharge constitutional responsibilities of staffing and the exercise of disciplinary control over the respective services.

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Additionally, these Service Commissions deal with the hiring and disciplining and termination of various public officers that fall under their respective ambits.

*Question proposed:* That Head 06 stand part of the Schedule.

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Members, the sum of $77,164,500 for Head 06, 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* and the *Draft Estimates of Development Programme*. We now proceed to consider the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure*. Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure, page 33 of the Recurrent Expenditure booklet; Item 001, General Administration, page 33. Member for Naparima.

**Mr. Charles:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. 01, salaries and cost of living. Given the fact that there are challenges experienced by the Service Commissions in making appointments on a timely basis, I think the Minister of Finance has alluded to that. Have the Service Commissions ever indicated the need for more human and physical resources? And if so, is the $32.2 million adequate for them to effectively carry out their remit under the constitution?

**Hon. Young:** Yes, to both questions.

**Mr. Charles:** Excuse me.

**Hon. Young:** Yes, to both questions.

**Mr. Charles:** So there is a backlog in appointments in the Service Commissions.

**Hon. Young:** That was not the question you asked. You asked whether in the past the Service Commissions have asked for extra resources, yes, from since 2010 come forward they have. And your second question is, whether $32 million is sufficient under Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance, the answer is, yes.

**Mr. Charles:** A follow up question.
Mr. Chairman: A follow up question?

Mr. Charles: So then what explains the lack of timely appointments? Is it a human resource problem?

Hon. Young: No.

Mr. Charles: Because you are saying this is adequate. So therefore, it is something else.

Hon. Young: That is a question that is actually best directed to those who serve in the Service Commissions. We cannot answer that.

Mr. Charles: But how could you answer and say the question is, yes.

Hon. Young: Constitutionally—

Mr. Chairman: One at a time please.

Mr. Charles: How could you say that the resources allocated are enough if you have no basis by the Constitution for interacting with them?

Hon. Young: I do not think the Member for Naparima, respectfully, understands the Constitution and Service Commissions are comprised. The membership of Service Commissions, they are appointed by the President, His Excellency the President.

Mr. Charles: Agreed.

Hon. Young: They are the ones charged with the responsibility of getting together, sitting down or standing up or doing whatever it is they do and hiring people and appointing people. The Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance are for the staff who do all of the hard work on the administrative side. They are not the ones who hire and appoint people.

Mr. Charles: So your job is simply, this figure simply represent a request and you grant it.

Hon. Young: This job—this figure as it says very clearly is Salaries and Cost of

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Living Allowance for the staff at the Service Commissions. The staff at the Service Commissions, to answer you Member for Naparima, does not appoint or hire persons.

**Mr. Charles:** I am not talking about appointment.

**Hon. Young:** Which is what you asked about, a backlog.

**Mr. Chairman:** Members, Members, Members, I think the answer is clear. If you have another question fine, if not I would like to go to the Member for Fyzabad.

5.10 p.m.

**Mr. Imbert:** Mr. Chairman, I would just like to add some clarity—

**Mr. Chairman:** Clarity, Minister of Finance?

**Mr. Imbert:**—in the way these estimates are prepared. The Service Commission, which is the independent body, would, through their accounting officer, who is the Director of Personnel Administration, make a request to the Ministry of Finance through the Budgets Division for an allocation for this particular Head, which is for their staff. If there are vacancies at the Service Commission, the independent constitutionally appointed body would make the necessary employments. If there is a need to supplement this Vote, I can tell you right now that the Government would make the appropriate arrangement to ensure that this Vote is supplemented.

So when the Service Commission, and if and when it fills whatever vacancies they may have in their establishment, or as happens all the time, they may wish to create additional positions within their establishment, this comes to Cabinet like every other division in the Government—when you want to increase or change this establishment you come to Cabinet, you get Cabinet approval and then funding is provided. If that happens and there are additional posts on the establishment which they fill, the Ministry of Finance would make appropriate arrangements to provide whatever supplementary funding is available. Okay.
Mr. Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Minister. The Member for Fyzabad.

Dr. Bodoe: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Line Item 01 also includes provision for Vacant Posts. Minister, can you indicate how many vacant posts there are at the current time?

Hon. Young: Yes. The number of permanent officers at the—this is at the Service Commissions Department?

Dr. Bodoe: That is correct.

Hon. Young: One hundred and forty-two. The number of vacant offices, 215; the number on establishment, 357; the number of vacant offices with bodies, 184; the number of vacant offices without bodies, 31; leaving a total vacancy of 250.

Mr. Chairman: A follow-up question, Member for Fyzabad?

Dr. Bodoe: Minister, can you indicate what challenges might be faced in terms of filling these vacancies? Because that would impact on the work of the Service Commissions.

Hon. Young: There is a very bureaucratic procedure that includes going out for public advertisements of posts to be filled, et cetera, and that is being undertaken by the Service Commissions Department.

Mr. Chairman: Member for Chaguanas West, question?

Mr. Singh: Thank you, Deputy Chair. I think it might be best within the bosom of the Minister of Finance to answer this question. Throughout all the Ministries, I did not see any allocation for this new creature which is a result of legislation, the Procurement Regulator.

Hon. Young: Where is the line Item with regard to Service Commissions?

Mr. Singh: No, no. What is the role of the Service Commissions in seeking to provide and facilitate those appointees?

Hon. Young: None.
Mr. Imbert: There is no line Item in the Service Commissions that could be attached to the appointment of the Procurement Regulator. That is a function of the Ministry of Finance to provide the funding and the President to make the appointment.

Mr. Singh: No, I am talking about the support staff in each Ministry because that is what is required now.

Mr. Imbert: We, as a Cabinet, have approved procurement units, different sizes, different compositions in each Ministry and as the Procurement Regulator is appointed and the board is appointed—because it is a regulator and a board—once they are appointed we can proclaim all sections of the Act and start to implement. That would be at an appropriate time close to the mid-year review or before, and we will make adjustments to the budget to suit. Okay?

Mr. Chairman: Member for Tabaquite.

Dr. Rambachan: Mr. Minister, very often—

Hon. Young: Which line Item?

Dr. Rambachan: 06, Remuneration to Board Members. And I specifically here refer to the members of the boards at the commissions. Right?

Hon. Young: Correct.

Dr. Rambachan: Very often, it seems to me that the public servants get the brunt of the criticism with respect to what they perceive as the inefficiency and ineffectiveness of the Service Commissions, when, in fact, judging from what you have alluded to, it is the boards that give the directions to the public servants and that the efficiency and effectiveness of the public servants depend on the effectiveness and efficiency of the boards. Is the Minister satisfied that the boards are carrying out their mandate in the interest of the country as they should, given what we hear of the experiences of people and the long length of time it takes to

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get appointments made? What is the Minister’s view on this?

Hon. Young: I think it is obvious to any citizen of Trinidad and Tobago who has been studying this for a while that, unfortunately, these commissions seem to be a bit outdated now and the way they operate. As you would be aware, they were set up under the 1962 Constitution and then continued, the 1972, and the time has come for it to be reviewed because the truth is there are backlogs in terms of dealing with the disciplinary side as well as the appointment side, et cetera. I am not going to cast blame or aspersion on any member of the board or any board, so to speak, but we must recognize that there are backlogs that are taking place and it seems to have ground to a halt on some occasions.

Dr. Rambachan: Does the Minister accept that because of the way the boards are operating it has led to frustration and to, really, situations which might be described as bringing to a halt the operations of certain aspects of Government?

Hon. Young: I am not sure whether that responsibility and blame lies at the feet of the board members but the answer to the situation you have described is, yes.

Dr. Rambachan: Does the President, therefore, have a role, in the Minister’s view, in terms of the quality of the appointments, to review these appointments—

Mr. Chairman: Member, I would not entertain that question. [Crosstalk] Members, I have already made the statement. Member for Tabaquite, you have another question?

Dr. Rambachan: Yes. But permit me, I have five minutes. I just want to say this. It is fine and good to say that we cannot bring the President into our discussion but when the President has a major role to play—

Mr. Chairman: Member for Tabaquite, I know you have five minutes but I want you to be careful in terms of the discussion and the road that you are going down.

Dr. Rambachan: Mr. Deputy Chairman, I am very cautious—

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Mr. Chairman: Okay, go ahead.

Dr. Rambachan:—but I have lived long enough in this country to understand that we are refusing to put blame where the blame is supposed to be put, and it is time that we begin to—[Crosstalk]

Mr. Imbert: What you mean by that? What line Item is this?

Mr. Chairman: Members, hold on.

Dr. Rambachan:—call a spade a spade.

Mr. Imbert: What line Item is this?

Dr. Rambachan: Board members.

Mr. Imbert: Board members?

Dr. Rambachan: Remuneration to Board Members.

Mr. Imbert: “How the President reach in that?”

Mr. Chairman: Members—

Mr. Imbert: Remuneration?

Dr. Rambachan: You see, “we afraid” to talk about the real issues in this country.

Mr. Chairman: Minister of Finance and Member for Tabaquite, [Crosstalk] any additional? Otherwise, I will go to the Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Yes. The Minister gave—

Hon. Young: Which line Item?

Dr. Gopeesingh: The same 01. You gave the amount of personnel and we appreciate that. Could you break it down into the four service commissions, the amount of members on them, employed and how many vacancies in each one of the commissions? You gave a total picture of 380-something, and so on.

Hon. Young: Remember, Member, this is the Service Commissions Department. So the commissions and the composition of the commissions do not fall under this. This is really the administrative staff of the Service Commissions Department.

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Dr. Gopeesingh: Where can we get the information about each one of the—
Hon. Young: From the President.
Dr. Gopeesingh: The President will give each one of the commissions, how many employed—
Hon. Young: He is the one that appoints them, yes.
Dr. Gopeesingh: No. Well, they came before the Joint Select Committee and they indicated that there were a significant amount of vacancies in the Public Service Commission, and that is the question I am trying to find out here.
Mr. Chairman: So you want the actual breakdown for each particular service commission.
Dr. Gopeesingh: Each one of four.
Mr. Chairman: So Minister, can that be provided?
Hon. Young: Well, I did provide it previously. There is one Service Commissions Department that provides the support for the various service commissions and that is what I answered the Member for Fyzabad with, and went through it in great detail.
Dr. Gopeesingh: Yes, you answered holistically, but I am asking for the breakdown by—
Hon. Young: There is one department.
Mr. Chairman: He is asking for actual breakdown probably by actual vacancies.
Dr. Gopeesingh: That is right.
Mr. Chairman: Are you in a position to provide that information?
Hon. Young: What do you mean by actual vacancies?
Dr. Gopeesingh: There are vacancies for the Teaching Service Commission, the Police Service Commission, the—
Hon. Young: But that is what I am trying to explain, with the greatest of respect.

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There is one—

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Yes, but you are giving a ballpark figure. We want it—

**Mr. Chairman:** Hold on. Okay, Member.

**Hon. Young:** I cannot invent the facts to satisfy you. The fact is there is one Service Commissions Department under the establishment that provides the service and the support for the Teaching Service Commission, for the Police Service Commission, for the Judicial and Legal Service Commission, and that is the information I have provided you with. If you are asking for these various commissions, the Judicial and Legal Service Commission, the Police Service Commission—

**Dr. Rowley:** Mr. Chairman, I just want—

**Mr. Chairman:** For clarity?

**Dr. Rowley:** For clarification. Are these questions coming from people who used to run this country for five years?

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Listen, we are talking about—

**Mr. Chairman:** Okay, Members—

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Prime Minister, we are talking about 2018, we are not talking about 2010 to 2015.

**Dr. Rowley:** These are people who were Ministers of Government and they are talking about Service Commissions at this time of the budget—

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** But we are talking about this time. [Crosstalk]

**Dr. Rowley:** That is not part of the budget.

**Mr. Chairman:** Members, Members—[Crosstalk]

**Dr. Rowley:** Well, let me answer the question for the Minister and the Government.

**Mr. Chairman:** Okay. Let us get the clarity, Mr. Prime Minister.
Dr. Rowley: Nothing has changed with respect to Service Commissions since September 09, 2015.

Dr. Gopeesingh: What you mean, no vacancies, no—

Mr. Chairman: Member, according to the information provided by the Minister, they are not in a position to provide it.

Dr. Rowley: No, the structure, the governance structure.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Prime Minister, we are not asking about the structure, we are asking about the vacancies.

Mr. Chairman: So Members, I would like to move on at this time.

Dr. Rowley: No, Mr. Chairman, I would like to give it clarification, because I do not want to rush the Member out of his question. I thought I was responding to an explanation and a discourse about what the Service Commissions were; what they were doing; who were there and how they interact in the governance of the country. Now, he is telling me it is not that. So then what is the question?

Dr. Gopeesingh: But I am asking the question on the amount of vacancies now for each one of these—

Mr. Chairman: And the Member is saying—

Dr. Rowley: And that is a different question.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, Members. I will take a ruling on it.

Dr. Gopeesingh: But you came in late, Prime Minister.

Mr. Chairman: Member for Caroni East, the ruling is that the Minister is not in a position to provide it. It will have to be provided—

Hon. Young: Mr. Deputy Chairman, that is not the answer. The answer is I have already provided it to the Member for Fyzabad.

Dr. Rowley: Somebody who knows.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, we will move on. Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, page
Appropriation Bill, 2017 (cont’d) 2017.10.23
Standing Finance Committee (cont’d)

33; Item 001, General Administration, pages 33 and 34. Member for Fyzabad.

**Dr. Bodeo:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Item 08, Rent/Lease - Office Accommodation and Storage, I note an increase of about $662,000 there—Item 08, Minister, if you can provide an explanation.

**Mr. Chairman:** Minister, Item 08, Rent/Lease, the increase.

**Hon. Young:** All right. During this period, there has been an increase in rent for one of the buildings which has led to this. There has been an increase in—sorry—some of the rentals for the various buildings that has led to this increase being provided. So there is a head office at Cipriani Boulevard; there is the DFL Building on Cipriani Boulevard; the Police Service Commission at the corner of Pasea Road and Churchill/Roosevelt Highway; storage facility in El Socorro and then there is also an office on Wilson Road, Scarborough.

**Dr. Bodeo:** So no new buildings have been rented, just increase in this rent?

**Hon. Young:** Correct.

**Mr. Chairman:** Item 002, Tobago Services, page 35; Item 003, Public Service Commission. Come, Member for Fyzabad, we need to ensure that—let us get the rhythm going. Go ahead.

**Dr. Bodeo:** Mr. Deputy Chairman, Item 16 on page 34, Contract Employment. Minister, I have noted that—if you could permit me to go back to 2016 and the expenditure of $939—

**Mr. Chairman:** Go ahead.

**Dr. Bodeo:**—and then in 2017, I note the expenditure of $1.9 million.

**Hon. Young:** What—

**Dr. Bodeo:** It is line Item 16 with regard to Contract Employment.

**Hon. Young:** Yes, I am following you. So in 2016, it was under $1 million. It was at 940, and it has now gone to $1.9 million.

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Dr. Bodoe: I am just wondering, Minister, whether that increase in Contract Employment would have been an attempt perhaps to provide the services not available for the vacancies.

Hon. Young: It is an attempt to make the Service Commissions Department more efficient and in particular in the area of supporting the Police Service Commission. So the Police Service Commission secretariat, a number of contract workers and positions were taken on in that area to provide the support in that area.

Dr. Bodoe: Okay, thank you.

Mr. Chairman: Member for Caroni East, which line Item? Which one are we on?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Just line Item 23. Those fees are for legal fees?

Hon. Young: No, those fees would be for the—just give me one second—23?

Mr. Chairman: 23, Fees.

Hon. Young: Those fees, Member for Caroni East, are for acquisition of software licences, support and upgrades for the service desk, a remark of the grading software in teaching service systems, licence renewals for HP server support, backup executive, McAfee Secure and Fortinet which, as you know, would be firewalls, et cetera.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Thank you.

Mr. Chairman: Item 002, Tobago Services, page 35; Item 003, Public Service Commission, page 35; Item 004, Teaching Service Commission, page 35; Item 005, Judicial and Legal Service Commission, page 36. Member for Fyzabad, where are you?

Dr. Bodoe: Next Item.

Mr. Chairman: Item 006, Police Service Commission, page 36. Member for Fyzabad.

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Dr. Bodeo: Under 28, Other Contracted Services, Minister, I note an increase of $1.4 million, thereof, under Other Contracted Services. Can you indicate, perhaps, what that would be for?

Hon. Young: Yes, thank you very much, Member for Fyzabad. That is for the recruitment and engagement of a Police Commissioner and a Deputy Commissioner.

Dr. Bodeo: Can I indulge and ask how far along we are in that process, Minister? Just for the information of the public and the House.

Hon. Young: I think it was released recently and they have narrowed it down and they are going through the process right now. So what they have done is, they have completed the first phase and they are going on to the assessment centre phase now. Phase one and two have been completed.

Mr. Chairman: Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, page 37; Item 001, General Administration, page 37.

Hon. Members, we will now move on to the Draft Estimates of Development Programme. Consolidated Fund, page 11 of the Development programme booklet; Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services, page 11. Member for Fyzabad.

Dr. Bodeo: Under Administrative Services—

Mr. Chairman: Member for Fyzabad, I will give way to you for the last time.

Dr. Bodeo: Just an update on the implementation of an Electronic Document Management System, 006. Minister, perhaps can you indicate to us the status of that project, how far along we are. It is at page 11, 006.

Hon. Young: We are currently awaiting releases to go ahead and purchase the software to implement it. Remember, this has to be approved. So once the budgetary exercise is over, then the Ministry of Finance can release the money so they can go ahead and implement the project.

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Dr. Bodee: In terms of the timeframe for the implementation?

Hon. Young: Well, once they get the money—it will take about two more years. As you know, we have to flag every file and this type of thing.

Dr. Bodee: Just to get an overview, thank you.

*Question put and agreed to.*

Head 06 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Minister, and thank you Madam DPA and your senior technocrats. Do have a good evening. Thanks for coming.

Head 31: Ministry of Public Administration and Communications, $973,032,390.

Mr. Chairman: I will now invite—before I invite. Welcome, Mr. Minister, Madam PS and the senior technocrats at your Ministry. I will now invite the Minister to give brief opening remarks not exceeding five minutes.

Hon. Young: Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Chair. Mr. Deputy Chair, I would like to use this opportunity to wish the substantive Minister of Public Administration and Communications, Minister Maxie Cuffie, who is currently away getting medical treatment, a speedy recovery and to let him know that we wish him all the best [Desk thumping] and we look forward to welcoming him back to the Parliament.

This is the Ministry of Public Administration and Communications that is responsible and charged with the responsibility of Public Administration and Communications for the Government.

*Question proposed:* That Head 31 stand part of the Schedule.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, the sum of $973,032,390 for Head 31, Ministry of Public Administration and Communications, is comprised of moneys proposed for expenditure under the following Sub-Heads and Items to be found in the Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure, the Draft Estimates of Revenue and Revenue and
Expenditure of the Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies and of the Tobago House of Assembly, and the Draft Estimates of Development Programme. We now proceed to consider the Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure.

[Madam Chairman: Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure, page 217, Item 001, General Administration. Member for Fyzabad.

Dr. Bodee: Thank you, Madam Chair. Minister, my question again would be under 01, the number of vacant posts in the Ministry.

Hon. Young: The total number of vacant posts are 254 and we have a breakdown. You want the breakdown?

Dr. Bodee: I can have that in writing in the interest of time. Or, if you want to—

Hon. Young: Sorry, that was the contract. So there are 254 vacant contract positions and then we have 524 vacant positions per the establishment.

Dr. Bodee: Thank you.

Madam Chairman: 002, Science and Technology; 004, Government Printery; 005, Property and Real Estate Management Services. Member for Fyzabad.

Dr. Bodee: With regard to salaries and cost of living—that would be 01, Minister—I am assuming that that $1.2 million 2018 estimate is for the staff in that department. Can you indicate how many people are employed in that department, their role? And I am asking this question in view of the budget as allocated for the Property and Real Estate Management Services.

Hon. Young: Unfortunately, we do not have the exact figures here in writing so we will provide that to you in writing, in terms of the number of staff. But this is a very important body for Government services and, really what they do is do a sweep of all of the property that is available, owned by Government as well as whatever private properties may be available to be rented by Government and

UNREVISED
Appropriation Bill, 2017 (cont’d) 2017.10.23
Standing Finance Committee (cont’d)

Statutory Bodies, et cetera. Sorry, it has just been provided. There are 23 members of staff in PRESD.

Dr. Bodo: Thank you, Minister. And my question to you would be—and if you may permit me, Madam Chair. I do not want to rush, but on page 226, the budget that you spoke about would be 447—

Hon. Young: On 226? We “gone” to 226?

Dr. Bodo: I will ask it then.

Hon. Young: I “doh” mind if we just go straight to 226 and forget everything in between. [Laughter]

Dr. Bodo: I will ask it then, but I was trying to relate it to the expenditure.

Hon. Young: Well, when we get there.

Dr. Bodo: Okay, sure. I will wait, Madam Chair.

Madam Chairman: Okay, sure. Thank you. Item 007, Public Service Academy; Item 008, National Archives; Item 009, Public Service Transportation Division. Member for Fyzabad.

Dr. Bodo: Madam Chair, again I am asking with regard to the number of staff employed in that division which, I am assuming, is a very important division based on the name of the division in terms of the transformation of the public service.

Hon. Young: We will provide that to you in writing.

Dr. Bodo: Okay, thank you.

Madam Chairman: Item 013, Information Division; Item 015, Strategic Services and Information Technology Division; Item 019, Diamond Division; Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, page 222; Item 001, General Administration. Member for Fyzabad.

Dr. Bodo: Madam Chair, with regard to Rent/Lease, 08, I see a decrease in just over $10 million, Minister. Could you indicate—
Hon. Young: And you would like to applaud us for saving the country 10 and a half million dollars in rentals? [Desk thumping]

Dr. Bodoe: That is fine. Can you indicate what was the reason and would there be any impact in the services provided by the Ministry?

Hon. Young: There will be no impact. In fact, what this reflects is that you would recall that previously the substantive Minister made a statement to the public and to Trinidad and Tobago that when we came in we set about doing a regularization and also negotiating lease rentals downwards wherever we could. So this is a direct result of that savings. We also moved various Ministries and Departments into properties that are owned by the State and thereby foregoing and cancelling private lease rentals and arrangements. So that is what you are seeing here. That is part of the savings.

Dr. Bodoe: So this is a decrease we can expect going forward?

Hon. Young: Correct. We continue to do it.

Madam Chairman: Item 002, Science and Technology; Item 003, National Information and Communication Technology Centre, Secretariat. Member for Fyzabad.

Dr. Bodoe: Thank you, Madam Chair. Minister, with regard to Item 23, Fees, the substantial amount of $66 million, can you just explain—

Hon. Young: Sorry, where are you? Item 23, yes.

Dr. Bodoe: We are on page 224, Item 23. Can you just give us a breakdown or maybe an explanation of what those fees will entail?

Hon. Young: Yes. These fees are for Enterprise Wide Services and Applications and Infrastructural Support for key projects of GUARD, MDAs. A review will have to be undertaken to determine ways in which cost-saving measures and, of course, modifications may be applied. This is really, predominantly in the area of
software and the software and ICT support across all of Government services.

Dr. Bodel: Thank you, Minister. Madam Chair, likewise with 28, Other Contracted Services, can the Minister indicate that figure of $100 million, an increase of over $99 million, what comes under that Item?

Hon. Young: Again, this is all to do with the ICT software and hardware, the upgrade of it that supports all of Government services and other entities that rely on Government services. So, as you know, these things have a shelf life. Technology is moving at a fast pace and, unfortunately, with a lot of the items, they have reached the end of their shelf life. So we are upgrading and purchasing not only hardware but also software to ensure that Government is properly supported.

Madam Chairman: Item 004, Government Printery; Item 005, Property and Real Estate Management Services. Member for Fyzabad.

Dr. Bodel: Thank you, Madam Chair. Minister, with regards to Item 08, the Rent/Lease - Office Accommodation and Storage, and the allocation of $447 million—

Hon. Young: Sorry, which Item?

Dr. Bodel: On page 26, line 08.

Hon. Young: Sorry. We are under Item 08. Yes, I am with you now. Yes?

Dr. Bodel: So, the $447,000, if you can provide the list of the buildings that are rented. But I wanted to relate this back to the staffing of that department, and the question really would have been whether the staffing would have been adequate to oversee this enormous expenditure.

Hon. Young: Well, I mean, as you know, once you have negotiated leases and lease arrangements, it is normally for a period of time: three years; five years, et cetera. So the answer is, yes, because what we have been doing is actually

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minimizing the number of external lease rental arrangements with the Government, and once we have negotiated it and it is in place, it just runs. It runs like clockwork. And this here also covers loan facilities and loan payments. For example, the International Waterfront Project and these things, which as you know, where we are right now, there are loan arrangements to be covered. So this covers the loan payments for the International Waterfront Centre and other buildings; Government Campus, et cetera.

**Dr. Bodoe:** Madam Chair, Item 21, Repairs and Maintenance of Buildings. Minister, I note that in the 2017 allocation it was $23.5 million but the expenditure was only 7.8. Would you be able to give an explanation for that? And the second question would be in terms of the 2018, $13 million expenditure projected, you know, what sort of repair work is expected on public buildings?

5.40 p.m.

**Hon. Young:** We will have a shortfall, so it is expected that we will be asking for a supplement, either at the mid-year review or looking to vire money from elsewhere. With respect to the—that we were provided $23.5 million in 2017 but only utilized 7.8. Again this would have been a management of cash flow. Right. So even though, as you are aware, you can budget a certain amount of money, it does not mean—well, under this administration—that we would expend all of that money. So we try to ensure savings throughout. So this is another area that we managed to have significant savings.

**Dr. Bodoe:** Just to clarify, it was not a challenge in terms of the execution of projects, so to speak. I just want to be clear on that.

**Hon. Young:** No, no. This is maintenance for existing things.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 006, Public Management Consulting Division; Item 007, Public Service Academy; Item 008, National Archives; Item 009, Public

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Dr. Bodoe: Thank you, Madam Chair. Well, I will ask it under line Item 16, which is Contract Employment, but just to ask if the Minister can indicate how many entities would have been diamond certified in the year 2017?

Hon. Young: We have actually had a review of that programme and right now we are now doing business process management and customer service training. So we have sort of moved away from this Diamond Division and we have restructured it into those two areas.

Dr. Bodoe: So the expenditure for 2018 would be for what? Just to wind down?

Hon. Young: Well, for the staff to do those things and to ensure that we are trying in selected Ministries. What we are trying to do is to make it more efficient, customer service, and this type of thing. So it is staff that will go out to these various Ministries and come back and feed us the information, to tell us where we are falling short, et cetera, and then we will try to work with those various Ministries.

Madam Chairman: Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases; Item 001, General Administration; Item 002, Science and Technology, page 234; Item 003, National Information and Communication Technology; Item 004, Government Printery; Item 005, Property and Real Estate Management Services, page 235; Item 006, Public Management Consulting Division; Item 007, Public Service Academy; Item 008, National Archives; Item 009, Public Service Transformation Division; Item 013, Information Division; Item 015, Strategic Services and Information Technology; Item 018, Strategic Human Resource and Management Division

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Mr. Singh: Thank you, Madam Chair. Item 03 under Transfers to State Enterprises, there is a decrease of $1.5 million and a $15 million allocation in the 2017/2018 allocation, is this for the formation of the new TTT?

Hon. Young: It is not so to speak for the formation of the new TTT. As you are aware, there is an existing entity with equipment, assets, staff, et cetera, called Caribbean New Media Group, and when that is morphed into TTT, yes, it will be for those expenses.

Madam Chairman: Member for Naparima. No? So we now move on to Sub-Head 06, Current Transfers to Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies, and we will move right away to the Draft Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure of Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies and of the Tobago House of Assembly. 03 - Trinidad and Tobago Telecommunications Authority, page 195. Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure; 001, General Administration page 195; Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services; 001 General Administration. Member for Fyzabad.

Dr. Bodoe: Thank you, Madam Chair. Minister, under 28, Other Contracted Services, I note an increase of $1.75 million in the 2018 allocation. Can you perhaps give an explanation for that?

Hon. Young: Yes, just give me one second. Right. What this is to facilitate is a digital radio consultancy and looking at things like channel spacing, and this consultancy is expected to assist when it comes to channel spacing and the
directive for broadcasters, and the requirement for designated stations to move frequency, as you know, going from analogy to digital.

Dr. Bodoe: Minister, Item 66, Hosting of Conferences, Seminars and Other Functions. I note an increase of $2.3 million in the 2018 allocation, could you perhaps explain what—

Hon. Young: Yes. This is a provision for a new industry award signature event for 2018. The awards are expected to be a major people’s choice awards to encourage the development of high standards of service provision and recognize the importance of consumer choice in service provision. Estimated cost is at this $2.5 million.

Dr. Bodoe: Can you perhaps explain how that award will function or will be administrated.

Hon. Young: Well, as you know we have a very vibrant media sector in Trinidad and Tobago with television stations. We have more than one. We have a few of them as well as radio stations. So I assume what it is, is to create this sort of bonding and also a quality standard in the industry so for people to aim towards and to achieve, like we say, in other developed nations.

Madam Chairman: Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, page 196; 001, General Administration; Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies; 007 Households; 009, Other Transfers. 53 - National Library and Information System (NALIS), page 200; Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure, 001 General Administration. Member for Fyzabad.

Dr. Bodoe: Thank you, Madam Chair. Minister, this is just a—it is a broad question in relation to the expenditure under 01 of $79 million annually on staff for the various NALIS facilities and so on, and the question really is, is there—

Hon. Young: Which line Item, sorry?
Dr. Bodee: 01, Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance, $79 million.

Hon. Young: Right. Okay.

Dr. Bodee:—is there a system in place, perhaps—I know it might be difficult—to determine the value that this kind of expenditure would bring to the population of Trinidad and Tobago. In other words, I am asking whether there are surveys, or studies and so on done, or reports and so on.

Hon. Young: As you quite rightly identify, it is very much an intangible. So the provision of, for example, national library services, the ability for our citizens and our visitors to go into these libraries, have access not only to hard books but also the Internet to do research, et cetera, is a very intangible product. But in measurement of developed nations, developed countries, I am sure that you all would accept, and you would accept, Member for Fyzabad, it is an important component because everyone does not have the same facilities in their homes as others. I mean, I went into the national library recently and I was very, very happy to see the level of maintenance and how much is being offered. So I think it is money well spent.

Dr. Bodee: That is fine. Thank you.

Madam Chairman: Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, 001, General Administration, pages 200 and 201; Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases; 001 General Administration, page 201; Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies; 007, Households; 009 Other Transfers.

Hon. Members, we will now move on to the Draft Estimates of Development Programme. Sub-Head 09, Development Programme. Consolidated Fund, page 88; Item 004, Social Infrastructure, pages 88 and 89. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, hon. Chair. Hon. Minister, line Item 005, how
many librarians do we have in the establishment?

Hon. Young: 005 on page 88?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Yes.

Hon. Young: Under Training of Librarians, you are asking how many librarians we have?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Yes.

Hon. Young: We will have to provide that for you, but we have 33 scholars currently being trained as librarians and that is what this covers the costs of.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you.

Madam Chairman: Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services, pages 89 and 90. Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.

Mr. Lee: Thank you, Madam Chair. To the hon. Minister, line Item 022, Public Sector Reform Preparation Programme, $7.7 million identified this year. Could the Minister just enlighten us what sort of reform this would take?—as we have done many reforms in that sector.

Hon. Young: This is actually to pay the bills you all left behind.

Mr. Charles: Just so?

Hon. Young: Well yeah, it is the truth.

Dr. Bodoе: Thank you, Madam Chair. Minister, Item 001, Implementation of the ICT Plan. I note there was no expenditure in 2017, is there an explanation for that?

Hon. Young: Again, that would have been cash flow issues, and as we had discussed earlier when you alluded to certain big-number items, what we are doing now in this year we are going to try to cover as much as we can.

Dr. Bodoе: Sure. 046, E-Government and Knowledge Brokering Programme, it is still on the line, but I notice no expenditure in 2017, nothing allocated in 2018. Is it to say that this is completed?
Hon. Young: That is because we have completed, yes.

Dr. Bodo: Okay. Would that be the same explanation for Item 054, Establishment of a Virtual Call Centre in the Public Service?

Hon. Young: That was transferred to another Ministry. That one was transferred to another Ministry. That is really to deal with scholarships, the scholarship programme.

Dr. Bodo: The Establishment of the Virtual Call Centre in the Public Service, 054?

Hon. Young: Yeah.

Dr. Bodo: Okay. It is just that it does not reflect here.

Hon. Young: I know. Sorry.

Mr. Charles: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. 002, Public Sector Reform Preparation Programme. The Minister indicated that this is a bill that is outstanding that was left by the previous administration. Two questions: one, why is the bill only now coming due after two and a half years; and secondly, what have been the deliverables of this programme—

Hon. Young: That is a good question.

Mr. Charles:—and how are you utilizing this in your—

Hon. Young: Well, that is a good question. We asked ourselves after, why is it that you all engaged in this in the first place, there being so many previous consultancies to do with public sector reform, but you all as had happened throughout, had already contracted the State to do it. So we allowed it to run its course. We tried to manage it tightly and now we are just paying the final bill. There is a report that has been produced. There is a committee that has been set up that includes, for example, the Chief Justice and other persons who are heads of various important sectors in the public sector, and they are looking at it now
currently to see what can be extracted and hopefully implemented.

**Mr. Charles:** Just for comprehensive information, who were the clients in respect of this programme?

**Hon. Young:** The client would have been the Ministry of Public Administration.

**Mr. Charles:** Right. And who did it?

**Hon. Young:** Who provided the work?

**Mr. Charles:** Who provided the service?

**Hon. Young:** Deloitte.

**Mr. Charles:** Deloitte. Okay.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Fyzabad.

**Dr. Bodoie:** The question has been answered.

**Madam Chairman:** All right. Infrastructure Development Fund, page 214; Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services.

*Question put and agreed to.  
Head 31 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.*

**Madam Chairman:** Thank you, Minister; thank you, Madam PS and other members of staff.

Hon. Members, the question is that the sum of $42,853,342,711 be approved as a grand total.

*Question put and agreed to.*

**Madam Chairman:** We shall now move on to consider the Schedule of the Appropriation Bill along with the clauses.

**Clause 1.**

*Question proposed:* That clause 1 stand part of the Bill.

**Mrs. Robinson-Regis:** Madam Chairman, would you want to consider all together, 1 to 3?
Clauses 1 to 3 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Question put and agreed to: That the Bill be reported to the House.

House resumed.

The Minister of Finance (Hon. Colm Imbert): [Desk thumping] Madam Speaker, after four gruelling weeks, I wish to report that a Bill to provide for the service of Trinidad and Tobago, for the financial year ending on the 30th day of September, 2018, was considered in Standing Finance Committee and approved without amendments. I now beg to move that it be read a third time and passed, and we will be calling for a division.

Bill reported, without amendment.

Question put: That the Bill be now read a third time.

Hon. Imbert: Division.

The House voted: Ayes 21

AYES

Imbert, Hon. C.
Rowley, Hon. Dr. K.
Al-Rawi, Hon. F.
Young, Hon. S.
Deyalsingh, Hon. T.
Robinson-Regis, Hon. C.
Hinds, Hon. F.
Forde, E.
Mitchell, Hon. R.
Garcia, Hon. A.
Crichlow-Cockburn, Hon. C.
Dillon, Hon. Maj. Gen. E.

UNREVISED
Webster-Roy, Hon. A.
Gadsby-Dolly, Hon. Dr. N.
Smith, Hon. D.
Francis, Hon. Dr. L.
Jennings-Smith, Mrs. G.
Olivierre, Miss N.
Antoine, Brig. Gen. A.
Leonce, A.
McDonald, Miss M.

The following Members abstained: Mr. D. Lee, Mr. R. Charles, Dr. S. Rambachan, Dr. R. Moonilal, Mrs. C. Newallo-Hosein, Mr. G. Singh, Mr. B. Padarath and Dr. L. Bodoe.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Members, 21 Members voted for; no Members voted against; eight Members declined to vote.

Question agreed to.

Bill accordingly read the third time and passed.

ADJOURNMENT

The Minister of Planning and Development (Hon. Camille Robinson-Regis): Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the Members on this side for their contribution on the debate [Desk thumping] and I am really very disturbed that those on the other side did not vote—

Hon. Member: Like this is a speech.

Hon. C. Robinson-Regis: Yes, it is a speech—that they did not vote for the pensions of the people of Trinidad and Tobago. [Dr. Moonilal is leaving the Chamber]

Madam Speaker: Member?
Dr. Moonilal: Ma’am, I am leaving.

Madam Speaker: There is no bar against you leaving, but again decorum and respect. I cannot not hear the steups. Okay. [Crosstalk] So for the public, for the public, if you will just apologize for that and you can leave.

Dr. Moonilal: I apologize to the public.

Madam Speaker: Sure. Thank you so much. Leader of the House.

Hon. C. Robinson-Regis: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. And I think it is quite unfortunate that that should happen. But, Madam Speaker, I beg to move that this House do now adjourn to a date to be fixed.

Question put and agreed to.

House adjourned accordingly.

Adjourned at 6.06 p.m.