



**REPORT
OF
THE STANDING FINANCE COMMITTEE
OF THE
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

**on the Consideration of Proposals for the Supplementation and
Variation of Appropriation for the fiscal year 2026**

SECOND SESSION OF THE THIRTEENTH PARLIAMENT (2026/2027)

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Standing Finance Committee

The Standing Finance Committee was established under House of Representatives Standing Order 82(1) to consider the Estimates and the Appropriation Bill. House of Representatives Standing Order 87(1) also states that, *“The Standing Finance Committee shall consider and report on all proposals for the expenditure from public revenue or other funds which are not included in the Annual Estimates, including proposals for supplementary and unforeseen expenditure.”*

Publication

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THE COMMITTEE

Mandate of the Committee

1. The Standing Finance Committee is established by House of Representatives Standing Order 82(1) of the House of Representatives Standing Orders. It is the duty of the Committee to consider the Estimates and the Appropriation Bill. The Committee is also empowered by House of Representatives Standing Order 87(1) to consider and report on all proposals for expenditure which are not included in the Annual Estimates including proposals for supplementary and unforeseen expenditure.

Membership

2. In accordance with the House of Representatives Standing Order 82(1), this Committee is a Committee of the Whole House of Representatives and is chaired by the Speaker.

Meeting

3. The Committee held a public meeting on Friday June 12, 2026, at 1:30 p.m. The Minutes of the Meeting and the Verbatim Notes are attached at Appendices II and III respectively.

4. The purpose of this meeting was to consider proposals for the supplementation and variation of the appropriation provided in the Appropriation (Financial Year 2026) Act, 2025 and varied by the Finance (Supplementation and Variation of Appropriation) (Financial Year 2026) Act, 2026. The Schedule relating to the Supplementation and Variation of estimates for fiscal 2026 is at Appendix IV.

Supplementation

5. The Standing Finance Committee noted the Supplementation to the Appropriation for fiscal year 2026 in the sum of **Two Thousand, Nine Hundred and Twenty Seven Million, Three Hundred and Seventy One Thousand, Eight Hundred and Fifty One Dollars (\$2,927,371,851)** required to meet expenditure under the following Sub-Heads:

- Goods and Services - \$343,046,510
- Current Transfers and Subsidies - \$1,921,379,338
- Current Transfers to Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies - \$570,199,800
- Development Programme - \$92,746,203

6. The Committee noted that it was necessary to have a Supplementation of Appropriation of resources to fund urgent and critical Recurrent and Capital Expenditure to September 30, 2026, in areas where insufficient or no allocation was provided. The source of these additional funds is the Consolidated Fund.

7. The Standing Finance Committee considered and approved the Supplementation to the Appropriation for fiscal year 2026 in the sum Two Thousand, Nine Hundred and Twenty Seven Million, Three Hundred and Seventy One Thousand, Eight Hundred and Fifty One Dollars, (\$2,927,371,851). The details of the Supplementation are provided in Table 1.

Table 1

Supplementation of Heads of Expenditure for fiscal year 2026.

Heads of Expenditure	Amount \$
01 - President	1,000,000
03 - Judiciary	39,154,220
04 - Industrial Court	685,000
05 - Parliament	3,228,200
07 - Statutory Authorities, Service Commission	285,700

Heads of Expenditure	Amount \$
15 - Tobago House of Assembly	94,000,000
16 - Central Administrative Services, Tobago	465,940
17 - Personnel Department	2,518,670
23 - Office of the Attorney General	75,000,000
26 - Ministry of Education	127,779,300
28 - Ministry of Health	499,978,970
30 - Ministry of Labour, Small and Micro Enterprise Development	4,969,800
31 - Ministry of Public Administration and Artificial Intelligence	68,648,710
34 - Ministry of Transport and Civil Aviation	21,100,000
37 - Integrity Commission	1,250,000
39 - Ministry of Public Utilities	513,641,000
40 - Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries	454,000,000
42 - Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government	188,210,313

Heads of Expenditure	Amount \$
61 - Ministry of Housing	197,364,564
64 - Trinidad and Tobago Police Service	64,200,000
65 - Ministry of Foreign and CARICOM Affairs	34,516,469
67 - Ministry of Planning, Economic Affairs and Development	1,628,803
69 - Ministry of Works and Infrastructure	362,944,942
72 - Ministry of Tertiary Education and Skills Training	19,800,000
78 - Ministry of the People, Social Development and Family Services	68,445,000
84 - Ministry of Defence	39,245,000
86 - Ministry of Culture and Community Development	43,311,250
Total	2,927,371,851

Recommendation

Supplementation

8. The Committee recommends the Supplementation of Appropriation for fiscal year 2026 in the sum of Two Thousand, Nine Hundred and Twenty Seven Million, Three Hundred and Seventy One Thousand, Eight Hundred and Fifty One Dollars, (\$2,927,371,851).

Variation

9. The Committee noted that it was necessary to have a Variation of the Appropriation of resources for fiscal 2026 in the sum of **Seven Hundred and Thirty-Seven Million, Five Hundred and Twenty-Two Thousand, Nine Hundred and Eighteen Dollars (\$737,522,918)** to fund urgent expenditure to September 30, 2026 for the Heads of Expenditure under Table 2.

10. The Standing Finance Committee noted savings in fiscal 2026 identified under Head 18 Ministry of Finance in the sum of \$737,522,918.

Summary of Changes to Heads of Expenditure

11. The Standing Finance Committee considered and approved a Variation to the Appropriation for fiscal year 2026 in the sum of Seven Hundred and Thirty-Seven Million, Five Hundred and Twenty-Two Thousand, Nine Hundred and Eighteen Dollars (\$737,522,918). The details of Variation are provided in Table 2 and Appendix V.

Table 2
Variation of Appropriation for fiscal year 2026

Head of Expenditure	Variation	
	Increase \$	Decrease \$
01 - President	1,000,000	
02 - Auditor General	5,900,000	
03 - Judiciary	9,874,000	
04 - Industrial Court	1,783,325	

Heads of Expenditure	Variation	
	Increase \$	Decrease \$
07 - Statutory Authorities Service Commission	375,000	
12 - Public Service Appeal Board	185,107	
16 - Central Administrative Services, Tobago	2,703,000	
17 - Personnel Department	1,000,000	
18 - Ministry of Finance		737,522,918
23 - Office of the Attorney General	7,000,000	
26 - Ministry of Education	166,449,000	
28 - Ministry of Health	17,282,800	
30 - Ministry of Labour, Small and Micro Enterprise Development	6,808,600	
34 - Ministry of Transport and Civil Aviation	24,900,000	
38 - Environmental Commission	200,000	
39 - Ministry of Public Utilities	8,231,000	
42 - Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government	121,962,340	

Heads of Expenditure	Increase	Decrease
	\$	\$
61 - Ministry of Housing	432,647	
64 - Trinidad and Tobago Police Service	275,000,000	
67 - Ministry of Planning, Economic Affairs and Development	8,361,190	
69 - Ministry of Works and Infrastructure	47,365,000	
75 - Equal Opportunity Tribunal	278,909	
78 - Ministry of the People, Social Development and Family Services	8,361,000	
83 - Ministry of Homeland Security	16,100,000	
86 - Ministry of Culture and Community Development	5,970,000	
TOTAL	737,522,918	737,522,918

Recommendation

Variation

16. The Committee recommends the Variation of Appropriation for fiscal year 2026 in the sum of Seven Hundred and Thirty-Seven Million, Five Hundred and Twenty Two Thousand, Nine Hundred and Eighteen Dollars, (\$737,522,918).

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

Respectfully Submitted,

Sgd.
Hon. Jagdeo Singh, MP
Chairman

June 12, 2026

APPENDICES

APPENDIX I
Requests for Additional Information from
Ministries/Departments

HEAD 03 - JUDICIARY

Supplementation

Recurrent Expenditure - \$49,028,220

02/001/16 - Contract Employment

1. Provide the following details regarding new hires in fiscal year 2026:
 - a. The names of the new staff hired;
 - b. The positions these new staff members filled; and
 - c. The processes used to identify and employ the new staff.

HEAD 23 - OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL

Supplementation

Recurrent Expenditure - \$ 75,000,000

02/001/23 - Fees - \$50,000,000

1. Provide the following:
 - a. The list of attorneys to be paid from this supplementation,
 - b. The nature of the matters for which the attorneys will be paid; and
 - c. The amount to be paid to each.
2. List the attorneys who will still be owed and the amount due to each after these payments are made from this supplementation.

02/009/23 - Fees - \$25,000,000

1. Provide the following:
 - a. The list of attorneys to be paid from this supplementation,
 - b. The nature of the matters for which the attorneys will be paid; and
 - c. The amount to be paid to each.
2. List the attorneys who will still be owed and the amount due to each after these payments are made from this supplementation

HEAD 26 - MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

Supplementation

Recurrent Expenditure - \$97,779,300

02/001/16 - Contract Employment - \$3,806,000

1. Provide the following details regarding the newly contracted employees:
 - a. The positions to which the employees have been appointed; and
 - b. The salary assigned to each position.
2. Provide the number of vacant positions in the following categories:
 - a. School Social Worker;
 - b. Special Education Student Aide;
 - c. Clinical School Psychologist; and
 - d. Behavioural Specialist.

04/007/40 – Gratuities to Contract Officers- \$21,998,000

1. Provide a breakdown of the categories of staff to be paid from this supplementation.
2. Of the persons paid under this line item in fiscal 2026, how many were re-employed?

04/007/41 – Remedial Education- \$5,292,000

1. Provide the number of vacant Learning Support Assistant positions.

04/011/02 – National Schools Dietary Services Ltd.- \$21,998,000

1. Provide the total number of lunches and breakfasts to be supplied by the end of fiscal year 2026 through this supplementation.

Development Programme - \$30,000,000

005/06/A042 – Acquisition and Delivery of Laptops and Tablets. - \$30,000,000

1. What is the total amount spent on acquiring laptops for fiscal year 2026?

HEAD 28 – MINISTRY OF HEALTH

Supplementation

Recurrent Expenditure - \$499,978,970

04/009/14 – Int. pay't UDeCOTT USD\$99.6Mn. Arima Hospital Loan- \$12,933,200

1. Provide the following details for this line item:
 - a. The date the loan was initiated;
 - b. The duration of the loan; and
 - c. The frequency of payment of principal and interest.

04/009/15 – Int.pay't UDeCOTT M/Term F'cing USDS\$35.6Mn P/F Hospital- \$6,999,400

1. Provide the following details for this line item:
 - a. The date the loan was initiated;
 - b. The duration of the loan; and
 - c. The frequency of payment of principal and interest.

04/009/18 – Interest Payment - UDeCOTT TT\$127.5Mn. Construction costs New Sangre Grande Hospital - \$3,200,300

1. Provide the following details for this line item:
 - a. The date the loan was initiated;
 - b. The duration of the loan; and
 - c. The frequency of payment of principal and interest.

04/009/19 – Interest Payment - UDeCOTT TT\$101.9Mn. Re-Development of the Central Block at POSGH - \$2,368,000

1. Provide the following details for this line item:
 - a. The date the loan was initiated;
 - b. The duration of the loan; and
 - c. The frequency of payment of principal and interest.

04/009/20 – Interest Payment - Ansa Merchant Bank Ltd - 11 Year Fixed Rate Loan TT\$500Mn. upsized to TT\$750Mn. Eastern Regional Health Authority - \$19,125,000

1. Provide the following details of this line item:
 - a. The date the loan was upsized;
 - b. The duration of the loan;
 - c. The purpose of the loan; and
 - d. The frequency of payment of principal and interest.

HEAD 30 – MINISTRY OF LABOUR, SMALL AND MICRO ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT

Supplementation

Recurrent Expenditure - \$ \$4,969,800

02/001/22 – Short - term Employment - \$ 2,668,000

1. Provide the number of short-term employees to be paid from this supplementation.

06/004/017 – Cipriani College of Labour and Co-operative Studies- \$2,301,800

1. Provide the following:
 - a. A detailed breakdown of the expenditure items (salaries, supplies, outstanding payments, etc.) to be funded by this supplementation; and
 - b. The amount to be spent under each sub-category of expenditure.

HEAD 39 – MINISTRY OF PUBLIC UTILITIES

Supplementation

Recurrent Expenditure - \$513,641,000

06/004/51 – Water and Sewerage Authority- \$375,803,000

1. Provide the following on short-term positions:
 - a. Positions contracted;
 - b. Salaries of each position; and
 - c. Number of persons on 3-month, 6-month, and 12-month contracts.

HEAD 40 – MINISTRY OF ENERGY AND ENERGY INDUSTRIES

Supplementation

Recurrent Expenditure - \$ 454,000,000

04/007/01 – Shortfall in Subsidy re: Sale of Petroleum Products- \$ 454,000,000

1. How much money is estimated to be taken from the Petroleum Fund?
2. How much is owed to Paria Fuel Trading Company Limited (Paria) for the provision of fuel?
3. How much is owed by the National Petroleum Marketing Company Limited (NPMC) and United Independent Petroleum Marketing Company (UNIPET) to Paria for the fuel subsidy?
4. How much of the Fuel Subsidy can be directly attributed to the \$1 decrease in Super Gasoline?

HEAD 61 – MINISTRY OF HOUSING

Supplementation

Recurrent Expenditure - \$197,364,564

04/009/01 – Trinidad and Tobago Housing Development Corporation- \$197,364,564

1. Provide a detailed breakdown of the allocation of principal and interest payments for each loan.

HEAD 64 – TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO POLICE SERVICE

Variation

Recurrent Expenditure - \$275,000,000

01/001/03 – Overtime - Monthly Paid Officers - \$125,000,000

1. Provide a breakdown of the expenditure under this item for fiscal 2026 thus far.
2. Provide a detailed breakdown of the anticipated expenditures from this supplementation for fiscal 2026.

Supplementation

Recurrent Expenditure - \$\$64,200,000

02/001/03 – Uniforms - \$20,000,000

1. What is the expected delivery schedule for the uniforms?

02/001/09 – Rent / Lease - Vehicles and Equipment - \$5,000,000

1. How are the new Riddara Brand electric vehicles being paid for?

02/001/40 – Food at Institutions - \$10,200,000

1. What are the outstanding debts to be paid from this supplementation?
2. Provide the names of the suppliers to be paid from this supplementation.

04/007/40 – Gratuities to Contract Officers - \$4,000,000

1. Provide the number of persons to be paid with this supplementation.
2. How many contract officers' contracts have been renewed, and how many have not been renewed?

HEAD 69 – MINISTRY OF WORKS AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Supplementation

Recurrent Expenditure – \$362,944,942

02/005/28 – Other Contracted Services - \$10,000,000

1. Provide a list of the completed works that would be paid for under this supplementation.

04/009/09 – National Recruitment Drive Initiative- \$12,500,000

1. Provide a breakdown of the number of workers engaged under this initiative by:
 - a. Region;
 - b. County; and
 - c. Constituency.

HEAD 78 – MINISTRY OF THE PEOPLE, SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT AND FAMILY SERVICES

Supplementation

Recurrent Expenditure - \$ 43,311,250

04/005/10 - St. Jude's Home for Girls - 2,954,000

1. Has a Management Committee been assigned to the St. Jude's Home for Girls to date?

APPENDIX II

Minutes of Meeting

STANDING FINANCE COMMITTEE
SECOND SESSION (2026/2027), THIRTEENTH PARLIAMENT
MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON
FRIDAY JUNE 12, 2026 AT 1:33 P.M.
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CHAMBER
OFFICE OF THE PARLIAMENT, RED HOUSE
ABERCROMBY STREET, PORT OF SPAIN

Members of the Standing Finance Committee

Present

- | | | |
|---------------------------------|---|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. Hon. Jagdeo Singh, MP | - | Speaker of the House of Representatives & Chairman |
| 2. Hon. Davendranath Tancoo, MP | - | Minister of Finance & Minister in the Ministry of Planning, Economic Affairs and Development
<i>(Member for Fyzabad)</i> |
| 3. Hon. Barry Padarath, MP | - | Minister of Public Utilities & Minister in the Office of the Prime Minister
<i>(Member for Couva South)</i> |
| 4. Hon. Jearlean John, MP | - | Minister of Works and Infrastructure
<i>(Member for Couva North)</i> |
| 5. Hon. Dr. Roodal Moonilal, MP | - | Minister of Energy and Energy Industries
<i>(Member for Oropouche East)</i> |
| 6. Hon. David Lee, MP | - | Minister of Housing
<i>(Member for Caroni Central)</i> |
| 7. Hon. Saddam Hosein, MP | - | Minister of Land and Legal Affairs
<i>(Member for Barataria/San Juan)</i> |
| 8. Hon. Khadijah Ameen, MP | - | Minister of Rural Development and Local Government
<i>(Member for St. Augustine)</i> |
| 9. Hon. Roger Alexander, MP | - | Minister of Homeland Security
<i>(Member for Tunapuna)</i> |
| 10. Hon. Devesh Maharaj, MP | - | Minister of Justice & Minister in the Office of the Attorney General
<i>(Member for Aranguez/St. Joseph)</i> |
| 11. Hon. Vandana Mohit, MP | - | Minister of the People, Social Development and Family Services
<i>(Member for Chaguanas East)</i> |
| 12. Hon. Wayne Sturge, MP | - | Minister of Defence and Minister in the Ministry of Homeland Security |

13. Hon. Dr. Lackram Bodoë, MP - *(Member for Toco/Sangre Grande)*
Minister of Health
14. Hon. Dr. Michael Dowlath, MP - *(Member for Oropouche West)*
Minister of Education
15. Dr. Aiyana Ali, MP - *(Member for San Fernando West)*
Deputy Speaker
16. Hon. Wilfred Morris, MP - *(Member for Princes Town)*
Minister in the Office of the Prime Minister
17. Hon. Michelle Benjamin, MP - *(Member for Mayaro)*
Minister of Culture and Community Development
18. Hon. Sean Sobers, MP - *(Member for Moruga/Tableland)*
Minister of Foreign and CARICOM Affairs
19. Hon. Phillip Watts, MP - *(Member for Tabaquite)*
Minister of Sport and Youth Affairs
20. Hon. Dr. Rishad Seecheran, MP - *(Member for La Horquetta/Talparo)*
Minister in the Ministry of Health
21. Hon. Ernesto Kesar, MP - *(Member for Caroni East)*
Minister in the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries
22. Hon. Clyde Elder, MP - *(Member for Point Fortin)*
Minister in the Ministry of Public Utilities
23. Ms. Shivanna Sam, MP - *(Member for La Brea)*
Parliamentary Secretary in the Ministry of Public Utilities
24. Mr. Hansen Narinesingh, MP - *(Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla)*
Parliamentary Secretary in the Ministry of Tertiary Education and Skills Training
25. Dr. Narindra Roopnarine, MP - *(Member for Claxton Bay)*
Parliamentary Secretary in the Ministry of Culture and Community Development
26. Dr. Colin Neil Gosine, MP - *(Member for Naparima)*
Parliamentary Secretary in the Ministry of Trade, Investment and Tourism
27. Mr. David Thomas, MP - *(Member for Chaguanas West)*
Member for Tobago East
28. Mr. Joel Sampson, MP - Member for Tobago West
29. Mr. Marvin Gonzales, MP - Member for Arouca/Lopinot
30. Hon. Penelope Beckles, MP - Leader of the Opposition
31. Mr. Colm Imbert, MP - *(Member for Arima)*
Member for Diego Martin

- | | | |
|-------------------------------------|---|-----------------------------------------------|
| | | North/East |
| 32. Dr. Nyan Gadsby-Dolly, MP | - | Member for St. Ann's East |
| 33. Mr. Stuart Young SC, MP | - | Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West |
| 34. Mr. Keith Scotland SC, MP | - | Member for Port-of-Spain South |
| 35. Mrs. Camille Robinson-Regis, MP | - | Member for Trincity/Maloney |
| 36. Mr. Symon De Nobriga, MP | - | Member for Diego Martin Central |
| 37. Mr. Brian Manning, MP | - | Member for San Fernando East |
| 38. Mr. Kareem Marcelle | - | Member for Laventille West |
| 39. Mr. Hans Des Vignes, MP | - | Member for Diego Martin West |
| 40. Mr. Christian Birchwood, MP | - | Member for Laventille East/Morvant |
| 41. Mr. Dominic Romain, MP | - | Member for Malabar/Mausica |

ABSENT

- | | | |
|----------------------------------------|---|----------------------------------------|
| 1. Hon. Kamla Persad-Bissessar, SC, MP | - | Prime Minister
(Member for Siparia) |
|----------------------------------------|---|----------------------------------------|

ALSO PRESENT

- | | | |
|--------------------------------------|---|---------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. Sen. the Hon. John Jeremie S.C | - | Attorney General |
| 2. Sen. the Hon. Dominic Smith | - | Minister of Public Administration and Artificial Intelligence |
| 3. Sen. the Hon. Eli Zakour | - | Minister of Transport and Civil Aviation |
| 4. Sen. the Hon Prof. Prakash Persad | - | Minister of Tertiary Education and Skills Training |

COMMENCEMENT

- 1.1 The meeting was called to order at 1:33 p.m.
- 1.2 The Chairman indicated that in accordance with Standing Order 82 (6) and 87, a meeting of the Standing Finance Committee was convened to consider proposals for the Supplementation and Variation of Appropriation for the fiscal year 2026.
- 1.3 Members were advised that in accordance with Standing Order 45(1) the speaking time in Standing Finance Committee shall not exceed five (5) minutes on each intervention.
- 1.4 The procedure for the consideration of the Heads of Expenditure was outlined.

PROPOSALS FOR THE SUPPLEMENTATION AND VARIATION OF APPROPRIATION FOR THE FISCAL YEAR 2026

Head 01: President

- 2.1 The Chairman announced Head 01 President, a supplementation of \$1,000,000.

- 2.2 The Minister of Finance and Minister in the Ministry of Planning, Economic Affairs and Development was invited to make a brief opening statement for a maximum of five (5) minutes.
- 2.3 The Chairman proposed the question that Head 01 President be supplemented by the sum of \$1,000,000.
- 2.4 The Member for Diego Martin North/East sought clarification from the Minister. The Minister of Finance and Minister in the Ministry of Planning, Economic Affairs and Development provided explanations for the supplementation.
- 2.5 The question was put and agreed that Head be supplemented by the sum of \$1,000,000.

Head 03: Judiciary

- 2.6 The Chairman announced Head 03 Judiciary, a supplementation of \$39,154,220.
- 2.7 The Attorney General was invited to make a brief opening statement for a maximum of five (5) minutes.
- 2.8 The Chairman proposed the question that Head 03 Judiciary be supplemented by the sum of \$39,154,220.
- 2.9 The Members for Diego Martin North/East, Port-of-Spain North/ St. Ann's West and Port-of-Spain South sought clarification from the Attorney General. The Attorney General provided an explanation for the supplementation.
- 2.10 The question was put and agreed that Head 03 Judiciary be supplemented by the sum of \$39,154,220.

Suspension

The Committee suspended at 2:30 p.m.

Resumption

The Committee resumed at 2:55p.m.

- 2.11 The Chairman announced Head 03 Judiciary, to be varied by an increase in the sum of \$9,874,000.
- 2.12 The Attorney General was invited to make a brief opening statement for a maximum of five (5) minutes.
- 2.13 The Chairman proposed the question that Head 03 Judiciary be varied by an increase in the sum of \$9,874,000.

2.14 The Member for Diego Martin North/East sought clarification from the Attorney General. The Attorney General provided an explanation for the increase.

2.15 The question was put and agreed that Head 03 Judiciary be varied by an increase in the sum of \$9,874,000.

Head 04: Industrial Court

2.16 The Chairman announced Head 04 Industrial Court, a supplementation of \$685,000 and an increase in variation of \$1,783,325.

2.17 The Attorney General was invited to make a brief opening statement for a maximum of five (5) minutes.

2.18 The Chairman proposed the question Head 04 Industrial Court be supplemented by the sum of \$685,000 and be varied by an increase in the sum of \$1,783,325.

2.19 The Member for Diego Martin North/East sought clarification from the Attorney General. The Attorney General provided explanations for the supplementation and variation.

2.20 The question was put and agreed that Head 04 Industrial Court be supplemented by the sum of \$685,000 and be varied by an increase in the sum of \$1,783,325.

Head 05: Parliament

2.21 The Chairman announced Head 05 Parliament, a supplementation of \$3,228,200.

2.22 The Minister of Finance and Minister in the Ministry of Planning, Economic Affairs and Development was invited to make a brief opening statement for a maximum of five (5) minutes.

2.23 The Chairman proposed the question that Head 05 Parliament be supplemented by the sum of \$3,228,200.

2.24 The Member for Diego Martin North/East sought clarification from the Minister. The Minister of Finance and Minister in the Ministry of Planning, Economic Affairs and Development provided an explanation for the supplementation.

2.25 The question was put and agreed that Head 05 Parliament be supplemented by the sum of \$3,228,200.

Head 01 President

2.26 The Chairman announced Head 01 President to be varied by an increase in the sum of \$1,000,000

- 2.27 The Minister of Finance and Minister in the Ministry of Planning, Economic Affairs and Development was invited to make a brief opening statement for a maximum of five (5) minutes
- 2.28 The Chairman proposed the question that Head 01 President be varied by an increase in the sum of \$1,000,000.
- 2.29 The Member for Diego Martin North/East sought clarification from the Minister. The Minister of Finance and Minister in the Ministry of Planning, Economic Affairs and Development provided explanation for the increase
- 2.30 The question was put and agreed that Head 01 President be varied by an increase in the sum of \$1,000,000.

Head 07: Statutory Authorities, Service Commission

- 2.31 The Chairman announced Head 07 Statutory Authorities, Service Commission, a supplementation of \$285,700 and an increase in variation of \$375,000.
- 2.32 The Minister of Finance and Minister in the Ministry of Planning, Economic Affairs and Development was invited to make a brief opening statement for a maximum of five (5) minutes.
- 2.33 The Chairman proposed the question that Head 07 Statutory Authorities, Service Commission be supplemented by the sum of \$285,700 and be varied by an increase in the sum of \$375,000.
- 2.34 The Members for Diego Martin North/East and Trincity /Maloney sought clarification from the Minister. The Minister of Finance and Minister in the Ministry of Planning, Economic Affairs and Development provided explanations for the supplementation and variation.
- 2.35 The question was put and agreed that Head 07 Statutory Authorities, Service Commission be supplemented by the sum of \$285,700 and be varied by an increase in the sum of \$375,000.

Head 15: Tobago House of Assembly

- 2.36 The Chairman announced Head 15 Tobago House of Assembly, a supplementation of \$94,000,000.
- 2.37 The Minister of Finance and Minister in the Ministry of Planning, Economic Affairs and Development was invited to make a brief opening statement for a maximum of five (5) minutes.
- 2.38 The Chairman proposed the question that Head 15 Tobago House of Assembly be supplemented by the sum of \$94,000,000.
- 2.39 The Members for Port-of-Spain North/ St. Ann's West and Diego Martin North/East sought clarification from the Minister. The Minister of Finance and Minister in the Ministry of

Planning, Economic Affairs and Development provided an explanation for the supplementation.

2.40 The question was put and agreed that Head 15 Tobago House of Assembly be supplemented by the sum of \$94,000,000.

Head 16: Central Administrative Services, Tobago

2.41 The Chairman announced Head 16 Central Administrative Services, Tobago, a supplementation of \$465,940 and an increase in variation of \$2,703,000.

2.42 The Minister in the Office of the Prime Minister was invited to make a brief opening statement for a maximum of five (5) minutes.

2.43 The Chairman proposed the question that Head 16 Central Administrative Services, Tobago be supplemented by the sum of \$465,940 and varied by an increase in the sum of \$2,703,000.

2.44 The Members for Diego Martin North/ East and Trincity/ Maloney sought clarification from the Minister. The Minister in the Office of the Prime Minister provided explanations for the supplementation and variation.

2.45 The question was put and agreed that Head 16 Central Administrative Services, Tobago be supplemented by the sum of \$465,940 and be varied by an increase in the sum of \$2,703,000.

Head 17: Personnel Department

2.46 The Chairman announced Head 17 Personnel Department, a supplementation of \$2,518,670 and an increase in variation of \$1,000,000.

2.47 The Minister of Public Administration and Artificial Intelligence was invited to make a brief opening statement for a maximum of five (5) minutes.

2.48 The Chairman proposed the question that Head 17 Personnel Department be supplemented by the sum of \$2,518,670 and be varied by an increase in the sum of \$1,000,000.

2.49 The Members for Trincity/ Maloney, Port-of-Spain North/ St. Ann's West and Diego Martin West sought clarification from the Minister. The Minister of Public Administration and Artificial Intelligence provided an explanation for the supplementation and variation.

2.50 The question was put and agreed that Head 17 Personnel Department be supplemented by the sum of \$2,518,670 and be varied by an increase in the sum of \$1,000,000.

Suspension

The Committee suspended at 4:15 p.m.

Resumption

The Committee resumed at 4:25p.m.

Head 23: Office of the Attorney General

- 2.51 The Chairman announced Head 23 Office of the Attorney General, a supplementation of \$75,000,000 and an increase in variation of \$7,000,000.
- 2.52 The Attorney General was invited to make a brief opening statement for a maximum of five (5) minutes.
- 2.53 The Chairman proposed the question that Head 23 Office of the Attorney General be supplemented by the sum of \$75,000,000 and an increase in variation in the sum of \$7,000,000.
- 2.54 The Members for Arima and Port-of-Spain South sought clarification from the Attorney General. The Attorney General and Minister of Finance and Minister in the Ministry of Planning, Economic Affairs and Development provided an explanation for the supplementation and variation.
- 2.55 The question was put and agreed that Head 23 Office of the Attorney General be supplemented by the sum of \$75,000,000 and be varied by an increase in the sum of \$7,000,000.

Head 26: Ministry of Education

- 2.56 The Chairman announced Head 26 Ministry of Education, a supplementation of \$127,779,300 and an increase in variation of \$166,449,000.
- 2.57 The Minister of Education was invited to make a brief opening statement for a maximum of five (5) minutes.
- 2.58 The Chairman proposed the question that Head 26 Ministry of Education be supplemented by the sum of \$127,779,300 and an increase in variation in the sum of \$166,449,000.
- 2.59 The Members for St. Ann's East, Port-of Spain North/ St. Ann's West, Diego Martin North/ East and Arouca/ Lopinot sought clarification from the Minister. The Minister of Education and Minister of Finance and Minister in the Ministry of Planning, Economic Affairs and Development provided an explanation for the supplementation and variation.
- 2.60 The question was put and agreed that Head 26 Ministry of Education be supplemented by the sum of \$127,779,300 and be varied by an increase in the sum of \$166,449,000.
- 2.61 The question was put and agreed that Head 26 Ministry of Education be varied by an increase in the sum of \$166,449,000

Head 28: Ministry of Health

- 2.62 The Chairman announced Head 28 Ministry of Health, a supplementation of \$499,978,970 and increase in variation of \$17,282,800.

- 2.63 The Minister of Health was invited to make a brief opening statement for less than five (5) minutes.
- 2.64 The Chairman proposed the question that Head 28 Ministry of Health be supplemented by the sum of \$499,978,970 and varied by an increase in the sum of \$17,282,800.
- 2.65 The Members for Diego Martin North/ East and Port-of-Spain North/ St. Ann's West sought clarification from the Minister. The Minister of Health and Minister of Finance and Minister in the Ministry of Planning, Economic Affairs and Development provided an explanation for the supplementation and variation.
- 2.66 The question was put and agreed that Head 28 Ministry of Health be supplemented by the sum of \$499,978,970 and be varied by an increase in the sum of \$17,282,800.

Head 30: Ministry of Labour, Small and Micro Enterprise Development

- 2.67 The Chairman announced Head 30 Ministry of Labour, Small and Micro Enterprise Development, a supplementation of \$4,969,800 and an increase in variation of \$6,808,600.
- 2.68 The Minister of Energy and Energy Industries was invited to make a brief opening statement for less than five (5) minutes.
- 2.69 The Chairman proposed the question that Head 30 Ministry of Labour, Small and Micro Enterprise Development be supplemented by the sum of \$4,969,800 and be varied by an increase in the sum of \$6,808,600.
- 2.70 The Members for Port-of-Spain South, Diego Martin Central and Trincity/ Maloney sought clarification from the Minister. The Minister of Energy and Energy Industries an explanation for the supplementation and variation.
- 2.71 The question was put and agreed that Head 30 Ministry of Labour, Small and Micro Enterprise Development be supplemented by the sum of \$4,969,800 and be varied by an increase in the sum of \$6,808,600.

Head 31: Ministry of Public Administration and Artificial Intelligence

- 2.72 The Chairman announced Head 31 Ministry of Public Administration and Artificial Intelligence, a supplementation of \$68,648,710.
- 2.73 The Minister of Public Administration and Artificial Intelligence was invited to make a brief opening statement for a maximum of five (5) minutes.
- 2.74 The Chairman proposed the question that Head 31 Ministry of Public Administration and Artificial Intelligence, be supplemented by the sum of \$68,648,710.

- 2.75 The Members for Diego Martin West, Port-of-Spain North/ St. Ann's West and San Fernando East sought clarification from the Minister. The Minister of Public Administration and Artificial Intelligence provided an explanation for the supplementation.
- 2.76 The question was put and agreed that Head 31 Ministry of Public Administration and Artificial Intelligence, be supplemented by the sum of \$68,648,710.

Head 34: Ministry of Transport and Civil Aviation

- 2.77 The Chairman announced Head 34 Ministry of Transport and Civil Aviation, a supplementation of \$21,100,000 an increase in variation of \$24,900,000.
- 2.78 The Minister of Transport and Civil Aviation was invited to make a brief opening statement for a maximum of five (5) minutes.
- 2.79 The Chairman proposed the question that Head 34 Ministry of Transport and Civil Aviation be supplemented by the sum of \$21,100,000 and be varied by an increase in the sum of \$24,900,000.
- 2.80 The Members for Laventille East/ Morvant, Diego Martin West, Diego Martin North/ East and Arouca/ Lopinot sought clarification from the Minister. The Minister of Transport and Civil Aviation provided an explanation for the supplementation and variation.
- 2.81 The question was put and agreed that Head 34 Ministry of Transport and Civil Aviation be supplemented by the sum of \$21,100,000 and be varied by an increase in the sum of \$24,900,000.

Head 37: Integrity Commission

- 2.82 The Chairman announced Head 37 Integrity Commission, a supplementation of \$1,250,000.
- 2.83 The Minister of Finance and Minister in the Ministry of Planning, Economic Affairs and Development was invited to make a brief opening statement for a maximum of five (5) minutes.
- 2.84 The Chairman proposed the question that Head 37 Integrity Commission be supplemented by the sum of \$1,250,000.
- 2.85 The Member for Diego Martin North/ East sought clarification from the Minister. The Minister of Finance and the Minister in the Ministry of Planning, Economic Affairs and Development provided an explanation for the supplementation.
- 2.86 The question was put and agreed that Head 37 Integrity Commission be supplemented by the sum of \$1,250,000.

Head 39: Ministry of Public Utilities

- 2.87 The Chairman announced Head 39 Ministry of Public Utilities, a supplementation of \$513,641,000 and an increase in variation of \$8,231,000.
- 2.88 The Minister of Public Utilities was invited to make a brief opening statement for a maximum of five (5) minutes.
- 2.89 The Chairman proposed the question that Head 39 Ministry of Public Utilities be supplemented by the sum of \$513,641,000 and be varied by an increase in the sum of \$8,231,000.
- 2.90 The Members for Arouca/ Lopinot and Port-of-Spain North/ St. Ann's West sought clarification from the Minister. The Minister of Public Utilities provided an explanation for the supplementation and variation.
- 2.91 The question was put and agreed that Head 39 Ministry of Public Utilities be supplemented by the sum of \$513,641,000 and that Head 39 Ministry of Public Utilities be varied by an increase in the sum of \$8,231,000.

Head 40: Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries

- 2.92 The Chairman announced Head 40 Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries, a supplementation of \$454,000,000.
- 2.93 The Minister of Energy and Energy Industries was invited to make a brief opening statement for a maximum of five (5) minutes.
- 2.94 The Chairman proposed the question that Head 40 Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries, be supplemented by the sum of \$454,000,000.
- 2.95 The Members for Port-of-Spain North/ St. Ann's West and San Fernando East sought clarification from the Minister. The Minister of Energy and Energy Industries provided an explanation for the supplementation.
- 2.96 The question was put and agreed that Head 40 Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries, be supplemented by the sum of \$454,000,000.

Head 42: Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government

- 2.97 The Chairman announced Head 42 Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government, a supplementation of \$188,210,313 and an increase in variation of \$121,962,340.
- 2.98 The Minister of Rural Development and Local Government was invited to make a brief opening statement for a maximum of five (5) minutes.
- 2.99 The Chairman proposed the question that Head 42 Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government be supplemented by the sum of \$188,210,313 and be varied by an increase in the sum of \$121,962,340.

2.100The Members for Diego Martin Central, Port-of-Spain North/ St. Ann's West, Laventille West, Diego Martin North/ East, Diego Martin West and Port-of-Spain South sought clarification from the Minister. The Minister of Rural Development and Local Government provided an explanation for the supplementation and variation.

2.101The question was put and agreed that Head 42 Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government be supplemented by the sum of \$188,210,313 and be varied by an increase in the sum of \$121,962,340.

Head 61: Ministry of Housing

2.102The Chairman announced Head 61 Ministry of Housing, a supplementation of \$197,364,564 and an increase in variation of \$432,647.

2.103The Minister of Housing was invited to make a brief opening statement for a maximum of five (5) minutes.

2.104The Chairman proposed the question that Head 61 Ministry of Housing be supplemented by the sum of \$197,364,564 and be varied by an increase in the sum of \$432,647.

2.105The Member for Trincity/ Maloney sought clarification from the Minister. The Minister of Housing provided an explanation for the supplementation and variation.

2.106The question was put and agreed that Head 61 Ministry of Housing be supplemented by the sum of \$197,364,564 and be varied by an increase in the sum of \$432,647.

Head 64: Trinidad and Tobago Police Service

2.107The Chairman announced Head 64 Trinidad and Tobago Police Service, a supplementation of \$64,200,000 and an increase in variation of \$275,000,000.

2.108The Minister of Homeland Security was invited to make a brief opening statement for a maximum of five (5) minutes.

2.109The Chairman proposed the question that Head 64 Trinidad and Tobago Police Service be supplemented by the sum of \$64,200,000 and be varied by an increase in the sum of \$275,000,000.

2.110The Members for Port-of Spain South, Port-of-Spain North/ St. Ann's West, Arouca/ Lopinot and Diego Martin North/ East sought clarification from the Minister. The Minister of Homeland Security and Minister of Finance and Minister in the Ministry of Planning, Economic Affairs and Development provided an explanation for the supplementation and variation.

2.111The question was put and agreed that Head 64 Trinidad and Tobago Police Service be supplemented by the sum of \$64,200,000 and be varied by an increase in the sum of \$275,000,000.

Head 83: Ministry of Homeland Security

2.112The Chairman announced Head 83 Ministry of Homeland Security, to be varied by an increase in the sum of \$16,100,000.

2.113The Minister of Homeland Security was invited to make a brief opening statement for less than five (5) minutes.

2.114The Chairman proposed the question that Head 83 Ministry of Homeland Security be varied by an increase in the sum of \$16,100,000.

2.115The Members for Port-of-Spain South and Malabar/Mausica sought clarification from the Minister. The Minister of Homeland Security provided an explanation for the increase.

2.116The question was put and agreed that Head 83 Ministry of Homeland Security be varied by an increase in the sum of \$16,100,000.

Head 65: Ministry of Foreign and CARICOM Affairs

2.117The Chairman announced Head 65 Ministry of Foreign and CARICOM Affairs, a supplementation of \$34,516,469.

2.118The Minister of Foreign and CARICOM Affairs was invited to make a brief opening statement for a maximum of five (5) minutes.

2.119The Chairman proposed the question that Head 65 Ministry of Foreign and CARICOM Affairs be supplemented by the sum of \$34,516,469.

2.120The Member for Port-of-Spain North/ St. Ann's West sought clarification from the Minister. The Minister of Foreign and CARICOM Affairs provided an explanation for the supplementation.

Suspension

The Committee suspended at 9:37 p.m.

Resumption

The Committee resumed at 9:48 p.m.

Head 65: Ministry of Foreign and CARICOM Affairs (cont'd)

2.121The Member for Arima sought clarification from the Minister. The Minister of Foreign and CARICOM Affairs provided an explanation for the supplementation.

2.122The question was put and agreed that Head 65 Ministry of Foreign and CARICOM Affairs be supplemented by the sum of \$34,516,469.

Head 67: Ministry of Planning, Economic Affairs and Development

2.123The Chairman announced Head 67 Ministry of Planning, Economic Affairs and Development, a supplementation of \$1,628,803 and an increase in variation of \$8,361,190.

2.124The Minister of Finance and Minister in the Ministry of Planning, Economic Affairs and Development, was invited to make a brief opening statement for a maximum of five (5) minutes.

2.125The Chairman proposed the question that Head 67 Ministry of Planning, Economic Affairs and Development be supplemented by the sum of \$1,628,803 and be varied by an increase in the sum of \$8,361,190.

2.126The Member for Arima sought clarification from the Minister. The Minister of Finance and Minister in the Ministry of Planning, Economic Affairs and Development provided an explanation for the supplementation and variation.

2.127The question was put and agreed that Head 67 Ministry of Planning, Economic Affairs and Development be supplemented by the sum of \$1,628,803 and be varied by an increase in the sum of \$8,361,190.

Head 69: Ministry of Works and Infrastructure

2.128The Chairman announced Head 69 Ministry of Works and Infrastructure, a supplementation of \$362,944,942 and an increase in variation of \$47,365,000.

2.129The Minister of Works and Infrastructure was invited to make a brief opening statement for a maximum of five (5) minutes.

2.130The Chairman proposed the question that Head 69 Ministry of Works and Infrastructure be supplemented by the sum of \$362,944,942 and be varied by an increase in the sum of \$47,365,000.

2.131The Members for Arima, Diego Martin North/ East, Port-of-Spain North/St. Ann's West, Arouca/ Lopinot, Diego Martin West and Laventille East/ Morvant sought clarification from the Minister. The Minister of Works and Infrastructure provided an explanation for the supplementation and variation.

2.132The question was put and agreed that Head 69 Ministry of Works and Infrastructure be supplemented by the sum of \$362,944,942 and be varied by an increase in the sum of \$47,365,000.

Head 72: Ministry of Tertiary Education and Skills Training

2.133The Chairman announced Head 72 Ministry of Tertiary Education and Skills Training, a supplementation of \$19,800,000.

2.134The Minister of Tertiary Education and Skills Training was invited to make a brief opening statement for a maximum of five (5) minutes.

2.135The Chairman proposed the question that Head 72 Ministry of Tertiary Education and Skills Training be supplemented by the sum of \$19,800,000.

2.136The question was put and agreed that Head 72 Ministry of Tertiary Education and Skills Training be supplemented by the sum of \$19,800,000.

Head 78: Ministry of the People, Social Development and Family Services

2.137The Chairman announced Head 78 Ministry of the People, Social Development and Family Services, a supplementation of \$68,445,000 and an increase in variation of \$8,361,000.

2.138The Minister of the People, Social Development and Family Services was invited to make a brief opening statement for a maximum of five (5) minutes.

2.139The Chairman proposed the question that Head 78 Ministry of the People, Social Development and Family Services be supplemented by the sum of \$68,445,000 and be varied by an increase in the sum of \$8,361,000.

2.140The Members for Diego Martin Central and Trincity/ Maloney sought clarification from the Minister. The Minister of the People, Social Development and Family Services provided an explanation for the supplementation and variation.

2.141The question was put and agreed that Head 78 Ministry of the People, Social Development and Family Services be supplemented by the sum of \$68,445,000 and be varied by an increase in the sum of \$8,361,000.

Head 84: Ministry of Defence

2.142The Chairman announced Head 84 Ministry of Defence, a supplementation of \$39,245,000.

2.143The Minister of Defence and Minister in the Ministry of Homeland Security was invited to make a brief opening statement for a maximum of five (5) minutes.

2.144The Chairman proposed the question that Head 84 Ministry of Defence be supplemented by the sum of \$39,245,000.

2.145The Members for Arouca/ Lopinot, Port-of-Spain North/ St. Ann's West and Port-of-Spain South sought clarification from the Minister. The Minister of Defence and Minister in the Ministry of Homeland Security provided an explanation for the supplementation.

2.146The question was put and agreed that Head 84 Ministry of Defence be supplemented by the sum of \$39,245,000.

Head 86: Ministry of Culture and Community Development

2.147The Chairman announced Head 86 Ministry of Culture and Community Development, a supplementation of \$43,311,250 and an increase in variation of \$5,970,000.

2.148The Minister of Culture and Community Development was invited to make a brief opening statement for a maximum of five (5) minutes.

2.149The Chairman proposed the question that Head 86 Ministry of Culture and Community Development be supplemented by the sum of \$43,311,250 and be varied by an increase in the sum of \$5,970,000.

2.150The question was put and agreed that Head 86 Ministry of Culture and Community Development be supplemented by the sum of \$43,311,250 and be varied by an increase in the sum of \$5,970,000.

Head 02: Auditor General

2.151The Chairman announced Head 02 Auditor General, to be varied by an increase in the sum of \$5,900,000.

2.152The Minister of Finance and Minister in the Ministry of Planning, Economic Affairs and Development was invited to make a brief opening statement for a maximum of five (5) minutes.

2.153The Chairman proposed the question that Head 02 Auditor General be varied by an increase in the sum of \$5,900,000.

2.154The question was put and agreed that Head 02 Auditor General be varied by an increase in the sum of \$5,900,000.

Head 12: Public Service Appeal Board

2.155The Chairman announced Head 12 Public Service Appeal Board, to be varied by an increase in the sum of \$185,107.

2.156The Minister of Finance and Minister in the Ministry of Planning, Economic Affairs and Development was invited to make a brief opening statement for a maximum of five (5) minutes.

2.157The Chairman proposed the question that Head 12 Public Service Appeal Board be varied by an increase in the sum of \$185,107.

2.158The question was put and agreed that Head 12 Public Service Appeal Board be varied by an increase in the sum of \$185,107.

Head 18: Ministry of Finance

2.159The Chairman announced Head 18 Ministry of Finance to be varied by a decrease in the sum of \$737,522,918.

2.160The Minister of Finance and Minister in the Ministry of Planning, Economic Affairs and Development was invited to make a brief opening statement for a maximum of five (5) minutes.

2.161The Chairman proposed the question that Head 18 Ministry of Finance be varied by a decrease in the sum of \$737,522,918.

2.162The Members for San Fernando East and Diego Martin North/ East sought clarification from the Minister. The Minister of Finance and Minister in the Ministry of Planning, Economic Affairs and Development provided an explanation for the decrease.

2.163The question was put and agreed that Head 18 Ministry of Finance be varied by a decrease in the sum of \$737,522,918.

Head 38: Environmental Commission

2.164The Chairman announced Head 38 Environmental Commission, to be varied by an increase in the sum of \$200,000.

2.165The Minister of Justice and Minister in the Office of the Attorney General was invited to make a brief opening statement for less than five (5) minutes.

2.166The Chairman proposed the question that Head 38 Environmental Commission be varied by an increase in the sum of \$200,000.

2.167The Member for Diego Martin North/East sought clarification from the Minister. The Minister of Justice and Minister in the Office of the Attorney General provided an explanation for the increase.

2.168The question was put and agreed that Head 38 Environmental Commission be varied by an increase in the sum of \$200,000.

Head 75: Equal Opportunity Tribunal

2.169The Chairman announced Head 75 Equal Opportunity Tribunal, to be varied by an increase in the sum of \$278,909.

2.170The Minister of Justice and Minister in the Office of the Attorney General was invited to make a brief opening statement for less than five (5) minutes.

2.171 The Chairman proposed the question that Head 75 Equal Opportunity Tribunal be varied by an increase in the sum of \$278,909.

2.172 The question was put and agreed that Head 75 Equal Opportunity Tribunal be varied by an increase in the sum of \$278,909.

Total Supplementation

2.173 The question was put and agreed that the Appropriation for fiscal year 2026 be supplemented by a total of \$2,927,371,851.

Total Variation

2.174 The question was put and agreed that the Appropriation for fiscal year 2026 be varied by a total of \$737,522,918.

REQUESTS FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

3.1 Requests for additional information to Ministries/Departments are listed in Appendix II of the Report.

OTHER BUSINESS

4.1 The Chairman informed Members that the debate for the adoption of the Committee's Report will take place on Monday June 15, 2026, at 10:30 a.m.

4.2 The adjournment was taken at 11:25 p.m.

We certify that these Minutes are true and correct.

CHAIRMAN

SECRETARY

June 12, 2026

APPENDIX III

Verbatim Notes

VERBATIM NOTES OF THE STANDING FINANCE COMMITTEE
OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES HELD IN THE HOUSE OF
REPRESENTATIVES CHAMBER, RED HOUSE, ST. VINCENT STREET, PORT OF
SPAIN, ON FRIDAY, JUNE 12, 2026, AT 1.30 P.M.

Mr. Chairman: Members, I think we just have a short housekeeping matter which we are trying to resolve, so hence the short delay in actually beginning. So, the hon. Chief Whip has asked for just a few minutes to clarify an issue. So if we could just give him perhaps a minute or so.

Mr. Gonzales: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Chairman: Alright, in order not to waste any more time, what I propose to do is to start.

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Chairman, may I say something?

Mr. Chairman: Yeah, I think it is being circulated electronically and in hard copy. They are taking the precaution of making hard copies for everyone.

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Chairman, you will appreciate having just received it—

Mr. Chairman: I understand, that is why—

Mr. Imbert: —we have had no time to look at it.

Mr. Chairman: I do not think that there is—it is just an explanation that it came late for everyone, including myself. I am now seeing it for the first time myself. What I propose to do in order for the economy of time is to start, and somewhere along the middle, we can perhaps go to the new process that the document contemplates we undertake if we have to do so.

Mr. Imbert: Could you explain what you mean by that, Mr. Chairman? Because there is a sequence supplementation.

Mr. Chairman: Yes, well, I had a word with the hon. Chief Whip who understands what we are trying to achieve here for the economy of time. However,

if Members need some time to familiarize themselves with the new documentation that has been circulated, and I understand it has just been circulated, I myself have now seen it for the first time, and I have been here since 9.30 this morning. What I propose to do is go the traditional route and start. If, at some point in time, it is required to adopt a little more flexible approach, we will do so at the appropriate times.

Mr. Imbert: So, you are going to do supplementation first and then variation?

Mr. Chairman: At the beginning, yes.

Mr. Imbert: And you are asking us, while we are interrogating the supplementation line items, to also look at the explanations that just came to interrogate the variation line items? I am just asking if that is what you are asking us to do.

Mr. Chairman: Well, yes. In order for the economy of time. But if there is no agreement on that, then we do it the traditional way.

Mr. Imbert: I think we should do it the traditional way, but—

Mr. Chairman: Well, that is a matter for—

Mr. Imbert: That is up to my leaders on this side.

Mr. Chairman: Well, that is what I was about to say. It is a matter for your leader to make that decision, but anyway. So I propose—

Mr. Young SC: Mr. Chair, before we proceed, I think I could speak for the whole of this side. We have no idea what is going on. We received documents some time ago in preparation to represent the population. We have printed the documents, we have come here prepared, and now seeing and hearing for the first time without any explanation as to what exactly it is. So maybe we can start with an explanation as to what the new document that apparently exists that you have just seen as well.

Mr. Chairman: Okay. I am advised by the staff, who are intimately more familiar with this, and I am going to say this not for the benefit of Members because I think all Members know the process being undertaken. I am going to say this for the benefit of the members of the public looking on.

Traditionally, the supplementation and variations were done separately. The

proposal from the Parliament staff this morning was that we do both together under each Head or each Ministry. Our understanding was to try to arrive at a consensus between both sides. Very reasonably, the hon. Chief Whip said he could not make that decision because he needed more information. The Clerk of the House then reached out to the Director of Budgets, who then provided an expanded document. So, that is what you are now seeing here.

Mr. Young SC: So, it is just the merging of the supplementation and variations?

Mr. Chairman: Yes, that is all it is. That is all it is.

Mr. Young SC: Alright, but we have not seen it. So I am simply asking for an explanation.

Mr. Chairman: Right, so, the explanation having been forthcoming, it was merely in an effort to achieve some economy of time so that all members – we have a phalanx of public servants here. It is simply in an effort to relieve the public servants from hanging around there for the entirety of the day and late into the night.

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Chair, in entertaining questions –

Mr. Chairman: But I accept that people need to consider it.

Mr. Imbert: – may I ask a question for the education of the Members to the left and right of me, and also the public? The new document, does it now contain explanations for the variations that were not in the original document? Because if it does, it means now, for the first time, we are getting information explaining the variations. Could you just clarify that?

Mr. Chairman: I myself have just seen it. I am advised that there are expanded explanations.

Mr. Imbert: There was no explanation before. There was a summary, but there was no explanation of each line Item, which is the practice that when you come to vary or supplement, there must be an explanation from the budget division of each change in each line Item. That was not there before for the variations. And I glanced at what has now come. There are now explanations for the variations.

Mr. Chairman: Alright. Well, it appears as though the preference is that we go with the old procedures, so it appears – am I correct hon. Chief Whip? So, we move along with the old procedures and whatever time it takes, then so be it.

Hon. Members, in accordance with Standing Order 82(6) and Standing Order 87 –

Mr. Young SC: [*Inaudible*]

Mr. Chairman: – this meeting of the Standing Finance Committee was convened – Port of Spain North, could I please be allowed to proceed in some silence? You do not usually disturb me, but I am hearing you this time – consider proposals for the supplementation and variation of appropriation for the fiscal year 2026. In accordance with Standing Order 45(1), the speaking time in the Standing Finance Committee shall not exceed five minutes on each intervention. That is both for the Minister making the presentation and also for Members making interjections.

1.40 p.m.

Mr. Chairman: So, in accordance with the old procedure, the proposals for supplementation will be considered prior to the proposals for variation. The Head and the amount to be supplemented or varied will be announced.

The Minister with responsibility will then be invited to explain the purpose for the supplementation or variation. I shall then propose the question that the Head be supplemented or varied. After that proposal, Members may then seek clarification from the Minister. Once this is concluded, I will then put the question for the sum to be supplemented or varied as may be required to be approved. This procedure will be repeated for each Head.

Hon. Members, we shall now consider the proposals for supplementation of appropriation for fiscal year 2026.

Mr. Tancoo: Chair, if I may? Sorry to interject –

Mr. Chairman: Yes.

Mr. Tancoo: – but before we continue. A matter has just been brought to my attention, literally just now. I am looking at Standing Order 84(3).

Mr. Chairman: 84(3), yes.

Mr. Tancoo: And I crave your indulgence to take a look at it and give us an opinion, please.

Mr. Chairman: Yes. Right. So, Standing Order 84—Well, let us go to the beginning. Standing Order 82 establishes the Standing Finance Committee. That is the establishment of the Committee. Right? Then 82(1) to (6) sets out a number of matters for the conduct of the Committee and the jurisdiction of the Committee and all that. Standing Order 83 then sets out the time for the Standing Finance Committee, 84 then says:

“Procedure on Examination of Estimates in the standing Finance Committee” And 83 says:

“In its consideration of each Head identified the Standing Finance Committee may seek clarification from the relevant Accounting Officers and technocrats.”

Right. I just ask Members to bear that in mind. Because there sometimes seems to be an over-enthusiasm, in terms of where questions are directed to. So I think we need to be careful. And also bear in mind that the Standing Order

“In its consideration of each Head identified the Standing Finance Committee may seek clarification from the relevant Accounting Officers and technocrats.”

So it does seem it gives the Committee the jurisdiction to ask questions of the technocrats and the accounting officers.

Mr. Young SC: Mr. Chair, I am a little confused. We have sat here for 10 years under these existing Standing Orders, gone through 10—well more than 10, because it will be 20, twice a year, these Standing Orders and the Standing Finance Committee. What exactly is it that the Member for Fyzabad is pointing to that for? Is it that they are now attempting to say that Ministers cannot be questioned and the questions have to be directed to the technocrats?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister.

Mr. Tancoo: Member for Port of North/St. Ann’s West. I was very clear in my statement of seeking clarification. May I be allowed to finish my comment? Thank you. I was very

clear that I was seeking a clarification. My interpretation of this may be different to yours. I am not focused on what the pattern has been or what the history has been, but on what is written here as what the practice should be. There has not been a single time in recent history where any Minister of Government has avoided providing information to any Standing Finance Committee. So I hope that answers your question.

Mr. Young SC: It does not. I am asking what is your drawing of reference to it for? What is it that you are suggesting?

Mr. Tancoo: I have made no suggestion, Member.

Mr. Chairman: All right. Port of Spain North, I do not think it is appropriate for you to direct enquiries to anybody else except to me. I think the — my own view of it is that it is a permissive provision which allows the Committee to ask the technocrats and the relevant accounting officers. As the Minister has said, there has been no practice where there has been ministerial avoidance of responsibility in information giving.

I think the hon. Minister merely is pointing it out as a reminder that in some instances the public servants and the technocrats are perhaps in a better position to give answers. Am I correct, Minister? Is that my —

Mr. Tancoo: Yes.

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Chairman, may I ask a question? The practice, which is part of our procedure until the practice has changed or the Standing Order has changed, is that the question will be directed to the Minister. And if the Minister cannot answer the question or does not have the information, the Minister will speak to the relevant technocrat, acquire the information and then respond to the Member asking the question. There is no practice of questioning Permanent Secretaries, the Commissioner of Police, et cetera.

Mr. Chairman: And that is the problem, you see, because the House passes Standing Orders and inserted in these Standing Orders are provisions. For whatever reason, these provisions are inserted at the appropriate time. And then there seems to me to be the practice where these Standing Orders are not resorted to, left in abeyance, and then when sought to be enforced, there is this submission that the practice has been different.

I think all the Minister was suggesting is that pursuant to 84(3), that the Committee may seek clarification from the relevant accounting officers and technocrats. Now it seems to me that that Standing Order does not provide any process by which the Minister intercedes between the technocrat and the public servant and the Committee. It does not appear so.

So whether the practice was developed in the past or not, where the question is passed through an intermediary, it does not appear as though the Standing Orders provide for that. As a matter of fact, this is a very permissive Standing Order in which it says:

“In its consideration of each Head identified the Standing Finance Committee may seek clarification from the relevant Accounting Officers and technocrats.”

Now the reason for that is plain and obvious. The technocrats will understand these questions on a far more organic and granular level than the Minister perhaps ever could. So that is why the Standing Orders give the SFC that general right to make those enquiries.

But if I am to take the Minister's answer, I do not think there is any intention on the part of the Minister not to answer the question. As a matter of fact, Minister, am I correct, there is a recommitment to provide information?

Mr. Tancoo: Yes.

Mr. Chairman: Simply pointing it out, am I correct? Is my interpretation simply to be that the Minister may then defer to the public servants who may understand these things far better than the Minister at times, and be able to assist the Committee on a greater granular level than the Minister can. Is my interpretation correct of that?

Mr. Tancoo: Yes, your interpretation is correct.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you. I think we have exhausted that, so let us move ahead.

Head 01: Office of the President, the supplementation of \$1 million.

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

Hon. Tancoo: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. The Office of the President is a department within the public service responsible for providing support services to Her Excellency the President in the execution of her functions and duties as enshrined in the Constitution of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago.

The Office of the President's mandate is to provide administrative, advisory, consultative, and other support services to the President in Her Excellency's exercise of her powers and functions as Head of State of the Executive Branch.

1.50 p.m.

In conclusion, the Office of the President plays a vital role in supporting Her Excellency the President in a range of important constitutional, ceremonial, and administrative duties and functions. Supplementary funding of \$1 million is required under Sub-Item 02/001/16: Contract Employment to facilitate the payment of salaries to officers employed on contract to the end of this fiscal. The staff of the Office of the President are here and we hold ourselves available to answer any questions that Members opposite may have.

Mr. Chairman: Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West.

Mr. Young SC: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Looking at the Schedule that has been provided to us, there is a variation above of \$1 million. Is it that we are not dealing with that at this time?

Mr. Chairman: We are dealing with supplementation.

Mr. Young SC: Okay. Thank you.

Mr. Chairman: Hence the reason why, we were trying to deal with both of them at the same time. So we will not have to move ahead and jump back over the river.

Mr. Imbert: Question, Mr. Chairman, if you will allow me?

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

Mr. Imbert: Whoever will answer this question, I am not sure, whether it is the Minister or the technocrat. Sub-Head 01/001/01 and also, Sub-Head 02/001/16. Could, whoever is going to answer the question, please indicate how much of this increase is as a result

of the increase in salaries of public servants and/or back pay? And similarly with the second Item, are these new contract workers, and if so, who are they? When were they employed? What process was used to employ them?

Mr. Chairman: First of all, I think, procedurally, the Item at Sub-Head 01 is a variation. The Item at Sub-Head 02 is supplementation, so we will deal with the supplementation now. The other part of the question will be deferred until –

Mr. Imbert: Thank you very much.

Mr. Chairman: Right.

Hon. Tancoo: I am advised that this additional supplementation will fulfil the requirements to pay all members of staff under Contract Employment at the Office of the President.

Mr. Imbert: Yes, but are these new workers or existing workers? New in terms of this budget cycle.

Hon. Tancoo: I am advised that these are existing workers.

Mr. Imbert: Okay.

Mr. Chairman: All right. No further questions, I intend to put the question.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 01 supplemented by the sum of \$1,000,000.

Mr. Chairman: Minister of Finance, thank you, and Madam Secretary, thank you very much for your attendance. We go now to Head 03: Judiciary.

Head 03: Judiciary, \$39,154, 220.

Mr. Chairman: I will now invite the hon. Attorney General to make a brief opening statement.

Sen. The Hon. Jeremie SC: I am reading the statement provided to me by the hon. Chief Justice. The Judiciary remains a vital pillar of this democracy, entrusted with the administration of justice, the resolution of disputes and the preservation of the rule of law. Its work is fundamental to maintaining public confidence in our institutions and ensuring social stability. The Government continues to maintain open lines of

communication with the Judiciary under the leadership of the hon. Chief Justice to ensure that the resources and support necessary for judicial operations and development are provided.

The Judiciary remains independent of the Executive and Legislative branches, but its administrative and operational requirements are advanced through the Office of the Attorney General. The Ministry of Justice works closely with the Judiciary to support court infrastructure and broader justice sector initiatives. The collaboration between the Office of Attorney General, the Ministry of Justice, and the Ministry of Land and Legal Affairs remains critical to strengthening the administration of justice, and advancing efficient, accessible and modern justice systems.

In this fiscal year 2026, the Judiciary was initially allocated some \$660 million for recurrent and capital expenditure. Some \$643 million was provided to fund the recurrent operations, and some \$16 million is provided for capital expenditure and the development projects. In reviewing projective recurrent expenditure to the end of 2026, this fiscal year, and taking into account representations from the Judiciary, it has become evident that a supplementary allocation is need at this mid-year review to ensure the fulfillment of existing commitments. This supplementary allocation reflects both the initial budgetary provision shortfall at the start of the financial year, and additional obligations arising from interim back pay, revised salary arrangements and revised salary arrangements for public servants.

In determining the quantum of supplementary funding, the Minister of Finance has carefully considered the needs and views of the Judiciary, the finite fiscal resources of the State and the imperative to balance competing national priorities. The administration remains committed to ensuring a properly resourced Judiciary as a foundation for a justice system that is efficient, accessible and effective. The total supplementation and variation in allocation, an increase of some \$49 million, has therefore been proposed to meet, first, existing salaries and loan repayment obligations; two, contracted security services; information and communication technology services; office equipment and

telecommunication services, which support the Judiciary's hybrid system of online and in-person court operations. I am available as best as I can to answer the questions that may be posed.

Question proposed: That Head 04 be supplemented by the sum of \$39,154, 220.

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Chairman, I see there is an experienced public officer from the Judiciary who will have the answers to the questions.

2.00 p.m.

With respect to Item 03 (iii) supplemented – I am going into the explanation now that has just been provided to us – to supplement the provision under Contract Employment to the end of fiscal 2026, 14.5 million, could the Judiciary please explain whether these are new employees or existing employees? And when I say new, I mean new as of October 1st, 2025, in the current budget year.

Sen The Hon. Jeremie SC: I am not sure if the question is directed as the Member for Diego Martin North/East says, to the experienced – she is undoubtedly very experienced, but through – well, she is speaking through me, and I am speaking through you, Mr. Chairman –

Mr. Imbert: We went through this before; perhaps you were not here.

Mr. Jeremie SC: I was here, and I heard. I am speaking to the Chairman.

Mr. Imbert: Your colleague is telling you to ask the technocrats. He did not ask the technocrats – *[Inaudible]*

Mr. Jeremie SC: I have done precisely that. I would like to answer your question. If you do not want the answer, then dance on your head.

Mr. Imbert: He seems to try to “muddy de water”. A Standing Order was – *[Inaudible]*.

Mr. Chairman: No need to make that unnecessary allegation, Diego Martin North/East.

Mr. Imbert: He is muddying “de water”.

Mr. Chairman: No, withdraw that. Come on.

Mr. Imbert: This is a Standing Finance Committee.

Sen. Jeremie SC: It does not matter – *[Inaudible]*.

Mr. Chairman: Yes, but an accusation that a Minister is trying to muddy the water. Do you know what that carries with it?

Mr. Imbert: Yes, truth.

Mr. Chairman: Yes, but withdraw it.

Mr. Imbert: I withdraw.

Mr. Chairman: Withdraw it.

Mr. Imbert: I did. I just did.

Mr. Chairman: It is too early for that.

Mr. Imbert: No, Sir, there is nothing as early or late.

Mr. Jeremie SC: He cannot help himself.

Mr. Imbert: And you cannot help yourself either.

Mr. Chairman: Alright, there is no need for that. Hon. Attorney General, can we just ignore that unhelpful hyperbole and just answer the question if you can?

Mr. Jeremie SC: Chairman, through you, the Judiciary has hired a number of new judicial officers and new staff, and the supplementation is required to meet the expenses connected with that, and some is relevant with respect to the existing staff.

Mr. Imbert: Thank you very much. I have a supplemental question now. Now that you have answered that, since the provision of 14.5million is for new staff in this fiscal year, could we get the names, the positions, and the process by which they were employed?

Mr. Jeremie SC: The Judiciary does not have the information today, and of course, being the responsible institution that it is, it is prepared to provide the information at another time.

Mr. Imbert: I have another question. I see that there is a supplementation of the amount for debt servicing. Could we have an explanation of why that was left out before? Because that was known.

Mr. Chairman: Can you identify the line Item, please? Simply identifying it as "debt servicing", I do not think it is helpful enough. Can you identify the line Item so a more fulsome answer can be forthcoming?

Mr. Imbert: Well, unfortunately, the new document provided to us has merged everything together, so we did not get it separately. But I will try my best. Sub-Head 04, Item 011: Transfers to State Enterprises, 0304.

Member: [*Inaudible*]

Mr. Imbert: That is what I am saying. They mixed up everything here, so I hope the Speaker does not try to correct me again and say that it is a variation because it is not clear. I have this document, which tells me it is a supplementation, but this does not identify the Head.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Attorney General, I think the question is directed to page 3 – the last two Items on page 3.

Mr. Imbert: “Dem is something else yuh know.”

Mr. Jeremie SC: The experienced Judiciary personnel have provided me with an explanation, Chair. They say that the additional sum is necessary to continue to honour the repayment of a semi-annual principal and interest – well, the principal and interest that is due on a loan which was approved by, I presume, him – I am sorry – I make that the Member for Diego Martin North/East on March the 24th, 2021 in the sum of some \$40million to facilitate phase II of the outfitting works at Tower D waterfront judicial complex, which now accommodates the Civil High Court.

The additional sums provided, the Judiciary says, are required to meet an inadvertent shortfall in the budgetary allocation to the Judiciary for fiscal 2026, and it is required to make the second semi-annual payment due in September of 2026. That is the answer that has been provided to me.

Mr. Imbert: So the answer is that it was left out of the original allocation [*Inaudible*] – inadvertently?

Mr. Jeremie SC: If you wish something else, then perhaps you should knock on the door of the Chief Justice.

Mr. Chairman: I think the answer is the answer – interpretation.

Mr. Imbert: This is our time to interrogate the Government.

Mr. Chairman: Yes, but it is your time to ask questions, not to put your unique interpretative spin on an answer.

Mr. Imbert: Okay, unique interpretation?

Mr. Young SC: If I may –

Mr. Imbert: The Attorney General used the word “inadvertent”.

Mr. Chairman: Yes, “inadvertent,” but then your interpretation is not an answer on the record. Any of the – Port of Spain South and Port of Spain North/St. Ann’s West will tell you that the evidence is the answer obtained, not the interpretation you give to it.

Mr. Imbert: That is not what happens in the cross-examinations. Can I ask the Minister of Finance why you accidentally left this out?

Mr. Chairman: No, no, no. That is inappropriate.

Mr. Imbert: I cannot ask him that? Because that is what “inadvertent” means; it is an accident.

Mr. Chairman: No, no, let us move on. Port of Spain North/St. Ann’s West.

Mr. Imbert: I asked why that –

Mr. Young SC: Thank you.

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Chairman, this inadvertence is repeated throughout the document.

Mr. Chairman: Well, you can address that other – now is not the time for that. You will have your time at the appropriate time to address that.

Mr. Imbert: I see there will be –

Mr. Chairman: So you cannot make a blanket statement like that. Port of Spain North/St. Ann’s West.

Mr. Young SC: Thank you very much Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, we were just told that this was a loan taken out in 2021. My first question is: Did the terms of the loan change to add a semi-annual payment from an annual payment? Was there a change in the amount of payments to be made per year?

Mr. Jeremie SC: Chair, the answer is no.

Mr. Young SC: So, having gotten that answer, why is it that, knowing that since 2021

there were semi-annual payments to be made, it was not provided for in October?

Mr. Jeremie SC: Chair, I do not think I need the assistance of the technocrats for this. It is superficial, and I do not wish to incur your —

Mr. Chairman: [*Inaudible*]

Mr. Jeremie SC: I think I saw the word “inadvertent” in the statement provided to me by the Judiciary. I take that as it is. It was an inadvertent shortfall in an allocation in fiscal 2026.

Mr. Young SC: Thank you. And that inadvertent shortfall was on the part of the Judiciary or on the part of the Budgets Division and the Minister of Finance?

Mr. Chairman: Are we able to say that now?

Mr. Jeremie SC: Chair, I have a document in front of me and a Judiciary officer at my side. I have given you the information that I can.

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Chairman, that does not deal with the supplemental question posed by my colleague from Port of Spain North/St. Ann’s West.

Mr. Jeremie SC: I think it does.

Mr. Imbert: Was it that the Judiciary did not request the funds, causing the inadvertence, or is it that the Minister of Finance did not put in the funds, causing the inadvertence? That is the question.

Mr. Chairman: I think—well, the hon. Attorney General has assured that he has answered the question as best as he can at this time.

Member: What he has — [*Inaudible*]

Mr. Jeremie SC: I am not a Chief Justice. I am sorry.

Mr. Chairman: But we have to go with that assurance.

Mr. Imbert: Are we allowed, using the Standing Orders cited by the Minister of Finance to ask the technocrats? So I would like to pose a question to the technocrats. Is it that the Judiciary did not submit the request? Or is it that the Minister of Finance did not allocate it?

2.10 p.m.

Sen. The Hon. Jeremie SC: Chair, I am at a —

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Chairman, I am not asking the Attorney General.

Sen. The Hon. Jeremie SC: I do not care who you are asking.

Mr. Chairman: Hold on.

Mr. Imbert: I am relying on Standing Order 84(3).

Sen. The Hon. Jeremie SC: I am answering the question.

Mr. Chairman: Hold on. If the technocrat feels comfortable to answer, you may direct it. Hang on a second. It is not fair to demand—hold on, hold on. It is not fair to the technocrats to come here and subject them to cross-examination. Okay? The technocrats, you may direct the question to the technocrats. The technocrats may then choose to give the answer if they feel more comfortable, because the Minister of Finance has said that the regular procedure is what we will go with today. The interpretation of 84(3) is an open question. Alright? Let us not be unduly troublesome, please.

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Chairman, please, we represent people and it is our duty to interrogate.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Chairman: Yes, and I represent the core interest and it is my duty too —

Hon. Member: “What duty you have?”

Mr. Chairman: — right?

Mr. Imbert: “What duty you have?”

Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: You are not on the Committee.

Mr. Chairman: — to rein in unruly behaviour.

Mr. Imbert: Oh really? Unruly.

Mr. Chairman: You cannot subject—yes, unruly, and I use that term quite deliberately.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Chairman: You cannot subject the public servants to cross examination. That is an untenable proposition, especially where you yourself, you yourself have said that the hitherto practice prevailing has not been to direct the question. The Minister of Finance raised it. We have all agreed that we will revert to the original practice as we know it.

Mr. Imbert: Nobody agreed to [*Inaudible*]

Mr. Young SC: When was that agreement? You pointed out to us, Mr. Chair, and told us to pay attention to it.

Mr. Chairman: Yes I did. But it is an open question and then we said we will keep the procedure as is.

Mr. Young SC: The use of supplementation and variation together?.

Mr. Chairman: That is not what this was about. What this is, 84(3) contemplates the Committee making enquiries of the public servants. Okay. You yourself said that no, the practice has been where the Minister would answer the question. The Minister of Finance then said okay. As of now, it is an open interpretive question, which we will keep.

Mr. Young SC: He never said that.

Mr. Chairman: I think –

Mr. Young SC: Why did he raise it in the first place? That is why we asked if they are going to duck.

Mr. Chairman: No, hold on.

Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: Chairman, we kept asking, why did he raise it?

Mr. Young SC: You said –

Mr. Chairman: You are not entitled to ask that. Hold on, let me elucidate what I am saying without some interruption. So, we have all agreed that the procedure, which you pointed out, is the prevailing procedure. You want to move back and forth.

Mr. Imbert: That is not so, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: That is what it appears to be.

Hon. Members: [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Imbert: Respectfully, you said the Standing Orders are clear –

Mr. Young SC: Correct.

Mr. Imbert: – and practices have developed that have deviated from the Standing Order, so we are going with the Standing Orders.

Mr. Chairman: No, I never said that.

Mr. Imbert: You said that.

Mr. Chairman: I said as of today.

Mr. Young SC: [*Inaudible*] whatever reason they have been deviating, but we will go with the strict interpretation of Standing Orders.

Mr. Chairman: I never said that. I never said that, and I would appreciate if I can be allowed to elucidate this in some silence.

Hon. Members: [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Chairman: Silence! Hon. Attorney General, if I could just have one minute simply to say that the understanding is that we will proceed with the established procedure that has been established in the past.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Chairman: There can be no question about that. That was the bold statement that we will proceed with the procedure as obtained in the past.

Mr. Imbert: Nobody agreed to that on this side.

Mr. Young SC: Nobody on this side agreed to that.

Hon. Members: [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Chairman: Well, this is not a matter for — if you all want to put it for a vote, we put it for a vote. It is as simple as that. The House runs its own procedure.

Hon. Members: [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Chairman: Alright, so, as of today, if the public servant feels to give their answers through their relevant Minister, that is a matter for them. But make no mistake about it, until the purpose of that Standing Order is given interpretative consideration, and a definitive position is reached, we are going with the old procedure for the avoidance of doubt.

Mr. Young SC: For Prime Minister's questions too?

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Attorney General.

Sen. The Hon. Jeremie SC: Thank you, Chair.

Mr. Scotland SC: Mr. Chairman.

Sen. The Hon. Jeremie SC: I must confess that I have a personal issue with my hearing. As voices tend to raise, I tend not to hear. But I gather that the discussion so far has centred on whether my friends opposite would have direct access to the public servants. They are not my public servants. These belong to the Judiciary. They are the staff of the Chief Justice. I will not allow them to be subjected to the type of shouting and screaming that I have heard –

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. The Hon. Jeremie SC: – from some persons.

Mr. Chairman: Neither will I.

Sen. The Hon. Jeremie SC: I will protect them. I will stand in the gap for them, as I always do.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Imbert: What nonsense.

Sen. The Hon. Jeremie SC: As I always do.

Mr. Chairman: You see, you see, you have been hoisted on your own procedural petard.

Mr. Imbert: I disagree with you, Mr. Chairman, you interpret the Standing Order.

Mr. Chairman: You may disagree how much you want, but you have been hoisted on your own procedural petard.

Mr. Imbert: It is quite the reverse.

Mr. Chairman: No.

Mr. Imbert: They have been hoisted on their own petard.

Mr. Chairman: No, you raised that.

Mr. Imbert: They reversed.

Hon. Member: [*Inaudible*]

Mr. Chairman: Yes. Okay, let us move on. There will be no further questions on this Head –

Mr. Imbert: So, so, Mr. Chairman, the answer is the question is not going to be answered.

Mr. Chairman: No. The answer is, the Judiciary will provide the answer at the appropriate time. That is, the evidence I am hearing emanating. Am I correct hon. Attorney General?

Sen. The Hon. Jeremie SC: In so far as one of the questions is concerned. The other one I concede is ambiguous, but I am not able to resolve that ambiguity this afternoon.

Mr. Chairman: Very well, so let us move on.

Sen. The Hon. Jeremie SC: And that is it.

Mr. Padarath: [*Inaudible*]

Mr. Chairman: Yes, Leader?

Mr. Padarath: Mr. Chairman, can I get from you the process that we are going to use to continue the conduct of the Standing Finance Committee? Several Members opposite are tripping up over themselves. Several of them have their mics on at the same time trying to get your attention speaking. We need to have some order in terms of how this SFC is going to be conducted. Can we get your direction on this matter please?

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much. I am very happy for that. So, what—put your hand down Port of Spain South, I will get to you. I am seeing you. I will get to you. No need to keep your hand raised like that, I will get to you, alright. So, this is how we are going to do it now. Those who wish to speak may raise their hand. We will do so in an orderly fashion. This is not going to descend into a glorified fish market. We are going to do so in an orderly fashion. There is going to be no crosstalk, no intercession of bacchanalia and for the avoidance of doubt, Standing Order 55 applies to Committee hearings. Okay? Having said that, one person at a time.

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Chairman, may I get clarification? How does that one person at a time attract your attention to be able to ask the question?

Mr. Chairman: I will deal with as I see fit.

Mr. Imbert: We have a one person over here.

Mr. Chairman: I will deal with it as I see fit. Right. So, Port of Spain South.

Mr. Scotland SC: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, on Sub-Head 02, Contract Employment: 16. I see that there is an increase of \$14.5 million. May I ask, firstly, if indeed additional staff were hired and if they were hired, could you tell us how many additional staff were hired, please?

Sen. The Hon. Jeremie SC: Chair –

Mr. Chairman: Yes.

Sen. The Hon. Jeremie SC: Thank you for the question, Port of Spain South. I think I said a few minutes ago that the Judiciary had hired some permanent staff. Those permanent positions have had to be supported by contract positions, and I am told that the supplementation relates to the payment for those support staff at the Judiciary.

2.20 p.m.

Mr. Scotland SC: Supplemental, Mr. Chairman. Those positions now, which were supplemental – which were hired to assist the permanent staff, are those positions on the organizational structure of the Judiciary?

Sen. The Hon. Jeremie SC: I am not sure if this is the answer to that question, but it is the answer that was provided to me by the experienced judicial staff, to use the language of Diego Martin North/East. These are new staff. I am not sure that there is an org chart just yet, but I can assure my friend and the Member for Port of Spain South, that the staff was hired pursuant to Cabinet approval.

Mr. Scotland SC: Thank you on that Head. Mr. Chairman, I would like to move on to Sub-Head 02/001/43: Security Services. There is a supplementation there of \$10million to:

“liquidate outstanding sums owed for the provision of security service for the previous” – 10 – “years”.

Could we find out what, in a breakdown – I know it cannot be done now, but in writing – what is the breakdown of the amounts currently owed, and to which firms, please? We can take that in writing.

Sen. The Hon. Jeremie SC: I do not know if you could take it in writing, but I am going

to give you the answer which I have. As you say, the amounts owed, are owed in respect of 10 years. That is 10 years of neglect and 10 years of bad pay.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. The Hon. Jeremie SC: I think the Judiciary is to be commended for making an effort to dent that huge accident that was caused by my friends opposite.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Scotland SC: Supplemental. Does this Sub-Head include any payments for Ramhit security?

Mr. Chairman: That is just—

Sen. The Hon. Jeremie SC: I would be happy to answer the question. I myself am not aware of any firm or security provider described as “Ramhit security”. I can take advice from Diego Martin—I am sorry, let me speak to the Judiciary expert for a second. Chair, I have an answer to my friend for Port of Spain North—Port of Spain South. How could I insult you in that way? The answer is, no.

Mr. Scotland SC: Finally, Mr. Chairman, does this provision provide for outstanding payments, or does it allocate for outstanding payments in the future, or is it just outstanding moneys alone owed?

Sen. The Hon. Jeremie SC: I am not sure if you have got the terminology correct. If a payment is outstanding, I mean—I am subject to correction—how can it be outstanding in the future?

Mr. Scotland SC: You did not hear my question. Does it relate to moneys that will be outstanding in the future, moneys that will become due in the future, or is it just to cover arrears? Two separate issues, Attorney General.

Sen. The Hon. Jeremie SC: I see. Mr. Chair, with the greatest of respect for my friend, I am not sure that that is a real question.

Mr. Chairman: Well, quite apart from that—[*Inaudible*]

Sen. The Hon. Jeremie SC: I am sorry—[*Inaudible*—Port of Spain South, because I have been told that “friend”, “he”, “she”, “it”, and those words are not permissible.

Mr. Chairman: Right. I think asked and answered already as well.

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Chairman, the Member asked a question before and then asked the question that was just discussed, and the Attorney General said that he is not sure whether he could provide the information in writing and then ventured to answer the question, but the primary question was: Who are these people who are going to be paid for security services? That was the primary question. And by the Attorney General saying, he does not think he could do it, provide it in writing, and then not addressing that, it begs the question, is this information going to be provided?

Mr. Chairman: Is there—hang on—is that an observation or a question?

Mr. Imbert: A question. Is the information—because the Attorney General's last statement negated any possibility of getting it.

Mr. Chairman: No, no, no, no, no, no, no. The question is a simple one: Is the Attorney General in a position to provide the information?

Sen. The Hon. Jeremie SC: Well, I thought I had mentioned at the beginning two points: One, that this is a Judiciary statement that I am reading, and two, that the Judiciary is entirely independent of the Office of the Attorney General. I cannot tell you whether this question can be answered in writing. The answer is not within my control. The answer to that question, I cannot say I will answer that question tomorrow or next year. What I can say is that perhaps you should know the answer to the question.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Chairman, now, you told me—

Sen. The Hon. Jeremie SC: Can I finish? Can I speak? Can I finish speaking, Chair? I mean, I do not know, is this a fish market?

Mr. Chairman: You are using your usual hyperbole attack on people, ad hominem attack, but go ahead.

Mr. Chairman: Despite my exhortations for us not to turn this into a glorified fish market, it seems as though we are slowly abandoning that.

Sen. The Hon. Jeremie SC: Okay, so—

Mr. Imbert: There is no reason for him to throw an ad hominem attack on me over estimates prepared by the gentleman, the member opposite me.

Mr. Chairman: Listen, let us cut the running commentary and just ask the question.

Mr. Imbert: My question is—and I am sorry, Mr. Chairman—that cannot be an appropriate answer.

Mr. Chairman: That is an observation, that is not a question.

Mr. Imbert: Okay. The question was: What are the names of the firms for which this \$10 million will be paid?

Mr. Chairman: And the answer repeatedly emanating from—

Mr. Imbert: So he cannot tell us?

Sen. The Hon. Jeremie SC: The answer is that he knows who they are, or he should know who they are.

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Chairman, this is the point I am making. This is why the Standing Order is there, that if a politician does not want to answer, you approach the persons who have the information.

Mr. Chairman: But you were the same one adopted in unbridled protestation of that. You were the same one.

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Chairman, when I was the principal person in a finance committee, I would have the technocrats there—

Sen. The Hon. Jeremie SC: I “doh” care about you.

Mr. Imbert:—I would get the information immediately.

Mr. Chairman: All right, let us move on. We are interested in the question—

Mr. Imbert: So you are not answering that question?

Sen. The Hon. Jeremie SC: I “doh” care about you.

Mr. Chairman: Hold on, hold on, silence. The hon. Attorney General answered.

Mr. Imbert: Which is that he cannot answer.

Mr. Chairman: The administrative principle emanating here is that pursuant to the separation of powers, as how I interpret it, the Judiciary resides in a separate

constitutional administrative space which the Attorney General does not have purview of.

Sen. The Hon. Jeremie SC: I cannot tell the Chief Justice anything.

Mr. Imbert: So we cannot get the answer.

Mr. Chairman: You can.

Mr. Imbert: How?

Sen. The Hon. Jeremie SC: Write the Chief Justice and ask him.

Mr. Imbert: What?

Mr. Chairman: You can. There is a little Act passed since 1995, or 2000, called the Freedom of Information Act—

Mr. Imbert: That could apply to everything here.

Mr. Chairman: Yes, you can. So where—

Mr. Imbert: What is the point of this meeting?

Mr. Chairman: So where the Attorney General says, “My constitutional remit does not allow me to impose my footprint on the Judiciary,” your solution is, within the four walls of the FOIA.

Mr. Imbert: So we come here to examine that Head of Expenditure and we are being told we cannot get answers because of the separation of powers?

Mr. Chairman: No, he is not saying that. The hon. Attorney General is saying, “I, today, cannot answer that.”

Mr. Imbert: And then he said we cannot ask the technocrats.

Mr. Chairman: He never said that.

Mr. Scotland SC: Well then, I am going to ask the technocrats.

Mr. Imbert: And you say, “Go to Freedom of Information”. This is getting ridiculous.

Mr. Chairman: Well, that may be your interpretation of it. Okay? Right. So let us move on.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 03 supplemented by the sum of \$39,154,220.

Hon. Tancoo: Chair, if I may? There has been consensus, I believe, between the Leader of Government Business and the Leader of Opposition Business in the House to request a 25-minute break to allow the Members opposite time to digest the information that they had requested.

Mr. Speaker: That being so, we will suspend and return at 2.55. Thank you very much.

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

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

Mr. Chairman: Alright. For the sake of the public record, I think the break did us some good. There has been agreement that we will do the supplementations and variations together, so we will save some time, and the public servants would not be unnecessarily discommoded.

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Chairman, in that regard, therefore, can we return to the first Head?

Hon. Members: [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Imbert: Come on. You all are just reactive.

Mr. Chairman: I think –

Mr. Imbert: There was an Item in the first Head that the Chairman said I could not address because it was a variation –

Mr. Chairman: Yeah. I –

Mr. Imbert: – and it was not addressed.

Hon. Members: It is also up to the Opposition. That is the order.

Mr. Imbert: They are just reactive. “Ah trying to help”.

Mr. Chairman: The secretary to Her Excellency has already returned to her office. I am advised she is not here, in any event. So, what I propose to do now, is move to the increase – the variation for the Judiciary.

Mr. Imbert: Right so –

Mr. Chairman: At some point later in time we will –

Mr. Imbert: – at some point in time we will?

Mr. Chairman: – revisit that –

Mr. Imbert: Okay.

Mr. Chairman: – if it becomes necessary. Okay? So, we go now to Head 03, pursuant to the new process.

Head 03: Judiciary, \$9,874,000.

Mr. Chairman: I now invite the Attorney General to make a brief opening statement on this. Can I ask, now that there is agreement, where there is supplementation and variation, that the opening statement, in the interest of saving time in the future, incorporate both? Hon. Attorney General.

Sen. The Hon. Jeremie SC: Chair, we have already done the – we now do the variation. That is it. I am ready to go.

Mr. Chairman: You are ready to go. Great. Alright. Insofar as the variation is concerned, are there any questions on that? Diego Martin North/East.

Mr. Imbert: Thank you –

Mr. Chairman: Line Item and number, please.

Mr. Imbert: – yes. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Head 03, Sub-Head 01; item 001; Sub-Item 01, \$9.25 million. How much of that is associated with the increase in salaries of public servants and how much of it is associated with payment of arrears in fiscal 2026?

Sen. The Hon. Jeremie SC: Thank you, Chair. I am advised that \$9.1 million is to pay the arrears, which would have been due, and approximately 700 – approximately, it does not work out exactly – would be in respect of a shortfall that occurred.

Mr. Imbert: And that shortfall is the shortfall because there was no provision for the 10 per cent increase? Because you just said, “a shortfall”. Is that the origin of the shortfall?

Sen. The Hon. Jeremie SC: I am told by the Judiciary staff that that was not the origin of the shortfall. Beyond that, anticipating another question, what is or what was, I cannot answer.

Mr. Chairman: Port of Spain North, was your hand up?

Mr. Young SC: [*Inaudible*]

Mr. Chairman: Okay. Very well.

Head 03 varied by an increase in the sum of \$9,874,000.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you, Attorney General, and thank you Ms. Philbert.

Head 04: Industrial Court.

Mr. Chairman: Ready?

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Chairman, what happened to the Auditor General.

Mr. Chairman: Sorry?

Mr. Imbert: Auditor General, 02.

Mr. Chairman: [Pause]

Mr. Imbert: Head 02. We seem to have skipped Head 02.

Mr. Chairman: No. I do not think so.

Mr. Imbert: Well I— are we not going in numerical sequence?

Hon. Members: [Crosstalk]

Mr. Imbert: Of course. "I not afraid of dat. I not like alyuh yuh kno. I could take any jamming."

Hon. Members: [Crosstalk]

Mr. Imbert: "I could take any jamming. Not like alyuh. Alyuh does brakes."

Hon. Members: Relax. Relax.

Mr. Imbert: No. You relax. You brought it up. Yes. Are we doing 02 at some point in time, Sir?

Mr. Chairman: Well, I would imagine we are, if it appears on the list, yes— of variations.

Mr. Imbert: But we are not going in numerical sequence, then?

Mr. Chairman: It does not appear so because there was no agreement before. So, the answer to that is quite simple. So, we are going on the agenda, which has been set by the staff here. I did not set it. So, we go now to Head 04: Industrial Court.

Head 04: Industrial Court \$685,000.

Mr. Chairman: I would now invite the hon. Attorney General to make the usual opening statement.

Sen. The Hon Jeremie SC: Chair, I am happy to appear—

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Chairman, I am sorry to – I apologize for any interruption. You just said, you are going on the agenda set by the Parliament. That is an inaccurate statement, with respect. Now that we have merged supplementation and variation, the sequence has also to be merged. In the variation document, Auditor General is second and it is in numerical sequence.

Mr. Chairman: Alright. Well, that might be so now, but that was no agreement before. I propose to deal with Industrial Court now and we will deal with it in the order as it appears on the procedural brief prepared for me by the Parliament staff. That is my own.

Mr. Imbert: Very well. But that has changed with this new document, eh?

Mr. Chairman: Well, we take it –

Mr. Imbert: So they need to change your brief too.

Mr. Chairman: No, it will –

Hon. Members: [*Crosstalk*]

3.05 p.m.

Mr. Chairman: Well.

Mr. Young SC: Chair.

Mr. Chairman: It is tiresome, but –

Mr. Young SC: Mr. Chair, I have been hearing “the Parliament staff, the Parliament staff”. But in looking at Standing Order 84(2) – and I just confirmed with the Leader of the Opposition – it is the Leader of the Opposition who has the right to determine in the order in which Heads of Expenditure shall be considered.

Mr. Chairman: That applies to the SFC over the five-day period for the Appropriations.

Mr. Young SC: Where is that said?

Mr. Imbert: There is no distinction, Mr. Speaker. There is no distinction.

Mr. Young SC: Where is that said? There is no distinction. There is one Standing Finance Committee.

Mr. Chairman: The Parliament staff has advised. I made an enquiry about it. The Parliament staff has advised that that has always been the practice.

Mr. Imbert: We are using the Standing Orders.

Mr. Young SC: Did they advise as well that it has always been the practice that you could have supplementary questions for the Prime Minister at Prime Minister's Questions?

Mr. Chairman: Well, it must be based off of the Standing Orders, and it is quite astonishing how —

Mr. Young SC: The Standing Order is clear.

Mr. Chairman: Yes.

Mr. Young SC:

“The Leader of the Opposition shall have the right to determine the order in which the...”

Mr. Chairman: Well.

Mr. Young SC:

“...Heads of Expenditure shall be considered.”

Mr. Chairman: And that is the point. If the Leader of the Opposition knows that the Standing Order is today and the Leader of the Opposition did not submit a list and the order in which —

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Chairman: — it means that.

Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: That is for the Parliament staff —

Mr. Young SC: The Leader of the Opposition was not consulted.

Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: It is for the Parliament to do that.

Mr. Young SC: She was not. The Leader of the Opposition was not consulted and asked.

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Speaker, we got this document after we got here.

Mr. Chairman: Because it has been the practice.

Mr. Imbert: No. No, no, no, no.

Mr. Chairman: Leader of the Opposition, this is no fault of yours, I accept that. Because the Parliament staff has advised that in this process it has never been the practice to seek the order in which the Heads are to be examined. That is what I am told.

Mr. Imbert: [*Inaudible*] and bad the next day.

Mr. Chairman: In this process—

Mr. Young SC: In the same—

Mr. Chairman: In the general process, the five- day process, that has been the practice, which has been consistently adhered to. I made enquiries about that. I was told that that is not the practice for this and it has also always been so.

Mr. Imbert: Chair, Chair. Sorry. Sorry.

Ms. Beckles: Mr. Chairman, the only thing about it is you made a very clear statement that I did not submit, and at the same time you are saying it is not my fault.

Mr. Chairman: Well, no, exactly.

Ms. Beckles: But that is what it is looking—as though I was negligent. That is not the case.

Mr. Chairman: Well, if there—

Hon. Members: [*Interruption*]

Mr. Chairman: Well, if there is some misconception that the fault is yours, I think I was careful enough to say that it is not your fault. The practice has never been to have recourse to the Office of Leader of the Opposition for this particular process that we are engaged in, to seek out the order in which the Heads are examined. I was careful enough to make those enquiries myself and that is what I was told by the Parliament staff that the prevailing practice, consistently applied, is that no such permission is sought at this time. So the order of examination is set by the Parliament staff. The enquiry as to the order of examination is always set by the preferences of the Leader of the Opposition at the five-day period for the Appropriation Bill. I do not think I can explain that more clearly than I have, so let us move on. For the avoidance of doubt, I do not lay blame at anyone. This is what the Parliament staff has advised. Hon. Attorney General, Industrial Court.

Sen. The Hon. Jeremie SC: Thank you, Chair. It is a privilege to appear— Again, I read this on behalf of a separate entity. From the separation of powers, the Attorney General

does not have any control over the Industrial Court.

Mr. Imbert: Industrial Court? Which part of the Constitution is that?

Sen. The Hon. Jeremie SC: It is, it is. It is a superior court of record.

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Young SC: Industrial Court judges are appointed by the Cabinet of Trinidad and Tobago. What separation of powers is this?

Mr. Imbert: [*Inaudible*] put things on the record that is not true.

Ms. Ameen: Why are you shouting?

Mr. Chairman: Could we stop all of that and allow the Attorney General to make his contribution?

Mr. Young SC: Not if he going to mislead the population.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Chairman: No, that is a serious allegation.

Hon. Member: [*Inaudible*]

Mr. Chairman: There is—hang on a second. If you want to get into the nuances of the separation of powers concept, we can. This is not the time or the place to do so. There is strict separation of powers, there is nuanced separation of powers, there is a functional separation of powers, and there is a personnel separation of powers. If you want to get into it, we can do so. This is not the time or the place. What the Attorney General plainly meant is the functional separation of powers concept. He has no power over it. So to engage—and I am going to say this and I deliberately mean it, this piddling nonsense.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Chairman:—about talking about Cabinet approval and all of that undermining the separation of powers, that is just piddling nonsense. With the greatest of respect, Attorney General, continue.

Sen. The Hon. Jeremie SC: Chairman, I am reading this statement on behalf of the Industrial Court, a superior court of record, over which the Office of the Attorney General has no control.

It is a privilege to appear before this meeting of the Standing Finance Committee on behalf of the Industrial Court of Trinidad and Tobago. As a specialized judicial body established under the Industrial Relations Act Chap. 88:01, the court serves as a superior court of record –

I am not sure – anyway. I am just reading, just reading:

– that is seized with the power to adjudicate on and to resolve disputes between employers and unions that deal offences under the Industrial Relations Act, minimum wages, retrenchment and severance benefits, maternity protection, occupational health and safety matters, among others.

The court sits in two divisions, namely, the General Services Division, as well the Essential Services Division, which hears matters dealing with electricity services, water and sewerage services, telephone and communication services, health and hospital services, civil aviation and sanitation services.

Additionally, there is a special tribunal within the court which was established by the Civil Service Act Chap. 23:01. The special tribunal consists of the chairman of the ESD, the Essential Service Division of the Industrial Court, and two other members of that division selected by him. The special tribunal hears and determines disputes in the civil service, the police service, the fire service, the prison service, the teaching service, the supplemental police, and the Central Bank.

Today, the Industrial Court continues to play a vital role in the impartial administration of justice, providing citizens with a forum that is independent of the Executive, respected, fair, equitable, and efficient in addressing workplace and industrial disputes. A total supplementation of \$2,468,000-odd was granted to the court, of which \$1.7 approximately will be used for the payment of Salaries, Cost of Living Allowances, and allowances to monthly paid officers. The remaining \$685,000 roughly, under Goods and Services, shall be used as follows:

- \$350,000 will be used to pay contract workers;
- \$160,000 will be used to pay officers under Short Term Employment; and

- \$175,000 for activities relating to the opening of the new law term.

That is the statement that was prepared for me by the independent court, known as the Industrial Court. Thank you, Chair.

Mr. Chairman: Diego Martin North/East.

3.15 p.m.

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Chairman, having read the Industrial Relations Act, section 5, which makes it crystal clear that the Cabinet has total control –

Hon. Members: [*Interruption*]

Mr. Chairman: That is not a question. Move on –

Mr. Imbert: –total control over the salaries – I am explaining my question. He was allowed to say something, we disagree. Section 5 disagrees with what he said. The Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance provision 04/01/001/01, this Item here, \$1.6 million, which is decided by Cabinet, could the Attorney General tell us how much of this is associated with arrears, and how much is associated with increased salaries?

Sen. The Hon. Jeremie SC: Just give me a minute to seek advice from the independent officers. [*Minister confers with technocrats*] Thank you, Chair. I am advised that the \$1.7 million is to pay an increase in salaries connected to new salaries being paid to public officers. This is not for judges. That was taken care of before.

Mr. Imbert: That does not answer my question. I had a two-part question. How much of the \$1.6 million – not the \$1.7 million, because I said 04/01/001/01, I did not say 04. How much of the \$1.6 million is arrears, arising from the increase in salaries, and how much is the recurrent increase in salaries for this fiscal year?

Mr. Young SC: How much is the back pay?

Mr. Imbert: Well, then, the arrears, that is the word I am using. If he does not understand that, I will say back pay.

Sen. The Hon. Jeremie SC: [*AG confers with technocrats*] Chair?

Mr. Chairman: Yes?

Sen. The Hon. Jeremie SC: It has taken some time to get the information from the

independent officers. I am told that, as I indicated before, my friend said, 1.7, 1.6, on this remarkably—I am sorry, I apologize. He is correct, \$1.6 million under Item 001, as the figures show, is reserved for public servant salaries; \$1.6 million. There is an additional figure of \$183,000, which he has not asked about, and that is in respect of monthly-paid officers.

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Chairman, I did not ask about the second Item. And just for the education of the Attorney General, this Item is intended to cater for both arrears and increases in monthly salaries. So I am simply—and back pay. If there is any back pay, it comes under Item 01. I am just asking, in the \$1.6 million, is there any element of back pay arising out of the increase in salaries of public officers in this fiscal, and if so, how much of the 1.6 is it, and what is the remainder for paying the monthly recurrent salaries? That is all I am asking.

Sen. The Hon. Jeremie SC: Okay. The first bit about the education of the Attorney General struck me. I am told that, by the independent officers, all of the arrears have been paid. So on this, he is, as usual wrong.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. The Hon. Jeremie SC: These are new figures.

Mr. Imbert: No, I am asking a question. How much of this is for arrears? All you have to say is none.

Sen. The Hon. Jeremie SC: I will—

Mr. Chairman: You are allowed to ask—

Mr. Imbert: No, but he is very rude and offensive, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: Well, so are you.

Mr. Imbert: No, I am not.

Mr. Chairman: Yes.

Mr. Imbert: No, I am not.

Mr. Chairman: So are you.

Mr. Imbert: I am not.

Mr. Chairman: Allow the Attorney General to answer the question. You were allowed to ask your question in silence. Let him answer his question in silence.

Sen. The Hon. Jeremie SC: I will now consult on the other parts of the question. [AG *confers with technocrats*] Chair?

Mr. Chairman: Yes.

Sen. The Hon. Jeremie SC: The public servants have advised that the \$1.6 million, which covers current debt and which does not cover current – well, does not cover arrears, and that response answers the question as to what future obligations are owed. That is the answer which I have been given by the independent Industrial Court.

Mr. Chairman: All right. Hon. Members, seeing that we dealt with both together, I will put one question on the supplementation and then the question on the variation.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 04 supplemented by the sum of \$685,000.

Mr. Chairman: I now put the question on the variation.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 04 varied by an increase in the sum of \$1,783,325.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you all very much, hon. Attorney General and the Accounting Officer for the Industrial Court and staff. Thank you very much. We go now to Head 05: Office of the Parliament.

3.25 p.m.

Head 05: Office of the Parliament, a supplementation of \$3,228,200.

Mr. Chairman: Minister of Finance.

Hon. Tancoo: Thank you, Chair. Chair, the Office of the Parliament provides the administrative and apolitical support services to the Parliament of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. The office functions under the leadership of the Clerk of the House, assisted by the Clerk of the Senate as Deputy Head.

The office also ensures the proper functioning of the Chamber, which includes the provision of procedural advice and essential professional support. The supplementation

of the appropriation by the sum of \$3,228,200 is required to provide for the cost of operational expenses.

Full details of the supplementation are as follows: Recurrent Expenditure, \$3,228,200, under Sub 02/001/12, material and supplies, \$1,228,200. The additional sums required under this vote is to facilitate the acquisition of consumables necessary for the Parliament to undertake its core functions. Under 02/001/22, short-term employment, \$1,000,000 is required to supplement the provision to facilitate the payment of salaries to persons for the remainder of fiscal 2026. Under 04/007/40, gratuities to contract officers, \$1,000,000 is required to facilitate the payment of gratuities owed to persons whose contracts have expired during the period 2021 to 2024.

The Clerk of the House is here and we hold ourselves available to answer any questions that Members may have.

Question proposed: That Head 05 be supplemented by the sum of \$3,228,200.

Mr. Chairman: Diego Martin North/East.

Mr. Imbert: With respect to these items, Head 05: 02/001/12/22; Sub-Head 04: 007/40, is this provision, this additional \$3,228,000 adequate to meet the obligations that arise from all of these Sub-Items for the rest of the fiscal?

Hon. Tancoo: I will find out from the independent officers.

Mr. Imbert: “Wait nah, everybody independent?”

Hon. Tancoo: The Parliament, this institution as you know, is independent.

Mr. Imbert: I did not ask you anything.

Hon. Tancoo: I am advised by the independent officer, yes. We believe that the allocation is sufficient and if any further submission is required, they will approach the Ministry of Finance accordingly.

Mr. Imbert: I am a little confused by that answer. If any additional is required, they will ask for it? Is that what you just said?

Hon. Tancoo: I premised my comments by saying it is the view of the Clerk that this allocation is sufficient to meet the objectives and there are procedural –

Mr. Imbert: I got that. It was the second part of what you said.

Hon. Tancoo: I have answered. Asked and answered already.

Mr. Imbert: No, no, no. You said –

Hon. Tancoo: I have answered.

Mr. Imbert: How would you achieve a supplementation to the Parliament without another finance appropriation Bill for 2026?

Hon. Tancoo: I have answered your question.

Mr. Imbert: You have not.

Mr. Chairman: That is just an unnecessary argument, Minister. It is an unnecessary exchange. Come on. No further questions?

Question put and agreed to.

Head 05 supplemented by the sum of \$3,228,200.

Mr. Chairman: Minister of Finance, thank you. Clerk, thank you very much.

I am advised that the Secretary to the Her Excellency has returned. So we go back to Head 01, I think it is. So we go back to Head 01 and we deal with the increase. Office of the President, an increase of \$1,000,000. Minister of Finance.

Hon. Tancoo: Thank you, Chair. Chair, it is proposed that the allocation under Head 01 for the President be varied by an increase in the sum of \$1,000,000 to replenish funding utilized to pay an advance on the arrears of salaries and costs of living allowance owed to monthly-paid officers.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, the question is that the 2026 appropriation for Head 01 –

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Chairman, “wha is dat?”

Mr. Chairman: I am putting the question and then I will invite the response. Surely, you must be more familiar with the procedure that I must put the question and then invite the responses and then we will put the final question. Surely, you must be aware that that is the procedure that obtains.

Hon. Members: [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Chairman: Alright, there is no need for that childish churlishness.

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Chairman —

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, the question is —

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Chairman, you have no right to say that.

Question proposed: That Head 01 be varied by an increase in the sum of \$1,000,000.

Mr. Chairman: I will now invite questions for those who choose to do so.

Mr. Imbert: Yes, Mr. Chairman, I have a question. Notwithstanding what the Minister said, is any part of the \$1,000,000 for increased salaries in fiscal 2026?

Hon. Tancoo: So, Member for Diego Martin North/East, in the introduction I indicated that the additional sum of \$1,000,000 was required to replenish funding, utilized to pay an advance on the arrears of salaries and cost of living allowance owed to monthly-paid officers.

Mr. Imbert: You have reaffirmed what you said, notwithstanding my question. It is only for arrears.

Hon. Tancoo: Yes.

Mr. Imbert: Right.

Hon. Tancoo: It is to — just to be clear, it is to replenish the sums used to pay those arrears. Thank you.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 01, varied by an increase in the sum of \$1,000,000.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much, Madam Secretary. I apologize for the inconvenience once again. We next move to Head 07, Statutory Authority Service Commission.

Head 07: Statutory Authority Service Commission.

Mr. Chairman: I will now invite the Minister of Finance to make the usual opening statement.

3.35 p.m.

Hon. Tancoo: Thank you very much, Chair. Mr. Chairman, the Statutory Authority Service Commission is an independent body established by the Statutory Authorities Act,

Chap. 24:01 with a specific and significant purpose. Its creation is rooted in the British Civil Service tradition which holds a core principle: to integrate the appointment, promotion and discipline of public officers from political influence and provide an impartial merit-based system. Operationalized on January 1st, 1967, the SASC's authority is clearly defined in section 5 of the Statutory Authorities Act.

This section grants the Commission exclusive power over all human resource matters, specifically to appoint individuals to roles within the Statutory Authority, to transfer, promote and remove personnel as needed and to exercise disciplinary control over all accountable persons. The SASC therefore ensures fairness and transparency and human resource management for the following 12 statutory

bodies under its purview.

1. The Agricultural Society of Trinidad and Tobago.
2. Arima Borough Corporation.
3. The National Lotteries Control Board.
4. Point Fortin Borough Corporation.
5. Port of Spain Corporation.
6. San Fernando City Corporation.
7. St. Dominic's Children's Home.
8. St. Jude's School for Girls.
9. St. Mary's Children Home.
10. St. Michael's School for Boys.
11. Sugar Industry Labour Welfare Committee.
12. The Zoological Society of Trinidad and Tobago.

These three entities, that is St. Dominic's Children's Home, St. Michael's School for Boys, and the Sugar Industry Labour Welfare Committee, are in the process of being removed from under the ambit of the SASC at this present time. The Executive Officer of the Statutory Authorities Services Commission Department is responsible for administering all activities related to recruitment, promotion, transfer, discipline, and

Head 07 Statutory Authority Service Commissions (cont'd)

other personnel matters relating to the statutory boards under the direction of the SASC. In accordance with these functions, the Executive Officer (Acting) is pleased to lend assistance with respect to supplementary funding for the Statutory Authorities Service Commission Department. We hold ourselves available for any questions that may be required and offered to the Statutory Authorities Service Commission.

Mr. Chairman: Seeing we are dealing with it compendiously, I propose to put the two questions, both the supplementation and the increase and then the questions can follow. I think it is more procedurally tidy to do it that way.

Question proposed: That Head 7 be supplemented by the sum of \$285,700 and also be varied by an increase in the sum of \$375,000.

Mr. Chairman: I now invite questions on both the supplementation and the increase. Diego Martin North/East.

Mr. Imbert: Yes, 07/01/001/01. How much of this amount is for arrears of salaries, and how much of it is for recurrent expenditure in terms of the increase in salaries in fiscal 2026?

Hon. Member: *[Interruption]*

Mr. Imbert: Yes, and I will ask it on every one. "Just like alyuh use to do it nah".

Hon. Tancoo: Member, can I ask you to repeat your question just for clarification.

Mr. Imbert: The \$375,000 in the variation under Sub-Item 01. How much is the \$375,000 is for arrears? You spoke about an advance in arrears with respect to the previous Head. Whether it is an advance, whether it is to pay arrears, how much of this is devoted to arrears, and how much of it is devoted to paying the increased salaries for fiscal 2026? If at all. It is just a question.

Hon. Tancoo: I am advised by the independent officer here that all of the supplementation now, all of the \$375,000, is to be provided for arrears of the Salaries and COLA.

Mr. Chairman: All right. There are two questions. Hon. Members the question is that—

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: Mr. Chairman, sorry.

Mr. Chairman: Oh. I am so sorry.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: Thank you. Minister, would you be able to say if any of the supplementation is to fund new hires or existing short-term employees?

Hon. Tancoo: So I am advised that this is to pay salaries of persons who would have been retained in short-term arrangement during this fiscal year. Short-term arrangements.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: In relation to that, is there any intention to give these persons longer-term contracts? And on what basis?

Hon. Tancoo: Yes. I am advised that an approach has been made to convert some of these short-term positions into longer-term contract positions.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: Is there a time limit within which this will occur?

Hon. Tancoo: It is unlikely to happen within the next fiscal year.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: Would you be able to say whether funds have been made available from the St. Dominic's Home—from the staffing at St. Dominic's from the staffing at St. Jude's?

Hon. Tancoo: I am advised that the funding for the staffing does not fall under the Statutory Authorities Service Commission, and therefore the question is—

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: It falls under the Ministry?

Hon. Tancoo: It will fall under the Ministry.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: The People and Social Development?

Hon. Tancoo: It will fall under the Ministry. Correct.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: Thank you very much.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, I propose to put the two questions one after the next.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 07 supplemented by the sum of \$285,700.

Mr. Chairman: The question on the increase.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 07 varied by the increase in the sum of \$375,000.

Mr. Chairman: Minister of Finance, thank you, and the accounting officer for the Statutory Authority Service Commission, the Chief Executive Officer, thank you very much.

Head 15: Tobago House of Assembly \$94,000,000.

Mr. Chairman: I will now invite the Minister of Finance to make his usual opening statement.

Hon. Tancoo: The Tobago House of Assembly is responsible for carrying out the administrative services of the items outlined in the Fifth Schedule of the THA Act No. 40 of 1996. Key amongst them is the delivery of education services to the population, which includes, but is not limited to, the construction and maintenance of schools, and other related amenities, together with the payment of teachers' remuneration.

3.45 p.m.

Today's variation seeks to provide resources to empower the THA to meet its responsibilities to the island's population in this regard. One, the reconstruction of the Scarborough Secondary School, and two, the payment of arrears and increased salaries to teachers. The representatives of the THA are here, and I am willing to take questions from members opposite.

Question proposed: That Head 15 be supplemented by the sum of \$94,000,000.

Mr. Chairman: Port of Spain North/St Ann's West.

Mr. Imbert: [*Inaudible*]

Mr. Chairman: I am advised by the Clerk that Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West beat you to it, but it does not appear as though it was a problem – your protestation, Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West.

Mr. Young SC: Thank you very much. To give my colleague from Diego Martin North/East a little break, under Head 15, 001/06, it is quite a large sum of \$79 million being provided here. And we see in the explanation, it is for a:

“...shortfall in allocation, resulting from the revised Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance and other terms and conditions of employment for members of the

Teaching Service...”

Did the members of the teaching service get all of the back pay due to them?

Mr. Tancoo: Member, I am advised by the representatives of the THA that this allocation of \$74 million –

Mr. Young SC: Seventy-nine, I think, Minister.

Mr. Tancoo: What is that?

Mr. Young SC: You said, 79 million, not 74.

Mr. Tancoo: Can I complete my statement, Sir?

Mr. Young SC: I was trying to help you, but go ahead.

Mr. Tancoo: No, no, I am quite capable, thank you very much. The \$74 million was used to pay arrears, and \$5 million was used to meet statistical – sorry, salaries increased to close fiscal 2026.

Mr. Young SC: So the \$74 million was to pay back pay?

Mr. Tancoo: Correct, arrears, correct.

Mr. Young SC: Right. And then my second question is, does that cover all of the back pay owing to the teachers?

Mr. Tancoo: I am advised by the technical staff that it does cover all of the arrears.

Mr. Young: Thank you.

Mr. Chairman: Diego Martin North/East.

Mr. Imbert: Could I get clarity as to whether this Item – and I would want to go to all the Items, but I am just dealing with Head 15, 06/001/06. Does this include any increase to salaries or arrears/back pay for workers in the Tobago Regional Health Authority?

Mr. Tancoo: As I indicated clearly – maybe the Member was not paying attention when I was speaking, but these were arrears for teachers. This is to make payments for teachers.

Mr. Imbert: It does not include any payment of arrears or increased salaries for any other category of worker paid by the Tobago House of Assembly?

Mr. Tancoo: I am advised, again, Member – in fact, Member, the question was asked and answered. It is for teachers.

Mr. Imbert: No, no, no, no, no, please.

Mr. Tancoo: It is for teachers. I have said that before. You asked me the same question. It is for teachers.

Mr. Imbert: Please, please. No other worker within the THA is in receipt of increased salaries and back pay?

Mr. Tancoo: As you requested, Sir, this allocation is to pay secondary school principals, primary school principals, secondary vice-principals, deans, heads of department, Teacher III, tech/voc educator IV, senior teachers, tech/voc educator II, special educators, Teacher II, Teacher I, Technical Educator II, and assistant teacher.

Mr. Imbert: [*Inaudible*]— Answer my question. There is no money for other workers. Could I go to Sub-Head 09/004 now? Head 04, Sub-Head 09/004/04, \$15 million. What is that for?

Mr. Tancoo: This \$15 million cited at Sub-Head 09/004/04, that \$15 million is to meet the projected expenditure for fiscal 2026, to cover the following works: pre-construction works, including geotechnical survey, design, quantity survey, topographical surveys and statutory approvals.

Mr. Imbert: Yes, but for what?

Mr. Tancoo: For the Scarborough Secondary School, my apologies.

Mr. Imbert: For which secondary school?

Mr. Tancoo: Scarborough Secondary School.

Mr. Imbert: Okay, and the next Item then, C. Secondary, \$15 million, what is that for?

Mr. Tancoo: Member, allow me to translate this for you. All of 004: Social Infrastructure is \$15 million. That is the increase.

Mr. Imbert: So it is a typographical error?

Mr. Tancoo: The Sub-Item is 04, the project group is C., the project description is: Reconstruction of the Scarborough Secondary School.

Mr. Imbert: So it is a typographical error?

Mr. Tancoo: All of that is the same allocation of \$15 million.

Mr. Imbert: So instead of 45, which is 3 by 15, it should be 15. Okay, thank you.

Mr. Tancoo: Where did you get this 45 from? It is 15. It is listed here clearly.

Mr. Imbert: You have \$15 million three times.

Mr. Tancoo: There is an Item Head, which is very, very clear; \$15 million.

Mr. Imbert: [*Inaudible*]

Mr. Tancoo: There is an Item Head.

Mr. Chairman: All right, move on. Hon. Members the question is that the —

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: Member for Trincity/Maloney, you really must be more timely in raising your hand.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: No, Mr. Chairman, there was a discussion going on, and you said all of us should not have our hands up at the same time.

Mr. Chairman: No, no. I looked down. I did not see you. I apologize. So let us —

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: Minister, could you say who is the intended contractor for this reconstruction of the Scarborough Secondary?

Mr. Tancoo: I am advised that we are not at that stage yet, Ma'am.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: Okay. So it is just for the preliminary works that you outlined?
Okay

Mr. Tancoo: Correct. It is for preliminary works.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: Thank you.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 15 supplemented by the sum of \$94,000,000.

Mr. Chairman: Minister of Finance, thank you once again, and the officers from the Tobago House of Assembly. Chief Administrator, thank you very much. Sorry for the inconvenience.

Head 16: Central Administrative Service, Tobago, a supplementation of \$465,940 and a variation of \$2,703,000.

Mr. Chairman: Minister —

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Chairman, have you put the question, or are you just in transition somewhere?

Mr. Chairman: This one is both a supplementation and a variation, so I propose to put the two questions. I would invite the Minister to make a compendious opening statement—

Hon. Morris: Thank you.

Mr. Chairman:— and then I will put the two questions.

3.55 p.m.

Hon. Morris: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The Office of the Prime Minister, Central Administrative Services Tobago, OPM CAST, plays a pivotal role in delivering government services to the people of Tobago, by providing essential financial and meteorological services. OPM CAST is also an important nexus bridging national, financial, Ministries and agencies with the Tobago House of Assembly, civil society, and the island's communities. At present, the Central Administrative Services Tobago comprises General Administration and the Meteorological Service Division.

The Meteorological Service Division provides a real-time, accurate, and reliable localized weather and climate data, on forecasting for sustainable public sector and private sector development, as well as, providing the basis for improved disaster preparedness and management on the island. By providing essential administrative and meteorological services, OPM CAST plays a vital role in ensuring that the Government of Trinidad and Tobago's policies, programmes, and initiatives are effectively implemented in Tobago. In this regard, OPM CAST has made strategic investments to improve service delivery and upkeep people-centered governance.

At this meeting of the Standing Finance Committee, OPM CAST is seeking a variation of \$2,703,000 largely to meet the projected shortfall in allocation to cover salaries and cost of living allowances, as a result of expenditure related to the advance payment of arrears, in accordance with the Comptroller of Accounts Circular No. 20 of 2025 and the adjustments in salaries to public officers, which took effect in January 2026.

Head 16 Central Administrative Services, Tobago (cont'd)

Additionally, OPM CAST seeks a supplementation of \$465,940,000 required to cover the projected shortfall in short-term employment and equipment subscription fees, which are critical to the staffing and effective operations of the Meteorological Services Division.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, I will put the two questions, one after the next.

Question proposed: That Head 16 Central Administrative Services, Tobago be supplemented by the sum of \$465,940.

Question proposed: That Head 16 Central Administrative Services, Tobago be varied by an increase in the sum of \$2,703,000.

Mr. Chairman: I now invite questions on both. Diego Martin North/East.

Mr. Imbert: Head 16, Sub-Head 01: Item 001: Sub-Item: 01 and item 005; Sub-Item: 01. What is the breakdown between arrears and Current Expenditure in terms of increases in salaries?

Hon. Morris: Thank you very much, Chairman. As we have said, the OPM CAST is seeking a variation of \$2,703,000 and that breakdown is, in terms of arrears, as stated before, we have General Administration, 44 persons. The arrears for there will be \$1,161,348. For the Meteorological Department, we have 17 persons and the arrears will be \$453,339 and going forward, because of the increase in each month we will now have an additional expenditure of \$103,000 per month, which will be covered by this variation.

Mr. Imbert: I am amazed that the Member for Mayaro has actually come prepared. Thank you very much.

Ms. Ameen: What?

Mr. Padarath: What ridiculousness.

Mr. Chairman: You know – frankly, what is the need for that?

Mr. Imbert: Chairman, there is a need. He is the only Minister who has given the breakdown.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Imbert: There is a need for the people to see that.

Mr. Young SC: “People are getting compliments and all yuh have ah problem with dat”.

Mr. Imbert: I never see more.

Mr. Chairman: Nobody has a problem for it. There is no need.

Mr. Imbert: Nobody else could answer that question. AG ducking it.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Chairman: Alright, let us move on. Any other question? Trincity/Maloney?

Mr. Imbert: Yes, yes. Sub-Head 02: Item 005; "on something else, I know all yuh doh read documents, you know". Sub-Item: 23. What are those fees for?

Hon. Morris: Yes. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. As stated, the OPM CAST is very critical to the function of our airport through the meteorological services. These fees are very critical, Mr. Chairman. If you recall, in 2025, there was an allocation of \$63,000, in fiscal 2026, \$72,000, Mr. Chairman. Now, we are going for \$380,000 more, and those fees are required for, if I repeat, the subscription for the maintenance support of the Capella-GR 16 Satellite Ground Station, Ranger-X5 Onset Calibration Maintenance Services, and the Visalia Exodus subscription fee.

Now, it must be noted, Mr. Chairman, that this fee of \$380,000, it is for the period September 2024 to September 2026. So, this Government has to pay outstanding payments we met for coming from September 2024 for these subscription fees.

Mr. Chairman: Trincity/Maloney.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, 02/005/22: Short-term Employment. Can the Minister indicate how many new individuals have been hired on a short-term basis, please?

Hon. Morris: Thank you very much, Member. Chairman, permit me to start up by saying that the OPM and the Government has inherited a critical shortage at this division. We only, at this point of time, we do not even have the Senior Meteorological Officers III and IV required, and we only have five of the eight Meteorological Office Assistants. So, this payment here that we are seeking will allow us to pay two Meteorological Assistants, as well as, one Facilities Technician up to September, so three to add.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: Those are three new hires?

Hon. Morris: Those are existing.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: Sorry?

Hon. Morris: Those are existing, Member.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: For what period have they been hired?

Hon. Morris: Alright, I have been informed by the PS at OPM CAST that they have been employed on a six-month period up until September 2026, with a provision to renew every three months.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: Okay, could I ask also, are these positions on the establishment and—?

Hon. Morris: Thank you, Member. I have been informed that they are on the establishment, but the Service Commission is still in the process of filling them.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: So there is an intention to fill these positions?

Hon. Morris: Member, yes, there is an intention to fill these positions.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: When that is being done, will these positions be advertised?

Hon. Morris: Right. Member, I have been informed by the Permanent Secretary at the OPM CAST that the process, it already has been advertised, and they are already in that process to fill them.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: On the short-term basis, those are the only positions that are filled on a short-term basis, or there are others?

Hon. Morris: At the Meteorological Station, those are the only short-term positions.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: Thank you very much.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 16 supplemented by the sum of \$465,940.

Mr. Chairman: In so far as the increase, the variation.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 16 varied by an increase of \$2,703,000.

Head 17: Personnel Department, \$2,518,670.

Mr. Chairman: Minister of Public Administration and Artificial Intelligence, I now invite you to make the usual opening statement.

Sen. The Hon. Smith: Thank you, Chairman. Thank you, Members, for the opportunity to address this distinguished House. The Personnel Department Chairman, is responsible for determining and advising on pay and other terms and conditions of employment for employees in the public service, estimated to be around 90,000 workers.

4.05 p.m.

Sen. The Hon. Smith: The Department determines, through consultation and negotiations with appropriate recognized majority unions and associations, the terms and conditions of service for persons in the civil service, the Statutory Authorities, subject to the Statutory Authorities Act, the Tobago House of Assembly, the Teaching Service, police service, fire service, and prison service.

The Department, Mr. Chairman, is also responsible for determining terms and conditions of employment for members of the defence force, daily-rated workers and contract workers, providing secretariat services and advising the Salaries Review Commission on the terms and conditions of employment for officeholders within its purview, as well as providing secretariat services to the Human Resource Advisory Committee, known as the HRC, as a subcommittee of Cabinet for which the Department provides recommendations and advice to treat with the organization in the state sector.

At this point, Mr. Chairman, I welcome comments and questions.

Mr. Chairman: I propose to put the two questions. This is another supplementation and increase.

Question proposed: That Head 17 be supplemented by the sum of \$2,518,670 and also be varied by an increase in the sum of \$1,000,000.

Mr. Chairman: Trincity/Maloney.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Could the Minister indicate what positions are currently being filled on a short-term basis under this Head?

Sen. The Hon. Smith: Member, can you identify the Head?

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: 02/001/22, Short-term Employment.

Sen. The Hon. Smith: Member, the positions are related to subject matter experts in the areas of human resource management, two persons responsible for digitizing the Department's records, and three persons engaged in facilities management, and four persons engaged in security management.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: Can you indicate the length of these short-term contracts, please?

Sen. The Hon. Smith: Member, I am advised that these are three-month terms, revolving.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: Would you be able to say for what period of time, three months, for what period of time? How many iterations of three-month periods there would be?

Sen. The Hon. Smith: Some so far, Member, are in excess of five years, as we are waiting on the Commission to fill those positions.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: So is there any indication from the Commission how soon those positions would be filled?

Sen. The Hon. Smith: We are hoping to fill them as soon as possible. As you know, the Department has been under-resourced for some time and so –

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: "I doh know dat."

Sen. The Hon. Smith: Well, I am letting you know that –

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: Okay.

Sen. The Hon. Smith: I am letting you know that it has been under-resourced for some time, and, as a result of that, we have had to make these appropriations. So thank you for your consideration while we do this.

Mr. Young SC: Mr. Chair, based on that answer that was just given, that the Department has been under-resourced for some time, would the Minister kindly provide us with the exact number of short-term employees that he has taken on during his tenure – that have been taken on during his tenure, please?

Sen. The Hon. Smith: Well, Member, I will start with a percentage, and the percentage

is that 27 per cent of all the vacancies had been filled, that number is quite subpar. In terms of the number of positions filled so far, we have been working with the Department to do just that, and these are some of the positions that will be filled. We are expecting that more will be filled in the near future.

Mr. Young SC: So how many have been filled during this period of time?

Sen. The Hon. Smith: Member, I am advised that it has significantly increased, and in addition to that, Member, I have also been advised that we have now engaged in three such recruitment drives, so the number will increase over the coming weeks and months.

Mr. Young SC: Thank you.

Mr. Chairman: Diego Martin West.

Mr. Des Vignes: Thank you very much, Chairman. To the Minister, through you, looking at Item 17/02, under Goods and Services, 001: General Administration, 08: Rent/Lease - Office Accommodation and Storage, we see a 12 per cent increase in this rental figure, what is the reason for this?

Sen. The Hon. Smith: Member, I am advised that this is to account for a shortfall and, therefore, the increase, I do not see that we provided a percentage per se, but I do see a supplementary allocation of \$1million. If you would like, I can provide details for that percentage increase as well.

Mr. Des Vignes: Thank you very much, Minister.

Mr. Chairman: Trincity/Maloney.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Under the Heading 04/007/40, there is a supplementation of \$300,000, could the Minister indicate how many contract officers will receive payments under this line Item?

Sen. The Hon. Smith: Member, I am advised this would cover four persons.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: Four?

Sen. The Hon. Smith: Yeah.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: Thank you. Can the Minister indicate which positions these are?

Sen. The Hon. Smith: Member, these are for the legal stream, members that fall in the

legal stream, as well as the executive assistants.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: Thank you.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 17 supplemented by the sum of \$2,518,670 and varied by an increase in the sum of \$1,000,000.

Mr. Chairman: Minister of Public Administration and Artificial Intelligence, may I thank you, and your Chief Personnel Officer, Dr. Dindial, thank you very much. I propose to make a 10-minute short personal break now. Thank you. We will resume at 4.23 p.m. Thank you very much.

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

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

Head 23: Office of the Attorney General, a supplementation of \$75,000,000 and a variation of \$7,000,000

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

Sen. The Hon. Jeremie SC: Thank you, Chair. The supplemental allocations for the Office of the Attorney General for the financial year 2026 are before this Committee this afternoon. As the principal legal advisor to the State and a guardian of both the public interest and the rule of law, the Office of the Attorney General occupies a central place in the institutional architecture of the Republic. The Office comprises and provides oversight to several specialized entities, whose responsibilities are fundamental to the execution of this mandate, including the DPP's Office, the Civil Law Department, the Central Authority, the Anti-Terrorism Unit, the Law Reform Commission, and the International Law and Human Rights Unit. The supplemental funding being requested today, at a value of \$82 million, is allocated to salaries and cost of living allowance, legal fees for the Office of the Attorney General, and legal fees for the Criminal Law Department, that is to say, the Office of the DPP.

This time last year, I made the point that when I first entered the doors of the Office

of the Attorney General, I was met with an alarming quantum of outstanding legal fees, somewhere in the vicinity of \$150 million, with invoices continuing to come in daily. We have been attempting to pay down on these outstandings, while ensuring continuity in the operations of the Office and the fulfilment of our mandate. Since my assumption of the role of Attorney General, we have been invoiced in the vicinity of \$34 million by attorneys retained on my instructions; \$34 million. That is it. This, in comparison to fees paid by the Office of the AG for these periods: 2022 – 2023, approximately \$246 million; 2023 – 2024, approximately \$147 million – I think something is wrong with that. This comparison, I believe, to be a critical indicator of the difference in the approach to fiscal prudence and fiduciary responsibility.

Madam Chair, before we begin this exercise, I wish to thank the public servants at the Office of the Attorney General for the hard work in preparing the submissions of the hard-working, civil servants in the Criminal Law Department and the Criminal Law Department who have assisted in bringing the external spend down dramatically, and for their continued dedication and hard work in service to the people of Trinidad and Tobago. I will take the questions now. Head 23.

Madam Chairman: Yes.

Question proposed: That Head 23 be supplemented by the sum of \$75 million and varied by an increase in the sum of \$7 million.

Madam Chairman: Member for Arima.

Ms. Beckles: Thank you most kindly, Madam Chairman. Madam Chairman, can I ask the Attorney General to provide – I am looking at Head 23, Sub-Head 02 –

Mr. Imbert: It is two Sub-Heads.

Ms. Beckles: Yeah – Item 001 and also, 009, Sub-Head 23. Just if you – at the soonest, the list of attorneys and the matters for which the payments are to be made.

Sen. The Hon. Jeremie SC: Okay. I am sorry, I did not –

Ms. Beckles: Yeah.

Sen. The Hon. Jeremie SC: – get everything. If you could just –

Ms. Beckles: Okay. Sorry about that.

Sen. The Hon. Jeremie SC:—repeat it slowly for me.

Ms. Beckles: Sure. Yeah. Okay. So that Head 23, Sub-Item 02/001: Fees, which would be \$50 million, if you can provide the list of attorneys and the nature of matters. And then, also, Sub-Head 02, again, Sub-Item 23, \$25 million, if you can provide the list of attorneys and the nature of the matters.

Sen. The Hon. Jeremie SC: All right. [*AG consults with technocrat*] Okay.

Ms. Beckles: Attorney General, my apologies. Subject to your answer, of course, and the amount paid.

Sen. The Hon. Jeremie SC: And—say again?

Ms. Beckles: The amount paid.

Sen. The Hon. Jeremie SC: The amount paid.

Ms. Beckles: So, the name, the nature of the matter and the amount paid.

Sen. The Hon. Jeremie SC: Okay.

Ms. Beckles: Thank you.

Sen. The Hon. Jeremie SC: You mean, the amount to be paid? Because—

Ms. Beckles: Or the amount contracted for.

Sen. The Hon. Jeremie SC: The amount—okay. So, we have—

Ms. Beckles: Only as it relates to what you requested.

Sen. The Hon. Jeremie SC: Only as it relates to—

Ms. Beckles: Relates to what is requested in the Sub-Items here. Because I mean, you may be paying less than what is contracted.

Sen. The Hon. Jeremie SC: Of course.

Ms. Beckles: Yes.

Sen. The Hon. Jeremie SC: So, if I could explain—

Ms. Beckles: Sure.

Sen. The Hon. Jeremie SC:—the amount that I have requested comes nowhere close to meeting the total that is due. I have a long and extensive figure, some of which contains

names of persons who were apparently dismissed by the State, ostensibly so, but remained on the State's payroll. I do not know how that came to happen. But you have asked the question, and I have to answer the question that you have asked.

Ms. Beckles: Well, I am only referring to what you have requested. Nothing else. So –

Sen. The Hon. Jeremie SC: No, but if I am to tell you what I am going to pay at this point in time, I have to tell you some of the challenges which I have in arriving at the decision whether or not I can pay some of these invoices. I did not open this conversation. Some of invoices which I have are invoices of persons who were publicly dismissed from the employ of the State, but retained some sort of arrangement which allowed them to be paid. I have to make a decision in respect of those. There are literally tens of persons – I am not sure if it is possible for me to do some sort of written answer. But there are literally tens of individuals who are owed money by the State, and those – unfortunately, because these are professionals – those amounts, those individuals have to be vetted. So that is a very difficult question for me to answer this afternoon.

4.35 p.m.

Ms. Beckles: Okay. All I am saying is that you have a particular figure in both instances as it relates to Criminal and what is the other category?

Hon. Member: Fees in general.

Ms. Beckles: And fees in general. So all I was asking is for the list of persons, because I am assuming that some sort of process would have gone in because you gave an explanation that there is a substantial amount of money outstanding. So I imagine this is only part of which you are prepared to pay. So, I am assuming some sort of vetting would have taken place before the recommendation was made for those persons.

Sen. The Hon. Jeremie SC: Well.

Ms. Beckles: So I am only asking for the persons for these figures. That is all I am asking.

Sen. The Hon. Jeremie SC: Okay. Some sort of vetting has been done. Even so, you have tens of individuals.

Ms. Beckles: Agreed.

Sen. The Hon. Jeremie SC: It is easier for me to tell you those and this is not the question that you have asked.

Ms. Beckles: Yeah.

Sen. The Hon. Jeremie SC: It is easier for me to tell you those persons that I have briefed and who have invoiced me. Because the list of persons who I inherited, I mean, I did not open this discussion, but that is a can of worms.

Ms. Beckles: Attorney General, I understand all what you are saying, right. But all I am saying to you and I am sure it is reasonable to understand that this figure would not have come here without some discussion with you. So all I am asking you is if you can provide the names of persons to which this allocation here applies, that is all. Nothing else.

Sen. The Hon. Jeremie SC: So you want names? There are several names. I did walk with the names, it would take some time to –

Ms. Beckles: Well, I mean, in the interest of time, you can send the list. I am not asking you to go through all. So there are the two allocations of a \$50 and a \$50million and all I am saying is if you can provide the list. I mean, for us to stay today to go through that, that is not, you know, that is not my request.

Sen. The Hon. Jeremie SC: Well, perhaps in the spirit of cooperation, what I can do is perhaps list the highest – if you wish, I can do that. I can say, for example –

Ms. Beckles: Attorney General, you have information that I do not have and I am not trying to create any – all I am asking you – I am only going based on the law and what the supplemental and variation is, that is all that I am asking. You know, that is all. I mean, it is either you could send it to us and I do not want to waste time. I do not want us to be here. All I am asking is if you could provide it in writing because this is something that was done before.

Sen. The Hon. Jeremie SC: I think I would like to provide this list in writing.

Ms. Beckles: If you can, I will be grateful.

Sen. The Hon. Jeremie SC: I have no objection to reading out some of the names –

Ms. Beckles: Well, I do not want – I do not want anything. I want just the list and only

specifically to what we are dealing with here as it relates to the supplemental and variation.

Sen. The Hon. Jeremie SC: Okay.

Ms. Beckles: Because if you provide some, people might want to know how some was provided and some was not provided.

Sen. The Hon. Jeremie SC: Okay.

Ms. Beckles: All I am asking for is the list.

Sen. The Hon. Jeremie SC: So, so—

Ms. Beckles:—in writing.

Sen. The Hon. Jeremie SC: I—

Madam Deputy Chairman: Okay, hon. Attorney General—

Ms. Beckles: That is just looking for unnecessary drama.

Madam Deputy Chairman:—you may choose—

Sen. The Hon. Jeremie SC: Chair. Chair, I would like to—

Madam Deputy Chairman:—to answer in whatever way you see fit.

Sen. The Hon. Jeremie SC: Chair, I would like to answer the question.

Madam Deputy Chairman: Okay. Please proceed.

Sen. The Hon. Jeremie SC: I am not prone to stammering in the way that certain persons are, I hear everything. I think that this is the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago; we could not be silly. This is not CIC. I am speaking to the Member for Arima, she has asked a serious question.

Member for Arima, the answer to the question is this, my allocation will not cover. It will not even cover 50 per cent of the outstanding that I have. Because remember, I have a department to run and I need to retain attorneys. Now, inside of all of that, I can provide you with a list of persons who I inherited, who I have not yet paid and I can even provide you with a list of those persons that I have retained and who have invoiced me and I have not been able to pay.

Ms. Beckles: Attorney General, this is a Standing Finance Committee, all I am asking

you, if you are not able to provide it, that is fine. But it is only as it relates to what you have requested. I understand your position, you know, and I understand what you are sharing, you inherited a certain amount of debt and you have not been able to pay, maybe even a portion of that and so you have a carryover. I understand all of that.

Sen. The Hon. Jeremie SC: But do you understand that that \$50 million, I cannot say to you this afternoon that that will not be paid to X, Y and Z?

Ms. Beckles: Okay. And you are not able say that, because?

Sen. The Hon. Jeremie SC: Because some of those claims are fraudulent.

Ms. Beckles: But why would there be an allocation for a fraudulent claim?

Sen. The Hon. Jeremie SC: Well, it is precisely that amount I am working through. I am working through those claims that ought not to be paid. There are still claims.

Ms. Beckles: But can you provide those that have been completed, that you have vetted and that are not fraudulent? Based on the information your department would have given you?

Sen. The Hon. Jeremie SC: Well, I can do so.

Ms. Beckles: Well, if you give that list at least for now.

Madam Deputy Chairman: Member for Arima, I believe that has been asked and answered already.

Ms. Beckles: Well, in your view, in your view, in your view. We have been having a very decent conversation. "Ah doh understand".

Sen. The Hon. Jeremie SC: I am very happy.

Ms. Beckles: I am trying to arrive at a reasonable solution, that is all.

Sen. The Hon. Jeremie SC: Member for Arima, I am happy to provide that list.

Ms. Beckles: Thank you. Thank you, Attorney General.

Madam Deputy Chairman: Port of Spain South.

Mr. Scotland SC: Thank you, Madam Deputy Chairman. Under the Sub Head, 001/01; Sub Item: Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance. There is an increase of expenditure and it was varied upward by \$7 million from \$21 million to \$28million. Could the

Attorney General confirm whether this variation reflects new hires, promotions or reclassifications? How many—well, let me ask that first. So can you confirm whether this variation reflects or is to account for new hires, promotions or reclassifications?

Sen. The Hon. Jeremie SC: Okay. Thank you for the question. Most of that funding is going towards reclassification because those persons are on the establishment. I should explain, there is, or there was a need to replenish some funding that was utilized to pay an advance on arrears of cost of living and salaries and allowances owed to monthly paid officers in accordance with the Ministry of Finance circular, that is No. 8 of December 2025.

There was also a sum of \$7 million, which would have been arrears of increments for the period November 30th, 2017 to February 28th, 2026 and that was due to officers who had not been paid. We are making good on the payments which were owed to persons.

4.45 p.m.

Mr. Scotland SC: Madam, a supplemental. Nowhere in this does it say arrears of Salaries and Cost of Living. Do you agree, hon. Attorney General? In your line Item, it does not speak to arrears of Salaries and Cost of Living. Agreed? Can you also tell us, does this figure include back pay?

Sen. The Hon. Jeremie SC: Okay. No, it does not include back pay. And technically, it is, as I said, replenishment of funding which was utilized to pay an advance on arrears of salaries. So, I am not an accountant, and neither are you.

Mr. Scotland SC: Could you—

Sen. The Hon. Jeremie SC: In respect of whether you categorize that as arrears or not, that rests very lightly on my shoulders.

Mr. Scotland SC: Attorney General, could you tell us? You quoted a figure of \$200 million, you did a comparison, and you quoted the comparative figure from 2022 and 2023, what was expended in the Office of the Attorney General. Could you confirm to us how much of that—I think you used a figure of \$200 million and a \$120 million—was used by the State to defend claims—Covid-related claims—iled by Anand Ramlogan and

others? How much of that money that you quoted there was used to defend those claims?

Sen. The Hon. Jeremie SC: I do not look to see who the attorneys are in any matters. I am just telling you that the spend was \$200 plus million/\$150 million plus, and that accounts only for the Office of the Attorney General. I should remind you that there were hires of persons and astronomical sums in the amount of TTD 1 billion were paid to embark on some sort of witch hunt in respect of persons for political reasons; \$1 billion.

Mr. Scotland SC: Madam Chair –

Sen. The Hon. Jeremie SC: I just wish to say that I know it is outside of the –
[*Interruption*]

Mr. Scotland SC: So, Madam Deputy Chair, now that the hon. Attorney General has admitted it is outside. Can I ask my question? You cited a time period 2022/2023, which we all know was during the Covid period, where the State – a PNM Government – had to defend a myriad of law claims brought every Monday morning by the office of Anand Ramlogan and others relative to Covid and other related litigation. How much of the \$200 million and the \$120 million aforementioned by you was utilized to pay for the defence of those claims? If you do not have it now – If you have it now, I will appreciate the answer now because it is contemporaneous. If you do not have it, can you give it to us in writing, please?

Sen. The Hon. Jeremie SC: I do not have the figure now. I do have the billion-dollar figure paid to Keith –

Mr. Scotland SC: Madam Chair, that is not the question that was asked.

Sen. The Hon. Jeremie SC: That is the answer that I am prepared to give.

Mr. Scotland SC: But it does not answer the question, Attorney General.

Sen. The Hon. Jeremie SC: I said I do not have it now.

Mr. Scotland SC: Thank you. Another question –

Madam Chairman: Hon. Attorney General and Member for Port of Spain South, may I remind you that this is for the end of fiscal 2026, not 2022 to 2023.

Mr. Scotland SC: Madam Chair, be fair. It is the hon. Attorney General who brought in

figures for 2022 and 2023. Without that, I would not piggyback.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Scotland SC: Come on. Come on, we are not sleeping. We are not sleeping. I have another question. Can you tell us, we see that there is an increase of \$82 million overall, and that is on a major Head, which is—the provision of Estimates for 2026 in the original budget was \$348,098,500. The revised provision is \$430,098,500. Could you tell us, hon. Attorney General, whether there was any oversight mechanism relative to your link with the hon. Minister of Finance to ensure that the original figure was realistic?

Sen. The Hon. Jeremie SC: Member for Port of Spain South, my friend, I am going to answer both of the issues that you raised, the first being the time period. I made an opening statement, as I was entitled to do. I chose to state my progress in 2026 and to reference the lack of progress as a country that we made in 2022, 2023, and 2024. That was my choice. It was my opening statement, I own it, I did nothing wrong. In respect of the second question, and the more fundamental question on the \$82 million that is now sought. I made every effort given the straightened circumstances of the country, and I think that if you look fairly at my spend, in terms of legal fees, when compared with 2022, 2023, 2024—

Mr. Scotland SC: Madam Chair, you understand, so if I asked—

Sen. The Hon. Jeremie SC: If you look at my spend—

Mr. Scotland SC: Yes?

Sen. The Hon. Jeremie SC:—you will see that \$30 million in Legal Fees, and asking my public servants to work harder, and to do more, and to brief out less, I made some progress towards that. I am \$82 million short. I have asked the Minister of Finance to assist, and he has kindly agreed to do so.

Mr. Scotland SC: Madam Chair, maybe I should ask for the answer in writing because my question was, there is a 24 per cent—I worked it out—increase in that single major Head, it is an increase. I am asking why it was not accounted for in the original budget. How come it has come now? That question was not answered.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Attorney General, are you able to answer that at the moment?

Sen. The Hon. Jeremie SC: I think the Minister of Finance is chomping at the bit to provide an answer.

Mr. Tancoo: Madam Chair, I understand the Member for Port of Spain South's query. But I think I need to put the Standing Finance Committee meeting today into some context. This is to supplement the allocation and to treat with variations of allocations. And therefore, when we would have gone through the Estimates et cetera, we would have determined certain figures which would have guarded and guided the budget of fiscal 2026. The purpose we are here today is to supplement that budget.

I understand the Members opposite who are anxious to make claims of all sorts of underspend and so on, but the purpose today is to marry what we would have assessed in the mid-year. That is the purpose today. To supplement, to add, to vary the allocations that were provided in the budget. And therefore, there will be instances where there will be increases, and there will be decreases. The purpose today is to get the Parliament's approval to move forward with an allocation.

Mr. Scotland SC: Madam Chair, I [*Inaudible*] unsolicited tutorial but my question was, my question was, you see, and I am not at all casting any aspersions and saying underspend, that is not my purpose here. I have seen a 24 per cent increase. I will cull from what the hon. Minister has said without the invective that as it goes along, things happen, and I think I would take that answer. I have another question as it relates to this line Item, but I will give way to any one of my colleagues. I do not want to hog the Floor, so I will give way to any one of my colleagues. I do not want to hog the Floor.

Hon. Member: Hog the Floor.

Mr. Scotland SC: Okay. I am told to hog the Floor.

Madam Chairman: Sure.

Sen. The Hon. Jeremie SC: I am sorry, Port of Spain South, would you give way to me? I had a supplemental to the Minister of Finance?

Mr. Scotland SC: [*Laughter*]

Sen. The Hon. Jeremie SC: It is up to you.

Mr. Scotland SC: I know normally it will take two to answer my one, so –

Hon. Members: Ahh. [*Laughter*]

4.55 p.m.

Mr. Scotland SC: I know normally it will take two to answer my one, so that is the logic. That is how they work. Go ahead, hon. Attorney General.

Sen. The Hon. Jeremie SC: Another reason for the shortfall would be that the public sector negotiations took place after the allocation. If you look at the date of the circular, it is dated the 5th of December, 2025, which would have been after the allocation. And adjustments had to be made to accommodate the increases and the arrears, of course, which were made necessary by that circular.

Mr. Scotland SC: Madam, my last question. This is a massive increase of over \$80 million. Are there accountability measures in place that will apply or attend to the use of these additional funds?

Sen. The Hon. Jeremie SC: That is a very good question, Member for Port of Spain South. And I thank you for asking that question, because it points to the fact that over the years, in the Office of the Attorney General, billions of dollars have been spent.

Mr. Scotland SC: Madam Chair, that is not my question. My question is not a historical – it is relative to the \$80 million.

Madam Chairman: Okay, I would allow the Attorney General to answer the question that you asked.

Mr. Scotland SC: But he is not answering the question.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Attorney General.

Mr. Scotland SC: My question has nothing to do with it – Madam Chair –

Madam Chairman: Can you give the Attorney General a second to answer your question?

Sen. The Hon. Jeremie SC: Port of Spain South, if you would allow me, I would – I am coming to the answer. Maybe I am –

Mr. Scotland SC: The run up, the run up. I just want an answer.

Madam Chairman: Okay, let us allow the hon. Attorney General to answer your question, please.

Mr. Scotland SC: What are the accountability measures that would account for 80 million—

Madam Chairman: I think he knows your question and he is trying and willing to answer at the moment.

Mr. Scotland SC: [*Inaudible*]

Sen. The Hon. Jeremie SC: Okay. Trying as feebly and as best as one who is not bright can do. So, as I was saying—

Hon. Members: [*Interruption*]

Sen. The Hon. Jeremie SC: The Member for Diego Martin North/East is disturbing me. I heard somebody say “Imbert” and I do not know what that is. I was schooled in that yesterday.

So, to answer the question. Billions of dollars have been wasted, taxpayers’ dollars have been wasted on fattening lawyers.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. The Hon. Jeremie SC: Now, the first accountability measure begins with having people in office who understand that they are custodians of the public purse.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Sen. The Hon. Jeremie SC: And that is why my figure is \$34 million, as opposed to \$200 million.

Now, having said that, there has been a continuing conversation on whether all of these state briefs should be a matter for the Auditor General; whether we should ask the Auditor General to have a look at it, whether we should impose some sort of procurement provisions on it. Everyone has run away from that. I am not afraid to run away from anything, including that. So that, it is something that I have in contemplation. I will have a discussion. I have started a discussion, as a matter of fact, in week one when I

discovered the horror that was left on me.

Mr. Scotland SC: Madam Chair, it is really not answering the question. You are allowing the hon. Attorney General to ramble on and on, and he only have five minutes.

Sen. The Hon. Jeremie SC: And here was I thinking that I was being so on point.

Mr. Scotland SC: I know you would have thought that, hon. Attorney General. Madam Chair, thank you.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 23 supplemented by the sum of \$75,000,000 and varied by an increase in the sum of \$7,000,000.

Madam Chairman: Thank you, Attorney General.

Head 26: Ministry of Education, a supplementation of \$127,779,300 and be varied by an increase in the sum of \$166,449,000.

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

Hon. Dr. Dowlath: Thank you, Madam Chair, hon. Members of the Committee.

The supplemental variation under Head 26, Ministry of Education, reflects an increase of \$294,228,300. The variation is a targeted and necessary adjustment. It aligns the Ministry's allocation with approved commitments, statutory obligations, contractual entitlements, scheduled financial payments, student support and priority investments in the education system.

Education is one of the clearest expressions of a people-first government. It supports our children, strengthens families and builds the human capital required for national development. The Ministry's strategic plan is built around three pillars, focused on the children, focused on parents and focused on the education system. Madam Chair, the largest component relates to personnel expenditure, which increases by approximately \$166,449,000. This relates to salaries, cost of living and the Government's contribution to the National Insurance System. I wish to declare that under the primary and secondary education personnel provisions, these payments relate to affected

teachers, public servants and non-teaching school personnel and support staff. This includes cleaners, clerks, laboratory assistants, farm attendants, administrative officers and other personnel who support the daily operation of our schools.

Madam Chair, the same principle applies to gratuity for contract officers. The variation increases this provision by approximately \$21.998 million. This will support gratuity payments to approximately 396 contract officers, including outstanding payments to which 393 officers carried over from the previous administration.

I also wish to address transfers to state enterprises. Of the \$43.707 million increase under this Item, \$42.310 million relates to the scheduled loan principal and interest payments associated with school repair and construction financing from 2020 to 2025. This includes \$32.547 million in principal and \$9.763 million in interest. These payments relate to works already undertaken, including school repairs, construction, critical works at government secondary schools, and works affecting ECCE primary and secondary schools. The variations also support students and families directly through remedial education, school supplies, book support, school feeding, essential services required for the day-to-day functioning of schools.

5.00 p.m.

Madam Chair, I also will highlight the \$30 million increase under the development programme for the acquisition of delivery of laptops and tablets. The allocation will support laptops for students who wrote the 2026 SEA, and who will enter Form 1 in September 2026. It is a people first, and financially responsible variation to invest in children, support parents, respect workers, honours the State's commitments, and strengthens the education system that serves the people of Trinidad and Tobago. Madam Chair, I thank you, and the hon. Members for your attention.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Chairman: Member for St Ann's East.

Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: Thank you kindly, Madam Deputy Chair.

Madam Chairman: Member, please allow me to put the question. My apologies.

Question proposed: That Head 26 be supplemented by the sum of \$127,779,300, and be varied by an increase in the sum of \$166,000,449.

Madam Chairman: Member for St. Ann's East.

Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: Thank you Madam Deputy Chair. Madam Chair through you, looking at the extensive line Item: 01/001 General Administration. Looking at 01 under that Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance, I want to ask the Minister how many officers that were paid under this line Item? Sorry, repeat it? Sub Head: 26; line Item: 01/001/01, Salaries and Cost of Living Allowances.

Hon. Dr. Dowlath: Thank you, member. Through you, Madam Chair, this increase will cover salaries to public servants 1,533 civil servants SRC office holders, and 3rd Schedule officers for the period July 2026 to September 2026 at the Ministry's Head Office.

Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: So, this is covering salaries. Is any allotted for back pay?

Hon. Dr. Dowlath: I am advised that the advance payment for back pay was paid in December 2025.

Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: So there is no back pay in this?

Hon. Dr. Dowlath: None.

Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: And similarly, under line Item: 01/005, Secondary Education, and 006, Primary Education. Under 01 of both of those, which is to be salaries and cost of living allowance. Can I ask, those funds that are allocated or are being varied, because it is a variation, right? Those funds are they for increase in salary to cover that? Or is any of it has to do with back pay? And this is for the teachers now. Are any teachers back pay are there?

Hon. Dr. Dowlath: There is no back pay there. It is only to cover salaries and cost of living, and NIS both under the primary and secondary.

Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: So no back pay has been paid in this variation? In these line Items. Thank you. If I may, I would like to move on to Goods and Services 02/001, Contract Employment. There is a supplementation under line Item: 16. I would like to know, what is the reason for the increase? Is it that there are more contract officers being hired here?

Hon. Dr. Dowlath: Through you, Madam Chair. The increase covers the payment of salaries for 1,396 contract officers. The original allocation is insufficient to make obligations for the period July to September 2016. The increase in salaries was required to facilitate the employment new officers, and increases in remuneration for legal officers.

Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: So, may I ask, how many new officers were hired, and are being paid from this supplementation?

Hon. Dr. Dowlath: 226.

Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: New officers?

Hon. Dr. Dowlath: Contract officers.

Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: New contract officers. So, 226 new contract officers. Through you, Madam Chair, I would what the positions are? These are positions that were on the organizational structure or these are new positions that were created?

Hon. Dr. Dowlath: Yes. So for example, 80 ECCE teachers, 93 ECCE teachers' assistants, 29 ECCE administrative teachers, behavioural specialists, ECCE auxiliary staff. So these are—

Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: So, I will like to know of this 226, I will like to have a breakdown, through you, Madam Deputy Chair. I suspect that it might be easier to put that in writing, and I am prepared to take it that way. With the breakdown of what those 226 new contract positions were, and what were the salaries that were assigned to those positions, please?

Hon. Dr. Dowlath: Sure. Thank you.

Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: Well, I would like to go to Other Contracted Services, which based on the notes are to pay PTSC drivers, which I am very happy to hear. Just a question, in so far as this has to be supplemented by almost \$3 million. Is it that there are new routes or there has been an increase in the routes are in cost or why is it that we have to have a supplementation here?

Hon. Dr. Dowlath: In May, 2025 there was an outstanding payment of \$5,751,989.91, and so therefore the increase utilized to pay whole debts plus going forward.

Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: May, 2025 would have been the last fiscal. So you would have come through a budget period in September of 2025. So, what I am really asking is, why there is a supplementation now if there is no needs or there is not an increase. Is it that the original allocation in the budget was insufficient?

Hon. Dr. Dowlath: The total expenditure to date is \$20,544,639.60 and the estimated expenditure for the period June to July, 2026 is 6.4 million so going forward the supplementation is required to carry us through to cover the cost until the first in July or the end of the term.

Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: I understand that, but what I am asking Minister is. Was your original allocation within your budget insufficient? Are there new costs that had come into this Item. Because if there are no new routes or no increase in cost then this is what it would have been in the first place? So I am asking, was your original allocation insufficient? Which requires this supplementation at this time?

Hon. Dr. Dowlath: I am advised that this is a shared Vote. There are other items that are paid from this particular vote.

Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: Okay the supplementation—the notes only speak about PTSC. So what else is paid from this Vote that will be paid from this supplementation?

Hon. Dowlath: There is a capture for the TTNLA and lower secondary proficiency exam.

Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: And are there increases in cost that were associated with this?

Hon. Dr. Dowlath: The data capture was a new Item for the TTNLA.

Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: The data capture was a new Item?

Hon. Dr. Dowlath: For the TTNLA.

Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: I remember that being an Item that existed before. So, the entire supplementation therefore is not for PTSC?

Hon. Dr. Dowlath: Yes. This supplementation is for PTSC.

Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: Okay. If the supplementation is for PTSC. I am asking, is that your original allocation was insufficient?

Hon. Dr. Dowlath: Yes.

Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: Yes?

Hon. Dr. Dowlath: Yes.

Mr. Tancoo: Madam Chair, if I may just to reinforce that that is exactly what this process we are engaging in is for.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Tancoo: It is to supplement what was presented before. Members are trying to make this look like — [*Inaudible*] — on a regular basis.

Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: The question really, Minister of Finance, is the fact that, if you have to supplement something that you had the known cost for, the question is why? Because if you under budgeted that is a question at this point.

Mr. Tancoo: Are you asking a question?

Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: There are no new routes. There is no increase in cost.

Mr. Tancoo: Are you asking a question?

Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: I am not asking Sir. You mentioned a comment. I was speaking to the Minister of Education through the Chair.

Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: Thank you very much. Good.

Hon. Members: [*Crosstalk*]

Madam Chairman: Any more questions?

Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: I have more questions. Okay, I am going to gratuities now, which is under Households.

5.15 p.m.

Mr. Young SC: Thank you. Madam Chair, Sub-Head 04: Current Transfers and Subsidies, 007: Households, and 40: Gratuities to Contract Officers. We see here an increase from an original budgeted amount of \$10 million of just under \$22 million. It is in the increase that we are being asked to approve; \$21,998,000. Minister, this is for contract officers who completed their contracts?

Hon. Dr. Dowlath: Thank you for the question. Through you, Madam Chair, this increased allocation is for 396 contract officers who completed their contracts.

Mr. Young SC: Three hundred and ninety-six?

Hon. Dr. Dowlath: Yes.

Mr. Young SC: And was it varying categories of contract officers?

Hon. Dr. Dowlath: Yes.

Mr. Young SC: Can you tell us what categories fell under this?

Hon. Dr. Dowlath: From my count, there are at least 30 categories

Mr. Young SC: Okay, so you could provide us with a copy of that, right? So we could see.

Hon. Dr. Dowlath: Sure.

Mr. Young: Thank you. Out of the 396 contract officers, how many were reemployed on contract?

Hon. Dr. Dowlath: I have to wait on advice from the PS on that one— *[Inaudible]*

Mr. Young SC: Whilst we are waiting, Minister, on the list that you have of the contract workers, did it include the category of school social workers, you know, who provide counselling services, et cetera, to the various schools?

Hon. Dr. Dowlath: No.

Mr. Young SC: No. It did not include that group. Okay, do you have the information now? Out of the 396, how many were re-employed? Contract workers whom he paid gratuity to.

Hon. Dr. Dowlath: I think, in the interest of time, that could be provided in writing.

Mr. Young SC: You will provide it in writing?

Hon. Dr. Dowlath: Yes.

Mr. Young SC: Okay, thank you. I wanted to go on then to Remedial Education, 04/007/41. Again, we are seeing an increase here of \$5.2 million, up from \$8 million. Now, we are at \$13.2 million. This is a critical category—or critical programme, rather, if I may call it that. Are you all going to utilize some of this money during the summer vacation to provide remedial education classes for certain schools?

Hon. Dr. Dowlath: Through you, Madam Chair, this is an old debt that is being paid off

from 2023 – 2024. It is outstanding payments for after-school education programmes, and to the University of Trinidad and Tobago for training teachers in 2023.

Mr. Young SC: Right.

Hon. Dr. Dowlath: Yes.

Mr. Young SC: But this Remedial Education line Item was created for that specific purpose; that they could provide exactly as you have said – after-school lessons, et cetera. Does that programme still exist?

Hon. Dr. Dowlath: This programme continues; not in the format that existed previously. It is being reviewed presently.

Mr. Young SC: So is it continuing, or is it stopped whilst being reviewed?

Hon. Dr. Dowlath: It has stopped while it is being reviewed.

Mr. Young SC: So, there are no remedial after-school programmes being conducted at this time?

Hon. Dr. Dowlath: Remediation is being integrated into the school system during the school day.

Mr. Young SC: So it is no longer being provided after school?

Hon. Dr. Dowlath: No.

Mr. Young SC: Do you all have any plans to introduce it for the summer period, which is a period where, in particular, certain students who fell behind during the year were provided with this service?

Hon. Dr. Dowlath: This programme is presently being reviewed so that –

Mr. Young SC: So it is not going to be provided for this summer?

Hon. Dr. Dowlath: There are different measures that are being put in place.

Mr. Young SC: Thank you.

Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: Thank you, Madam Chair. On this same line Item: So Minister, if I am understanding you correctly, under this line Item, the supplementation is strictly for paying bills that were outstanding from the last fiscal, and not from this fiscal? Because you would have met those programmes ongoing in the last fiscal.

Hon. Dr. Dowlath: Right, so the ongoing programme from June to September '26 – salaries for 177 officers – that continue to serve 189 primary and 56 secondary schools on what we call the priority schools. Previously, I think in your time, it would have been referred to as schools of focus. So, part of this supplementation is going to that staff of 177.

Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: Okay, so how much of it is to pay bills that were unpaid from the last fiscal and how much of it is to pay current bills from the ongoing initiatives?

Hon. Dr. Dowlath: Outstanding for the after-school programme, it is a total of \$1,125,981.69. That was for the after-school support. For the University of Trinidad and Tobago, \$846,530. For the vacation remedial programme, \$26,400. And the balance will be going towards the payment of the 177.

Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: Okay, thank you kindly. I want to ask a question about the school supplies and book grants. How many primary and secondary school students are being catered for with this supplementation of \$20 million?

Hon. Dr. Dowlath: With respect to the results from the 2025 SEA exam, 6,000 students made less than 50 per cent. They came from 189 primary schools, and they were placed in 64 secondary schools.

Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: That is school supplies and book grants?

Hon. Dr. Dowlath: Sorry.

Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: Sorry.

Hon. Dr. Dowlath: Okay, sorry, my mistake – 20,000.

Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: And so, each of the grants would be 1,000?

Hon. Dr. Dowlath: The system has been reviewed and the means test has been applied consistently over the last three years, and \$1,000 has been the standard in 2024 and 2025. But presently, the system is being reviewed.

Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: Oh, so let me clarify then. This supplementation is expected to give book grants within this fiscal, yes?

Hon. Dr. Dowlath: With a minimum of 20,000, yes, because –

Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: Minimum or maximum, is it?

Hon. Dr. Dowlath: A minimum.

Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: Okay.

Hon. Dr. Dowlath: Because presently at the Form 1 and Form 2 levels with the laptop initiative, learning resources and learning materials have been developed in six subject areas.

Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: Okay, so the application process for this has started already?

Hon. Dr. Dowlath: As soon as this process is completed and approved, the application process will be open.

Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: Okay. You said the minimum is 20,000, but you are reviewing the amount, and it is – no application process has been started yet for the book grants, yeah?

Hon. Dr. Dowlath: Yes.

Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: Okay.

Hon. Dr. Dowlath: Thank you.

5.15 p.m.

Mr. Young SC: Thank you. Madam Chair, Sub-Head 04: Current Transfers and Subsidies, 007: Households, and 40: Gratuities to Contract Officers. We see here an increase from an original budgeted amount of \$10million of just under \$22 million. It is in the increase that we are being asked to approve; \$21,998,000. Minister, this is for contract officers who completed their contracts?

Hon. Dr. Dowlath: Thank you for the question. Through you, Madam Chair, this increased allocation is for 396 contract officers who completed their contracts.

Mr. Young SC: Three hundred and ninety-six?

Hon. Dr. Dowlath: Yes.

Mr. Young SC: And was it varying categories of contract officers?

Hon. Dr. Dowlath: Yes.

Mr. Young SC: Can you tell us what categories fell under this?

Hon. Dr. Dowlath: From my count, there are at least 30 categories

Mr. Young SC: Okay, so you could provide us with a copy of that, right? So we could see.

Hon. Dr. Dowlath: Sure.

Mr. Young: Thank you. Out of the 396 contract officers, how many were reemployed on contract?

Hon. Dr. Dowlath: I have to wait on advice from the PS on that one— [Inaudible]

Mr. Young SC: Whilst we are waiting, Minister, on the list that you have of the contract workers, did it include the category of school social workers, you know, who provide counselling services, et cetera, to the various schools?

Hon. Dr. Dowlath: No.

Mr. Young SC: No. It did not include that group. Okay, do you have the information now? Out of the 396, how many were re-employed? Contract workers whom he paid gratuity to.

Hon. Dr. Dowlath: I think, in the interest of time, that could be provided in writing.

Mr. Young SC: You will provide it in writing?

Hon. Dr. Dowlath: Yes.

Mr. Young SC: Okay, thank you. I wanted to go on then to Remedial Education, 04/007/41. Again, we are seeing an increase here of \$5.2 million, up from \$8 million. Now, we are at \$13.2 million. This is a critical category – or critical programme, rather, if I may call it that. Are you all going to utilize some of this money during the summer vacation to provide remedial education classes for certain schools?

Hon. Dr. Dowlath: Through you, Madam Chair, this is an old debt that is being paid off from 2023 – 2024. It is outstanding payments for after-school education programmes, and to the University of Trinidad and Tobago for training teachers in 2023.

Mr. Young SC: Right.

Hon. Dr. Dowlath: Yes.

Mr. Young SC: But this Remedial Education line Item was created for that specific purpose; that they could provide exactly as you have said – after-school lessons, et cetera.

Does that programme still exist?

Hon. Dr. Dowlath: This programme continues; not in the format that existed previously. It is being reviewed presently.

Mr. Young SC: So is it continuing, or is it stopped whilst being reviewed?

Hon. Dr. Dowlath: It has stopped while it is being reviewed.

Mr. Young SC: So, there are no remedial after-school programmes being conducted at this time?

Hon. Dr. Dowlath: Remediation is being integrated into the school system during the school day.

Mr. Young SC: So it is no longer being provided after school?

Hon. Dr. Dowlath: No.

Mr. Young SC: Do you all have any plans to introduce it for the summer period, which is a period where, in particular, certain students who fell behind during the year were provided with this service?

Hon. Dr. Dowlath: This programme is presently being reviewed so that –

Mr. Young SC: So it is not going to be provided for this summer?

Hon. Dr. Dowlath: There are different measures that are being put in place.

Mr. Young SC: Thank you.

Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: Thank you, Madam Chair. On this same line item: So Minister, if I am understanding you correctly, under this line item, the supplementation is strictly for paying bills that were outstanding from the last fiscal, and not from this fiscal? Because you would have met those programmes ongoing in the last fiscal.

Hon. Dr. Dowlath: Right, so the ongoing programme from June to September '26 – salaries for 177 officers – that continue to serve 189 primary and 56 secondary schools on what we call the priority schools. Previously, I think in your time, it would have been referred to as schools of focus. So, part of this supplementation is going to that staff of 177.

Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: Okay, so how much of it is to pay bills that were unpaid from the last

fiscal and how much of it is to pay current bills from the ongoing initiatives?

Hon. Dr. Dowlath: Outstanding for the after-school programme, it is a total of \$1,125,981.69. That was for the after-school support. For the University of Trinidad and Tobago, \$846,530. For the vacation remedial programme, \$26,400. And the balance will be going towards the payment of the 177.

Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: Okay, thank you kindly. I want to ask a question about the school supplies and book grants. How many primary and secondary school students are being catered for with this supplementation of \$20 million?

Hon. Dr. Dowlath: With respect to the results from the 2025 SEA exam, 6,000 students made less than 50 per cent. They came from 189 primary schools, and they were placed in 64 secondary schools.

Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: That is school supplies and book grants?

Hon. Dr. Dowlath: Sorry.

Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: Sorry.

Hon. Dr. Dowlath: Okay, sorry, my mistake – 20,000.

Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: And so, each of the grants would be 1,000?

Hon. Dr. Dowlath: The system has been reviewed and the means test has been applied consistently over the last three years, and \$1,000 has been the standard in 2024 and 2025. But presently, the system is being reviewed.

Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: Oh, so let me clarify then. This supplementation is expected to give book grants within this fiscal, yes?

Hon. Dr. Dowlath: With a minimum of 20,000, yes, because –

Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: Minimum or maximum, is it?

Hon. Dr. Dowlath: A minimum.

Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: Okay.

Hon. Dr. Dowlath: Because presently at the Form 1 and Form 2 levels with the laptop initiative, learning resources and learning materials have been developed in six subject areas.

Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: Okay, so the application process for this has started already?

Hon. Dr. Dowlath: As soon as this process is completed and approved, the application process will be open.

Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: Okay. You said the minimum is 20,000, but you are reviewing the amount, and it is – no application process has been started yet for the book grants, yeah?

Hon. Dr. Dowlath: Yes.

Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: Okay.

Hon. Dr. Dowlath: Thank you.

5.25 p.m.

Mr. Imbert: Yeah, Madam Chairman, within the following Items, Head 26; Sub-Head 01. Item 01; Sub-Item 01. Item 005; Sub-Item 01. Item 006; Sub-Item 01. Sub-Head 02; Item 001; Sub-Item 16 – this is the first question I have – is there any provision for the following categories of staff: Guidance officers, school social workers, special education student aides, learning support assistants or clinical school psychologists and behaviour specialists?

Hon. Dr. Dowlath: Just repeat the Sub-Items.

Mr. Imbert: It is a series of line Items. It is 001/Sub-Head 01; 001/01; 005/01; 006/01. I will read them out. Item 001 is General Administration; Personnel Expenditure. 005 is Secondary Education under the same heading, Personnel Expenditure. And 006 is Primary Education under the same heading, Personnel Expenditure. And Sub-Head 02; Item 001; Sub-Item 16 is Contract Employment under General Administration. So, within those four Sub-Items, is there any provision for these categories of staff? Do you want me to repeat the categories of staff too? No problem. Guidance officers, school social workers, special education student aides, learning support assistants, clinical school psychologists, behaviour specialists.

Hon. Dr. Dowlath: Right. Those categories are paid under Households 007; 41: Remedial Education. Right?

Mr. Imbert: Just to assist, Minister, these are all in the Student Support Services Division. So, there would be a combination of public officers and contract officers.

Hon. Dr. Dowlath: Right. So, the learning support assistants are paid under 41, and the other categories are paid under 16.

Mr. Imbert: You are saying that all of these contract are paid under Remedial Education? The guidance officers –

Hon. Dr. Dowlath: No, only learning support is paid under 41.

Mr. Imbert: The learning support assistants –

Hon. Dr. Dowlath: Learning support assistants are paid under 41.

Mr. Imbert: So special education student aides, guidance officers, school social workers, clinical school psychologists and behaviour specialists are paid what?

Hon. Dr. Dowlath: Paid under 16, Contract Employment.

Mr. Imbert: So, there are no public officers inside of the Student Support Services Division in these categories?

Hon. Dr. Dowlath: Under these line Items?

Mr. Imbert: Yeah.

Hon. Dr. Dowlath: No.

Mr. Imbert: No public officers? Okay. But are there positions that are vacant for all of these categories?

Hon. Dr. Dowlath: In the interest of time, we could provide that in writing for you.

Mr. Imbert: So, you will provide me with a list of the vacant positions in all of these categories?

Hon. Dr. Dowlath: Sure.

Mr. Imbert: Okay. Is there any intention in fiscal 2026, the three months that remain, to hire anybody in any of these categories under these Items?

Hon. Dr. Dowlath: Right. So, regarding the Student Support Services Division, presently, the organizational structure is currently under review, and once that review is

completed and the reorganization is completed, the Ministry will move forward to fill the vacancies.

Mr. Imbert: The reason why I am asking is that I am aware—I am not advised, I am aware that many of these categories of officers are no longer employed in the Ministry, and they are very, very important for the welfare of our children, especially the ones who require special assistance, people who are autistic, and other children like that. So, this is why I am asking these questions. So, you are saying, this is under review, and when the review is over, you will deal with it in terms of the people who no longer there. Because quite a few of them are no longer employed, as you know, special education student aides, learning support assistants. That is your answer? You are reviewing it?

Hon. Dr. Dowlath: Yes, we are presently reviewing.

Mr. Imbert: Okay. I have other questions on this, but maybe Port of Spain North, you want to go ahead?

Mr. Young SC: No, my questions are—*[Inaudible]*

Mr. Imbert: Okay. With respect to the School Supplies and Book Grant, could you explain why the application process—this would be Sub-Head 04; Item 007: Households; Sub-Item 42: School Supplies and Book Grant. Can you explain why the application process for these grants has to wait until we complete this exercise and the Appropriation Bill?

Hon. Dr. Dowlath: The application process will be opened as early as next week.

Mr. Imbert: No, I understand that—

Hon. Dr. Dowlath: Yes.

Mr. Imbert:—but nine months of the year would have gone. Why did we have to wait nine months for that?

Hon. Dr. Dowlath: This School Supplies and Book Grant, like the other systems, the SSSD, was under review and so, presently, we are very clear now on the way forward.

Mr. Imbert: Well, actually, the correct answer is there was no allocation. It is okay. All right. I will hand over to my colleague.

Madam Chairman: St. Ann's East.

Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: Thank you, Madam Chair. I would like to go to line Item – under Transfer to State Enterprises, 011, I would like to look at 02: National School Dietary Services, and I am asking of the Minister, through you, whether the supplementation has been required because there are new contractors, or is it that there is an increase in the rate, or is it that there are more student lunches and breakfast being distributed at this time?

Hon. Dr. Dowlath: Thank you for the question. Through you, Madam Chair, the increased allocation is used to cover salaries and increases in NIS contributions for 69 employees, as well as operational expenses.

Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: So, this has to do with the employees themselves, nothing to do with the contractors?

Hon. Dr. Dowlath: Yeah.

Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: Okay. Could you tell me how many lunches and breakfast are provided, or are intended to be provided, expected/projected until the end of the year?

Hon. Dr. Dowlath: I do not have that information at hand, but –

Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: I am happy to get it in writing, that is no problem.

Hon. Dr. Dowlath: Okay. Thank you.

Madam Chairman: Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West.

Mr. Young SC: Thank you. Minister, on that same line Item 04/011/02, an increase of only \$1.3 million was given – well, roughly 1.4 that you have just told us is really to pay NIS contributions for staff – increases in NIS contributions for staff and some operational expenses. Looking at the budget of \$250 million – I guess that cannot be very much – for the upcoming summer period when schools are out, is there any plan by this body to continue providing any support in the form of lunches for students during that period?

Hon. Dr. Dowlath: It is not the norm, because school is normally closed during the July/August holidays.

Mr. Young SC: Correct, but I mean, we had done it, for example, during a COVID period, et cetera. I am asking whether there is any such plan, because we know how there is a lot of difficulty right now with certain citizens in being able to provide that level of nutritional support to their children. So, I am just wondering if there is such an initiative planned.

Mr. Tancoo: Ma'am, Chair, that question was asked and answered already.

Madam Chairman: Yes. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Young SC: The question was not asked and answered. The Minister was in the process of answering.

Madam Chairman: I have just called on the Minister of Finance.

Mr. Young SC: What?

Mr. Tancoo: The Minister has already advised that there is no provision being made.

5.35 p.m.

Mr. Young SC: He did not say there is no provision. He said, "That is not normal", and I then asked a question, "Is there going to be such an initiative?"

Mr. Tancoo: Moving on, please.

Mr. Young SC: When was that answered?

Madam Chairman: Member for Port of Spain South –

Hon. Members: [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Young SC: I could shout if I want.

Madam Chairman: Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West, my apologies, may I remind you that this is for fiscal 2026. The question that you have asked –

Mr. Young SC: I am talking about fiscal 2026. Fiscal 2026 ends in September or October.

Madam Chairman: – is in relation to the COVID period. It is in relation to COVID period.

Mr. Tancoo: Why are you talking over the Chairman?

Mr. Young SC: What?

Madam Chairman: I suggest that we move along. Member for St. Ann's East.

Hon. Member: Yes, you.

Mr. Young SC: “Yuh brain leakin’”?

Hon. Member: “Your brain leaking”.

Madam Chairman: Member for Port of Spain North/St. Ann’s West, this type of behaviour will not be condoned in this Chamber.

Hon. Members: [*Crosstalk*]

Madam Chairman: Let us move along. Member for St. Ann’s East, if your colleague would allow you to ask a question in silence, please, go ahead.

Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: Thank you, Madam Deputy Chairman. Madam Deputy Chair, I move to line Items 15, 20, 22 and 23, which are all payments on loans, and the Minister would have spoken in his preamble about the fact that those loans would have existed previously and were used for infrastructural work on schools during the five-year period, prior to his taking office. My question is, these are quite large supplementations that are being proffered here for these loans, and these existed previously, therefore there must have been a fixed rate that would have been paid for these loans and agreed to, previous to the Minister taking office. My question is, were there changes in the conditions or the terms? Why would a supplementation be required at this point for loans that existed before with set payments, and this is in the order of 21, 31, almost \$40 million?

Mr. Tancoo: If I may answer your question, Ma’am, there is a supplementation of \$21.8 million under MTS loan for financing work at 27 schools. There is a supplementation of \$10.7 million for payments for loans, for three loans basically – four loans that were taken out under your administration. This Government remains committed to fulfilling its obligations, and the supplementation that we are asking today for is to do exactly that.

Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: If I may, Madam Deputy Chair, the point is that you would have met those loans in operation and therefore they were set payments, but there is an under-budgeting of almost \$40 million in this regard. So I am asking, you would have passed a budget period last year, where you would have had the opportunity to budget for the payment that was already agreed to in these loans that you met in operation. So my question is, why was almost \$40 million under-budgeted and now require

supplementation?

Mr. Tancoo: It is a standard budgetary practice, Madam Chair —

Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: To under-budget?

Mr. Tancoo: It is a standard budgetary — can I finish my comments?

Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: Please, please do.

Mr. Tancoo: You are interrupting again. It is a standard budgetary practice that has taken place for the last 60-odd years in this country and which the Members opposite have also done during their term in office when they come to this House to ask for supplementation of the budget. Today, these line items that the Member has identified, we have come to supplement the budget. That is it.

Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: We are supplementing something that was a fixed cost and payment, therefore you would have under-budgeted by almost \$40 million, and just on these items alone, and I do not understand how that is a standard budgeting practice.

Mr. Tancoo: Your ignorance, Ma'am —

Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: The question is, why did you under-budget?

Mr. Tancoo: With the greatest of respect —

Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: Nobody under-budgeted, so why are you supplementing this cost?

Hon. Members: [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Tancoo: Madam Chair, I do not know — Madam Chair, if I may —

Madam Chairman: Yes, Minister.

Mr. Tancoo: I think I have made myself very, very, very, very clear, I think I have made —

Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: I fully understood, it was under-budgeted, that is fine.

Mr. Tancoo: Can I please finish? Why are you interrupting?

Madam Chairman: Can we please let the Minister of Finance provide the answer to the question asked.

Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: I think he said he provided the answer, Deputy Chair. I am satisfied with the answer, it was under-budgeted by \$40 million.

Mr. Tancoo: Madam Chair —

Madam Chairman: I am going to allow the Minister of Finance to finish his answer.

Mr. Tancoo: Madam Chair, for repetition, because the Member keeps interpreting comments that I have made based on her own focus point. This is a supplementary variation, this is a supplementation of the budget, and where there are shortfalls, we are supplementing. This, ironically, is to pay loans that that Government took out and made no provision to repay.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: To repair schools, and that is—no, no, no, you met the cost there and they were— [*Inaudible*] No, Madam Deputy Chair, that is not correct— [*Inaudible*]

Mr. Imbert: Madam Chair, this is not a budget debate, what is that all for? What is all that banging table for?

Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: On an annual basis, it is a loan they took, Deputy Chair, therefore to say that there was no provision, that is an inaccurate statement, and that should be withdrawn and apologized for.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Chairman: Diego Martin North/East, good, very good. St. Ann's East, do you have any other questions?

Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: Most certainly, I want to go to the Development Programme, Madam Deputy Chair, under 09/005, and there is one Item there, Acquisition and Delivery of Laptops and Tablets, and I would like to ask the Minister, through you, the \$30 million that is allocated, the notes say it is for the 2026/'27 academic year, so it is not a top-up for the last academic, it is to provide for the next academic year, is that correct? I am just clarifying.

Hon. Dr. Dowlath: For the upcoming academic year.

Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: Yeah. Okay. So then my question is, how many laptops are expected to be provided for the \$30 million, because the provision before that was like 105, so I am asking, is there a decrease in the number of laptops? How much you are supposed to provide with this?

Hon. Dr. Dowlath: This is a supplementation for the 18,000 laptops that are to be provided.

Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: 80,000?

Hon. Dr. Dowlath: 18, 1-8.

Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: 1-8, and that is for the next academic year?

Hon. Dr. Dowlath: Yes.

Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: Okay. Previous to this, the allocation was \$105,000, so that \$105,000 would have provided how many laptops then?

Hon. Dr. Dowlath: Eighteen thousand.

Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: 8-0 or 1-8?

Hon. Dr. Dowlath: The \$105,000 was part payment.

Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: Part payment?

Hon. Dr. Dowlath: Yes.

Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: So the \$30 million is for the next academic year to provide 18,000, the same 18,000, because the notes are saying it is for the next academic year?

Hon. Dr. Dowlath: Yes. So in the process of procuring the laptops, there is a requirement for 50 per cent down payment at the start and at the end.

Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: Okay. I am sorry, maybe I am not asking my question clear, so I am just going to try it again. The \$30 million supplementation is to provide laptops for the next academic year, and that is to provide 18,000 laptops, 1-8?

Hon. Dr. Dowlath: It is to begin or to commence the process. There is an available balance of \$37.5 million on the supplementation of \$30 million will bring it up to \$67.5million, which is the required 50 per cent for mobilization.

Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: Okay. Could the Member provide information with regard to if there is already a contractor chosen for this?

Hon. Dr. Dowlath: Presently, the procurement process is ongoing.

Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: Could you tell me if the procurement process is taking place within the Ministry of Education?

Hon. Dr. Dowlath: We will advise at the appropriate time.

Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: If I could be clear, you are not sure if the procurement is taking place within the Ministry of Education?

Hon. Dr. Dowlath: We will advise you at the appropriate time, yeah.

Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: At the appropriate time, I thought this was the appropriate time, this is the Standing Finance Committee. So I am asking if the procurement for the laptops, based on the supplementation in this line Item under the Ministry of Education, is taking place within the Ministry of Education.

Hon. Dr. Dowlath: We will advise at the appropriate time.

Madam Chairman: Asked and answered. Member for Diego Martin North/East.

Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: Thank you so kindly.

Mr. Imbert: I have a question on the same Item. Does the Minister know whether —

Hon. Members: [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Imbert: Madam Chairman —

Madam Chairman: Line Item, Member.

Mr. Imbert: Could you stop the Member for Barataria/San Juan, please. I want the Minister to hear my question.

Madam Chairman: It is going both ways.

Hon. Members: [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Imbert: No, no, no, he started it.

Hon. Members: [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Young SC: All of a sudden the Chair not hearing.

Madam Chairman: I am hearing both sides.

Mr. Young SC: This Member for Barataria/San Juan is harassing the Member for St. Ann's East.

5.45 p.m.

Madam Chairman: It is both sides.

Hon. Members: [*Crosstalk*]

Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: “Yuh have to be mad”.

Madam Chairman: It takes two to tango. Remember that.

Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: It does. And we will tango.

Mr. Young SC: “Nobody tangoing with he.”

Madam Chairman: Diego Martin North/East.

Mr. Imbert: I am waiting. Thank you.

Madam Chairman: Ask a question with—

Mr. Imbert: Under—

Madam Chairman:—respect to the line Item.

Mr. Imbert:—yes. Page 15 of my document.

Mr. Hosein: [*Inaudible*].

Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: “Doh play yuh wah tango at all. Doh play with me”.

Mr. Imbert: Sub-Head 09: Development Programme, Item 005, Sub-Item 06/042: Acquisition and Delivery of Laptops and Tablets. Can the Minister state whether he is aware whether the procurement of these laptops is being done in accordance with the Public Procurement and Disposal of Public Property Act? And whether the procuring agent, the supplier, or the person doing the procuring on behalf of the Ministry, is of the view that they are subject to the Public Procurement and Disposal of Public Property Act? Does the Minister know? The reason is, I am told that they say they are not. I am told that they say they are not. They are not subject to the Public Procurement Act.

Hon. Dr. Dowlath: Well, at the Ministry of Education, we comply with the Public Procurement Act.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Imbert: No. Not the Ministry of Education. Not the Ministry of Education. I am advised that this has been given to TSTT, who is alleging that they are not subject to the Public Procurement Act. I just want to know if you know, as Minister.

Mr. Tancoo: Madam Chair, the Member is introducing a set of speculation, and “he say and they say”, and he is advised, and they are advised.

Hon. Members: [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Imbert: This is not speculation.

Mr. Tancoo: That—

Hon. Members: [*Continuous crosstalk*]

Mr. Imbert: This information is in this Parliament.

Mr. Tancoo:— with the greatest of respect, that is not an appropriate question.

Mr. Imbert: It is in the— this information— look. Madam Chairman, I am speaking about what has been put into the public domain and put into this Parliament that TSTT is the person doing the procurement, and they say they are not subject to the Public Procurement Act. I am asking what the Minister knows about this.

Mr. Tancoo: This line Item refers to the acquisition and delivery of laptops and tablets, a \$30 million increase in the supplementation. I think what the Member is talking about; is a set of speculation. He himself said that he was advised, et cetera, et cetera.

Mr. Imbert: It is not speculation. TSTT is doing the procurement.

Mr. Tancoo: I would like you to address the question to the \$30 million. If that is your question.

Mr. Imbert: I am speaking about the \$30 million.

Mr. Tancoo: And the \$135 million and the \$105. Please. Focus on the numbers, please.

Mr. Imbert: I am speaking about the— Madam Chairman, let us go back. Let us go back. Sub-Head 09, *Development Programme*, Item 005; Sub-Item 06: General Public Services, Project Group A: Administrative Services, Projects Description 042: Acquisition and Delivery of Laptops and Tablets, increase \$30million. And by the way, in the Finance Committee, we are allowed to ask questions on all of the columns that appear on the paper.

Madam Chairman: Okay, Member. So ask a question.

Mr. Imbert: So, I am simply asking, with respect to this \$30 million—

Madam Chairman: Yes.

Mr. Imbert:— and the total revised provision of \$135 million is the entity that is procuring

the laptops, doing so in accordance with the Public Procurement Act. I know it is not the Ministry.

Madam Chairman: Okay. That is your question.

Mr. Imbert: Yeah. I know it is not the Ministry.

Madam Chairman: Minister, are you prepared to answer that?

Hon. Members: [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Imbert: They are not. Well, we will see.

Hon. Dr. Dowlath: As I indicated earlier, at the Ministry of Education, we follow the law.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Imbert: Not you. Is TSTT following the Act?

Madam Chairman: Member for Arouca/Lopinot.

Hon. Dr. Dowlath: I can answer for the Ministry of Education.

Dr. Moonilal: “Dey put somebody else to ask it now”.

Mr. Imbert: No, Sir. “He ha’ to pay”.

Mr. Gonzales: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Minister, you have indicated that currently there is a part payment of \$105million on this Item. The \$30 million in supplementation, is it to cover outstanding sums from the part payment, as you have indicated a short while ago?

Hon. Dr. Dowlath: All right. So, to correct that, there is no part payment of 105; \$67.5million was used for the outstanding balance for the 2025 acquisition of laptops. So the balance of, as I indicated earlier, 37.5 is supplemented with \$30million. So, we could arrive at the sum of \$67.5 million, which is the 50 per cent for mobilization for the academic year 2026/2027.

Mr. Gonzales: So, do you have any outstanding debts from this current fiscal to settle—

Hon. Dr. Dowlath: No.

Mr. Gonzales:— from this allocation?

Hon. Dr. Dowlath: No.

Mr. Gonzales: How much have you expended in this fiscal with respect to the acquisition

of these laptops?

[Minister consults with technocrat]

Mr. Padarath: In the variation or the supplementation?

Mr. Imbert: Something is wrong. Nyan, something is wrong.

Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: Of course. Yeah. We know that.

Mr. Imbert: "Dey hiding".

[Minister continues to consult with technocrat]

Hon. Dr. Dowlath: 67.5.

Mr. Gonzales: 67.5 what?

Hon. Dr. Dowlath: Million.

Mr. Gonzales: You are owing?

Hon. Dr. Dowlath: Was paid. You asked how much was paid.

Mr. Gonzales: Yes. So you have any outstanding arrears?

Hon. Dr. Dowlath: No. *[Minister consults with technocrat]*

Mr. Gonzales: So, just to make it clear, Minister, and hopefully as my last question on this, you have expended, the Ministry, \$67 million for 18,000 laptops under this programme?

Hon. Members: *[Crosstalk]*

Mr. Gonzales: Is that what you are saying? My question was how much did the Ministry spend on the laptop programme, the laptop acquisition. You are saying \$67 million?

Hon. Dr. Dowlath: Okay. To make it easier, we will provide the full amount in writing for you.

Mr. Padarath: Because they asked the question in Parliament, so they have the answer. 'He playing smart with foolishness".

Question put and agreed to.

Head 26 supplemented by the sum of \$127,779,300 and varied by an increase in the sum of \$166,449, 000.

Madam Chairman: Thank you, Minister of Education.

Head 28: Ministry of Health, a supplementation of \$499,978,920 and a variation of \$17,282,800.

Madam Chairman: I will now invite the Ministry of Health to make a brief opening statement for a maximum of 5 minutes.

Hon. Dr. Bodoë: Thank you, Madam Chair. Good afternoon, colleagues. Madam Chairman, at the Ministry of Health, we are working assiduously towards the provision of effective and timely health care services to the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago. These services are provided via the Regional Health Authorities and the vertical divisions of the Ministry of Health. By introducing accountability and focusing on value for money, especially in the operations at the regional health authorities, citizens are already starting to experience measurable improvement in services. At the Ministry of Health, we continue to pursue the Government's stated policy of treating with the epidemic of non-communicable diseases and the reduction of the long waiting list for surgeries that we inherited.

5.55 p.m.

In this regard, Madam Chairman, it is to be noted that the opening of the Couva Children's Hospital last December has already impacted on the waiting list for certain surgeries. The innovative amendments to the Children's Life Fund Act have already benefitted a number of our nation's children. Madam Chairman, it is to be noted that these achievements, which have occurred in just under a year in office, were due in no short measure to the support of the hon. Prime Minister, Kamla Persad-Bissessar, for which I am grateful. I also wish to thank the Minister in the Ministry of Health, Dr. Rishad Seecheran, my other Cabinet colleagues and dedicated staff at the Ministry of Health for their support. I also express my gratitude to the Minister of Finance for this mid-year budget allocation.

Madam Chairman, this allocation under Head 28 is to meet the following Items of expenditure. Loans: The payment of outstanding loans in the sum of \$386.1 million. The RHAs, in particular the Eastern Regional Health Authority, to cover the sum of \$59.5

million for the payment of trade payables and operational expenses; the SWRHA to cover the sum of 54.4 million, again, for the payment of trade payables and certain operational expenses. And the final Item, Madam Deputy Chairman, will be for the Ministry of Health to cover the sum of \$7.7 million for payment of the arrears applicable to the Ministry of Health's monthly-paid permanent public officers that occurred in December 2025, and the 10 per cent increase in salaries and COLA, from January 2026 and onwards to the end of fiscal 2026.

As I close, Madam Chairman, I want to thank all our health care workers for their dedication, commitment and hard work. I remain available to answer any questions. Thank you.

Madam Chairman: Thank you, Minister.

Question proposed: That Head 28 be supplemented by the sum of \$499,978,970 and varied by an increase in the sum of \$17,282,800.

Madam Chairman: Member for Diego Martin North/East.

Mr. Imbert: Thank you, Madam Chairman. Could the Minister state, with respect to Head 28; Sub-Head 01; Item 001/01 and Item 004/01, how much of this, or these increases are for back pay, and how much increased salaries?

Hon. Dr. Bodoë: Sorry, you said how much for back pay and the second part?

Mr. Imbert: How much—the two Sub Items, 001/01 and 004/01, both of them are Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance.

Hon. Dr. Bodoë: Sure.

Mr. Imbert: How much of—those two Items combined together are about \$17 million. How much is for back pay or arrears and how much is for increased salaries in this fiscal year?

Hon. Dr. Bodoë: Sure, Member. So with regard to the first sum of \$7.7million—this is the Ministry of Health—the sum covers arrears, \$4.9million, and the revised salaries of \$2.76 million. This is for the period January to September 2026.

Mr. Imbert: Right.

Hon. Dr. Bodoë: For the second Sub-Item 01, the sum of \$9.58 million, the arrears would be \$6.43 million, and the revised salaries allocation to take is to the end of the financial year would be \$3.15 million.

Mr. Imbert: And is it sufficient?

Hon. Dr. Bodoë: This is sufficient.

Mr. Imbert: Okay. Could I go now to Sub-Head 04: Current Transfers and Subsidies; Item 009: Other transfers; Sub-Item 03: Eastern Regional Health Authority, \$59.5 million. What exactly will this \$59.5 million be spent on?

Hon. Dr. Bodoë: So, Member, the breakdown for the expenditure would be operational expenses for the EHRA, in the sum of \$4.8 million, and the payment of outstanding trade payables of \$54.7 million.

Mr. Imbert: Okay. And similarly, Sub-Item 05, what is the \$54.4 million for?

Hon. Dr. Bodoë: Sure. Member, the breakdown for that would be trade payables of \$44.4 million, expenses for the Cancer Centre of Trinidad and Tobago - South, \$4.7 million, and expenses at the Couva Children's Hospital of \$5.3 million.

Mr. Imbert: Okay. And I noticed the other two RHAs are not getting any money. How come?

Hon. Dr. Bodoë: Yeah. At this point in time, Member, the other two RHAs have sufficient funds to take them through the financial year.

Mr. Imbert: So the North West RHA and the North Central have enough money for trade payables and operational expenses. That is what you are saying?

Hon. Dr. Bodoë: At that point in time, Member.

Mr. Imbert: I am very surprised to hear that, but if –

[MR. SINGH *in the Chair*]

Mr. Young SC: Mr, Chair. Thank you very much. Minister, same Sub-Items, Head 28, Sub-Head 04; Item 009 under Other Transfers; Sub-Item 03. Out of this \$59.5 million, is any of that towards payment for the nurses?

Hon. Dr. Bodoë: That question does not arise from this allocation, Member.

Mr. Young SC: Are the nurses not paid by the Eastern Regional Health Authority?

Hon. Dr. Bodoë: The allocation here is very specific, Member, operational and outstanding trade payables.

Mr. Young SC: You are saying it is very clear, but there is no explanation provided. You have just told us it is operational expenses and?

Hon. Dr. Bodoë: And trade payables.

Mr. Young SC: Then, similarly, for 009/05, the SWRHA, \$54 million, any of that for the payment towards nurses?

Hon. Dr. Bodoë: Again, the question does not arise. It is for the Cancer Centre of Trinidad and Tobago, \$4.7 million. The breakdown there would be for utilities, medical supplies, janitorial supplies and security.

Mr. Young SC: The former Augustus Long Hospital has been converted into a cancer care centre, an oncology centre?

Hon. Dr. Bodoë: This was done under your Government –

Mr. Young SC: Tenure.

Hon. Dr. Bodoë:—Member, and the problem here that caused us to request this additional sum is that this was not budgeted for under your watch, Member. So we are just trying to bring our expenses up to date.

Mr. Young SC: I understand what you are saying but this is the second budget cycle for you all. But the Augustus Long Hospital, is it operationalized for cancer care? It is?

Hon. Dr. Bodoë: It is.

Mr. Young SC: Okay. So thank you.

Hon. Dr. Bodoë: It is being used.

Mr. Young SC: So that is for there?

Hon. Dr. Bodoë: It is being used.

Mr. Young SC: Okay. Thank you. Thank you, Minister. Okay. If we can now move along—and unfortunately, it is quite a lot. It is 24 of them. Under Sub-Head 04/009: Other Transfers; Sub-Item 13: Payment of the UDeCOTT. It appears to be a facility of

\$199.6 million for the—I assume that is the Arima Hospital. When was this loan taken out, and what is the tenure?

Hon. Dr. Bodoë: I will defer to my colleague, the Minister of Finance.

Mr. Young SC: Thank you.

Mr. Young SC: The first one, Minister of Finance, Sub-Item 13. The \$199.6—

Mr. Tancoo: The loan was taken out in 2018. The agreement was signed in 2018.

Mr. Young SC: Right. And the tenure?

Mr. Tancoo: Ten years, 2028.

Mr. Young SC: Ten years. The payments are semi-annual?

Mr. Tancoo: I do not have the breakdown of the payments.

Mr. Young SC: Of the payments. But this is for an interest payment of 2.3. You are giving a supplementation of 2.3 for that loan.

Mr. Tancoo: Correct.

Mr. Young SC: Is that going to be sufficient for the rest of the fiscal?

Mr. Tancoo: This will be sufficient to complete payments for the rest of the fiscal.

Mr. Young SC: And if it was since 2018, a 10-year loan, it would have been part of the programming at the Ministry of Finance and we would of known that that was a payment that was due, correct?

6.05 p.m.

Mr. Tancoo: Member, what we are doing today is supplementing to ensure that we meet the obligations that would have been taken out again by your government, and ensuring that we meet our financial obligations.

Mr. Young SC: And this is an obligation taken out by the PNM Government to build the Arima Hospital?

Mr. Tancoo: Yes, you built it and did not furnish it.

Mr. Young SC: And then Sub-Item 14, another interest payment, a UDeCOTT loan of \$99.6 million, Arima Hospital loan. When was that taken out?

Mr. Tancoo: Member, I would have to get all that information for you in writing.

Mr. Young SC: What is that? Sorry?

Mr. Tancoo: I will have to get that information for you in writing, it is very difficult to—

Mr. Young SC: Was it taken in the last fiscal?

Mr. Tancoo: No, it was not.

Mr. Young SC: So, again, we would have known that there was this \$12.9 million to be paid, and it was not provided for in October's budget?

Mr. Tancoo: That was the question, Member?

Mr. Young SC: Yeah.

Mr. Tancoo: Member, we would have known of several payments outstanding, and we are coming here today to supplement the payments for these loans. All of the loans and interest that you are referring to, we are here today to ensure that there is full supplementation for those loans.

Mr. Young SC: Thank you. And then Sub-Item 15: Interest Payment UDeCOTT, m-term financing, USD 35.6 million for the Point Fortin Hospital. When was this one taken out?

Mr. Tancoo: Same issue, Member. I would have to provide that for you in writing.

Mr. Young SC: When you are providing it, would you also provide the tenor of the loan?

Mr. Tancoo: Sure.

Mr. Young SC: And whether the payments on interest are semi-annual or annual?

Mr. Tancoo: Sure.

Mr. Young SC: Thank you. So, this almost \$7 million, this would be sufficient to cover the interest payment that needs to be made in this fiscal?

Mr. Tancoo: This is my understanding, yes.

Mr. Young SC: Sub-Item 18: Interest Payment UDeCOTT, \$127.5 million, construction cost of the new Sangre Grande Hospital. When was this one taken out?

Mr. Tancoo: Same response, Member, same response.

Mr. Young SC: You will provide, when it was taken out, whether it is semi-annual payments and the tenor?

Mr. Tancoo: Yes. Thank you.

Mr. Young SC: The \$3.2 million was not provided in the October budgeting exercise?

Mr. Tancoo: The \$3.2 million was provided in the budget for 2026.

Mr. Young SC: So it seems to be like a semi-annual payment because you have that, and now you are saying you need another 3.2 for this annual.

Mr. Tancoo: Correct.

Mr. Young SC: Sub-Item 19 and this one is of particular interest to me as the Member of Parliament for Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West, \$101.9 million for the redevelopment of the central block at Port of Spain General Hospital. When was this one taken out?

Mr. Tancoo: Same response.

Mr. Young SC: Okay. And now to the Ministers of Health, when is it that you all will be opening the central block?

Hon. Dr. Bodoë: Member, as you recall, there was a ceremonial opening of the central block giving the—

Hon. Members: [*Laughter*]

Mr. Young SC: Not for operational purposes, but, yes, as end of construction, but when will you all be operationalizing it and opening it?

Hon. Dr. Bodoë: Member, if I may complete my answer? There was some sort of opening by your Government, I believe, in March of 2025. When I, with my team, visited the central block, I believe in June of last year.

Mr. Young SC: You will what? Sorry?

Hon. Dr. Bodoë: I said when we did the site visit, it was far from complete.

Mr. Young SC: Right, so, when you are opening it?

Hon. Dr. Bodoë: So, we are working towards completion. One of the issues that we found is that, in this new facility, there was no connection catered for in terms of transporting and transferring patients from the Accident and Emergency in this new building, and that is something that we are working on.

Mr. Young SC: There was no facility to transfer in the same hospital from Accident and Emergency to other parts of the hospital?

Hon. Dr. Bodoë: I found that quite shocking myself, Member, when we did that site tour. So we are working with UDeCOTT at this point in time to get that facility —

Mr. Young SC: So, you do not have an opening date as yet? Because we were told it would be opened in June of this year.

Hon. Dr. Bodoë: That was our expectation, Member, but as I said, there are challenges that we have met, and we want to ensure that when the hospital is open, it is opened properly and fully functional.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Young SC: Sub-Item 20: Ansa Merchant Bank, an 11-year fixed-rate loan \$500 million, upsized \$750 million. This upsizing took place when?

Mr. Tancoo: Member, I will provide to you in writing —

Mr. Young SC: That information?

Mr. Tancoo: — the dates, the tenor —

Mr. Young SC: And this one is a different one, right? It is when it was upsized by the extra 250.

Mr. Tancoo: I will provide for you in writing the dates, the tenor, the upsizing, the purpose, the borrower, the maturity dates —

Mr. Young SC: Well, I have that part, but thank you. And when we look now, you are asking us to agree to a supplementation of \$19.125 million. Correct?

Mr. Tancoo: Correct.

Mr. Young SC: And a similar sum was provided in October. So it appears to be a semi-annual payment of a fixed sum. Why was it not provided for in October?

Mr. Tancoo: Member, I have responded to you for four or five other instances in the same way. The Government is committed to meeting its statutory obligations. We are here today to supplement the allocations that would have been made to ensure that all loans and interest payments, and this is true for every one of these loans here, all loans and interest payments are met on time and fully, as they are required to be met.

Mr. Young SC: Thank you. So, Minister, in an effort to try and short-circuit it, my

calculations and counting, it is 24 of these supplementations you are asking for, either for interest payments or principal payments under the Ministry of Health, totally \$386 million. The question is, why was that not provided for in your October budgeting exercise?

Mr. Tancoo: Noted.

Mr. Young SC: The answer is “noted”?

Mr. Tancoo: Noted.

Mr. Young SC: You will provide the answer in writing?

Mr. Tancoo: I am providing the material and the money to meet these obligations that you all took out to build hospitals without making provisions –

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Tancoo: – to furnish, equip, and to open hospitals that were not completed. This Government is meeting the obligations today and will continue to meet the obligations henceforth that you left behind.

Mr. Young SC: I am very glad that you are continuing to do so, and we take great pride in the building of the Arima Hospital, the Point Fortin Hospital –

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Tancoo: Which you did not furnish.

Mr. Young SC: – the central block and all of the hospitals.

Hon. Members: [*Continuous desk thumping*]

Mr. Tancoo: You did not finish, you did not furnish. Did not finish, did not furnish.

Mr. Young SC: The same children’s hospital you all opened just before the election that the rain washed out?

Hon. Members: [*Laughter and desk thumping*]

Mr. Hosein: If the Member goes to Couva, there is an operational hospital in Couva opened by the hon. Kamla Persad-Bissessar.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Chairman: Okay.

Mr. Young SC: That hospital saved lives during COVID including two of your Ministers.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Chairman: Okay.

Mr. Hosein: That we built and you all refused to open.

Hon. Members: [*Continuous desk thumping*]

Mr. Chairman: Let us—

Mr. Hosein: It took a pandemic for you all to open that hospital.

Mr. Scotland SC: So say thank you.

Mr. Chairman: Let us put the question.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Questions put and agreed to.

Head 28 be supplemented by the sum of \$499,978,970.

Head 28 varied by an increase in the sum of \$17,282,800.

Mr. Chairman: Minister of Health, thank you very much, and your staff. Thank you very much.

Head 30: Ministry of Labour, Small and Micro Enterprise Development. I am advised that the substantive Minister of Energy will fill in for the Minister of Labour, who, I understand, is out of the jurisdiction.

Head 30: Ministry of Labour, Small and Micro Enterprise Development, a supplementation of \$4,969,800 and a variation of \$6,808,600.

Mr. Chairman: Minister.

6.15 p.m.

Mr. Chairman: Minister.

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: The usual.

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: It is a pleasure to be in the position to speak to this matter this afternoon and address the Standing Finance Committee to discuss proposals for the supplementation and variation of appropriation for the fiscal year 2026 of the Ministry of

Labour, Small and Micro Enterprise Development.

Mr. Chairman, as stated, it is an honour to act as Minister of Labour, Small and Micro Enterprise Development in the absence of Sen. The Hon. Leroy Baptiste, who is currently out of the country attending the 114th Session of the International Labour Conference of the International Labour Organization. Mr. Chairman, it is also a distinguished pleasure, since 26 years ago, I first found myself as a Minister in the Ministry of Labour.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: Needless to add, Chairman, that this is also a big part of my initial academic training. Permit me to express my gratitude to my colleague, the Minister of Finance, and his team for their efforts in ensuring that Ministries are adequately funded to facilitate continued business.

Mr. Chairman, the Ministry plays a critical role in fulfilling Government's labour, employment and entrepreneurship commitments. It executes this role with an aim of maintaining industrial peace, facilitating decent work and improving the quality of life of all. The supplementation and variation of appropriation pertinent to the Ministry are required to meet the shortfall in payments of salaries and operational costs of the Ministry and the Cipriani College of Labour and Co-operative Studies up to September 30, 2026.

Mr. Chairman, it is proposed that the Ministry receive a supplementary provision of \$4,969,800 to meet the cost of salaries under short-term employment to the end of fiscal year 2026 and a shortfall in meeting the operational costs of the Cipriani College of Labour and Co-operatives Studies. The latter includes the cost of rental, janitorial services, and electricity to allow for the continued operation of the college, both at Valsayn and the Tobago campuses.

Additionally, a variation of appropriation under the recurrent expenditure of an increase of \$6,808,600 is deemed necessary to meet the shortfall in the allocation for personnel expenditure in salaries and cost of living allowance and Government's contribution to NIS up to the end of the current fiscal. This is a consequence of the

agreement reached between the Chief Personnel Officer and the Public Service Association of Trinidad and Tobago—

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Dr. Moonilal:—a proud agreement reached by the United National Congress Government to revise salaries and terms and conditions for the period 2014 to 16 and 2017 to 19.

Mr. Chairman, the Ministry of Labour, Small and Microenterprise Development continues to work towards the promotion of decent work for all, industrial peace, and entrepreneurship development. We look forward to a productive session and stand ready to receive questions from colleagues opposite. Thank you.

Question proposed: That Head 30 be supplemented by the sum of \$4,969,800 and also be varied by an increase in the sum of \$6,808,600

Mr. Chairman: Port of Spain South.

Mr. Scotland SC: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Hon. Minister, we see at Line Item Sub-Head 02/001/22, Short-term Employment, and there is an increase of \$2,668,000. Could you tell us if this supplementary provision is intended to fund new hires or existing short-term employees?

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: Existing short term.

Mr. Scotland SC: Beg your pardon?

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: Existing short-term employees.

Mr. Scotland SC: And for the existing short-term employees, how many of them are covered by this increase?

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: Chairman, I have taken note of the Member's question and we will be prepared to elaborate on Monday.

Mr. Scotland SC: All right. I see under Sub-Item Sub-Head 001/01, Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance, there is an increase of \$5,810,000. Could you tell us if back pay for these workers is included therein?

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: No.

Mr. Scotland SC: In that supplemental?

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: Answered already, Chairman.

Mr. Scotland SC: Pardon?

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: The answer is no.

Mr. Scotland SC: No, back pay is not included. Sorry, Mr. Chairman. And I will give way to one of my colleagues.

Mr. de Nobriga: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, through you to the Minister. Short-term Employment, 01, Sub-Item 22, under General Administration, \$2,668,000. Minister, can you tell us if any of these are new hires or if these are existing contracts?

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: The question, Members, you really need to pay attention, even to your colleagues. The question was asked and answered.

Mr. de Nobriga: I thought he had asked. Thank you very much.

Mr. Chairman: Okay.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: Yes.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: Under Cipriani College, which is 06/004/17, could you provide a breakdown of what part of the supplemental allocation would be used for salaries, supplies, and outstanding payments and the like?

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: We would put it on Monday and we would elaborate.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: And I would like to know if there is a subcategory with regard to the expected expenditure. Thank you very much.

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: Thank you.

Mr. Chairman: All right.

Questions put and agreed to.

Head 30 supplemented by the sum of \$4,969,800.

Head 30 varied by an increase in the sum of \$6,808,600.

Mr. Chairman: So we move now to the Ministry of Public Administration and Artificial Intelligence, Head 31. Thank you Minister and thank you staff.

6.25 p.m.

Head 31: Minister of Public Administration and Artificial Intelligence \$68,648,710

Mr. Chairman: I would now invite the Minister of Public Administration and Artificial Intelligence to make the usual very brief opening statement.

Sen. The Hon. Smith: Chairman, thank so much for the opportunity to speak once again to Members of this distinguish Chamber. The Ministry of Public Administration and Artificial Intelligence comes before the Committee today to provide full and transparent account of the supplementary funding required, contained within the mid-year review, and to outline the strategic importance of these allocations to continued delivery of the Government's digital transformation and artificial intelligence agenda.

As the lead Ministry responsible for a public sector modernization, digital government, artificial intelligence policy, information and communication technology development, and a citizen-centred service delivery Ministry, we remain focused on building a more connected, responsive, technologically-enabled state. Our vision is to create a modern public service that leverages innovation, technology, and data to improve the lives of our citizens, strengthen institutional effectiveness, and support national development. Our mission is to transform the way in which government operates and delivers services through digital innovation, strategic partnership, human capital development, and the adoption of emerging technologies that enhance efficiency, accessibility, and of course, public value.

As the Ministry charged with leading the adoption of artificial intelligence and digital transformation across Trinidad and Tobago, we recognize we are at the cusp of a profound technological shift. Artificial intelligence is transforming how governments operate, how businesses compete, and how citizens access opportunities.

Trinidad and Tobago, under the leadership of our hon. Prime Minister, Kamla Persad-Bissessar SC, Prime Minister of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, has demonstrated foresight by establishing a dedicated Ministry of Public Admin and AI. This reflects the recognition that AI is a national development issue and that touches education, productivity, economic growth and quality of life. The importance of this work is also reflected through the presidency of the Caribbean Telecommunications Union. I had the privilege of contributing to regional discussions on AI, digital public infrastructure, cybersecurity and digital transformation.

For this Ministry, Chairman, the objective is simple, technology must improve people's lives, and it must make government services more accessible, responsible and effective. It is about unlocking opportunities, equipping our workforce with future-ready skills, strengthening national competitiveness, and building a public sector capable of meeting the demands of rapidly changing world.

It is at this backdrop that the supplementary allocation before this Committee is being sought. They support infrastructure systems, programmes and human capital investments required to move Trinidad and Tobago from digital aspiration to digital leadership. So, Chairman, I thank you for the opportunity to speak and answer questions on behalf of the Ministry of Public Administration and AI, and welcome Members to make those comments.

Question proposed: That Head 31 be supplemented by the sum of \$68,648,710.

Mr. Chairman: Diego Martin West.

Mr. Des Vignes: Thank you very much, Chairman. Looking at Item 011/01 to the National Information and Communication Technology Company also known as iGovTT, we see an extra request of \$5.1 million. Can the Minister elaborate why the need for this expansion?

Sen. The Hon. Smith: Sure, Member. Thank you for the question. The reality is that the agency, iGovTT, over the last couple of years, the subvention has not been sufficient to

really advance the mandate of the Ministry. Given as well that the Ministry has now combined the Ministry of Public Administration and Artificial Intelligence, this supported expenditure will go towards things related to salary, as well as equipping the agency with the required human resource to really be the operational arm of the Ministry, and so this subvention supports that initiative.

Mr. Des Vignes: So does this include salary increases, or simply, more staff? What does it include?

Sen. The Hon. Smith: It includes a combination of things, Member. One of it will be staffing up of the agency in key roles that has been designated as important for the delivery of our mandate as the Ministry.

Mr. Des Vignes: What are some of these key roles?

Sen. The Hon. Smith: We are in the process, Member, of looking for a head of Finance and Accounts. We are also in the process of recruiting for a head of security assurance. We are also looking at a CEO, technical, as it relates to corporate communications, among other executive-led positions.

Mr. Des Vignes: Were these positions not filled before April, 2025?

Sen. The Hon. Smith: Strangely enough, some of them were filled. Others had been not filled for quite some time. The ones that are being filled, that were filled previously, those contracts would have expired, and so we now need to resource the agency with talents required.

Mr. Des Vignes: So, contracts expired, but not renewed. We now move on to Item 07, regarding the UDECOTT, TT \$496 million interest payment on a 10-year fixed interest rate loan, Government Campus Plaza fit-out due 2028. Given that this loan would have had a prior amortization schedule outlined, and terms outlined, how come this particular Item is now being budgeted for an extra \$3.828 million?

Sen. The Hon. Smith: Well, you quite rightly identified an amortization schedule, and the terms of that amortization schedule require that these subventions be made. Now, I

want you to take into consideration as well that the former, former Minister of Finance would have been the person at the helm of this undertaking. I also want you to acknowledge, and let the public record reflect, that this loan was taken outside of what we call the “debt servicing of the country”, and so it is not accurately reflected on our books, meaning that this loan was taken outside of what traditional debt will entail.

As a result of that, this particular loan does not impact our debt service ratio, and it is also a matter that persons have, over time, spoken to. In the Standing Finance Committee as well last year, this was also identified, and it is something that will be recurring for the next couple of years in the future.

Mr. Des Vignes: So if this Item is recurring, how come this Item was not budgeted for previously when the Minister in October presented the budget?

Sen. The Hon. Smith: As I mentioned prior, the payments are, one, principle payment, as well as interest payments, and so the incursion relates to the amortization schedule.

Mr. Des Vignes: I am not sure the Minister understands the question, but I will move on to the next Item.

Sen. The Hon. Smith: I understand the question, but is whether or not you understand the answer.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Des Vignes: Regarding amortization schedules, the explanation for that is very simple. We know what we are supposed to pay every month or every year for a loan—

Hon. Members: What is the question?

Mr. Des Vignes:—and then, hold on, it is a lead-up to a question, do not get antsy on that side.

Hon. Member: What is the question?

Mr. Des Vignes: It is something that is set from before. My question was simply, why was it not budgeted for, and why are we asking for additional funding?

Mr. Chairman: I think that question was asked three times, and answered three times.

Next question.

Sen. The Hon. Smith: Asked and answered, but colleague maybe you can also speak to your former, former Minister of Finance for that answer.

Mr. Chairman: Minister, I think you answered the answer three times. Diego Martin West, do you have another question?

Mr. Des Vignes: Yes. Let us move on to 09, in Development Programme. We have \$5 million, establishment of a tier 4 data centre to strengthen the digital infrastructure. Not previously budgeted for, but when can we expect this tier 4 data centre to come on line?

Sen. The Hon. Smith: Thank you for the question. This one, though it was not mentioned prior, this tier 4 data center is actually part of a larger digital transformation by the Government. It is supported by a number of multilateral organizations and we are now putting things in place to materialize this particular vision. It is something that we can all be proud of, now and in the near future, as citizens of Trinidad.

6.35 p.m.

Mr. Chairman: Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West.

Mr. Young SC: Thank you very much. Building on the answer to that question, this Tier 4 data centre was part of a larger vision that was taken under the Cabinet of the previous administration. And we now ask with respect to 018, who is managing the procurement of the construction and outfitting of this centre?

Sen. The Hon. Smith: Member, thank you for the question. I just want to also, for the record, identify that many projects were undertaken by the former administration. Many of them remain uncompleted, unfinished, and left in a derelict position. So while that may be true, we are advancing the policy of our Government, and we believe that in order for us to advance our digitization priorities, the data centre is something that certainly can achieve that.

Mr. Young SC: So, will you answer the question now? So, who is managing the procurement of the construction and outfitting of this?

Sen. The Hon. Smith: So Member, thank you for your question. The management and procurement are being done by iGovTT.

Mr. Young SC: iGovTT is managing the construction?

Sen. The Hon. Smith: iGovTT is managing the process.

Mr. Young SC: Have they gone out for procurement as yet?

Sen. The Hon. Smith: No, no one has gone out for procurement at the moment, Member.

Mr. Young SC: Where is it intended to construct this Tier 4 data centre?

Sen. The Hon. Smith: At the moment, we have identified a number of locations, but the one that we are leaning towards is in Phoenix Park.

Mr. Young SC: There are just under three months left in the fiscal. You have not commenced procurement. You have not found a site as yet. How are you going to spend \$20 million in three months, where you have no site, and you have not commenced procurement? Is it that you intend to breach the procurement and the standalone procedures?

Mr. Chairman: No, come on, that is an improper question.

Mr. Young SC: Is it? Okay.

Mr. Chairman: It is an improper question.

Mr. Young SC: Is it that you intend to spend this \$20 million that you are asking taxpayers to give you, where you have not identified a site nor begun a procurement cycle?

Sen. The Hon. Smith: Member, thank you for the question, but I would say that you have a very detailed imagination in terms of referencing such scandalous types of activity. That is not within the remit of this current government. We do not behave in that manner.

Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Young SC: So you should have a word with the people at Landmark. Listen, so is it that you intend to spend the \$20 million in the next three months?

Sen. The Hon. Smith: In addition, Member, you mentioned that a location has not been identified. I think I mentioned in my statement that a number of locations have been identified. The ones that we are leaning towards, which can accommodate the data centre, are in Phoenix Park. So please do not misquote me. In addition to that—

Mr. Young SC: I am not misquoting you; I am asking a question. There is very little to quote.

Sen. The Hon. Smith: Member, you misquoted me. I just wanted to correct the record. In addition to that, procurement will be done within the ambit of the Government in the way that has usually been done and conducted with transparency and accountability.

Mr. Young SC: Procurement will be done within the ambit of the Government. The Government is not the law. What I would suggest you do is procure in accordance with the legislation, which is the public procurement and exposition of state lands

Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Chairman: San Fernando East.

Mr. Young SC: No further questions for the artificial intelligence.

Members: [*Laughter*]

Mr. Chairman: San Fernando East.

Mr. Manning: Yes, thank you. For the Minister: This Tier 4 data centre is strictly for State use, or will there be aspects leased to the general public or private sector?

Sen. The Hon. Smith: Member, if you are referring to possible revenue generation opportunities on a diversification strategy entrenched in ICT development, that is a consideration being undertaken by the Government.

Mr. Manning: Okay. Well, thank goodness Minister Bacchus left all of his proposals for you to follow.

Mr. Chairman: San Fernando East, do you have a question or not?

Question put and agreed to.

Head 31 supplemented by the sum of \$68,648,710.

Mr. Chairman: Minister, thank you and thank your staff. We apologize for the delay.

Mr. Chairman: Laventille East/Morvant—I am sorry.

Head 34: Ministry of Transport and Civil Aviation, a supplementation of \$21,100,000 and a variation of \$24,900,000.

Questions proposed: That Head 34 be supplemented by the sum of \$21,100,000 and varied by the sum of \$24,900,000.

Mr. Chairman: Laventille East/Morvant.

Mr. Birchwood: Thank you, Chair.

Member: [*Inaudible*]

Mr. Birchwood: Statement.

Member: The Minister has to give a statement.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, I just got distracted by my Clerk.

Sen. The Hon. Zakour: Good evening, Mr. Chairman, Members of the Committee, and members of the viewing and listening public. Thank you for the opportunity to appear before the Standing Finance Committee in support of the Ministry of Transport and Civil Aviation's proposed supplementation for fiscal year 2026 and to provide any information or clarification required by Members.

Transportation remains a critical enabler of economic growth, social development, public safety, and national connectivity. The Ministry, therefore, plays a critical role in ensuring that citizens and businesses have access to safe, reliable, efficient, and modern transport services throughout Trinidad and Tobago. The Ministry's mandate extends beyond the administration of transport services. It includes the development of policy and regulatory frameworks, traffic management, road safety initiatives, civil aviation oversight, public transportation systems, licensing and regulatory functions, and the management and coordination of transportation infrastructure that supports national development.

The Ministry exercises oversight responsibility for several key state enterprises and

statutory bodies, namely the Transport Board, the Public Transport Service Corporation, the Vehicle Management Corporation of Trinidad and Tobago, the Airports Authority of Trinidad and Tobago, the National Helicopter Services Limited, the Trinidad and Tobago Civil Aviation Authority, and now, Caribbean Airlines. Mr. Chairman, upon assuming office, the Ministry inherited a number of long-standing operational, administrative, and financial challenges across the transport sector. Many critical matters were left unresolved, including outstanding obligations, staffing deficiencies, ageing infrastructure, and service delivery issues that required immediate intervention to ensure continuity of operations and the maintenance of essential services.

The supplementation now before this Committee is therefore largely driven by the need to address these inherited obligations, meet outstanding commitments, strengthen staffing capacity, and ensure that the Ministry can continue to deliver services upon which the travelling public relies daily. The variation will allow the Ministry to redirect resources to areas of greatest operational need and priority while maintaining prudent financial management and ensuring value for public expenditure.

In closing, Mr. Chairman, I wish to assure Members that the Ministry remains committed to utilizing public resources in a responsible, transparent, and accountable manner. We are focused not only on addressing the challenges inherited from the previous administration but also modernizing the transport sector, improving service delivery, strengthening accountability, and delivering meaningful results for the people of Trinidad and Tobago. Mr. Chairman, I thank you.

6.45 p.m.

Madam Deputy Chairman: Laventille East/Morvant.

Mr. Birchwood: Thank you, Chair. Head 34, Sub-Head 02: Item 001; Sub-Item 22. Through you Chair, to the Minister. I am seeing this line Item, Short-term Employment. There is an increase of a little over \$3 million. Can the Minister elaborate on if these positions were already in the system, or if they are new positions?

Sen. The Hon. Zakour: Member, this is for the continued engagement of 49 existing persons, and to engage 25 new persons.

Mr. Birchwood: Twenty five new persons, okay.

Sen. The Hon. Zakour: Yes, that is correct.

Mr. Birchwood: These 25 new persons, can you elaborate on the onboarding processes?

Sen. The Hon. Zakour: Yes, we will be using the same mechanism that has been used in the past, including under the previous administration by a pool of CVs at the Ministry. There were filled areas in General Administration; Traffic Warden Division; Legal Services Unit; Communications Unit; ICT Unit; Records Management and the Procurement Unit, Member.

Mr. Birchwood: Thank you. The contract end dates, Minister, did it go beyond the end of the financial period?

Sen. The Hon. Zakour: Yes, these will be three and six months short-term Member.

Mr. Birchwood: Okay, thank you. Another line Item, through you Chair, Head 34: Sub-Head 04: Item 009; Sub-Item 07: Traffic Enforcement Centre Unit. I am seeing an increase of a little over \$7 million. Can the Minister elaborate on the purpose for?

Sen. The Hon. Zakour: Traffic Enforcement Unit is responsible for the administration under the Motor Vehicle and Road Traffic Act. The original allocation was used to pay outstanding invoices dating back to 2024. This money will be used to pay our service providers – TSTT, TTPOST, the U-Turn service provider.

Mr. Birchwood: Okay. Thank you very much.

Sen. The Hon. Zakour: Sorry, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: Diego Martin West.

Mr. Des Vignes: Thank you very much, Chair. 01: Personnel Expenditure, 001: General Administration, 01: Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance. This figure has tripled in terms of the revision. Is it that the Ministry intends to recruit new staff? Are there positions that were on the register that were unfilled? What is the explanation for this tripling of the figure?

Sen. The Hon. Zakour: Salaries and Allowances for 123 public officers. It also includes back pay for the period 2014–2016 and 2017–2019. Concerning the staffing, 44 filled, 77 vacant, vacant with bodies 60 and vacant without bodies 17.

Mr. Des Vignes: Thank you very much, Minister. I would like to move on to 04: Current Transfers and Subsidies. Transfers to State Enterprises where 02: NIPDEC Interest Payment, on TT \$339 million; Fixed Rate Bond Motor Vehicle. We see a 100 per cent increase in the figure. What is the reason for that increase?

Sen. The Hon. Zakour: This was a loan that was approved by Cabinet Minute 1878 on October 10th 2024. This was when the Cabinet refinanced \$5.5 billion to meet physical 2025. You could speak more about that to the former, former Minister of Finance.

Mr. Des Vignes: Understood, Minister, thank you for your answer. I think what you meant to say is “fiscal” and not “physical”, by the way. Minister, I would like to go a little more into this figure, given that we knew this was taken out in 2023/2024. Why was it not budgeted for 2025/2026 in said period?

Sen. The Hon. Zakour: Firstly, we had to wait for the bond to mature in 2025. This was a bond that was refinanced, that was taken out many years before for several purposes and key projects, Member.

Mr. Des Vignes: But we knew it was coming due, so why was it not budgeted? – that is the question.

Mr. Chairman: I think you have asked that.

Sen. The Hon. Zakour: The Minister of Finance did the best he could, given what he inherited from your [*Inaudible*]

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Des Vignes: So, what the Minister is essentially saying is that the Minister of Finance underbudgeted the figure.

Mr. Chairman: Alright.

Mr. Des Vignes: Thank you.

Mr. Chairman: Minister, that opinion is not a question. You have a question. Diego Martin/North East.

Mr. Imbert: With respect to Head 34. Sub-Head 04: Item 009/07. The increase in allocation of \$7.1 million. Is any of this for collaboration with the TTPS, in terms of sharing information?

Sen. The Hon. Zakour: [*Inaudible*] House, when I would have answered this question, this is for our service providers.

Mr. Imbert: That is fine.

Sen. The Hon. Zakour: With traffic enforcement –

Mr. Imbert: Do any of those service providers provide a service which allows real-time sharing of information with the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service?

Sen. The Hon. Zakour: Well Sir, the Traffic Enforcement Unit oversees the fixed penalty and warning system. I am trying to understand your question, Sir.

Mr. Imbert: Okay. Are you familiar with the U-Turn Software Management System?

Sen. The Hon. Zakour: I am, Sir.

Mr. Imbert: Fine. Are you aware that it allows data to be shared in real-time with the TTPS?

Sen. The Hon. Zakour: I am aware, Sir.

Mr. Imbert: Fine. So, any of this is for that?

Sen. The Hon. Zakour: No, Sir. These are our service providers, as I mentioned, TTPOST, TSTT, the U-Turn system provider, and others.

Mr. Imbert: You just said no. I asked you if it is for the U-Turn. Why you said no?

Sen. The Hon. Zakour: Yes, but the U-Turn is a company that provides service. I am trying to understand, Member.

Mr. Imbert: All I am asking is, any part of the \$7,144,424 is to allow that software management system that shares data with the TTPS to continue for the rest of the fiscal?

Sen. The Hon. Zakour: If you are trying to ask if anyone will see the ticket you got a few years ago, the answer is no.

Mr. Chairman: Alright.

Sen. The Hon. Zakour: I am trying to understand where you are getting at.

Mr. Imbert: I am certainly not trying to ask that.

Mr. Chairman: Alright.

Mr. Imbert: Certainly not trying to ask that. I am asking whether any part of this \$7,144,424 is to continue the operations of the software management system, which shares data in real-time with the police?

Sen. The Hon. Zakour: I do not get involved in the business of these companies. There will be some level of sharing between the two entities.

Mr. Imbert: What?

Sen. The Hon. Zakour: But I am trying to understand why you have so much interest in this?

Mr. Imbert: But you are not answering the question, Minister. How could you say, as Minister of Transport, you do not get involved? I am talking about a unit within your Ministry, and you say you are not involved.

Sen. The Hon. Zakour: No, I do not get involved like you.

Mr. Chairman: Minister, Member, I think we will –

Mr. Imbert: No, but hold on, I will explain why I am asking the question.

Mr. Chairman: No, no. I think you have exhausted the question.

Mr. Imbert: No, I have not Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: I am of the view, you have.

Mr. Imbert: I have not, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: Arouca/Lopinot, ask your question.

Mr. Imbert: This is not democracy.

Hon. Members: [*Laughter*]

Mr. Chairman: You really do not want me to respond to that.

Mr. Imbert: This is not democracy.

Mr. Gonzales: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Chairman: You really do not want me to respond to that.

Mr. Gonzales: Mr. Chair, to the Minister.

Mr. Chairman: Arouca/Lopinot.

Mr. Gonzales: Minister, how much is owed to TSTT and how much is owed to TTPOST?

Sen. The Hon. Zakour: Currently, owed TTPOST, Member, is a little over \$5 million. TSTT a little under \$2 million.

Mr. Gonzales: So, is 5 million to TSTT?

Sen. The Hon. Zakour: Yes, as you know TTPOST provides the citation notices.

Mr. Gonzales: Sorry, I did not get it. So, how much is owed to TSTT?

Sen. The Hon. Zakour: I am sorry, Sir, Member.

Mr. Gonzales: How much is owed to TSTT?

Sen. The Hon. Zakour: Currently, to TSTT a little over 1.9 million, Member.

Mr. Gonzales: And TTPOST?

Sen. The Hon. Zakour: A little over 5 million.

Mr. Gonzales: So, \$5 million to TSTT –

Sen. The Hon. Zakour: Since 2024.

Mr. Gonzales: 5 million to TTPOST. So, 1.5 million?

Sen. The Hon. Zakour: Yes.

Mr. Chairman: 1.9; my definition is 1.9 to TSTT, 5 point something to TTPOST.

6.55 p.m.

Mr. Gonzales: So the increased allocation would be sufficient for you to meet all outstanding obligations by your service provider towards the end of this year?

Sen. The Hon. Zakour: Yes. I am very appreciative to the hon. Minister of Finance for this supplemental, yes.

Mr. Gonzales: So the answer is, yes?

Sen. The Hon. Zakour: Yes.

Mr. Gonzales: Okay.

Sen. The Hon. Zakour: At this time.

Mr. Gonzales: Is it the UTurn System that you referred to a short while ago, rightly so, does it assist the Ministry of Transport and Civil Aviation? The UTurn System that you referred to, rightly, a short while ago, does it assist in tracking criminals, like the 1 per cent, who are involved in drug trafficking as well?

Hon. Members: [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Chairman: If you are going to answer a question, ask a question. You introduced invective into your question and then you complain what you are getting – [*Inaudible*]

Mr. Gonzales: I just want to know if the system does that.

Mr. Chairman: And the simple question is whether the software tracks criminals.

Mr. Gonzales: No problem. Thank you.

Mr. Chairman: Right? Minister.

Sen. The Hon. Zakour: I will not answer that line of questioning, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you. Okay. I propose to put the questions.

Questions put and agreed to.

Head 34 be supplemented by the sum of \$21,100,000.

Mr. Imbert: [*Laughter*]

Mr. Chairman: Diego Martin North/East, your laughing is disturbing me.

Hon. Members: [*Laughter*]

Head 34 varied by an increase in the sum of \$24,900,000.

Mr. Chairman: Head 37: Integrity Commission. Minister, thank you, thank your staff very much.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Head 37: Integrity Commission, \$1,250,000.

Mr. Chairman: I will now invite the Minister of Finance to make the usual very brief opening statement.

Hon. Tancoo: Thank you very much, Chair. Chair, the Integrity Commission is a constitutional body created by sections 138 and 139 of the Constitution of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, and established by section 4 of the Integrity in Public Life Act.

Section 4 also provides for the membership of the Commission, that is to say, a Chairman, a Deputy Chairman, and three other members. The core functions of the Commission include ensuring compliance with the Integrity in Public Life Act, investigating breaches of the Act and allegations of corruption, educating the public and fostering a culture of integrity.

The supplementary funding for fiscal 2026 that is required is as follows. Under 02/001/22: Short-term Employment, \$1.25 million is being requested to supplement the provision under the Sub-Item, Short-term Employment, in order to retain contract officers until the terms and conditions of their renewed employment are finalized.

The representative of the Integrity Commission is here, and we are willing to engage conversations and questions.

Question proposed: That Head 37 be supplemented by the sum of \$1,250,000.

Mr. Chairman: Diego Martin West North/East.

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Chairman, “yuh look all about, yuh ent look at me.”

Mr. Chairman: [*Inaudible*]

Mr. Imbert: But it is a fact, you did not look at me. Head 37; Sub-Head 02; Item 001; Sub-Item 22, what is the nature of the employment in terms of the positions, the work that these people will be doing, and so on, this \$1.25 million for Short-term Employment?

Hon. Tancoo: All right. So I am advised by the technical staff that this is really short-term employment across the Integrity Commission, and they are now apparently working on getting to contract positions, and therefore this sum is being asked to carry them through until contract positions have been finalized.

Mr. Imbert: I got all that, but what is the nature of the work of the persons who will be paid under this supplementation? What are they doing?

Hon. Tancoo: You are asking if their work is investigative or administrative? Is that the direction?

Mr. Imbert: All. I want to know everything.

Hon. Tancoo: Well, then you just answered the question. Across the spectrum of the Integrity Commission, at every level, the support staff works, and therefore they are involved in all aspects of the work of the Integrity Commission.

Mr. Young SC: Why are they short term?

Mr. Imbert: Yes, why are they short term?

Hon. Tancoo: As I tried to explain earlier, they are short term because they are awaiting finalization of the contracts.

Mr. Imbert: Why are they – okay. Who is responsible for converting the contracts from short term to long term?

Hon. Tancoo: I am advised that they are awaiting confirmation from the Cabinet before we can have movements towards the contract employment.

Mr. Imbert: I see.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 37 supplemented by the sum of \$1,250,000.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much, and, Madam Registrar, thank you very much as well.

Head 39: Ministry of Public Utilities, a supplementation of \$513,641,000 and a variation for an increase in the sum of \$8,231,000.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, might I now invite you to make your short statement.

Hon. Padarath: Thank you most kindly, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, for fiscal year 2026, the Ministry of Public Utilities has received a total of \$521,872,000 in additional allocation to support its ongoing work. Mr. Chairman, in coming into office, I met the Ministry of Public Utilities with mounting debt; inefficiency in the system; concentration on a select few contractors across the state enterprises and companies under the purview of the Ministry of Public Utilities; advanced payments that are now under investigation that cannot be substantiated with work done; wastage, stalled projects and nepotism.

While the challenges facing the public utilities sector did not arise overnight and cannot be resolved immediately, this Government remains committed to taking the

necessary steps to improve the delivery of essential services to the people of Trinidad and Tobago. We recognize that there are longstanding issues which require sustained attention and careful management, but, however, it requires the political will.

In one short year, Mr. Speaker, in being in office, the Ministry of Public Utilities has revolutionized the utilities sector, having fixed over 28,000 street lights across the length and breadth of this country –

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Padarath:—clearing a backlog of over 2,500 connections, both in the water and in the electricity sector, and making substantial and sustainable plans and progress with respect to projects across the sector.

7.05 p.m.

Mr. Chairman, this Government remains firmly committed to restoring confidence in the public utilities sector and ensuring that the people of Trinidad and Tobago receive the reliable services they deserve. We have chosen action over excuse, solutions over rhetoric, and accountability over complacency. The welcomed additional allocation of \$521.872million will support the Ministry and its agencies in meeting critical operational and administrative requirements, thereby strengthening their capacity to carry out their mandates effectively.

I wish to take this opportunity to place on record my sincere appreciation to the dedicated staff at the Ministry of Public Utilities and our State agencies for their continued support and commitment. I would also like to take the opportunity to thank my colleagues in the Ministry, who join me in terms of the leadership, the Member for La Brea, and the Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Padarath: Mr. Chair, we now welcome the questions of the Committee and stand ready to account for how the funds allocated to the Ministry of Public Utilities will be used to fulfil our mandate.

Mr. Chairman: Arouca/Lopinot.

Mr. Gonzales: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. To the Minister, Head 39, Item 001; Sub-Item 01: Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance. Minister, I see you have an increased allocation of \$8.2 million. Can you give an explanation for that increase?

Hon. Padarath: Certainly, Member. The increase in salaries and COLA with effect January 2026, these are the revised salary and COLA regarding the Ministry of Finance Circular No. 8, dated the 05/12/2025, and arrears of increments and acting allowances, shortfall, also, as a result of a lump sum paid in December 2025. This allocation will be sufficient to meet the demands of this fiscal year. The total number of established positions is 232. The total number of officers who received the lump sum in December 2025, is 152. The number of officers who met the criteria for the period 2014 – 2025 and substantive positions were on the establishment at the Ministry of Public Utilities.

I would further advise, hon. Member, that the total amount of the lump sum paid was \$4,008,250. It represents an increase in salary per month covered by the Ministry of Public Utilities, totalling \$206,461. Further, it will also represent an increase in NIS contributions by the Government through the Ministry of Public Utilities in the sum of \$41,018.

Mr. Gonzales: Member, thank you very much. Can you indicate whether that \$8.2 million would also be utilized for the payment of any outstanding arrears in back pay for the officers that you have just identified?

Hon. Padarath: Yes.

Mr. Gonzales: How much of it?

Hon. Padarath: We would – [*Minister consults technocrat*] – sorry, hon. Member. This does not represent any outstanding back pay. My apologies.

Mr. Gonzales: Okay. Mr. Chair?

Mr. Chairman: Yes. Go ahead.

Mr. Gonzales: Yes. So Item 001; Sub-Item 42: Street Lighting, can you indicate whether that is the normal monthly amount that the Ministry of Public Utilities would remit to

T&TEC as part of the bills for the lighting of streets and parks?

Hon. Padarath: Yes, hon. Member.

Mr. Gonzales: So, it is not for the installation of new lights or lights in parks and recreation spaces?

Hon. Padarath: Correct.

Mr. Gonzales: It is not for that.

Hon. Padarath: It is not for.

Mr. Gonzales: Alright. The increased amount of \$87million, is it that the originally allocated sum of \$108 million was not sufficient to meet what was required toward the end of this financial year?

Hon. Padarath: Hon. Member, I will be able to detail a breakdown of the allocation in the last financial year and how we arrived at that.

Mr. Gonzales: Yeah.

Hon. Padarath: The expenditure, to date, was \$96,000,849. These were bills for the period November2024 to September2025, just to give you some context. The bills on hand are \$59,608,210. This covers the bills for the period October2025 to March2026. That provides a total of \$156,457,529. The balance of the provision is \$39,505,471, to be utilized for the period April2026 to the end of the fiscal year.

Mr. Chairman: Port of Spain North.

Mr. Young SC: Thank you very much. Minister, I was happy to see this additional sum under the Sub-Item 42 for street lighting. Is it going to give you additional capacity to get more street lighting done toward the end of this fiscal?

Hon. Padarath: Certainly. Hon. Member, what has been happening at T&TEC is that there has been an aggressive approach in terms of, particularly, highways and byways. We did an audit of those. There were a number of complaints. We have been able to compile that information over the last couple months. Therefore, strategically, what they are now doing is deploying the same resources under your administration. There are new additional contractors in terms of outsourcing the work, but rather, deploying

strategically, some of the same resources, in-house work, to get a lot more done, more efficiently.

Mr. Young SC: Thank you very much, Minister. Might I ask that you all pay some particular attention exactly to the first Item that you described, the highways, in particular, coming along the Solomon Hochoy Highway and even along the Foreshore highway, the Diego Martin Highway. There is a predominance of long stretches that have, I assume, exceeded their life or whatever it is.

Hon. Padarath: I am happy you raised the issue of exceeding their life, in that, a number of the street lights, particularly on the highways, as you noticed, they are changing them out to the LED. So, that is in the works. But thank you for your recommendation.

Mr. Young SC: Last one, have you all looked at the utilization—I am seeing more and more use of it in some of our neighbouring islands—of the solar street lighting, which would save us tremendously as well, on our gas consumption?

Hon. Padarath: Yes. Hon. Member, you would recall that this is something that was looked at formerly. We had a severe challenge with respect to the theft of solar street lights in the past and other infrastructure associated with solar power. But, yes, it is something that we are looking at but it also seems to attract a lot of vandalism. Therefore, we are looking to see what may be the best approach in terms of integrating solar power back onto highway grid in particular.

Mr. Young SC: Thank you.

Mr. Chairman: Arouca/Lopinot.

Mr. Gonzales: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Minister, Sub-Item 08: Refunds to T&TEC—Re-Rebate on Electricity Bills. I note an increase of \$38.875 million. Can you explain why there was the need to increase by this amount?

Hon. Padarath: Certainly. Hon. Member, there are two issues that I wish to raise in relation to the question that you have asked, and to provide you with some context, as to how we arrived at this. First, the 35 per cent rebate programme provides a 35 per cent rebate to T&TEC's residential customers on bills that are \$300 or lower, as you are aware,

inclusive of the customer total kilowatt consumption charge for the bi-monthly period, the bi-monthly customer charge of \$6 and the VAT of 12.5 per cent. The programme is aimed at encouraging customers to reduce their electricity consumption.

As you know, the rebate is not transferable from one account to another and cannot be used to liquidate arrears. The expenditure, to date was \$33 000769.32, average monthly billing is about 5.8million. So, this will help to take us onto the end of this fiscal year, in terms of assistance that this programme provides with respect to the rebates to T&TEC.

However, we also were able to vire to Vote 24: CEPEP, which fell under the Ministry of Public Utilities, for the period January2026 to April2026, to meet the constraints that were being experienced in terms of the transition of the company, the CEPEP Company, that is. So that would have accounted for how we would arrived at this situation in terms of the funds being vired to CEPEP, but also to meet the demands that we will have to take us to the end of this fiscal year through this rebate programme.

7.15 p.m.

Mr. Gonzales: Mr. Chair?

Mr. Chairman: Yes.

Mr. Gonzales: Minister, I am happy that you made reference to Sub-Item 24, the Community-Based Environmental Protection and Enhancement Programme, (CEPEP) and I have observed that you have an increase of \$3 million. Can you indicate what that \$3 million is to do? Because my understanding is, based on public pronouncement on the part of the Government, is that a decision has been taken to wind up the company. So what outstanding obligations do you have that would require this additional expenditure of \$3 million?

Hon. Padarath: Certainly, Member. Member, despite the programme being closed by this administration, one of the challenges that we have had is the transition in terms of identifying the funding for it, and therefore, the administrative component of the umbrella organization of the company is still in the phase of wrapping up. Therefore, you still have a number of employees that are there and you still have some operational

expenses. So this \$3 million is expected to take us to end of fiscal and also to assist us in the operations in terms of the wrapping up. As you are aware, the CEPEP company has several assets and therefore it is not just a simple situation of wrapping up the company. There is going through it transition.

Mr. Gonzales: How many employees are there within the organisation?

Hon. Padarath: I am advised that the administrative component of CEPEP, the umbrella organization, they have retained eight members of staff.

Mr. Gonzales: Eight members of staff? Do you plan to bring an end to these employment engagements at the end of this fiscal year?

Hon. Padarath: This would have to be determined based on the work that is before the company. So therefore it would be premature of me to make a pronouncement on that issue.

Mr. Gonzales: Okay. I observe, Member – I am at Sub-Item 04 – an increase in allocation to TTPOST by \$7 million. Is it that the \$62 million that was allocated in subvention to TTPOST is not sufficient for TTPOST operations towards the end of this fiscal year?

Hon. Padarath: Member, this allocation has to do with the payment of Salaries and COLA and as an experienced Member who has served in Government before, you understand how the budgetary process operates. So I think that is rather self-explanatory.

Mr. Gonzales: So the \$7 million that your Ministry is getting that will be allocated for TTPOST, the question is, is that \$7million going toward ensuring the full operation of TTPOST towards the end of this financial year?

Hon. Padarath: Yes.

Mr. Gonzales: That is for the payment of salaries –

Hon. Padarath: Correct.

Mr. Gonzales: – and operational expenses?

Hon. Padarath: Payment of Salaries and COLA to the end of the fiscal.

Mr. Gonzales: Okay. Item 004; Sub-Item 51: Water and Sewerage Authority. Member,

I observe that you are getting an increased allocation of \$375 million. Can you indicate what this massive—

Mr. Young SC: Twiggy.

Mr. Gonzales: [*Laughter*]—allocation is for?

Mr. Young SC: [*Inaudible*]

Mr. Gonzales: [*Laughter*] I am sure, Member, that \$375 million is not for Twiggy.

Hon. Padarath: You will also recall, Member, in previous incarnations, that there were severe cuts both under yourself and the Member for Diego Martin North/East, in critical areas of material and supplies, et cetera, which resulted in massive underperformance at WASA's facilities that resulted in large parts of the country, particularly in south and central, that went without water for weeks and in some instances, months.

Mr. Gonzales: Not true.

Hon. Padarath: Mr. Chairman, this allocation for WASA would allow for personnel expenditure at WASA to cover personnel expenditures I have mentioned before, as well as goods and services, heavy equipment rental, contract employment, traveling and subsistence, as well as current transfers to loans that were accrued to WASA under the former administration.

Mr. Young SC: Nothing for communication?

Mr. Gonzales: Minister, can you indicate how many contract employees will this allocation be utilised for, for the payment of the salaries?

Hon. Padarath: Member, I am advised that it will impact on of 2,573 contract employees.

Mr. Gonzales: How many short-term employees?

Hon. Padarath: 576.

Mr. Gonzales: Okay. How many of those short-term employees were employed within this current financial year?

Hon. Padarath: 551.

Mr. Gonzales: 551 short-term employees were employed within this—

Hon. Padarath: For this fiscal year.

Mr. Gonzales: Fiscal year. Yes. Can you provide us, not now, because it is quite a lot, 551 employees, a list of the names of those employees, the positions that they all hold as well as their respective salaries?

Hon. Padarath: Member, I think you would recall in your last incarnation while serving as Minister of Public Utilities, you received several similar requests, both from myself and other members of the public and the answer that was forthcoming at that time, is the same answer I will give to you, which is, that information would have to be requested. But obviously, because of the impact of several pieces of legislation, you would also have to get the concurrence and the permission of employees to release their names and salaries and personal data information. So at this point in time, I can share with you that there are 551 contract employees at WASA on short-term contract.

Mr. Gonzales: When are those contracts coming to an end?

Hon. Padarath: Many of them came in at various times, I am advised and therefore it would be both within this fiscal and going into the next one because some of them may have started as early as today or yesterday.

Mr. Gonzales: How many of them?

Hon. Padarath: We would find out from WASA, but that information I am sure in the debate, I can speak to that.

Mr. Gonzales: Can you say within that category of short-term employment under this category, how many are three-month contracts, six-month contracts, 12-month contracts?

Hon. Padarath: I am sure in the debate I will speak to those issues.

7.25 p.m.

Mr. Gonzales: So, you do not have the information right now?

Hon. Padarath: I am sure in the debate, I will speak to those issues.

Mr. Gonzales: I am just asking. You do not have the information now to provide —

Hon. Padarath: I am sure in the debate, Member, I will speak to those issues.

Mr. Chairman: I think that has been asked and answered.

Mr. Gonzales: [*Inaudible*]

Mr. Chairman: Asked and answered.

Hon. Members: [*Interruption*]

Hon. Members: [*Laughter*]

Hon. Padarath: I may also speak to some issues about how some people ended up in WASA that are related to Members of the Opposition, including siblings, parents, brothers and sisters, and close friends. So, I may give a very comprehensive statement that may —

Mr. Gonzales: Make it very, very — [*Inaudible*]

Hon. Padarath: — provide all of the information that you are looking for and more.

Mr. Gonzales: And whilst you are at that, Minister, can you also provide the qualifications of all of those persons who are employed on short-term contracts in the organization?

Hon. Padarath: I will speak to all of these issues —

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Padarath: — even those who became members of WASA's establishment via a phone call from a Minister of Government saying, "Put them on the payroll."

Mr. Gonzales: Okay.

Hon. Members: "Ohhh."

Hon. Padarath: Because that is their brother or sister.

Mr. Gonzales: Very good, very nice.

Mr. Chairman: That is it?

Mr. Gonzales: Yeah, that is it.

Mr. Chairman: Okay.

Mr. Gonzales: You have anything for MTS here under this?

Questions put and agreed to.

Head 39 supplemented by the sum of \$513,641,000.

Head 39 varied by an increase in the sum of \$8,231,000.

Mr. Chairman: Moving right along. We go now to the Ministry of Energy and Energy

Industries, Head 40.

Head 40: Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries, a supplementation of \$454 million.

Mr. Chairman: I now invite the Minister of Energy and Energy Industries to make the usual brief opening statement.

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I thank you for the opportunity to address this Committee on the supplemental funding requirements under the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries. I am joined, of course, by the very distinguished Member of Parliament for Point Fortin and Minister in the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries, the hon. Ernesto Kesar, Permanent Secretary, Ms. Toolsie, and other officials of the Ministry.

Mr. Chairman, this is necessary to facilitate payments for the subsidy as it relates to the sale of petroleum products. We are all aware of the importance of the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries to the economic well-being and the economic future of Trinidad and Tobago, which has, of course, great consequences for our society. We have spoken at length on the importance of this Ministry, and within recent times, we have spoken at length on our achievements over the last year or so. This evening, Mr. Chairman, in these few minutes, I would just like to indicate that I take this opportunity to deliver landmark news—

Hon. Members: [*Laughter*]

Hon. Dr. Moonilal:—to the people of Trinidad and Tobago, given our importance— [*Laughter*]—Mr. Chairman, it is with great pleasure that I indicate and acknowledge the latest development in the sector. On June 11th, the Venezuelan Government granted Shell a licence for the exploration and exploitation of non-associated gas of the Loran Field—

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Dr. Moonilal:—this Block 2 of the Plataforma Deltana in Venezuelan waters. Mr. Chairman, this licence authorizes our legacy partner, Shell, to extract 1.7 trillion cubic feet of gas from Loran via the Shell-owned Manatee Platform, which will be located in Trinidad and Tobago waters.

Hon. Members: *[Desk thumping]*

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: The Loran project is pending final government approvals, including an approval from the Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries. This signing reflects our legacy partner's, Shell, continued commitment to work with Trinidad and Tobago and Venezuela to help progress projects, capabilities and infrastructure that can support our mutual development for the benefit of the people.

Mr. Chairman, might I add that the implication of this is that Trinidad and Tobago, by virtue of the licence of yesterday, has a commitment from the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela that 100 per cent of the gas in phase one, 1.7 trillion cubic feet, will be exported solely to Trinidad –

Hon. Members: *[Desk thumping]*

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: – and will be processed at the Beach field facility. Mr. Chairman, this is an enormous consequence to our energy sector and the economy of Trinidad and Tobago, and I want to indicate that this was done without a conga line, it was done without visiting Venezuela a hundred times.

Hon. Members: *[Desk thumping]*

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: And for those people who think that we were doing nothing, this is the result of enormous work that has taken place behind the scenes, involving all the partners over the last year or so, and we were able to do it without spending Valentine's night in Caracas –

Hon. Members: *[Interruption]*

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: – without a selfie, without physically meeting in Caracas. We were able to work with all our partners to achieve this landmark moment –

Hon. Members: *[Desk thumping]*

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: – of great pride to Trinidad and Tobago. We also want to congratulate the hon. Kamla Persad-Bissessar for her direction and leadership –

Hon. Members: *[Desk thumping]*

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: – in this matter and other energy-related matters. As you will recall,

this week, we also agreed on and approved the 10 per cent buy-in of Oxy into the Exxon Mobil deepwater block.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: So, Mr. Chairman, it is good news all over. And tonight is a very important matter to us before you, but it is a single matter of the fuel subsidy, which serves a critical public policy purpose. It cushions households, commuters, small businesses, fishermen, farmers, et cetera. At a time when global oil prices remain elevated and uncertain, this intervention continues to play a crucial role in shielding citizens from significant increases in the cost of living. Mr. Chairman, the Ministry is now faced with a substantial request given the shortfall, driven primarily by international oil price movements and accumulated subsidies obligations from previous years, including 2024.

In fiscal 2026, thus far, approximately TT \$395 million has already been paid to NP and Unipet for liquid fuel subsidies. This supplemental funding of \$454 million, together with expected receipts from the petroleum products subsidies fund, will be utilized to make payments towards the outstanding subsidy obligations for the balance of the fiscal year. This supplementary funding is necessary to allow for the Government to honour its obligations, maintain confidence in the fuel supply chain, preserve stability within the domestic energy market and continue protecting citizens. Mr. Chairman, I thank you.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Chairman: Minister, I think you went over the five minutes, but that is fine.

Question proposed: That Head 40 be supplemented by the sum of \$454,000,000.

Mr. Young SC: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I am using the same extended five minutes. We on this side start by saying, you are most welcome.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Young SC: We would then like to very quickly add that, exactly as we said, the licence was granted to Shell and not to the Government of Trinidad and Tobago.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Young SC: The 1.7 Tcf of—I am getting to my question, I have five minutes. The 1.7 Tcf of gas is but a drop because the Loran Field is 7.3 Tcf of gas. Moving now along to the—

Hon. Member: *[Inaudible]*

Mr. Young SC: Correct. You got zero. So you are most welcome for the trip with the selfie. So, now moving along to the Item in front of us, Minister, you are requesting a supplementation of \$454 million. What is the current outstanding subsidy amount for fiscal 2026?

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: The outstanding is \$1.3 billion.

Mr. Young SC: So, the outstanding for fiscal 2026, this year alone, is \$1.3 billion. You said you have spent \$395 million, which included past bills—so let us say there is a billion outstanding and you are only asking for \$454 million, which will take you to the end of this fiscal and, of course, whatever you get from the petroleum—

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: *[Inaudible]*

Mr. Young SC: Correct, from that Petroleum Fund. How much is expected from the Petroleum Fund? What is the estimate?

7.35 p.m.

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: Mr. Chairman, I was just taking note of the important questions that require accuracy, and we are prepared to respond Monday during the debate.

Mr. Young SC: Okay, so you will provide how much we expect in the estimate from the Petroleum Fund?

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: We will elaborate those questions, require great accuracy in response.

Mr. Young SC: So currently, how much money is owing to Paria? You will add that as well?

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: Yes. I will add it. So you can raise all the questions you want.

Mr. Young SC: Okay, thank you. So how much money is currently outstanding to Paria for this fuel. And then, how much money is owed by both NP and Unipet as well, each

of those entities, to Paria for the fuel subsidy? All of these questions can be answered now. You will provide the answer on Monday.

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: I prefer to give you an accurate response.

Mr. Young SC: Thank you. No further questions.

Mr. Chairman: Please.

Mr. Manning: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. To the Minister of Energy. How much of this subsidy can be attributed to the \$1 decrease in super fuel?

Hon. Dr. Moonilal: Thank you. I will take a note of the question.

Mr. Manning: Thank you.

Mr. Chairman: Here we go.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 40 be supplemented by the sum of \$454 million.

Mr. Chairman: Minister, thank you very much and thank your diligent staff.

Head 42: Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government.

Mr. Chairman: Here we go. Head 42, Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government, a supplementation of \$188,210,313 and a variation and increase in the sum of \$121,962,348.

Minister, might I invite you to make your statement.

Hon. Ameen: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government, under the United National Congress, has pursued an ambitious programme of boots on the ground, responsive policy and technology modernization that results in service delivery in real time during this period under review.

At a time when citizens are demanding greater accountability, stronger local government institutions and more efficient use of public funds, this Ministry has demonstrated that meaningful results can be achieved through proper planning, strategic partnerships and responsible management of public resources, including cutting out corruption, waste and mismanagement.

Mr. Chairman, the Ministry has significantly strengthened our disaster resilience and preparedness through our flood mitigation programme that has effectively cleared more than 60,000 metres of watercourses that fall under the purview of the local government authorities. This proactive approach, in collaboration with other Ministries, represents a shift away from reactive disaster management and more towards prevention and preparedness.

Mr. Chairman, we have recently expanded our disaster management units in every municipality, a long needed human resource boost to a formerly understaffed unit. As part of our preparations for this rainy season, disaster management units from all 14 municipal corporations received critical emergency supplies, including tarpaulins, hurricane straps, generators, pumps, mattresses and shelter equipment. We are not waiting for the disaster to happen. We have provided these to every one of our 14 municipalities so that they can respond more quickly.

Community resilience was further strengthened through the expansion of our community emergency response team programme with close to 400 volunteers being trained and certified in disaster preparedness in every municipality. And very importantly, I think, Mr. Chairman, to note, is that this programme also included organizations representing the visually-impaired and the hearing impaired. They are included and that demonstrates this Government's commitment to including the differently-abled as equal citizens.

Mr. Chairman, the diplomacy of Prime Minister, The Hon. Kamla Persad-Bissessar has brought benefit to this ministry. Through the collaboration with Governments of Japan and India, equipment and grant funding were secured for us to attain advanced fogging machines for insect vector control and equipment for Sargassum weed accumulation on coastal areas. Personnel having undergone intense training over the last few months will now participate in the launch this Tuesday in Mayaro for our first day of operations.

Significant progress has been made in the area of public health and environmental

management. We have launched the national programme for the upkeep of public spaces that employs over 1,600 persons who get decent wages. We have cut out the middlemen and the contractors and the political affiliates and gang leaders, Mr. Chairman.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Ameen: And we are providing citizens with opportunities for employment and we are getting good productivity. So that our cemeteries, recreation grounds, school compounds and other spaces are maintained in town centres as well as in rural communities. We have expanded a local economic development unit. We have created a local economic development unit as well that will also benefit us. I am open to questions, Mr. Chairman.

Questions proposed: That the 2026 appropriation for Head 42, Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government be supplemented by the sum of \$188,210,313 and further that Head 42 Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government be varied and increased in the sum of \$121,962,340.

Mr. Chairman: Diego Martin? Arima? You give way? Thank you. Diego Martin Central.

Mr. de Nobriga: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, through you, Minister, Sub Head 01/001/01, Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance, I am seeing an increase of \$81,774,000-odd, can you give me an idea of what exactly this variation covers?

Hon. Ameen: Just call back the number?

Mr. de Nobriga: First one, 01, Personnel Expenditure; 001, General Administration, Sub Item 01, Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance.

Hon. Ameen: Thank you. Mr. Chairman, this was really to meet the cost of increased salaries. As you know, there was the revised salaries and COLA for 2014 to 2016 and 2017 to 2019. So that the Ministry of Finance would have proceeded with sending their circular that gave instructions to deal with these arrears and this is to cover those arrears. Some were covered by our allocation previously and this covers the balance that is owed in terms of arrears.

7:45 p.m.

Mr. de. Nobriga: Thank you, Minister. Minister, just a follow-up: Does this also then cover the increase in the recurrent cost of these salaries to the end of the fiscal?

Hon. Ameen: This takes us up to the end of September, yes.

Mr. de. Nobriga: At the end, okay. And lastly, does this contemplate the hiring of new staff at all?

Hon. Ameen: No, this is strictly for those arrears.

Mr. de. Nobriga: Okay.

Hon. Ameen: This particular Head, yes.

Mr. de. Nobriga: Okay, so, Chairman, I will continue. I think my colleague has a follow-up.

Mr. Young SC: On this same line Item, thank you very much. Minister, would this cover the outstanding back pay to councillors that is owed?

Hon. Ameen: That is under another Head.

Mr. Young SC: And this will cover all of the SRC increases until the end of the fiscal? Is that what you are saying?

Hon. Ameen: Yes, it does.

Mr. Young. SC: Okay, thank you.

Mr. Chairman: Diego Martin Central.

Mr. de. Nobriga: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Continuing Minister. Sub-Head 02: Goods and Services, 001, General Administration, Sub-Item 16: Contract Employment. Minister, I am seeing an increase of \$10.7 million, and there is a note here – well, maybe before we get to that, can you give me clarification as to what this 10.7million will cover?

Hon. Ameen: Yes, in my brief opening remarks, I mentioned that we have created a Local Economic Development Unit at the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government. And this ties in as a coordinating unit for our LED units in the 14 municipalities. So, the establishment of that unit now gives us a clearer policy overview, and there are 22 positions in that Local Economic Development Unit. So, this provides

for salaries for those persons, as well as the existing legal officers. There was a memo indicating that their terms and conditions had changed. So, in other words, they had an increase. So that covers. Those were existing officers that covers them – legal officers.

Mr. de. Nobriga: Thank you, Minister. I just want to follow up. Of course, Minister, this additional 10.7 million is at the end of the fiscal, so we are saying for these 22 people, as well as the legal officers, it is \$10.7million extra?

Hon. Ameen: Well, it is not 22 persons only. Bear in mind, the LED Unit has 22 persons, but it is also for all the legal officers. And what I can also tell you is that at the time the unit was created, it was not in time for an allocation from the budget. So that when the unit was created, we did virements within the Head in the Ministry with the approval of finance, and therefore, we have to replenish those. So it is not only for this half of the fiscal. It would have been from the moment the unit started, but it is not for those 22 persons only. There are several legal officers who also fall under this as well, and some take us up to the end of September.

Mr. de. Nobriga: Thank you. Minister, so I know you will have legal officers both at the Ministry, as well as – I am assuming – in the regional corporations themselves. Can you give me an idea of how many legal officers we are talking about here, in addition to the 22 persons in the LED unit?

Hon. Ameen: Mr. Chairman, this is for the legal officers at the Ministry; the ones at the corporation are called corporate secretaries, so they do not fall under this Vote. We had the head, legal – that legal department, I think, four senior legal persons, and about three Legal Officers I, and several other positions. But these are persons who exist and have been there. There was a circular from the personnel department that advised the Ministry that there were increases in their remuneration based on their terms and conditions, and therefore, we were obliged to comply with it.

Mr. de. Nobriga: Fair enough. Minister, I know as you said, this LED unit would have been created post the budget, and of course, we did not hear about this before. Could you give a brief – or exactly what this LED Unit does?

Hon. Ameen: Well, I am sorry if you missed it, but the Local Development Unit does just that; it attends to local economic development. Now, if you know the structure of regional corporations, you know that every corporation has a local economic development officer. And they just have two people roughing in those units. In my view, we need to boost the manpower there as well. But in the Ministry, there was no local economic development unit to spearhead and coordinate policy and project management so that every corporation was doing what they felt they wished to do. And what we found is that there was a lot of wastage in resources. Because as a lot of time was spent with planning and paying money for consultants and plans to be drawn up—and the corporation was very excited about a project for some reason, it did not materialize. So we have a lot of corporations that have wonderful plans and the people on the ground—the citizens—have not seen a brick go down, they have not seen a shovel turn to a sod—because we do not have a concrete project. So to change that, we have created this unit that has a chief LED officer, but also has officers who will be direct liaisons with the corporations in groups. So we have two or three corporations grouped together, and that officer will work together to manage them. And some of them put forward projects, but we also have to ensure that we imagine them meaningfully rather than it just being talked—I mean, LED is a nice catchword, but we have to make it a reality.

Mr. de. Nobriga: So, okay, I appreciate that, and those persons, of course, would be these 22 people who will form part of that cadre of persons.

Hon. Ameen: Yes. It also includes one officer for every corporation. So 14 of those are assigned to corporations.

Mr. de. Nobriga: Okay. Mr. Chairman, if I can continue now to Item 009, Sub-Item 006, National Programme for the Upkeep of Public Spaces. And, we are seeing an increase in your allocation from 8.9 to 49 million.

Hon. Ameen: Yes.

Mr. de. Nobriga: Minister, can you give us a breakdown of what this additional 40 million covers?

Hon. Ameen: Right. So, the National Upkeep of Public Spaces – we launched a pilot in December, which ran for three months, and that pilot had about 200 workers on it. We also included, for Carnival, that special programme that targeted and worked alongside the Ministry of Culture and the National Carnival Commission to provide services before and after carnival events. We had additional persons employed for that one-month period for carnival, and following that, based on the learnings and findings of the pilot, we implemented the programme, which started in April. It continues, and it is anticipated to go until September. The programme presently employs 1,684 employees, and they are assigned to all 14 municipalities on a proportion based on the number of electoral districts. We have also included teams that are specifically being trained for disaster response and preparedness. So even now, those teams are clearing water courses in flood-prone areas, they are trimming trees because we have trained them to use power saws, and we have provided them with power saws. So they are trimming trees in areas that are prone to that kind of activity, and they will continue to work until the end of their period.

7.55 p.m.

Mr. de Nobriga: Minister, you have told me how many employees you have now, which is 1,684, but obviously, is it that you are going to be increasing the amount of people covered between now and the end of the fiscal with this \$40 million extra?

Hon. Ameen: No. So, the Cabinet Note gives approval for 1,684 persons to be employed. So, we will not be exceeding that number within this fiscal. There is a lot of representation from our local government representatives from both sides of the political aisle to increase the number of employees, the coverage of that programme, and specifically for rural areas. If you think about some of those very far outlying areas, they too have the need and I certainly have been in conversation with our corporations, taking their views into consideration.

Because what is very important is that this programme is not a handout programme. This is a programme where people are given a meaningful salary. Their

salary is \$200, plus they get COLA and allowances, and so on. That is the minimum salary, and it increases based on their position. So that what we have is a lot of production. They are really working, they are cleaning preschools, cemeteries, panyards, recreation grounds, you know. And the feedback is positive, so we want to maintain the productivity. This is not a situation where you have a contractor handling a certain area. These workers are direct employees, and so, you know, we are able to pay them more money, but at the same time, it cost us less to employ that bigger number of persons.

Mr. de Nobriga: Minister, could I ask if we could get in writing, from the Ministry, a breakdown in terms of the expenditure categories covered by this \$40 million, including position and salaries, any equipment and materials, and administrative costs, and any other —

Hon. Ameen: No, there is no equipment under this thing, eh. This is only for the payment of the employees' salaries, and there is one senior operations manager, four senior regional coordinators, 23 regional coordinators, 138 maintenance supervisors and 828 maintenance workers. We also have an additional 690 wacker operators. So that is it. It does not include any hiring, of any equipment, and to say like tractors and so on, no.

Mr. de Nobriga: Yeah, so —

Hon. Ameen: So, that is it. All of it is for wages and COLA.

Mr. de Nobriga: All right. Okay.

Hon. Ameen: Yes.

Mr. de Nobriga: Moving on to 011: Transfers to State Enterprises —

Mr. Marcelle: If I may interject before we move on.

Mr. de Nobriga: Sure. I think we have a question on that line Item.

Mr. Marcelle: Deeply grateful, please, Mr. Chairman. Hon. Minister, line Item — the same line Item on NPUPS, 009/06: National Programme for Upkeep of Public Spaces, can the hon. Minister indicate, based on — as of today, whether these employees are paid up to date?

Hon. Ameen: The employees are paid on a fortnightly basis. In the first fortnight, the one of the hiccups was gathering workers' proper information, so that they are required to submit all their bio data, including things like their bank account numbers and so on. So people who do not have a bank account, for instance, would have had delays. There were also persons whose names were not spelled correctly and so on, understanding that, based on the first fortnight of the programme, the first month of the programme, where they were getting those records right, so that we did have some delays. I do expect now that we have all—well, most people's bio data, information, down correctly, that we could have smoother payment for them.

There is also a new unit—because the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government handles the payments for under the pilot programme, and it was really tough; the capacity to pay this vast number of workers much more than they would usually handle in terms of processing payroll, and so on. They were challenged. So a new unit has been created to manage that, and that unit also has officers who are being trained and working alongside our in-house HR department and payroll department.

Mr. Marcelle: Hon. Minister, on the same line Item, the programme having started in April of this year, it means therefore that a minimum of about five fortnights would have passed.

Hon. Ameen: No, it started in April.

Mr. Marcelle: Yes, I am saying, you said, it started in April.

Hon. Ameen: Yes.

Mr. Marcelle: And at least five fortnights thereabouts would have passed. If let us say, at minimum, five fortnights have passed, based on your information, how many fortnights have these workers been paid for as of today?

Hon. Ameen: Right, it varies. So, there are workers who—teams who have the information complete and they are up to date. There are teams who may have gotten one fortnight, but there were issues with their second fortnight's payroll, so they may have been paid for one fortnight and not the second one. So, it varies across the board. It is

not as though they were all paid for the exact period across the board. But as I said, this is a new unit, so they themselves are also being trained and encountering the little hiccups, which are being addressed. So that I myself am very involved in the programme, and the workers continue to work, while we straighten out these issues.

Mr. Marcelle: I am guided.

Mr. Chairman: Diego Martin Central.

Mr. de Nobriga: Thank you, Chair. Minister, can I take you to Item 11: Transfer to State Companies; Sub-Item 03: RDC? Minister, there is a revised provision of 5.4 million, of course, from an initial allocation of zero. And the note that I have seen says that it is to:

“...supplement the provision to enable the...” – RDC – “...to meet its operational costs to the end of fiscal 2026...”

Minister, the first question I want to ask is, if we knew where the RDC required funding to meet its operational cost for the fiscal year, one, why was there zero allocation, and two, will this \$5.4 million manage the operational costs, I am assuming, for the entire fiscal year?

Hon. Ameen: Yes. So the RDC does not usually get a subvention in the budget for their operations. Most of their operational costs are met by project management fees, so that based on the number of projects they manage, that income is what will cover them. So, this really provides for a shortfall, because at the beginning of the fiscal year, you do not anticipate that there will be a shortfall. So, really, based on their project management fees, it would have covered some of the operational expenses, and this covers the balance, and yes, it will take us till the end of fiscal.

Mr. de Nobriga: Okay. Minister, if I could then take you to Sub-Item under that same Head, Sub-Items 10, 11, 12, and 13: RDC interest and principal on, I believe, two loans, and we are seeing, of course, very large increases in terms of your allocation. And wonder, I am just asking, Minister, what requires you now to have such a large supplementation for the allocation?

8.05 p.m.

Hon. Ameen: This is a fixed loan that becomes due in September of 2026.

Mr. de Nobriga: In September of —

Hon. Ameen: The payment, 2026.

Mr. de Nobriga: But I am asking, Minister, of course, you would have known that it was due in September, 2026, so the initial allocation is now, in most cases, being doubled. Was the Ministry not aware that the loan payment would have been required as this new allocation plays out?

Hon. Ameen: This is part of an arrangement with a fixed loan that was taken under the previous government for \$200 million.

Hon. Member: [*Inaudible*]

Hon. Ameen: The payment becomes due in September, 2026, and this allocation is timely to make the payment, and that applies to 03, 10, 11, 12 and 13, because this covers the principal, as well as interests on the fixed rate. Well, it is self-explanatory in terms of the name of the Head, but that is what it provides for, repayment arising out of the RDC's \$200 million loan that was taken under the former government.

Mr. de Nobriga: Okay. Chair, if I could just ask one clarifying question for my own knowledge. Minister, you were saying that these loans require one payment a year, you pay it in September or you pay it monthly?

Hon. Ameen: The fixed rate loan is due in September 2026.

Mr. de Nobriga: Okay. Well, Minister, if —

Hon. Member: [*Inaudible*]

Hon. Ameen: That is what — yeah, based under this Head, yes.

Mr. de Nobriga: Fair enough, Minister. I do not know if there are any other questions on this line Item by colleagues. Minister, moving on to 005, Sub-Item 37, Regional Corporation Services – General, Minister, can I ask what this increase in allocation covers?

Hon. Ameen: This covers the arrears. If you recall, I think one of your colleagues, or you, asked earlier about arrears to councillors. The Salaries Review Commission would have made changes in terms of the benefits to councillors and aldermen, and we had to,

of course, audit when we get those. We had to audit the arrears, and there was a total of – this really covers the remuneration to members of council based on that 120th review of the Salaries Review Commission, but this covers six corporations. It covers Port of Spain, San Fernando, Arima, Chaguanas, San Juan/Laventille and Mayaro corporations. This is because the decision was taken in the last fiscal, however, they must be audited before the Ministry of Finance can release moneys for it. The other corporations made it before the deadline for budget so they got their moneys allocated in the budget.

These corporations missed the deadline, maybe by a few hours, but they did miss the deadline. So we worked with them to ensure that they were included in terms of the supplement, because the Minister could not give an allocation based on an unaudited amount without audited figures. So this attends to that. So with this payment now, all corporations, all 14 corporations, their councillors and aldermen would have received their arrears based on the Salaries Review Commission's recommendation.

Mr. Imbert: Head 42, Sub-Head 01, Item 001: General Administration - Salaries, Minister, I noticed an almost 100 per cent increase in the allocation under this Sub-Item, how come?

Hon. Ameen: Call the number again. You are going back, or the same one, or "yuh gone back"?

Mr. Imbert: I am not going back, I have not asked any questions yet.

Hon. Ameen: "Yuh gone back"?

Mr. Imbert: This is my first question, I am not going back anywhere.

Hon. Ameen: Your colleague is on 30 – which one you are going on? You are way back.

Mr. Imbert: I am not going back, this is my first question.

Hon. Ameen: You should have raised your hand at the time. I think the Speaker passed that one.

Mr. Imbert: What going on here?

Hon. Ameen: The Chairman passed that one.

Mr. Imbert: You are absolutely wrong. I had my hand up and he tell me to wait.

Hon. Ameen: Alright. Which one do you want us to go back to?

Mr. Imbert: I am not going back anywhere. I have a question about Sub-Head 01/001, General Administration - Salaries, and I see a 100 per cent increase in—

Hon. Members: [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Chairman, “ah doh know” what this cacophony over there is for, you know. There is a 100 per cent increase, why is there 100 per cent increase?

Mr. Padarath: Mr. Chairman, is this the approach he is going to take for the rest of the Head?

Mr. Chairman: No. I think in all fairness, the Member had his hand up, but because the Member for Diego Martin Central was going, I allowed him to go, but I think, as a matter of general discipline, people who have—so we can move forward, but I accept that I should have entertained you earlier, but I—

Mr. Imbert: I had my hand up all the time.

Mr. Chairman:—thought we were going by way of—I was under the impression that the questioning for this Head was allocated to one particular Member.

Mr. Imbert: No, no, no, there are 13 of us. So could you answer the question, please, this is a 100 per cent increase, why?

Hon. Ameen: Yes.

Mr. Imbert: No, no, no, no, no, not this question.

Hon. Ameen: Mr. Chairman, there is not much more explanation, because another one of his colleagues did ask about this and I explained that this had to do with arrears and increases and salaries for revised salaries. In fact, I went into detail by calling out the years that these salaries were for, so I am sorry if the Member missed it.

Mr. Imbert: No, no, I did not miss anything.

Hon. Ameen: But it is for arrears—

Mr. Imbert: No other Ministry has this level of increase.

Hon. Ameen:—and revised—it is for arrears—

Mr. Chairman: Well, I think, Member, I think the question was asked by your colleague for Diego Martin Central.

Mr. Imbert: My question is, every other Ministry has about a 10 to 20 per cent increase under this Item.

Mr. Chairman: Well, no, in all fairness —

Mr. Imbert: This one —

Mr. Chairman: — that was not your question. Your question, as originally framed, was, this was 100 increase, what is it for?

Mr. Imbert: No, I said, “Why?”

Mr. Chairman: Hang on. My recollection of the questioning, I think, is accurate. The Minister has answered it in a very fulsome manner, so let us move —

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Chairman, I have another question on this Head. If every other Ministry¹ is increased for this Item as being no more than 20 per cent, why is your Ministry 100 per cent?

Mr. Chairman: I think the answer is to be gleaned from the answer the Minister gave to the Member for Diego Martin Central.

Mr. Imbert: The answer does not make any sense.

Mr. Chairman: Well, that may be a matter of opinion, which may or may not be correct.

Mr. Imbert: The salaries were not doubled.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, hang on a second. It is a matter that has been asked and answered in a very sufficient and fulsome manner.

Mr. Imbert: [*Inaudible*] — on the same Item.

Mr. Chairman: Well, let us move on.

Mr. Imbert: Move on from what? I have a question on the same Item.

Mr. Chairman: There has to be some structure in this, you know. So come on, ask your question.

Mr. Imbert: Is it that the original provision was inadequate?

Mr. Chairman: I think that has been asked and answered.

Mr. Imbert: No, no, it was never asked or answered.

Mr. Chairman: The Minister gave a comprehensive answer —

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Chairman, that is just not so.

Mr. Chairman:— in very great detail.

Mr. Imbert: That is not so.

Mr. Chairman: You may think it is not so.

Mr. Imbert: But since you do not want me to ask the question, I will move on to another Item.

Mr. Young SC: “Dey cyah stop yuh from asking questions.”

Mr. Imbert: I will go on to another Item. I am absolutely certain this was under-provided for, and this is why you have 100 increase now. Could we go to Item 009/06, please? Could the Minister confirm whether the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government transferred any money from its Development Programme to this particular Item for the Upkeep of Public Spaces? Did the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government transfer any money from its Development Programme, or the Development Programmes of various corporations to this Item?

Hon. Ameen: Mr. Chairman, up to today, I was approached by members of the media who have been asking questions because this claim, which is absolutely false, has been made on PNM platforms.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Ameen: It is absolutely false.

Mr. Imbert: So the answer is, no?

Hon. Ameen: If anyone understands how local government bodies are funded, and the fact that the national programme for the Upkeep of Public Spaces is funded under the Ministry, you will know that that cannot happen. The municipal corporations have their allocations, the Ministry pays the workers directly, no corporation has been asked to or will they be required to pay any workers under the upkeep programme. It is an absolute falsehood and it is being repeated on the PNM platforms —

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Chairman, that is not the question I asked.

Hon. Ameen:— and again, it is an absolute falsehood.

Mr. Imbert: That is not the question I asked.

Mr. Chairman: Well, it is the answer which—

Mr. Imbert: No, no, no, no, no. Has the Ministry transferred money from its Development Programme for this Item?

8.15 p.m.

Mr. Chairman: Member, it is the answer which the Minister has given if you want to do—

Mr. Imbert: Come on. It is at a very simple question

Mr. Chairman: Yes. It is. It is also an answer which has been given. So let us move on. Next question.

Mr. Imbert: No, Mr. Chairman. So, \$3million was not taken from Chaguanas, \$2 million from San Juan/Laventille—

Hon. Ameen: Absolutely not.

Mr. Imbert:—\$2 million from Siparia—

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Ameen: The answer is no.

Mr. Imbert:—\$1 million. So this memo is a fake?

Hon. Ameen: That is a falsehood.

Mr. Imbert: This memo is a fake?

Hon. Ameen: That is absolutely false.

Mr. Imbert: This memo from the Ministry—

Hon. Members: [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Imbert:—from the PS of Local Government—

Hon. Ameen: It is probably a fake memo.

Mr. Chairman: All right

Mr. Imbert:—the 28th of May it is fake?

Mr. Chairman: Okay.

Hon. Ameen: It is probably a fake memo.

Mr. Chairman: If there are no further questions of note, I am going to put the question.

Hon. Members: No. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Imbert: [*Inaudible*] that your thoughts, it was won. I have another question —

Hon. Members: [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. Ameen: Like the fake food badge thing he had. Remember he had a fake food badge memo.

Mr. Imbert: — on Item 005.

Mr. Chairman: This is wasting time, man

Mr. Imbert: — Sub-Item 37. Could we get a breakdown of this \$106 million, please? “Ah breakdown”. If you do not have it now, could we get it in writing before Monday?

Hon. Ameen: Mr. Chairman —

Mr. Chairman: Was that not answered already?

Hon. Ameen: Yes. It was. I explained —

Mr. Imbert: A breakdown? It was not.

Mr. Chairman: Yes. It was.

Hon. Ameen: — and I gave, for each, corporation. I gave the corporations. I explained why these corporations were not in the original fiscal.

Mr. Imbert: You gave no breakdown. How much for Port of Spain? How much for Chaguanas? How much for Siparia? How much for Diego Martin?

Hon. Ameen: The Port of Spain Corporation —

Mr. Imbert: You gave no breakdown. What kind ah ting going on here?

Hon. Ameen: — hello. Hello. “Take yuh time”.

Mr. Chairman: Yes. Let us tone down the —

Mr. Imbert: Can I get the breakdown please? How much each corporation is going to get, so I can see whether PNM corporations are not getting and UNC are getting.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Ameen: Mr. Chairman —

Hon. Member: What is the line Item?

Mr. Imbert: 005/37.

Hon. Ameen:—let me tell you something, there is no treatment and discrimination against PNM corporation.

Mr. Young SC: The figures speak differently.

Hon. Members: [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Young SC: The figures speak differently!

Mr. Imbert: Where is the breakdown?

Mr. Chairman: All right.

Hon. Ameen: And the Member—

Mr. Chairman: Port of Spain North, stop shouting. Stop it. There is no need for that.

Mr. Young SC: [*Inaudible*]

Mr. Chairman: Stop. I am speaking to you. Stop shouting.

Mr. Young SC: You are shouting at me.

Mr. Chairman: Because you are shouting. I had to raise my voice above the din of that. So stop it. Stop the shouting. Minister.

Hon. Ameen: I explained, Mr. Chairman, that when the Salaries Review Commission made their 120th Report, there was an increase for councillors and aldermen, and of course, before you pay arrears, they must be audited.

Mr. Imbert: That is impossible.

Hon. Ameen: So, those who were audited in time for the deadline for the budget, they got their money in the budget. The Minister of Finance and the Ministry of Finance could not allocate to those who did not provide audited arrears. When those audited arrears were submitted, the balance of corporations, and this represents that.

Under this Head, you also had the Salaries and COLA for four municipal corporations, that fall under the Statutory Authorities Service Commission. As you may be aware, some corporations fall under the SASC and some fall under the Public Service Commission. So, those that fall under the Statutory Authorities Service Commission, their arrears, because there was an agreement for revised salary from 2014—2016 and 2017—2019. So, we are

making this payment that was for a period before our time, and this is due to the workers, and we are providing it according to the collective agreement between the CPO and the amalgamated workers in Port of Spain, San Fernando, Arima, and Point Fortin.

Mr. Chairman: Member for Arima.

Ms. Beckles: [*Inaudible*]

Mr. Chairman: No. You—

Mr. Young SC: [*Inaudible*]

Mr. Chairman: Yeah. Port of Spain North.

Mr. Young SC: Thank you very much. Minister, just to clarify what you just said, because the first time you said it was for the arrears and all the arrears that were owing for certain corporations or councillors under various corporations.

Hon. Ameen: Yes.

Mr. Young SC: This is the \$106million—

Hon. Ameen: Yeah.

Mr. Young SC:—now being supplemented—

Hon. Ameen: Right.

Mr. Young SC:—and you just—

Hon. Ameen: It is two categories—

Mr. Young SC:—right.

Hon. Ameen:—arrears—

Mr. Young SC: Just let me ask the question.

Hon. Ameen:—one is arrears—

Mr. Young SC: Right. And then one is—

Hon. Ameen:—some is for councillors and some is for the Statutory Authority Service Commission.

Mr. Young SC: Right. So that is what I want to get to.

Hon. Ameen: But all is arrears.

Mr. Young SC: Okay. So it is covering. This will now cover all of the outstanding back

pay for councillors? That is the first question.

Hon. Ameen: As well as the, SASC.

Mr. Young SC: Right. So, the answer to the first question is yes.

Hon. Ameen: Yes.

Mr. Young SC: And then now, you are telling us those corporations that fall under the SASC—

Hon. Ameen: Yes.

Mr. Young SC:— this is not only for the councillors and aldermen; it is also for the staff of those corporations?

Hon. Ameen: Yes. Based on their arrangement with the CPO.

Mr. Young SC: Okay. Understood. So that is how you come up with this large figure.

Hon. Ameen: Yes. So, those both fall under this particular Head.

Mr. Young SC: Head.

Hon. Ameen: Yes.

Mr. Young SC: Okay. That would be, as we had up above—well, not up above. So, this is all of the staff, for example, and all of the arrears owing as a result of those collective bargaining periods from 2014 come forward, I think you said till—

Hon. Ameen: It is for 2014 to—

Mr. Young SC: Seventeen.

Hon. Ameen:— 2016—

Mr. Young SC: Right.

Hon. Ameen:— 2017—

Mr. Young SC: Nineteen.

Hon. Ameen:— to 2019.

Mr. Young SC: Right.

Hon. Ameen: Yes.

Mr. Young SC: For Point Fortin, as one example, under the SASC.

Hon. Ameen: It is for Port of Spain, San Fernando, Arima, and Point Fortin, as I indicated

before.

Mr. Young SC: Okay. Thank you.

Hon. Ameen: Yes.

Mr. Chairman: Malabar/Mausica, are you still interested in asking a question or no?

Mr. Romain: [*Inaudible*]

Mr. Chairman: No. Hang on. Diego Martin West. Just now.

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Chairman, I want to make sure –

Mr. Des Vignes: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would just like to ask the actual amounts. I know the Minister mentioned a breakdown. But the breakdown that we are asking for is the amounts for the separate corporations. What are the figures? Because that is the discussion today. The discussion today is about figures. We would like to know the actual figures for the six corporations, outlined that is the question.

Hon. Ameen: For the what? Six corporations?

Mr. Des Vignes: That you identified for the over \$100million.

Hon. Ameen: Right. So, Mr. Chairman, as you know, when we have the total amount the allocation, it is followed by a circular from the Ministry of Finance that will indicate exactly how much the is to be provided based on the collective bargaining agreement. So, this is usually followed by that circular. So, when the Ministry of Finance sends – and it does go to every Ministry. It is part of the normal fiscal procedure. That is what will provide us with the breakdown, so that we can pay.

Mr. Des Vignes: Is the Minister able to give us to the amounts today, yes or no?

Mr. Chairman: Well, I think the answer was unless the circular is issued –

Hon. Ameen: Yeah.

Mr. Chairman: – It is impossible to do so.

Hon. Ameen: Yeah.

Mr. Des Vignes: Thank you very much, Chairman. So my question is when can we get it?

Hon. Ameen: The Circular could only be issued after the approval in the Standing

Finance Committee. So, it is after this budget exercise, this exercise here in Parliament, that is when the Ministry of Finance prepares those circulars. It is something that is across all Ministries, and it has to do with that the arrangement with the CPO. It is standard.

Mr. Young SC: [*Inaudible*]

Mr. Des Vignes: I give way, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: Port of Spain North.

Mr. Young SC: Thank you very much. Minister, there is a lot of concern by some of the corporations—

Hon. Ameen: The same Head?

Mr. Young SC:—correct—with respect to, they were hoping to get a supplement for general goods and services.

Hon. Ameen: Do you want to tell me which Head you are under?

Mr. Young SC: Under the same one. I am just exploring. Under this same Item 005; Sub-Item 37: Regional Corporation Services General. You have given the explanation for the 106, but there are questions being asked, whether out of that \$106 million, will there also be, for some corporations, a supplemental towards their goods and services.

Hon. Ameen: This is not for goods and services.

Mr. Young SC: So, the answer is no. There will be no supplemental for goods and services for corporations?

Hon. Ameen: No. I did not say that.

Mr. Young SC: So, where will that come in then? Because there is no other line Item for supplementals for goods and services.

Hon. Ameen: [*Minister consults with technocrat*] We will be directed by Finance because there—I mean, every corporation—well, not all of them made requests. We have been working with them on their debt management in particular. There are corporations who owe a lot of money for three/four years back. So, we have been working with them to manage that debt, so that they will not be, for instance, spending money on throwing fetes, rather than paying their workers. So that debt management will continue, and they

will get supplemental funding. In fact, we have done a lot of internal transfers, as well, to cover that and to work with them.

Mr. Young SC: So, it would not be supplemental funding. It would be variations and virements and stuff.

Hon. Ameen: We will continue to supplement them. Yes. Because some of them do need supplementing

8.25 p.m.

But the first preference is for them to utilize the funds already allocated them to properly manage and to cover their debt first and then, of course, their critical services before they can move to, you know, more frivolous things.

Mr. Young SC: Understood completely.

Hon. Ameen: So we will continue that sort of supplementing. We have done it even during the fiscal without having the need to come for this type of transfer.

Mr. Young SC: Minister, I completely understand what you are saying, that you are helping them to manage their cash flows and to pay outstanding debt, et cetera.

Hon. Ameen: Yes.

Mr. Young SC: But for the current purposes and for the national budgeting purposes, if there is no supplementation here, unless you all come back before the end of the fiscal for a further supplementation, there cannot be the any additional supplementation. So is it going to be a virement—I mean, there is no variations moving moneys, unspent by other Ministries, to yours. So there is a lot of concern as to whether that supplementation that does not exist in this mid-year review, where it is going to come from. That is what I am trying to ask.

Hon. Ameen: It can come from. It can also come from here.

Mr. Young SC: From the \$106 million?

Hon. Ameen: Yes, it can also come—

Mr. Young SC: That is what I was asking.

Hon. Ameen: But as I indicated—I said that, and I also said that we will manage that

process internally, as we have been doing since the beginning of the budget. So, yes.

Mr. Chairman: Okay. Port of Spain South.

Mr. Scotland SC: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, through you, under the Head 09/005/09/A./014: Development Programme, through you, hon. Minister, is there not a memorandum dated the 28th of May, 2026, from the Permanent Secretary of your Ministry, under the rubric, "Approval for the transfer of funds, Development Programme," where it was directed that \$8 million was transferred from the development fund to our national programme for the upkeep of public spaces?

Hon. Ameen: Mr. Chairman, we spoke about this earlier.

Mr. Chairman: All right. So I take it –

Hon. Ameen: We spoke about this earlier.

Mr. Chairman: I think the answer is asked and answered, and we will move on here.

Mr. Scotland SC: Mr. Chairman, just for the record, this is the first time that the specific memorandum, the specific date and the heading was put. Is the hon. Minister's answer, no, there is no such memorandum? That is all I want to know, Chairman.

Hon. Ameen: This was raised by your colleague and it was addressed.

Mr. Scotland SC: I know. And what was your answer?

Hon. Ameen: It was addressed.

Mr. Scotland SC: No. Well, Chairman, if it was addressed, I just want to be sure because there are consequences that follow. May I just respectfully ask, through you, Mr. Chair, or could you edify us as to what the answer is? What is the –

Mr. Chairman: I am simply going to ask the Minister whether her answer is different from the answer she has previously given.

Hon. Ameen: There is only one truth, you know, and I already addressed his colleague and the same answer applies.

Mr. Chairman: Right. So let us – your remedy will lie elsewhere.

Mr. Scotland SC: You said, it was not true? Okay.

Hon. Ameen: I said, there is only one truth and spoke that earlier.

Mr. Scotland SC: What is the truth?

Hon. Ameen: When I addressed the Member for Diego Martin North/East, I addressed—

Mr. Chairman: Okay. Port of Spain South.

Hon. Ameen:—that exact memorandum that he raised.

Mr. Scotland SC: Chairman, why is she shouting at me and you are addressing me? I am quiet?

Hon. Ameen: It seems as though you did not hear me when I said it the first two times.

Mr. Scotland SC: [*Inaudible*]—I am quiet. “I am not taking no bully.”

Mr. Chairman: No. No. No. Come on. All right. So no further questions. I am going to put the compendious question.

Hon. Members: [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, the questions are—

Mr. Young SC: No—[*Inaudible*]

Mr. Chairman: Yes, the questions are—

Mr. Young SC: Mr. Chair, Sub-Head 09/005: Multi-Sectoral and Other Services under the Development Programme. Not a question was asked here. So, Mr. Chair, under Sub-Head 09: Development Programme; Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services, Project Group A. Port of Spain City Corporation, now requesting an additional supplementation, which we are happy to see, of just under \$9 million—\$8, 989,087.

Hon. Ameen: Yes.

Mr. Young SC: Now, this is the Development Programme.

Hon. Ameen: Yes.

Mr. Young SC: Minister, may I ask what this is for?

Hon. Ameen: Well, Mr. Chairman, this is actually to provide payment for 20 contracts that were awarded in the fiscal 2024 to 2025, before we came into Government, and the allocations—the moneys released was not sufficient to cover. So the—

Mr. Young SC: So it is old contracts?

Hon. Ameen: So the contracts were awarded. In fact, the corporation was given the money in their allocation. When they awarded the contract, the former Minister of Finance did not release the money to this corporation to cover all the contracts that they entered into. So contractors were actually – had completed the jobs and were waiting for payments all this time.

The Port of Spain City Corporation had to use their current year's allocation for DP to pay off some of this debt, to the extent that they could not even enter into new contracts for the current fiscal. So this addresses the insufficient releases. That is what it was. The corporation was not at fault because they would have worked with their allocation. But when it was time to release the money, the former Minister of Finance just did not release the money to Port of Spain Corporation.

Mr. Young SC: So, Minister, thank you very much, and I hope that you and the Member for Fyzabad will do the necessary and release it. One further question under this –

Hon. Ameen: Well, that is why we are here and you are there.

Mr. Young SC: We look forward to the releases. So, Minister, under this same line Item, can any of this money be utilized for garbage collection and disposal?

Hon. Ameen: Not under this Head. No, this is for development projects. So you would not have that covered.

Mr. Young SC: So, what is it that Port of Spain is going to do? Because they have exhausted the garbage and disposal line Item allocations.

Hon. Ameen: We have been working with them to manage in-house in terms of their allocations and to prioritize certain things, and we will continue do that –

Mr. Young SC: Thank you. We are looking forward to it.

Hon. Ameen: – as we are doing with other corporations as well.

Mr. Young SC: Thank you.

Questions put and agreed to.

Head 42 be supplemented by the sum of \$188, 210,313.

Head 42 varied by an increase in the sum of \$121,962,340.

Mr. Chairman: Minister, thank you very much and thank your staff.

Head 61: Ministry of Housing, a supplementation of \$197,364,564 and varied by an increase in the sum of \$432,647

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, I invite you to make your short — [*Inaudible*]

Hon. Lee: I will be short. Five minutes.

Mr. Chairman: Go right ahead.

Hon. Lee: Thank you. Good night, Mr. Chairman, hon. Members of the Committee, ladies and gentlemen. Mr. Chairman, it is a distinct honour and profound responsibility to appear before this distinguished Committee in my capacity as Minister of Housing to participate in the mid-year review of 2025/2026 national budget, and to address the supplementation variation and appropriation for fiscal year 2026. I welcome this opportunity to account for the financial requirements of the Ministry of Housing for the remainder of the fiscal year.

8.35 p.m.

Hon. Lee: The midyear review is an important instrument of parliamentary oversight, providing the Government with the opportunity to account for its stewardship of public resources, assess emerging priorities and ensure that expenditure remains aligned with national objectives and fiscal realities. As stewards of the public trust, we have a duty to ensure that every dollar entrusted to the Ministry is utilized prudently, efficiently and transparently. Accordingly, the requests before this Committee are grounded in demonstrated needs, existing commitments and imperative to maintain momentum in the delivery of housing solutions and to improve the lives of our citizens.

The Ministry of Housing remains steadfast in its commitment to transparency, accountability, and sound fiscal management. We recognize our responsibility to manage public resources with the highest standards of prudence, efficiency and integrity. And we stand ready to provide any information or clarification that may assist this Committee in its deliberation. Mr. Chairman, housing is far more than the provision of shelter. It is a fundamental pillar of national development and a critical drive of social

and economic progress. Access to safe, affordable, and secure housing creates the conditions for families to prosper, communities to thrive, and economies to grow.

Housing influences virtually every aspect of national life. It impacts the public health, education attainment, workforce, productivity, social mobility, community stability and overall equality of life. For families, a home represents security, dignity and opportunity. For the nation, it represents —

Hon. Member: [*Interruption*]

Hon. Lee: Mr. Chairman, I am being disturbed.

Hon. Members: [*Interruption*]

Hon. Lee: For the nation [*Laughter*], it represents investment, productivity, resilience, and social cohesion. It is against this backdrop that the work of the Ministry assumes such significance. Our mandate extends beyond the construction of houses. It encompasses the creation of sustainable communities, expansion of opportunities for homeownership, and the improvement of living standards for present and future generations.

At that same time, these objectives must be pursued within a framework of fiscal discipline and responsible governance. Sound public administration requires not only the careful allocation of resources, but also the honouring of obligations already undertaken on behalf of the State and the responsible management of public assets. Chairman, a supplementary allocation today is in the amount of \$197,000,364, and the variation is \$432,647.

Chairman, in closing, I reaffirm the Government's commitment to ensuring that every citizen has access to adequate housing and the opportunity to live in safe, resilient and vibrant communities. Together, we will build more houses, we will build stronger communities, expand other opportunities, restore confidence and lay the foundation for a more prosperous future for all. I therefore welcome the opportunity to engage constructively with this honourable Committee and to provide the rationale for the supplementary allocation and variation now under consideration. I thank you.

Questions proposed: That the 2026 appropriation for Head 61, Ministry of Housing be supplemented by the sum of \$197,364,564 and further, that Head 61, Ministry of Housing, be varied and increased in the sum of \$432,647.

Mr. Chairman: Trincity/Maloney.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: Mr. Chairman, before I get into the meat of the questioning. Is there a reason why the two illustrious junior Ministers are not here?

Hon. Lee: Chairman, my two other Ministers are in the Senate presently, I think, doing yeoman service for the Government of Trinidad and Tobago.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: I did see other Senators come, but if you say that. Mr. Chairman, of the \$432 million –

Hon. Lee: No, \$432,000.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: The \$432,647, is any of this money for back pay?

Hon. Lee: Member, this \$432,647 is to meet the shortfall in the salaries for permanent employees at the Ministry. It has no back pay in it, and it is just to meet that shortfall of about \$56,000 a month for the next six months.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: Okay. Thank you very much. And, Mr. Chairman, regarding Sub-Head 04: 009; Current Transfers and Subsidies; Other Transfers, and 01: Trinidad and Tobago Housing Development Corporation, could the Minister indicate whether these debt-servicing obligations were known at the time of the preparation of the budget?

Hon. Lee: Member, it would have been known, but it would not have been due until September this year, and we knew we were coming back for supplementation. We said that at the SFC, at the time in October, that if we needed more funding, we would come back at the supplemental midyear review for it.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: Okay. And would you provide a breakdown of the \$197,364,000 between principal and the interest payments?

Hon. Lee: Sure. Do you want it now, or do you want it on Monday?

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: Monday is fine.

Hon. Lee: Monday is fine. I will say more on Monday. Thank you.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: Okay. That is all from me.

Mr. Chairman: Okay.

Hon. Lee: See why I did not bring the other two Ministers. [*Laughter*]

Hon. Members: [*Laughter*]

Questions put and agreed to.

Head 61 supplemented by the sum of \$197,364,564.

Head 61 varied by an increase in the sum of \$432,647.

Mr. Chairman: Minister, thank you very much, and thank you to your staff. Head 64: Trinidad and Tobago Police Service.

Hon. Member: Minister, are you ready?

Hon. Alexander: Yes, Sir.

Hon. Member: Minister, are you ready?

Hon. Alexander: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: Okay.

Head 64: Trinidad and Tobago Police Service, a supplementation of \$642,200,000 and an increase and variation of \$275,000,000.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, please make your statement in the usual brief manner.

Hon. Alexander: Thank you, Mr. Chair. The Trinidad and Tobago Police Service continues to serve the people of Trinidad and Tobago with professionalism, respect, integrity, dignity and excellence. Today, I seek the approval of the honourable Committee for a supplementary allocation of \$64.2 million under Head 64: Trinidad and Tobago Police Service. This funding is necessary to ensure that the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service can continue its operations effectively for the remainder of the fiscal year 2026. Despite significant operational demands, the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service continues to deliver on its mandate to protect our citizens, and maintain law and order.

Mr. Chairman, these are necessary expenditures to maintain operational readiness and ensure the continuity and delivery of policing services to the people of Trinidad and

Tobago. I look forward to the questions from the honourable Members of this House.

Questions proposed: That the 2026 appropriation for Head 64, Trinidad and Tobago Police Service be supplemented by the sum of \$642,200,000 and further to that, Head 64, Trinidad and Tobago Police Service be varied and increased in the sum of \$275,000,000.

Hon. Alexander: Mr. Chairman, these are necessary expenditures to maintain operational readiness and ensure the continuity and deliverance of policing service to the people of Trinidad and Tobago. I look forward to the questions from Hon. Members of this House.

Questions proposed: That Head 64: Trinidad and Tobago Police Service be supplemented by the sum of \$64,200,000 and be varied by an increase in the sum of \$275 million.

Mr. Chairman: Member for Port of Spain South.

Mr. Scotland SC: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The supplementation of \$64 million is quite a handsome sum, Hon. Minister. Why was that not catered for initially in the first budget presentation in October last year?

Hon. Alexander: Member, the police service continues to both employ and have additional expenses to maintain continuous operational programmes, and in order to do that this was not possible at the time.

Mr. Scotland SC: You have brought under Sub-item 01, Personnel Expenditure 001/01, Salaries and Cost of Living and there is an increase of \$120,000,000 under that Head, Sub-Item 01. Could you tell us whether any of this amount includes back pay to the police officers?

Hon. Alexander: Member, this does not include back pay.

Mr. Scotland SC: It does or it does not?

Hon. Alexander: It does not include back pay.

Mr. Chairman: May I remind you we are moving forward.

Mr. Young SC: We still in this 01/03.

Mr. Chairman: Okay. We are not going to jump ahead and come back.

Mr. Scotland SC: so we are in 001.

Mr. Chairman: Right, great. Port of Spain North.

Mr. Young SC: Thank you. Minister, under Head 64, Sub Head 01: Personnel Expenditure, Item 001 and in particular – well let us start with Sub-Item 03: Overtime. There is a request for a variation to add an additional \$100,000,000. Minister, this overtime, and it is described in the document from budgets that we were provided with, that is provide the payment of allowances and overtime to monthly-paid police officers. Is this also for the increase in, let us call it police call out time during the states of emergency that we are in?

Hon. Alexander: Member, the answer is no.

Mr. Young SC: It is not?

Hon. Alexander: It is not, Member.

Mr. Young SC: So this overtime is overtime that is normal overtime?

Hon. Alexander: Member, when we look at it, it was less than last year –

Mr. Young SC: This is taking it up to \$500 million for overtime for the year and you are saying – so half a billion dollars and none of that half a billion is attributable to any of the activities and the extra duties – well not extra duties, that has a specific understanding to the police service – any of the extra hours that are necessary to be worked as a state or emergency? You are saying that it is a normal figure for the police service to have an overtime bill to the taxpayer of half a billion dollars?

Hon. Alexander: Member, remember that you all left the police service heavily depleted. So what you are seeing here is just a continuation of what you all would have left for us to deal with.

Mr. Young SC: So you are saying that the police service was running indebtedness for overtime that has now half a billion dollars and still continuing?

Hon. Alexander: Correct.

Mr. Young SC: And then you have, right above that the salaries and cost of living allowance is now for the year, 1.2 billion. So you are telling the population that the police

service is running an overtime bill of \$500 million, whereas the normal salary is just \$1.2 billion?

Hon. Alexander: Member, check you data to make sure that we are on the same page.

Mr. Young SC: I am on the same page. I am on Sub-Item 01, Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance, revised provision for 2026, \$1.2 billion. You are asking for 120 million more. Right under that, Sub-Item 03: Overtime - Monthly Paid Officers, a revised provision of \$500 million. And the question that we are asking is if the bill for overtime services in 2026 is half a billion dollars? Whereas the salary and cost of living for the same 2026 is \$1.2 billion.

Because I remember certainly, under my time as Minister of National Security, a lot of debate over an overtime annual amount of less than \$100 million. And you are now telling us it is \$500 million. There is no way that is arrears from past years of the police being owed overtime in half a billion dollars.

Hon. Alexander: Member, we will provide that information for you.

Mr. Young SC: Thank you. And now – there are questions, Mr. Chair, that my friend would like to ask under the Sub-Item 001.

Mr. Scotland SC: Under the Sub-Item 001 heading, my last question on that is, could the – honourable, I have looked at the figures contained under this heading, Personnel Expenditure, and I do not see you have already said that none of these figures here are associated with the cost of funding the police during states of emergency. You are aware that of the 400 days since you have been in charge in this country, 296 days have been spent under a state of emergency. Where is the cost of the payment for these officers in this heading and how much is that state of emergency costing the population via the police service?

Mr. Chairman: Well, I think those are two questions.

Mr. Scotland SC: Yes, they are two.

Mr. Chairman: I think in this discussion, peculiar discussion, the first falls to be answered.

Mr. Scotland SC: Yes, please.

Mr. Chairman: I think the second one falls outside the remit of this Committee.

Mr. Scotland SC: Agreed.

Hon. Alexander: Could you repeat the question again?

Mr. Scotland SC: Where in these allocations, under any of the Sub Headings in 001, are the figures associated with the payment of police officers during the 296 days that we have spent under a state of emergency under your watch, Hon. Minister?

Hon. Alexander: Chairman, let me inform you that the police officers continue to perform their duties in the same manner and function as they were doing before the state of emergency. It is just strategies that they are using that have brought success to the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Chairman: Port of Spain North.

Mr. Young SC: Thank you very much. Minister, Sub-Head: 02, goods and services, under Item 001: Police Service Trinidad. And I am going down to Sub-Item 09: Rent, Lease, Vehicles and Equipment. I see an additional appropriation now, not a variation. This is a supplemental appropriation, so additional money being provided in the sum of \$5 million. How much of this additional \$5 million is for Aeonix Industries Limited and the lease or rental of electric vehicles for the police service of the Riddara brand?

Hon. Alexander: Member, absolutely none.

8.55 p.m.

Mr. Young SC: Okay. So, these vehicles, these new electric vehicles for the police service, that I am quite happy to see across the country being utilized, how are those being paid for?

Hon. Alexander: We will provide that in writing.

Mr. Young SC: When can we expect to get that in writing?

Hon. Alexander: In due course.

Mr. Young SC: All right. But everything that is supposed to be provided in writing

here – because the way the Standing Finance Committee works is that the completion of this exercise is a report from the Standing Finance Committee that is now due to be debated at 1.30 on Monday. So, your due course has to finish before 1.30 on Monday. Will we get the assurance that we get that provided to us in writing before the debate on the report coming out of this Standing Finance Committee at 1.30 on Monday?

Hon. Alexander: A good attempt will be made to provide the information.

Mr. Young SC: Knowing that it is the efficiency of the police service, I am sure that they will provide it by 1.30 on Monday. So, out of this \$5million, on the same line item, you are saying that absolutely none of that \$5million is towards these new electric vehicles?

Mr. Chairman: I think asked and answered. Come on, next question. Asked and answered already.

Mr. Young SC: I am seeking confirmation.

Mr. Chairman: Confirmation, same answer, asked and answered. Next question.

Mr. Young SC: Under Sub-Item 13: Maintenance of Vehicles, you are asking, or you are being provided with an additional \$5million that is a supplementation. Is any of that \$5million towards the infrastructure to support the electric vehicles?

Hon. Alexander: Member, no.

Mr. Young SC: Thank you. And then the last question I have under this Sub-Head is at Sub-Item 40: Food at Institutions, Minister, in October, we agreed to, and there was a provision of \$12.5million for food at institutions. As I understand it, this is for the provision of food to various police stations, for prisoners, et cetera, but also, maybe, police officers. You have now come to Parliament for an additional \$10.2 million for the rest of the fiscal. How much of this \$10.2 million, additional money that the taxpayers are being asked to provide for food, is as a result of the State of Emergency?

Hon. Alexander: Member, the sum is to settle outstanding debts.

Mr. Young SC: And none of which has arisen as a result of the additional facilities that are being utilized under the State of Emergency?

Hon. Alexander: Member, what we are saying is, it is bills on hand for nine companies,

outstanding debts.

Mr. Young SC: Would you provide that to us as well in writing?

Hon. Alexander: And include previous years.

Mr. Young SC: Yeah. So, you will include everything for us, right?

Hon. Alexander: We will try.

Mr. Young SC: Thank you. No further questions.

Mr. Chairman: Member for Arouca/Lopinot.

Mr. Gonzales: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Minister, I am at Sub-Head 02; Sub-Item 09. That increase of \$5 million, Minister, is it for new rentals or existing rentals?

Hon. Alexander: Existing.

Mr. Gonzales: Existing rentals?

Hon. Alexander: Yes.

Mr. Gonzales: How many providers?

Hon. Alexander: Twenty-three service providers.

Mr. Gonzales: Twenty-three service providers?

Hon. Alexander: Yeah.

Mr. Gonzales: And the \$5 million would cover expected expenditure towards the end of this fiscal, or is it to cover sums owed prior to this variation or supplementation?

Hon. Alexander: The TTPS currently has outstanding vehicle maintenance –

Mr. Gonzales: No, it is rentals, not maintenance. It is rentals.

Hon. Alexander: Rentals?

Mr. Gonzales: Yes.

Mr. Tancoo: Chair, I want to refer the hon. Member – you see, a lot of work was done to provide some documentation for Members opposite, and for the Committee as a whole. There is an agenda. The agenda includes, on page 11, the answers to the question you are asking. I will encourage Members to read this document. You took a 25-minute period –

Mr. Gonzales: No, no, no. Mr. Chair, we are asking questions in this Standing Finance

for the benefit of the listening public. The public does not have any agenda –

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Gonzales: – that Minister would have provided. So, I am asking a question of the Minister –

Mr. Tancoo: Then allow me –

Hon. Member: – so that the public can understand where the sums of money are being allocated for.

Mr. Tancoo: So, allow me, please. The sum of this \$5 million referenced under 02/001/09 is to:

“...meet the cost incurred for rental of additional vehicles for assignment to specialist sections, to be used in covert operations during the present State of Emergency. In addition, to covering outstanding payments for rental of additional vehicles outstanding payments for fiscal 2025...”

Mr. Gonzales: So, it is additional vehicles. How many additional vehicles?

Hon. Alexander: Member, the police service has 188 vehicles. From time to time, they are switched, changed, sometimes from cars to SUVs. So most of the time, not all of the time, that is what is happening in terms of the allocation. The allocation will assist in meeting outstanding obligations and maintaining operational mobility.

Mr. Gonzales: Is it for overt operations or a covert operation?

Hon. Alexander: Both.

Mr. Gonzales: Both? Can you provide the Committee, Minister, with a list of the service providers?

Hon. Alexander: No, no, no. I would not do that.

Mr. Gonzales: Why would you not do that?

Hon. Alexander: Because that should be against national security interests. Because it makes no sense that I tell you who are the owners of the vehicles – just now you will ask me for the number of the vehicles.

Mr. Gonzales: So you are saying that the public ought not to know?

Hon. Alexander: No.

Mr. Gonzales: So the public ought not to know?

Hon. Alexander: No.

Mr. Chairman: I think the Minister has invoked the national security exception. So, as I have always said, there are other ways you can access that information. We just need to read the case of *Conway v River*.

Mr. Gonzales: Sub-Item 04; Item 007: Gratuities to Contract Officers –

Mr. Scotland SC: Mr. Chairman – [*Inaudible*] – so, I do not want to run afoul of any procedures.

Mr. Imbert: [*Inaudible*]

Mr. Chairman: Diego Martin North/East.

Mr. Imbert: Thank you. Can I just get clarification from the Minister? I heard two things that, in terms of Sub-Item 03/01/001, none of this \$500 million is for call-out for officers during the State of Emergency. You said none, right? Is that not what you said? I am just getting clarity on what you said. You said, none. Nothing of this \$500 million is for the overtime, is for the call-out during the State of Emergency?

Mr. Gonzales: It is not for call-out for the State of Emergency.

Mr. Imbert: Right. And secondly, you said, it is less than last year?

Hon. Alexander: It is much less than last year.

Mr. Imbert: This \$500 million is much less than what was spent in the last fiscal year?

Hon. Alexander: No, no. You asked me if the overtime – are you asking me if the overtime bill was less than last year? The answer is, yes.

Mr. Imbert: The overtime bill under Sub-Item 03: Monthly Paid Officers, \$500 million, provision for 2026, you are saying that is much less than last year?

Hon. Alexander: I am saying to you that the amount of overtime gained last year is less than this year.

Mr. Imbert: Sorry, I do not want to understand the response.

Hon. Alexander: You are confused.

Mr. Imbert: There is an amount here, \$500 million. I heard you say that this amount is less than the amount spent last year. Is that what you said?

Hon. Alexander: One hundred thousand times.

Mr. Imbert: I am not hearing you, Minister.

Hon. Alexander: How many times do I have to tell you? I do not know if you are not hearing me well.

Mr. Imbert: No, well, you are not answering the question. It is a direct question. Was it less than \$500 million last year? Yes or no?

Hon. Alexander: I said to you that the overtime last year was less than this year.

9.05 p.m.

Mr. Imbert: Okay, so this is higher than last year. No problem. Thank you. That is making sense now.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, Member for the Spain South.

Mr. Scotland SC: The Sub-Head –

Hon. Alexander: Chairman, please allow me to, because I do not know if the Member for Diego Martin North/West –

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: North/East

Hon. Alexander: – North/East is “confuffled”.

Member: “Confuffled?”

Hon. Alexander: What I said to you is that the overtime for 2026, which is this year, is less than 2025 and 2024.

Hon Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Imbert: That is not true, by the way, “eh”. That is not true.

Mr. Chairman: Port of Spain South.

Mr. Imbert: The figures are in here. I went and checked it myself.

Hon. Alexander: “Yuh wukin’ admin?”

Mr. Imbert: It is more this year than last year, but it is all right.

Mr. Chairman: Member for Port of Spain South.

Hon. Alexander: “Yuh hadda be wukin’ admin.”

Mr. Chairman: Diego Martin North/East, your colleague is waiting to ask a question.

Hon. Alexander: “He wukin’ admin.”

Mr. Scotland SC: Under Sub-Head 02/011/03, there is an increase for an allocation, Uniforms for \$20 million for this fiscal. Could the hon. Minister tell us what is the expected delivery schedule for these uniforms that these increases attract?

Hon. Alexander: Member, we will also provide that in writing for you.

Mr. Scotland SC: And could you tell us whether these uniforms – I see they are standard duty uniforms and digital camouflage uniforms. Will any of these uniforms – seeing that we are spending \$20 million on them – be equipped with body cameras?

Hon. Alexander: No, Member. The body cam is a different procurement.

Mr. Chairman: I think those are two different sub-headings as well.

Hon. Alexander: Yeah, different procurement.

Mr. Scotland SC: No, Mr. Chairman, I understand, but my question, Mr. Chairman, is seeing that they are getting these uniforms – because we know there are some of these uniforms that come already equipped with body cameras. So I am asking the question – yes, you do not know that there are technologies out there?

Hon. Alexander: You saw that on TV?

Mr. Scotland SC: No, Sir, on AI.

Members: [*Laughter*]

Mr. Chairman: Alright, I think we –

Mr. Scotland SC: So is it – are any of these uniforms going to come equipped with body cameras, yes or no?

Hon. Alexander: I said no.

Mr. Scotland SC: Okay, thank you, Mr. Chairman, I will move on.

Hon. Alexander: Mr. Chairman –

Mr. Chairman: Mausica.

Hon. Alexander: Mr. Chairman, can I – I want to assist the Member. These uniforms are

patrol order Nos. 1 to 4, which are referred to as “orders of dress”. And they are for a number of officers, 9,464 officers.

Mr. Chairman: Member for Malabar/Mausica.

Mr. Romain: Thank you, Chair, that is actually the question I was going to ask but the Minister pre-empted it. Thank you.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, very well.

Mr. Romain: Thank you.

Hon. Alexander: “Yuh help out yuh brother.”

Mr. Gonzales: Thank you, Mr Chair. Minister, Item 007, Sub-Item 40, Gratuities to Contract Officers. How many –

Hon. Alexander: Pardon me?

Mr. Gonzales: Sub-Head 04, Item 007, Sub-Item 40: Gratuities to Contract Officers. How many contract officers, former contract officers, or existing contract officers, will benefit from this allocation of \$4 million?

Hon. Alexander: Member, we have 161 contracted officers.

Mr. Gonzales: One hundred and sixty-one –

Hon. Alexander: Yeah.

Mr. Gonzales: –contracted officers? Those officers – I assume, you are referring to gratuities.

Hon. Alexander: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Gonzales: Their contract would have come to an end. Are they still employed in the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service, or they are outside of the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service, awaiting their payment of gratuities?

Hon. Alexander: Some of their contracts were renewed, and some were not.

Mr. Gonzales: How many?

Hon. Alexander: I will provide that in writing for you.

Mr. Gonzales: Okay. So the \$4 million in the increase in allocation, would be to pay gratuities to 161 contract officers?

Hon. Alexander: Yes.

Mr. Gonzales: Okay.

Questions put and agreed to.

Head 64, be supplemented by the sum of \$64,200,000.

Head 64, be varied by an increase in the sum of \$275,000,000.

Mr. Chairman: Minister, hang on a second. Thank you very much to the Commissioner of Police and his staff. We wish you the best. I propose to do – because the Permanent Secretary is the same – out of convenience, I propose to move to Head 83 now, so we could save some time.

Head 83: Ministry of Homeland Security.

Mr. Chairman: I now invite the hon. Minister to give his characteristic, brief and succinct statement.

Hon. Alexander: Thank you, Mr. Chair. The Ministry of Homeland Security continues to fulfil its mandate of protecting our citizens, securing our borders, and strengthening national security. Today, I seek the approval of this honourable Committee for a variation of appropriation in the amount of \$16.1 million under the heading 83, Ministry of Homeland Security. This funding is required primarily to meet salaries related to obligations within the Immigration Division to the end of fiscal 2026.

The Immigration Division continues to play a critical role in protecting Trinidad and Tobago's borders and managing the movement of persons into and out of this country. Over the past year, the Ministry, through its Immigration Division, successfully implemented the Migrant Registration Framework programme, which has strengthened the Government's ability to recognize and monitor the migrant population. The Ministry has also advanced the modernization of border management through the implementation of an online arrival and departure platform, improving efficiency and enhancing the immigration screening process. In addition, the Ministry is currently in the process of modernizing the passport system by transitioning the machine-readable passports to an e-passport. Mr. Chair, I look forward to the questions from these hon.

Members.

Question proposed: That Head 83, Ministry of Homeland Security, be varied by an increase in the sum of \$16,100,000.

Mr. Chairman: Member for Port of Spain South.

Mr. Scotland SC: This increase is really under one Sub-Item, Salaries and Cost of Living. Does any of this include back pay for any of these workers, firstly?

Hon. Alexander: Member, no. No back pay.

Mr. Scotland SC: Also, you would agree that the full amount of the \$16.1 million variation is allocated exclusively to Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance under the Immigration Division Item 004, Sub-Item 01. Why was the entire supplementation for the Ministry directed to a single Sub-Item?

9.15 p.m.

Hon. Alexander: Member —

Mr. Scotland SC: Yes.

Hon. Alexander: The Immigration Department had a shortfall in salary.

Mr. Scotland SC: Does this reflect a structural salary issue within the Immigration Department that was not anticipated in the original Estimates?

Hon. Alexander: No, Member.

Mr. Scotland SC: The immigration salary shows a 31 per cent increase. The Immigration Division salary provision rises from \$52,280,700 to \$68,128,700, an increase—I have worked it out to 31 per cent. Can the hon. Minister confirm whether this is attributable to new appointments, reclassification of existing officers, or some combination of both? It is a 31 per cent increase.

Hon. Alexander: No new hiring Member; no new classification. That is just to pay salaries.

Mr. Scotland SC: Wow. And not taken into account initially. I see also, hon. Minister, that under this Sub-Head no other Sub-Heads were adjusted. The Ministry's Goods and Services Capital Sub-Head show no change, despite a total revised budget of nearly \$1.95

billion. Does this mean that all other divisions within Homeland Security, including coast guard, prison service and fire services, are operating within their original allocations?

Mr. Chairman: Alright, I do not think that question falls to be answered. You have to direct your question to a particular – bearing in mind Standing Order 87 or whatever it is, that narrows the focus of – it has to be limited to the Heads, the supplemental Heads.

Mr. Scotland SC: Okay, Mr. Chairman, I will pitch it.

Hon. Alexander: Pitch it.

Mr. Scotland SC: I will pitch it, and hitch it to the Heads. There is an increase, and only as it relates to Immigration, there are no other Sub-Head increases, and that increase as it relates to Immigration is \$16.1 million. Does it mean that the other constituents of Homeland Security, the coast guard, and prison service, fire services are operating within their original allocations?

Hon. Alexander: Member, I could answer to \$16.1 million, Immigration.

Mr. Chairman: I think that is what falls to be answered on this discussion.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Chairman: Let us move on, unless there is another question on this.

Mr. Scotland SC: I want to be clear. This reads as a variation rather than a supplementation. Is my first premise correct, hon. Minister? It is a variation.

Hon. Alexander: Yes, Member.

Mr. Scotland SC: The adjustment then, having been classified as a variation of appropriation rather than a supplementation, meaning funds are being moved from elsewhere within the Ministry, can the hon. Minister identify which Sub-Head or Item is being reduced to find that \$16.1 million salary increase in Immigration? That is the first question. Where is it coming?

Hon. Alexander: Member, there is no movement of funds within the Ministry.

Mr. Scotland SC: Well, it is a variation; you should seek some assistance.

Hon. Alexander: The \$16.1 million is within the budget cycle.

Mr. Scotland SC: Yes. What operational –

Hon. Alexander: And within the total appropriation for the Ministry.

Mr. Scotland SC: So, what operational impact will that reduction have on the Ministry, therefore?

Mr. Chairman: I think it first has to be established that there has been a reduction in some other way. I think the Minister was very clear that there has been no reduction in any other branch of his Ministry. I think that much is clear.

Mr. Scotland SC: Well, in that case, Mr. Chairman, I do not have any other question.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, so I think we had a question from Malabar/Mausica, or has it been answered?

Mr. Romain: No, not yet.

Mr. Chairman: Yeah, Malabar/Mausica.

Mr. Romain: Yes, of course. Same line item. Minister, do you anticipate that this allocation would assist in treating with the backlog of applications for passports in terms of productivity?

Hon. Alexander: Member, the passport issue is a different one.

Mr. Romain: No, in terms of productivity. Do we anticipate that would see an improvement in the —

Hon. Alexander: Immigration officers do not make passports.

Mr. Romain: Okay.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, right. Okay. There being no other questions.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 83 varied by an increase in the sum of 16,100,000.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, thank you.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much, public servants. Alright, so we go back to the batting order, and we move now to Head 65: Ministry of Foreign and CARICOM Affairs.

Head 65: Ministry of Foreign and CARICOM Affairs \$34,516,469.

Hon. Members: [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Chairman: Okay, Head 65: Ministry of Foreign and CARICOM Affairs. Ministry of Foreign and CARICOM Affairs, supplementation of \$34,516,469. Hon. Minister, I now invite you to make your brief opening statement.

Hon. Sobers: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, thank you for the opportunity to participate in this meeting of the Standing Finance Committee, especially in the context of the Ministry of Foreign and CARICOM Affairs being provided with supplemental funding in the amount of \$34,516,469. This increased funding is reflective of the recognition by the Minister of Finance and the wider Government of Trinidad and Tobago, of the important role the Ministry of Foreign and CARICOM Affairs is playing in making Trinidad and Tobago safer, stronger, and more prosperous via engagement bilaterally and multilaterally at headquarters through its 17 diplomatic missions and three consulates general.

As the hon. Prime Minister would have detailed in her statement to the Parliament last Friday. No other Government in the history of Trinidad and Tobago has leveraged its foreign policy in such a short space of time to achieve tangible results for the people of Trinidad and Tobago. The most recent example of this was the election of Trinidad and Tobago as a non-permanent member to the United Nations Security Council after 40 years. More historically, since coming into office one year ago, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, through the Ministry of Foreign and CARICOM Affairs, has successfully hosted several high-level visits and bilateral meetings to advance this country's commercial interests. Elevated this country's leadership with the world's most powerful economy and the country's largest trading partner, the United States of America.

Secured the relevant OFAC licences from the United States of America to allow this country, to engage with bordering countries and multinational companies to monetize cross-border hydrocarbons. Obtain grant funding of over TT\$100 million and actively pursued new trade relationships between Trinidad and Tobago and South America, in particular Mercosur.

9.25 p.m.

Chair, given the specific purpose and mandate of this Standing Finance Committee, as opposed to other bodies of the Parliament, myself and the team from the Ministry of Foreign and Caricom Affairs are happy to provide any additional information or explanations for Members of the House in order to facilitate a better consideration of the proposed supplemental funding under Head 65.

I take this opportunity to thank the staff at the Ministry, at headquarters and at the overseas missions who continue to offer yeoman service to this country by raising the flag of Trinidad and Tobago high through promoting our country's interests. They do so tirelessly in an ever-increasingly volatile and dynamic global environment, and for their efforts, I express sincere appreciation. Mr. Chairman, thank you.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you.

Question proposed: That Head 65 be supplemented by the sum of \$34,516,469.

Mr. Chairman: Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West.

Mr. Young SC: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Minister, I am going straight to the Development Programme, Sub-Head 09: Development Programme; Item 005: Multi-Sectoral and Other Services; Project 075: Upgrade Works at Overseas Missions, and a request for a supplementation of \$13.7 million. Am I correct to say that this is to cover costs of proposed repairs to the residence of the permanent representative of the permanent mission to the United Nations in New York? It is?

Hon. Sobers: Yes, Member.

Mr. Young SC: Who is the current permanent representative for Trinidad and Tobago to the United Nations in New York?

Hon. Sobers: Ambassador Neil Parsan, Member.

Mr. Young SC: Are you aware that this same individual spent taxpayers' money in Washington, D.C., when he was there at a sum of over, if I remember correctly, \$20 million, putting down palatial residence. Is it the intention to do same here?

Mr. Chairman: All right. I do not think that—

Mr. Young SC: I am asking my question.

Mr. Chairman: I do not think that arises for —

Mr. Young SC: But it must arise.

Hon. Sobers: It does not arise.

Mr. Chairman: Yes, but it arises for the — the Minister has answered the question.

Whether the Minister is aware of whatever happened before —

Mr. Young SC: [*Inaudible*]

Mr. Chairman: Hold on — in a period that did not fall within his tenure about a palatial residence and upgrade, does not fall to be answered at this Committee. I suppose you can do it in another way but not —

Mr. Young SC: I can, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Chairman: It does not fall to be answered —

Mr. Young SC: I can, Mr. Chair. I did not even reach the question. I am allowed five minutes to get to my question. So in providing context of the individual involved, and it is past history, I am now going to what appears to be another such opportunity. This \$13.7million, is it for the residence of the permanent representative? First question.

Hon. Sobers: Yes, Member.

Mr. Young SC: Who is doing the procurement for it?

Hon. Sobers: Member, this was done pursuant to a joint site visit conducted by the Ministry of Works and Infrastructure and the Ministry of Foreign and CARICOM Affairs in 2024.

Mr. Young SC: Right.

Hon. Sobers: Several deficiencies were identified at the residence that rendered the building uninhabitable for use, resulting in the incurrence of the use of rental accommodation and associated costs. The proposed upgrade works are therefore necessary to restore the property's safety, functionality and efficiency, including, but not limited to, roof and ceiling replacements, structural repairs to prevent further water damage, surface crack repairs and repainting, electrical repairs and new fittings.

Completion of these works will allow the property to be returned to its intended use and significantly reduce the continued need for rental accommodations. This was done based upon a request from the former ambassador under the People's National Movement.

Mr. Young SC: Minister, are you aware, because this is just—the only supplementation is for New York. Every single embassy we have around the world has similar requests. So, for example, Venezuela—I am asking, I have not finished my question. So, for example, Venezuela, for the whole period, was requesting the same thing. My question is, why the prioritization of a residence for Parsan?

Hon. Sobers: Member, that question does not arise. What I would say to you, you are correct, the majority of a lot of these missions and embassies and housing accommodation was left to rot under the last administration for 10 years.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Sobers: And the first one you decide to do is a person who has undergone the same thing in D.C. at the taxpayers—

Hon. Sobers: The first one I decided to do was based upon documentation that was forwarded to the Ministry.

Mr. Young SC: [*Inaudible*]—over \$20million before he was kicked out of office.

Hon. Sobers: It was left for 10 years by you and your foolish administration.

Mr. Young SC: It was not left out of—[*Inaudible*]

Hon. Sobers: If you had any—[*Inaudible*]

Mr. Young SC: The Member of the Opposition—[*Inaudible*]—was there quite comfortably.

Mr. Chairman: Members, stop this exchange. The question has been asked and answered. Unless there is another—

Hon. Members: [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Padarath: Mr. Chairman, may I draw to your attention, and this is not the first time this has happened, the technicians who are operating the audio system of the Parliament cannot determine who they want to listen to –

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Padarath: – and therefore, I am seeking your direct intervention because this is not the first time. So the bias –

Hon. Members: [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Padarath: No, I am not going to apologize for that at all.

Hon. Member: My mic was being turned off too – [*Inaudible*]

Mr. Padarath: The bias approach by the staff and the technicians to mute while we speak, and sometimes the audio while it is being played on the Parliament Channel, will not be tolerated, and therefore we ask –

Hon. Members: [*Continuous desk thumping*]

Mr. Padarath: – from now I am signalling that there will be a meeting of the broadcasting committee to treat with these matters.

Hon. Members: [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. Member: “Who de hell you telling hell? Who de hell you telling hell?”

Mr. Chairman: Okay, let us –

Hon. Member: You.

Hon. Members: [*Continuous crosstalk*]

Mr. Chairman: Okay, it is 9.30 in the night. There is a solution to this, we will convene the meeting of the broadcast committee. There is a way to get the empirical evidence and data. Let us not allow ourselves to be sidetracked into this and prolong this issue which can be dealt with in another way. Right?

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: Mr. Chairman, you letting them attack – [*Inaudible*]

Hon. Members: [*Continuous crosstalk*]

Hon. Member: Mr. Speaker, this Government is a bunch of dictators –

Hon. Member: And this was raised already.

Hon. Member: Who are you? This is tyranny.

Hon. Member: "Yuh outta place."

Hon. Member: This was raised already.

Hon. Members: [*Continuous crosstalk*]

Hon. Member: Tyranny enough— [*Inaudible*]

Hon. Member: He attacked the staff.

Hon. Member: They just bully the staff.

Hon. Member: "They outta place."

Hon. Member: What is wrong with you all? What is wrong with "allyuh"?

Mr. Chairman: I am going to stop this now —

Mr. Padarath: Mr. Chairman, we will not continue to — [*Inaudible*]

Hon. Member: You cannot do that.

Mr. Chairman: I am going to stop this now. Everyone, be quiet.

Hon. Member: That is ridiculous.

Hon. Member: This is a free and democratic society. What the hell is wrong with this Government?

Mr. Chairman: Everyone, be quiet.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Members: What is wrong with this Government?

Hon. Member: "Outta place."

Mr. Chairman: Everyone, I have —

Hon. Members: [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. Member: And you have not come to the defence of our own staff. You have not come to the defence of our own staff in the Parliament, Mr. Chairman.

Hon. Member: Call the police for him. Call the police for him. Call the police for him.

Hon. Member: That is bullying behaviour.

Hon. Member: Go and make a report to the police.

[Mr. Chairman confers with Clerk]

Hon. Members: *[Continuous crosstalk]*

Mr. Chairman: Okay. It is 9.33. Let us all calm down, exercise a measure of verbal and –

Hon. Members: *[Crosstalk]*

Mr. Chairman: Let us exercise some restraint. This unbridled shouting is not helpful. There is a way we can do this. If it is there is an allegation, or whatever it is, we can collect the empirical data, subject it to analysis, but for the sake of moving on, let us move on. We have 10 Heads yet to go. Okay? There is another way to deal with that. There is another way to deal with that, and you know it, you are an experienced parliamentarian. We are sitting in Committee here, okay, so you know the other way to deal with that, everyone knows their way to deal with that, procedurally.

[Mr. Chairman confers with Clerk]

Further, I would ask all Members, please, exercise a great degree of restraint with the Parliament staff. The Parliament staff, they go beyond the call of duty, by and large.

Hon. Members: *[Desk thumping]*

9.35 p.m.

Mr. Chairman: All right. So, let us –

Hon. Members: *[Continuous desk thumping]*

Mr. Chairman: I would trust that, sometimes, when my ruling do not find favour with you, you would pound the desk as vociferously as you are pounding it now.

Hon. Members: *[Desk thumping and crosstalk]*

Mr. Chairman: All right.

Mr. Scotland SC: This is the first time in the history of the democracy of Trinidad and Tobago, that we are not –

Mr. Chairman: Port of Spain South –

Mr. Scotland SC: No, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Chairman: I am not having a discussion. We are moving on.

Mr. Scotland SC: Mr. Chairman, I cannot sit with this.

Mr. Chairman: Well, Port of Spain South, there is—

Hon. Member: Well go. Well go.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Scotland SC: [*Inaudible*]

Mr. Chairman: Port of Spain South.

Mr. Scotland SC: [*Inaudible*]

Mr. Chairman: Port of Spain South!

Mr. Scotland SC:— in the history of democracy!

Mr. Chairman: I am instructing you to be quiet.

Mr. Scotland SC: Why Mr. Chairman? Why should I be quiet in light of this injustice, Mr. Chairman?

Mr. Chairman: Because we are moving on.

Hon. Members: [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. Member: Take off his mic.

Mr. Scotland SC: Mr. Chairman, this is the first time.

Mr. Chairman: So be quiet. We are moving on.

Hon. Members: [*Continuous crosstalk*]

Mr. Chairman: The issue has somewhat been dealt with. We will deal with it through another procedural device and mechanism. If you do not allow me to move on—

Mr. Scotland SC: Mr. Chairman, [*Inaudible*] so I just want to ask, Mr. Chairman, has that ever happened in— [*Inaudible*]

Mr. Chairman: We are moving on.

Hon. Members: [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Scotland SC: Okay, Mr. Chairman. [*Inaudible*]

Hon. Members: [*Continuous crosstalk*]

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, the question is that the 2026 appropriation for Head 65.

[Procedural Clerk notifies Chairman of Member's intent to raise a question]

Mr. Chairman: Listen, you all need to tell me prior to, what it is. Okay.

Hon. Members: *[Continuous crosstalk]*

Mr. Chairman: All of this foolishness.

Mr. Young SC: Mr. Chair, the Member for Couva South got up and went and took a photograph right there—

Mr. Scotland SC: Yeah. In front of you.

Mr. Young SC:— the technician there.

Mr. Chairman: I did not see that.

Ms. Benjamin: And so what?

Hon. Members: *[Crosstalk]*

Ms. Benjamin: And so what?

Hon. Members: *[Continuous crosstalk]*

Ms. Benjamin: And so what?

Hon. Members: *[Continuous crosstalk]*

Mr. Chairman: Jesus Christ.

Ms. Benjamin: Mr. Chair, if you will allow me. For clarity and for the public record, for the public record. I am a member of the Broadcasting Committee—

Hon. Members: *[Crosstalk]*

Ms. Benjamin: This situation with regards to the mic—

Hon. Members: *[Shouting]*

Ms. Benjamin:— was raised before. They raised the situation of the Government's mics continually being mute.

Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: The mic does not be so. No. No. No. No. No.

Ms. Benjamin: It was raised before.

Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: No. No. No. No. No. No.

Hon. Member: Ridiculous.

Ms. Benjamin: Do not let us sit here and act like it is the first time!

Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: We not sitting here and allowing this [*Inaudible*].

Ms. Benjamin: It was raised before by myself and Member Ameen.

Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: This is a democracy.

Ms. Benjamin: It was raised before.

Mr. Scotland SC: Shame! Shame! Shame!

Hon. Members: Shame! Shame! Shame! Shame! Shame! Shame!

Ms. Benjamin: Shame on you! Shame on you!

Hon. Members: Shame! Shame! Shame! Shame! Shame! Shame!

Mr. Chairman: Okay. The sitting of this House is going to be suspended for 10 minutes.

Hon. Member: Shame.

Hon. Members: [*Shouting*]

Mr. Chairman: We come back at 9.47.

Hon. Members: [*Continuous shouting*]

Hon. Member: Shut up? Eh? Who you are?

Mr. Young SC: "Yuh lil hen".

Hon. Members: [*Continuous shouting*]

Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: Little bully and hooligan.

Mr. Young SC: We will not allow you all to bully staff!

Hon. Members: [*Continuous shouting*]

Dr. Gadsby-Dolly: Ridiculous.

Mr. Young SC: "We do not afraid you all!"

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

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

Mr. Chairman: Member for Arima.

Mr. Gonzales: Mr. Chairman, before the Member for Arima asks her question, we just want to simply ask a question of you, as Chair of these proceedings. Are you going to allow or to ignore what transpired at a short while ago, where the Leader of

Government Business was caught taking a photograph of a member of staff and attacking a member of staff in this intimidating way?

Hon. Members: [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Gonzales: Are we going to allow that? Are we going to allow that?

Mr. Chairman: First of all—

Mr. Gonzales: It has to be addressed, Mr. Chairman. It has to be addressed.

Mr. Chairman: First of all, first of all, first of all, I do not have any evidence before me now of that. I did not see the Leader of Government Business do that, first of all. If someone else saw that, that is a matter for you to use a different avenue to do whatever. Procedurally, you can do whatever you wish with that. It will behold to be decided in a different forum. I did not see that. Okay. And I asked my staff very—that is why I suspended, to find out what actually happened. Okay. I did not see it. If anybody saw it, they are free to make use of it with what they wish of it. That will be dealt with in a different manner.

Mr. Young SC: So, Mr. Speaker, is it that there is not going to be an investigation with respect to what was brought to your attention? I do not expect you to see it. **Mr. Chairman:** No. No. I do not have—

Mr. Young SC: I do not expect you to have the evidence.

Mr. Chairman: Hold on. Hold on. What Standing Order am I going to utilize to unilaterally—

Mr. Young SC: [*Interruption*]

Mr. Chairman: Hold on—commence an investigation? To use your own words. The Standing Orders do not permit that.

Mr. Young SC: If it is that parliamentary staff are not going to be provided with protection by the Parliament from Members intimidating or assaulting them, and we are now going to be depending on Standing Orders—

Mr. Chairman: I think it—

Mr. Young SC:—something is fundamentally wrong.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

9.50 p.m.

Mr. Chairman: I think you need – we need to go back to what you initially asked of me. We are in the middle of a committee, what are we supposed to do? Suspend this, put it in abeyance and conduct some sort of inquisition?

Mr. Young SC: No, Sir. No, Sir. Because there is no way that an investigation can take –

Mr. Chairman: That is my point. And that is –

Mr. Young SC: But you said that you were not going – so I am asking a simple question and it does not have to be you. Is an investigation going to be conducted into what has been brought to our attention –

Mr. Chairman: I told you –

Mr. Young SC: – that a Member of Parliament –

Mr. Chairman: – every Member –

Mr. Young SC: – was intimidating, potentially assaulting, you know the definition of “assault”, a member of the parliamentary staff.

Mr. Chairman: So that is a bit hyperbolic to call it an assault, if taking it at its highest.

Mr. Young SC: The definition of assault is once a person apprehends or fears, or believes there is a threat –

Mr. Chairman: Well, look –

Mr. Young SC: – to his or her person, that is assault.

Mr. Chairman: I am not going to get into the –

Mr. Young SC: I am not the judge to determine.

Mr. Chairman: – the nuances of the –

Mr. Young SC: I said it can amount to an assault.

Mr. Chairman: Port of Spain North, I am talking, right? So I am not going to get into the nuances of the criminal law of that or the law of that. I have a committee to

complete. It is 9.52 p.m.; I am going to complete my committee. I told you all, there is a mechanism, whoever wishes to make use of it, that is a matter for you. Right? We will deal with that, this is not the process to deal with. I do not have the power to conduct any form of unilateral investigation.

Mr. Hosein: Mr. Chair –

Mr. Chairman: Barataria.

Mr. Hosein: –in terms of fairness, the Opposition placed certain matters on the record, the Government has to also respond on record.

Mr. Chairman: Yes.

Mr. Hosein: By saying that we completely reject the submissions by the Opposition –

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Hosein: –of the intimidation of any member of staff. The Leader of Government Business on several occasions would have raised this with the muting of microphones. It happened to us when we were in Opposition, it continued into Government, it happened up to this evening right before you suspended, Mr. Chairman, and I think the Leader of Government Business, as the person in charge of this Bench, had all rights to raise that particular issue –

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Hosein: –to protect the integrity of the process and I fully agree with you, Mr. Chair, that if the Opposition feels aggrieved in whatever way, there are avenues to do it, but this is not the avenue.

Mr. Chairman: This is not the avenue.

Mr. Young SC: Just for the record –

Mr. Hosein: This committee is for the examination of the Heads of Expenditure –

Mr. Chairman: Right.

Mr. Hosein: –and I think we should get on with the business.

Mr. Chairman: Which I propose to move expeditiously to do. Member for Arima.

Mr. Young SC: And which we will do. Before the Member for Arima, if she will permit me, for the record, no one on this side in the Opposition has raised any issues with a complaint being made about the muting of the mics.

Mr. Chairman: Alright.

Mr. Young SC: The issue that we are raising and bringing to the attention—

Mr. Chairman: Port of Spain South.

Mr. Young SC: Is the intimidation of parliamentary staff by the Member for Couva South.

Mr. Chairman: Port of Spain South.

Mr. Young SC: Let us not conflate and confuse the issue.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Chairman: You have said that. I have said this Committee is not the forum to decide that. I am firm in my view that we are here for a limited purpose. This committee is not the forum to decide that, okay. So we are going to move ahead, whoever feels aggrieved by the conduct of any Member, everyone in this Chamber knows the Standing Orders and knows the recourse you have. Member for Arima, let us continue.

Ms. Beckles: Mr. Chairman, Head 65: 04/001/01: Caribbean Community Secretariat. Mr. Chair, I would like to find out from the hon. Minister whether the sum allocated in sum of \$18,020,883, whether that is going to be sufficient to pay whatever I assume is outstanding? In other words, is that the sum outstanding and are we paying off in full?

Hon. Sobers: Member, I am informed that it will cover up to December 31st, 2025. So it is an outstanding Bill from before.

Ms. Beckles: Can I also enquire, hon. Minister, as it relates to the Peacekeeping figure of \$2,739,200 is that also the outstanding, or would there be moneys subsequent?

Hon. Sobers: Member, I am informed that it will be up to the same period of December 2025.

Ms. Beckles: Thank you.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 65 be supplemented by the sum of \$34,516,469.

Head 67: Ministry of Planning, Economic Affairs and Development, a supplementation of \$1,628,803 and a variation in the sum of \$8,361,190.

Mr. Chairman: Minister, can I—?

Hon. Tancoo: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chairman and all Members of this honourable Committee, it is my privilege on behalf of my colleague, the substantive Minister of Planning, Economic Affairs and Development, to outline the variation of appropriation and supplementation of appropriation to the Ministry of Planning, Economic Affairs and Development for the 2025/2026 fiscal period.

The Ministry of Planning, Economic Affairs and Development has played a central and transformative role in advancing the Government's vision by driving policies and programmes that strengthen economic resilience, environmental sustainability and human development. Through the stewardship of the Public Sector Investment Programme, the PSIP, the Ministry has coordinated strategic investments and infrastructure, digital transformation, climate resilience, urban planning and economic diversification to stimulate growth and improve the quality of life for citizens.

In the area of environmental development, the Ministry has continued to lead initiatives focused on climate adaptation, sustainable land use, biodiversity protection and green economic opportunities, recognizing that environmental stewardship is essential to long-term national prosperity.

10.00 p.m.

Hon. Tancoo: At the same time, the Ministry's emphasis on citizen-centred development, social infrastructure, community resilience and inclusive policy planning reflects a commitment to ensuring that economic progress translates into meaningful benefits for all citizens, particularly vulnerable communities, as well as current and future generations. The variation of appropriation under Salaries and COLA of \$8,361,198 is to facilitate the increased salary rates which took effect from January 10th, 2026.

In addition, the supplementation of appropriation under Contract Employment in the amount of \$1,628,803 is for the filling of positions within this fiscal year. Through integrated planning and strategic national leadership, the Ministry of Planning, Economic Affairs and Development will continue to build a more sustainable, diversified and people-focused Trinidad and Tobago for the remainder of this fiscal year. Mr. Chair, the members of staff or the members of the technical support of the Ministry of Planning, Economic Affairs and Development are here to answer questions which Members opposite may pose.

Questions proposed: That the 2026 appropriation for Head 67, Ministry of Planning, Economic Affairs and Development, be supplemented by the sum of \$1,628,000 and further to that, Head 67, Ministry of Planning, Economic Affairs and Development, be varied by an increase in the sum of \$8,361,190.

Mr. Chairman: Member for Arima.

Ms. Beckles: Thank you kindly, Mr. Chairman. There is only that one Item there under Personnel Expenditure, which is Sub-Head 01, \$8,361,190. Minister, is that both salary increase and arrears?

Hon. Tancoo: I am advised [*Inaudible*] that this is only with regard to the increased salary rates—

Ms. Beckles: Okay.

Hon. Tancoo:— that we will pay to public officers. It does not include arrears.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, thank you. And then the other Item, Sub-Head 02: Contract Employment; Sub-Item 16. Can the Minister indicate how many officers will benefit from the supplementary sum allocated? If you do not have the information now, I can take it in writing.

Hon. Tancoo: I do have the information now. The staff will provide me with the information.

Ms. Beckles: Sure, thank you.

Hon. Tancoo: The \$1.6 million odd is for the filling of a total of 14 positions, two in legal, eight in the National Transformation Unit, and four in the Green Fund Execution Unit during this fiscal.

Ms. Beckles: Okay. Thank you.

Questions put and agreed to.

Head 67 supplemented by the sum of \$1,628,803.

Head 67 varied by an increase in the sum of \$8,361,190.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much, Minister, and the public servants. Head 69: Ministry of Works and Infrastructure.

Hon. Member: Minister, are you ready?

Hon. John: Yes, Sir.

Head 69: Ministry of Works and Infrastructure, a supplementation of \$362,944,942 and a variation in increase in the sum of \$47,365,000.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Minister, can I invite you to make your statement?

Hon. John: Yes, thank you, Chairman, hon. Members of this Committee. Before I get into the figures, allow me to provide a brief overview of the Ministry's work. The Ministry of Works and Infrastructure is responsible for developing, maintaining, and regulating the country's macro infrastructure, the agenda, particularly the revitalization blueprint, its road network, drainage systems and maritime assets, through policy, capital work execution and oversight of several of state enterprises.

For fiscal year 2026/2027, the Ministry receives supplemental and variation funding totalling \$410,309,942, and the allocation addresses specific, committed obligations across three Sub-Heads. Mr. Chairman, the work of this Ministry is reflected across the length and breadth of the country as we continue to prepare for the rainy season. The Drainage Division has completed over 187 water course projects nationwide, with a phase two programme of more than 140 additional projects about to be rolled out and mobilized this week into next week.

We have mapped the flooding hotspots across the country, and work is ongoing in communities such as, but not exclusive to, Bamboo Settlements No. 1, 2 and 3, Brickfield, Carapichaima, Caroni, Cunupia, Felecity, La Paille, Manzanilla, Penal, Diego Martin, Sangre Grande, Sangre Chiquito, San Juan, Saint Joseph Woodland, and Beetham, just to mention a few, because, you know, when UNC wins Beetham wins. Chairman, we all know – please no more shouting – that as soon as one drop of rain falls, Port of Spain is under water. So, just yesterday, the Ministry partnered with the Port of Spain City Corporation to commence cleaning of the underground drains at the Beetham highway, eastbound near PTSC, which will alleviate the flooding right here in the capital city.

Our pumps and gate systems across the country are operational, and we are moving full speed ahead. In the area of infrastructure, in the short term we have prioritized spot patching across the country while a long-term restoration plan is being developed and mapped. To date, the Ministry has completed over 11,324 square meters of patching nationwide utilizing over 3,927 tons of hot-mixed asphalt across high traffic roads. We have addressed over 3,406 road defects, and, of course, we are not stopping there. We continue to support the regional corporations through the provision of over 600 tonnes of hot-mixed asphalt.

We have improved our collaborative efforts with the Water and Sewage Authority to ensure timely road reinstatements as a result of greatly enhanced interagency coordination and collaboration. Within this fiscal we have also completed over 87 road infrastructure projects spanning roadway maintenance, slope stabilization, and bridge upgrades.

Mr. Chairman, I will stop there because the work continues with great urgency and focus. And, of course, before I end, I just want to thank the team at the Ministry of Works and Infrastructure. The work is not easy, but they are up to the challenge. Thank you.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Questions proposed: That the 2026 appropriation for Head 69, Ministry of Works and Infrastructure, a supplementation of \$362,944,942 and further to that, Head 69, Ministry of Works and Infrastructure be varied and increased in the sum of \$47,365,000.

Mr. Chairman: Member for Arima.

Ms. Beckles: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Hon. Minister, Head 69, Sub-Item 02: Highways; Other Contracted Services. Minister, could you indicate that additional \$10 million? Could you indicate what that would be for, please?

Hon. John: This is really to pay for works that had already been done. Actually, I have a whole list of them here.

Ms. Beckles: Okay, so that is completed work?

Hon. John: Completed works, yes.

Ms. Beckles: Outstanding payments?

Hon. John: Money that is outstanding.

Ms. Beckles: Okay, so, hon. Minister, can I ask that you provide a list of that? I do not need it now, but that would be fine.

Hon. John: Yeah, certainly, no problem.

10.10 p.m.

Ms. Beckles: Hon. Minister, same 002, Sub Item 28, Other Contracted Services in the sum of \$14 million. Could you also indicate what that – it is drainage, but is that also completed work, or would that be new?

Hon. John: No, this is proposed programme of works to utilize supplemental funding. One, rehabilitation works along the Cunupia River in the vicinity of No. 263, Southern Main Road, Cunupia, some reinforced concrete wall, removal of failed section and construction of two reinforced concrete retaining walls at Tahadille Road, Pierre Road, Charleville. So that is removal of failed section of these walls and construction of two reinforced concrete retaining walls. Three, rehabilitation works along the Mandillon River, Hermitage Road, Union Village, Claxton Bay. Rehabilitation works along the

Malick River at 2nd Street, Barataria, in Barataria. And I think that is about it so far with that. Four different pieces of work.

Ms. Beckles: Thank you, Minister.

Mr. Imbert: Thank you. Head 69, Item 009, under Sub Head, Current Transfers and Subsidies, National Recruitment Drive. Could the Minister indicate what is the process to select workers for this programme?

Hon. John: There was a nationwide invitation for people to sign up on a database. They either did that or they did it in person, and they are drawn from this database. Or people have signed up in person across the country.

Mr. Imbert: Okay, what are the qualifications of persons employed in this programme?

Hon. John: Well we have a wide range of qualifications. You have people who are talented, carpenters, electricians, whatever and then you have the unskilled, those who can cut the grass and clean the drains and so on.

Mr. Imbert: So this is a combination of labourers and tradesmen?

Ms. Beckles: By and large, but more labourers, more than anything else; a high concentration of labourers.

Mr. Imbert: Do you have, or could you provide us with a list, either by region, county, or constituency, of the distribution of the workers?

Hon. John: Well I can give you the numbers. Because somebody was asking a similar question. I have to ask if I can give out their names.

Mr. Imbert: I am the first person asking about this. Nobody asked a similar question.

Hon. John: It was a kind of equivalent question. But all right, I can give you the numbers. By what? By region? What do you mean by region?

Mr. Imbert: Either by county, by region, or by constituency.

Hon. John: Very well, okay.

Mr. Imbert: You will provide it?

Hon. John: I will give you the numbers. I am not giving out the people's names.

Mr. Imbert: I did not ask for the people's names.

Hon. John: What are you asking for?

Mr. Imbert: The numbers. How are you distributing it?

Hon. John: Of course, yes.

Mr. Imbert: For Monday?

Hon. John: No, I do not know if it is Monday. We are talking about –

Mr. Imbert: So we would not have it for the debate, then?

Hon. John: Sir, I can give you what I can give you. Monday, I did not set the debate date for Monday, but if it is Monday, I cannot promise you. Today is Friday. We have public servants here after 10. So you just shouting down the place.

Mr. Imbert: You said you had it on a database, so you cannot just extract it from the database in a couple of minutes? You cannot do that?

Hon. John: You have asked me a question. I will provide the information, but I will provide it when I can provide it.

Mr. Imbert: Okay, so you are not doing it. All right, no problem.

Ms. Beckles: Hon. Minister, can I just ask you how many persons are likely to be employed under this recruitment drive initiative, please?

Hon. John: We have the Cabinet approval for 1,806, but at this time, I think it is about 1,200 and – 1,801? About 1,245 or thereabouts.

Ms. Beckles: Thank you.

Mr. Imbert: I have a follow-up, based on that question. Are people going to be employed throughout the year, or is it for a period like two fortnights, three fortnights a month? What is it?

Hon. John: We are now going on to – we are on the 14th fortnight actually.

Mr. Imbert: An individual?

Hon. John: Six months at a time.

Mr. Imbert: So each person is being given six months, and then somebody else is being given six months?

Hon. John: No, it is not a rolling thing, no.

Mr. Imbert: It is the same people all the time?

Hon. John: The first set just came. Those who started from fortnight one, we are now on fortnight 14. Completed fortnight 13. So those who would have been from, let us say, one to 13, we just broke the service, I think, for one week. And they will be engaged based on an evaluation from the various divisional offices that they were performing, in keeping with the standards we have set.

Mr. Imbert: My question is, would there be a pool, of say, 10,000 people from which 500 or 1,000 would be employed at any given time? How many people are employed at any given time?

Hon. John: Well, at this point in time, the last count I had was about 1,245.

Mr. Imbert: 1,245.

Hon. John: Yes, but we can engage right up to 1,801.

Mr. Chairman: Port of Spain North.

Mr. Young SC: Mr. Chair, thank you. But the question was somewhat answered. Minister, I was going to ask, out of this 38,500, which is the 38,500,000 that is going to be a whole budget for this initiative, for the whole fiscal, how many people it is that are intended to be employed? But you said it is 1,860. They have approval for.

Mr. Young SC: But you have so far employed 1,245.

Hon. John: Yes because we rank up, we go along. We want to ensure people get paid, meaning in terms of the structure of our programme.

Mr. Chairman: Arouca/Lopinot..

Mr. Gonzales: Thank you, Chair. Minister, do you communicate with your ministry, communicate with Members of Parliament or Councillors with respect to recommending persons to be employed in this programme?

Mr. Chairman: Can you identify the Line Item?

Mr. Gonzales: Item 008/09. The same programme.

Hon. John: Me personally?

Mr. Gonzales: No, no, the ministry.

Hon. John: I do not know that the ministry does that. I do not know that the ministry does that. I think, as I said before, there was a big recruitment programme, and then what else we had? We had people coming in to various areas, I do not want to say constituencies, where they had certain offices. But people from time to time ask for work for people. And we try our best to help and facilitate.

Mr. Gonzales: When you say people?

Hon. John: People walk into the office. People walk in and say, I am in trouble. And basically, not me – they will tell you, I do not interfere with –

Mr. Gonzales: I do not expect you

Hon. John: But I am just saying, so somebody's in trouble, they're in crisis, we try to help.

Mr. Gonzales: And is there a particular location that has been designated by your ministry where persons can go and register and put down their names to participate in this programme?

Hon. John: We have eight divisional offices. People tend to come to the head office, as the case may be.

And there's a National Recruitment Drive unit. So sometimes these names are filtered through there.

Mr. Gonzales: Where that unit is located?

Hon. John: At the head office in Port of Spain.

Hon. John: We are equal opportunity employer.

Mr. Chairman: Diego Martin West.

Mr. Des Vignes: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Same Line Item.

Regarding the National Recruitment Drive, we know there were a series of events that happened to get those who were interested in being hired. Is there any portion of this amount that is attributed to those national events that were held?

Hon. John: I do not know that the question is. I have said before, the source for the folks who are with us, I assume, are through that database programme. And they would have been recruited or would have submitted their interest to various offices across Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Des Vignes: Yes, but Minister, for the National Recruitment Drive, there were events that were held. There were about two or three events that were held. The question is, what amount inside here is attributed to those events that were held as part of the National Recruitment Drive? I cannot tell you that. I do not know. We have not done an audit of it, a comparison of it, a reconciliation of it. Thank you, Minister.

Mr. Chairman: Laventille East/Morvant.

Mr. Birchwood: Thank you Chair. Going to Head 69, Sub Head 02/005/28. Can the Minister state if any of these funds are dedicated to the dredging of the main watercourse by the Maritime Roundabout?

10.20 p.m.

Mr. Birchwood: Line Item 005/28.

Hon. John: What is it? The Maritime roundabout?

Mr. Birchwood: Yes.

Hon. John: The question is, Member?

Mr. Birchwood: If any of these funds are allocated towards the dredging of that main water course?

Hon. John: Yes. I think we are in that water course right now, or close to it.

Mr. Birchwood: Okay.

Hon. John: If you look over Lady Young, the Lady Young never looked so clean. As a matter of fact, we just put up a sign under the Hilton – it is late now, or else I would have told you. I will stand up here on Monday and tell you. That whole Lady Young

has never looked so clean. Straight into Maritime. We do not discriminate. I do not discriminate.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. John: So we have backhoes inside of there. If it is not there, just tell me. We will get them there, do not worry.

Mr. Chairman: Port of Spain North.

Mr. Young SC: Minister under Item 009: Other Transfers. Down at Sub-Item 49: Leasing of the Semi-submersible Barge. We started off in October with \$37million, now coming for an additional \$34.5 million, almost 100 per cent. What is this in relation to?

Hon. John: That is a very interesting question, and a very good question, hon. Member. The first sum, 39, I assume would have been to service the obligation –

Mr. Young SC: The?

Hon. John: The tri-annual payment –

Mr. Young SC: Right.

Hon. John: – subject to the contract. But your former colleague would have put us under this obligation, the – what you call it? Rented or – what do you call that?

Mr. Young SC: Leases?

Hon. John: Lease, sorry, right. Lease of a barge, a floating barge without the necessary, you call it a spud pole –

Mr. Young SC: Or, this is a barge for down at Cari Dock?

Hon. John: At Cari Dock.

Mr. Young SC: Okay.

Hon. John: *AMT Goliath*. But it is a floating piece of infrastructure.

Mr. Young SC: Correct, Correct.

Hon. John: And you cannot get any boats on it, really. They tried to do MV Galleon.

Mr. Young SC: The *Galleons Passage* or one of those?

Hon. John: No, no. It was *Galleons Passage*, I think. They just did – *A.P.T James*, and they had to take it out at sea, and then it went down, because it was not fastened. The dry dock is very old. So, they have no winching, as they say, I am using terms that – I am not an engineer. So they brought in this thing without the spud poles to fasten it. So, to get the spud pole, this is the engineer's estimate of what is called the spud pole.

Mr. Young SC: Okay, so this would be able to have it operate closer to shore, as opposed to going further out?

Hon. John: To out in the sea, exactly.

Mr. Young SC: Okay. I just did not know what the semi-submersible barge. So, you all are now trying to implement and activate so that we can take on dry docking and make the revenue from it, et cetera?

Hon. John: Precisely.

Mr. Young SC: Thank you.

Hon. John: But we have lost a lot of money and time in this thing, right?

Mr. Young SC: Thank you.

Questions put and agreed to.

Head 69 supplemented by the sum of \$362,944,942

Head 69 varied by an increase in the sum of \$47,365,000.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much, Minister, and your public servants.

Head 72: Ministry of Tertiary Education and Skills Training, \$19,800,000.

Mr. Chairman: Minister of Tertiary Education and Skills Training.

Sen. The Hon. Prof. Persad: Thank you, Chairman, and goodnight to colleagues. Chairman, the Ministry requests a supplementation of TT \$19,800,000 under Head 72 for this fiscal mid-year review. We seek supplementary funding to address two specific matters requiring resolution. In this regard, the supplementary allocation of TT \$13 million under Sub-Head 04: Current Transfers and Subsidies is requested in respect of retroactive payments of arrears to the academic and senior administrative staff of WIGUT

and the Global Campus and the university centre units of UWI for the period August 1st, 2014, to July 31st, 2017, and August 1st, 2017, to July 31st, 2020.

In this regard, there are 32 employees from the Global Campus and 24 employees from the centre units who will benefit from this payment. A further \$6,800,000 of supplementary funds is requested under Sub-Head 06: Current Transfers of Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies for the payment of gratuity and statutory obligations of staff at the College of Science Technology and Applied Arts of Trinidad and Tobago. This includes salary increases approved for the period 2012 to 2018, which were implemented in April 2026. Chair, 326 persons will benefit from this salary increase, and also the provision of gratuity payments for 82 members of staff. Thus, these two requests, Mr. Chair, come up to \$19,800,000. I end by thanking my colleagues at the Ministry.

Question proposed: That Head 72 be supplemented by the sum of \$19,800,000.

Mr. Chairman: No questions?

Question put and agreed to.

Head 72 supplemented by the sum of \$19,800,000.

Head 78: Minister of the People, Social Development and Family Services, as a supplementation of \$68,445,000, and a variation of \$8,361,000.

Mr. Chairman: Minister, can I invite you to make your brief opening statement?

Hon. Mohit: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Today, I appear before this honourable Committee on behalf of the Ministry of the People, Social Development and Family Services at a time when thousands of citizens continue to depend on the social protection systems of this country for dignity, stability, and hope. The work of this Ministry is unlike any other. We deal with the lived realities of people. Mr. Chair, it is therefore fitting that, as we review the financial position of the Ministry, at the midpoint of this fiscal year, we do so with a clear understanding that behind every allocation, programme, and intervention, there is a human story.

Mr. Chairman, this Government inherited a social sector burdened by significant operational challenges, long-standing backlogs, delayed interventions, and obligations that in many instances had accumulated over several years. The expectation of the people, however, was not that we would identify problems, but rather solve them, and that is precisely what we have set out to do. Over the last several months, this Ministry has pursued an aggressive programme of reform, modernization, and service improvement.

10.30 p.m.

We have strengthened our social welfare delivery systems, reduced delays in critical services, improved collaboration across agencies, enhanced accountability mechanisms, and placed greater emphasis on evidence-based decision-making. Our objective has been straightforward: to ensure that the public resources reach those in need of them most, faster, fairer, and more effectively. Mr. Chair, the allocation of \$6,012,215,208 provided to this Ministry for fiscal '25/'26 represents one of the largest investments in people made by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago. We have strengthened frontline service delivery, accelerated the processing of key social assistance programmes, reduced backlogs, expanded support to vulnerable households, and advanced critical reforms aimed at ensuring that assistance is delivered equitably and transparently.

Mr. Chair, these achievements were not accidental. They are the result of deliberate policy choices, disciplined management, and the unwavering commitment of the public officers, social workers, and frontline staff who continue to serve our nation's most vulnerable citizens. Mr. Chair, what is significant about the increased supplementation to the Children's Authority of Trinidad and Tobago is that the current administration is addressing longstanding debts incurred under the last regime without due diligence and fiduciary obligations. This is what we inherited.

Mr. Chair, while much work remains to be done, the progress achieved thus far demonstrates what can be accomplished when the Government places people at the centre of policy and administration. It is against this backdrop, Mr. Chair, that I will now defend the Ministry's performance during the period under review and the justification for the supplemental funding being sought to sustain essential services and fulfil obligations to the citizens who depend on them. Mr. Chair, our Parliamentary Secretary is in the other place at this time, so I just wish to mention that.

Question proposed: That Head 78 be supplemented by the sum of \$68,445,000 and varied by the sum of \$8,361,000.

Mr. Chairman: Diego Martin, Central.

Mr. de Nobriga: Thank you, Chair. Chair, through you to the Minister: 01/003/01, a variation of appropriation in the amount of \$8.36 million. If you can just inform the House as to the nature of the variation itself, and what it covers.

Hon. Mohit: Sure, Member. This particular revised provision is to provide for the payment of the revised Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance awarded to 216 monthly paid officers in accordance with the Minister of Finance circular dated December 5th, 2025.

Mr. de Nobriga: Minister, will there be any part of this variation aligned with additional hirings at all, or is this only for the arrears in this division?

Hon. Mohit: Member, as I said, this is for the remaining period of the fiscal year. It is not for any arrears.

Mr. de Nobriga: Oh, thank you. So, none of this is connected to the situation a lot of your colleagues faced, where you had arrears of back pay that had to be paid?

Hon. Mohit: Member, that was dealt with already. So, this is what we are asking for here today, it is for the remaining period of the fiscal year for these officers mentioned.

Mr. de Nobriga: Minister, again—my apologies—just to clarify—is it that if this was handled previously, will this, as has been done in other Ministries, replace funds that have been used to pay arrears?

Hon. Mohit: Member, as I said before, this is not for anything in relation to back pay. This is to cover salaries for the remaining period of the fiscal year.

Mr. de Nobriga: Mr. Chairman, through you to the Minister: Sub-Head 04/005: Non-profit Institutions, Sub-Item 4.: St. Mary's Children Home. Minister, could you give us an idea as to what this 3.385 million supplementation covers?

Hon. Mohit: Member, thank you for your question. This is to provide for the payment of the revised Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance awarded to 66 monthly paid officers in accordance with the Minister of Finance circular dated December 5th, 2025.

Mr. de Nobriga: Minister, am I correct in asking you if Sub-Item 10 is the same?

Hon. Mohit: For the remaining period of the fiscal year, to cover salaries.

Mr. de Nobriga: And how many workers would that cover?

Hon. Mohit: As I said, 66 monthly paid officers.

Mr. de Nobriga: No, for St. Jude's.

Hon. Mohit: Oh, for St. Jude's as well. That would be 55 monthly paid officers.

Mr. Chairman: Trincity/Maloney.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Minister, would you be able to say whether the Management Committee has been assigned to St. Jude's to date, and if they will be paid out of this?

Hon. Mohit: Member, I can check on that for you, but this line Item and the supplemental funding is solely for staffing, but I can check on that for you.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: Thank you very much. I would like to ask under Sub-Head 04, Item 007, Sub-Item 23: Minister, I am informed that NIS payments are outstanding for staff. On behalf of the staff at the Children's Authority, would you be able to say whether this will cover that?

Hon. Mohit: Member, yes, this would cover statutory deductions.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: And also, I remember that you had indicated that there were liabilities in the sum of 77 million at the Children's Authority. I noticed you have only asked for 62. Is there a reason why?

Hon. Mohit: Yes. Member, through you, Chair, the reason you are seeing this figure reflected here, it is because of the fact that those are the figures that were audited. We are in the process of having the other liabilities being audited. When that is completed, we will approach the Ministry of Finance.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: Minister, has there been a decision to cut staff at the Children's Authority?

Hon. Mohit: There is no such decision at this point in time.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: And could I also ask, with regard to staff from St. Dominic's, has the staff been transferred to St. Jude's?

Hon. Mohit: One second, please. Chair, through you, because of the fact that St. Dominic's is not listed as a line item here, I will have to get that information for you. I can provide it on another day.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: Okay, the thing is that when I asked previously under the Statutory Authority Services Commission, they told me to ask you. So I am just following what was said.

Hon. Mohit: Sure. Chair, through you, I think why they said to ask me, it is because the SASC provides the staffing; we provide the payment.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: Right.

Hon. Mohit: So that is something I will have to clarify for you in terms of the transfer, and I will give you that information later on.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: Okay. And could I also ask whether there has been any funding for the migrant population that is looked after by the St. Jude's Home?

Hon. Mohit: Chairman, through you, Member, as you may be aware as well, we provide the payments in terms of subvention for the salaries and other Items.

10.40 p.m.

These are presented by the payments in terms of subvention for the salaries and other items. These are presented by the homes or the bodies. And all of these things may or may not be included. I can confirm that for you but I know some support was being provided when it comes to that aspect of it.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: Thank you. And has there been an increase in the subvention to St. Jude's to accommodate the increase in residents placed there by the court?

Hon. Mohit: Chairman, through you, as far as I understand Member, provisions are being made based on the situations we are faced with right now, in terms of some placements there.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: Okay, thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Questions put and agreed to.

Head 78 be supplemented by the sum of \$68,445,000.

Head 78 be varied by an increase in the sum of \$8,361,000.

Mr. Chairman: Minister, thank you very much. And your staff really do apologize for this late hour. We go to Head 84: Ministry of Defence.

Head 84: Ministry of Defence, \$39,245,000.

Mr. Chairman: Minister, can I invite you to make a brief statement?

Hon. Sturge: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, it is a privilege to appear before this Committee. The Ministry of Defence is responsible for counter-terrorism, global security issues, regional security coordination, and securing our borders, including the air space and territorial waters of Trinidad and Tobago. Under the remit of the Ministry of Defence are the Trinidad and Tobago Defence Force, the Trinidad and Tobago Cadet Force, and Lifeguard Services. Mr. Chairman, the Ministry of Defence has

been allocated an additional \$39,245,000 in the mid-term review. The Ministry of Defence has advertized 19 vacant contract positions across the Ministry, and has been allocated an additional \$3.3 million to fund these contract positions.

The Ministry is currently interviewing individuals for these 19 contract positions. Further, the Ministry has been allocated an additional \$16,190,000 under extraordinary expenditure. The additional funding will be utilized to pay bills for the continuation of works for the National Coastal Surveillance Radar Centre. Mr. Chairman, additional funding in the sum of \$5.5 million has been allocated for the procurement of uniforms for the Trinidad and Tobago Regiment. Regiment personnel require new uniforms since their existing uniforms have become old and tattered due to continued use and lack of replacement over the years, and no order has been made since 2013.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, additional funding in the sum of \$11.9 million has been allocated on the Maintenance of Vehicles for the Air Guard. The additional funds will be utilized to pay outstanding bills to National Helicopter Services Limited, in the amount of \$8,593,733.29 for the period 2023–2025 and to cover expenditure for the rest of fiscal 2026, for the servicing of these helicopters. The Ministry of Defence will continue to do what is necessary to bring the TTDF equipment up to operational levels. I thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I am available for any questions the Committee might have.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Question proposed: That Head 84 be supplemented by the sum of \$39,245,000.

Mr. Chairman: Arouca/Lopinot.

Mr. Gonzales: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Sub-Head 02: Sub-Item 19: Contract Employment. Minister, I observed that you have an increase of \$3.3 million and reading from the supporting documents, it makes reference to the filling of 19 positions or vacancies. Can you list the positions?

Hon. Sturge: Yes, I can.

Mr. Gonzales: Proceed.

Hon. Sturge: Under the Corporate Communications Unit: one, a Manager of Communications; two, a Communications Officer; a Web Designer; a Content Creation Specialist, a Graphic Designer, an Animator, a Photographer, a Videographer/Editor; Multimedia/Social Media Officer and an Audio-Visual Officer.

In the Counter-Terrorism Unit, the Deputy Director and National Coordinator for Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism.

In the Legal Unit, one Senior Legal Officer and a Legal Officer II.

In the Procurement Unit, a Public Procurement Officer and a Procurement Support Officer.

Under the Programme Management Unit, a Programme Manager.

Lastly, under the Research Policy and Planning Unit, Director of Research Policy and Planning, a Senior Research and Policy Officer, and a Statistician.

Mr. Gonzales: How many of those positions have already been filled?

Hon. Sturge: None.

Mr. Gonzales: Okay. And how does the Ministry intend to fill those vacancies. What recruitment criteria or process?

Hon. Sturge: I have already advertized the criteria, and we are in the process of interviewing.

Mr. Gonzales: Was it publicly advertized?

Hon. Sturge: Yes.

Mr. Gonzales: And you are in the process of conducting interviews, et cetera.

Hon. Sturge: Yes.

Mr. Gonzales: Yes? Minister, looking at Sub-Item 66: Hosting of Conferences, Seminars, and Other Functions. I observed that there is a huge increase from \$190,000, an increase by \$2.3 million. What has accounted for this massive increase?

Hon. Sturge: Independence Day Parade.

Mr. Gonzales: Oh, so are you saying that the Government intends to have Independence Day Parade activities this year?

Hon. Sturge: Yes.

Mr. Gonzales: And the answer is?

Hon. Sturge: Yes.

Mr. Gonzales: Okay.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Gonzales: The \$2.3 million, are you saying that all of that will be allocated towards Independence Day activities?

10.50 p.m.

Hon. Sturge: It would be for the entire Independence Day celebration.

Mr. Gonzales: And what does that include?

Hon. Sturge: Well, it includes the cocktails, and so on, and the events at the Queen's Park Savannah, and everything connected to it.

Mr. Gonzales: Thank you very much.

Mr. Chairman: Port of Spain North/St. Ann's West.

Mr. Young SC: Minister, two nights ago in this very Chamber, the Government used its majority to extend the State of Emergency, and during the course of that debate told the population that that there could not be persons gathered in public protests within 500 metres of 15 places, et cetera, et cetera. And we were told by no less than the Chairman of the National Security Council, the Member for Siparia, that it is because there was intelligence of possible criminals in between crowds, and this type of thing, that pose a threat. In light of that, and the fact that you went for a three-month extension, which goes beyond the date of Independence, is it that the Government intends to carry out the normal Independence Day parade at the Queen's Park Savannah on Independence Day? Yes?

Hon. Sturge: Yes.

Mr. Young SC: Thank you.

Mr. Young SC: Head 84, Sub-Head 02, Item 004: Air Guard. Thank you for providing some level of detail in your opening statement. I think I heard you say around \$8million is for outstanding arrears to NHSL, National Helicopter Services Limited, correct? The remainder, you said it is for servicing of helicopters, whose helicopters, the National Helicopter Services' helicopters or the AW135s that the Air Guard have?

Hon. Sturge: The latter.

Mr. Young SC: What is the current status of those AW135s?

Hon. Sturge: I would rather not say.

Mr. Young SC: What he said, he would rather not say? [*Laughter*] Thank you.

Mr. Scotland SC: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Minister, under Sub-Head 84/02/011, 16: Contract Employment, you said there were 19 contract positions to be filled, which accounts for the \$3.3 million increase. Could you tell us what would be the tenure of those 19 contracts? How long will they be?

Hon. Sturge: Three calendar years.

Mr. Scotland SC: In light of that, was any consideration given to have these functions provided within the permanent establishment of the organization?

Hon. Sturge: At the end of the three-year period, we would give consideration to absorbing them into the Ministry. It is a new Ministry.

Mr. Scotland SC: Could you tell, we see, as it relates to Uniforms, which is Item 84/02/002, under Regiment, you see Uniforms have an increase of 5.5; I saw the explanation. The procurement of these uniforms, was it done via a competitive tender process or was it a sole – what was the process followed?

Hon. Sturge: Selective tender.

Mr. Scotland SC: Selective tender. Could you tell us who the preferred provider was?

Hon. Sturge: We are going out for –

Mr. Scotland SC: You are going out, so it has not been done as yet?

Hon. Sturge: Correct.

Mr. Scotland SC: And that will be advertised?

Hon. Sturge: Yes.

Mr. Scotland SC: Okay. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 84 supplemented by the sum of \$39,245,000.

Mr. Chairman: Minister, thank you and your staff, and my apologies.

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Chairman, at some point in time we will get to Head 18?

Mr. Chairman: I am sorry?

Mr. Imbert: At some point we will get to Head 18?

Mr. Chairman: Head 18, well, I would imagine so, yes.

Mr. Imbert: I hope so.

Mr. Chairman: So do I. Head 86, Ministry of Culture and Community Development. Minister, are you ready?

Head 86: Ministry of Culture and Community Development, a supplementation of \$43,311,250, and a variation, an increase in the sum of \$5,970,000.

Mr. Chairman: Minister, can I invite you to make your statement?

Hon. Benjamin: Thank you, Mr. Chair. The Ministry of Culture and Community Development's mandate is to advance social development, cultural preservation and community empower, and to strengthen economic diversification through the creative and cultural sectors, so that culture and community development continue to contribute meaningfully to our national identity, social cohesion and sustainable growth.

The supplementary provision will assist the Ministry in meeting its obligations, including increased salary cost of \$5.9 million, increased travelling and subsistence expenditure of \$1.5 million, and loan repayment obligations amounting to \$41.7 million. The loan repayment is associated with borrowing undertaken to settle outstanding Carnival-related liabilities accumulated in prior years.

Although these obligations originated before the current administration assumed office, it is incumbent upon the Government to honour these commitments and ensure

continued stability, credibility and proper functioning of the cultural sector. The variation became necessary, owing to the advanced payment of arrears processed in December, 2025, and the payment of salary and COLA at the revised rate, which took effect January, 2026, in keeping with the agreement on revised salaries and COLA for officers of the civil service.

Mr. Chairman, the resources reflected in these estimates will support the continued work of the Ministry to pursue its mandate during the remainder of this fiscal year. I thank you, and I am open to questions from the opposite side.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Question proposed: That Head 86 be supplemented by the sum of \$43,311,250, and be varied by an increase in the sum of \$5,970,000.

Questions put and agreed to.

Head 86 be supplemented by the sum of \$43,311,250.

Head 86 varied by an increase in the sum of \$5,970,000.

11.00 p.m.

Head 02: Auditor General, a variation of \$5,900,000.

Mr. Chairman: Minister of Finance, can I invite you to make your statement?

Hon. Tancoo: Thank you, Chairman. The Auditor General is the supreme audit institution responsible under the Constitution for annually auditing and reporting to Parliament on the public accounts of Trinidad and Tobago, and of all offices, courts and authorities. The Auditor General is also required to audit the accounts of any statutory body, if so directed by Parliament, and is additionally empowered to carry out audits of the accounts, balance sheets and other financial statements of all enterprises that are owned or controlled by or on behalf of the State.

The Auditor General conducts comprehensive audits to assess the efficiency and effectiveness of public spending, ensuring that the public's resources are used responsibly and effectively. The portfolio of the Auditor General also includes the

verification of computations of all pensions, gratuities and other separation benefits paid by the State, in accordance with the Pensions Act and other agreements, and the grant of credit on the exchequer account in accordance with the requirements of the Exchequer and Audit Act.

In the conduct of the mid-year review exercise, it was determined that an overall sum of \$5.9 million is required under Sub-Item 01/001/01: Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance, to replenish funding utilized to pay an advance on the arrears of salaries and cost of living allowance owed to monthly-paid officers.

The funds needed to facilitate this increase will be sourced through a variation of appropriation. We have the representative of the Auditor General, who is here tonight. Therefore, we hold ourselves available for questions from Members opposite.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 02 varied by an increase in the sum of \$5,900,000.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much, Minister, and my apologies

Head 12: Public Service Appeal Board, a variation of \$185,107.

Mr. Chairman: Minister of Finance, can I ask you to do the needful of the opening statement?

Hon. Tancoo: Thank you, Chair. The Public Service Appeal Board was established under section 130 of the Constitution of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. The Public Service Appeal Board is responsible for handling appeals related to the decisions made by Service Commissions or delegated authorities in disciplinary proceedings against public officers. Details of the variations are as follows: Under Recurrent Expenditure, \$185,107, under Head 01/001/01: Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance.

In the conduct of the mid-year review exercise, it was determined that an overall sum of \$185,107 is required to replenish funding utilized to pay an advance on the arrears of salaries and cost of living allowance owed to monthly-paid officers. The funds needed

to facilitate this increase would be sourced through a variation of appropriation. We hold ourselves available to questions.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 12 varied by an increase in the sum of \$185,107.

Mr. Chairman: Minister of Finance, thank you very much.

Head 18: Ministry of Finance, a variation of \$737,522,918.

Mr. Chairman: Minister of Finance.

Hon. Tancoo: Thank you, Chairman. The Ministry of Finance is responsible for managing the financial resources of the Government. It ensures that Trinidad and Tobago has the necessary legal and financial infrastructure to manage the appropriation of funds among Ministries and departments. More specifically, it is responsible for managing government financial assets, proposing economic and financial policy, and coordinating and supervising these actions as empowered by law. The Ministry's mandate seeks to facilitate revenue collection and revenue management; budget planning, preparation and management; the formulation and promotion of national fiscal and economic policy; trade facilitation and border control; debt management; and the management of the state enterprises sector.

Details of the variations are as follows: Under Recurrent Expenditure, 04/009/52: Employment Fund, \$475 million. The legislation necessary for the operationalization of the Employment Fund has not yet been finalized. Under 07/011/24: National Infrastructure Development Company Limited (NIDCO), \$262,522,918. A NIDCO six-year 3.8 per cent TT \$300 million loan, which was due to mature on January 21, 2026, was refinanced in accordance with Cabinet Minute 1182 of October 23, 2025.

The technical staff and the Permanent Secretary at the Ministry of Finance are here. We hold ourselves available to answer questions that may be posed.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 18 varied by a decrease in the sum of \$737,522,918.

Mr. Chairman: San Fernando East

11.10 p.m.

Mr. Chairman: Member, for San Fernando East.

Mr. Manning: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. To the Minister of Finance. Minister of Finance, who should be held responsible for the unmitigated epic failure that was the Employment Fund.

Hon. Members: [*Interruption*]

Mr. Chairman: Alright. What is your line Item?

Mr. Manning: Employment fund, Mr. Chairman.

Hon. Members: [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. Member: 52.

Mr. Manning: And I have five minutes, do I not?

Mr. Chairman: Yes, but you asked the question already.

Mr. Manning: Yes, I have five minutes, not so?

Mr. Chairman: No, no. You asked the question.

Mr. Manning: But I am on my way to ask the question.

Mr. Chairman: No, you did. You did ask the questions.

Mr. Manning: Mr. Chairman, line Item 009; Sub- Item 52. I will ask it one more time.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Manning: Minister of Finance, who should be held responsible for the unmitigated and epic failure that has been the Employment Fund?

Hon. Tancoo: Chair, I think the hon. Member is confused as to what day this is. That question may perhaps be best asked and answered on Monday during the debate. It is irrelevant at this point.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Manning: Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, one more question, how many jobs would have been created by this mythical almost half a billion Employment Fund?

Hon. Tancoo: Mr. Chairman, I think, again, the honourable gentleman is anxious to prove something to somebody. This is not a mythical fund —

Mr. Manning: To prove that you have no idea what you are doing.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Tancoo: Excuse me.

Mr. Manning: And that you are a complete disaster —

Hon. Tancoo: No, no, no. Chill out. Chill out, brother

Mr. Manning: — of Minister of Finance. I have never seen a Minister of Finance where we could never — [*Inaudible*]

Ms. Ameen: Mr. Chairman.

Hon. Tancoo: Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, if I may —

Hon. Members: [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. Tancoo: Mr. Chairman, if I may speak —

Mr. Manning: Give us “ah” number, please. Half a billion dollars —

Ms. Ameen: Mr. Chairman, this type of behaviour is unacceptable for the Parliament.

Mr. Chairman: Alright.

Hon. Members: [*Laughter*]

Ms. Ameen: And I recall —

Mr. Chairman: Those questions do not fall in the —

Mr. Manning: Mr. Chairman, Mr. Chairman, I am sorry but the people of Trinidad and Tobago deserve to know, we have a fund here —

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Chairman: San Fernando East. That questions does not fall.

Mr. Manning: Mr. Chairman —

Mr. Chairman: That does not fall —

Mr. Manning: Half a billion dollars, the line Item is right here, the line Item is right here and I am asking the question.

Mr. Chairman: It does fall to be answered in this —

Mr. Manning: And the Minister, what line Item here, he had nothing to prepare for but this.

Mr. Chairman: Alright. Diego Martin North/East.

Mr. Manning: Mr. Chairman, I am still asking a questions. I am not finished yet.

Mr. Chairman: No.

Mr. Manning: Mr. Chairman, half a billion dollars in an Employment Fund, how many jobs was —

Mr. Chairman: San Fernando East. San Fernando East. Be quiet. Diego Martin North/East.

Mr. Manning: Mr. Chairman, do not tell me to be quiet, please. Not tonight. Not tonight.

Hon. Members: [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Chairman: Diego Martin North/East.

Ms. Ameen: You cannot speak to the Chairman like that.

Mr. Manning: I just did.

Mr. Chairman: I am not bothering with him.

Ms. Ameen: No, you should be ashamed of yourself. “You spoiling yuh fadda’s legacy.”

Mr. Chairman: Diego Martin North/East.

Mr. Imbert: Yes, Mr. Chairman.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping and crosstalk*]

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Chairman, could I ask my questions in silence?

Mr. Chairman: Can we get back to the constructive questions?

Mr. Imbert: They are making noise.

Mr. Chairman: No, no. The noise emanated from San Fernando East.

Mr. Imbert: Not anymore. It is coming from over there.

Mr. Chairman: Thankfully, he has removed himself.

Mr. Imbert: Alright. Could the Minister state whether, when this fund was announced in the budget, in October 2025, it was known that it required specific legislation?

Hon. Tancoo: Yes.

Mr. Imbert: Okay. Could the Minister state why it is taking one year, or at least a year? Because this fund will not be operationalized in this year to draft the necessary legislation.

Hon. Tancoo: The legislation is currently being reviewed as we speak.

Mr. Imbert: No, but why is it taking so long, a year?

Hon. Tancoo: Mr. Chairman, the accident—let me respond like this, Mr. Chairman, the legislation is being drafted and reviewed as we speak.

Mr. Imbert: That is not an answer to my question. Why is it taking a year to do a simple thing like that?

Hon. Tancoo: Because unlike the PNM, we do things properly.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Young SC: You obviously delirious at this hour.

Mr. Chairman: Alright.

Questions put and agreed to.

Head 18 be varied by a decrease in the sum of \$737,522,918.

Mr. Chairman: Minister, thank you very much. Thank your staff.

Head 38: Environmental Commission, a supplementation of \$200,000.

Mr. Chairman: Minister of Justice.

Hon. Maharaj: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: Minister in the Office of the Attorney General, can I ask you to make a brief statement?

Hon. Maharaj: Very brief, thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, this commission was created by the Environmental Management Act, Chap. 35:05, and it was established in 2000. Since then, the Commission continues to play a pivotal role in

the digital infrastructure of Trinidad and Tobago as the superior court of record, possessing all the inherent powers of such a court, serving as a forum for persons to address specific violations outlined in the Environmental Management Act. Its primary purpose is to uphold the provisions of the Act by resolving disputes that may arise between the EMA, the Environmental Management Authority, and persons pursuant to the EMA enforcement action, or between persons for a violation of an environmental requirement as identified in the Act.

The Commission is currently made up of six members who hear and determine environmental matters. Mr. Chairman, one of the strategic goals of the Commission is improving and modernizing physical facilities in support infrastructure of the Commission, which has begun to engage on a more streamlined approach to operations in order to ensure that it meets to and surpasses its strategic goal. To this end, it is sought to strengthen its human resource capacity by incorporating one person with profession competencies in corporate communications, one in information technology services to facility the seamless e-government through development of its infrastructure. Mr. Chairman, I stand ready to provide any further information required by the committee to respond to questions.

Question proposed: That Head 38 be varied by an increase in the sum of \$200,000.

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Chairman, what is that?

Mr. Imbert: No, I looked along and no one raised their hand.

Mr. Imbert: No, no, no, no, no. I had my hand up long time. You had your face down.

Mr. Chairman: No, that is not true.

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: I looked along that line.

Mr. Imbert: The Minister saw it.

Mr. Chairman: I do not know if you can say the Minister saw it. But I looked along that line up and down and Laventille West—

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Chairman—

Mr. Chairman:— Knows I looked at him.

Mr. Imbert:— I had my hand up.

Mr. Chairman: Laventille West knows, I looked at him, and I looked up and down that line.

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Chairman, I had my hand up.

Mr. Chairman: You belatedly raised your hand whilst in the process.

Mr. Imbert: No, Sir. No, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: I was in the process of putting the question.

Hon. Members: [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Chairman: Okay.

11.20 p.m.

Mr. Imbert: His head down, not mine. That is what I said. “Dais why eh see meh.” May I ask my question, Sir?

Mr. Chairman: I looked up and down.

Mr. Imbert: Sir, may I ask my question?

Mr. Chairman: No, no, no. In the interest of not being too steadfast to procedural justice, ask your question. There is one Item. Ask the question.

Mr. Imbert: Could the Minister state how many cases have been dealt with by this Commission?

Hon. Members: [*Interruption*]

Mr. Chairman: That does not arise. That does not arise.

Mr. Imbert: How many cases are being dealt with by this Commission this year?

Hon. Maharaj: It does not arise, Sir. That question does not arise.

Mr. Imbert: So you do not want to answer?

Mr. Chairman: Member, that does not arise.

Mr. Imbert: You do not want to answer? All right. It does arise. We are spending millions of dollars on this entity, and they are not doing any work.

Mr. Imbert: It does arise.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 38 varied by an increase in the sum of \$200,000.

Head 75: Equal Opportunity Tribunal, an increase in the sum of \$278,909.

Mr. Chairman: Minister.

Hon. Maharaj: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, the Equal Opportunity Tribunal is a specialist court entrusted with adjudicating unresolved complaints of discrimination, victimization and offensive language referred to it by the Equal Opportunity Commission, with the consent of the complainant. As a superior court of record, comparable to the High Court of Justice and Industrial Court, it operates independently and is presided over by a judge of equivalent standing to a High Court judge. Through its work, the Tribunal plays a vital role in safeguarding equality, fairness, and access to justice in Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Chairman, the Tribunal has the power to judicially determine complaints referred to it by the Commission. It conducts formal hearings and trials. Following procedures similar to the High Court, it has its own rules, the equal opportunity rules of practice and procedure. Where rules are silent, the Civil Proceedings Rules apply.

The Tribunal can grant injunctions, order compensations, damages or other remedies, and award costs. Its decisions are enforceable by the High Court, with a limited right of appeal to the Court of Appeal. Mr. Chairman, I stand to take any questions from any hon. Members concerning this matter.

Question proposed: That Head 75 be varied by an increase in the sum of \$278,909.

Mr. Chairman: And for the record my gaze is fixed on Diego Martin North/East, who has not raised his hand.

Hon. Members: *[Interruption]*

Mr. Chairman: You could have relieved us from that. Hon. Members, the question is that the—

Mr. Imbert: *[Inaudible]*

Mr. Chairman: I am reading.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 75 varied by an increase in the sum of \$278,909.

Mr. Chairman: Minister, thank you very much. Thank you to your staff, and my sincerest apologies. It is now 11.23.

Questions put and agreed to.

Appropriation for fiscal year 2026 is supplemented by the sum of \$2,927,371,851.

Appropriation for fiscal year 2026 is varied by the sum of \$737,521,918.

Mr. Chairman: Now, we adjourn this Standing Finance Committee. And hon. Members are asked to please note that the debate for the adoption of the Committee's report will take place on Monday, June 15, 2026, at 10.30 a.m. This meeting of the Standing Finance Committee is now adjourned.

Hon. Members: [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Chairman: Thank you all very much. Good night.

11.26 p.m.: *Standing Finance Committee adjourned.*

APPENDIX IV

Schedule relating to the Supplementation and Variation of Estimates 2026

SCHEDULE RELATING TO SUPPLEMENTATION/ VARIATION OF ESTIMATES - 2026

HEAD/SUB-HEAD/ITEM AND SUB-ITEM			Provision in Estimates 2026 including Direct Charges, Transfers & Virements	Revised Provision 2026	NET		Explanation
					Increase	Decrease	
			\$	\$	\$	\$	
HEAD	01	PRESIDENT	22,556,400	24,556,400	2,000,000		
Sub-Head	01	Personnel Expenditure	2,662,600	3,662,600	1,000,000		Variation of Appropriation.
Item	001	General Administration	2,662,600	3,662,600	1,000,000		
Sub-Item	01	Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance	1,400,000	2,400,000	1,000,000		
Sub-Head	02	Goods and Services	18,344,600	19,344,600	1,000,000		Supplementation of Appropriation.
Item	001	General Administration	18,296,100	19,296,100	1,000,000		

HEAD/SUB-HEAD/ITEM AND SUB-ITEM			Provision in Estimates 2026 including Direct Charges, Transfers & Virements	Revised Provision 2026	NET		Explanation
					Increase	Decrease	
			\$	\$	\$	\$	
Sub-Item	16	Contract Employment	2,238,600	3,238,600	1,000,000		
HEAD	02	AUDITOR GENERAL	34,230,100	40,130,100	5,900,000		
Sub-Head	01	Personnel Expenditure	26,996,600	32,896,600	5,900,000		Variation of Appropriation.
Item	001	General Administration	25,918,600	31,818,600	5,900,000		
Sub-Item	01	Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance	21,000,000	26,900,000	5,900,000		
HEAD	03	JUDICIARY	660,035,450	709,063,670	49,028,220		
Sub-Head	01	Personnel Expenditure	190,192,400	200,066,400	9,874,000		Variation of Appropriation.
Item	001	Judiciary Trinidad	187,544,800	197,418,800	9,874,000		
Sub-Item	01	Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance	50,000,000	59,250,000	9,250,000		
Sub-Item	05	Government's Contribution to N.I.S	4,500,000	5,124,000	624,000		

HEAD/SUB-HEAD/ITEM AND SUB-ITEM			Provision in Estimates 2026 including Direct Charges, Transfers & Virements	Revised Provision 2026	NET		Explanation
					Increase	Decrease	
			\$	\$	\$	\$	
Sub-Head	02	Goods and Services	413,738,250	445,438,250	31,700,000		Supplementation of Appropriation.
Item	001	Judiciary Trinidad	391,845,350	423,545,350	31,700,000		
Sub-Item	05	Telephones	16,800,000	22,300,000	5,500,000		
Sub-Item	09	Rent/Lease-Vehicles and Equipment	3,300,000	5,000,000	1,700,000		
Sub-Item	16	Contract Employment	185,000,000	199,500,000	14,500,000		
Sub-Item	43	Security Services	61,830,000	71,830,000	10,000,000		
Sub-Head	04	Current Transfers and Subsidies	38,843,800	46,298,020	7,454,220		Supplementation of Appropriation.
Item	007	Households	24,644,248	28,644,248	4,000,000		
Sub-Item	40	Gratuities to Contract Officers	24,598,200	28,598,200	4,000,000		
Item	011	Transfers to State Enterprises	12,675,300	16,129,520	3,454,220		

HEAD/SUB-HEAD/ITEM AND SUB-ITEM			Provision in Estimates 2026 including Direct Charges, Transfers & Virements	Revised Provision 2026	NET		Explanation
					Increase	Decrease	
			\$	\$	\$	\$	
Sub-Item	03	UDECOTT-Principal payment on TT\$39.99Mn Fixed Rate Loan	3,332,650	6,665,250	3,332,600		
Sub-Item	04	UDECOTT-Interest on TT\$39.99Mn Fixed Rate Loan	182,550	304,170	121,620		
HEAD	04	INDUSTRIAL COURT	50,230,750	52,699,075	2,468,325		
Sub-Head	01	Personnel Expenditure	26,854,850	28,638,175	1,783,325		Variation of Appropriation.
Item	001	General Administration	26,854,850	28,638,175	1,783,325		
Sub-Item	01	Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance	7,000,000	8,600,000	1,600,000		
Sub-Item	04	Allowances-Monthly Paid Officers	43,000	226,325	183,325		
Sub-Head	02	Goods and Services	20,199,741	20,884,741	685,000		Supplementation of Appropriation.

HEAD/SUB-HEAD/ITEM AND SUB-ITEM			Provision in Estimates 2026 including Direct Charges, Transfers & Virements	Revised Provision 2026	NET		Explanation
					Increase	Decrease	
			\$	\$	\$	\$	
Item	001	General Administration	17,062,241	17,747,241	685,000		
Sub-Item	16	Contract Employment	2,950,000	3,300,000	350,000		
Sub-Item	22	Short-term Employment	1,365,400	1,525,400	160,000		
Sub-Item	66	Hosting of Conferences, Seminars and other Functions	125,000	300,000	175,000		
HEAD	05	PARLIAMENT	155,529,900	158,758,100	3,228,200		
Sub-Head	02	Goods and Services	110,102,100	112,330,300	2,228,200		Supplementation of Appropriation.
Item	001	General Administration	104,116,667	106,344,867	2,228,200		
Sub-Item	12	Materials and Supplies	3,700,000	4,928,200	1,228,200		
Sub-Item	22	Short-term Employment	4,300,000	5,300,000	1,000,000		

HEAD/SUB-HEAD/ITEM AND SUB-ITEM			Provision in Estimates 2026 including Direct Charges, Transfers & Virements	Revised Provision 2026	NET		Explanation
					Increase	Decrease	
			\$	\$	\$	\$	
Sub-Head	04	Current Transfers and Subsidies	2,623,500	3,623,500	1,000,000		Supplementation of Appropriation.
Item	007	Households	2,000,000	3,000,000	1,000,000		
Sub-item	40	Gratuities to Contract Officers	2,000,000	3,000,000	1,000,000		
HEAD	07	STATUTORY AUTHORITIES SERVICE COMMISSION	8,141,643	8,802,343	660,700		
Sub-Head	01	Personnel Expenditure	5,032,668	5,407,668	375,000		Variation of Appropriation.
Item	001	General Administration	5,032,668	5,407,668	375,000		
Sub-Item	01	Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance	2,950,000	3,325,000	375,000		
Sub-Head	02	Goods and Services	2,287,275	2,572,975	285,700		Supplementation of Appropriation.
Item	001	General Administration	2,287,275	2,572,975	285,700		
Sub-Item	22	Short-term Employment	400,000	685,700	285,700		

HEAD/SUB-HEAD/ITEM AND SUB-ITEM			Provision in Estimates 2026 including Direct Charges, Transfers & Virements	Revised Provision 2026	NET		Explanation
					Increase	Decrease	
			\$	\$	\$	\$	
HEAD	12	PUBLIC SERVICE APPEAL BOARD	3,808,550	3,993,657	185,107		
Sub-Head	01	Personnel Expenditure	1,459,500	1,644,607	185,107		Variation of Appropriation.
Item	001	General Administration	1,459,500	1,644,607	185,107		
Sub-Item	01	Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance	537,000	722,107	185,107		
HEAD	15	TOBAGO HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY	2,943,574,800	3,037,574,800	94,000,000		
Sub-Head	06	Current Transfers to Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies	2,742,074,800	2,821,074,800	79,000,000		Supplementation of Appropriation.
Item	001	Tobago House of Assembly	2,742,074,800	2,821,074,800	79,000,000		
Sub-Item	06	Tobago House of Assembly	2,742,074,800	2,821,074,800	79,000,000		
Sub-Head	09	Development Programme	201,500,000	216,500,000	15,000,000		Supplementation of Appropriation.

HEAD/SUB-HEAD/ITEM AND SUB-ITEM			Provision in Estimates 2026 including Direct Charges, Transfers & Virements	Revised Provision 2026	NET		Explanation
					Increase	Decrease	
			\$	\$	\$	\$	
Item	004	Social Infrastructure	103,600,000	118,600,000	15,000,000		
Sub-Item	04	Education	23,350,000	38,350,000	15,000,000		
Project Group	C	Secondary	9,400,000	24,400,000	15,000,000		
Project Desc.	759	Reconstruction of Scarborough Secondary School	2,000,000	17,000,000	15,000,000		
HEAD	16	CENTRAL ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES, TOBAGO	28,505,890	31,674,830	3,168,940		
Sub-Head	01	Personnel Expenditure	7,560,900	10,263,900	2,703,000		Variation of Appropriation.
Item	001	General Administration	5,122,500	7,175,500	2,053,000		
Sub-Item	01	Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance	4,600,000	6,495,000	1,895,000		
Sub-Item	05	Government's Contribution to N.I.S.	425,000	583,000	158,000		
Item	005	Meteorological Services	2,425,200	3,075,200	650,000		

HEAD/SUB-HEAD/ITEM AND SUB-ITEM			Provision in Estimates 2026 including Direct Charges, Transfers & Virements	Revised Provision 2026	NET		Explanation
					Increase	Decrease	
			\$	\$	\$	\$	
Sub-Item	01	Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance	1,780,600	2,430,600	650,000		
Sub-Head	02	Goods and Services	14,217,550	14,683,490	465,940		Supplementation of Appropriation.
Item	005	Meteorological Services	2,707,550	3,173,490	465,940		
Sub-Item	22	Short-term Employment	60,000	145,940	85,940		
Sub-Item	23	Fees	72,000	452,000	380,000		
HEAD	17	PERSONNEL DEPARTMENT	45,104,600	48,623,270	3,518,670		
Sub-Head	01	Personnel Expenditure	15,645,000	16,645,000	1,000,000		Variation of Appropriation.
Item	001	General Administration	15,645,000	16,645,000	1,000,000		
Sub-Item	01	Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance	12,800,000	13,800,000	1,000,000		
Sub-Head	02	Goods and Services	21,341,400	23,560,070	2,218,670		Supplementation of Appropriation.

HEAD/SUB-HEAD/ITEM AND SUB-ITEM			Provision in Estimates 2026 including Direct Charges, Transfers & Virements	Revised Provision 2026	NET		Explanation
					Increase	Decrease	
			\$	\$	\$	\$	
Item	001	General Administration	21,341,400	23,560,070	2,218,670		
Sub-Item	01	Travelling and Subsistence	640,000	700,000	60,000		
Sub-Item	08	Rent / Lease - Office Accommodation and Storage	8,600,400	9,649,940	1,049,540		
Sub-Item	16	Contract Employment	4,000,000	4,095,000	95,000		
Sub-Item	22	Short-term Employment	4,520,000	5,252,130	732,130		
Sub-Item	23	Fees	100,000	382,000	282,000		
Sub-Head	04	Current Transfers and Subsidies	302,000	602,000	300,000		Supplementation of Appropriation.
Item	007	Households	302,000	602,000	300,000		
Sub-Item	40	Gratuities to Contract Officers	302,000	602,000	300,000		

HEAD/SUB-HEAD/ITEM AND SUB-ITEM			Provision in Estimates 2026 including Direct Charges, Transfers & Virements	Revised Provision 2026	NET		Explanation
					Increase	Decrease	
			\$	\$	\$	\$	
HEAD	18	MINISTRY OF FINANCE	6,449,498,900	5,711,975,982		737,522,918	
Sub-Head	04	Current Transfers and Subsidies	3,941,221,305	3,466,221,305		475,000,000	Variation of Appropriation.
Item	009	Other Transfers	2,885,570,000	2,410,570,000		475,000,000	
Sub-Item	52	Employment Fund	475,000,000	0		475,000,000	
Sub-Head	07	Debt Servicing	1,728,357,625	1,465,834,707		262,522,918	Variation of Appropriation.
Item	011	Principal Repayment - Local Loans	1,001,975,845	739,452,927		262,522,918	
Sub-Item	24	National Infrastructure Development Company Limited (NIDCO)	299,968,850	37,445,932		262,522,918	

HEAD/SUB-HEAD/ITEM AND SUB-ITEM			Provision in Estimates 2026 including Direct Charges, Transfers & Virements	Revised Provision 2026	NET		Explanation
					Increase	Decrease	
			\$	\$	\$	\$	
HEAD	23	OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL	348,098,500	430,098,500	82,000,000		
Sub-Head	01	Personnel Expenditure	85,521,700	92,521,700	7,000,000		Variation of Appropriation.
Item	001	General Administration	52,476,000	59,476,000	7,000,000		
Sub-Item	01	Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance	21,000,000	28,000,000	7,000,000		
Sub-Head	02	Goods and Services	228,788,800	303,788,800	75,000,000		Supplementation of Appropriation.
Item	001	General Administration	178,314,100	228,314,100	50,000,000		
Sub-Item	23	Fees	70,000,000	120,000,000	50,000,000		
Item	009	Criminal Law Department	48,528,900	73,528,900	25,000,000		
Sub-Item	23	Fees	20,000,000	45,000,000	25,000,000		

HEAD/SUB-HEAD/ITEM AND SUB-ITEM			Provision in Estimates 2026 including Direct Charges, Transfers & Virements	Revised Provision 2026	NET		Explanation
					Increase	Decrease	
			\$	\$	\$	\$	
HEAD	26	MINISTRY OF EDUCATION	5,266,480,354	5,560,708,654	294,228,300		
Sub-Head	01	Personnel Expenditure	3,623,175,100	3,789,624,100	166,449,000		Variation of Appropriation.
Item	001	General Administration	195,036,100	254,725,100	59,689,000		
Sub-Item	01	Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance	175,000,000	229,822,000	54,822,000		
Sub-Item	05	Government's Contribution to N.I.S.	13,508,000	18,375,000	4,867,000		
Item	005	Secondary Education	2,271,890,000	2,337,769,000	65,879,000		
Sub-Item	01	Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance	2,165,000,000	2,205,906,000	40,906,000		
Sub-Item	05	Government's Contribution to N.I.S.	90,584,000	115,557,000	24,973,000		
Item	006	Primary Education	1,156,249,000	1,197,130,000	40,881,000		
Sub-Item	01	Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance	1,060,000,000	1,077,671,000	17,671,000		
Sub-Item	05	Government's Contribution to N.I.S.	85,280,000	108,490,000	23,210,000		

HEAD/SUB-HEAD/ITEM AND SUB-ITEM			Provision in Estimates 2026 including Direct Charges, Transfers & Virements	Revised Provision 2026	NET		Explanation
					Increase	Decrease	
			\$	\$	\$	\$	
Sub-Head	02	Goods and Services	738,717,670	745,499,670	6,782,000		Supplementation of Appropriation.
Item	001	General Administration	716,265,670	723,047,670	6,782,000		
Sub-Item	16	Contract Employment	191,000,000	194,806,000	3,806,000		
Sub-Item	28	Other Contracted Services	25,000,000	27,976,000	2,976,000		
Sub-Head	04	Current Transfers and Subsidies	716,887,854	807,885,154	90,997,300		Supplementation of Appropriation.
Item	007	Households	35,142,225	82,432,225	47,290,000		
Sub-Item	40	Gratuities to Contract Officers	10,000,000	31,998,000	21,998,000		
Sub-Item	41	Remedial Education	8,000,000	13,292,000	5,292,000		
Sub-Item	42	School Supplies and Book Grant	0	20,000,000	20,000,000		
Item	011	Transfers to State Enterprises	431,339,629	475,046,929	43,707,300		
Sub-Item	02	National Schools Dietary Services Ltd.	248,602,774	250,000,074	1,397,300		

HEAD/SUB-HEAD/ITEM AND SUB-ITEM			Provision in Estimates 2026 including Direct Charges, Transfers & Virements	Revised Provision 2026	NET		Explanation
					Increase	Decrease	
			\$	\$	\$	\$	
Sub-Item	15	NMTS- Interest Payment TT\$200Mn. 2yr. 3.00% Fixed Rate Syndicated Loan due 2028	4,174,028	8,285,028	4,111,000		
Sub-Item	20	NMTS- Principal Payment on TT\$174Mn. 4Yr. Non- Revolving Fixed Rate Loan Facility due 2027- Financing critical works at Twenty-Seven (27) Government Secondary Schools	21,842,156	43,684,356	21,842,200		
Sub-Item	22	NMTS Principal Payment on TT\$250Mn. Fixed Rate 7yr. Term Loan Facility for School Construction and Repairs	35,642,240	46,346,940	10,704,700		

HEAD/SUB-HEAD/ITEM AND SUB-ITEM			Provision in Estimates 2026 including Direct Charges, Transfers & Virements	Revised Provision 2026	NET		Explanation
					Increase	Decrease	
			\$	\$	\$	\$	
Sub-Item	23	NMTS- Interest Payment on TT\$250Mn. Fixed Rate 7Yr. Term Loan Facility for School Construction and Repairs	12,487,260	18,139,360	5,652,100		
Sub-Head	09	Development Programme	186,200,000	216,200,000	30,000,000		Supplementation of Appropriation.
Item	005	Multi-Sectoral and Other Services	186,200,000	216,200,000	30,000,000		
Sub-Item	06	General Public Services	186,200,000	216,200,000	30,000,000		
Project Group	A	Administrative Services	128,200,000	158,200,000	30,000,000		
Project Desc.	042	Acquisition and Delivery of Laptops and Tablets	105,000,000	135,000,000	30,000,000		
HEAD	28	MINISTRY OF HEALTH	7,040,859,291	7,558,121,061	517,261,770		
Sub-Head	01	Personnel Expenditure	162,534,460	179,817,260	17,282,800		Variation of Appropriation.
Item	001	General Administration	32,417,260	40,117,260	7,700,000		

HEAD/SUB-HEAD/ITEM AND SUB-ITEM			Provision in Estimates 2026 including Direct Charges, Transfers & Virements	Revised Provision 2026	NET		Explanation
					Increase	Decrease	
			\$	\$	\$	\$	
Sub-Item	01	Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance	22,800,000	30,500,000	7,700,000		
Item	004	Vertical Services	77,635,000	87,217,800	9,582,800		
Sub-Item	01	Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance	36,000,000	45,582,800	9,582,800		
Sub-Head	04	Current Transfers and Subsidies	5,635,820,201	6,135,799,171	499,978,970		Supplementation of Appropriation.
Item	009	Other Transfers	5,182,877,715	5,517,770,285	334,892,570		
Sub-Item	03	Eastern Regional Health Authority	581,633,470	641,142,240	59,508,770		
Sub-Item	05	South West Regional Health Authority	1,297,402,200	1,351,803,800	54,401,600		
Sub-Item	13	Int. pay't-UDeCOTT TT\$199.6Mn. F/Fin.Const. A/Hosp	2,933,954	5,274,754	2,340,800		
Sub-Item	14	Int. pay't UDeCOTT USD\$99.6Mn. Arima Hospital Loan	23,647,230	36,580,430	12,933,200		

HEAD/SUB-HEAD/ITEM AND SUB-ITEM			Provision in Estimates 2026 including Direct Charges, Transfers & Virements	Revised Provision 2026	NET		Explanation
					Increase	Decrease	
			\$	\$	\$	\$	
Sub-Item	15	Int.pay't UDeCOTT M/Term F'cing USDS\$35.6Mn P/F Hospital	7,582,375	14,581,775	6,999,400		
Sub-Item	18	Interest Payment - UDeCOTT TT\$127.5Mn. Construction costs New Sangre Grande Hospital	3,200,250	6,400,550	3,200,300		
Sub-Item	19	Interest Payment - UDeCOTT TT\$101.9Mn. Re-Development of the Central Block at POSGH	2,578,786	4,946,786	2,368,000		
Sub-Item	20	Interest Payment - Ansa Merchant Bank Ltd - 11 Year Fixed Rate Loan TT\$500Mn. upsized to TT\$750Mn. Eastern Regional Health Authority	19,125,000	38,250,000	19,125,000		

HEAD/SUB-HEAD/ITEM AND SUB-ITEM			Provision in Estimates 2026 including Direct Charges, Transfers & Virements	Revised Provision 2026	NET		Explanation
					Increase	Decrease	
			\$	\$	\$	\$	
Sub-Item	21	Interest Payment - Scotiabank Refinancing of Principal for \$500Mn. RHA's Trade Payables Loan. South West Regional Health Authority	14,506,813	27,779,313	13,272,500		
Sub-Item	24	Interest Payment - ERHA TT\$469.756Mn. RHA's Trade Payables Loan	8,456,029	15,619,529	7,163,500		
Sub-Item	25	Principal Payment - UDeCOTT TT\$199.6Mn. F/Fin. - Construction of Arima Hospital	19,964,141	39,928,341	19,964,200		
Sub-Item	27	Principal Payment - UDeCOTT Medium Term Financing USD\$35.6Mn. P/F Hospital	24,263,604	49,159,204	24,895,600		

HEAD/SUB-HEAD/ITEM AND SUB-ITEM			Provision in Estimates 2026 including Direct Charges, Transfers & Virements	Revised Provision 2026	NET		Explanation
					Increase	Decrease	
			\$	\$	\$	\$	
Sub-Item	28	Principal Payment - Scotiabank Refinancing of Principal for \$500Mn. RHA's Trade Payables Loan. South West Regional Health Authority	50,030,022	100,030,022	50,000,000		
Sub-Item	29	Principal Payment - ERHA TT\$469.756Mn Trade Payables Loan	58,719,618	117,439,318	58,719,700		
Item	011	Transfers to State Enterprises	354,989,746	520,076,146	165,086,400		
Sub-Item	06	UDeCOTT-RBC Royal Bank (T&T) Ltd. US\$16.9Mn. 10 year Term Loan - Arima Hospital	2,935,506	5,769,306	2,833,800		

HEAD/SUB-HEAD/ITEM AND SUB-ITEM			Provision in Estimates 2026 including Direct Charges, Transfers & Virements	Revised Provision 2026	NET		Explanation
					Increase	Decrease	
			\$	\$	\$	\$	
Sub-Item	08	UDeCOTT-CIBC First Caribbean International Bank (T&T) Ltd. TT\$70.3Mn. 8yr. Fixed Rate Loan for Re-development of the Central Block at POSGH	1,711,434	3,382,934	1,671,500		
Sub-Item	09	UDeCOTT-CIBC First Caribbean International Bank US\$12.4Mn. 8yr. Fixed Rate Loan for Re-development of the Central Block at POSGH	2,031,382	4,043,282	2,011,900		
Sub-Item	14	NIPDEC - TT\$272.3Mn. Procurement, Storage and Distribution of Pharmaceuticals / Non Pharmaceuticals - Interest Payment	2,246,920	3,932,120	1,685,200		

HEAD/SUB-HEAD/ITEM AND SUB-ITEM			Provision in Estimates 2026 including Direct Charges, Transfers & Virements	Revised Provision 2026	NET		Explanation
					Increase	Decrease	
			\$	\$	\$	\$	
Sub-Item	15	NIPDEC - TT\$267.3Mn. Procurement, Storage and Distribution of Pharmaceuticals / Non Pharmaceuticals - Interest Payment	3,931,106	7,024,706	3,093,600		
Sub-Item	16	NIPDEC TT\$284.19Mn. 8year Fixed Rate Term Loan - Procurement, Storage and Distribution of Pharmaceuticals / Non Pharmaceuticals	20,217,858	40,084,958	19,867,100		
Sub-Item	17	UDeCOTT - TT\$100Mn. 2.95% Fixed Rate Loan due in 2026 for Package 1 Central Block Port of Spain General Hospital - Interest Payment	737,500	1,106,300	368,800		

HEAD/SUB-HEAD/ITEM AND SUB-ITEM			Provision in Estimates 2026 including Direct Charges, Transfers & Virements	Revised Provision 2026	NET		Explanation
					Increase	Decrease	
			\$	\$	\$	\$	
Sub-Item	18	NIPDEC - TT\$403Mn. Pharmaceuticals/Non Pharmaceuticals - Programme 2nd Issue - Principal Payment	25,188,817	50,377,717	25,188,900		
Sub-Item	19	NIPDEC - TT\$403Mn. Pharmaceuticals/Non Pharmaceuticals - 2nd Issue - Interest Payment	5,289,664	10,050,364	4,760,700		
Sub-Item	24	NIPDEC - TT\$272.3Mn. Procurement, Storage and Distribution of Pharmaceuticals/ Non Pharmaceuticals - Principal Payment	34,044,231	68,088,531	34,044,300		
Sub-Item	27	NIPDEC - TT\$267.3Mn Procurement, Storage and Distribution of Pharmaceuticals/Non Pharmaceuticals - Principal Payment	44,560,607	89,121,207	44,560,600		

HEAD/SUB-HEAD/ITEM AND SUB-ITEM			Provision in Estimates 2026 including Direct Charges, Transfers & Virements	Revised Provision 2026	NET		Explanation
					Increase	Decrease	
			\$	\$	\$	\$	
Sub-Item	28	UDeCOTT - TT\$100Mn 2.95% Fixed Rate Loan due in 2026 for Package 1 Central Block Port of Spain General Hospital - Principal Payment	25,002,500	50,002,500	25,000,000		
HEAD	30	MINISTRY OF LABOUR, SMALL AND MICRO ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT	182,231,500	194,009,900	11,778,400		
Sub-Head	01	Personnel Expenditure	38,731,680	45,540,280	6,808,600		Variation of Appropriation.
Item	001	General Administration	26,756,880	32,985,680	6,228,800		
Sub-Item	01	Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance	21,000,000	26,810,000	5,810,000		
Sub-Item	05	Government's Contribution to N.I.S.	1,600,000	2,018,800	418,800		

HEAD/SUB-HEAD/ITEM AND SUB-ITEM			Provision in Estimates 2026 including Direct Charges, Transfers & Virements	Revised Provision 2026	NET		Explanation
					Increase	Decrease	
			\$	\$	\$	\$	
Item	002	Co-operatives	9,970,000	10,549,800	579,800		
Sub-Item	01	Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance	9,970,000	10,549,800	579,800		
Sub-Head	02	Goods and Services	66,496,900	69,164,900	2,668,000		Supplementation of Appropriation.
Item	001	General Administration	34,080,450	36,748,450	2,668,000		
Sub-Item	22	Short - term Employment	34,080,950	36,748,950	2,668,000		
Sub-Head	06	Current Transfers to Statutory Boards & Similar Bodies	26,533,100	28,834,900	2,301,800		Supplementation of Appropriation.
Item	004	Statutory Boards	26,533,100	28,834,900	2,301,800		
Sub-Item	17	Cipriani College of Labour and Co-operative Studies	26,533,100	28,834,900	2,301,800		

HEAD/SUB-HEAD/ITEM AND SUB-ITEM			Provision in Estimates 2026 including Direct Charges, Transfers & Virements	Revised Provision 2026	NET		Explanation
					Increase	Decrease	
			\$	\$	\$	\$	
HEAD	31	MINISTRY OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE	1,570,513,513	1,639,162,223	68,648,710		
Sub-Head	04	Current Transfers and Subsidies	442,478,113	486,126,823	43,648,710		Supplementation of Appropriation.
Item	011	Transfers to State Enterprises	427,297,058	470,945,768	43,648,710		
Sub-Item	01	National Information and Communication Technology	50,000,000	55,100,000	5,100,000		
Sub-Item	07	UDECOTT - TT \$496Mn. Interest Payment on 10 years Fixed Rate Loan Gov't Campus Plaza Fit-Out due 2028	4,519,548	8,348,258	3,828,710		
Sub-Item	10	UDECOTT - TT\$496Mn. Principal Payment on 10 years Fixed Rate Loan Gov't Campus Plaza Fit-Out due 2028	34,720,000	69,440,000	34,720,000		

HEAD/SUB-HEAD/ITEM AND SUB-ITEM			Provision in Estimates 2026 including Direct Charges, Transfers & Virements	Revised Provision 2026	NET		Explanation
					Increase	Decrease	
			\$	\$	\$	\$	
Sub-Head	09	Development Programme	132,100,000	157,100,000	25,000,000		Supplementation of Appropriation.
Item	005	Multi-Sectoral and Other Services	112,100,000	137,100,000	25,000,000		
Sub-Item	06	General Public Services	112,100,000	137,100,000	25,000,000		
Project Group	A	Administrative Services	62,600,000	67,600,000	5,000,000		
Project Desc.	077	Establishment of a Tier 4 Data Centre to Strengthen the Digital Infrastructure	0	5,000,000	5,000,000		
Project Group	F	Public Buildings	49,500,000	69,500,000	20,000,000		
Project Desc.	018	Construction and Outfitting of A Tier 4 Data Centre to Strengthen the Digital Infrastructure	0	20,000,000	20,000,000		

HEAD/SUB-HEAD/ITEM AND SUB-ITEM			Provision in Estimates 2026 including Direct Charges, Transfers & Virements	Revised Provision 2026	NET		Explanation
					Increase	Decrease	
			\$	\$	\$	\$	
HEAD	34	MINISTRY OF TRANSPORT AND CIVIL AVIATION	545,839,000	591,839,000	46,000,000		
Sub-Head	01	Personnel Expenditure	60,471,000	85,371,000	24,900,000		Variation of Appropriation.
Item	001	General Administration	13,190,000	38,090,000	24,900,000		
Sub-Item	01	Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance	11,275,000	36,175,000	24,900,000		
Sub-Head	02	Goods and Services	95,274,000	98,668,254	3,394,254		Supplementation of Appropriation.
Item	001	General Administration	10,611,000	14,005,254	3,394,254		
Sub-Item	22	Short-term Employment	3,500,000	6,894,254	3,394,254		
Sub-Head	04	Current Transfers and Subsidies	35,701,000	53,406,746	17,705,746		Supplementation of Appropriation.
Item	009	Other Transfers	7,000,000	14,144,424	7,144,424		
Sub-Item	07	Traffic Enforcement Centre Unit	7,000,000	14,144,424	7,144,424		
Item	011	Transfers to State Enterprises	20,681,000	31,242,322	10,561,322		

HEAD/SUB-HEAD/ITEM AND SUB-ITEM			Provision in Estimates 2026 including Direct Charges, Transfers & Virements	Revised Provision 2026	NET		Explanation
					Increase	Decrease	
			\$	\$	\$	\$	
Sub-Item	02	NIPDEC - Interest Payment on TT\$339Mn. 6.25% Fixed Rate Bond - Motor Vehicle	10,681,000	21,242,322	10,561,322		
HEAD	37	INTEGRITY COMMISSION	9,764,685	11,014,685	1,250,000		
Sub-Head	02	Goods and Services	5,235,192	6,485,192	1,250,000		Supplementation of Appropriation.
Item	001	General Administration	5,235,192	6,485,192	1,250,000		
Sub-Item	22	Short-term Employment	3,378,467	4,628,467	1,250,000		
HEAD	38	ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION	9,711,245	9,911,245	200,000		
Sub-Head	01	Personnel Expenditure	3,946,340	4,146,340	200,000		Variation of Appropriation.
Item	001	General Administration	3,946,340	4,146,340	200,000		
Sub-Item	01	Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance	1,300,000	1,500,000	200,000		

HEAD/SUB-HEAD/ITEM AND SUB-ITEM			Provision in Estimates 2026 including Direct Charges, Transfers & Virements	Revised Provision 2026	NET		Explanation
					Increase	Decrease	
			\$	\$	\$	\$	
HEAD	39	MINISTRY OF PUBLIC UTILITIES	3,270,777,074	3,792,649,074	521,872,000		
Sub-Head	01	Personnel Expenditure	24,820,000	33,051,000	8,231,000		Variation of Appropriation.
Item	001	General Administration	13,047,000	21,278,000	8,231,000		
Sub-Item	01	Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance	10,500,000	18,731,000	8,231,000		
Sub-Head	02	Goods and Services	385,904,500	473,867,500	87,963,000		Supplementation of Appropriation.
Item	001	General Administration	371,990,668	459,953,668	87,963,000		
Sub-Item	42	Street Lighting	108,000,000	195,963,000	87,963,000		
Sub-Head	04	Current Transfers and Subsidies	1,291,285,574	1,341,160,574	49,875,000		Supplementation of Appropriation.
Item	007	Households	53,084,913	92,959,913	39,875,000		
Sub-Item	08	Refunds to T&TEC - Re-Rebate on Electricity Bills	48,784,913	87,659,913	38,875,000		
Sub-Item	40	Gratuities to Contract Officers	500,000	1,500,000	1,000,000		
Item	009	Other Transfers	1,118,843,461	1,128,843,461	10,000,000		

HEAD/SUB-HEAD/ITEM AND SUB-ITEM			Provision in Estimates 2026 including Direct Charges, Transfers & Virements	Revised Provision 2026	NET		Explanation
					Increase	Decrease	
			\$	\$	\$	\$	
Sub-Item	04	Trinidad and Tobago Postal Corporation (TTPost)	62,000,000	69,000,000	7,000,000		
Sub-Item	24	Community Based Environmental Protection and Enhancement Programme (CEPEP)	18,215,087	21,215,087	3,000,000		
Sub-Head	06	Current Transfers to Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies	1,470,679,000	1,846,482,000	375,803,000		Supplementation of Appropriation.
Item	004	Statutory Boards	1,470,679,000	1,846,482,000	375,803,000		
Sub-Item	51	Water and Sewerage Authority	1,470,679,000	1,846,482,000	375,803,000		
HEAD	40	MINISTRY OF ENERGY AND ENERGY INDUSTRIES	553,807,800	1,007,807,800	454,000,000		
Sub-Head	04	Current Transfers and Subsidies	324,683,100	778,683,100	454,000,000		Supplementation of Appropriation.
Item	007	Households	301,190,000	755,190,000	454,000,000		

HEAD/SUB-HEAD/ITEM AND SUB-ITEM			Provision in Estimates 2026 including Direct Charges, Transfers & Virements	Revised Provision 2026	NET		Explanation
					Increase	Decrease	
			\$	\$	\$	\$	
Sub-Item	01	Shortfall in Subsidy re: Sale of Petroleum Products	296,000,000	750,000,000	454,000,000		
HEAD	42	MINISTRY OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT	2,094,683,516	2,404,856,169	310,172,653		
Sub-Head	01	Personnel Expenditure	114,412,000	196,186,380	81,774,380		Variation of Appropriation.
Item	001	General Administration	108,512,000	190,286,380	81,774,380		
Sub-Item	01	Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance	83,539,000	165,313,380	81,774,380		
Sub-Head	02	Goods and Services	56,180,580	66,962,523	10,781,943		Supplementation of Appropriation.
Item	001	General Administration	52,743,580	63,525,523	10,781,943		
Sub-Item	16	Contract Employment	32,000,000	42,781,943	10,781,943		

HEAD/SUB-HEAD/ITEM AND SUB-ITEM			Provision in Estimates 2026 including Direct Charges, Transfers & Virements	Revised Provision 2026	NET		Explanation
					Increase	Decrease	
			\$	\$	\$	\$	
Sub-Head	04	Current Transfers and Subsidies	88,429,376	190,760,889	102,331,513		Supplementation and Variation of Appropriation.
Item	007	Households	4,418,000	4,638,175	220,175		
Sub-Item	40	Gratuities to Contract Officers	2,900,000	3,120,175	220,175		
Item	009	Other Transfers	8,938,960	49,126,920	40,187,960		
Sub-Item	06	National Programme for the Upkeep of Public Spaces	8,938,960	49,126,920	40,187,960		
Item	011	Transfers to State Enterprises	74,839,916	136,763,294	61,923,378		
Sub-Item	03	Rural Development Company of T'dad and T'go (R.D.C.)	0	5,400,000	5,400,000		
Sub-Item	10	R.D.C. Interest on \$200.437Mn Fixed Rate Term Loan	2,427,811	4,263,515	1,835,704		
Sub-Item	11	R.D.C. Principal on \$200.437Mn Fixed Rate Term Loan	33,096,893	66,784,566	33,687,673		

HEAD/SUB-HEAD/ITEM AND SUB-ITEM			Provision in Estimates 2026 including Direct Charges, Transfers & Virements	Revised Provision 2026	NET		Explanation
					Increase	Decrease	
			\$	\$	\$	\$	
Sub-Item	12	R.D.C. Interest on \$200Mn Fixed Rate Term	4,766,667	9,100,001	4,333,334		
Sub-Item	13	R.D.C. Principal on \$200Mn Fixed Rate Term	16,666,667	33,333,334	16,666,667		
Sub-Head	06	Current Transfers to Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies	1,539,375,560	1,645,670,560	106,295,000		Supplementation of Appropriation.
Item	005	Local Government Bodies	1,539,375,560	1,645,670,560	106,295,000		
Sub-Item	37	Regional Corporation Services - General	11,449,738	117,744,738	106,295,000		
Sub-Head	09	Development Programme	294,761,000	303,750,817	8,989,817		Supplementation of Appropriation.
Item	005	Multi-Sectoral and Other Services	281,261,000	290,250,817	8,989,817		
Sub-Item	09	Local Government Services	266,508,000	275,497,817	8,989,817		

HEAD/SUB-HEAD/ITEM AND SUB-ITEM			Provision in Estimates 2026 including Direct Charges, Transfers & Virements	Revised Provision 2026	NET		Explanation
					Increase	Decrease	
			\$	\$	\$	\$	
Project Group	A	Port of Spain City Corporation	4,100,000	13,089,817	8,989,817		
Project Desc	014	Drainage and Irrigation Programme	500,000	9,489,817	8,989,817		
HEAD	61	MINISTRY OF HOUSING	637,044,000	834,841,211	197,797,211		
Sub-Head	01	Personnel Expenditure	11,642,000	12,074,647	432,647		Variation of Appropriation.
Item	001	General Administration	11,642,000	12,074,647	432,647		
Sub-Item	01	Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance	9,140,000	9,572,647	432,647		
Sub-Head	04	Current Transfers and Subsidies	555,864,000	753,228,564	197,364,564		Supplementation of Appropriation.
Item	009	Other Transfers	493,916,000	691,280,564	197,364,564		
Sub-Item	01	Trinidad and Tobago Housing Development Corporation	488,916,000	686,280,564	197,364,564		

HEAD/SUB-HEAD/ITEM AND SUB-ITEM			Provision in Estimates 2026 including Direct Charges, Transfers & Virements	Revised Provision 2026	NET		Explanation
					Increase	Decrease	
			\$	\$	\$	\$	
HEAD	64	TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO POLICE SERVICE	2,612,301,000	2,951,501,000	339,200,000		
Sub-Head	01	Personnel Expenditure	2,008,125,000	2,283,125,000	275,000,000		Variation of Appropriation.
Item	001	Police Service	2,008,125,000	2,283,125,000	275,000,000		
Sub-Item	01	Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance	1,140,800,000	1,260,800,000	120,000,000		
Sub-Item	03	Overtime - Monthly Paid Officers	400,000,000	500,000,000	100,000,000		
Sub-Item	04	Allowances - Monthly Paid Officers	350,000,000	375,000,000	25,000,000		
Sub-Item	05	Government's Contribution to N.I.S.	115,000,000	145,000,000	30,000,000		
Sub-Head	02	Goods and Services	432,969,000	493,169,000	60,200,000		Supplementation of Appropriation.
Item	001	Police Service (Trinidad)	428,033,000	488,233,000	60,200,000		
Sub-Item	03	Uniforms	10,100,000	30,100,000	20,000,000		
Sub-Item	08	Rent / Lease - Office Accommodation and Storage	26,500,000	31,000,000	4,500,000		

HEAD/SUB-HEAD/ITEM AND SUB-ITEM			Provision in Estimates 2026 including Direct Charges, Transfers & Virements	Revised Provision 2026	NET		Explanation
					Increase	Decrease	
			\$	\$	\$	\$	
Sub-Item	09	Rent / Lease - Vehicles and Equipment	25,000,000	30,000,000	5,000,000		
Sub-Item	13	Maintenance of Vehicles	25,000,000	30,000,000	5,000,000		
Sub-Item	16	Contract Employment	72,000,000	75,500,000	3,500,000		
Sub-Item	21	Repairs and Maintenance - Buildings	20,000,000	25,000,000	5,000,000		
Sub-Item	23	Fees	30,000,000	37,000,000	7,000,000		
Sub-Item	40	Food at Institutions	12,500,000	22,700,000	10,200,000		
Sub-Head	04	Current Transfers and Subsidies	26,028,000	30,028,000	4,000,000		Supplementation of Appropriation.
Item	007	Households	8,000,000	12,000,000	4,000,000		
Sub-Item	40	Gratuities to Contract Officers	6,000,000	10,000,000	4,000,000		

HEAD/SUB-HEAD/ITEM AND SUB-ITEM			Provision in Estimates 2026 including Direct Charges, Transfers & Virements	Revised Provision 2026	NET		Explanation
					Increase	Decrease	
			\$	\$	\$	\$	
HEAD	65	MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AND CARICOM AFFAIRS	269,403,500	303,919,969	34,516,469		
Sub-Head	04	Current Transfers and Subsidies	64,549,000	85,309,083	20,760,083		Supplementation of Appropriation.
Item	001	Regional Bodies	39,800,000	57,820,883	18,020,883		
Sub-Item	01	Caribbean Community Secretariat (CARICOM)	35,500,000	53,520,883	18,020,883		
Item	003	United Nations Organisations	17,797,000	20,536,200	2,739,200		
Sub-Item	04	United Nations Peacekeeping Operations	7,000,000	9,739,200	2,739,200		
Sub-Head	09	Development Programme	22,229,000	35,985,386	13,756,386		Supplementation of Appropriation.
Item	005	Multi-Sectoral and Other Services	22,229,000	35,985,386	13,756,386		
Sub-Item	06	General Public Services	22,229,000	35,985,386	13,756,386		
Project Group.	F	Public Buildings	15,750,000	29,506,386	13,756,386		

HEAD/SUB-HEAD/ITEM AND SUB-ITEM			Provision in Estimates 2026 including Direct Charges, Transfers & Virements	Revised Provision 2026	NET		Explanation
					Increase	Decrease	
			\$	\$	\$	\$	
Project No.	075	Upgrade Works at Overseas Missions	8,000,000	21,756,386	13,756,386		
HEAD	67	MINISTRY OF PLANNING, ECONOMIC AFFAIRS AND DEVELOPMENT	323,403,000	333,392,993	9,989,993		
Sub-Head	01	Personnel Expenditure	68,660,000	77,021,190	8,361,190		Variation of Appropriation.
Item	001	General Administration	23,089,000	31,450,190	8,361,190		
Sub-item	01	Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance	17,500,000	25,861,190	8,361,190		
Sub-Head	02	Goods and Services	70,646,000	72,274,803	1,628,803		Supplementation of Appropriation.
Item	001	General Administration	19,741,000	21,369,803	1,628,803		
Sub-item	16	Contract Employment	6,000,000	7,628,803	1,628,803		

HEAD/SUB-HEAD/ITEM AND SUB-ITEM			Provision in Estimates 2026 including Direct Charges, Transfers & Virements	Revised Provision 2026	NET		Explanation
					Increase	Decrease	
			\$	\$	\$	\$	
HEAD	69	MINISTRY OF WORKS AND INFRASTRUCTURE	2,152,657,000	2,562,966,942	410,309,942		
Sub-Head	01	Personnel Expenditure	320,306,000	329,171,000	8,865,000		Variation of Appropriation.
Item	001	General Administration	37,601,000	46,466,000	8,865,000		
Sub-Item	01	Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance	30,775,000	39,640,000	8,865,000		
Sub-Head	02	Goods and Services	234,260,533	258,260,533	24,000,000		Supplementation and Variation of Appropriation.
Item	002	Highways	67,459,395	77,459,395	10,000,000		
Sub-Item	28	Other Contracted Services	49,152,300	59,152,300	10,000,000		
Item	005	Drainage	104,723,000	118,723,000	14,000,000		
Sub-Item	28	Other Contracted Services	40,000,000	54,000,000	14,000,000		
Sub-Head	04	Current Transfers and Subsidies	1,497,165,700	1,874,610,642	377,444,942		Supplementation and Variation of Appropriation.
Item	008	Subsidies	173,977,000	189,977,000	16,000,000		

HEAD/SUB-HEAD/ITEM AND SUB-ITEM			Provision in Estimates 2026 including Direct Charges, Transfers & Virements	Revised Provision 2026	NET		Explanation
					Increase	Decrease	
			\$	\$	\$	\$	
Sub-Item	01	Port Authority - Contribution towards deficit on operation of Coastal Steamers	173,977,000	189,977,000	16,000,000		
Item	009	Other Transfers	81,929,000	94,429,000	12,500,000		
Sub-Item	09	National Recruitment Drive Initiative	26,000,000	38,500,000	12,500,000		
Item	011	Transfers to State Enterprises	1,223,220,260	1,572,165,202	348,944,942		
Sub-Item	24	NIPDEC - Road Works \$500Mn - PURE	12,550,000	25,100,000	12,550,000		
Sub-Item	25	NIDCO - Road Works \$500Mn - Point Fortin Highway	11,950,000	23,900,000	11,950,000		
Sub-Item	28	NIDCO - Operation and M'tce of the M.V. Galleons Passage	23,285,000	33,380,000	10,095,000		
Sub-Item	31	NIDCO - Operation and M'tenance of the A.P.T. James	76,000,000	86,775,000	10,775,000		

HEAD/SUB-HEAD/ITEM AND SUB-ITEM			Provision in Estimates 2026 including Direct Charges, Transfers & Virements	Revised Provision 2026	NET		Explanation
					Increase	Decrease	
			\$	\$	\$	\$	
Sub-Item	32	NIDCO - Operation and M'tenance of the HSC Buccoo Reef	85,000,000	98,260,000	13,260,000		
Sub-Item	36	NIPDEC - Repayment of \$682 Mn. 3.75% Fixed Rate Loan Interest	8,525,000	14,918,750	6,393,750		
Sub-Item	49	Leasing of Semi-submersible Barge	37,017,000	71,598,000	34,581,000		
Sub-Item	50	NIPDEC - Principal Payment on TT\$682 Mn. 3.75% Fixed Rate Loan	113,667,000	227,334,000	113,667,000		
Sub-Item	53	NIDCO - Principal Payment on TT\$250Mn. 5.5% Fixed Rate Loan	25,000,000	50,000,000	25,000,000		
Sub-Item	54	NIDCO - Interest Payment on TT\$250Mn. 5.5% Fixed Rate Loan	6,222,000	11,845,000	5,623,000		
Sub-Item	55	NIPDEC - Principal Payment on TT\$250Mn. 6.4% Non-Revolving Fixed Rate Loan - PURE	50,000,000	75,000,000	25,000,000		

HEAD/SUB-HEAD/ITEM AND SUB-ITEM			Provision in Estimates 2026 including Direct Charges, Transfers & Virements	Revised Provision 2026	NET		Explanation
					Increase	Decrease	
			\$	\$	\$	\$	
Sub-Item	56	NIPDEC - Interest Payment on TT\$250Mn. 6.4% Non-Revolving Fixed Rate Loan - PURE	15,203,000	23,224,192	8,021,192		
Sub-Item	57	UDECOTT - Principal Payment on TT\$500Mn. 3.78% Fixed Rate Loan	62,500,000	125,000,000	62,500,000		
Sub-Item	58	UDECOTT - Interest Payment on TT\$500Mn. 3.78% Fixed Rate Loan	7,088,000	12,994,000	5,906,000		
Sub-Item	59	UDECOTT - Interest Payment on TT\$159.694Mn. 4.5% Fixed Rate Loan	3,629,000	7,252,000	3,623,000		
HEAD	72	MINISTRY OF TERTIARY EDUCATION AND SKILLS TRAINING	1,797,511,900	1,817,311,900	19,800,000		
Sub-Head	04	Current Transfers and Subsidies	1,058,955,700	1,071,955,700	13,000,000		Supplementation of Appropriation.
Item	006	Educational Institutions	913,620,600	926,620,600	13,000,000		

HEAD/SUB-HEAD/ITEM AND SUB-ITEM			Provision in Estimates 2026 including Direct Charges, Transfers & Virements	Revised Provision 2026	NET		Explanation
					Increase	Decrease	
			\$	\$	\$	\$	
Sub-Item	02	Direct University Services-Current	585,572,700	598,572,700	13,000,000		
Sub-Head	06	Current Transfers to Statutory Boards Similar Bodies	114,791,000	121,591,000	6,800,000		Supplementation of Appropriation.
Item	004	Statutory Boards	114791000	121,591,000	6,800,000		
Sub-Item	56	College of Science, Technology and Applied Arts of Trinidad and Tobago	100,247,000	107,047,000	6,800,000		
HEAD	75	EQUAL OPPORTUNITY TRIBUNAL	6,135,480	6,414,389	278,909		
Sub-Head	01	Personnel Expenditure	3,365,980	3,644,889	278,909		Variation of Appropriation.
Item	001	General Administration	3,365,980	3,644,889	278,909		
Sub-Item	01	Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance	715,000	984,359	269,359		

HEAD/SUB-HEAD/ITEM AND SUB-ITEM			Provision in Estimates 2026 including Direct Charges, Transfers & Virements	Revised Provision 2026	NET		Explanation
					Increase	Decrease	
			\$	\$	\$	\$	
Sub-Item	05	Government's Contribution to N.I.S.	55,000	64,550	9,550		
HEAD	78	MINISTRY OF THE PEOPLE, SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT AND FAMILY SERVICES	6,012,215,208	6,089,021,208	76,806,000		
Sub-Head	01	Personnel Expenditure	44,443,000	52,804,000	8,361,000		Variation of Appropriation.
Item	003	Social Welfare	26,740,000	35,101,000	8,361,000		
Sub-Item	01	Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance	21,000,000	29,361,000	8,361,000		
Sub-Head	04	Current Transfers and Subsidies	5,791,835,400	5,860,280,400	68,445,000		Supplementation of Appropriation.
Item	005	Non-Profit Institutions	67,587,545	73,926,545	6,339,000		
Sub-Item	04	St. Mary's Children's Home	13,000,000	16,385,000	3,385,000		
Sub-Item	10	St. Jude's Home for Girls	14,510,745	17,464,745	2,954,000		

HEAD/SUB-HEAD/ITEM AND SUB-ITEM			Provision in Estimates 2026 including Direct Charges, Transfers & Virements	Revised Provision 2026	NET		Explanation
					Increase	Decrease	
			\$	\$	\$	\$	
Item	007	Households	5,697,253,000	5,759,359,000	62,106,000		
Sub-Item	23	Children's Authority	97,700,000	159,806,000	62,106,000		
HEAD	83	MINISTRY OF HOMELAND SECURITY	1,930,361,700	1,946,461,700	16,100,000		
Sub-Head	01	Personnel Expenditure	1,231,893,700	1,247,993,700	16,100,000		Variation of Appropriation.
Item	004	Immigration	72,075,700	88,175,700	16,100,000		
Sub-Item	01	Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance	52,028,700	68,128,700	16,100,000		
HEAD	84	MINISTRY OF DEFENCE	1,472,699,070	1,511,944,070	39,245,000		
Sub-Head	02	Goods and Services	155,659,897	194,904,897	39,245,000		Supplementation of Appropriation.
Item	001	General Administration	48,752,112	70,597,112	21,845,000		
Sub-Item	16	Contract Employment	7,000,000	10,300,000	3,300,000		

HEAD/SUB-HEAD/ITEM AND SUB-ITEM			Provision in Estimates 2026 including Direct Charges, Transfers & Virements	Revised Provision 2026	NET		Explanation
					Increase	Decrease	
			\$	\$	\$	\$	
Sub-Item	36	Extraordinary Expenditure	27,529,210	43,719,210	16,190,000		
Sub-Item	66	Hosting of Conferences, Seminars and other Functions	190,000	2,545,000	2,355,000		
Item	002	Regiment	32,065,500	37,565,500	5,500,000		
Sub-Item	03	Uniforms	1,890,000	7,390,000	5,500,000		
Item	004	Air Guard	22,995,211	34,895,211	11,900,000		
Sub-Item	13	Maintenance of Vehicles	8,003,588	19,903,588	11,900,000		
HEAD	86	MINISTRY OF CULTURE AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT	436,362,700	485,643,950	49,281,250		
Sub-Head	01	Personnel Expenditure	30,303,700	36,273,700	5,970,000		Variation of Appropriation.
Item	001	General Administration	12,742,900	14,942,900	2,200,000		
Sub-Item	01	Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance	10,800,000	12,800,000	2,000,000		

HEAD/SUB-HEAD/ITEM AND SUB-ITEM			Provision in Estimates 2026 including Direct Charges, Transfers & Virements	Revised Provision 2026	NET		Explanation
					Increase	Decrease	
			\$	\$	\$	\$	
Sub-Item	05	Government's Contribution to N.I.S.	780,000	980,000	200,000		
Item	002	Culture Division	3,911,900	4,936,900	1,025,000		
Sub-Item	01	Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance	3,420,000	4,355,000	935,000		
Sub-Item	05	Government's Contribution to N.I.S.	300,000	390,000	90,000		
Item	003	Community Development Division	10,318,900	12,118,900	1,800,000		
Sub-Item	01	Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance	8,300,000	9,980,000	1,680,000		
Sub-Item	05	Government's Contribution to N.I.S.	850,000	970,000	120,000		
Item	004	Best Village	3,330,000	4,275,000	945,000		
Sub-Item	01	Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance	3,000,000	3,875,000	875,000		
Sub-Item	05	Government's Contribution to N.I.S.	270,000	340,000	70,000		
Sub-Head	02	Goods and Services	37,768,900	39,318,900	1,550,000		Supplementation of Appropriation.

HEAD/SUB-HEAD/ITEM AND SUB-ITEM			Provision in Estimates 2026 including Direct Charges, Transfers & Virements	Revised Provision 2026	NET		Explanation
					Increase	Decrease	
			\$	\$	\$	\$	
Item	001	General Administration	17,803,046	18,138,046	335,000		
Sub-Item	01	Travelling and Subsistence	500,000	835,000	335,000		
Item	003	Community Development Division	9,047,804	9,777,804	730,000		
Sub-Item	01	Travelling and Subsistence	476,000	1,206,000	730,000		
Item	004	Best Village	2,462,100	2,947,100	485,000		
Sub-Item	01	Travelling and Subsistence	650,000	1,135,000	485,000		
Sub-Head	04	Current Transfers and Subsidies	135,448,000	177,209,250	41,761,250		Supplementation of Appropriation.
Item	011	Transfers to State Enterprises	73,118,750	114,880,000	41,761,250		
Sub-Item	02	NCC - Interest Payment on TT\$200Mn 4-year	10,331,250	14,448,750	4,117,500		
Sub-Item	03	NCC - Principal Payment on TT\$200Mn 4-year	50,000,000	75,000,000	25,000,000		

HEAD/SUB-HEAD/ITEM AND SUB-ITEM			Provision in Estimates 2026 including Direct Charges, Transfers & Virements	Revised Provision 2026	NET		Explanation
					Increase	Decrease	
			\$	\$	\$	\$	
Sub-Item	04	NCC - Interest Payment on TT\$100Mn 2-year	287,500	431,250	143,750		
Sub-Item	05	NCC - Principal Payment on TT\$100Mn 2-year	12,500,000	25,000,000	12,500,000		
TOTAL HEADS			48,944,078,019	51,871,449,870	3,664,894,769	737,522,918	

APPENDIX V

Proposals for the Supplementation and Variation for fiscal year 2026

AGENDA FOR THE SECOND MEETING OF
STANDING FINANCE COMMITTEE
OF THE 2026 SESSION OF THE HOUSE OF
REPRESENTATIVES OF THE REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO
TO BE HELD ON

12th June, 2026

MATTERS RELATING TO THE 2026 ACCOUNTS

	F.C. NOTE NO.	FILE NO.	SUBJECT	PAGE NOS.
01	01	F:BUD:4/4/8	Supplementation of Appropriation for fiscal year 2026	2 - 15
01	02	F:BUD:4/4/8	Variation of Appropriation for fiscal year 2026	16-23

NOTE FOR STANDING FINANCE COMMITTEE

ITEM NO. 1

F.C. (2026)

F:BUD: 4/4/8

SUPPLEMENTATION OF APPROPRIATION FOR
FISCAL YEAR 2026

Standing Finance Committee is being asked to consider the under-mentioned proposals:

Provision of Supplementary Funds in the sum of *Tw Thousand, Nine Hundred and Twenty Seven Million, Three Hundred and Seventy One Thousand, Eight Hundred and Fifty One Dollars (\$2,927,371,851)* to fund urgent and critical Recurrent and Capital Expenditure to September 30, 2026, in areas where insufficient or no allocation was provided.

2. The Standing Finance Committee is asked to note that as a result of the review of the Recurrent Expenditure and the Development Programme which was conducted by the Ministry of Finance it is necessary to return to Parliament to seek approval for a supplementation of the Appropriation (Financial Year 2026) Act, 2025 for twenty seven (27) Heads of Expenditure totaling \$2,927,371,851.

3. Further, the Standing Finance Committee is now being asked to approve the additional sum amounting to \$2,927,371,851 which will be sourced from the Consolidated Fund and is required to meet expenditure under the following Sub-Heads:-

- (i) Goods and Services - \$343,046,510
- (ii) Current Transfers and Subsidies - \$1,921,379,338

- (iii) Current Transfers to Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies - \$570,199,800
- (iv) Development Programme - \$92,746,203

4. Details of the total proposed Supplementation by Heads of Expenditure are given in the Table below:

Supplementation by Heads of Expenditure - 2026

Heads of Expenditure	Amount \$
01 - President	1,000,000
03 - Judiciary	39,154,220
04 - Industrial Court	685,000
05 - Parliament	3,228,200
07 - Statutory Authorities, Service Commission	285,700
15 - Tobago House of Assembly	94,000,000
16 - Central Administrative Services, Tobago	465,940
17 - Personnel Department	2,518,670
23 - Office of the Attorney General	75,000,000
26 - Ministry of Education	127,779,300
28 - Ministry of Health	499,978,970
30 - Ministry of Labour, Small and Micro Enterprise Development	4,969,800
31 - Ministry of Public Administration and Artificial Intelligence	68,648,710
34 - Ministry of Transport and Civil Aviation	21,100,000
37 - Integrity Commission	1,250,000
39 - Ministry of Public Utilities	513,641,000
40 - Ministry of Energy and Energy Industries	454,000,000
42 - Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government	188,210,313
61 - Ministry of Housing	197,364,564

Heads of Expenditure	Amount \$
64 - Trinidad and Tobago Police Service	64,200,000
65 - Ministry of Foreign and CARICOM Affairs	34,516,469
67 - Ministry of Planning, Economic Affairs and Development	1,628,803
69 - Ministry of Works and Infrastructure	362,944,942
72 - Ministry of Tertiary Education and Skills Training	19,800,000
78 - Ministry of the People, Social Development and Family Services	68,445,000
84 - Ministry of Defence	39,245,000
86 - Ministry of Culture and Community Development	43,311,250
Total	2,927,371,851

5. Explanations for the areas for the proposed supplementary funding are as follows:

Recurrent Expenditure

HEAD: 01 - PRESIDENT - the sum of **\$1,000,000** is required to supplement the provision to facilitate the payment of Salaries to the end of the fiscal year.

HEAD: 03 - JUDICIARY - the sum of **\$39,154,220** is required to: -

- (i) provide for the payment of outstanding bills from previous years in respect of FLOW and TSTT - \$5,500,000;
- (ii) settle outstanding payments owed to service providers for previous years for the purchase of vehicles and equipment - \$1,700,000;
- (iii) supplement the provision under Contract Employment to the end of fiscal 2026 - \$14,500,000;

- (iv) liquidate outstanding sums owed for the provision of security services for previous years - \$10,000,000;
- (v) settle payment of contract gratuities to persons whose contracts have expired - \$4,000,000; and
- (vi) supplement the provision for the payment of Principal - \$3,332,600 and Interest - \$121,620 UDeCOTT - TT\$39.99Mn. Fixed Rate Loans.

HEAD: 04 - INDUSTRIAL COURT - the sum of **\$685,000** is required to:-

- (i) supplement the provision for the payment of revised Salaries and Transport Allowance to contract officers to the end of fiscal 2026 - \$350,000;
- (ii) supplement the provision for the payment of Salaries under short-term employment to the end of the fiscal year - \$160,000; and
- (iii) cover expenses related to activities associated with the opening of the new Law Term - \$175,000.

HEAD: 05 - PARLIAMENT - the sum of **\$3,228,200** is required to:-

- (i) supplement the provision to facilitate the acquisition of consumables necessary for the Parliament to undertake its core function - \$1,228,200;
- (ii) supplement the provision for the payment of Salaries to persons under short-term employment to the end of the fiscal year - \$1,000,000; and
- (iii) facilitate the payment of gratuities owed to persons whose employment contracts expired during the period 2021 to 2024 - \$1,000,000.

HEAD: 07 - STATUTORY AUTHORITIES SERVICE COMMISSION - the sum of **\$285,700** is required to supplement the provision in order to facilitate payment of Salaries to persons retained under short-term employment to the end of the fiscal year.

HEAD: 15 - TOBAGO HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY- the sum of \$79,000,000 is required to meet the shortfall in allocation resulting from the revised Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance and other terms and conditions of employment for members of the Teaching Service as embodied in the Memorandum of Understanding dated 18th April, 2025.

HEAD: 16 - CENTRAL ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES, TOBAGO - the sum of **\$465,940** is required to: -

- (i) supplement the provision to facilitate the payment of Salaries under short-term employment to the end of the fiscal year - \$85,940; and
- (ii) meet the cost of subscription fees for the maintenance support of the Capella - GR GOES - 16 Satellite and the Vaisala Xweather Cloud base severe weather alert platform, for the period September 2024 to September 2026 - \$380,000.

HEAD: 17 - PERSONNEL DEPARTMENT - the sum of **\$2,518,670** is required to:-

- (i) supplement the provision to facilitate the payment of Travelling and Subsistence to eligible officers to the end of the fiscal year - \$60,000;
- (ii) supplement the provision for the payment of rent to the end of the fiscal year - \$1,049,540;
- (iii) supplement the provision for the payment of Salaries and Transport Allowance to contract officers to the end of the fiscal year - \$95,000;
- (iv) supplement the provision to meet the cost of Salaries under short-term employment to the end of the fiscal year - \$732,130;
- (v) supplement the provision to meet the annual subscription fee of the VMWare support and software assurance - \$282,000; and
- (vi) supplement the provision to enable the payment of gratuities to persons whose contracts have expired - \$300,000.

HEAD: 2 - OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL - the sum of **\$75,000,000** is required to facilitate the payment of legal fees to local and foreign attorneys to the end of fiscal 2026. The sum is disaggregated as follows:-

- General Administration - \$50,000,000; and
- Criminal Law Department - \$25,000,000

HEAD: 26 - MINISTRY OF EDUCATION - the sum of **\$97,779,300** is required to:-

- (i) supplement the provision to facilitate payment of Salaries to persons employed on contract to the end of fiscal 2026 - \$3,806,000
- (ii) supplement the provision to enable payment to the Public Transport Service Corporation (PTSC) for the provision of maxi taxi school transportation services to the end of fiscal 2026 - \$2,976,000;
- (iii) supplement the provision to facilitate the payment of contract gratuities to persons whose contracts expired - \$21,998,000;
- (iv) supplement the provision under the Sub-Item: Remedial Education to facilitate payment of Salaries to officers to the end of fiscal 2026 - \$5,292,000;
- (v) supplement the provision to enable the acquisition of school supplies and the award of book grants to needy students of Primary and Secondary schools - \$20,000,000;
- (vi) supplement the provision under the Sub-Item: National Schools Dietary Services Ltd. to facilitate the supply of meals to students to the end of fiscal 2026 - \$1,397,300; and
- (vii) supplement the provision to enable the payment of Principal and Interest on loans totaling \$42,310,000 to the end of fiscal 2026.

HEAD: 28 - MINISTRY OF HEALTH - the sum of **\$499,978,970** is required to:-

- (i) supplement the provision of \$59,508,770 under the Eastern Regional Health Authority to the end of fiscal 2026;

- (ii) supplement the provision totaling \$54,401,600 under the South West Regional Health Authority for operational cost and outstanding trade payables to the end of fiscal 2026; and
- (iii) supplement the provision to enable the payment of Principal and Interest on loans totaling \$386,068,600 to the end of fiscal 2026.

HEAD: 30 - MINISTRY OF LABOUR, SMALL AND MICRO ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT - the sum of **\$4,969,800** is required to:-

- (i) supplement the provision to meet cost of Salaries under short-term employment to the end of fiscal 2026 - \$2,668,000; and
- (ii) supplement the provision to meet operational costs of the Cipriani College of Labour and Co-operative Studies - \$2,301,800.

HEAD: 31 - MINISTRY OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE - the sum of **\$43,648,710** is required to: -

- (i) supplement the provision to facilitate the payment of Salaries under Sub-Item: National Information and Communication Technology to the end of fiscal 2026 - \$5,100,000; and
- (ii) supplement the provision to enable the payment of the Principal - \$34,720,000 and Interest - \$3,828,710 on UDeCOTT - TT\$496.0Mn. - 10 years Fixed Rate Loan Gov't Campus Plaza Fit-Out to the end of fiscal 2026.

HEAD: 34 - MINISTRY OF TRANSPORT AND CIVIL AVIATION - the sum of **\$21,100,000** is required to:-

- (i) provide for the recruitment of technical staff on a short-term basis - \$3,394,254;
- (ii) supplement the provision for the payment of outstanding bills under the Traffic Enforcement Centre Unit - \$7,144,424; and

- (iii) supplement the provision to enable the payment of interest on NIPDEC Loan - \$10,561,322.

HEAD: 37 - INTEGRITY COMMISSION - the sum of **\$1,250,000** is required to supplement the provision under Short-Term Employment to the end of fiscal 2026.

HEAD: 39 - MINISTRY OF PUBLIC UTILITIES - the sum of \$513,641,000 is required to: -

- (i) supplement the provision to meet the cost of street lighting and the lighting of parks and recreational grounds to the end of fiscal 2026 - \$87,963,000;
- (ii) supplement the provision to facilitate refunds to T&TEC for the 35% rebate programme on electricity bills to the end of fiscal 2026 - \$38,875,000;
- (iii) supplement the provision to enable the payment of contract gratuities to persons whose contracts have expired - \$1,000,000;
- (iv) supplement the provision under the Trinidad and Tobago Postal Corporation to the end of fiscal 2026 - \$7,000,000;
- (v) meet the cost of operational expenses, inclusive of emoluments for the administrative staff attached to the Community Based Environmental Protection and Enhancement Programme (CEPEP) - \$3,000,000; and
- (vi) supplement the provision of the Water and Sewerage Authority to the end of fiscal 2026 - \$375,803,000.

HEAD: 40 - MINISTRY OF ENERGY AND ENERGY INDUSTRIES - the sum of **\$454,000,000** is required to settle subsidy liabilities owed to:-

- the National Petroleum Marketing Company Limited (NPMC); and
- United Independent Petroleum Marketing Company (UNIPET)

HEAD: 42 - MINISTRY OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT - the sum of **\$179,220,496** is required to: -

- (i) supplement the provision to facilitate the recruitment of twenty-two (22) persons on contract for the newly established Local Economic Development Unit - \$10,781,943;
- (ii) supplement the provision to facilitate the payment of contract gratuities to persons whose contracts have expired - \$220,175;
- (iii) supplement the provision to enable the Rural Development Company of Trinidad and Tobago Limited to meet its operational costs to the end of fiscal 2026 - \$5,400,000;
- (iv) supplement the provision to meet the principal and interest payments on loans as detailed:-
 - Principal - \$50,354,340; and
 - Interest - \$6,169,038
- (v) supplement the provision of fourteen (14) Regional Corporations to the end of fiscal 2026 - \$106,295,000.

HEAD: 61 - MINISTRY OF HOUSING - to supplement the provision to facilitate the payment of principal and interest on loans to the end of fiscal 2026 - **\$197,364,564.**

HEAD: 64 - TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO POLICE SERVICE - the sum of **\$64,200,000** is required to: -

- (i) provide for the purchase of standard duty uniforms as well as the Digital Camouflage uniforms for use by officers of the Multi-Operational Police Section (MOPS), Inter-Agency Task Force (IATF) and Guard and Emergency Branch (GEB) - \$20,000,000;
- (ii) supplement the provision to facilitate the payment of rent to the end of fiscal 2026 - \$4,500,000;

- (iii) meet the cost incurred for rental of additional vehicles for assignment to specialist sections, to be used in covert operations during the present State of Emergency. In addition, to cover outstanding payments for the rental of vehicles for fiscal 2025 - \$5,000,000;
- (iv) provide for the settlement of outstanding bills accrued from the maintenance of vehicles in fiscal 2025 - \$5,000,000;
- (v) supplement the provision to meet the payment of Salaries to contract officers to the end of fiscal 2026 - \$3,500,000;
- (vi) supplement the provision to meet the cost of repairs and maintenance to buildings - \$5,000,000;
- (vii) supplement the provision to enable the payment of fees and IT subscriptions, membership and software maintenance - \$7,000,000;
- (viii) supplement the provision to facilitate payment of outstanding bills to the end of fiscal 2026 - \$10,200,000; and
- (ix) supplement the provision to enable the payment of contract gratuity to persons whose contracts have expired - \$4,000,000.

HEAD: 65 - MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AND CARICOM AFFAIRS - the sum of **\$20,760,083** is required to:-

- (i) settle outstanding amounts owed to the Caribbean Community Secretariat (CARICOM) for the period October 2024 to March 2025 - \$18,020,883; and
- (ii) supplement the provision to meet the contribution of the Trinidad and Tobago Government to the United Nations Peacekeeping Operations for the period January 2025 to December 2026 - \$2,739,200.

HEAD: 67 - MINISTRY OF PLANNING, ECONOMIC AFFAIRS AND DEVELOPMENT - **\$1,628,803** is required to supplement the provision to enable the payment of Salaries to contract officers to the end of fiscal 2026.

HEAD: 69 - MINISTRY OF WORKS AND INFRASTRUCTURE - the sum of **\$362,944,942** is required to:-

- (i) supplement the provision to enable the Drainage Division to complete its programme of works to the end of fiscal 2026 - \$14,000,000.
- (ii) supplement the provision to facilitate the payment of principal and interest on loans to the end of fiscal 2026 - \$280,233,942;
- (iii) supplement the provision to meet the operational costs of the Galleons Passage, A.P.T. James and HSC Buccoo Reef to the end of fiscal 2026 - \$34,130,000; and
- (iv) supplement the provision to meet the cost associated with the semi-submersible barge to the end of fiscal 2026 - \$34,581,000.

HEAD: 72 - MINISTRY OF TERTIARY EDUCATION AND SKILLS TRAINING - the sum of **\$19,800,000** is required to: -

- (i) supplement the provision as a result of the payment of arrears of Salaries owed to academic and senior administrative staff of the University Centre and Global Campus for the period August 1, 2014 to July 31, 2020 - \$13,000,000; and
- (ii) supplement the provision to enable payment to contract officers attached to the College of Science, Technology and Applied Arts (COSTAAT) to end of fiscal 2026 - \$6,800,000.

HEAD: 78 - MINISTRY OF THE PEOPLE, SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT AND FAMILY SERVICES - the sum of **\$68,445,000** is required to:-

- (i) provide for the payment of the revised Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance awarded to monthly paid officers attached to the institutions listed below in accordance with the Minister of Finance Circular dated December 05, 2025:-
 - St. Mary's Children's Home - \$3,385,000 =

- St. Jude's Home for Girls - \$2,954,000; and
- (ii) supplement the provision to enable the payment of outstanding bills and increased administrative and operational costs associated with the Foster Care and Adoption Units as well as the National Care and Empowerment Centre (NCEC) of the Children's Authority - \$62,106,000.

HEAD: 84 - MINISTRY OF DEFENCE - the sum of **\$39,245,000** is required to: -

- (i) facilitate the filling of nineteen (19) vacant offices on the Ministry's contract establishment - \$3,300,000;
- (ii) meet the cost associated with the upgrade of equipment at the National Coastal Surveillance Radar Centre - \$16,190,000;
- (iii) meet the cost of hosting the 2026 Independence Day Parade - \$2,355,000;
- (iv) facilitate the purchase of uniforms for members of the Trinidad and Tobago Defence Force - Regiment - \$5,500,000; and
- (v) enable the Air Guard to meet costs associated with the repairs and maintenance of four (4) helicopters - \$11,900,000.

HEAD: 86 - MINISTRY OF CULTURE AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT - the sum of **\$43,311,250** is required to: -

- (i) supplement the provision under Travelling and Subsistence to the end of fiscal 2026 - \$1,550,000; and
- (ii) supplement the provision to enable the payment of Principal and Interest on loans to the end of fiscal 2026 - \$41,761,250.

Development Programme

HEAD: 15 - TOBAGO HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY- the sum of **\$15,000,000** is required to provide for the expenditure associated with the reconstruction of the Scarborough Secondary School.

HEAD: 26 - MINISTRY OF EDUCATION - the sum of **\$30,000,000** is required to supplement the provision for the acquisition of laptops for Form One (1) students for the 2026/2027 Academic year.

HEAD: 31 - MINISTRY OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE - the sum of **\$25,000,000** is required to: -

- (i) facilitate the payment of Salaries to Management Consultants and evaluation fees to the Corporacion Andina de Fomento (CAF) for services provided under the Sub-Item: Establishment of a Tier 4 Data Centre to Strengthen the Digital Infrastructure - \$5,000,000; and
- (ii) meet the cost of expenditure incurred for Civil works, Rated Engines, and Modules incurred under the Sub-Item: Construction and Outfitting of a Tier 4 Data Centre to Strengthen the Digital Infrastructure - \$20,000,000.

HEAD: 42 - MINISTRY OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT - the sum of **\$8,989,817** is required to supplement the provision under the Drainage and Irrigation Programme, to the end of fiscal 2026.

HEAD: 65 - MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AND CARICOM AFFAIRS - the sum of **\$13,756,386** is required to cover the cost of proposed repairs to the residence of the Permanent Representative of the Permanent Mission to the United Nations, New York.

NOTE FOR STANDING FINANCE COMMITTEE

ITEM NO. 2

F.C. (2026)

F: BUD: 4/4/8

**VARIATION OF THE APPROPRIATION FOR
FISCAL YEAR 2026**

The matter for the consideration of the Standing Finance Committee is the Variation of the Appropriation for the fiscal year 2026 in the sum of Seven Hundred and Thirty Seven Million, Five Hundred and Twenty Two Thousand, Nine Hundred and Eighteen Dollars (\$737,522,918) to fund urgent expenditure to September 30, 2026 as detailed in paragraph 2.

2. The Standing Finance Committee is asked to note that the Variation of Appropriation is required in part, to:-

- (i) replenish funding utilized to pay an advance on the arrears of Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance owed to monthly paid officers in accordance with the Minister of Finance Circular No. 08 dated December 5th, 2025;
- (ii) meet the cost of the increase in National Insurance Scheme (NIS) contribution from 13.2% to 16.2% effective January 5th, 2026, as per the Finance Act No. 14 of 2025;
- (iii) provide for the payment of Allowances and Overtime to monthly paid officers;
- (iv) replenish the allocation to enable the Highways Division to complete its programme of works for fiscal 2026 under the Sub-Item: Other Contracted Services;
- (v) meet operational expenses related to the establishment of the National Programme for the Upkeep of Public Spaces, for the period April 2026 to

September 2026 and the continued engagement of employees under the programme;

- (vi) facilitate the continuation of employment of workers through the National Recruitment Drive Initiative to the end of fiscal 2026; and
- (vii) provide for expenditure under the Sub-Item: Port Authority - Contribution towards deficit on operations of Coastal Steamers.

3. Accordingly, the Variation of Recurrent Expenditure on the affected Heads of Expenditure is as follows:-

Head of Expenditure	Variation	
	Increase \$	Decrease \$
01 - President	1,000,000	
02 - Auditor General	5,900,000	
03 - Judiciary	9,874,000	
04 - Industrial Court	1,783,325	
07 - Statutory Authorities Service Commission	375,000	
12 - Public Service Appeal Board	185,107	
16 - Central Administrative Services, Tobago	2,703,000	
17 - Personnel Department	1,000,000	
18 - Ministry of Finance		737,522,918
23 - Office of the Attorney General	7,000,000	
26 - Ministry of Education	166,449,000	
28 - Ministry of Health	17,282,800	
30 - Ministry of Labour, Small and Micro Enterprise Development	6,808,600	

34 - Ministry of Transport and Civil Aviation	24,900,000	
38 - Environmental Commission	200,000	
39 - Ministry of Public Utilities	8,231,000	
	Variation	
Head of Expenditure	Increase	Decrease
	\$	\$
42 - Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government	121,962,340	
61 - Ministry of Housing	432,647	
64 - Trinidad and Tobago Police Service	275,000,000	
67 - Ministry of Planning, Economic Affairs and Development	8,361,190	
69 - Ministry of Works and Infrastructure	47,365,000	
75 - Equal Opportunity Tribunal	278,909	
78 - Ministry of the People, Social Development and Family Services	8,361,000	
83 - Ministry of Homeland Security	16,100,000	
86 - Ministry of Culture and Community Development	5,970,000	
TOTAL	737,522,918	737,522,918

4. The details with regard the Variations noted at paragraph 3 above, are as follows: -

Recurrent Expenditure

HEAD: 01 - PRESIDENT - the sum of \$1,000,000 is required to replenish funds utilized to pay an advance on the arrears of Salaries owed to officers

HEAD: 02 - AUDITOR GENERAL - the sum of \$5,900,000 is required to replenish funds utilized to pay an advance on the arrears of Salaries owed to officers.

HEAD: 03 - JUDICIARY - the sum of \$9,874,000 is required to: -

- (i) replenish funds utilized to pay an advance on the arrears of Salaries owed to officers - \$9,250,000; and
- (ii) meet the cost of an increase in NIS contributions - \$624,000.

HEAD: 04 - INDUSTRIAL COURT - the sum of \$1,783,325 is required to: -

- (i) replenish funds utilized to pay an advance on the arrears of Salaries owed to officers - \$1,600,000; and
- (ii) facilitate the payment of allowances to monthly paid officers - \$183,325.

HEAD: 07 - STATUTORY AUTHORITIES SERVICE COMMISSION - the sum of \$375,000 is required to replenish funds utilized to pay an advance on the arrears of Salaries owed to officers.

HEAD: 12 - PUBLIC SERVICE APPEAL BOARD - the sum of \$185,107 is required to replenish funds utilized to pay an advance on the arrears of Salaries owed to officers.

HEAD: 16 - CENTRAL ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES, TOBAGO - the sum of \$2,703,000 is required to:-

- (i) replenish funds utilized to pay an advance on the arrears of Salaries owed to officers - \$2,545,000; and
- (ii) facilitate the payment of allowances to monthly paid officers - \$158,000.

HEAD: 17 - PERSONNEL DEPARTMENT - the sum of **\$1,000,000** is required to replenish funds utilized to pay an advance on the arrears of Salaries owed to officers.

HEAD: 23 - OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL - the sum of **\$7,000,000** is required to replenish funds utilized to pay an advance on the arrears of Salaries owed to officers.

HEAD: 26 - MINISTRY OF EDUCATION - the sum of **\$166,449,000** is required to:-

- (i) replenish funds utilized to pay an advance on the arrears of Salaries owed to officers - \$113,399,000; and
- (ii) meet the cost of an increase in NIS contributions - \$53,050,000.

HEAD: 28 - MINISTRY OF HEALTH - the sum of **\$17,282,800** is required to replenish funds utilized to pay an advance on the arrears of Salaries owed to officers.

HEAD: 30 - MINISTRY OF LABOUR, SMALL AND MICRO ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT - the sum of **\$6,808,600** is required to: -

- (i) replenish funds utilized to pay an advance on the arrears of Salaries owed to officers - \$6,389,800; and
- (ii) meet the cost of an increase in NIS contributions - \$418,800.

HEAD: 34 - MINISTRY OF TRANSPORT AND CIVIL AVIATION - the sum of **\$24,900,000** is required to replenish funds utilized to pay an advance on the arrears of Salaries owed to officers.

HEAD: 38 - ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION - the sum of **\$200,000** is required to replenish funds utilized to pay an advance on the arrears of Salaries owed to officers.

HEAD: 39 - MINISTRY OF PUBLIC UTILITIES - the sum of **\$8,231,000** is required to replenish funds utilized to pay an advance on the arrears of Salaries owed to officers.

HEAD: 42 - MINISTRY OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT - the sum of **\$121,962,340** is required to: -

- (i) replenish funds utilized to pay an advance on the arrears of Salaries owed to officers - \$81,774,380; and
- (ii) meet operational expenses related to the establishment of the National Programme for the Upkeep of Public Spaces, for the period April 2026 to September 2026 and the continued engagement of employees under the programme - \$40,187,960.

HEAD: 61 - MINISTRY OF HOUSING - the sum of **\$432,647** is required to replenish funds utilized to pay an advance on the arrears of Salaries owed to officers.

HEAD: 64 - TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO POLICE SERVICE - the sum of **\$275,000,000** is required to: -

- (i) replenish funds utilized to pay an advance on the arrears of Salaries owed to officers - \$120,000,000;
- (ii) meet the cost of an increase in NIS contributions - \$30,000,000; and
- (iii) provide for the payment of Allowances and Overtime to monthly paid officers - \$125,000,000.

HEAD: 67 - MINISTRY OF PLANNING, ECONOMIC AFFAIRS AND DEVELOPMENT - the sum of **\$8,361,190** is required to replenish funds utilized to pay an advance on the arrears of Salaries owed to officers.

HEAD: 69 - MINISTRY OF WORKS AND INFRASTRUCTURE - the sum of **\$47,365,000** is required to: -

- (i) replenish funds utilized to pay an advance on the arrears of Salaries owed to officers - \$8,865,000;
- (ii) replenish the allocation to enable the Highways Division to complete its programme of works for fiscal 2026 under the Sub-Item: Other Contracted Services - \$10,000,000;
- (iii) facilitate the continuation of employment of workers through the National
- (iv) Recruitment Drive Initiative to the end of fiscal 2026 - \$12,500,000; and provide for expenditure under the Sub-Item: Port Authority - Contribution towards deficit on operations of Coastal Steamers - \$16,000,000.

HEAD: 75 - EQUAL OPPORTUNITY TRIBUNAL - the sum of **\$278,909** is required to: -

- (i) replenish funds utilized to pay an advance on the arrears of Salaries owed to officers - \$269,359; and
- (ii) meet the cost of an increase in NIS contributions - \$9,550.

HEAD: 78 - MINISTRY OF THE PEOPLE, SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT AND FAMILY SERVICES - the sum of **\$8,361,000** is required to replenish funds utilized to pay an advance on the arrears of Salaries owed to officers.

HEAD: 83 - MINISTRY OF HOMELAND SECURITY - the sum of **\$16,100,000** is required to replenish funds utilized to pay an advance on the arrears of Salaries owed to officers.

HEAD: 86 - MINISTRY OF CULTURE AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
- the sum of **\$5,970,000** is required to: -

- (i) replenish funds utilized to pay an advance on the arrears of Salaries owed to officers - \$5,490,000; and
- (ii) meet the cost of an increase in NIS contributions - \$480,000.

5. With specific reference to the Variation of the Appropriation, savings have been identified to meet the proposed liabilities to the end of the fiscal year, under Head 18 - Ministry of Finance as indicated hereunder:

04/009/52 - Employment Fund \$475,000,000 - The legislation necessary for the operationalization of the Employment Fund has not been finalized; and

07/011/24 - National Infrastructure Development Company Limited (NIDCO) - \$262,522,918 - A NIDCO six-year 3.80% TT\$300Mn. Loan, which was due to mature on January 21, 2026 was refinanced in accordance with Cabinet Minute No. 1182 (2nd Session) of October 23, 2025.

6. Accordingly, the Standing Finance Committee is asked to approve the Variation of the Appropriation Act, 2026 in the amount of **\$737,522,918** to fund urgent expenditure to September 30, 2026, for the Heads of Expenditure indicated at paragraph (3) above.