

Appropriation Bill, 2017

Tuesday, October 17, 2017

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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APPROPRIATION (FINANCIAL YEAR 2018) BILL, 2017

[Sixth Day]

The Standing Finance Committee of the whole House resumed its deliberations on the Bill and Estimates.

[Chairman: Mrs. Annisette-George]

10.00 a.m.

Madam Chairman: I now call to order day two of the Standing Finance Committee meeting. Under “Announcements”, I am to advise that the hon. Kamla Persad-Bissessar, MP, Member for Siparia, has asked to be excused from today’s meeting of the Standing Finance Committee.

Head 22: Ministry of National Security, \$2,838,568,421.

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

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Thank you very much, Madam Chair and a pleasant good morning. Madam Chair, national security is the largest, most complex public sector organization. In fact, there is no area of public policy that is as important in terms of manpower, resources and money like national security. One can only envisage that never a day goes by, or never a moment goes by, without some issues relating to national security being discussed either in the print or electronic media or throughout the length and breadth of Trinidad and Tobago.

Madam Chair, the Ministry of National Security is responsible for ensuring the safety and security of the people, the nation, the territory and the national interest of Trinidad and Tobago, and this is executed by way of the maintenance of law and order, by defence against aggression, by the response to natural and man-made disasters, by ensuring that our border protection is dealt with in an effective and efficient manner. And to do this, Madam Chair, the Ministry of National Security has 10 established divisions and about 15 mandatory units and these divisions include: the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service, General Administration, of course; Trinidad and Tobago Defence Force; Trinidad and Tobago Fire Service; Trinidad and Tobago Prison Service; the Office of Disaster Management and Preparedness; the Forensic Science Centre; the Strategic

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Services Agency; Immigration; the Trinidad and Tobago Cadet Force; and other mandatory units, Madam Chair, such as the anti-money laundering/combating the financing of terrorism, the counter-trafficking unit, the life guards, probation services, transnational organized crime, to name a few.

Madam Chair, in fiscal 2018, the Ministry of National Security has been allocated a recurrent expenditure of \$3.3 billion and a PSIP of \$475 million, a total of 3.8, together with the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service which we will deal with later, Madam Chair. But more importantly, these allocations would be used to deal with institutional strengthening throughout the length and breadth of the national security: capacity-building, personnel development, infrastructure maintenance and construction, and we intend to align these expenditures through the five strategic pillars of prediction, deterrence, detection, prosecution and rehabilitation.

Madam Chair, we are sure, in keeping with the theme of fiscal budget, we will create the environment for the paradigm change that is required for the sustainable development of Trinidad and Tobago.

Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

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

Madam Chairman: Hon. Members, the sum of \$2,838,568,421 for Head 22, the Ministry of National Security, is comprised of moneys proposed for expenditure under six Sub-Heads to be found in the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure and the Draft Estimates of Development Programme*.

We now proceed to consider the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure*. We are at page 126. Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure, Item 001, General Administration, page 126. Member for Naparima.

Mr. Charles: Permit me—for clarification, are we dealing with 01, Personnel Expenditure?

Madam Chairman: Yes, but we are under 001, General Administration which is at page 126.

Mr. Charles: Okay. Thank you, Madam Chair. There is a decrease of \$500,000, Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance. Would the Minister care to explain in the context of the war on crime?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: 01, Salaries and Cost of Living, right? Correct?

Mr. Charles: Yes.

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Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: The increase here had to do with—arrears were paid out in last fiscal year and therefore there are no arrears to be paid out in this current fiscal year, in 2018. So that is why there is a difference. Hence the reason for the decrease.

Mr. Charles: Okay. When one looks at allowances, I see—

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Number and line Item, please.

Mr. Charles: Line Item 04, Monthly Paid Officers and Overtime, 03. It is 03 and 04. There are no increases. Are we to assume then that there are no increased activities with respect to the police service in this fiscal year compared to last—

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: These are not police service, right? This is General Administration.

Mr. Charles: Yeah, General Administration.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: So these are not the police service as such.

Mr. Charles: So, we will take it that there is no increased activity, given all the initiatives that you have started?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: No, no, no.

Madam Chairman: But I think what the Minister is saying, these are public servants, these are not police officers.

Mr. Charles: Yes, but they have a supervisory role and therefore—

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: No, they do not. They have an administrative role but not a supervisory role.

Mr. Charles: So you are saying administratively, the work is remaining constant.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: No, you cannot say that.

Mr. Charles: No, well I am asking.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: No, it is not remaining constant.

Mr. Charles: Right, so therefore—and this is not reflected in any increased allocations.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: No, it is not an increase. There is a decrease because there were arrears paid off in 2017 so there is no need for arrears to be paid off in 2018, hence the reason why there is a decrease in the allocation.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: Madam Chair, if I may, if the Member would also look at what were the revised estimates for last year, he would see that the amounts that are now the estimates for 2018 are very similar, which means that there is a certain constancy with regard to the amount of money that is allocated.

Mr. Charles: And that is exactly the point I was making, that there is a constancy but then there is an increased activity with respect to crime. But I move on. I move on.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: I do not see the relation.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: What the Minister explained is that these are public servants, so these are not the people who are actually in the field dealing with the crime issue. Okay? So you are moving on?

Mr. Charles: I do not want to belabour the point—

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: So you are moving on?

Mr. Charles:—but the public servants have an administrative role.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Well, everyone has a role to play towards crime.

Mr. Charles: But let us go on. Let us go on, Madam Speaker.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: Madam Speaker, I think we should move on.

Mr. Charles: We should move on.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: Yes.

Madam Chairman: Thank you very much. Anyone else? Member for Princes Town.

Mr. Padarath: Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, Line Item 14. With respect to remuneration to members of Cabinet-appointed committees, can you indicate how many Cabinet-appointed committees there are, and what committees are they?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Okay. I can give you the list of those. The Cabinet-appointed committees are: the Seized Assets Committee; Inter-Ministerial Committee; National Anti-Money Laundering/Counter-Financing Terrorism Committee; National Emblems Committee; Work Permit Advisory Committee; Trinidad and Tobago Cadet Force Advisory Committee; the National Drug Council; Protective Services Compensation Committee; Advisory Committee on the Powers of Pardon; Firearms Appeal Board also comes under

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that list. Did I call the National Drug Council? I think I did. The National Security Officers Foundation is another such Cabinet-appointed body; Trinidad and Tobago Police Service Manpower Audit Committee. That is the list.

Madam Chairman: Member for Chaguanas West.

Mr. Singh: Thank you, Madam Chair. With respect to the Work Permit Advisory Committee, which is a committee under the Ministry of National Security, Minister, have you done a productivity analysis of that work permit committee? Because as a parliamentarian I get lots of requests that they have a lot of matters before this work permit committee and the processing takes a lot of time. So, in the context of all that is happening in the country for productivity, may I suggest that you undertake an analysis, a review analysis, of the productivity of that work permit committee?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Point taken.

Madam Chairman: Member for Couva South.

Mr. Indarsingh: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. To the Minister, from the point of view of salaries and cost of living, there is no—

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Line Item please?

Mr. Indarsingh: 01—

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: 01, Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance.

Mr. Indarsingh: Yes. Just for my clarification, there is no outstanding back pay or any sums being owed to public servants, right?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: This question was asked a while ago with respect to the line Item and I said it was based on arrears that were paid last year. I do not know if you heard that.

Mr. Indarsingh: Okay. So there is no allocation as it relates to 2018 for any increase from a collective bargaining point of view for public servants?

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: No, there is none.

Mr. Indarsingh: There is none.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: No.

Mr. Indarsingh: So what that means is that, is there an ongoing—

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: At this point, what the budget reflects is what is on the table at present. At present there is none.

Mr. Indarsingh: There is none.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: Yeah.

Mr. Indarsingh: Okay.

Madam Chairman: Member for Princes Town.

Mr. Padarath: Hon. Minister, through you, Madam, I am referring to line Item 14 again. With respect to one of the committees you identified, the Firearms Appeal Committee, I know there has been a lot of complaints with respect to legally acquiring firearms. Have you seen an increased activity with respect to this particular committee?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: The committee meets regularly. There have been several appeals brought before the committee and I have been treating with them. To suggest that there has been an increase, I cannot say there has been an increase, but I know they have been dealing with several matters before them.

Mr. Padarath: Is there any attempt to reform the process of legally acquiring firearms?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Not at this time, no. The Commissioner of Police still has the sole discretion, and then the Appeal Committee treats with that.

Madam Chairman: Member for Tabaquite, you have a question?

Dr. Rambachan: No, Madam Chair.

Madam Chairman: Okay. So can we go on to 002, Fire Service, and this is at pages 126 and 127. Member for Naparima.

Mr. Charles: Thank you, Madam Chair. Would the Minister explain the—this is 01—significant decrease of \$51 million in respect of salaries and cost of living allowances? And this includes provision for vacant posts and incumbents.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: The decrease here reflects the arrears that were paid out in the last fiscal year and therefore it more or less returned back to its normal standing. So that is based on the arrears that were paid out. So there was an increase last fiscal year to cater for the arrears, which no longer exists in this fiscal year.

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Mr. Charles: Could the Minister give us an indication of how many acting positions there are in the Fire Service and what provision ought to be included for this?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Let me just find out if you are referring to—now, this first Item here refers to civilians, right? Do you want the civilians or you want the fire officers? Which one? Now we are dealing with line Item—

Mr. Charles: Civilians first.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: This is fire officers, sorry. 01 is in fact fire officers. At the established strength of the fire service right now, based on 2,713 uniformed personnel, the number of positions filled is 2,219. So there are vacant positions of 494 uniformed personnel in the fire service right now, and there are plans to recruit in this fiscal year.

Mr. Charles: I am just asking. If there are plans to recruit and there are plans to regularize officers in the position in which they are acting, how does that tie in with this decrease of \$51 million?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: The allocation covers that. The allocation covers the recruitment.

Mr. Charles: But when we look at the revised estimate for 2017 it was \$352 million, and it is 301 now. So if—

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: Madam Chair, may I intervene, please? If you add the \$51 million increase to the estimates, you would get the 352.

Mr. Charles: Yes, agreed.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: Okay? And what the Minister is saying is the \$352 million included the money that was paid in arrears, and so on.

Mr. Charles: Agreed.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: And I would like to indicate that if you do that throughout, you will see that all the time. So I do not know if you would still want to ask the same questions on each occasion.

Mr. Charles: No.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Because most of this is based on arrears.

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Mrs. Robinson-Regis: Okay? Because it is arrears. So even if you look back at 2016 actual, you would see that it was less than what we have budgeted for this year. Because in 2017 we paid arrears, and so on.

Mr. Charles: Okay.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: Okay? Thank you.

Mr. Charles: Item 04, Allowances, Monthly Paid, a decrease of \$8 million. Is that the same—

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Same arrears—based on the arrears.

Madam Chairman: Okay, can we go on?

Mr. Charles: Item 10, Remuneration to the Auxiliary Fire Unit. I need some clarification. Was there a promise at all to regularize auxiliary fire—

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: To absorb.

Mr. Charles: To absorb?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Right. That is before Cabinet right now. That matter is still before Cabinet.

Mr. Charles: So it is not budgeted here?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: The absorption is not budgeted.

Mr. Charles: It is before Cabinet and you will go for a virement—

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Once Cabinet does the approval, then we will deal with it.

Madam Chairman: Member for Tabaquite.

Dr. Rambachan: Minister, Item 4. The allowances to monthly-paid officers amount to \$118 million in 2017 and of course, \$110 million in 2018.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Yes.

Dr. Rambachan: That is 33 per cent, basically, of your salaries and cost of living. What accounts for these allowances that is 33 per cent of the cost of salaries? In other words, you are looking at really \$410 million rather than \$301 million, when you take all the allowances. What accounts for this substantial allowance?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: The allowances are based on laundry allowances and proficiency allowances.

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Dr. Rambachan: Proficiency allowances?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Proficiency allowances paid to the fire service.

Dr. Rambachan: Can you explain proficiency?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Proficiency is based on your skills. There is a proficiency allowance based on the skill set that you acquire through training and development. You are paid an allowance based on your proficiency.

Dr. Rambachan: It is a substantial amount. That is why I asked. It is 33 per cent of the salaries, eh.

Mr. Imbert: You had negotiated and signed that agreement.

Dr. Rambachan: You blame everything on Kamla and the UNC. You come back with that thing again?

Madam Chairman: Item 004, Prison Service, page 127; Item 005, Regiment, page 128; Item 006, Coast Guard, pages 128 to 129. Member for Tabaquite.

Dr. Rambachan: Mr. Minister, in the summary document you have under Personnel, a total overtime to monthly-paid officers of approximately 80—

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Which line Item are you on?

Dr. Rambachan: There is a Summary Item under Personnel Expenditure which was on page 125 that says \$80 million was paid—

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Page 129.

Madam Chairman: 128 and 129.

Dr. Rambachan: Yes, I know.

Madam Chairman: But we would not have done 125. That is the Summary Page. So could you find it, though—

Dr. Rambachan: It is there, 125, under Personnel Expenditure, Overtime, Monthly Paid amounted to \$80 million in—\$80,338,039—in 2017—and it is projected to be \$72 million in 2018.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Where are you? I am trying to follow you.

Dr. Rambachan: On page 125, the Summary page.

Madam Chairman: So let us hear the question. So you are going to relate that to Coast Guard.

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Dr. Rambachan: Right.

Madam Chairman: Right, yes.

Dr. Rambachan: So I see \$8 million under Coast Guard, all right? And which is now—that is about 11 per cent of the total. Item 3—

Madam Chairman: But this is what Item—

Mr. Charles: 03.

Dr. Rambachan: Sorry, sorry.

Mr. Karim: You in Immigration?

Dr. Rambachan: Immigration, sorry. You are on Coast Guard?

Madam Chairman: Yes, we are on Coast Guard. Okay?

Dr. Rambachan: Yes, sorry. Okay, I will come back to it.

Madam Chairman: So can we go on to 007, which is Immigration? And Member for Tabaguite, I will take you now if that is where you are at?

Dr. Rambachan: Yes, that is where I am, Ma'am. Thank you.

Madam Chairman: Right. So page 129.

Dr. Rambachan: So overtime for Immigration here is \$8 million, right? Okay. As I go along I am trying to find where that other \$64 million in overtime in Personnel Expenditure is coming from—

Madam Chairman: Okay, so that—

Dr. Rambachan: The question is why do we occasion so much overtime?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: It depends on the division. Immigration, for instance, would have overtime based on the various crew having to work additional hours, either through shortages or people who may have reported sick, and so on, at the ports of entry. So you have overtime. They build up overtime based on that.

Madam Chairman: Member for Chaguanas West.

Mr. Singh: Thank you, Madam Chair. That raises the issue of what is your establishment of immigration officers, what is your current complement, and how many vacancies you have?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: The established position for Immigration, 569; the number of positions filled, 366; vacant positions, 203.

Mr. Singh: So immediately we can recognize that that is why you have such a high overtime bill.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Yes, that is right. And the fact is that there are several applicants being processed by the Service Commission which takes some time, because immigration applicants come through the Service Commission and it takes some time. But they are in fact—I know there are several applicants right now being processed at Service Commission to fill those shortages.

Madam Chairman: Member for Couva South.

Mr. Indarsingh: Thank you, Madam Chair. And it goes back to this very issue of overtime. Could the Minister indicate to this meeting how many passports, in terms of—

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Which line Item are you on?

Mr. Indarsingh: Well, I am speaking about overtime, and the overtime that is being paid to—and I want to know if the public, really, is getting value for money in terms of the amount of passports that have been pending in relation to the processing at this point in time for the benefit of the wider public.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Processing of passports is just one aspect of the Immigration Department, so I cannot link that to any sort of emphasis on overtime.

Mr. Indarsingh: Well, I am trying to find out for the benefit of those persons who have passports that are pending in terms of their processing, and so on. How many passports are pending in terms of processing—

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Right now I can tell you there are roughly about 30,000 passports that have been completed processing and waiting to be collected at Immigration right now. People have come, applied for their passport, and we have sent out notices for them to come and collect their passports. There are roughly about that amount of passports, people who have processed, applied and have not come to collect their passports.

Mr. Indarsingh: I welcome what you are saying in terms of those that have been processed. I am trying to find out in terms of how many are pending.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: I will provide you with that at a later stage. I cannot understand the relevance of it but I will provide you with it.

Mr. Indarsingh: Well, the relevance is in the context of the overtime that is being paid out and whether the wider public is getting value for money. Simple as that.

Mr. Imbert: The Minister made it clear that is for work at ports of entry, at the airport when a flight comes in at midnight.

Mr. Indarsingh: Mr. Minister, with all due respect to the Minister of Finance, does this not apply to the head office and all various arms of the Immigration Division, Madam Chair?

Madam Chairman: But, Member for Couva South, it is with respect—it is not that it may not be relevant, but in terms of the particular Item, the overtime—

Mr. Indarsingh: No, I—

Madam Chairman: Just one minute. The overtime related to ports of entry. I am not certain that the processing of new passports are done at the port of entry. Member for Chaguanas East.

Mr. Indarsingh: Well, I am not seeing under the line Item that—

Madam Chairman: Member for Couva South, I no longer recognize you. Member for Chaguanas East.

Mr. Karim: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, I am on line Item 03, Immigration again, Overtime. Might you be able to indicate to us which one of your ports of entry has the highest amount of overtime being paid to?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Piarco.

Mr. Karim: I am just going on to another question, with your permission. In that case, would you say that the highest overtime at the Piarco International Airport is as a result of the significant amount of vacancies? Or is it a high level of absenteeism among the officers?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: It is a combination of both.

Madam Chairman: Member for Tabaquite.

Dr. Rambachan: My question is—you will shoot me down, with due respect—

Madam Chairman: There is no shooting being done here.

Dr. Rambachan:—because I was going to ask the question why does it take 10 weeks to get a passport processed in Chaguanas. [*Interruption*] But it is 10 weeks. It is a long time to wait for a passport.

Madam Chairman: Members, can we now go on to Item 008, Probation Service, page 130? Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, Line Item 01, where you have a decrease, can you indicate how many positions are there in the Probation Service and how many are filled, please?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: The established position is 97; number of positions filled, 34; vacant positions, 63; and Cabinet has approved, in fact, the creation of 48 positions and Service Commission has been requested to fill these vacancies. So they are in the process of being filled.

Madam Chairman: Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you. Has this severe shortfall affected the efficiency of the services of the probation officers in terms of meeting the needs of—

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: This is a decrease in terms of Salaries and Cost of Living Allowances, but that, in fact, would be dealt with when additional posts come on board in the next fiscal year. We expect that when the Juvenile Court comes on board there will be additional probation officers requested and then we will request the increase accordingly.

Madam Chairman: Member for Naparima.

Mr. Charles: That question was asked.

Madam Chairman: Okay. So can we go on to Item 009, Forensic Science Centre, page 130. I recognize the Member for Mayaro.

Mr. Paray: Thank you very much, Madam Chairman. Minister, I note under line Item 01, there is an increase of \$1.8 million for Salaries and Cost of Living Allowances. Taking note of the pending departure of Dr. Alexandrov from the Forensic Science Centre, are there any plans to add additional pathologists, one, to replace him and to boost up the ability of the Forensic Science Centre to be more efficient in delivering its reports?

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Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: The pathologists come under Contracted Officers, not under this line Item. But I can answer your question by saying that we are treating with the issue of Dr. Alexandrov's retirement at the end of this year, with respect to recruitment of additional pathologists.

10.30 a.m.

Mr. Charles: In respect of 01, the Minister indicated that the replacements would be contracted officers.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: No. The pathologists are not under this line Item. They are not under contracted, but I answered the question all the same.

Mr. Charles: Okay. Is the Minister satisfied that we are doing enough to incentivize positions in the forensic science centre, such that we would not have this problem of people leaving and recruiting new people repeatedly?

Mr. Imbert: Madam Chairman, the Minister was clear that this does not relate to pathologists. So the question is not relevant.

Mr. Charles: No!

Madam Chairman: Let me ask something. Member, would you want to find out what post 01 relates to, and then see whether you would want to ask your question?

Mr. Charles: Okay. Could the Minister tell us what post this relates to—positions.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: This relates to scientific staff and other staff in the Forensic Science Centre. Not the pathologists.

Mr. Charles: Scientific staff? These are the people who do the testing and what not.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: The ballistic testing, the chemical testing, the labs and so on.

Mr. Charles: So are you satisfied that we are adequately resourced with personnel to handle that, and that this \$1.8 million would handle what is needed because that seems to be a bottleneck in the crime solving area.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Still, we have requested the DPA to fill additional posts in the Forensic Science Centre. So we are not yet fully satisfied and we are making arrangements to increase the staff. We have made requests to have an increase in staff.

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Mr. Charles: Could the Minister indicate: what is the extent of the backlog in a time frame? It should be operating at—tests should take one day, or two days, and it is taking a month. You have a sense of where we are?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: You are talking about the process that is—

Mr. Charles: The process. The test and the efficiency of the forensic science centre.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: I cannot give you that. I cannot go into details of the process that takes place in the Forensic Science Centre.

Mr. Imbert: Madam Chairman—

Mr. Charles: Are you satisfied with the way, the outputs and the efficiency of the Forensic Science Centre?

Mr. Imbert: Madam Chairman, is that a relevant question to this line Item?

Mr. Charles: It is. It is because you have allocated some money and I am asking is this enough to meet the needs of—because this is a bottleneck.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: There are vacancies that we are filling at this point in time.

Mr. Imbert: He answered you.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: That is it.

Madam Chairman: Okay, and Member for Couva South.

Mr. Indarsingh: Thank you, Madam Chair. I will pass to my colleague.

Madam Chairman: Member for Chaguanas West.

Mr. Singh: Yes, I think my colleague asked the question. Through you, based on your guidance, Madam Chair, what are the vacant posts in the Forensic Science Centre; and if you have that knowledge available, how can you deal now with the processes in the Forensic Science Centre so as to facilitate the efficiency of the process? For example, I am told that firearm testing, if there vacancies in that area, certainly firearm testing takes a very, very long time. So I would like to find out whether or not the firearm testing—how can I put it—expertise, is one of the vacant areas?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: No. The firearm testing is not one of the vacant areas and there is a process in terms of the firearm testing that takes place. That takes some time. More so the process as opposed to the vacancies of staff. There are in

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fact adequate staff to deal with the firearm testing. But in terms of the positions, I can give you the list of positions if you want. I can provide it. It is a long list to you. So I can provide it to you rather than to read them out to you.

Mr. Singh: No, no.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: I can provide them to you.

Mr. Singh: For our own efficiency, I would rather you—

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: The list of positions and vacancies and so on, I can provide that to you.

Mr. Singh: And much like not only the vacancies, but are these positions also filled by the Service Commission.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: They are. They are all filled by the Service Commission other than the contracted officers, like the pathologists. All.

Mr. Padarath: Thank you, Madam. Just as a follow-up to the hon. Minister on the last comment that he made with respect to the filling of these vacancies by the Service Commission as opposed to contracted services. You indicated in one category that falls under this line Item is the issue of forensic technicians, that seems to be a significant area in which we—

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Scientific officers.

Mr. Padarath: Yes—do not get the type of delivery that we are looking for in the shortest possible time. Is there any indication at this point to have some of the scientific officers and the forensic technicians become contracted officers?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: No. Those positions are not under the contracted positions. So we do not use the contracted positions for those types of positions mentioned. We go through the Service Commission to do that type of selection.

Mr. Padarath: There is no attempt to utilise that particular area to bring in these technicians and these scientific staff.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: It is not an area that is—in fact, we have four of such officers on contract right now.

Mr. Padarath: Scientific staff and technicians?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Yes, that is right. We do have four on contract.

Mr. Padarath: And is there an attempt to increase that as we go along?

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Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Well, there is a combination of measures. One, through contract and also through the Service Commission. So it depends on if the length of time—

Mr. Padarath: Which one comes first?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Well, there is a combination because you see, because of the length of time that Service Commission takes, we have to go the contract route, but when we get there, Service Commission, which is the “permanent staff” then we can deal with the contracts. So there is a combination of both, one to support to complement the other.

Mr. Charles: Minister, help us understand why the pathologists are contracted positions. I understand the point that to get it done quickly, but is there any attempt to put those posts on the permanent establishment?

Madam Chairman: Member, we will take that question when we come to the Contract Positions under Goods and Services.

Mr. Charles: Okay.

Madam Chairman: So can we go on? Item 012, Lifeguard Services, page 131. Member for Chaguanas West.

Mr. Singh: Thank you, Madam Chair. I would like to find out the complement of lifeguard service, their deployment and whether or not we have fulfilled the establishment in that area.

Madam Chairman: So we are at 01?

Mr. Singh: 01, Salaries and Cost of Living.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: The established positions—the lifeguards are in fact under 02 and not 01. I do not know if you want to refocus?

Mr. Singh: Wages. Okay. So fine.

Mr. Imbert: Madam Chairman, could I just make a general point with response to these queries of this particular nature? There is a budget document, all Members would have received it—this is what it looks like. [*Mr. Imbert displays document*]—and in this document every single post on every single establishment is listed.

Mr. Singh: Yes, but we want to find out—

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Mr. Imbert: So with respect to this particular matter on page 105 under Lifeguard Services, you would see the establishment positions under Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance and that applies throughout every single Head here. Just for your information because questions have been asked as to what is the establishment. It is all in this document.

Mr. Singh: Okay. I think that we do not want to get the positions. We want to get the arithmetic because if you have 100 positions and 50 filled, then you can get a sense of where is the deficiency and what is the service being provided.

Mr. Imbert: Now, I understand that. It is just that one of the typical questions is: what is the establishment? And the establishment is in this document. So you do not need to ask the question.

Mr. Singh: I need to understand the arithmetic because I am following up a question from last year.

Madam Chairman: Okay, so the question is the vacancies?

Mr. Singh: How many, yes.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Under 01—

Mr. Singh: No, but you said it come under 02.

Madam Chairman: The vacancies in terms of what, lifeguards?

Mr. Singh: Lifeguards.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: I will provide that for you.

Mr. Singh: The reason why I asked that question, Madam Chair, is that last year—

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Okay, let me answer your question. Lifeguards under 02, Wages: number of established positions 93; number of positions filled 33; vacant positions 60; daily-rated workers, 108 daily-rated not on the establishment. So you have 108 persons who are not on the establishment that are being regularized right now.

Mr. Singh: So you are saying that you are exceeding your positions?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Yes.

Mr. Singh: The establishment positions?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Yes, that is correct.

Mr. Singh: Okay. Because the reason being is that on the last occasion the lifeguards complained that since they have come under your Ministry they have been neglected, and I just wanted to know from last year whether or not that position has been corrected.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: That position has been corrected.

Mr. Imbert: They did not complain this year, right?

Madam Chairman: Item 015, Cadet Force, Page 132. Member for Naparima.

Mr. Charles: Thank you very much. Item 01, Salaries and Cost of Living Allowances, 183, and all I am asking is this related to any attempt to expand the cadet force in secondary schools in the country?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: The cadet force has expanded over the last year to a number of secondary schools.

Mr. Charles: So could you tell us what proportion of secondary schools have cadet forces?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: I will provide that for you.

Mr. Charles: And is there any attempt to do this in the hotspot schools in those areas or—

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: The plan is to have the cadet force throughout the length and breadth of Trinidad and Tobago.

Madam Chairman: Item 016, Air Guard, page 132. Sorry, Member for Chaguanas East. Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, Item 001, General Administration, pages 132 to 133. Member for Naparima.

Mr. Charles: Item 09, Rent, Lease, Vehicles and Equipment and there is an increase of \$90 million, could the Minister enlighten us?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Sorry, which line Item are you on?

Mr. Charles: Item 09?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: 09. 09, that is the CCTV, most of the rent there is based on the CCTV. That is the CCTV—

Mr. Charles: Expansion throughout.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:—throughout Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Indarsingh: Thank you, Madam Chair. Under 02, 16 Contract Employment, I see a decrease \$7,002,900, why is this; and if so, does this indicate a reduction in staff and—

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: If you look at last year's expenditure, we have spent just about \$34 million. So it is almost about the same amount being allocated for 2018.

Mr. Indarsingh: I am seeing under the revised estimates, Minister, \$38,450,000, and 2018, \$31,447,100.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: The actual expenditure—

Mr. Imbert: Just let me say as a general point, if you look at the original 2017, the allocation for this Item was \$18 million. The actual expenditure was \$38 million. This year Finance has allocated \$31 million and we would hope that the Ministry would stay within that \$31 million.

Madam Chairman: Member for Princes Town. Just one minute. I will take Member for Princes Town and then I will call you back Member for Couva South. Member for Princes Town.

Mr. Padarath: Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, going back to line Item 09 with respect to your last comments about the CCTV cameras, I just want to get a sense of clarification where this additional \$90 million that is being appropriated here. Does this also have to do with lending support with respect to the infrastructure from removing traffic offences to violations in terms of the technology needed for the red light cameras and all these things?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Well, the whole camera system is integrated, but this also includes the new equipment and so on because some of the cameras would have to be replaced and so on. So it includes new equipment, the whole CCTV framework.

Mr. Padarath: With respect also to the specifications that will be needed to enforce this legislation, yes?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: In the way going forward yes, in terms of treating with the whole question of the red light and cameras. Yes.

Mr. Indarsingh: Yes, Madam Chair, I have listened to the Ministry about the Ministry and the air guard's staying within the parameters of the allocation, but I

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am still to get an explanation in terms of the decrease in \$7,002,900, whether this reflects a reduction in staff within the operations of the air guard?

Madam Chairman: I think Member we got an answer to that question.

Mr. Imbert: He dealt with it.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: We dealt with it.

Mr. Imbert: Originally they got \$118 million, they spent \$38 million, we are asking them to spend \$31 million.

Mr. Indarsingh: I am just asking whether in terms of the numbers.

Madam Chairman: Minister, your numbers remain the same?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Yes, they do.

Madam Chairman: So, could you please answer. Have your numbers remained the same?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Yes, they have.

Madam Chairman: Right. Member for Chaguanas East.

Mr. Karim: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, I am still on this same Item, the heading 02, Goods and Services, but on page 133, Item 36, if it is okay with you.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Extraordinary Expenditure? Yes, the question is?

Mr. Karim: The question is really if you could give us a sense as to what the extraordinary for \$50 million?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Those are more in keeping with the IATF operation and covert activities which I will not go into any further explanation.

Mr. Karim: While I am at that, you may likely be also able to give us a sense as to line Item 28, there is a decrease of \$1.3 million Other Contracted Services. What is it that might have decreased in the quantum of the sum? Whatever caused that?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: This line Item deals with more the maintenance contracts and so on. The decrease here I will provide you with some answers on that.

Mr. Karim: Minister, this will be maintenance of what?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Maintenance, as things like waste disposals and so on, MTS as well.

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Mr. Karim: Okay.

Mr. Singh: Thank you, Madam Chair. Line Items 11 and 12, Books and Periodicals, there is an allocation of \$150,000, a decrease of \$128,000 from \$270,000, and materials and supplies an allocation of \$40,000. What I am seeing is that, look, there is a—I am happy that you have a reading and an up to date air guard with the allocation, but I am seeing a disparity with Materials and Supplies in terms—I do not know how they organize themselves with only that piddling amount allocated to that as against that. Just a comment. But I want to go back to—

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: You know, I gather this is General Administration.

Mr. Singh: This is not under—okay.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: This is Goods and Services, General Administration.

Mr. Singh: Okay. Fine. I thought it was air guard. My apologies. Item 36, Extraordinary Expenditure. My colleague asked the question and you said it is for covert operations, I understand that, but is there any kind of oversight in this \$50 million allocation for covert operations—

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Yes.

Mr. Singh:—so as to ensure that there are checks and balances so it does not become a slush fund in the hands of personnel.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: There is oversight through the Permanent Secretary and through the National Security Council.

Mr. Padarath: Madam, I am on line Item 43, Security Services. We see an increase of \$1.1 million, is this a case of private company being paid to guard the guards; or is this MTS; or whether or not this figure reflected here is for arrears?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: It is in fact services provided by MTS, the national security building in particular, and other national security institutions.

Mr. Padarath: By MTS?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: By MTS, yes.

Mr. Padarath: Is there any consideration—

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: And other security services.

Mr. Padarath:—to use law enforcement in terms of—

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: No. Not to do those kinds of static guards. Law enforcement are required to do more law enforcement type duties. So we contract those out to MTS and so. But if you use our manpower like police to guard the Ministry of National Security building, it is not an effective use of manpower. So we contract the security at the buildings—

Mr. Padarath: Especially when you already have a depleting police force.

Madam Chairman: Item 002, Fire Service, page 134. Member for Naparima

Mr. Charles: Thank you, Madam Chair. Item 21, Repairs and Maintenance - Buildings, and I see a decrease of \$1.6 million and my own observations are that a number of the fire stations are in need of repair. I can speak specifically of the Princes Town Fire Station that I understand has not been repaired for about 20 years or so, and the question is: is this enough, this decrease?

Mr. Imbert: Exactly what page are you on?

Mr. Charles: I am on page 134, Item 21, Repairs and Maintenance - Buildings.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: The whole question of repairs to buildings, fire service is based on a priority and the Chief Fire Officer will go and— he will, of course, prioritize the nature of the buildings and the ones that need to be repaired.

Mr. Charles: So can you say if Princes Town—

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: No.

Mr. Charles: You have no idea.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: I cannot say Princes Town is singled out.

Mr. Charles: Okay. Item 13, Maintenance of Vehicles, a \$3.6 million decrease. Are you satisfied, Minister, that the appliances are ready to fulfil their mandate?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Again, to use the term satisfied, one will never be satisfied, but we will have to be able to prioritize and treat with the issues of maintenance accordingly.

Mr. Charles: So, in your view a \$3.6 million decrease is not a problem? I am just asking.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: No, I would not use those words “It is not a problem”. I am saying we have to prioritize given the situation.

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Mr. Charles: Could I ask it in a different way? In Princes Town there is one appliance to handle a geographic area that could be 30 miles away—not 30, but 20 miles if it is Moruga. That appliance must be functioning at all times. You are sure given what is budgeted here that that would be ready as required?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: The Chief Fire Officer will in fact do his prioritization. But in addition to that, there are in fact new fire appliances that are ordered, that in fact were ordered last year and due to come into the country this year, and we continue to purchase additional vehicles as the finance allocated comes to us, but there are in fact new appliances on order that are due to arrive in Trinidad.

Mr. Charles: And the last question. Is there a response time in the fire service generally to say that if a fire takes place within 30 minutes, or 20 minutes, or 40 minutes, an appliance will be on site?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: There is a response time all things considered.

Mr. Paray: Thank you very much, Madam Chairman. Minister, I just want to follow up with one issue that is still outstanding at the Mayaro Fire Station. The fire officers are quite happy with the tender and so on that was provided and I think the people are very appreciative for that. There is an issue of communications in the building. There is still no telephone and internet circuits at that building, and I think there is only wireless service available. I hope that is something that can be addressed soonest.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Yes. That is being dealt with. That is being treated with.

Madam Chairman: And that is under 05.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Yes.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Madam Chair. Line Item 13, hon. Minister. Just a follow-up on my colleague. With the decrease, how will the reduction impact upon the effectiveness of the fire services?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Item 28? I answered that earlier on.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: No, 13.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: 38?

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Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: No, 13.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: 38?

Madam Chairman: 13, Maintenance of Vehicles.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Yes, I dealt with that earlier on.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: I know, but you did not indicate how it would impact upon the effectiveness. You said that there were new fire tenders on the way, but those tenders have not arrived and in the meanwhile there is a transition period.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: And as I said, the Chief Fire Officer will do this in terms of priority, maintain the vehicles accordingly.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Hon. Minister, I know what it is you are saying. Let me ask another question. Does the maintenance of vehicles include the fire tenders, the ambulances, the vehicles? Is it all the vehicles?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: All the vehicles under their administration.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: And the fire officer will determine what should be repaired at what time?

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

Mr. Karim: Thank you, Madam Chair. I am on line Item 22, Short-Term Employment, hon. Minister. Could you give us a sense—and I am sure the public will be happy to hear—what is the role or what do these fire guardians do, what do they perform? And as a follow-up to that, how many are engaged currently, and how are they recruited?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: There are 22 fire guardians and what they do especially—sorry, there are 90 fire guardians employed in the fire service right now and they are the ones who would go out into—especially during the dry season and so on—the forested areas and look at the situation where there may be a propensity for bush fires and so on, and with the initial response to treat with that in terms of talking to people and so on, dealing with the people who may be inclined to start those fires and so on, and pass the kind of information to the fire service so they can develop the appropriate response.

Mr. Karim: Do you intend to increase that complement?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: As the need determines, Sir.

Mr. Karim: And how are they recruited?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: The positions are in fact advertised and people respond to the advertisement.

Mr. Karim: Okay.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, I am on line Item 37, Janitorial Services and I am seeing there is an increase of \$2.4 million. Is there a system in place for the procurement process for janitorial services, and what criteria is used?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: There is a system in place for the equipment and it is based on advertisement and people who respond to the advertisement, et cetera.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: Sorry, Minister, what?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: It is based on an advertisement for the services and response to that, and it goes through the selection process.

Mr. Padarath: Thank you, Madam. Hon Minister, as a follow-up to that and I think the real question there is that when you look at line Item 37, Janitorial Services, an increase of \$2.4 million while you decrease a critical area like vehicles by \$3.6 million, is this to deal with arrears?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Exactly and that is the reason why there is arrears due to those companies in this fiscal year and that is to cater for the arrears.

Mr. Singh: Thank you, Madam Chair. Line Item 17, and this is really a follow-up from last year. Last year, Madam Chair, I had asked the question about training for landfill fires and the Chief Fire Officer, acting then, had indicated that they had embarked on a programme for training of fire officers with respect to landfill fires. I just wanted to know whether or not that training took place, and whether there will be the continuation of that training, or is it completed.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: That training is in fact ongoing.

Madam Chairman: Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: My question was answered.

Madam Chairman: Okay, we go on. Item 004, Prison Service, page 135. Member for Naparima.

Mr. Charles: Thank you, Madam Chair. Looking at Item 43, Security Services, and I am asking: Does this relate to the “Justice on Time” programme?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Yes, it does.

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Mr. Charles: Right. Have you done an audit on the benefit, or whether there are alternative ways of saving \$43 million; and also is that subject to tender or is it just a rollover annually?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: To answer your first question, we are in fact looking at alternatives to that with the coming on stream of the video conferencing centre which is about 70/75 per cent complete. Once that centre is up and running, it means that there would not be the requirement for prisoners to go from Golden Grove throughout Trinidad and Tobago, but they can be dealt with by video conferencing between the centre and the courts. So that is one alternative that we are working on and that should be on stream, all things considered, by the end of 2018, if not before.

Mr. Charles: At present this is tendered, or is it just a rollover?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: It is contracted for three years.

Mr. Padarath: Hon. Minister, just out of pure curiosity, I am looking at line Item 40, Food at Institutions with an allocation of \$15 million—

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: 40.

Mr. Padarath: Pardon me?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: 4-0, yes.

Mr. Padarath: 4-0, yes—I am guessing that this is food for prisoners?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Yes, it is.

11.00 a.m.

Mr. Padarath: What is the complement of inmates right now?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Three thousand and seven. That is convicted. And of course, we have the remand population.

Mr. Padarath: Any idea how many?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Three thousand and seven is, in fact, the total, convicted and remand.

Mr. Padarath: Three thousand?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Three thousand and seven as of today, and of course, that could change by this afternoon.

Mr. Padarath: Of course, of course.

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Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Three thousand, seven hundred, as of today, which could change by this evening.

Madam Chairman: Member for Naparima.

Mr. Charles: Thank you, Madam Chair. Item 21, Repairs and Maintenance - Buildings. This allocation refers to the prisons or the administrative buildings?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: This would be all the buildings.

Mr. Charles: All the buildings? Right. I know that there is an allocation for fixing the sewer at Remand Yard.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: That is Remand; that is different. That is captured under another—

Mr. Charles: But given complaints about prison conditions and cramped conditions and whatnot, there is a decrease of \$1.1 million. Do you think that that decrease is justified?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: We have other allocations to treat with—under Development Programme to treat with other issues of prisons infrastructure.

Madam Chairman: Member for Oropouche West.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, line Item 23, Fees. I just need some edification on it. What does that represent?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Fees, you have chaplain fees, customs fees and so on.

Madam Chairman: Item 005, Regiment, page 136; Item 006, Coast Guard page 137. Member for Chaguanas West.

Mr. Singh: Madam Chair, both with respect to the Regiment and to the Coast Guard, the line Item dealing with Food at Institutions, Item 40, there is reduction in both, one of \$3.5 million with respect to the Regiment from \$20.5 million to \$17 million in 2018, and in 2017, the allocation was \$9.5 million to an allocation of \$9 million for the Regiment in 2018. I want to know whether the quality of the food offered will be affected by this and what measures will be in place having regard that the complement of staff at both these institutions is increasing.

Hon. Maj Gen. Dillon: The quality, I do not think it would be affected but it is in fact a better management of the resources available. That is the measures that are put in place.

Madam Chairman: Member for Couva South.

Mr. Indarsingh: Thank you, Madam Chair. In relation to both 005, Regiment and 006, Coast Guard in terms of line Item 17, Training, there is a decrease of \$1,894,000 and \$2,570,000. Minister, does this in any way means that the quality of training is being compromised in any way?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: No, it is not being compromised whatsoever. No.

Madam Chairman: Member for Chaguanas East.

Mr. Karim: My question was just taken.

Madam Chairman: Member for Princes Town.

Mr. Padarath: Minister, if you look at line Item 50, Housing Accommodation, a decrease of \$214,400. This vote is utilized with respect to who and what?

Madam Chairman: Page 137.

Hon. Maj Gen. Dillon: Housing Accommodation, that would be with respect to commissioned officers in the Trinidad and Tobago Coast Guard. Based on their terms and conditions, they would be afforded rental accommodations depending on where they work and where they operate from. The decrease—

Mr. Imbert: Member, if you look at the 2016, 2017, 2018 figures, you will see it fluctuates, so that obviously dependent on the actual officer on the ground at the particular time, and this vote would be supplemented if necessary. It is an entitlement.

Mr. Padarath: So it is part of their package?

Hon. Maj Gen. Dillon: That is right.

Mr. Imbert: It is an entitlement.

Madam Chairman: Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Madam Chair. I just wanted to enquire, line Item 15, Repairs and Maintenance – Equipment, what equipment we refer to here? There is a decrease and I just want to know how it would impact.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Those are like small machines and so on, photocopiers and those kinds of things.

Madam Chairman: The Member for Princes Town.

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Mr. Padarath: Line Item 37, Janitorial Services. It seems across the board, under this Ministry, there is a significant increase when it comes to janitorial services. Again, is this for outstanding arrears?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Yes, that is correct. Yes.

Mr. Imbert: I would also like to point out that the actual expenditure for 2017 was far less than the provision. There was a provision of \$4 million and expenditure of \$1,022,000, so a provision of \$2 million this year should be adequate.

Madam Chairman: Item 007, Immigration, page 138. Member for Chaguanas East.

Mr. Karim: Thank you, Madam Chair. Just would like to get some information with respect to line Item 28, Other Contracted Services which seems to have an increase of about 50 per cent.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Those are based on arrears for agencies like Rentokil and so on. We have some arrears due to them so that is based on that. Outstanding arrears.

Mr. Karim: Okay. And Item 12, Materials and Supplies. Is that in any way connected with what you have to distribute to the public?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Materials and Supplies has to do with the payment for passports and permits and so on, security papers and so on.

Mr. Karim: Security papers. Do you have sufficient amount? There seems to be a concern that there is an insufficiency why you have the delay. I do not know if there is any veracity to that.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: No, that is not the case.

Mr. Karim: Because at one time, we did not have paper to print payslips.

Mr. Imbert: Where you get that from?

Mr. Karim: No, I am just indicating whether—

Mr. Imbert: “So yuh going on allegations.”

Mr. Karim: The question is: Do you have sufficient?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Yes, we do.

Madam Chairman: Member for Naparima.

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Mr. Charles: Thank you, Madam Chair. Line Item 51, Relocation of Overseas Staff. Does this relate to the immigration officers who process passports in the missions abroad?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Those relate to all immigration staff who work in the various embassies and missions abroad.

Mr. Charles: Right. Are you aware that it is now taking, I think, six months for an appointment in New York and in Miami for a passport and therefore, the figure is \$7 million last year and \$7 million this year, whether there is need to look at that figure and increase the numbers?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: This is based on relocation, you know, based on whether the staff have to be relocated, either return to Trinidad or relocated from one mission to the next. That is what this allocation is about.

Mr. Charles: So, if you need more staff, you would need an increased relocation allowance. And I am just saying are you satisfied the existing staff—relocated staff, you are happy with their outputs? Have you been getting complaints from nationals abroad?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: No, I have not.

Mr. Charles: Okay.

Madam Chairman: Member for Princes Town.

Mr. Padarath: Hon. Minister, just as a follow up on that same line Item, can you indicate what is the current complement of immigration staff at our diplomatic missions abroad?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: I would have to provide that to you because there is a different amount of staff at the various missions. It depends on where you are operating from. So I can provide you with that.

Mr. Padarath: Okay. Similarly, another follow up, could you also indicate whether or not there is a shortage at any particular mission currently?

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

Mr. Singh: Thank you, Madam Chair. Item 28, Other Contracted Services. Minister, there exists and it is in the media, that there seems to be a problem with the provision of passports between one firm and a competing firm. The question I want is whether under this line Item, there exists a subsisting contract for the provision of passports, what is that firm, whether it is a month-to-month

arrangement or whether or not it has a continuous period for a number of years or whether there is going to be a change?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: The present situation is that the contracted firm is being treated at the level of Cabinet right now with respect to the renewal of the contract.

Mr. Singh: Madam Chair, through you, how long has that matter been before the Cabinet?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: I do not want to give you a guess, I can get the date for you.

Mr. Singh: So it has been for some time because—

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: I would not use the words “for some time”; it is before the Cabinet right now for the approval of renewal of the contract.

Mr. Karim: Madam Chair, I am referring to Item 16, Contract Employment, just to ask the question with respect to that line Item, whether there is a sufficient amount of persons contracted to assist in the preparation, production and delivery of passports, and if not, by how much do we have a deficit?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: These are persons like Business Assistants and so on, who have been recruited to assist in the administration areas of the Immigration.

Mr. Karim: And the question I am really asking is: Do you have enough of those persons to assist in the requisite work to deliver?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Well, we continue to build on that capacity. Enough is not a finite figure so we continue to build. If there is a requirement, then we continue to use the contracting services.

Mr. Karim: I think what I want to establish and I think what people want to know, by what percentage are you short of persons? How many persons—

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: In fact, I had as much as about 22 this year alone.

Mr. Karim: Twenty-two short—

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: They were hired.

Mr. Karim: Or hired. No, how many—*[Interruption]* You are telling the Minister to say that—

Mr. Imbert: Yes, I am.

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Mr. Karim: Minister, can I ask the question whether in your opinion, you have sufficient number of staff to satisfy the need for passports being prepared on a timely basis for members of the public? You will be on record as answering, eh.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Yeah. It all depends on so I would not give you a definite answer.

Mr. Karim: But the Minister of Finance “telling yuh tuh say yes”, I want to ask you.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: I will not—listen to me, right. Yes, I have enough.

Mr. Karim: Yes, okay.

Madam Chairman: Item 008, Probation Service, page 139; Item 009, Forensic Service Centre, page 140. Member for Naparima.

Mr. Charles: Right. I am asking on Item 16, contract, it came up earlier. Which positions are contract positions in the Forensic Science Centre? You mentioned forensic pathologist earlier.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Again, I have the list, it is a long list and I can provide it for you.

Mr. Charles: Does it include forensic pathologist?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Yes, yes.

Mr. Charles: Okay, so the question I am asking is, if the budget is \$3.7 million revised estimates in 2017 and it has increased only by \$244,000, and in 2017, we got complaints that bodies were piling up, I think from the—you know from whom—and that the number of pathologists was inadequate to the needs of that centre, are you satisfied that a mere \$244,000 would ameliorate that situation?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: As you see there, we have the line Item. If there is a need to increase it, we will increase it as the need arises.

Mr. Charles: So how many do we need? How many forensic pathologists do we need to be operating optimally?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: We need—four is the figure that is being, so we have posts for four pathologists and we are, in fact, trying to recruit in addition to the replacement of Alexandrov.

Mr. Charles: The earlier question, an important position like this: should it be contract employment or the time has come for us to have a permanent establishment, professional pathologists and dealing with the crime situation?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: There is a move right now to look at permanent but it is a very specialized field, and therefore, you have to look at scholarships—starting at scholarship level and bringing people. So that is the approach that we are using right now. Getting people from the scholarship now.

Mr. Charles: So you are aligning the GATE programme with the needs of the Forensic Science Centre.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: And looking at scholarships and so on. Because it is a specialized field.

Dr. Moonilal: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. To the Minister of National Security, on this very matter, I note this increase of \$244,000 no pun intended, but to the Forensic Science Centre, how many warm bodies this will include? What is the \$244,000 increase meant to address in terms of the number of people at this skill level? Because I am just saying at that level, I imagine it is a competitive salary and package. What is the \$244,000 I think, what is it meant to do?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: It is meant to address the increase in staff.

Dr. Moonilal: And as of now, having put 244 and not 245 or 243, how many warm bodies and what skill and who, to the Minister of National Security I asked?

Mr. Imbert: That is fine but I will answer. Madam Chairman, I just want to make the point that the actual expenditure on this Item in 2016 was \$2.5 million, \$2.9 million was provided in 2017, the actual was 3.7 and we are now providing \$4 million. So clearly, this will employ more people than was employed last year.

Dr. Moonilal: Madam Chairman, I think the Minister of Finance jumped in and created another question for me. So you have been increasing over the period, we are looking at estimates here, we do not have before us a 2017 actual, so that is what the estimate was, it was not what was spent.

Mr. Imbert: The revised estimate is \$3.75 million. It is right in front of you.

Dr. Moonilal: Yes, but what is the actual for 2017?

Mr. Imbert: Revised and the actual will be almost the same.

Dr. Moonilal: What will be almost the same?

Mr. Imbert: You have been in this Parliament for a long time. You know the system.

Dr. Moonilal: Madam Chairman, you must permit me to ask the Minister a question.

Madam Chairman: Fine. So what is the question?

Dr. Moonilal: The question is since we do not have an actual, we do not know how much was spent in 2017 and my question is that when you have been increasing this, could you tell us—and you do not have to tell us now, you are not obliged now, the warm bodies, how many have been hired in 2016, 2017, 2018; what is required now that validates your 244 increase? That is all. You may not have the answer but you could commit to answering.

Mr. Imbert: Madam Chairman, I just want to make a point. The allocation was made by the Ministry of Finance, it is a round number, \$4 million flat. The Revised Estimates—and I want to clear that up as well. The Revised Estimates are the best numbers given by the Budget Division at the end of September. They are very close to the actual. So the actual will be very close to \$3.75 million. The Ministry of Finance has allocated \$4 million, a flat number, we have rounded up the \$3.75 million.

Dr. Moonilal: Okay. Could I ask the Minister of Finance now, why 244 and not zero? What are you doing with 244?

Mr. Imbert: Madam Chairman, I have to object to this continuous reference to 244, the allocation is \$4 million.

Dr. Moonilal: But there is an increase.

Mr. Imbert: That is simply because, as I said—

Dr. Moonilal: You wanted to round it?

Mr. Imbert: We rounded up on the 3.75 obviously.

Mr. Padarath: Hon. Minister, line Item 28, in a critical area like your Forensic Science Centre, what is included in Other Contracted Services?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: That would be waste disposals, disposal of materials and so on and some short-term services.

Mr. Padarath: With respect to that comment, short-term services, could you expand a little in terms of what type of services? Whether or not these include some of those same technicians we spoke of? So there is no outsourcing?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Some areas like when leave reliefs are not provided, they would use that as short-term contract services and so on to provide leave reliefs in various positions. Very short term.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, I am coming back to line Item 16 with Contract Employment and I just want to confirm. You said contract employment, you were identifying the skill sets in terms of the pathologist and persons who are required to do very specific tasks that are highly skilled and with an increase of \$244,000 to add—I just calculated it—that is \$20,333 per month. How does the Minister intend to attract these high-skilled personnel with a figure such as that and it is in an area that is clearly needed?

Madam Chairman: Member, I am not going to allow that. I think that was exhausted in a different manner in a conversation earlier. Member for Couva South.

Mr. Indarsingh: Thank you, Madam Chair. 21, Repairs and Maintenance - Buildings, I see an increase in the allocation of \$500,000, what will this address? And there have always been rumours in relation or allegations that the refrigeration services at the forensic centre are not functioning properly, Minister. Could you give the listening public an assurance that this has been addressed?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Repairs and maintenance continue at the Forensic Science Centre including the issue that you mentioned a while ago.

Mr. Indarsingh: So the refrigeration services—

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: This allocation is to treat with that. Repairs and maintenance throughout.

Mr. Indarsingh: The refrigeration services is up to par?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Upgrading of Plants and Equipment.

Madam Chairman: Would 21 be equipment?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: More buildings, Madam Chair. The 15 would be equipment, 21 would be buildings.

Mr. Singh: Thank you, Madam Chair. Under Item 28, Other Contracted Services, Minister, in terms of the holistic approach to the role of the Forensic Science Centre, do you think it is prudent for an analysis to be done in the manner in which the processes of the Forensic Science Centre impact upon the judicial system?

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Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: We continue to look at ways of improving throughout national security including the Forensic Science Centre including the delivery.

Mr. Singh: But specifically because in my discussions with members who practise before the lower courts, the whole question of the verification exercise of firearms—

Mr. Imbert: Madam Chairman, could I ask what line Item this is?

Mr. Singh: That is line Item 28, Other Contracted Services, so I am making an argument for the Other Contracted Services to be utilized, that line Item, for someone to do a thorough analysis of the processes of the Forensic Science Centre and its impact upon the judicial system in the country.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: In fact, that is already being done because we are going through the process of accreditation at the Forensic Science Centre and that includes part of that—

Mr. Padarath: Madam, I will try to tie this into line Item 15 and again, just for my information, especially seeing that we have had reports of bodies going missing, records not being easily accessible. Is the Forensic Science Centre, their records, are they computerized?

Madam Chairman: Under what Item are we?

Mr. Padarath: I am trying to tie it into 15. But just for my information really.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: What records? Records of repairs and maintenance?

Mr. Padarath: Yes. I am really trying to find out whether or not their system is computerized.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: I am not aware if any body is missing so I do not know if you may want to correct that statement.

Mr. Padarath: No, you have to pick that up with the media.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: No, but you may have to correct it.

Mr. Padarath: But the question I really want to find out is whether or not their systems are computerized.

Madam Chairman: But this Item is Repairs and Maintenance - Equipment so that I do not see this under that Item. So we now move on to Item 010, Fire Service, Tobago, page 141. Member for Naparima.

Mr. Charles: Thank you, Madam Chair. Item 15, Repairs and Maintenance - Equipment, could the Minister tell us what that relates to?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Repairs to things like pumps and saws, Jaws of Life, rescue equipment, et cetera.

Mr. Charles: Right and I note that the figure, the estimates, \$460,000, half a million, that is for the Fire Services, but for the entirety of Trinidad, we just did it at 002, Fire Services, \$1 million. Could you explain why Tobago would have half the allocation of the entire equipment in the Fire Service in Trinidad?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: The difference in needs between Trinidad and Tobago based on the Chief Fire Officer's assessment.

Mr. Charles: But is it not the same equipment that was used there?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Yeah, but it is a difference in terms of Tobago. Of course, it is different to Trinidad. It must be different, size etc.

Madam Chairman: Item 013, Lifeguard Service, pages 142 and 143; Item 013, Immigration Tobago, page 143; Item 014, Defence Force Headquarters, page 144; Item 015, Cadet Force, page 145; Item 016, Air Guard, page 146; Item 017, Immigration Detention Centre, page 147; Item 018, Volunteer Defence Force (Reserves), pages 147 and 148; Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, page 148; Item 001, General Administration, page 148; Item 002, Fire Service, page 149. Member for Naparima. 002, Fire Service, page 149.

Mr. Charles: Again, and I do not want to—but the allocation for the Fire Service in Trinidad is \$31 million and we just saw in Tobago, it is \$19.1 million, closely two-thirds. The total of 01, 02, 03 and 04 is \$31 million estimate and I am just asking if \$31 million in Trinidad as opposed to \$19.1 million in Tobago, is there any reason for that high allocation or the disparity given the size and geography and population and equipment and that—

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: It is not so much the size and population, it depends on the needs analysis that was done by the Chief Fire Officer at any point in time. That is the requirement now.

Mr. Charles: So you do not look at equipment or you do not look at vehicles in Trinidad, vehicles elsewhere and say well, look, if you have 10 here and 100 here, that there must be some proportionality?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Of course, the Chief Fire Officer will look at that. That is his remit.

Madam Chairman: Item 004, Prison Service, page 149; Item 005, Regiment, page 149; Item 006, Coast Guard, page 150; Item 007, Immigration, page 150; Item 008, Probation Service, page 150; Item 009, Forensic Science Centre, page 151.

Mr. Charles: Item 04, could the Minister indicate to us what that Other Minor Equipment relates to?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Things like printers and so on—laser printers and specialized equipment.

Mr. Charles: Oh, special related to the forensic.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Relating to forensic science, yeah.

Madam Chairman: Item 010, Fire Service, Tobago page 151; Item 012, Lifeguard Service, page 151; Item 014, Defence Force Headquarters, page 151; Item 015, Cadet Force, page 152; Item 016, Air Guard, page 152; Item 017, Immigration Detention Centre, page 152; Item 018, Volunteer Defence Force (Reserves), page 153. Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies, page 153; Item 001: Regional Bodies, page 153; Item 004, International Bodies, page 153; Item 005, Non-Profit Institutions, page 154; Item 007, Households. Member for Chaguanas East.

Mr. Karim: Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, might you be able to indicate to us line Item 05 refers, MiLAT Programme for the allocation of \$10 million. How many students are currently enrolled in that programme and how many centres do you have?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: We have two cohorts right now, roughly about 237 students.

Mr. Karim: How many centres?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: They operate from one centre out at Mausica.

Mr. Karim: Mausica. The other question, the line Item before that, 04, could you tell us the complement of the CCC? And I have an idea as to how many centres but I do not know if you will just want to indicate it to us so that we will see the spread throughout Trinidad.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: There are about 727 trainees right now in the CCC programme that is going on right now.

Mr. Karim: Okay and the Item 11, is that programme discontinued?

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Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: That programme has been discontinued.

Mr. Karim: I thank you.

Madam Chairman: Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, following on colleague, on line Item 11, is there a programme that will replace this most important mentoring programme for youths at risk?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: The intention of the programme, based on a survey that was done, is to move the programme from Ministry of National Security and send it to another Ministry. That was based on a consultancy who looked at the programme for us. So that is the way forward but I cannot say when it will happen.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Have you all decided as yet which Ministry will assume that?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Most likely Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs is one of the recommended Ministries.

Madam Chairman: Member for Naparima.

Mr. Charles: Thank you. So we can expect to see the \$13 million reduction in the Civilian Conservation Corps. It would be budgeted elsewhere in another Ministry is what you are telling us. Or you are telling us until that happens there is a significant cut in the Civilian Conservation Corps?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Yes.

Mr. Charles: Minister, on a broader note, are you happy with these cuts to MiLAT and Civilian Conservation Corps, et cetera, in the mentoring youth programme, the youth at risk, in the context of crime prevention and the need for males, particularly, to get help in dealing with the issues they face that lead them ultimately to a life of crime?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: I am sure that you would have heard in the Minister of Finance's presentation that based on our economic situation, we have to look at cuts across the entire spectrum, whether National Security or other Ministries, and therefore there are areas in which we have to adjust accordingly.

Mr. Charles: I thank you very much, but when we get to 009, I will deal with the SSA, the increased allocation.

Madam Chairman: Member for Couva South.

Mr. Indarsingh: Thank you, Madam Chair. Under 15, Compensation to the Estates of Members of the Protective Services, I see an increase in the allocation of \$1 million. Mr. Minister, will this allocation be enough to compensate the estates of members of the protective services?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Sorry, I did not hear. Could you repeat the last part of your question?

Mr. Indarsingh: I said, will this allocation be adequate to compensate the estates of members of the protective services?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: If there is a need for additional funds, then that will be pursued.

Mr. Indarsingh: But, in terms of who have died in the line of duty, could you give a number, in terms of the estates who are awaiting compensation?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: No, I cannot.

Mr. Indarsingh: You cannot?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: No.

Madam Chairman: Member for Princes Town.

Mr. Padarath: Madam Chair, line Item 13, the Criminal Injuries Compensation. We see an increase by half a million. Could the hon. Minister indicate how many persons were able to access compensation through the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board over the last fiscal year and in which categories are the sums and whether or not there are any plans by the Ministry or the Government to increase the ceiling with respect to that? I know that has been a very contentious issue with respect to the ceiling limits, and whether or not there are any plans to review and reform?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: There are no plans to do that.

Mr. Padarath: And with respect to the amount of persons?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: I can provide you with that at a later stage.

Mr. Padarath: Sure.

Madam Chairman: Member for Mayaro.

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Mr. Paray: Madam Chairman, question asked by the Member for Princes Town.

Madam Chairman: Member for Oropouche West.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: Madam Chair, is it 009, Other Transfers?

Madam Chairman: No, we have not reached there as yet.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Okay, so when we reach there.

Madam Chairman: So we can now move on to Item 009, Other Transfers. Member for Oropouche West, pages 154 and 155.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, line 12, HIV/AIDS Coordinating Unit. I would just like to know what is the status of this unit and what has this unit achieved thus far?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: That unit is functioning at the Ministry of National Security and it has been instrumental in looking at measures and policy measures to treat with HIV/AIDS across the spectrum of national security.

Madam Chairman: Member for Naparima.

Mr. Charles: Thank you, Madam Chair. Item 02, Strategic Services Agency. Could the Minister tell us briefly what are the main functions of the SSA? And I have a follow-up question.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: I am sure that you would have heard, in terms of our legislative agenda, we dealt with that issue at length and breadth, in terms of the function, the scope and the organization structure of the Strategic Services Agency and I am sure I can provide you with—if you need additional information I can provide you with that.

Mr. Charles: Am I correct in saying that this is a surveillance agency in general?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: I have provided you with the kind of information that is required and I, again, if you need—

Mr. Charles: Would the Minister give us an assurance that this agency is not engaged in surveillance of Members of the Opposition, including monitoring our phones? [*Crosstalk*]

Madam Chairman: Okay. So, I would not allow that. Member, do you have any other questions?

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Mr. Charles: The \$2 million increase, you mentioned that they are cutting everywhere because of the financial circumstances and MiLAT and Civilian Conservation Corps but yet there is an increase here. What justifies an emphasis on after the crime, rather than on crime prevention?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: It is to deal with additional criminals. So the measures are there. You have to balance. I mean, you have to balance it across the board.

Madam Chairman: Member for Chaguanas East.

Mr. Karim: Thank you, Madam Chairman. Line Item 17, the Morvant/Laventille Initiative of \$2 million. Hon. Minister, is this connected because I know there is an allocation under the Ministry of Education for the Morvant/Laventille School Improvement programme. Is this connected, and if it is, what really does this subset do in relation to that project?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: While the schools would deal specifically with the schools, this deals with outside of the school areas, to a large extent, in the communities in that area. So it is at-risk communities in Morvant and Laventille. So it is a combination of the school and then the other environs.

Madam Chairman: Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, line Item 10, Office of Disaster Preparedness and Management. I think it is a very important unit and I just want to know, would this unit require, or would they have an intimate working relationship with the helicopter services?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: When you say they are working with the helicopter service, I do not understand your question.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: If I could go back to Matelot. You could not, with the disaster that had taken place, you needed helicopter access, so is there going to be a working relationship with the air guard, or—?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: There is collaboration and cooperation across national security. If there is a requirement we will cooperate fully.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: All right, okay, thanks.

Madam Chairman: Member for Chaguanas West.

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Mr. Singh: Thank you, Madam Chair, line 22, Cyber Security Programme. There is an allocation and an increase of \$160,000. Minister, could you give us an appreciation of what this programme is about?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: The Ministry has set up, based on a cyber security policy, a Cyber Security Unit that treats with the whole aspect of what goes on in cyber security and this allocation is to treat with issues pertinent to that unit. They relate directly, together with the other cyber unit in the police unit as well. This is at the Ministry of National Security.

Mr. Singh: Okay, so this is an internal in-house unit that liaises with the police unit.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: That is correct. Yes.

Madam Chairman: Member for Naparima.

Mr. Charles: Thank you very much. Item 23, Community Comfort Patrol programme, that has been disbanded, \$27 million less. Am I correct in stating that the intent was to replace this programme by the Community Police that were assigned to the local government bodies and municipalities?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: I think I mentioned in this very House that this area would be dealt with by the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service, in terms of increased patrols in various areas, and so on. And that was my reply.

Mr. Charles: So, therefore, we could look to an enhanced police capability, community police?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: I had mentioned that before. Hence the reason there is no allocation here for the Comfort Patrol.

Mr. Charles: Thank you.

Madam Chairman: Member for Couva South.

Mr. Indarsingh: Thank you, Madam Chair, 16, Transit Police Unit. There is a decrease in the allocation of \$2 million. Mr. Minister, could you give us the reason for this reduction?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: That was based on arrears that were paid out last year.

Mr. Indarsingh: Arrears?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Yeah.

Mr. Indarsingh: Okay.

Madam Chairman: Members, we will now move on to the *Draft Estimates of the Development Programme*. Sub-Head 09, Development Programme, Consolidated Fund, page 56; Item 004, Social Infrastructure, pages 56 to 62. Member for Naparima.

Mr. Charles: Thank you. Item 019, Purchase of Vessels for the Coast Guard. I was under the impression that, with the vessels that we left, you had reached your complement of vessels for the Coast Guard. This \$5.8 million, what is that in respect of?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: That is to purchase four high-speed interceptors, inboard diesel interceptors.

Madam Chairman: Item 005, Multi-sectoral and Other Services, pages 62 to 64; Infrastructure Development Fund, page 199, same book; Item 004, Social Infrastructure, pages 199 to 202; Item 005, Multi-sectoral and Other Services, page 202.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 22 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Madam Chairman: Thank you, Madam PS and the other technocrats. You all are now discharged. We move on to Head 64.

Hon. Members, I have been advised that the members of the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service were advised to come for 12.00. So, I would want to suggest, that in the interest of time, we take the lunch break now and we return at 12.30. So that the meeting is now suspended to 12.30.

11.44 a.m.: *Standing Finance Committee suspended.*

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

[MR. FORDE *in the Chair*]

Head 64: Trinidad and Tobago Police Service, \$2,323,223,100.

Mr. Chairman: Good afternoon. We would like to resume the Standing Finance Committee meeting this afternoon, and we are on head 64, Trinidad and Tobago Police Service. Welcome Mr. Minister, and welcome also Mr. Williams, Commissioner of Police. Also to the technocrats, all the senior advisors and officers at the Police Service of Trinidad and Tobago.

Head 64, Trinidad and Tobago Police Service, \$2,323,223,100. I will now invite the Minister of Finance to make a brief opening statement for a maximum of five minutes.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Chair, in my opening remarks this morning under National Security, I covered all agencies including the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service, so I would definitely want to go straight into the matters before us.

Mr. Chairman: Sure.

Question proposed: That Head 64 stand part of the Schedule.

Mr. Chairman: At this stage hon. Members, the sum of \$2,323,223,100 for Head 64: The Trinidad and Tobago Police Service is comprised of moneys proposed for expenditure under the following Sub-Heads and Items to be found in the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure and the Draft Estimates of the Development Programme*. We now proceed to consider the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure*.

Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure, page 332; Item 001, Police Service, page 332. I recognize the Member for Naparima.

Mr. Charles: Thank you, Deputy Chair. I refer to Items 03 and 04, and note that the estimates in 2018 are less than the actuals in 2016. So one relates to Overtime - Monthly Paid Officers; and Allowances - Monthly Paid Officers.

Mr. Chairman: And the question is?

Mr. Charles: And the question is what explains that significant reduction, \$92 million, in one instance and \$78 million in the other.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: That had to do with the arrears that would have been paid in 2017.

Mr. Charles: The 2017 estimate for overtime was 476 and the year before it was 337. So if—and is 300 the lowest in four years? So if it was arrears, we would see an increase in one year and then it goes back to the normal. But the normal, if you take the average, it is about \$360 million for overtime and it is now \$300 million. Now, there may be a reason, I—

Mr. Imbert: Member for Naparima, what is the question?

Mr. Charles: The question is: What is the reason for the \$92 million decrease in overtime?

Mr. Imbert: There is back pay in overtime too, you know.

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Mr. Charles: Yeah.

Mr. Imbert: So that is what it is.

Mr. Charles: So it was a back pay paid in 2016 also?

Mr. Imbert: Fifty per cent and 50 per cent. The whole country knows that.

Mr. Charles: Okay.

Dr. Moonilal: Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Chairman. To the hon. Minister on this Sub-Head, may I also welcome the Commissioner of Police and other members of the police service. For the record, my name is Roodal Moonilal; for the record, Member for Oropouche East. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Chairman: Member, Member.

Dr. Moonilal: But we have a higher-ranking officer in the Chamber, so I bow to that. And if I could be permitted now, Mr. Chairman, after my own introduction to the team.

On the matter of personnel expenditure, matters as being discussed over the years here, concern the payments and the quantum being paid to officers who may be on suspension for one reason or another, whether full-pay or half-pay, and so on and whatever benefits—if not now, could we get a list of the numbers, not the names, and so on, but the number of officers at this time on suspension, and for what reason, and the time of the suspension ongoing, from when and the amount of moneys being paid on this matter? That is one.

Secondly, Current Transfers and Subsidies, we notice between the actual—

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: “Yuh gone tuh”—

Mr. Chairman: We have not reached there as yet.

Dr. Moonilal: Okay, sure. We would leave it there and I will come back.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: We will provide you with that information.

Dr. Moonilal: You would provide. Thank you very much.

Mr. Chairman: Member for Chaguanas East.

Mr. Karim: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Item 08, hon. Minister, Vacant Posts, for \$10 million. It is indicated there, without incumbents. Could we say how many of these such posts are vacant and the ranks, if possible? If you do not have it now, you can supply it in writing. And how long have these been vacant?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: I would provide that to you in writing.

Mr. Karim: Okay, thank you.

Mr. Chairman: Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, page 332, Item 001, Police Service (Trinidad), pages 332 and 333; Item 002. Okay. Member for Chaguanas West.

Mr. Singh: Under Goods and Services, first Item of Training, line Item 17, there is a line Item 17, \$2.5 million for training. This is the same as last year. Does this training take into consideration the training at the Cambridge University for police officers?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: We would not have any Cambridge training in 2018. No such training in 2018.

Mr. Singh: Could the hon. Minister indicate how many officers have been trained at the Cambridge University in this higher education arena?

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Chairman, could I just get clarification here? Can that question be asked; if in this year there is no training at Cambridge? Can the Member ask about what happened in previous years? Is that a correct question?

Mr. Chairman: Yes, I am guided. Yes.

Mr. Imbert: Are you sure?

Mr. Chairman: Yes.

Mr. Imbert: How far back?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: How far back?

Mr. Chairman: What year are you enquiring for, Member?

Mr. Singh: For the period 2015 to 2017.

Mr. Imbert: No, you cannot go that—Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have to complain, you know. He cannot do that, 2015 does not even appear in this book.

Mr. Singh: Well, then for the period 2016.

Mr. Chairman: So 2016/2017, Member.

Mr. Singh: Yes.

Mr. Chairman: Mr. Minister, you could provide the information now?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: No, no, I would provide that at a later stage.

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Mr. Chairman: Okay, so 2016/2017.

Mr. Singh: Similarly, Mr. Chairman, line Item 19. In the face of significant cutbacks, I see that official entertainment has increased by \$200,000. Could the Minister provide a justification for that increase in official entertainment?

Mr. Imbert: Let me clarify that, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: Minister of Finance.

Mr. Imbert: The Member is very cleverly not reading that the original estimate in 2017 was \$500,000, exactly the same as the original estimate in 2018. So, on the face of it, there is no increase. It simply means that the police, I would have to say, very prudently, did not spend all of the allocation provided for official entertainment in the last fiscal year.

Mr. Singh: I merely want to indicate, Mr. Chairman, that under line Item 19, that under the column “Increase”, there is an increase of \$200,000.

Mr. Imbert: On the actual but not on the original.

Mr. Singh: All right.

Mr. Imbert: “Leh we keep an eye on dem. Doh worry.”

Mr. Chairman: Member for Naparima.

Mr. Charles: Thanks. Item 16: Contract Employment, to whom does this refer?

Mr. Chairman: Mr. Minister, contract employment.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: These would be civilian staff employed by the Commissioner of Police, to a large extent.

Mr. Charles: You are talking about stenographers, clerks or technical staff?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Business operating assistants. All the data entry clerks, heads of various divisions. In the police administration arm, most of them are civilians.

Mr. Chairman: Member for Chaguanas East.

Mr. Karim: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Line Item 13, hon. Minister.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Maintenance.

Mr. Karim: Maintenance of vehicles, allocation of \$35 million, an increase of \$2 million. Would you be able to give us a sense, and to the viewing public as

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well, as to the status of these vehicles, because oftentimes their roadworthiness and the amount that are available to respond—oftentimes, when you see some of these vehicles they appear not to be in proper functioning order, even in terms of the lights, the security lights on the vehicles. So, the question is: If you can give us a sense as to the functioning, the roadworthiness of these vehicles. In addition to that, are these vehicles maintained in-house at a government agency, or are they privately secured or properly maintained by other outfits?

Mr. Chairman: Mr. Minister.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: There is a total of 1,526 operational vehicles, 320 non-operational and a total of 1,613 vehicles.

Mr. Karim: As a follow-up. In terms of where are they maintained, are they maintained within the service or are they contracted out for maintenance?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: It depends on the age of the vehicle. Of course, the new vehicles would go back to the dealers for the maintenance. And depending on the—again depending on the—vehicle itself, it will be sent to various contactors, some contracted out, including VMCOTT. VMCOTT also handles some of the repairs of the police vehicles.

Mr. Karim: And would the majority go to VMCOTT?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: I cannot say whether the majority goes there but it is across the board. It all depends on the vehicle and the services that are needed.

Mr. Karim: Okay. Well then as a follow-up question, would it be possible for you to indicate to us and therefore to the national community, to whom are these vehicles sent? In other words, what are the agencies that maintain these vehicles on behalf of the police service?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: We can provide that for you.

Mr. Karim: Sure.

Mr. Chairman: Okay. Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Thank you, Chair. The Contract Employment of approximately \$50 million.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Line Item, line Item, please.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Line Item 16. Would you be kind enough to give us a breakdown, if not today, in writing, of the different positions within the police service that there are contract employees?

Mr. Chairman: Member, that question was asked a while ago.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Asked a while ago.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Yes, it was just asked a while ago.

Mr. Chairman: And it would be provided.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Okay.

Mr. Chairman: That would be provided by the Minister.

Dr. Gopeesingh: I did not get that but all right. Thank you.

Mr. Chairman: Do you have another question?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Yes. Also the Short-Term Employment. When you say short-term—

Mr. Chairman: Call the line Item, please, to make it easier.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Line Item 22.

Mr. Chairman: Go ahead.

Dr. Gopeesingh: When you say Short-Term Employment, would the Minister be kind enough to give us an understanding of what he means by that?

Mr. Chairman: Mr. Minister.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Sure. Short-Term Employment is basically as it says, short-term such as leave relief, and so on for three months, and so on; three months employment, very short-term, as it says.

Dr. Gopeesingh: To fill gaps.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Exactly.

Dr. Gopeesingh: All right, okay. And last question here on the Fees. Could you explain what that means, \$7 million in Fees, to whom and for what?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Fees are: upgrade in IT and the licences and so on, software licensing and so on. The upgrade of IT. Those are basically where the fees are expended.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Okay, all right, thanks.

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Mr. Chairman: Member for Chaguanas West.

Mr. Singh: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Under Item: Maintenance of Vehicles, line Item 13, I am told that the—

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: What line Item, sorry?

Mr. Singh: Line Item 13, Maintenance of Vehicles. The new vehicles and their maintenance at the various dealerships.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: The new ones.

Mr. Singh: New ones, relatively new because you have a maintenance profile. I am told that the police department has a history of bad pay with the new car dealers, well the car dealerships that provide these vehicles. I want to know what measures would be put in place so as to ensure the proper payment for the maintenance of these vehicles?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: I do not know if that is true, where they bad pay. I have no information that that is true so I cannot respond to your question.

Mr. Singh: Okay, well—

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: I cannot remedy something that I am not sure is right.

Mr. Singh: Well, I think you should enquire as to the payment scheduling for these vehicles, for their maintenance and then you can arrive at a position. But I am telling you from my information that there is bad pay from the major car dealers, Neal & Massy, Lifestyle Motors by the police service.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: You related to all of them?

Mr. Chairman: Okay, we will move on.

12.45 p.m.

Mr. Chairman: I recognize the Member for Tabaquite. You still have a question?

Dr. Rambachan: Thank you. I want to go to Item 21, Repairs and Maintenance of Buildings. And to begin by asking what is the process by which a building gets repaired? And if I may draw an example, recently I went to the Oropouche Police Station in South and the policemen were complaining that the air-condition system was not operational for quite a while—a couple of weeks well. And it was looking very bad, the ceiling and so on was opened up, and I

asked, have you requested that it be repaired? And they said yes and nothing was done for quite a couple of weeks.

What is the process by which, you know, a police station gets repaired and how quickly does that happen? Because this was a couple of weeks that the policemen said that the system was down, and incidentally, it was not the only air-condition system down in a police station. A similar system in another police station, the same air-condition type broke down again.

Mr. Chairman: Mr. Minister.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: There are over 115 buildings under the police charge, so therefore, their maintenance of course is done based on priority and based on—so if you could single out Oropouche, it may not be in terms of the list for priority, but all stations are being targeted for repairs.

Dr. Rambachan: Well, it might be a list of priorities when you do not have sufficient windows to open in that police station and they have to sit in the hot—in the heat—

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Well, it was you all who constructed it, you know.

Dr. Rambachan: Sorry?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: You all built it.

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Chairman, what Line Item is this?

Dr. Rambachan: Line Item 21. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Imbert: Can you assist me? What Line Item is this?

Mr. Chairman: Line Item 18 and we are on page 339.

Mr. Imbert: Thank you very much.

Mr. Chairman: I will now recognize Member for Oropouche East.

Dr. Moonilal: Mr. Chairman, I want to be on Line Item 21 on page 333 to follow up on my colleague's question really. Now, the actual in 2016 was 12.6 million of which you had a revised estimate in 2017 of 10 million. This has taken a decrease—a cut by \$4 million. I am asking the Minister two questions on this matter. First, what is the likely implication of cutting on such a critical area as repairs and maintenance of buildings? And secondly, what is the maintenance and repair regime that exists at this time to ensure that buildings, particularly those nine police stations built by the Partnership Government and the three started are

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now completed? Particularly where you have new facilities that it is, I could continue, particularly where you have buildings built over the last four or five years. The nine police stations plus three and to maintain a regime of maintenance of these facilities so that they do not go as traditionally throughout the public sector go into disrepair and become you know so terribly in a state of disrepair that you have to take all types of steps, emergency steps, to repair buildings and so on? So I am asking two things, your maintenance regime to ensure that those high quality products produced just a few years ago are maintained, and what is the likely implication of this cut in \$4 million?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: You would realize of course that part of your question with respect to the—4 million decrease, but the actual estimate in 2017 was \$6 million so there might have been some virement transfers to the revised estimate of \$10 million so there is no difference in terms of the allocated 2017 and 2018, the \$6 million stands—if there is need for virement later on the Commissioner could make that sort of request.

All right, in terms of who handles the repairs and so on. It is the use of service contracts for generators, lifts and sewer repairs and so on, and the AC of course in the police station?

Dr. Moonilal: But Mr. Minister, you will agree that we need a very strong maintenance regime given the new assets in terms of buildings and so on supplied to the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service over the last seven years or so.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: We need maintenance for every structure that we put up and every facility that we have, including the police service.

Mr. Karim: Thank you Mr. Chairman. Hon. Minister, I am just following up on the question from my colleague the Member for Chaguanas West. Is it possible that in terms of Line Item 13, you might be able to supply us in writing with all those persons or companies to whom you are indebted for the provision of maintenance of these vehicles?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: I will provide the list of the vehicles and some of the providers. I cannot tell you if they are indebted.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Line Item 58, Hon. Minister, Medical Expenses, is it for insurance for the members of the police service or is that for incidental or when issues arise for medical for personnel that is the amount? Could you give an explanation of the—

Mr. Chairman: Member you are tying in both 58 and 61?

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Dr. Gopeesingh: Yes, well—

Mr. Chairman: You are speaking about insurance but you are in line Item 58?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Item 58 is the medial expenses for officers. It is for officers of the police service.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Yeah, but are your—is the police service insured medically by a group health plan or is it for individual payments?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: No. That is for individuals who access medical services. As part of the terms and conditions the police service pays for their medical.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Minister, I am not hearing you clearly.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: I said part of their terms and conditions they pay for their medicals. The police service pays for their medicals so this is for the officers in the police service.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Now, you are not making that clear.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: How clearer do you want it?

Dr. Gopeesingh: If you have an "X" amount of police officers, and you have on a daily basis one or two or monthly basis three or four with problems how is that managed from a medical perspective and for expenses. You just pay the bill, or the officers pay the bill, or is there an insurance plan—a medical insurance plan for the officers?

Mr. Imbert: I believe the Minister said payments are made—

Dr. Gopeesingh: You believe—I am asking the Minister—

Mr. Imbert: That is what he said—

Dr. Gopeesingh: I am not asking you to believe, I am asking a direct question to the Minister.

Mr. Imbert: Asked and answered twice. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Chairman: Member for Caroni East.

Mr. Imbert: I am being polite to you.

Mr. Chairman: Member for Caroni East and the Minister of Finance again let us do it in a cordial fashion. So your question has been answered and you have a clarification could we hear it.

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Dr. Gopeesingh: No. I have not received the clarification, Speaker or Chair.

Mr. Chairman: But an answer was given—

Dr. Gopeesingh: I did not hear the answer.

Mr. Chairman: You did not hear the answer—[*Crosstalk*] hold on, Mr. Minister, he said he did not hear the answer could you just kindly provide the answer for him.

Mr. Imbert: For the third time.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Their terms and conditions of the members of the police service entitle them for a medical, there are times when they have reimbursement, there are times when the medical is paid in advance for them; it all depends on the situation, but they are entitled to medical and this is what this Vote allows for the expenses incurred for medical.

Dr. Gopeesingh: That is an ambiguous answer. Is there—

Mr. Chairman: Member, Member, Member for Caroni East, one second, an answer was provided, okay whether it is that you are pleased with it or not an answer was provided. If you have a subsequent question as a result, you are free you have the time to do it. So could we get—?

Dr. Gopeesingh: I have a subsequent question—

Mr. Chairman: Fine. Proceed.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Do you have a medical insurance plan established with an insurance company for officers of the police service.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: No.

Mr. Chairman: Yes or no?

Mr. Imbert: He said no three times.

Mr. Chairman: Member for Chaguanas East, Minister of Finance.

Mr. Karim: Thank you very much Mr. Chairman. Hon. Minister, Line Item 23. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Chairman: Member for Chaguanas East is on floor.

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Mr. Karim: Yes, Hon. Minister, line Item 23, could you indicate what these fees are and what would have caused—

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: I just answered the question—I answered the question a while ago.

Mr. Karim: The decrease as well? Did you respond to why the decrease? I am not sure what I heard you say what is responsible for the \$3 million decrease.

Mr. Chairman: That is a separate question you want to know why the decrease.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: There has been a reduction across the entire National Security that is just one of them.

Mr. Chairman: Item 002, Police Service Tobago, page 334. Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, page 334. I recognize the Member for Chaguanas West.

Mr. Singh: Dealing with Sub-Head 002, Tobago Food at Institutions, you have there an increase of \$110,000 is that increase as a result of the increase of food prices in Tobago?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: No.

Mr. Chairman: Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases page 334. Item 001, Police Service Trinidad, page 334; Item 002, Police Service Tobago, page 335; Sub-Head 04, Current Transfer and Subsidies, page 335. Item 001, Regional Bodies, page 335.

12.55 p.m.

Mr. Singh: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Item 01, under 004, International Bodies, Interpol. What is our staff complement for Interpol in Trinidad. How many persons?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: There are 12 officers assigned to Interpol.

Mr. Chairman: Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: So, is 004, 01—following on my colleague's question, the \$153,000, is it for a fee attached to being a member of the Interpol?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: It involves the annual contribution to Interpol.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Right, okay. Thank you.

Mr. Chairman: Item 005, Non-profit Institutions, page 335. Member for Tabaquite.

Dr. Rambachan: Thank you. I am very happy to see that under Item 01, the amount of money for Police Youth Clubs has increased to \$6 million, although, you know, the \$4 million that was estimated only \$2.4 million was received or spent, but I want to just tell the Commissioner of Police, through the Minister, that there are some Police Youth Clubs with buildings that do not have proper toilets, for example, at Whiteland where there are 97 children in a Police Youth Club, one that I had set up and they need one toilet that will cost \$4,000 or \$5,000.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: You could expand on that?

Dr. Rambachan: Sorry?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: You could expand?

Dr. Rambachan: I took a Minister, the Minister of Works and Transport there eight weeks ago and they promised to do something and nothing was done. There is a building sitting in Tabaquite—you had asked for a building—Minister and Commissioner—the building is there, grass is growing on it and it could be used as the Police Youth Club in Tabaquite.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Thanks for the information.

Mr. Chairman: Member for Naparima, are you okay? Item 007, Households, page 335. I recognise the Member for Naparima.

Mr. Charles: Item 02, Compensation—I take it—to the Estates of Members of the Protective Services. Is this in relation to the \$1 million that is paid for officers who die in the line of duty?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Yes, it is.

Mr. Charles: So it means that only three could be paid.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: No, it does not mean that.

Mr. Charles: \$3 million.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: You could always put money—

Mr. Chairman: Okay. The Minister of Finance will clarify.

Mr. Imbert: During this fiscal year, the Commissioner of Police made a request to the Minister of Finance for a transfer from other Votes to compensate

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the families of police officers who had died in the line of duty and the request was accommodated. So I am certain that in 2018, whatever is required will be accommodated by way of a transfer, if necessary.

Mr. Charles: Agreed and that is excellent. Could the Minister tell us how many officers—families of officers who are eligible to access this loan remain outstanding at this moment?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: One.

Mr. Chairman: Item 009, Other Transfers, page 335.

Hon. Member: Page 336.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, my apologies. Member for Tabaquite, proceed.

Dr. Rambachan: I just want to ask the Minister whether given that we have the million dollars and so for police officers who die in the line of duty—and I commend that, that is something I recommended highly at one point in time—I want to know whether the Minister is considering or has considered a wider insurance scheme to cover police officers in general, in terms of in their line of duty for injuries as well as death, an insurance scheme that covers them?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: There are other areas that handle compensation for officers who get injured in the line of duty. There are a number of different areas where that is covered under the police regulations.

Mr. Chairman: Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Chair. Hon. Minister, I heard complaints outside and I just want to know if whatever is in place, is it adequate or is it something that the Ministry can improve upon?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: What is adequate? Sorry.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: The compensation for officers who are injured in the line of duty.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Which one of the compensations? There are various compensations. Is it the million-dollar compensation? You are talking about injuries and so on?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Yes.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: I have had no complaints about that.

Mr. Chairman: Member for Naparima.

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Mr. Charles: Minister, I am aware that the Police Credit Union has a—.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Which line Item?

Mr. Charles: I am referring to 02.

Mr. Chairman: Members, we are on page 336.

Mr. Charles: Oh, it is not here.

Mr. Chairman: Right. So, Member for Caroni East, we are on page 336, Households.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Yes. Following up on the question from my colleague, would the Minister or his Commissioner of Police contemplate having an insurance plan that will deal holistically with any member who becomes injured and to assist in that rather than paying out individually?

Mr. Chairman: Member, Member, we dealt with insurance and medical expenses. We are now on page 336, with regard to the specific line Item.

Dr. Gopeesingh: I am dealing, Chair, on 007, 02, Compensation to the Estates of Members of the Protective Services. I am asking the Minister if he will ever contemplate having a policy or a plan, an insurance plan, to deal holistically with compensation for officers in the line of duty rather than just this one million, one million.

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Chairman, the operative word in this line Item is the word “Estates”, this means the person is deceased so injuries do not come into play when you are deceased.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Okay.

Mr. Imbert: Okay.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Sure. But that is in the line of duty. So is there a holistic plan to compensate? [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Imbert: That is not in this line Item. That is not in this line Item. [*Crosstalk*] This is not in this line Item.

Mr. Chairman: Members. Item 009, Other transfers, page 336. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Imbert: Could we move on, please?

Mr. Chairman: You are not satisfied with the answer you received?

Dr. Gopeesingh: That is all right. I do not expect anything else from the Member.

Mr. Chairman: No, no, Member. As the Chairman, I am asking you the question. We will move on. We will move on.

Dr. Gopeesingh: I will move from there.

Mr. Chairman: Item 009, Transfers, page 336. Member for Caroni East, proceed.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Could the hon. Minister and possibly the Commissioner, whoever, indicate to us what is the nature of this academy, what is involved? Are there personnel involved? What is the nature and the function of the academy, in brief? Not the Minister of Finance, eh.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: As it says there, the Trinidad and Tobago Police Academy. It is a training academy, so it is used for the developmental training and promotional training for members of the police service.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Is that the academy that looks to train recruits and move them on to become full police officers?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: It is all part of that training cycle. It moves from recruit all the way up.

Dr. Gopeesingh: And could you indicate how many personnel you have within that department of the police academy?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: I will have to provide you with that at a later stage.

Dr. T. Gopeesingh: And could you give us the rankings of the personnel involved in the training?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: There will be various levels of training. What do you want? All the levels of training?

Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Yes, well the number of officers with the various levels of training in that academy.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: I want to be clear as to what you are asking, so that I can provide you with the necessary answers.

Dr. Gopeesingh: You may have different personnel from a higher level to a lower level. Would you be able to give us the various areas and how many personnel involved? And while I am on that, could I ask you now, the police

academy at the moment, how many recruits do they train on a yearly basis as far as you are aware?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: It changes because the batches—you do not get the same size of batch every time you recruit, so it is different.

Dr. T. Gopeesingh: Let us say for 2017. How much—

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: What do you want? For 2017, how many batches of recruits were trained and how many people passed through the academy? That is what you want to find out?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Yes, I would get an understanding.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: That will be provided to you.

Mr. Chairman: Will be provided, Member.

Mr. Lee: Thank you, Chair. To the Minister: where is the location of the Trinidad and Tobago Police Academy?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: In the Police Barracks, St. James.

Mr. Lee: The allocation increase of \$2 million, in this academy, do they have a shooting range?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: In the Academy? No, no, they do not have a shooting range in the Academy.

Mr. Lee: And the \$2 million, what would it be used for?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Training.

Mr. Lee: An allocation increase of \$2 million?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: That is to deal with training, the training programme in the police service for 2018.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, we will now move on to the *Draft Estimates of the Development Programme*, Sub-Head 09, Development Programme; Consolidated Fund, page 142 of the Development Programme booklet. I recognize the Member for Naparima.

Mr. Charles: Item 001, Improvement Works to Police Stations on page 142. I am seeing an estimate of \$1.5 million. Given the challenges we face with Government buildings and the maintenance and rapid deterioration, is this adequate?

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Mr. Chairman: Mr. Minister?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: When you say is it adequate, I am not so sure how to answer that question, but what is provided—

Mr. Charles: Meaning, will this keep the police stations in a functional position? Because normally they say it is 10 per cent of the asset to be used annually for upkeep and maintenance.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: The allocation is consistent. If you look at the 2017 allocation, same, it is \$1.5 million. The same as 2018.

Mr. Karim: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Hon. Minister, line Item 022, Upgrade of the Police Hospital, an allocation of \$500,000. Could you give us some details of this allocation, please? Where is that facility going to be?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: That facility is at the St. James Barracks.

Mr. Karim: And what is expected of it?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: The Police Hospital treats police officers, retirees and recruits.

Mr. Karim: This is a new initiative?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: No, it is a question of upgrading the hospital right now.

Mr. Karim: So, the hospital exists?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: It exists for quite some time.

Mr. Karim: So it is just an allocation to upgrade it?

Mr. Chairman: No, Member for Oropouche East, hold on. Member for Chaguanas East.

Mr. Karim: Line Item 038, Establishment of new Facilities for Traffic and Highway Patrol Branch. Could you tell us where these new facilities are going to be relocated?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: We are, in fact, exploring different areas right now to locate that facility.

Mr. Karim: Is the current facility still located at the Freeport Police Station?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: At the?

Mr. Karim: The current facility, the highway patrol, is it located at one of the locations at the Freeport Police Station?

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Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: It is, in fact, located in many locations including Freeport right now. So we are looking at a facility now to establish a new facility.

Mr. Karim: I have more, but afterwards.

Mr. Chairman: I recognize the Member for Oropouche East.

Dr. Moonilal: Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Chairman. Just about two or three questions in the same area. Upgrade of Police Administration Building, line Item 012, page 142. I am looking at the column 2018 estimates—you are with me?—\$1,500,000. Now, Upgrade of Police Administration Building, could we either now or at some other time soon get an assessment of what is this money for in 2018? What type of upgrade you estimate will cost, more or less, \$1.5 million and which Police Administration Buildings that you are going—is there a scope of work already in place? To me, it looks like a very small sum for upgrading administration buildings.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: There is one Police Administration Building at the corner of Sackville Street and Edward Street.

Dr. Moonilal: So this is a typographical error, “Buildings”?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Yeah.

Dr. Moonilal: Okay, sure. So is the Police Administration Building—

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: At the corner of Sackville Street—

Dr. Moonilal: And what do you plan to do with the \$1.5 million in the coming fiscal?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: We plan to do works on the third floor and the fourth floor of that building.

Dr. Moonilal: Okay. The next matter is—

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon:—Finance and Accounts and the Human Resource.

Dr. Moonilal: So it is one building you are talking about.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: That is correct.

Dr. Moonilal: Well, fine. I saw “buildings” there I wanted to just clarify.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: No. you saw “building”—

Dr. Moonilal: Administration buildings?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Sorry, it is building.

Dr. Moonilal: Yes, so you just take note of that. 022, Upgrade of the Police Hospital, if we could get something in writing and not an extempo response, but something in writing—

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: You did not get an extempo response, you got a definite response that the building—.

Dr. Moonilal: If we can get a more comprehensive definite response.

Mr. Imbert: What is the question?

Dr. Moonilal: But, Mr. Chairman, I am engaging the hon. Minister of National Security.

Mr. Chairman: Members. Listen, Members, one second, please. According to the procedure, each member has five minutes in order to make a comment and then get into the question. As the Chairman, I will decide as we go forward. Right? So, Member, kindly proceed and come to your question. .

Dr. Moonilal: Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Chairman. I forgot we have all of five minutes. I will take my time.

Mr. Chairman: Member, proceed.

Dr. Moonilal: The question is, on this matter of upgrade of the Police Hospital, if the Minister can tell us either now or in writing, a note to us, as to where the hospital is? How long has the hospital been in existence? What is currently done there? What will be done with this \$500,000 estimate for the Police Hospital? Because what I am seeing is over 2016/17 both the estimate and revised estimates for 2017, there is no expenditure there, but for 2018, there is an estimate. There is no explanation in the appropriate column, so it suggests to me that there is something that was not happening or not being done. So, you can tell us what is exactly there. I could not help but notice the Member for St. Joseph's concern as well on the Police Hospital when we heard it, an assessment of that.

Mr. Chairman: Member, let us get the question now, please.

Dr. Moonilal: So the question is please tell us either now or in writing, the work of this Police Hospital and what you intend to do with the \$500,000 being provided? Could I go to my next question?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: The Police Hospital has been there, in fact, from since colonial times. It has always been a hospital. When you say a hospital, it is not like the Port of Spain General Hospital, a medical facility that treats with officers and, therefore, that treats with officers, retirees, recruits and other authorized service personnel. It is a facility that is most relied upon by serving recruits and people within the barracks and other police officers. The Police Hospital is located at the St. James Barracks Compound and it has always been there from time immemorial. It has always been there.

Dr. Moonilal: Could you indicate why there was no allocation for it at all over the last two years?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Not may be, over the last five or so years, it might not have been, but there is a need right now to do an upgrade.

Dr. Moonilal: The five years are not before us.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: There is need to do an upgrade now, hence the reason why money is allocated now to treat with the issue. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Chairman: Next question, Member for Oropouche East.

Dr. Moonilal: My next five minutes revolve around 038. One of the facilities here, Minister, you might be aware, is the Debe facility in the constituency of Oropouche East that is in need of some measure of repair and refurbishment.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: 038 you said?

Dr. Moonilal: 038. I notice here that you have your line Item, which is a line Item, Establishment of New Facilities for Traffic and Highway Patrol Branch.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: That is correct.

Dr. Moonilal: Now, if this is a line Item is it every year you are looking for new facilities? The point I am making is that is there an intention to remove the Traffic Branch from the Debe area so that we can go to something much better than that because the refurbishment that is required, I put it to you, for that one centre, is in excess of what is budgeted.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: There is a plan, as I mentioned a while ago, to establish a new facility for the Highway Patrol. Right now, it is scattered across various police stations.

Dr. Moonilal: Would the Minister be prepared to share that plan with us?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Not right now.

Dr. Moonilal: Okay. Thank you.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Chair. I have several questions, Minister. The first one—

Mr. Chairman: Line Item.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: The first one is line Item 001, Improvement Works to Police Stations, I just want to know if any works have been identified for Manzanilla. You do not have to give it to me now. You know, just to ask that question.

Mr. Chairman: Next one, please.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: The second one, line Item 22, sorry 25, Upgrade of the Police Training Academy, I notice there is no allocation. I was wondering if the current facility is adequate in light of the fact that there are new crimes coming up—you have cybercrime and so forth—and if the current facility is adequate hence the reason there is no allocation.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: There are separate units dealing with cyber security and so on. They are housed differently. And your first question, under consideration.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Under consideration?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Yeah.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Line Item 048, Establishment of the Juvenile Booking Stations, that is on page 143. Will these booking stations be located within the current police stations or will they be entirely new entities, new and separate infrastructure?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: They are already established in several police stations throughout Trinidad and Tobago pursuant to legislation.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: All right. And will they be operationalized according to guidelines mandated by the Children's Authority?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: They are already operationalized.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Okay.

Mr. Chairman: I recognize the Member for Princes Town.

Mr. Padarath: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair. Hon. Minister, line Item 051, Supplemental Works—Phase I Police Stations.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: 051 you said?

Mr. Chairman: 051, page 143.

Mr. Padarath: They are identified as new projects, the Supplemental Works—Phase I Police Stations. Could you indicate whether or not or which stations have been identified that will fall within this remit?

Mr. Chairman: Could that list be provided now, Sir, Mr. Minister?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: This will include, phase I, the new Piarco Police Station.

Mr. Chairman: The new Piarco Police Station.

Mr. Padarath: That is the only one that has been identified?

Mr. Chairman: That is right. That is what he said.

Mr. Padarath: Sure. And then, if you look at line Item 55, Establishment of Facilities for Divisional Command Centres, an estimate of \$1 million. Could you give us some background with respect to these Divisional Command Centres?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: The intention is to have command centres in all the Divisions. There are nine divisions in Trinidad and one in Tobago and, therefore, in order to give the divisional commanders the tools and the equipment to command and control the various divisions, there is an intention to place command centres within each division. And, of course, they will all be interconnected to the overarching command centres at Police Headquarters.

Mr. Padarath: So the reporting in terms of the synergy among them is to the Police Headquarters?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: It is just giving the divisional commanders some use in technology to give them command centres where they could see and hear and get a sense of what is happening in the various divisions. So they have these command centres in their divisions which really is what you call management by getting the kind of information required throughout the various divisions. So we are giving them the tools and equipment to do so, because remember we have already charged the divisional commanders with a certain amount of responsibility, now we are giving them some additional equipment to be in control of their divisions and, again, those are geographical divisions. Right?

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Mr. Charles: Purchase of Vehicles for Police Service, \$1.5 million allocated, which really boils down to about six vehicles. Are we to understand that those are replacement vehicles, additional vehicles?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: It is, in fact, new vehicles.

Mr. Charles: So, therefore, it is not replacement, new.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: New vehicles.

Mr. Charles: Okay. Item 041, Establishment of Police Youth Clubs.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: This is beyond what is in the recurrent expenditure, so there are new vehicles for 2018.

Mr. Charles: Okay.

Mr. Chairman: 041, now.

Mr. Charles: 041, Establishment of Police Youth Clubs and that is an excellent initiative in the police service, but I see \$500,000, half a million dollars, and I am just asking: are these for buildings? Are these for setting—what facilities mean in this context and, therefore, how will the \$500,000, half a million, be allocated?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: It is in fact, if you recall, the Member for Tabaquite mentioned there are buildings that require repairs, there are some buildings that require repairs, but there are also administrative things to do with the Police Youth Clubs. So there is a combination of things, including repairs to certain buildings that they are occupying and so on.

Mr. Karim: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair. Hon. Minister, with respect to 051, line Item, I recognize what you had answered just now, but can I ask for you to give us any update with respect to the commitment to construct the Enterprise Police Station?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: I cannot answer that under this line Item.

Mr. Karim: So is there any—so it is not at this time on any of your list? Let me ask the question properly for the records. Is the Enterprise Police Station down for any expenditure item in this new fiscal year?

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Chairman, what line Item is that? Where are you?

Mr. Chairman: Member, you identified, line Item 051.

Mr. Karim: I saw new projects.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: You saw new phase police station.

Mr. Imbert: You were told this is Piarco.

Mr. Karim: I know, he said that.

Mr. Chairman: Minister? Minister? Right. On that line Item.

Mr. Karim: So there is no commitment at all with respect to the Enterprise Police Station?

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Chairman—

Mr. Chairman: On that line Item. Minister?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Mr. Chairman that Enterprise Police Station does not come under new phase I police stations.

Mr. Imbert: He answered him twice.

Mr. Karim: Can I therefore ask with respect to line Item 047—

Mr. Chairman: 07?

Mr. Karim: 047, Purchase of Equipment, if you can tell us, what is involved in this expenditure of \$4.5 million?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: It includes public order equipment such as canister grenades, projectiles, water cannon and so on. There are a number of different equipment, what you call public order equipment. I can go down the whole list for you, but I do not think—public order equipment, you understand what that means.

Mr. Karim: I do not want you to go into the whole list. I am just asking to give us some sense globally as to what is involved.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: It also includes mobile tracking units and so on.

Mr. Karim: Mobile meaning as mobile phone also.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Tracking system.

Mr. Karim: Okay. I understand what you said.

Mr. Chairman: Member for Couva South, I now recognize you.

Mr. Indarsingh: Thank you, Chairman. My colleague dealt with 055, but I just want to get a little insight into 029, Refurbishment of Riverside Plaza. In 2016 there was an actual of \$4,998,157—

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: What page is that?

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Mr. Chairman: We are on page 142, 029, Refurbishment of Riverside Plaza. We are on the same item.

Mr. Indarsingh:—in 2017, \$5 million and then 2018, \$3,600,000. Could the Minister give us an idea of what is happening at Riverside Plaza and when the refurbishment will come to an end?

Mr. Chairman: Minister?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Riverside Plaza is being upgraded to deal with different kinds of entities the police service has at Riverside Plaza. So the upgrade is there. We have to provide the kind of environment for them to do their job effectively and efficiently. So it is an ongoing process. I cannot tell you when it will be completed. We are creating the environment so that they can do their job effectively and efficiently since they occupy Riverside Plaza.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thanks, Deputy Chair. I have a couple questions. The first one, line Item 046, Purchase of Vehicles, I just want to know if Cumuto Police Station will be getting a new vehicle, Sir?

Mr. Chairman: Member, that question was asked and he identified it for the purchase of vehicles and did not go on to specify where the vehicles will be allocated.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: And that is why I am asking if he can specify?

Mr. Chairman: Mr. Minister, will you be able to say where the vehicles will be allocated?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: No.

Mr. Chairman: Next question, please.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Line Item 050, I notice there is an expansion of facilities for homicide in Cumuto and I would like to find out from the Minister—I am happy to hear it and I just want to know how will the expansion of these facilities impact on the increase in crime? And, finally, I asked this question but I did not get an answer, and that is line Item 048. I am asking again, are the Juvenile Booking Stations working within the guidelines mandated by the Children's Authority?

1.25 p.m.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Yes, they are. They are created by us by law so they must work within the guidelines created by the Children's Authority.

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Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: They are not, but thank you. Thank you.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: And the Homicide, East—Cumuto is developing the facilities there.

Mr. Imbert: Mr. Chairman, just on 046, I did not raise this matter before not knowing that there would be multiple returns to this Head, but Members should know that this \$1.5 million is not the only sum allocated for the purchase of vehicles for the police. In recurrent, there is a sum of \$14 million which has to be added to this, okay.

Mr. Chairman: Thank for the clarification. Member for Caroni Central.

Dr. Tewarie: Yes, Chair, two questions, one on 051 and another on 055. On 051, which has to do with supplemental works at the police station the Minister identified as Piarco, I just wanted to—that is a new police station, it was perhaps opened, I “doh” know, maybe two years ago, and I just wanted to know what was the nature of this supplemental works.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: The supply and installation of flag poles, the replacement of locking devices, paving works, and so on, yeah. At all, the paving works, and so on, are at eight new phase one police stations, right. All right, let me break it down for you: supply, installation of flag poles and replacement of locking devices at the eight phase one new stations. The flag poles were not—

Dr. Tewarie: So it is not just one station.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: No, not just one. All right. And the paving works at Piarco.

Dr. Tewarie: Okay. And 055, this is just for my understanding, if you can help me to clarify. There are nine divisions in the country—

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: That is correct.

Dr. Tewarie:—and each division has a person in command, a senior police officer, and there are a number of stations, but that commander is at one particular station. When you say, establishment of facilities for divisional command centres—I know you said it is support equipment, and so on, do you mean that at the station where the commander is stationed there would be support elements that would help that commander to be more in command of the stations around him or her?

Mr. Chairman: Minister.

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Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Now in the command centres, in some instances, it may not be the station that he is located, all right, because in some areas you have a physical command centre, in some areas it would be where he is located. But what it is, it is giving him that sense of presence, that area, so he has the information, the command and control element, whether information flow, the CCTV, the cameras, so he can understand and see what is happening throughout his division. So we are giving him those tools and equipment so to do. So it is a command centre within the division that gives the divisional commander—

Dr. Tewarie: So it is information and deployment capabilities, is that what it is?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Exactly. He has the information to deploy. He has the information to treat with, and if need be he can also bump it up or across, or sideways, as the case may be, because they are all interlocking.

Dr. Tewarie: But it could be in any location but accessible to the commander, is that what you are saying?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Definitely.

Mr. Chairman: Member for Chaguanas West.

Mr. Singh: Mr. Chairman, my question was asked by my colleague.

Mr. Chairman: Great. Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Could we get an appreciation, line Item 001, of how many police stations have been identified for improvement work, and the follow up to that.

Mr. Chairman: Member.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Yes.

Mr. Chairman: Member, that question was asked already and an answer was given.

Dr. Gopeesingh: No. I said how many have been identified for improvement work.

Mr. Chairman: Yes. So I will need to move on. Member for Tabaquite. Members, in the interest of time we need to ensure that we get through the items identified today. Member for Tabaquite.

Dr. Rambachan: Two questions—

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Mr. Chairman: Line Item?

Dr. Rambachan: Line Item, together 27, 28, and 31, it has to do with canine facilities. I considered that the use of dogs—[*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Chairman: Hold on. Member for Couva South, are you saying something?

Mr. Indarsingh: I was just asking—something.

Mr. Chairman: No, Member, and you see this is the same reason why we have duplication of questions and the Ministers having to clarify certain things. So let us listen, please. Member for Tabaquite.

Dr. Rambachan: Items 27, 28 and 31, I am a firm believer that the use of dogs is very important in the fight against crime, particularly at the airports and sea ports, and so on, with respect to drug interdiction, and what have you. However, I find it very strange that the establishment of canine facilities in Caroni, which is a very important area, nothing in 2017, nothing in 2018. The establishment of canine facilities in Tobago, nothing spent in 2017, although \$1 million was allocated, nothing in 2018, and Tobago, as you know, has had several murders, and what have you. An expansion of the training facilities at the canine unit, Cumuto, \$517,000 spent in 2017, nothing allocated for 2018. I would like to ask two questions, why is it that there is this look, almost like de-emphasis on the canine facilities? And, secondly, how many dogs do we have now, and do we have a sense of what is the complement of dogs we need in the country?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: I can provide you with the complement of dogs at a later stage.

Dr. Rambachan: But why is it that we are not emphasizing more in terms of resources into what I consider to be a critical area in the fight against crime?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Well, we are. We are in fact at the stage right now where we are purchasing additional dogs, and we do a complement of dogs for various, different kinds of activities. They have been used quite effectively and we continue to use them.

Dr. Rambachan: You said you are about to purchase dogs, right?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Yes.

Dr. Rambachan: More dogs?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Yeah, that is correct, because we use dogs for drugs, for arms, for ammunition, different, different, different categories of dogs.

Dr. Rambachan: Yes. Would it be wise to ask you how many dogs do you intend to purchase?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: It is ongoing right now, but it is more in the area of 10 to 11 dogs.

Dr. Rambachan: Okay. Second question, I am all for the facilities for the Divisional Command Centres, Item 55, okay, but I want to ask a question. We have given facilities, we have given resources to the police service in very large quantities, to say the least, what kind of performance goals are set for the divisional commanders? And if they are set, do divisional commanders provide a strategic action plan as to how these goals are going to be achieved? And, thirdly, how often does the Commissioner of Police himself analyse the performance or appraise the performance? How regular is that done of the divisional commanders and with what kinds of the outcomes of those performance measures and appraisals?

Mr. Chairman: Mr. Minister.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: The Commissioner of Police has his meeting with the divisional commanders every week, and during those meetings the divisional commanders are asked to respond, to state in terms of performance of the various divisions.

Dr. Rambachan: But, Mr. Minister, I go back to my basic question, are performance goals quantified in cases where they can become quantified, because you will have quantifiable and non-quantifiable? Are they quantified for the divisional commanders? And can we—I do not expect you to show me, but the question is, can someone see evidence that there is in writing a strategic action plan to deal with the achievement of these goals?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Yes, there is. The police have, in fact, based on their strategic plan, done an operational plan throughout the length and breadth of Trinidad and Tobago, and there are measurables, and there are evaluating criteria that the Police Commissioner use that he can report in any particular year.

Dr. Rambachan: So then I have the third question, the police keep reporting in the statistics that there has been a decline in serious crimes—I have no problem with that. That is the police statistics. My belief is a lot of people not reporting crimes at all again, but I want to ask—

Mr. Chairman: Member for Tabaguite, one sec, now I am giving you a little leeway, right, the line Item really speaks to Facilities. Now, based on the

Minister's answer, I will say I would give you a little leeway. Let this be the last question along that line, because the line Item is on facilities, but, as a result, of the answer given by the Minister you are able to expound on the question you are now asking. So, go ahead.

Dr. Rambachan: Well my question might not be a very palatable question, because it was going to ask, despite all of this, and despite what the Minister and Police Commissioner confirms that is being done with performance goals, why is the detection rate so abysmally low?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: The detection rate is not low right now. In place and in terms of if you do a historical, it is 31 per cent. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Chairman: Minister of Finance, hold on, hold on, hold on, hold on. Right. Minister of Finance, you need to clarify something that the Minister said?

Mr. Imbert: No, I would like to ask a general question. If we are dealing on this line Item—

Mr. Chairman: Mr. Minister, I am moving on. We are moving on now.

Mr. Imbert: From this line Item?

Mr. Chairman: We are moving on. Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services, page 144. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla. [*Crosstalk*]

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Deputy. Line Item, Hon. Minister, 001, the Development of a Computer System for the Police Service. Will this system be utilized to record each request that would come from citizens, and particularly businessmen for licences, for firearms, so you would have proper record?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Sorry, I did not hear, repeat that question, please.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: For the development, 001, of a computer system for the police service, will this computerized system allow for persons who make requests for licences to own a firearm? Will this computerized system allow for such requests so you can have a system whereby it can be recorded, and therefore persons can follow along as to where their application has reached?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: The intention is to computerize almost all the transaction businesses within the police service at the end of the day. I cannot tell you what stage the firearm has reached, but the intention is to computerize all the data collections, and so on.

Mr. Chairman: Member for Caroni East.

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Dr. Gopeesingh: Line Item 003, Transformation of the Police Service, could you just briefly indicate some of the areas that you have been doing and what you would want to continue to do in your transformation process?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: The transformation has to do with increase in terms of community relations, also institutional development, and also with respect to issues pertinent to the police band, issues pertinent to the police youth club. So those are some of the areas in terms of transformation that the Commissioner is targeting right now in a general sense.

Dr. Gopeesingh: You have a unit itself for transformation?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: A transformation unit. There is a team, a transformation team that operates based on the objectives.

Dr. Gopeesingh: And the direction and policy of that transformation team is established by whom, the hierarchy of the police service?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: By the Police Commissioner and his team, they sat together and developed—they have a strategic plan, and following out from that plan you have the transformation taking place.

Dr. Gopeesingh: All right. Okay.

Mr. Chairman: Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Deputy Chair. Hon. Minister, same line Item 003, I mean, a significant portion of the police officers are held by very fine officers, does the transformation of the police service include removing the criminal element that tarnishes the entire police service? Will it include that?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Well, in fact, we remove criminal elements from any jurisdiction, or any part, whether the police service or otherwise. There would always be an attempt to move criminal elements from any area of operations, whether in the police service, whether in politics, or otherwise.

Mr. Chairman: Infrastructure Development Fund, page 242; Item 004, Social Infrastructure, page 242.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 64 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Minister. Thank you, Commissioner of Police, and other members of your technical hierarchy. Thanks for coming.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, we will now proceed to Head 65, the Ministry of Foreign and Caricom Affairs. Welcome, Mr. Minister, Senator. Welcome to your Permanent Secretary, and also to the other members of your hierarchy, the technocrats at the Ministry of Foreign and Caricom Affairs.

Head 65: Ministry of Foreign and Caricom Affairs, \$267,972,000

Mr. Chairman: I will now invite the Minister of Foreign and Caricom Affairs to make a brief opening statement not exceeding five minutes. Over to you, Mr. Minister.

Hon. Moses: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Against the backdrop of a dynamic regional and global environment, and unprecedented natural disasters affecting our Caribbean community, the focus of the Ministry's mandate over the past year has remained the ongoing management of this country's relations with other states and with the international entities, the provision of political and consular services, and functioning as the main interlocutor that generally guides and executes Trinidad and Tobago's foreign policy. These activities of the Ministry of Foreign and Caricom Affairs are operationalized through the activities of the Ministry's staff at headquarters, its network of 19 missions, and its honorary consulates.

Mr. Chairman, in 2017 the Ministry continues its thrust towards the realigning of its operations to ensure consistency with Government's policy objectives as highlighted in the official policy framework. In this regard, in the area of trade and export promotion, the Ministry and many of its missions, partnered with the Ministry of Trade and Industry, ExportTT, InvestTT, the Chambers of Commerce and other business groups to strengthen our economic diplomacy, cognizant of the fact that trade continues to be an important drive of economic growth, poverty reduction and sustainable development. Accordingly, the Ministry has supported trade and energy initiatives with Chile, Guatemala, El Salvador, Venezuela and Ghana, including the facilitation of partial scope trade agreements.

The Ministry's role as facilitator was also manifested in our support of security initiatives spearheaded by the Ministry of National Security. Further, it is to the credit of the Ministry's steadfast efforts, both here at headquarters and at our permanent mission to the United Nations in New York, and vigorous lobbying, notwithstanding our limited budget that Trinidad and Tobago realize the successful selection of one of its nationals to the commission on the limits of the continental shelf. Mr. Chairman, the Ministry also facilitated official visits by senior officials to various jurisdictions. These included visits by the hon. Prime

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Minister, the Speaker and Deputy Speaker of this honourable House, and Ministers of Government.

In view of the many natural disasters that have occurred in this year, the Ministry has worked assiduously with its diasporic networks to maintain contact with nationals in affected territories in order to provide assistance where it is needed. Following the passage of Hurricane Irma, followed by Hurricane Maria, the Ministry partnered with the Ministry of National Security and its branches, such as the coast guard and the air guard, the Office for Disaster Preparedness, Immigration Division, National Helicopter Services and Caribbean Airlines to efficiently and effectively facilitate the provision of assistance for our Caribbean neighbours, as well as to render assistance to our nationals.

Mr. Chairman, these unfortunate incidents have provided an opportunity for citizens to appreciate how critical it is to utilize our registration system for our nationals abroad which was fully launched in this year, 2017. The system sets a new standard for our consular services by allowing nationals who are abroad or going abroad to register the details of their stay online. The Ministry can then use this information to contact or provide assistance to nationals who may be in a jurisdiction where a crisis may occur. Conscious of the country's current economic challenges, Mr. Chairman, and the need to be financially prudent, yet focused on its mandate, the Ministry of Foreign and Caricom Affairs is in the final stages of its Voice Over Internet Protocol project, which would enhance the connectivity between headquarters and the missions. The project has already yielded crucial cost reductions and has also enhanced the efficacy of the Ministry's overall communication and strategy network.

Mr. Chairman, in closing, I wish to underscore that the Ministry remains steadfast in its commitment to the objectives of securing Trinidad and Tobago's interest and achieving its goal in the regional and international environment. The Ministry of Foreign and Caricom Affairs will seek to continue to strategically direct its work such that the objectives of Vision 2030 are realized and can redound to the benefit of the people of our dear republic, Trinidad and Tobago. I thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

Question proposed: That Head 65 stand part of the Schedule.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, the sum of \$267,972 for Head 65, Ministry of Foreign and Caricom Affairs is comprised of monies proposed for expenditure under the following Sub-Heads, and Items to be found in the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure* and the *Draft Estimates of the Development Programme*.

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We now proceed to consider the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure*, and we go to Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure, page 338; Item 001, General Administration, and I recognize the Member for Tabaquite, page 338.

Dr. Rambachan: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, a very simple question, under Item 01, Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance, we have said over and over that there have been agreements established for the people who work in the Ministries, and what have you, but in 2017 the salaries and cost of living amounted to \$19 million, and in 2018 it is also stated as \$19 million, is it that we have not catered for the increases in line with what the agreements with the unions have established?

Mr. Chairman: Minister.

Hon. Moses: Mr. Chairman—

Mr. Chairman: Proceed.

Hon. Moses: Many thanks. I am not fully seized of the thrust of the question, but, dare I say, within the current constraints—and within the current constraints and the agreement which was referenced, the figure in our view is appropriate.

Dr. Rambachan: But does this mean that you are going to have a same complement of workers, given that you will have an interest in the bulk of the salaries to be paid with the increase according to the agreement? Or is it that you are going to be shedding members of the workforce, or not renewing contracts, or what have you, or what? What is going to happen here? Is your complement of staff going to be decreased to accommodate the very same amount? You see, I have been making the point—

Mr. Chairman: Member, I think we got the question, right, complement of staff in terms of decreases. Mr. Minister.

Hon. Moses: Mr. Chairman, a while ago I mentioned my uncertainty relative to agreement; there is no outstanding agreement as far as I am aware, so I am unable to respond as—

Dr. Rambachan: But you do have three-year agreements, and every year there is an increase to be applied, but if you tell me \$19 million in 2017, the same \$19 million, obviously you are not explaining about whether there is a 4 per cent increase to be included in that, or what have you, that is all I am asking.

Mr. Chairman: Well, the Minister said that there is no outstanding agreement.

Dr. Rambachan: We know there might be no outstanding agreement, but there are agreements that have been reached for which conditions have to be implemented, and it seems to me that this does not take care of what has to be implemented, unless the Minister of Finance can advise.

Mr. Chairman: Any addition to that with your statement, Mr. Minister?

Hon. Moses: Mr. Chairman, I think we are operating outside of the thrust of that question.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, fine. Member for Naparima.

Mr. Charles: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Could the Minister tell us, with respect to 01, what is the complement of staff to which this is applicable? And how many vacancies are there at the professional level, and I am speaking here of the IROs and FSOs?

Mr. Chairman: Line Item 04, Mr. Minister.

Hon. Moses: Mr. Chairman, with your permission, I am pleased to detail that there is a total of 270 persons in the permanent category, 134 of such posts are filled. There are 39 without bodies and 97 with bodies, bringing it to a total of 270 contract positions, 46 filled of a total of 70. The total, permanent and contract, comes to a total of 340, of which 180 are filled. I perhaps should add for further information, not to pre-empt any further questions, that there has been no meaningful change in the level of contract employees at the Ministry of Foreign and Caricom Affairs and, indeed, the subsidiary, the missions abroad.

Mr. Chairman: Member for Princes Town—you have a subsequent question, Member for Naparima? Okay, so, Member for Naparima.

Mr. Charles: I just want to find out, could the Minister give us an idea when these vacant posts, and I take it that we are talking about 30 or more—sorry, 60—160—when these vacant posts will be filled?

Mr. Chairman: Mr. Minister.

Hon. Moses: Which posts, 160, you said, the number, please, through you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: You need to be more specific, Member for Naparima.

Mr. Charles: Yes, he said there are 270 permanent posts and 134 filled, right, that is my understanding, and that leaves about 130 unfilled vacancies—136 vacancies, your information—

Hon. Moses: Mr. Chairman, the details made available a short while ago were that 39 of these positions are without bodies and 97 are with bodies.

Mr. Chairman: So the 39, could you identify them? Is it possible to?

Hon. Moses: The 39 that are without bodies operating within the constraints and the need for prioritization and financial management of the limited resources we have, we are involved in recruiting some of these positions, but not to the extent as this number would indicate, meaning the number 39.

Mr. Chairman: Member for Princes Town.

Mr. Padarath: Mr. Deputy Chairman, through you to the hon. Minister. Minister, in light of what you have just said, just a follow-up with respect to line Item 01, can you indicate with respect to our diplomatic missions abroad, how many of our diplomatic missions are without rank of ambassador, consul generals and/or high commissioners?

Mr. Chairman: Mr. Minister.

1.55 p.m.

Hon. Moses: Mr. Chairman, I can make this information available in writing. Dare I say that, to a large extent, we are succeeding in placing competent persons with the requisite qualifications and experience in our missions, but I certainly will be delighted to provide the information in writing.

Mr. Chairman: Additional question?

Mr. Padarath: Yes, Mr. Chairman. Also, Minister, in light of your willingness to provide that information, if you could also indicate at this stage which ones we are currently seeking agrément for?

Mr. Chairman: Seeking what?

Mr. Padarath: Agrément.

Hon. Member: What?

Mr. Padarath: It is a diplomatic term, Mr. Chairman—agrément. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Chairman: Members.

Hon. Moses: Mr. Chairman, through you, that question is posited on my revealing details that should ultimately prove less than convenient, because we are treating with other countries, international organizations and we cannot second

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guess what the responses—if indeed there are outstanding responses to requests for agrément as the hon. Member would have asked.

Dr. Rambachan: Mr. Chairman, does the hon. Minister not realize that you could google and find out where we have ambassadors and where we do not have ambassadors and consulate generals? The Minister is saying, with due respect, that this is highly confidential, he cannot say where we have and do not have. If you google—but forget that.

Hon. Moses: Mr. Chairman, perhaps to alleviate any fears and to demonstrate how earnest and forthright I am, perhaps I can enlighten the hon. Member by informing this House that when requests for agrément are made to foreign countries, it is in the purview of such countries to respond as they see fit. My informing or providing information to which countries such as would have been directed, I think it is not appropriate given that it resides with the country to respond how they see fit. So if I indicate in this House to which countries we would have made such requests, it can be delicate for obvious reasons. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Minister.

Dr. Rambachan: Well yes, I am finished with that.

Mr. Chairman: Item 001.

Dr. Rambachan: I thought we moved to 002.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, Item 002, Overseas Missions, same page 338.

Dr. Rambachan: No. 01. Mr. Minister, in the newspapers about two to two and a half months ago, it was reported that the local staff at the High Commission in India, they walked off their jobs and they were unwilling to work and what have you, due to the fact that they had not received salary increases for a number of years. If I recall the newspaper article correct, 10 years. Have we sorted out that problem and are those increases included in this Item here, Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance?

Hon. Moses: Certainly, I dealt with it. Mr. Chairman, I am not aware of members of staff, locally recruited or otherwise, at our High Commission in India walking off the job, and while I am wary to respond to reports cited in newspapers, I can tell you that we do not have such a problem. Thank you.

Mr. Chairman: Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla, and then I will go to the Member for Caroni East.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Hon. Minister, line Item 01, Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance for Overseas Missions. How does the Minister cope with the shortage of foreign exchange and payment to our members of staff who are overseas? And how does this figure that is quoted here, in fact, the amount allocated, provide for fluctuations in the rate of exchange?

Mr. Chairman: Minister, are you in a position to—

Hon. Moses: I can respond. We are operating in a prudent way. Our financial management of the system is such that we are doing reasonably well, given that we have included any such concerns in our outlay of foreign currency to cover the less than optimal staffing of our establishment across the board.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Minister, there have been some reports of former senior personnel of the various missions overseas who have not received their allowances that were supposed to be paid to them.

Mr. Chairman: Remember we have to zero in to line Item also, Member.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Yes, the line Item is 04. Does that line Item include consideration for the payment of these allowances which have been owing to these former heads of missions?

Hon. Moses: 04 contemplates payment with regard to foreign service and related allowances payable to heads of mission and home-based staff at our missions abroad.

Mr. Chairman: And no problems anticipated, according to the Member?

Hon. Moses: So the answer is yes. It is a composite question, I just would have responded fully to one part of the question at least. Sometimes it becomes so convoluted when there is a strong and [*Laughter*] long narrative that the choice—

Dr. Gopeesingh: Can I shorten it, hon. Minister?

Hon. Moses:—is such that I provide answers as it comes to me. But I can also answer the other part, with your permission.

Mr. Chairman: Sure.

Hon. Moses: I take it that reference—and I am being liberal here, I hope not in a misplaced way—that the allowances referred to or outstanding payments with respect to payment in lieu of earned vacation leave. My recall is that in some of the individuals, substantial overpayments would have been made to them and there are also some, perhaps, irregularities that we are trying to resolve against the

backdrop, of course, of prioritization and the stringency attached to our use of resources. Thank you.

Dr. Gopeesingh: So just a final one.

Mr. Chairman: Member for Caroni East, a follow-up question?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Yes. So from your answer I gather that there is active consideration of the issue, yes?

Mr. Chairman: Active consideration of?

Dr. Gopeesingh: The issue of the non-payment to or allowances being owed to former heads of mission.

Hon. Moses: Mr. Chairman, we are cognizant and very attentive to all matters coming under the purview of the Ministry of Foreign and Caricom Affairs. Thank you.

Dr. Gopeesingh: All right. Thank you.

Dr. Rambachan: Chairman, a while ago the hon. Minister stated that he was unaware of any problems in India. I am going to ask, is the hon. Minister aware that there was an article in the *Express* of August 19th, entitled:

Envoy tackling pay woes at Trinidad and Tobago embassy in India—in which—High Commissioner to India, Dave Persad said that he had officially complained about the lack of response from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs over the salaries of workers at the Trinidad and Tobago Embassy.

And he did so by way of a release stating that he had met on July 14th during his vacation, with Minister Dennis Moses and Acting Permanent Secretary Jennifer Daniel to complain about the lack of response from the Ministry.

Mr. Chairman: And the question is?

Dr. Rambachan: Is he aware now about that meeting that Mr. Dave Persad had with him, over the position that the protests that the local staff staged on 7th, 8th, 10th and 11th of August in India?

Hon. Moses: Mr. Chairman, the representation made a while ago of what I actually said is patently otherwise. I did not say that there are no problems at our High Commission in India. Across the board with our missions, we have issues that come up from time to time relative to labour relations, staff member problems and so on, and we treat with them in a way befitting our concern for our staff members and within the strictures within which we operate.

Dr. Rambachan: Well, just one follow-up. Then, is the Minister in agreement or disagreement with Mr. Dave Persad, the High Commissioner, as he said that he was—

Mr. Chairman: Member, I will not entertain that question.

Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, page 339; Item 001, General Administration, pages 339 and 340.

Mr. Charles: Thank you. Item 63, Repatriation of Nationals and the figure, the estimate is only \$40,000. Given the fact that we have nationals, families right now in Iraq, and the cost of airfare would be much more than the family and the numbers they have indicated, there are 10 or 12 or so, is the \$40,000 in Item 63 adequate to repatriate our nationals or those expected—

Hon. Moses: I am just trying to locate repatriation.

Mr. Chairman: Line Item 63, 340, Repatriation.

Hon. Moses: 63, yes I have got it.

Mr. Charles: Is the \$40,000 adequate, given the numbers we are hearing about in countries like Iraq and Syria who are awaiting repatriation to Trinidad and Tobago, or does this speak to a different category of nationals abroad?

Hon. Moses: Mr. Chairman, this Item, Repatriation of Nationals, the allocated amount relates to provision to meet the cost of ad hoc requests, that is, to repatriate nationals from countries experiencing strife, war, national disasters and the like. Once again, with our fortunes as they are, this is the figure that we can afford.

Mr. Charles: The Government of Iraq is reported to have said that they are in contact with the Government of Trinidad and Tobago regarding the repatriation of citizens now being held. Has this discussion taken place and are we budgeting for a circumstance such as this?

Mr. Chairman: It is the same question put differently, Member for Naparima, or is it a different question?

Hon. Moses: Mr. Chairman, perhaps, I can by way of a response, inform this House that only but recently we would have made a commitment as a Government to repatriate the remains of two persons from St. Martin, who would have lost their lives in that unfortunate passage of the hurricane there, and it did in fact wipe out or completely exhaust the provision. So we try our best, and this is just but another attempt to see what we can do. Certainly during the course of the

year, should the exigencies or the demands are such, we would endeavour to see to what extent we can oblige in increasing the sum. Thank you.

Dr. Tewarie: Just a quick question on the same subject, 63. Minister, are there many requests by other countries for the repatriation of Trinidad and Tobago nationals who are in their country or is it limited to a small number, and what are those countries?

Hon. Moses: Mr. Chairman, through you, the answer is no.

Mr. Padarath: Mr. Chairman, to the hon. Minister, line Item 21, Repairs and Maintenance of Buildings, an increase of almost \$5.9 million. Could the hon. Minister indicate which overseas missions are earmarked for repairs and maintenance with respect to this allocation, and also whether or not there are any other missions that have been earmarked with respect to purchases of those facilities?

Hon. Moses: Are we on overseas missions? Where are we?

Mr. Chairman: We are on Overseas Missions, 002.

Hon. Moses: Yes.

Mr. Chairman: Line Item 21, Repairs and Maintenance of Buildings and the allocation is \$5.8 million, line Item 21.

Hon. Moses: Under Goods and Services, Repairs and Maintenance of Buildings—

Mr. Chairman: Yes, and he enquired about overseas missions, the possibility of any purchases or rental arrangements and so on.

Hon. Moses: The proposed allocation for this fiscal year of \$12 million, is that it?

Mr. Chairman: The estimates, but there is an increase of \$5.8 million, and you know the question.

Hon. Moses: The question, I will be much obliged if you can repeat the question.

Mr. Padarath: Sure. Minister, with respect to repairs and maintenance, under line Item 21, could you indicate which missions have been earmarked for utilization of this particular vote, and also if you can provide us with the information of whether or not any other missions or whether those where you have repairs and maintenance to the buildings are being earmarked for future prospects of purchase?

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Hon. Moses: Mr. Chairman, through you once more, this allocation is primarily focused on the Chancery at our High Commission in London.

Mr. Padarath: That entire allocation of \$12 million, you are saying, Minister, just to get you right, is for the London High Commission?

Hon. Moses: No, but in the main yes it is.

Mr. Padarath: The question really was, which ones in terms of which missions would these funds be utilized for. Now, you have indicated mainly for the London High Commission. If it is not in total, then there must be other missions that have been earmarked to utilize this particular vote. So separate and apart from London, which other ones are you looking at?

Hon. Moses: As required in a contingent fashion, but primarily, the allocation is for Chancery at our High Commission in London.

Mr. Padarath: And do you have an idea out of this allocation of \$12 million, how much would be utilized for that London High Commission?

Hon. Moses: Mr. Chairman, the response is no. We can take it for all intents and purposes that this figure is for refurbishment, maintenance of the Chancery at our High Commission in London.

Mr. Padarath: So it is \$12 million for London?

Hon. Moses: The response we can take it as yes. I would be more definite.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. On the same line Item, I just want to ask, in light of the fact with limited foreign exchange is this expenditure necessary at this time?

Hon. Moses: Perhaps by way of elucidation I can proffer, even at this stage, that the average annual figure is even more pronounced than that one. We are treating with an historical building, an old one, and, with your permission, perhaps I can give you a figure for the average. So we talking about \$15 million, \$13 million, \$16 million and \$23 million and \$16 million as of the fiscal years 2011, 2012 coming all the way to 2015, 2016. So it is an expensive enterprise and undertaking, and those are the figures, actual expenditure levels that would have been incurred relative to our Chancery High Commission in London.

[MRS. ANNISSETTE-GEORGE *in the Chair*]

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: Hon. Minister, line 23. What do these fees represent?

Hon. Moses: Line 23?

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: Yes.

Hon. Moses: Those would be related to fees for software licences.

Madam Chairman: Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, page 341; Item 001, General Administration; Item 002, Overseas Missions; Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies, page 342; Item 001, Regional Bodies; Item 002, Commonwealth Bodies; Item 003, United Nations Organizations; Item 007, Households; Item 009, Other Transfers; Item 010, Other Transfers Abroad, page 344.

Dr. Tewarie: 009, Ma'am.

Madam Chairman: Line Item?

Dr. Gopeesingh: 04. From what it seems here the National Reparations Committee is not funded for 2018. I just want the Minister to confirm that that is so and if he can explain why.

Madam Chairman: So, Member, the question is why it is not funded for 2018?

Dr. Tewarie: Yes.

Hon. Moses: Chair, initially this sum of \$500,000 was allocated towards the establishment of a secretariat, to cover costs associated with rental of office space, outfitting the office and payment of personnel. It has not materialized and in our changing circumstances it was deemed appropriate to utilize the funds elsewhere. Notwithstanding, we continue to persevere and endeavour to continue with that initiative.

Mr. Imbert: Madam Chairman, what the Budget's Division has told me is that the committee is not operational at this point in time. So I guess if it becomes operational during the year a transfer can be made.

Madam Chairman: Item 010, Transfers Abroad, page 344.

Mr. Lee: Thank you, Madam Chair. To the Minister, line Item 08, Contribution to Disaster Relief. 2017 we had an estimated budget of \$1.3 million,

and we did not spend anything, and then 2018 there is no allocation. What was the thinking behind estimating for it in 2017, and where that would have been applied to and why no such contribution or estimate for 2018?

Hon. Moses: There was no allocation in respect of 2017.

Mr. Lee: Yes, \$1.3 million; there was an allocation.

Hon. Moses: The revised figure was zero. Yes, the revised is zero.

Mr. Lee: What was the idea behind it in 2017, the Disaster Relief Fund?

Hon. Moses: The zero figure in 2017?

Mr. Imbert: I think we can investigate that for you and determine, Budgets is not able to tell me immediately, but I will find out for you.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Members, we will now move on to the *Draft Estimates of the Development Programme*. Sub-Head 09, Development Programme, Consolidated Fund, page 146; Item 005, Multisectoral and Other Services, pages 146 and 147.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, line Item 009, can you indicate what this policy is, and also 019 which is a new project, what do you hope to achieve by establishing this unit?

Madam Chairman: 09 and what is the other one, Member?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: 19, it looks as though they are interlinked hence the reason why I put them together.

Madam Chairman: You want to know what happened to 009?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: I would like to know what the policy is, the development of the policy, and the establishment of the National Diaspora Unit. It is a new project. What is the hope of the Ministry to achieve?

Hon. Moses: Chair, the policy is on diaspora. The sum expended thus far relates to the public education campaign, television ads and the like. And what comes out of a stakeholder engagement process, that would contribute towards the finalization of the policy and the unit would be the focal point of undertaking the work that comes out of this policy. The unit is a new project and that is why it comes as a separate project number, meaning 019. So that is the unit that will be charged with undertaking the recommendations that come out of the national policy on diaspora, and the outstanding element to complete that policy would be the stakeholder engagement exercises.

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Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Is this establishment working alongside this unit working alongside the Ministry of Tourism?

Hon. Moses: The answer is not in an overt way. Perhaps I can add that the Ministry of Planning and Development would be the instance concerned for collaboration with the Ministry of Foreign and Caricom Affairs in this instance.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: Madam Chairman, may I? This is a direct result of a manifesto undertaking. As you know, the manifesto is Government's policy. This is a direct result of that manifesto undertaking. In addition to that, the Economic Development Advisory Board has been working with us on developing this diaspora policy and the unit, and Vision 2030 also has this as one of its pillars. So this is all part of ensuring that connection with the diaspora. And the Ministry of Foreign and Caricom Affairs will be charged with the responsibility of engaging the diaspora.

Mr. Karim: Hon. Minister, with respect to line Item 058, I recall last year I had raised this matter with respect to the embassy. First I had indicated Saudi Arabia, but you had mentioned that the decision was to locate it in the United Arab Emirates. I notice in 2017 there was an allocation of \$1.5 million and nothing was utilized in 2017, and again a similar allocation for 2018. Might you be able to give us an update with respect to the establishment of this new embassy and trade office in the United Arab Emirates?

Hon. Moses: Certainly. There were some difficulties involved in establishing in an outright fashion with clarity the status of relations between Trinidad and Tobago and countries in that area. Such has been clarified and regularized and we are now in a position to actually enter to make an onsite visit with a view of establishing the embassy in the UAE and the subsidiary mission, the consulate in Dubai.

2.25 p.m.

Mr. Karim: Through you, Madam Chairman, do you have a projected date by which you may start some actual work on that location; and if you have a projected date, what might be the expected completion, based on your projection?

Hon. Moses: Chair, by way of added information, we are also involved in the establishment of a High Commission in Barbados and we have, in fact, undertaken an onsite visit and we have, in a rather detailed way, information that would allow us to open such a Mission. In a similar vein, such is the approach that would be taken in respect to the UAE.

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Mr. Karim: Madam Chair, I just wanted to get a clear idea as to, do you think it will commence in fiscal 2018?

Hon. Moses: Madam Chair, I can respond with a degree of certainty and precision which is being demanded, I am unable to fulfil such a request.

Madam Chairman: Infrastructure Development Fund, page 244, same book, Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services.

Hon. Members, the question is that the sum of \$267,972,000 for Head 65, Ministry of Foreign and Caricom Affairs stand part of the Schedule.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 65 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Madam Chairman: Thank you, hon. Minister, Madam PS and your other technocrats.

Head 75: Equal Opportunity Tribunal, \$2,570,600.

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

Hon. Imbert: Madam Chairman, the Equal Opportunity Tribunal is set up under the Equal Opportunity Act as a superior court of record to handle complaints with respect to discrimination and other matters relating to equal opportunities.

Question Proposed: That the sum of \$2,570,600 for Head 75, Equal Opportunity Tribunal stand part of the Schedule.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Members, the sum of \$2,570,600 for Head 75 Equal Opportunity Tribunal is comprised of moneys proposed for expenditure under the following Sub-Heads and Items to be found in the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure*. We now proceed to consider the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure*.

Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure, page 382; 001, General Administration, page 382. Member for Tabaquite.

Dr. Rambachan: I just wanted to know, Madam Chair, how many persons are involved in the Equal Opportunity Tribunal? How much staff?

Hon. Imbert: Twenty-five.

Dr. Rambachan: Twenty-five.

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Hon. Imbert: More or less.

Mr. Karim: More or less.

Hon. Imbert: That is a term of art, it means approximately.

Mr. Karim: Yeah. I know.

Hon. Imbert: Okay. As long as you know.

Madam Chairman: Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, page 382. Member for Tabaquite.

Dr. Rambachan: Does that include under Item 16 that 25 are those under Contract Employment?

Hon. Imbert: Yes.

Dr. Rambachan: What is the nature of the persons' qualifications or the persons who are employed under Contract Employment and what functions do they perform? [*Crosstalk*] You take over from the Minister of Finance now?

Hon. Imbert: Okay. Administrative and manipulative staff and some professionals, it is just a few.

Dr. Rambachan: I was looking for a line Item to ask how many cases are there before the tribunal, but I cannot find a line Item.

Hon. Imbert: Good. [*Laughter*] So we can move on.

Madam Chairman: Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, page 384; 001, General Administration, page 384.

Hon. Members, the question is that the sum of \$2,570,600 for Head 75, Equal Opportunity Tribunals stand part of the Schedule.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 75 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Madam Chairman: I thank you, representatives from the EOT. You all are discharged.

Head 48: Ministry of Trade and Industry, \$163,260,400.

Madam Chairman: I will now invite the Minister of Trade and Industry to make a brief opening statement for a maximum of five minutes. Minister.

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: Thank you, Madam Chair. The Ministry of Trade and Industry is responsible for leading and overseeing the implementation of government policy for business development, trade, investment and consumer empowerment. Our work is aligned to supporting the measures and targets defined in the Vision 2030 under Theme IV, Building Globally Competitive Businesses.

During fiscal 2017, the Ministry of Trade and Industry successfully executed a number of initiatives related to reforming the institutional environment for the ease of doing business; advancing the diversification agenda; growing exports and facilitating investments. And I will elaborate more on the Ministry's achievement during my contribution in the budget debate in the Senate.

Based on the *Draft Estimates of Expenditure* for the fiscal 2017/2018, the Ministry of Trade and Industry has been allocated TT \$113,414,760 for recurrent expenditure and \$50,200,000 has been allocated under the *Development Programme*. And with this allocation there are a number of goals that we will be working with. Goal one, support development of competitive businesses; goal two, to increase investments; goal three, to expand the exports; goal four, to enhance the protection and empowerment of consumers; and goal five, to transform the Ministry of Trade and Industry for enhanced service delivery and performance.

In addition, during fiscal 2018, the Ministry of Trade and Industry will continue to improve its efficiency and strengthen its institutional capacity with the focus on the development imperatives of good governance, value for money and service excellence. Thank you, Madam Chair.

Question proposed: That Head 48 stand part of the Schedule.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Members, the sum of \$163,260,400 for Head 48 the Ministry of Trade and Industry is comprised of moneys proposed for expenditure under the following Sub-Heads and Items to be found in the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure*, the *Draft Estimates of the Revenue and Expenditure Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies* and the *Tobago House of Assembly* and the *Draft Estimates of the Development Programme*.

We now proceed to consider the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Programme*. Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure, page 303; Item 001, General Administration, page 303. Member for Tabaquite.

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Dr. Rambachan: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Minister, happy Divali to you.

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: Shubh Divali to you as well.

Dr. Rambachan: Under Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance— [*Crosstalk*] That is very personal.

Hon. Member: Eh, eh!

Dr. Rambachan: Madam Minister, how do you measure under salaries, how do you measure the efficiency and effectiveness of your Ministry's performance to justify these salaries? In other words, do you feel that your Ministry is giving to this country value for money with respect to the expenditure of these salaries?

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: Yes.

Dr. Rambachan: And in your tenure for this year, for last year what measures can you elaborate to us that you have put in place that you say "I measured X, Y and Z"?

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: Well, as you know as with regard to staff and salaries and so on annually the staff would be assessed, and based on that I can have an idea of the individual—I am dealing with the line Item, so I am dealing with the salary per person, I can have an idea of the performance levels of the members of staff and weigh that against our achievements overall and the department's achievements as well.

Dr. Rambachan: Is the attraction of foreign investment to the country under your portfolio?

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: Yes, it is.

Dr. Rambachan: And if so, is that a measure that you have used to justify these salaries as to the value for money?

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: But these salaries that you are speaking to under 01—

Dr. Rambachan: General Administration.

Hon. Gopee-Scoon:—the salaries under 01 have to do with members of staff who are on the establishment. It has nothing to do with InvestTT or so.

Madam Chairman: Member for Caroni Central.

Dr. Tewarie: Okay. Just a couple of questions, Madam Chair. Item 08, Vacant Posts—Salaries, et cetera, I see that there is an allocation for that in 2018.

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Can you indicate what type of posts these are, in other words, what the people will come on to do when you hire them?

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: Okay. That kind of detail I will have to give you in writing, but these are provisions for appointments by the DPA.

Dr. Tewarie: No. No. I appreciate that. I just wanted to know what the—

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: The level of the detail you require I will have to furnish it to you in writing.

Dr. Tewarie: Okay. So you will provide in writing.

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: Yes.

Dr. Tewarie: And Item 14, Madam Chair—

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: Remuneration.

Dr. Tewarie: No. I just wanted to find out what were, in fact, the Cabinet appointed committees?

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: There is one committee under that, and that is the National Trade Facilitation Committee.

Dr. Tewarie: Trade facilitation?

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: That is right.

Dr. Tewarie: Okay.

Madam Chairman: Item 002, Weights and Measures Inspectorate, page 303. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, line Item 01, can you indicate how many positions are in this post for Weights and Measures, the Inspectorate, how many are vacant, and do they now have the requested qualifications—because I remember that sometime ago there was an issue with that?

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: That is right. And so you would know that weights and measures really now—all of the issues concerning weights and measures that is all now covered under the Metrology Act and issues related with that. So there are four officers that are still within the unit and two of these officers are due to retire in 2018, and the other two officers will retire in 2019.

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And as I said before, all of the functions are being subsumed by the TTBS in accordance with the Metrology Act. So, quite frankly, I do not think the full amount will be utilized.

Madam Chairman: Member for Oropouche West.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, what are really the current—

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: Would you tell me the line Item first, please?

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: Same Weights and Measures Inspectorate I am dealing with. So I just need to know, 002, what are the current functions of that inspectorate; and two, what tangible benefits have been accrued to the Ministry as a result of the work of those inspectors?

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: As I said to you, all of the functions under the Weights and Measures unit are now all subsumed under the TTBS the Trinidad and Tobago Bureau of Standards under the Metrology Act. So, in other words, all of this is being phased out.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: So prior to it being subsumed was there any tangible benefits?

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: You are asking me to report on a previous period.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: Okay.

Madam Chairman: Well, I am not going to allow that, I think the explanation we are getting from that is last year.

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: Yeah.

Madam Chairman: Yes. Okay. 003, Consumer Affairs Division, page 304; Item 004, Research and Planning, page 304. Member for Caroni Central.

Dr. Tewarie: Yes. I just wanted to ask, Chair, the division, Research and Planning, in terms of the Ministry of Trade and Industry, what generally is its focus?

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: Consumer affairs and consumer empowerment. So we will be researching new ways of empowering the consumer as well.

Dr. Tewarie: Okay. So it is doing the research to provide information to consumers—

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: That is right.

Dr. Tewarie:—to help them to make decisions?

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: Is right, consumer empowerment.

Madam Chairman: Items 005, Consumer Outreach and Protection Unit, page 304. Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Madam Minister, could you just give an appreciation of how many positions that are being paid for there? And an extension to the question is, are you—the Consumer Protection Unit, are you comfortable with, based on what is happening at a national level in terms of citizens needing the protection at all times in terms of consumer issues, are you comfortable with your unit, or is there a need for increased staffing to help more citizens?

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: Thank you. So with regard to the question as to the number of staff members, I am going to have to give that to you in writing. I do not remember the particular number. As to whether or not I feel that they are doing what is required having regard to the advancements in the world of consumer protection, I want to say we have done a complete review and overhaul of this department, and recommendations have been formalized, and it is at the level of the Cabinet at this time.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Do you foresee an expansion of it?

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: It may very well include some kind of expansion, but that will be addressed by the next fiscal. Let us, you know, as I said, it is a complete overhaul that we are looking at including new legislation.

Dr. Gopeesingh: I look forward to seeing that.

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: Thank you.

Madam Chairman: Member for Couva South.

Mr. Indarsingh: Thank you, Madam Chair. This unit, Minister, has the responsibility of monitoring VAT in the country in terms of the imposition or the re-imposition of VAT on 7,000 food items?

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: The consumer division does, in fact, look after the monitoring of prices. Prices in some areas will be plus VAT, in some supermarkets it will be plus VAT, some without VAT, but we do monitor prices and, as you know, this is displayed on the Ministry's website monthly and quarterly in the national newspapers. But monitoring is done every month and published.

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Mr. Imbert: I would just like to say, Madam Chairman, the monitoring of VAT payments is the responsibility of the Board of Inland Revenue.

Mr. Indarsingh: Yes, Mr. Minister of Finance, but I could remember the Minister of Trade and Industry indicating to the national community that she had established a hot line as it relates to taking calls from the national community in relation to the re-imposition of VAT and price gouging and so on, and that is why I am seeking to get some clarification from the Minister what has been the success rate of this particular unit in addressing the issue of price gouging and so on.

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: I have answered you already. Yeah.

Madam Chairman: Member for Oropouche West.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, how many complaints were made to this unit and how many were dealt with?

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: I will have to give you that in writing. All complaints received are dealt with, but I will give you the exact number in writing.

Madam Chairman: Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: It is okay. It was, more or less, answered—how effective is the unit?

Madam Chairman: Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, page 305; Item 001, General Administration, pages 305 to 306. Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.

Mr. Lee: Thank you, Madam Chair. To the Minister I have three questions, three line Items 08, Rent/Lease Office Accommodation, I see you are budgeting for \$1 million increase.

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: Where are you? Sorry.

Mr. Lee: 08, Rent/Lease Office Accommodation and Storage.

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: Yes.

Mr. Lee: You have budgeted for \$1 million increase to \$11 million. Could you state, what is the reason for that? Do you expect a rent increase wherever you are leasing presently? And could you provide a list of the rentals of the different places of the Ministry of Trade and Industry?

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: I could give you now.

Mr. Lee: Sure.

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Hon. Gopee-Scoon: Okay. Our total rental is really about \$11,734 million. The rent for September is outstanding for Nicholas Tower and the TTMA building, so that has to be paid in 2017/2018. To give you an idea of our rental spaces, Nicholas Tower where we have seven floors; the Trade zone; the Trinidad and Tobago Manufacturers' Association building which houses our trade licensing unit. Then we also rent car park spaces at Chacon Street for employees, Chacon storage, and also level 19 for Consumer Affairs Division when they came across from Legal Affairs division.

Mr. Lee: And my second question, I would like to tie in line Item 16, Contract Employment.

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: Line Item 16.

Mr. Lee: And line Item, Short-Term Employment, could you state how many people are employed in these two sub categories?

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: Okay. Under Contract Employment, line Item 16, you are saying? Right. Ninety-three persons in all and that includes 14 or so under the SEW division, but 38 of these 93 positions are vacant.

Mr. Lee: And the short term, 22?

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: Line Item 22 therefore, four persons in there, four persons on short-term contract.

Mr. Lee: Could we get a listing of their monthly income, please?

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: The four persons or the—

Mr. Lee: Yeah. On short term.

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: The short term?—sure.

Madam Chairman: Member for Caroni Central.

Dr. Tewarie: This is just follow-up question on the Contract Employment. I just want the Minister to confirm that this Contract Employment here refers to existing vacant posts in the Ministry. Did I hear you say that?

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: You are talking about the 93?

Dr. Tewarie: Yes.

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: Of course. Yes. In the Ministry across different divisions.

Madam Chairman: Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.

Mr. Lee: Thank you, Madam Chair. To the Minister in line Item 27, Official Overseas Travel.

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: 27, hold a sec.

Mr. Lee: 27, could you provide a listing of the travels throughout the last 12 months or so?

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: You would like to hear it now?

Mr. Lee: No. You could give us in writing.

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: Okay. Sure.

Madam Chairman: Okay. So Item 002, Weights and Measures Inspectorate, page 306; Item 003, Consumer Affairs Division, pages 306 and 307; Item 004, Research and Planning, page 307; Item 005, Consumer Outreach and Protection, page 307; Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, page 308; Item 001, General Administration, page 308; Item 003, Consumer Affairs Division, page 308; Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies, page 308; Item 001, Regional Bodies; Item 003, United Nations Organizations; Item 004, International Bodies; Item 007, Households; Item 008, Subsidies; Item 009, Other Transfers, pages 308 and 309. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, at line Item 29, Trinidad and Tobago Creative Industries Company. In light of the fact that the hon. Minister of Finance indicated that the creative industries—

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: Sorry. Hon. Member, could you just tell me which line Item you are on?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Twenty-nine—23, it is 23.

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: Twenty-three. I lost you there.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Twenty-three, in light of the fact that the hon. Minister of Finance indicated in his budget statement that the creative industries would be one of the pillars that will be focused on for diversification, I noticed that there is a decrease in the allocation. Could the hon. Minister indicate, why is this so—seeing that this industry is geared towards diversification?

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: Yeah. It is just a small decrease of \$425,000, but I tell you what we are doing right now and we will implement is a rationalization of the structure. We find this structure way too cumbersome and too expensive for the

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output that we are getting from it now. So we have actually done the rationalization and we feel that this is going to be enough for the recurrent expenditure.

Madam Chairman: Member for Caroni Central

Dr. Tewarie: Thank you, Madam Chair. Financial assistance to export.

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: Where are we?

Dr. Tewarie: It is 01.

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: Yeah.

Dr. Tewarie: —to exportTT, can you explain what the assistance is targeted at? What it is for?

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: Sure. So there is a variance there in the plus of \$3 million and it is to address increase in salaries and also outstanding areas due to wage negotiations that are due, and also the filling of critical posts in the context of our export thrust as well. It is imperative that we ramp up our export activities, and we envisage and we are planning to increase in staffing levels as well.

Dr. Tewarie: Okay. So the increase in staffing is really to support your export thrust, is that it?

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: Yes.

Dr. Tewarie: And that, of course, has to do with the exporting companies that are private sector basically?

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: “Uh hmm.”

Dr. Tewarie: All right. I noticed the continuing support for the Betting Levy Board, and I mean racing is an industry that can be profitable. Is there any—I know that this has been a sore point over many administrations and I just wanted to ask you, is there any discussion at all with the racing body to wean themselves off of this?

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: Well, really it is an in and out transfer, as you know and this moratorium that they have put themselves onto. Really if we had gotten this Gambling (Gaming and Betting) Control Bill out of the way and gotten the support of it and passed it, then we would be able to deal with these industries comprehensively. But in the meantime, I have had discussions on both sides, the TTRA and Betting Levy Board, and I do believe that they can find themselves in a position to help the industries. But we need support for this Gambling (Gaming

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and Betting) Control Bill, and I think with that we would be able to put these agencies on the right footing.

Dr. Tewarie: All right. 06, Venture Capital, I realize that this programme is no longer in existence.

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: No. And that is because the facility was unused for several years and the programme has been wound up.

Dr. Tewarie: Right. So is there some alternative that you have or contemplating?—I know the Minister mentioned something in the budget.

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: Yes. The Minister of Finance did speak to a start-up, a programme for start-ups, and there are some other initiatives as well. When I come to the Senate I will be elaborating on those.

Dr. Tewarie: It will be established under your Ministry?

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: That will be detailed to you.

Dr. Tewarie: All right.

Madam Chairman: Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.

Mr. Lee: Thank you, Madam Chair. To the Minister, line Item 19, Single Electronic Window for Trade and Business Facilitation. Could you just explain what those funds are for even though you have an increase of \$1 million this year? What were the funds utilized for in 2017, and how they will be utilized in 2018?

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: This fund—and you will see this Single Electronic Window also mentioned in the DP as well. So this aspect of it is really for the training of stakeholders and for filling critical posts as well. So it includes all sorts of operational costs including salaries and so on, but when I say training of stakeholders, I speak to all of those agencies that are involved in the projects under the SEW as well. And of course the front-end users; it includes collaboration and stakeholder consultation with all the front-end users. I am talking about, customs brokers, et cetera, et cetera.

2.55 p.m.

You know, as a matter of fact, because of the funding constraint, we were not able to do as much as we would have liked to do, but this year we are pressing ahead with it.

Madam Chairman: Member for Caroni East.

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Dr. Gopeesingh: Line Item 03—

Madam Chairman: Excuse me, Member for Caroni East, could you kindly speak—it is strange for me to ask you to have to raise your volume.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Yes, I would come closer. [*Laughter*]

Madam Chairman: Thank you.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Well, that is stranger for me. The Betting Levy Board, line Item 03.

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: We dealt with that already.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Yeah. Following on Member for Caroni Central, there was an allocation estimated in 2017 for \$82 million, but the revised estimate nothing shows there, is it because the information has not come to hand as yet, or what has happened to that?

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: Literally there has been no exchange. You know what is supposed to happen is 50 per cent of the taxes collected should come into the Ministry and then we give it back under the so-called moratorium, but there has been no exchange.

Dr. Gopeesingh: So that \$82 million that was estimated that you were going to—

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: There was no exchange at all?

Dr. Gopeesingh: You were going to give them that in exchange?

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: Well, that could have happened but I will tell you something. All along the while I was hoping that we could have this piece of legislation dealt with and that would put an end to all of these matters, but again we are in your hands.

Dr. Gopeesingh: All right.

Madam Chairman: Member for—

Dr. Gopeesingh: No, just last question on this.

Madam Chairman: Sorry.

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: Sure.

Dr. Gopeesingh: On 19, following from my colleague. The Single Electronic

Window, where are we in terms of the efficiency and effectiveness of that in terms of moving up the scale to facilitating business easily and quicker? The Single Electronic Window?

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: Well, I think you can address that under the DP. There is a line Item for it there.

Dr. Gopeesingh: All right. Okay.

Madam Chairman: Member for Princes Town.

Mr. Padarath: Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, several—

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: What line Item?

Mr. Padarath: First let us—I would have some questions with respect to the DP, I think it would better be addressed under line Item 19, so I would wait for that. But with respect to line Item 17, Trinidad and Tobago Manufacturers Association, earlier one of my colleagues spoke about the FDI with respect to how much foreign direct investment has been brought in over the past year, with respect to the allocation for Trinidad and Tobago Manufacturers Association, we have signed several partial scope agreements and MOUs with several Latin American countries. Does the Ministry have an ongoing programme with Trinidad and Tobago Manufacturers Association in terms of assessing new products going into these markets where we have assigned MOUs as well as partial scope agreements?

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: To put it simply, yes. It is an ongoing and healthy relationship between the Ministry of Trade and Industry, exportTT and the Trinidad and Tobago Manufacturers Association.

Mr. Padarath: Can you give us an idea of a degree of success that you have seen in new markets, especially in the Latin American areas where we have signed partial-scope agreements and MOUs in the past year?

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: Okay, I can give you that in writing because I would like to do it country by country and I can give you. I would have to get that from exportTT as well.

Mr. Padarath: Sure. Also, if we could look at line Item 26, NAPA, with respect to the hoteliers, you know this has been an—

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: Wait. Where are you?

Mr. Padarath: On the other page.

Hon. Member: Page 310.

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: Yes, thank you.

Mr. Padarath: As you know this has been an ongoing saga with respect to the hotel there. Could you indicate to us whether or not there is any definitive plans with respect to a service provider for the hotel?

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: No. This is recurrent, so that matter will be dealt with under the DP. So here we are with this, what was it \$700,000? And that is for security and janitorial services. The question of the operator could be dealt with elsewhere.

Mr. Padarath: No problem. Sure.

Madam Chairman: Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: My question was answered already.

Madam Chairman: Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.

Mr. Lee: [*Inaudible*]

Madam Chairman: Member for Caroni Central.

Dr. Tewarie: Line Item 14, 009/14: Trinidad and Tobago Coalition of Services. This institution is no longer supported by trade?

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: Well, I would not put it like that. What I would say to you is, and you would know the genesis of this, I am certain. The organization was set up some time in 2003, and the intention was that it would receive operational financing for six years. Of course, that has long gone.

Dr. Tewarie: Certain time has crossed?

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: Yes. So, it ought to be self-sufficient. Notwithstanding, we recognized the value and purpose of the TTCSI and you would see that, under the DP again—it is under the DP or the line there—there is a provision for a particular project, and I have actually called in the TTCSI members, maybe about two months. We have had some discussions to look at the way forward, how they can cut expenses and repackage themselves. There is a role for the TTCSI and their services.

Dr. Tewarie: Are they involved in the IDB services export programme through the Ministry of Planning and Development?

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: Are they? Yes, they are. I am told that they are.

Dr. Tewarie: All right.

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Mr. Imbert: Madam Chairman, I just want to make the point. I heard the Member ask whether Trade is no longer supporting this organisation, but there is an allocation of \$1 million.

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: Yes.

Mr. Imbert: Is it there? Yes, it is there.

Dr. Tewarie: No.

Mr. Imbert: Under 14, \$1 million.

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: There is an allocation.

Mr. Imbert: One million dollars.

Dr. Tewarie: Okay. I may have been looking for it under the line with industries.

Mr. Imbert: It is there, yes.

Madam Chairman: Member, okay so can we go on? Item 010, Other Transfers Abroad, page 309. Okay, we now go on to Sub-Head 06, Current Transfers to Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies; 004, Statutory Boards, page 310. Do Members have any questions under this Head?

Okay. So, Members we now move on to the *Draft Estimates of the Revenue and Expenditure of Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies*, and we have no questions there, so we can now go on to DP. Sub-Head 09, Development Programme.

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: Just a minute please, Madam?

Madam Chairman: “Hm mm”. Consolidated Fund, page 128. Minister, it will take us a little time—

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: Page 1—

Madam Chairman: 28. Item 003, Economic Infrastructure, pages 128 and 129. Member for Mayaro.

Mr. Paray: Thank you very much, Madam Chairman. Minister, line Item 017, New Economic Zone Development for Moruga, can you enlighten us as to what are the specific areas of economic activities that you all are planning to engage in that area, in Moruga there?

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Hon. Gopee-Scoon: Yes, sorry. So, ideally it is for agro-processing and agribusiness including fish processing. It is an acreage of about 18 acres, and it is under development, the project will be ready in January 2019.

Madam Chairman: Member for Princes Town.

Mr. Padarath: Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, line Items 019, 021, 023.

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: 019—

Mr. Padarath: 021 and 023 on page 128. These are listed as new projects, respectively the music industry \$1 million, film industry 2.5, fashion industry 4.5. Can you indicate what are the Ministry's plan with respect to these industries seeing that we have had a plethora of other programmes having been commenced, whether it is under your administration, or different administration that has happened in the past but without seeing these industries really advance in any meaningful way, what new will happen with respect to these new projects?

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: Let me just say as briefly as I can, that I too had my concerns—from the time I came into office—with this particular agency, in that to me it operated without a plan, and that is precisely what we have done. So, part of the achievements for fiscal 2017 with regard to music and with regard to fashion, we actually completed a strategic plan. So, there are achievements under either of those, and the strategic plan with regard to film, they would be ready in December. So, I think it is only with a plan that you can move forward.

So, in the meantime there have been attempts to do projects. There have been projects. The public identifies with particular projects, some more successful than others, but we really have to be very strong with our efforts and this agency, especially as it deals with diversification. So, this is a very serious agency which has to do with the commercialization of film, fashion and music, and therefore, our approach is a very serious one. So, we are moving forward with some of the projects which were successful from the past, but we have definitive projects which would bring us to the place where we are actually exporting.

So it has to do with the commercialization where persons involved in these industries can in fact be paid for their work which they do, and which in the past—and I am talking about for ages in Trinidad and Tobago they have not been. They have not been recognized, they have not been earners of substantial income and so on. This is the place we want to go to, and where we can export these areas

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as well, film and fashion and music. That is the plan. I have further details on which I will elaborate on in the Senate.

Madam Chairman: Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Hon. Minister, with the Government's thrust—and of course, this is what we want—for increased export, and more investment, and support to enable competitive business, can I refer you to—

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: Member, sorry, I cannot hear you.

Madam Chairman: Member, we are not hearing you.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Something is wrong with this mike, you know.

Madam Chairman: Well, maybe you could switch on the mikes on the side.

Dr. Gopeesingh: I am surrounded by ladies, I have to be soft in my—in line Items 304, 001 and 011, Madam Minister—

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: 304?

Dr. Gopeesingh:—304—

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: Ah ha.

Dr. Gopeesingh:—001 and 011, which incorporate the issues of export capacity, investment promotion and support to enabling competitive business in T&T, this is much desired from a national perspective in terms of bringing in more revenue and increased competitiveness and so on, but your allocation for these are very small, and where there should be a greater thrust, we see a whittling down of the allocation. Well, \$500,000 for export capacity building. In my humble opinion, I feel that is not sufficient at all. And the investment promotion, you have brought it down from \$5 million to \$3 million, and to enable competitive business, the estimate last year was 1.5, there is none for it now. Could you give us some picture as to what is really happening, whereas you should be putting more thrust on these areas, we seem to be not supporting it as much?

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: You know, this is a very long explanation. I would really like you to listen in the Senate, when I would really go into each one of these in detail. If you would like, I can detail all the projects that we are doing under each one. I can in fact send it to you in writing. Would you like me to do that?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Put it in writing to the committee.

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: I shall put in writing all of the projects.

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Dr. Gopeesingh: You know, I listen to you attentively at all times—

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: I thank you so much. [*Laughter*]

Madam Chairman: Member for Mayaro.

Mr. Paray: Thank you very much, Madam Chairman. [*Crosstalk*] Minister, under Item 021—

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: 021?

Mr. Paray: Yes, 021: Development of the Film Industry. Has there been any effort on the part of your Ministry to engage foreign film producers to see Trinidad and Tobago as a more attractive destination for some of the production facilities? I ask that in context of, I remember a conversation when the producers were looking for locations for the filming of *Pirates of the Caribbean*, there was some challenges with regard to the high cost of the importation of their movie equipment, customs duties, taxes and so on, have there been any conversations so far in your Ministry to see if we can do better at attracting international film producers into Trinidad and Tobago?

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: Well, definitely that is the final objective, but of course what we have had to do, the main attraction really is the rebate programme which this Government had put in place a number of years ago and we have had to reengineer it to ensure that it becomes effective, and so that we can have optimum efficiency and success with it. It is as it is, I think, reengineered and quite attractive on its own, and this is what we will be using. I do have some details of actual films that will be shot in Trinidad and Tobago, there is a 90 per cent perhaps likelihood that these would be shot, and I can always detail these and send them for you. But, there are some, I can give you further details.

Madam Chairman: Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.

Mr. Lee: Thank you, Madam Chair. To the Minister, I just want to go back to line Item 17, The New Economic Zone, Moruga. This 2017 incurred \$2.6 million for something. Could you tell us what you all did in that economic zone in Moruga this year?

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: What line Item you are talking about again?

Mr. Lee: 017, Moruga, New Economic Zone.

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: 017—going back and forth.

Madam Chairman: Just above the music industry.

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Hon. Gopee-Scoon: So, 2,622 is really intended for the master plan, and the master plan would have included all the stakeholder analysis and so on. So, we have reached the point where—

Mr. Lee: Just the master plan cost \$2.6 million roughly?

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: But it is not only that at all. You have to procure the master plan, so we actually engaged Desal Designs Limited. We did a lot of community sensitization, as I said stakeholder involvement. The master plan has been handed in, I have not had sight of it yet, but it has just been handed in, I believe yesterday or today, and then we are beginning to move ahead with the geotechnical work at the same time.

Mr. Lee: Okay, then the follow-up question, the 13.3 that is budgeted for this year would be based on the master plan, I am assuming, the expenditure for 13.3?

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: Well, the funding for this project is a \$69 million project, and is partially funded by the PSIP and also e Teck, and from funds held at e Teck. So, together with the projected 2018 figure of the two point something, e Teck is going to put their \$13 million in at that point, and by the time we get to the end of this fiscal year we will in fact come back for the remainder, which is going to be around \$24 million.

Mr. Lee: Okay. All right, thank you.

Madam Chairman: Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Madam Chair. Just going back to line Item 021, which is the film industry, I remember the animated industry was highly sought after and Disney World has in fact looked at Trinidad and Tobago. Is that a consideration in your development plan?

Madam Chairman: I think the Minister already said she would supply a list of those various projects which are likely to come on stream in this fiscal. Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Hon. Minister, you had referred me to the Development Programme when I asked about the enhancement of the Single Electronic Window, a \$15 million increase funded by the IDB, could you give us—

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: What line Item?

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Dr. Gopeesingh: 016. Could you give us an appreciation and an understanding of what you propose to do to help to improve the efficiency of this aspect of trade?

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: Okay. There are 16 consultancies to be conducted under this \$25 million loan. So, we have already issued—we have short listed firms for several consultancies within those. I can tell you what the components are. I can give you the details after, but there are three components, and the first one will be enhancing and expanding the services of the SEW; and the second one, enhancing the interoperability of TTBizLink; and component three, modernizing the governance of SEW and the institutional framework. As I said, there are several consultancies under that. For instance, under component three, you would have business process engineering and developing change management strategies for several agencies and Ministries as well. So, something like this I would have to give you in writing. I have it here, but I do not think there is enough time for me to detail all 16—all of the consultancies that we are dealing with at this time.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Can I ask, in all of this what is your main objective in terms of your ease of doing business and quickness of trade facilitation, is it?

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: Again, it is to generally improve the entire framework for trade and business, to ensure that it is easy, even for the countries with which we do business as well that there is greater interoperability. So that there are countries that would have the same SEW system, and a lot of the Latin American countries have the same system so that the interoperability is going to work well, it is going to be easier, faster, more efficient. And within this as well you would have heard us talk—heard me talk and certainly the Ministry, about the construction permitting process which is going to be automated, and the pilot for that will actually be completed for Port of Spain in April 2018. The work is extensive and the results are going to be good, generally for trade and business facilitation.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Last question on that. When do you expect to see some tangible results of all the—

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: This is a five-year plan. As I have just said, for instance, with construction permitting you will have the pilot programme completed hopefully by April 2018. I have dates, end dates for all of these projects. I can provide those to you.

Madam Chairman: Member for Princes Town.

Mr. Padarath: Madam, on the same line Item 016, with respect to support for this venture in terms of reform and upgrade, can you indicate whether or not for this Single Electronic Window—again for upgrade and reform—there will be an expansion of the trade licence unit in the Ministry of Trade to provide support for this particular area?

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: My PS has advised me that that too is included under the institutional governance structure improvements.

Mr. Padarath: Okay. So, therefore we can see a further enhancement of this particular unit to provide support?

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: That is right.

Madam Chairman: Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services, pages 129 and 130. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, line Item 216, Procurement of Equipment for the Implementation of the Metrology Act 2004. Could the hon. Minister advise if this equipment was in fact procured and implemented?

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: And this is 216, Procurement of Equipment. Yes, they have already begun the procurement of equipment.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: So it has not been in fact purchased and implemented, it is just in the procurement stage?

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: No, it has gone beyond procurement. In some areas, there are different kinds of machinery and equipment. Some of it has already been utilized. So, we have gone around to all of the supermarkets to check all of the weighing, the devices. All of those exercises have been done, but there is continuing work, and then there is this big machinery called the mas-comparator facility. It is a little bit delayed, but it is going to be completed pretty soon, and that is for measuring large pieces of equipment to the minute point and calibration, and so on.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: And it would be calibrated, I would think, on a regular basis?

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: I am sure that there is a programme for doing that on a regular basis.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Do you have an after sales service where you have training that accompanies this?

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: Yes, considerable training is done. That is a feature. That is an integral component of the work of the Bureau of Standards.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: How many persons will be trained on this programme?

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: I can send that to you.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Okay, thanks.

Madam Chairman: Okay. So we will go on now to Infrastructure Development Fund, same book, page 234. Infrastructure Development, page 234. Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services, page 235. [*Crosstalk*] Hon. Member for Pointe-a-Pierre, do you have a question?

Hon. Members, the question is that the sum of \$163,260,400 for Head 48, the Ministry of Trade and Industry stand part of the Schedule.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 48 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Madam Chairman: Thank you, hon. Minister, Mr. PS and other representatives of the Ministry of Trade.

Head 35: Ministry of Tourism, \$78,564,500.

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

Hon. Cudjoe: Thank you, Madam Chairman. The development of the tourism sector is critical to the diversification, expansion and sustainable growth of our national economy.

The Ministry of Tourism is responsible for the general tourism policy development, facilitating growth in the tourism sector, promoting awareness, building stakeholder relationships, and for monitoring and evaluating the country's performance. As you are well aware, the Tobago House of Assembly has responsibility for the development of tourism in Tobago. In fiscal 2016, the Government undertook an evaluation exercise with an aim to improve our strategy and performance in the sector. This exercise resulted in the Cabinet's decision to reengineer the institutional arrangement towards more effective management of the sector.

To this end, a new tourism entity, Tourism Trinidad Destination Management Company, also known as Tourism Trinidad Limited was established, and in fiscal

2018 this entity will be operationalized. The entity is mandated to develop and market Trinidad's tourism offering, lead and facilitate marketing and promotion of the destination, lead in attracting tourism investment in Trinidad, promote tourism business development, promote education awareness and cooperation in advancing the economic expansion through tourism, and encourage a tourism friendly approach through well-defined and coordinated marketing strategies, inclusive of all social media and all other technology-based platforms.

In fiscal 2018, the Ministry has identified the following critical objectives: to provide competitive legislative framework, effective evidence-based tourism policy; to promote regionally and internationally the destination; to promote our different niches in tourism; to development our tourism facilities, and to build a more competitive sector. To this end, we have expanded and extended our room upgrade programmes and the government loan guarantee programme. As a part of our 2018 Development Programme under Head 35, the Ministry will further the upgrade and refurbishment of community-based sites and attractions across the country, and we will revise our national tourism policy and strategic development plan. Thank you, Madam Chairman.

Question proposed: That Head 35 stand part of the Schedule.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Members, the sum of \$78,564,500 for Head 35, Ministry of Tourism is comprised of moneys proposed for expenditure under the following Sub-Heads and Items to be found in the Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure and the Draft Estimates of the Development Programme. We now proceed to consider the Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure. Sub-Head 01: Personnel Expenditure, page 241, Item 001: General Administration, page 241. Member for Mayaro.

Mr. Paray: Thank you very much, Madam Chairman. Minister, Item 14, Remuneration to Members of Cabinet Appointed Committees. Can you tell me how many of these Cabinet Committees exist, and what specific area that they look at in terms of assisting the Ministry at this time?

Hon. Cudjoe: We have two of these committees, the Tourism Standing Committee, which helps the Ministry in liaising with the stakeholders to develop a tourism policy. In fiscal 2017, they would have worked on a tourism road map for the sustainable development of tourism in Trinidad.

Mr. Paray: Just a follow up, in terms of the interaction with the two new units that are coming, one for Trinidad and one for Tobago, under the Ministry, how do you emphasize the interaction between those committees and those

agencies in the direction that they would be going? Do you see synergies, and if there are, what most likely would they be?

3.25 p.m.

Hon. Cudjoe: Well, of course, there will be synergies like there always have been. The Tobago House of Assembly has responsibility for tourism development in Tobago and had always been since the inception of the Assembly, since tourism is a Schedule Five item under the Tobago House of Assembly Act. So the House of Assembly would have its Tobago Tourism Agency while Tourism Trinidad would interact and liaise with the agency also. We have established, which is the second committee, a Tourism Task Force in order to coordinate joint initiatives and joint marketing initiatives of that nature.

Madam Chairman: Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, page 241; Item 001, General Administration, pages 241 and 242; Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases; Item 001, General Administration, page 242; Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies; Item 001, Regional Bodies, page 243; Item 003, United Nations Organization, page 243. Member for Caroni Central.

Dr. Tewarie: I see under Item 04 here, Chair, Tourism Trinidad Destination Management Company Limited, an allocation of \$16 million. I just wanted to ask the Minister, what is the focus, what is the idea behind the creation of this company, what will it actually do?

Hon. Cudjoe: Through you, Madam Chairman, I would have listed the objectives of the entity in my opening statement. You want me to repeat?

Dr. Tewarie: Yeah. Do you mind?

Hon. Cudjoe: Sure.

Madam Chairman: This is under 011, Transfers to State Enterprises.

Dr. Tewarie: 04, yes.

Madam Chairman: All right. So I do not think I called that. So just that everybody would be on the same page, we are now at Item 011, Transfers to State Enterprises, page 243; we are now considering Item 04.

Hon. Cudjoe: So, the entity's mandate is to develop and market Trinidad's tourism offerings; to lead and facilitate the marketing and promotion of the destination; to lead in attracting tourism investment; to promote tourism business development; to promote education awareness and cooperation in advancing economic expansion through tourism; to encourage a tourism-friendly approach

through well-defined and coordinated marketing strategies, inclusive of all social media and all other technology-based platforms.

Dr. Tewarie: Okay, from what you say, Minister, I mean, the main role is a marketing role for both tourists and for tourism investment. But, I mean, it has nothing to do with the development of local destinations, does it?

Hon. Cudjoe: Yes, it does have to do with the development of the local destinations also because we have to develop the product. So product development is a part of the responsibility of the entity.

Dr. Tewarie: Okay, I may ask another question.

Hon. Cudjoe: Okay.

Madam Chairman: Member for Chaguanas East.

Mr. Karim: Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, can you tell us what will be the staffing complement of this new organization?

Hon. Cudjoe: The staffing complement of the new organization—well, we are at the point right now where we are finalizing the structure, and that is still taking place at this time, but we anticipate no more than 50 people.

Mr. Karim: Fifty, okay. How do you think it will be different from its predecessor—intrinsically or strategically?

Hon. Cudjoe: There are several ways it would be different from the predecessor, from the structure to the different responsibilities based on what I am seeing right now and based on what would have come out of the preliminary report that we would have received. But I do not want to pre-empt the results of the report. However, the previous entity would have been responsible for Trinidad and Tobago and now having two separate entities, Tobago, which is responsible for tourism development in Tobago will focus specifically on Tobago. I think Tourism Trinidad places a new focus on Trinidad in developing areas and tourism products that would have been overlooked before, so the focus is on improving the product and then marketing it.

Mr. Karim: This might be a rhetorical question, but do you see any potential areas of conflict between the two entities operating in the two separate islands?

Hon. Cudjoe: No. I do not see areas of conflict because we then have the committees that are established in order to coordinate peaceful and harmonious relationship. You see, we cannot take for granted or overlook the position that Tobago has responsibility and has always had responsibility for tourism

development in Tobago. Tobago would have had its own overseas representatives and doing its own product development. You would remember in your time when the former Minister of Culture wanted to go and hold a carnival in Tobago and he ran into some problems with that, because the Tobago House of Assembly is responsible for these items in Tobago. Yes?

Mr. Karim: Madam Chair, just on line Item 02, the TDC. Do you have any outstanding contingent liabilities that you need to address with respect to that organization?

Hon. Cudjoe: That will be a matter more for the Ministry of Finance.

Madam Chairman: Member for Couva South.

Mr. Indarsingh: Madam Chair, my colleague from Chaguanas East raised a number of the issues that I wanted to raise, but I just wanted to ask the Minister if all the settlement packages for the former employees of the TDC, have they been fully settled with respect to—

Hon. Cudjoe: I am not sure which line Item you are relating to, one; and two, that would be a matter for the Ministry of Finance.

Madam Chairman: Is that not the same thing as the outstanding contingent liabilities? Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, line Item 04, Tourism Trinidad Destination Management Company Limited. Is there—will the management company internally use their internal resources to promote destination Trinidad or does the management company intend to source the services of a company to manage it locally or internationally?

Hon. Cudjoe: The Minister of Foreign and Caricom Affairs would say—I did not seize the thrust of your question. The question you are asking is, if we are going to use our internal resources? I would say, we would utilize the best resources possible to give Trinidad and Tobago value for money and to properly promote destination awareness and market the destination.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Okay. In line with your opening statement where you indicated that you would utilize whether it is ads on social media and so forth, this is why I was asking if it is the—

Hon. Cudjoe: Right. Okay. Marketing would not be limited to social media, because when you look at, you would, of course, need overseas marketing representatives—

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Obviously.

Hon. Cudjoe:—and different markets call for different kinds of marketing—
Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Absolutely.

Hon. Cudjoe:—but social media, the digital platform, of course, technology would have changed the whole environment as it relates to tourism and we must employ the different technological advancements in order to properly promote the destination. Now we are talking about Uber, about Expedia, TripAdvisor, all these items are now central to tourism advancement, and if we are not doing that then we are out of the game, we are no longer relevant. So we will be exploring all the necessary media, all the necessary resources to properly promote and market Trinidad and Tobago with an aim to improve arrivals, visitor expenditure and all the good stuff that tourism has to offer.

Madam Chairman: Member for Caroni East. Hon. Members, we will now move on to—oh sorry, I did not see you, Member for Caroni Central.

Dr. Tewarie: Just on 04 again, Tourism Trinidad Destination Management Company Limited. Minister is it, I mean, am I correct in saying that the \$16 million here allocated for 2018 is really to cover salaries, travel and promotions?

Hon. Cudjoe: No. The operational costs: You have Salaries, Rental, Electricity, Telephone and these things.

Dr. Tewarie: Okay. But that is what I meant, you know.

Hon. Cudjoe: All the recurrent expenditure.

Dr. Tewarie: So it is really going to be caught up in operations. All right, I am clear.

Hon. Cudjoe: Okay.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Members, we will now move on to the *Draft Estimates of Development Programme*. Sub-Head 09, Development Programme Consolidated Fund, page 92—different book. Item 003, Economic Infrastructure, page 92 to 93. Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.

Mr. Lee: Thank you, Madam Chair. To the Minister, line Item 032, Tourism Agency—Trinidad, \$10 million. What is this about? Could you elaborate, Tourism Agency? It sounds like a travel agency, I do not know.

Hon. Cudjoe: Where are you?

Mr. Lee: 032—

Madam Chairman: Page 92.

Hon. Cudjoe: 032. That is Tourism Trinidad. That is the same Tourism Trinidad. That is the development programmes under Tourism Trinidad Limited. So that would deal with—we spoke about the expansion of the room upgrade programme where the stakeholders, the hoteliers and so on, will be getting a refurbishment of 50 per cent that they would have spent to upgrade, that would come under the new entity. The quality programmes from STAR to Hospitality Assured to ensure proper customer service throughout the sector, that will come under this vote also. Basic standards, such as the certification programme for the industry; that comes under this too. Environmental conservation to keep our beaches and our hotels and so on green, to green the industry; that would come under this also. There is also a new project that is proposed under this vote which is to help stakeholders with the digital marketing side of the product.

Mr. Lee: This is another follow-up question. The new entity, there is one in Trinidad and one in Tobago, correct?

Hon. Cudjoe: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Lee: So this line Item of 032 which says that Tourism Agency - Trinidad will only refer to the Trinidad end?

Hon. Cudjoe: Yes, because remember, the Tobago House of Assembly has responsibility for Tobago's tourism. Therefore the entity for Tobago falls under the division of Tourism and Culture in Tobago. So the layout of their plans and the details of their allocation would be under the Tobago House of Assembly's allocation. So when they come here on Thursday I am sure you will have the opportunity to ask your questions then.

Madam Chairman: Member for Chaguanas East.

Mr. Karim: Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, line Item 019, could you give us an idea as to what are these tourism sites and attractions for upgrade?

Hon. Cudjoe: Okay, Item 019, Tourism Sites and Attractions Upgrade. Now, the Ministry of Tourism has, first and foremost, five sites that are under the remit of the Ministry that—let me find it—Las Cuevas, Manzanilla, Vessigny, Maracas and La Brea Pitch Lake. So, of course, our priority would be first and foremost to those sites and attractions. Earlier in this year we would have done meetings with the different regional corporations asking for their recommendations and their proposals to have work done in their areas and we got response from four. So we are still working with regional corporations and different community groups in

order to select and go with the items that are ready to go, but our priority first and foremost is the five sites that are under the remit of the Ministry of Tourism.

Mr. Karim: Madam Chair, just a follow-up, on line Item 027—

Hon. Cudjoe: 027.

Mr. Karim: If you can give us an idea or a status of the Tourism Baseline Survey.

Hon. Cudjoe: Okay, the Tourism Baseline Survey, the focus for the survey right now is primarily on Tobago, because we would have completed the two segments of the Trinidad side of the survey. We started one in Tobago, and you probably would have seen the enumerators at the port and at the airport asking questions and having the surveys done and we are moving on to part two of the baseline survey where we are going to be working with the business entities in the tourism sector in Tobago.

Mr. Karim: Just a final with respect to the baseline survey. When you are fully completed with the survey, both from the individual entities and the business communities or whichever stakeholder interest groups, by what time do you expect that would be completed? What you intend to do with the results of that baseline survey? In other words, the impact assessment.

Hon. Cudjoe: Right. In order to measure your growth you have to start somewhere. So we have never had a baseline survey done before. So this would give us a platform or a place to start from as it relates to seeing the performance of the sector and its direct impact on the people employed within the sector, on the businesses in the sector.

Mr. Karim: So by what time, “estimatedly” so, you might want to have the findings be made public?

Hon. Cudjoe: The Trinidad side has been completed. So this fiscal year we are working on the Tobago side. So I would say by the end of this fiscal year.

Mr. Karim: No, but the Trinidad side, have the results been of the baseline survey?

Hon. Cudjoe: We have a draft report on the Trinidad side.

Mr. Karim: So by what time you estimate we might be able—the public—

Hon. Cudjoe: To have a national report?

Mr. Karim: Yeah.

Hon. Cudjoe: I would say by the first—let us say by the second quarter in this year.

Mr. Karim: Okay.

Madam Chairman: Member for Caroni Central.

Dr. Tewarie: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. The Tourism Sites and Attractions Upgrade you mentioned—

Madam Chairman: 019.

Dr. Tewarie: Yes, but there are—except for the Pitch Lake they are all ocean sites, they are all beaches. I wondered what was the differentiating factor for Trinidad as opposed to Tobago.

Hon. Cudjoe: Well, the Tobago House of Assembly would have to speak for the Tobago side of how they are going to go about their product development in Tobago, how we are going to go about that. We would have ideas and interact and work closely with the Tobago House of Assembly, but at the end of the day we have to respect the will of the people of Tobago—

Dr. Tewarie: No, but—

Hon. Cudjoe:—and they would choose their sites and work on those.

Dr. Tewarie: No, I mean, the point I am making is that, I mean, I know that you are doing an upgrade in Maracas and these are sites for upgrading and they are all ocean sites; they are all beaches basically. So I just wondered if there is another dimension to the development of tourism in Trinidad.

Hon. Cudjoe: Well, of course, we have different niches as it relates to event tourism, conference tourism, even culinary tourism, eco-tourism, and the new entity would be working specifically with the stakeholders in that regard.

Dr. Tewarie: But I do not see anything funded in that direction.

Hon. Cudjoe: And that is under the TTL. The 019 you are talking about is under the Ministry.

Dr. Tewarie: Okay.

Hon. Cudjoe: Right? And that specifically, sites and attractions under the Ministry. Now, as it relates to other items, the niche market development is under the development programme of the entity. Right?

Dr. Tewarie: All right, fine.

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Mr. Imbert: And I would also make the point that those local sites and attractions are the responsibility of the regional corporations and not the Ministry of Tourism.

Hon. Cudjoe: The regional corporations. Yes, you are right.

Mr. Imbert: So it would not appear here at all.

Dr. Tewarie: Okay.

Mr. Imbert: So we could stop talking about that.

Dr. Tewarie: Well, I do not see why I should stop talking because you feel so.

Madam Chairman: Are you finished, Member?

Dr. Tewarie: No, I have some other questions. The establishment—028, Establishment of Trinidad and Tobago Tourism Regulatory and Licensing Authority. This is a new entity. This is going to be another state entity?

Hon. Cudjoe: Okay, well right now we are conducting the consultations with the stakeholders on the development, on the proposed development, of a regulatory authority. So those consultations are happening right now. As you are probably aware we are the only destination who claims to be serious about tourism that does not have mandatory standards and regulations for the sector. So this is moving towards establishing and enforcing mandatory standards in the sector.

Dr. Tewarie: Okay, and—

Hon. Cudjoe: The entity that is working on this item should complete its report by the end of December 2017, so we will see what the recommendations are and then see what is the next best step to take.

Dr. Tewarie: The Caribbean Small Tourism Enterprises Project (STEP), how do you envisage that?

Hon. Cudjoe: Okay, that is the STEP programme. It is a regional programme that we have partnered with CTO and the OAS has also been a part of this initiative. It has been very successful in Trinidad and Tobago to the point that the Trinidad and Tobago programme has been used as the template throughout the region and it works with small tourism operators to help them in accounting, getting their books ready, more so programmes like how to decorate on a small budget—

Dr. Tewarie: Helping them survive.

Hon. Cudjoe:—helping the entities that have five and less rooms, even 20 rooms. People who are interested in becoming bigger players in the tourism industry but need some hand-holding. It also helps with other entities that do not probably see themselves as directly related to tourism but we help them to understand how everybody has a role to play. Tourism is everybody's business. And looking at the business development side of tourism for the small man or for people who are interested in small-business development.

Dr. Tewarie: Okay. I am fine.

Madam Chairman: Member for Oropouche West.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: Thank you, Madam Chair. I am not sure if my colleague had asked 030?

Madam Chairman: No. Development of the National Tourism Policy (2018).

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: Hon. Minister what exactly does this entail? And, is there a separate committee going to be established to set up this policy and is there a commencement date?

Hon. Cudjoe: No. A separate committee would not be established for this. This is the kind of work where you pretty much work with the Tourism Advisory Unit alongside a consultant to help us improve our tourism policy. The last tourism policy for Trinidad and Tobago was developed in the years 2007/2008 and this is 10 years later. Our tourism master plan was developed in 1995 when I was in second form and I think it is high time for us to review these plans and policies for something more modern, more timely and more relevant for this day and age.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: And is there a time for implementation?

Hon. Cudjoe: Well, of course, even before we get to implementation, the review of the policy has to be done. So the Ministry is right now working on developing the scope of works to bring on a consult—to advertise and to bring on a consultant and to get the ball rolling so that this work could be done in this fiscal year.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Madam Chair. Continuing on the line of question for 030, I do believe that there was a policy being developed and I do remember that there was a sector, and I am asking if the Minister has considered

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this? There is a sector being developed for the disabled community which accounts for 7 per cent of world travel and therefore I just want to ask if the Minister will in fact continue building on that sector in light of the fact that it was considered during the term of the PP, the Partnership. And also—

Madam Chairman: What Item are we on?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Development of the National Tourism Policy.

Madam Chairman: Oh, so you are really asking that the disabled community be considered in the policy?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Absolutely.

Hon. Cudjoe: I want to assure the Member that we have continued to build on this policy which has been a policy of the Caribbean Tourism Organization and we would have done some work even down at La Brea to get to build a ramp for the differently-abled and now in the development of a site. We are ensuring that the differently-abled are considered and we are working also with stakeholders so that they could craft and develop the programmes and the tours that they offer to suit the elderly, to suit the differently-abled also. So it is a Caribbean initiative that is being supported by this Government and we are working on it.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: I am glad to hear this continued. Also on line Item 019, Tourism Sites and Attractions Upgrade. I know Minister you had identified several areas that would be receiving this. I am asking if you would consider at all two sites—

Hon. Cudjoe: The Bat Cave?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Two sites in my constituency of Cumuto/Manzanilla—

Hon. Cudjoe: The Bat Cave?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: You know I have to make a plug. Yes, definitely for the bat cave which is, of course, you know it is indigenous—white, white bats, which *National Geographic* holds us, you know, in high regard; and also we have a nesting turtle site in Fishing Pond and I am asking if during the course of your tenure if you can consider those two sites, please.

Hon. Cudjoe: Okay. As you would have been informed earlier most of these sites would really fall under the agreement of the regional corporations but we in the Ministry of Tourism would work with the different entities—

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Absolutely.

Hon. Cudjoe:—in order to help develop these sites.

Madam Chairman: Member for Princes Town.

Mr. Padarath: Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, just to build on a point you made earlier on line Item 028—

Hon. Cudjoe: 028.

Mr. Padarath: With respect to the Establishment of Trinidad and Tobago Tourism Regulatory and Licensing Authority, you spoke about the regulating of industry standards. I know with respect to sanctions that in other countries they use an avenue that is available to them in the industry called Grading Licences. How do you intend to treat with this particular issue of sanctions when it comes to regulating the industry standards?

Hon. Cudjoe: Well, we are at a very early point in the development of proper standards. Of course, we would have worked with the TTBS, the Trinidad and Tobago Bureau of Standards to implement the TTTIC, the Trinidad and Tobago Tourism Industry Certification programme, but that is voluntary. So we need to at least first make the very basic standards mandatory and then we can go to a grading system, but it is really a hand-holding process for most of our stakeholders and as we continue to interact with them and consult with them we have to implement a programme that is fitting so that nobody gets left behind and we can truly bring the standard of the product up to scratch.

Mr. Padarath: Minister, while I agree with you, I think there must be an approach where there is both happening at the same time with respect to the mandatory standards but also looking at the issue of regulating the industry when it comes to the sanctions. So I would like to point in the direction of the Grading Licences as well as some of the other benchmarks that have been used in this particular way that would be able to assist in the thereafter as well.

Hon. Cudjoe: I am sure that is something we could consider and we could liaise with the experts that are doing the consultation and working on this matter right now in order to get the very best that the whole system has to offer.

Mr. Padarath: Sure. As you are on the point of those who are involved in the process, have you or are there currently consultants working on these policy documents?

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Hon. Cudjoe: They are working on the consultations right now as we speak and then they would propose a way forward for the Ministry.

Madam Chairman: Member for Naparima.

Mr. Charles: Hon. Minister, I am referring to 030, Development of the National Tourism Policy—

Hon. Cudjoe: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Charles: I am just asking whether there is a communications component to that and if so when we will begin to see advertisements abroad in the international media? At least one advertisement. We hear about the Turks and Caicos—

Hon. Cudjoe: You are not referring to 030. I am sorry, you missed that under recurrent.

Mr. Charles: No, this development of the policy and I am asking about the policy with relation to communications.

Hon. Cudjoe: No, what you are talking about is overseas marketing. That is under Vote 62, you missed that under recurrent.

Mr. Charles: So you are saying the policy does not have a component of communications?

Hon. Cudjoe: No, I am saying that you missed Vote 62 under recurrent.

Mr. Charles: I missed it.

Madam Chairman: Okay, Item zero—[Crosstalk]

Hon. Cudjoe: You were probably outcast.

Madam Chairman: Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Madam Minister, line Item 021, the Cruise Tourism Initiative. There is no funding that has been put for that in the midst of your recent thrust on the increase in tourist arrivals.

Hon. Cudjoe: Okay, the Cruise Tourism Initiative would be handled by the new entity. So that is in that line Item for the new entity.

Dr. Gopeesingh: The new entity that is going to come on?

Hon. Cudjoe: Yes, Sir.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Okay.

Hon. Cudjoe: Yeah, even when you look at port upgrades and so on, that would have in the past come under this vote, but now the port has its allocation for the upgrade of the quayside and upgrading the port. So the state enterprise no longer handles that part of it.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Okay.

3.55 p.m.

Madam Chairman: Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services, page 93 and page 94. Member for Chaguanas East.

Mr. Karim: Thank you, Madam Chairman. Hon Minister, line Item 031—

Hon. Cudjoe: 031?

Mr. Karim: Yes. Page 93, 031, Certification of Tourism Programme Operators. Could you say how many persons are certified? Who certifies them, and how are they distinguished or recognized?

Hon. Cudjoe: 031?

Mr. Karim: 031.

Hon. Cudjoe: What page are you on, please?

Mr. Karim: Page 93.

Hon. Cudjoe: Oh, yes, okay, TTTIC? The TTTIC Programme is a partnership between the state enterprise and the TTBS, the Bureau of Standards. So the Bureau of Standards is primarily responsible, or assists the state enterprise in doing that.

Mr. Karim: And who awards certification?

Hon. Cudjoe: The Bureau of Standards.

Mr. Karim: And how many such operators certified by the Bureau do we have?

Hon. Cudjoe: I could provide that to you in writing, but I know during the last fiscal year we would have done some work with the taxi drivers and so on, within Trinidad and in Tobago.

Mr. Karim: And how do people at these various ports identify them? Are they easily identifiable as being certified as operators?

Hon. Cudjoe: They have a certificate, but we are not yet at a place of having a sticker just like the black London Cab in Europe would have. And that is what

the work of the regulatory authority is geared towards, improving the enforcement.

Mr. Karim: If I may just make a comment and a suggestion. It is the line Item, eh, because I know the Minister of Finance will want to come at the line Item. Given the circumstances in terms—as we are facing now in our country, it will be better for those who are entering the country to easily identify these certified operators.

Hon. Cudjoe: Yes, of course. So the development of trademarks and stickers, and so on, so that they would be easily identifiable would be a part of the programme to be carried out by the regulatory authority.

Mr. Karim: Thank you very much.

Madam Chairman: Okay, so Members, Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services? Yes, Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla, and thereafter Member for Caroni East.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Madam Chair. If the hon. Minister can clarify Line Items 035 and 053, please.

Hon. Cudjoe: 035 and which one?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: And 053.

Hon. Cudjoe: 035 and 053. Let us go first with 035. That is Safety and Security. That has to do with working alongside with the police. It also has to do with the work we are doing with CARPHA in order to ensure health and safety standards in food management and so on. We would have done some significant work, both in Trinidad and in Tobago, in public awareness and working with the service providers in health and safety measures with CARPHA and we continue to work with CARPHA in that regard.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: And 053?

Hon. Cudjoe: 053 is a Visitor Relations Management System. This is a programme that would have been—being developed by the TDC. It is a programme that they were partnering with the Government of Bahamas to have a proper record of the visitors that come and to really keep a track of them, what they are doing and how they are enjoying their stay while they are in Trinidad and Tobago, and even afterwards, in order to ensure return visits. But if you pay close attention to your document, Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla, you would see there is no allocation for 2018. So you are asking me then to report on the previous

year. All these Items that were previously executed by the TDC would be considered by the new entity.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: All right. So therefore what you are saying is that having accomplished the Tourism Safety and Security Project, and this other visitor relationship, you have concluded your matter and there is no need to go forward? Or is it that you have come up with a—

Hon. Cudjoe: No, I am saying this is under that line. You recognize that is a Line Item—

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Yeah, right.

Hon. Cudjoe:—of \$10 million. All these Items will be taken into consideration under that vote.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Okay.

Madam Chairman: Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Line Item 011, the Incentive Upgrade of Hotel—

Hon. Cudjoe: Incentive Upgrade of Hotel, yes.

Dr. Gopeesingh: There is no more funding for it in the 2018.

Hon. Cudjoe: I do not know if you missed it but it was the very first Item that the Member for Pointe-a-Pierre would have raised, and that falls under the new entity.

Dr. Gopeesingh: And how is that different from what the Minister of Finance spoke about in his budget presentation?

Hon. Cudjoe: That is what the Minister of Finance spoke about.

Dr. Gopeesingh: All right, thanks. Just one more. The Maracas Beach Community Tourism Initiative, what has happened to the initiative to have the work and the whole Maracas Beach upgrade completed? Where is that in relation to this? This is \$300,000 for an upgrade and that was a major upgrade that has been thwarted over a period of time.

Hon. Cudjoe: Member, I am of the belief that you are mixing up the two projects.

Mr. Imbert: Let me handle it. The Maracas Beach project is being handled by Nidco, not by the Ministry of Tourism. So they no longer have responsibility for that project.

Dr. Gopeesingh: So both are initiatives for upgrade of Maracas Beach—

Hon. Cudjoe: No, it is two different facilities.

Mr. Imbert: Completely different things.

Hon. Cudjoe: Further down the road from the bigger project is a little fishing site that we are working with the fishermen and the member of that community to develop that site. So they would have asked for a gazebo, and to upgrade the parking facility, because they want to do small weddings and so on there, and we have worked with them and continue to work with them in that regard. The bigger project that I think you are referring to is under the Ministry of Works and Transport now.

Mr. Imbert: The river separates the two projects, if you are familiar with the beach at all. So this side of the river would be the project the Minister is speaking of, and on that side of the river is the larger project being handled by Nidco.

Dr. Gopeesingh: And it is continuing?

Mr. Imbert: Yes, almost finished. When last you went?

Madam Chairman: Member for Chaguanas East.

Mr. Karim: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Hon. Minister, line Item 017, NTQSI. Could you give us an update on it?

Hon. Cudjoe: That is the Item I had spoken about before which is National Standards and Quality of Service. So the STAR programme that was previously implemented by TDC, that would be considered here but what we are doing under this programme in this fiscal year is implementing and expanding the regional service programme called Hospitality Assured where we are trying to get as many of our properties hospitality-assured certified in this fiscal year.

Madam Chairman: Infrastructure Development Fund, page 216, same book. Item 004, Social Infrastructure, page 216.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 35 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Madam Chairman: Thank you, Minister. Thank you, Madam PS and other representatives from the Ministry of Tourism.

Head 38: Environmental Commission, \$6,283,900.

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

Hon. Imbert: Madam Speaker, the Environmental Commission is a superior court of record established under the Environmental Management Act. Its purpose is to resolve environmental disputes.

Question proposed: That Head 38 stand part of the Schedule.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Members, the sum of \$6,283,900 for Head 38, Environmental Commission is comprised of moneys proposed for expenditure under the following Sub-Heads and Items to be found in the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure*. We now proceed to consider the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure*. Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure, page 249; Item 001, General Administration, page 249; Sub-Head, 02, Goods and Services, Item 001, General Administration, pages 249 and 250; Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases; Item 001, General Administration, page 251.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 38 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Madam Chairman: I thank the representatives from the Environmental Commission. You all are now discharged.

Head 05: Parliament, \$131,463,500.

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

Hon. Imbert: Madam Chairman, the Parliament supports the legislative branch of the State.

Question proposed: That Head 05 stand part of the Schedule.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Members, the sum of \$131,463,500 for Head 05, Parliament, is comprised of moneys proposed for expenditure under the following Sub-Heads and Items to be found in the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure* and the *Draft Estimates of the Development Programme*: Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure, Item 001, General Administration, page 26; Item 002, Office of the Ombudsman, pages 26 and 27; Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services, page 27; Item 001, General Administration, pages 27 to 28. Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.

Appropriation Bill, 2017

Tuesday, October 17, 2017

Mr. Lee: Madam Chair, page 28, Line Item 97, Expenses of the Office of the Leader of the Opposition was decreased by \$195,000.

Hon. Imbert: That is just a round number. It will be supplemented—

Mr. Lee: Well, why did you not round it back up to \$3.5 million that was there in 2017?

Mr. Imbert: We rounded in the millions.

Member: Say you will give it—

Mr. Imbert: I said I will give it back. Why are you behaving like this?

Mr. Lee: Okay, sorry. Thank you. You will give it back. Okay.

Hon. Imbert: You could listen to Princes Town.

Mr. Lee: Okay. We will get it back, \$195,000—\$3.5 million. Thank you.

Madam Chairman: Item 002, Office of the Ombudsman, pages 28 and 29; Sub-Head, 03, Minor Equipment Purchases, Item 001, General Administration, page 30; Item 002, Office of the Ombudsman, page 30; Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies, Item 002, Commonwealth Bodies, page 30; Item 004, International Bodies, page 31.

Hon. Members, we will now move on to the *Draft Estimates of the Development Programme*—different book. Sub-Head, 09, Development Programme, Consolidated Fund, page 9; Item, 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services, page 9; Infrastructure Development Fund, page 192—same book; Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services, page 192.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 05 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Madam Chairman: I would like to thank Madam Clerk and the other representatives for the Parliament. You all are discharged.

Hon. Members, the Standing Finance Committee is suspended to Thursday, the 19th day of October, 2017 at 1.30 p.m.

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