

**VERBATIM NOTES OF THE FIRST PUBLIC MEETING OF THE
PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND APPROPRIATION COMMITTEE
HELD IN THE J. HAMILTON MAURICE ROOM, MEZZANINE FLOOR
(IN PUBLIC) TOWER D, THE PORT OF SPAIN INTERNATIONAL
WATERFRONT CENTRE, 1A WRIGHTSON ROAD, PORT OF SPAIN, ON
WEDNESDAY, APRIL 13, 2016, AT 2.35 P.M.**

PRESENT

Mrs. Bridgid Annisette-George	Chairman
Mrs. Ayanna Webster-Roy	Member
Miss Nicole Olivierre	Member
Mr. Maxie Cuffie	Member
Dr. Lackram Bodoë	Member
Mr. Wade Mark	Member
Mr. Daniel Dookie	Member
Miss Allyson Baksh	Member
Mr. Clarence Rambharat	Member
Miss Melissa Ramkissoon	Member

Mrs. Jacqui Sampson-Meiguel	Secretary
Miss Sheranne Samuel	Assistant Secretary

OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL AND LEGAL AFFAIRS

Ms. Ingrid Seerattan	Permanent Secretary
Ms. Angela Siew	Permanent Secretary

Mr. Chairman: Good afternoon everyone and I wish to welcome the officials of the various Ministries, the members of the media and the public to the first public meeting of the Eleventh Parliament of the Public Administration and

Appropriation Committee which is the Committee set up to examine the 2016 expenditure of the various Ministries.

The mandate of this Committee is to examine the budgetary expenditure of Government entities as it occurs in order to ensure compliance with parliamentary approval to monitor ongoing expenditure, to determine hindrances to efficiency in the administration of Government and to make recommendations for the improvement of public administration.

The scope of this Committee is to monitor the real-time spending of government agencies relative to the policies and projects for which appropriations were made under the Heads of Expenditure. Before we start with the substance of today's business, I would like to invite the Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of the Attorney General and the Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Legal Affairs, both of them being the accounting officers in the Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs. [*Crosstalk*]

I am corrected. There is one accounting officer and that will be the Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of the Attorney General, yes? And thank you both ladies for attending and primarily it is just really to explain to the Committee the reason that your submission has not as yet come to the Committee.

Ms. Seerattan: Thank you, Madam Chair. What initially transpired, the initial request was sent to the Ministry of Legal Affairs. The Permanent Secretary at the Ministry of Legal Affairs is not the accounting officer. I was not provided with a request to provide information until she received it. It was at that point when it was eventually sent to me, thereafter, that we asked for an extension to provide a response, and I think we had asked until—yesterday was the deadline. We had asked until yesterday. We are still, at this point, still trying to put together all of the information. For the most part, we have most of the information, just that we

are awaiting some information from some of the other agencies in order to complete the report to be submitted.

Madam Chairman: Madam Permanent Secretary, the difficulty that the Committee faces is that, while we understand the explanation that it may not have been sent directly to you as the accounting officer, it meant that, I think the submissions were due March 11th. So we are very well out of time, and even at your initial request for April 12th, it appears that you still would not have been in a position to have met that time frame which the Committee considers a really, very serious default, because even as of today, you still do not have all the information for, say, if the Committee were minded to grant it for submission on Monday.

Ms. Seerattan: I understand, Madam Chair. In the midst of it we have also had a number of changes in terms of the Ministries. We had changes even at the PS level within the Ministries; even this week we only had a new Permanent Secretary taking office. So we have had to get her into understanding what was being requested, which is what she has been trying within this last week, so that we are coming to terms with the information that has been asked. At this point, we have, like I indicated earlier, we do have more or less, most of the information ready for submission. We just need, maybe two further days or so to complete the information to be provided as requested.

Madam Chairman: So that, from what you are saying, your submission should be ready by Monday?

Ms. Seerattan: Yes, Madam Chair.

Madam Chairman: And in that case, the Committee with a very heavy heart would agree to a submission deadline being—

Ms. Seerattan: Monday.

Madam Chairman: Monday.

Ms. Seerattan: Understood, Madam Chair.

Madam Chairman: Thank you very much. You all are relieved.

Ms. Seerattan: Thank you.

[Entity officials exit the committee room]

MINISTRY OF SPORT AND YOUTH AFFAIRS

Ms. Joan Mendez	Permanent Secretary
Mr. Ian Ramdahin	Deputy Permanent Secretary
Adrian Raymond	Ag. CEO Sport
Mr. Wilford Fullerton	Project Coordinator
Ms. Meredith Sambury	Accounting Executive
Mr. Lyndon Burton	Assistant Project Coordinator
Ms. Calistra Gregoire	Project Manager
Ms. Sade Sarjeant-Hanief	Project Analyst

Madam Chairman: Therefore we will now embark on the substance of today's meeting which would be to examine the expenditure thus far of the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs. At this stage I would like to invite the members of the Committee to introduce themselves while the representatives from the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs take their seats at the table provided for them. And if I can start from my furthest right, with the introductions by the members of the Committee.

[Members of the Committee introduce themselves]

Madam Chairman: And then, could I ask the members, the representatives from the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs to introduce themselves and I can start with the Permanent Secretary.

[Permanent Secretary introduces herself and other officials from the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs]

Madam Chairman: Thank you very much and I am Bridgid Annisette-George, the Chairman of this Committee. The purpose of this first public meeting is to examine the 2016 expenditure of the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs under the following subheads: Current Transfers and Subsidies, Development Programme, Consolidated Fund and the Infrastructure Development Fund. The Committee is therefore desirous of hearing from the Permanent Secretary and the other key officials of the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs to discover the challenges being faced and to determine the possible solutions to these challenges. The role therefore of this Committee is to assist the Ministry to achieve efficient delivery of services while ensuring that expenditure is embarked upon in accordance with Parliamentary approval.

For the information of all, this meeting is being held in public and it is being broadcast live on the Parliament Channel 11, radio 105.5 FM, and the Parliament's YouTube channel, *ParlView*. Viewers and listeners can send their comments related to today's topic via email, parl101@ttparliament.org, facebook.com/ttparliament and Twitter [@ttparliament](https://twitter.com/ttparliament).

All the introductions having been done, I will therefore now invite the Permanent Secretary to make a brief opening statement about her Ministry. Madam Permanent Secretary.

Ms. Mendez: Good afternoon, Madam Chair, good afternoon committee members. I thank you for this opportunity to share some of our challenges, but as well to share some of our strategies in dealing with the challenges we have faced over the period under review. The Ministry is in a transition period having had the youth affairs portfolio returned in September 2015. We also went through another transition, in that the regional complexes was removed and transferred to the Ministry of Community Development, Culture and Arts.

During the period of assimilation and, of course, with the attendant issues of mergers having to assimilate the youth affairs portfolio, we have faced challenges regarding our human resource staffing, record keeping, inventory management and our asset management. As we bring all these different factors together we are implementing systems to look at inventory control, as well as to develop certain policies and practices that can guide whenever we have merging of Ministries or separation of the Ministries and their portfolios.

In November, the Ministry received Cabinet's approval for the one-year action plan and whilst at the same time of implementing that action plan we have been undertaking some reviews of our policies and systems and work processes that might have been hampering the efficiency and effective operations of the Ministry.

We are also facing some challenges in the implementation of our capital projects, as well as certain payments of outstanding commitments that have faced us during this current financial year have impacted on us in delivering some of our planned programmes and projects for the fiscal year 2015/2016. As we move into a period of stabilizing some of the upheavals that change brings in a Ministry, we have been engaging in some capacity building for our heads of divisions, particularly, in areas of procurement, financial management and accounting procedures. We are looking also at enhancing the capacity in our HR and accounts unit and hopefully we will get certain funds under our training vote so we can also expose our audit section which we know needs some building in terms of competencies and skills.

During this period as we move towards the end of this financial year, we hope to commence our strategic review, as well as transformation exercise as the Ministry is transitioning itself to be more policy and programme management

oriented, as well as to assume a more robust monitoring and evaluation and audit type of operation. So, this gives you an overview in terms of the work so far at the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs. Thank you.

Madam Chairman: Thank you very much, Madam Permanent Secretary, and I just want to start the conversation on the point that you yourself made very early in terms of the transition. In the context of, we received on Monday I think, a revised submission and therefore I would like to ask, what prompted this revision which came before the Committee?

Ms. Mendez: We thought it was fit to bring the Committee up to date regarding our mid-year review and some of our revised projects and, of course, allocations, as well as to bring current expenditure to date of some of the votes.

Madam Chairman: So that, I think we have seen clearly that there have been some changes in the figures which I think would suggest increases in expenditure. In terms of the mid-year review, how did that impact your Ministry?

Ms. Mendez: Regarding the mid-year review we had focused on our operating cost and expenses, so we had to engage in a line-to-line item in terms of reviewing our expenditure. In certain areas, it was very tight. We had to cut and hopefully we will be able to transfer back into some of the votes. But we, of course, attempted not to touch our personal expenditure. We looked at our electricity and some of the utilities, probably, being more cost saving, turning off our lights, sending out communication that, you know, be more careful in the use of the telephone.

We also looked at the various service providers, how we can get more value in terms of the services that are provided. We are in the process of advertising very soon a prequalification list so we would be able to capture various service providers in various services that the Ministry requires from time to time and to

come up with a more cost-effective way of managing our contracts.

What are some of the other areas? Unfortunately we had to look at training and this is very crucial, because as we recruit new staff we have to acclimatize them to the culture of the Ministry, the systems, of course our code of conduct, the necessary regulations and in conducting training, of course, there is a cost in providing trainers and the cost of materials. One of our issues is the whole situation of short-term employment, because much of the staff, unfortunately, in both the sport division and the youth division have been on short-term for over four, five, six years. It is a very frightening situation, a very challenging situation, particularly for the person who comes out from an HR background. It presents an industrial relations challenge.

Madam Chairman: Thank you and I just would like to ask one question before I open the floor and it is with respect to a comment in your submission referring to your internal audit unit. There is a statement that it is currently understaffed and the complement of human resources lack expert skills in forensic auditing and value for money auditing. And therefore I would like to, if you could assist the Committee in understanding then, having regard to having made this statement, how then do you assess the effectiveness of your audit unit and how do you ensure transparency and value for money in light of those challenges?

Ms. Mendez: Madam Chair and Committee, I will answer part of the question and then I will ask my Deputy Permanent Secretary who has been spearheading a project in terms of reengineering our procurement and financial system, as well as audit system. Yes, we do have the challenge in the internal audit, but I will say, it is a systemic problem throughout the public service, in that the role of the internal audit has evolved. We are in a situation in terms of technology and, of course, sophisticated persons who may know how to avert and do things that contravene

the regulations.

Fortunately, we have persons that will bring these things to the attention of either the Deputy Permanent Secretary or myself and we have at this time certain investigations that are being undertaken which I would not be able to provide details. So that coming into the internal audit we need to equip the internal audit with the adequate resources. We do intend to engage a service provider to do some audit training. At another Ministry I was able to do that and saw the success in bringing in persons to equip the internal audit with the particular competencies. I know last year, the Ministry of Finance had developed certain charters and guidelines to guide the internal audit operations. So that is also work in progress. I will now defer to Deputy Permanent Secretary, who may wish to add.

Mr. Ramdahin: Regarding the audit capacity of the Ministry, the Ministry has engaged a financial consultant to assist us in examining all financial reports, preparing the Auditor General's Report. Previously, in the Ministry, the preparation of the Auditor General responses was not centralized. We have centralized that now basically. It is the Deputy PS office which handles the coordination of the responses to the Auditor General. Because my background is also intelligence, finance project management and monitoring, I have been basically trying to train somebody, subordinate staff, monitoring evaluation, auditing and building capacity back into the institution. So even though we may appear depleted in terms of the staffing, in term of the experience, we do have in-house capabilities to supplement.

Madam Chairman: Thank you very much. I therefore will invite the Member, Miss Ramkissoon.

Miss Ramkissoon: Good afternoon to the panel of the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs. Let me just add to, Madam Chair, and say thank you for sticking

with the Committee's deadline in submitting and seeing it fit to send a revision after hearing the mid-year review. So I want to thank you for that added information. We are in a bit tense in the room right now, but money tends to do that, right? So I want to dive straight into the submission that, on page four, which deals with how much money was transferred in relation to 011/01 which is the Brian Lara Stadium and if you can just share with me, because in the first submission there was nil and then it was released, approximately \$34 million. And then also on that same page, number two, it speaks about a repayment of a loan facility from the First Citizens Bank Limited for the Brian Lara Stadium.

So I would like to know if that payment, that \$33 million incorporates that repayment loan and if not or if so, can you just give some details on it, as well? Let me just ask one more thing in terms of money and the revision that was submitted. A new project was submitted, project number 094, which deals with the construction of swimming pools. And in the old submission which was also dealt with, project number 096, which dealt with upgrading of swimming pools. I noted on 094 though, the project over exceeded its approved budgets, so we are actually on a variation about \$87 million and I would like to know why we have reached this or if you can just clear up this information for this Committee, please. Thank you.

Ms. Mendez: Madam Chair, regarding the payment of the Brian Lara, we are financing a loan that goes up to 2019. So that was the instalment that was due, that you would have seen reflected there in terms of that figure.

Miss Ramkissoon: Just a supplement to that. In light of the present situation where there is a promise to deliver the completion of this project in 2016 and it has an amount of \$10 million, does this loan take that into consideration if it—

Ms. Mendez: This loan, it is regarding the original project and the project in terms

of the completion. This is in progress with UDeCOTT and we are now finalizing that arrangement. Mr. Raymond.

Mr. Raymond: Mr. Adrian Raymond of the Sport Company. We have oversight, 094 refers to the National Aquatic Centre in Couva. Part of the variation would be an expanded scope of works at the facility. When the facility would have been first envisioned there was a different location. There were issues with that particular location and they then moved to the location where it is currently at, which is in Couva. What also occurred as well was that, there was also an additional facility put into the Aquatic Centre which was the diving pools and the dive facility as well.

In addition, there were also upgrades that would have been done to the facility where we got a very much more modern system, which is the Murtha system which is the internationally, the most sound international system you can used for aquatic in giving us good FINA certification. FINA is the overall body responsible for the certification of Aquatic Centres and competitive pools across the world. Then, in addition to that, what we would have also done would have been an upgrade and part of that would have been at the Aquatic Centre as well, furniture, fixtures and equipment.

Previously, they would have been, the equipment would have come out of one particular area which would have been out of China. The issue with that would have been a question of the warranty on that particular equipment and how difficult it would have been to get that equipment. So we would have upgraded, it would have been a little more expensive at the upfront, but it would have been easier replacement later on.

In addition, because we were trying to standardize the sort of equipment we had across at all the facilities, it meant that we would have been able to benefit

from economies of scale in the procurement process. So therefore we would have had a better price point on those as opposed to always having to head to one supplier or one particular area to change out, because no matter how well we take care of those facilities at some point in time there are parts and equipment you are going to have to change out. So it was more down the road sort of thinking.

Miss Ramkissoo: Thank you for that explanation, but this project is not complete. Well, quoted here, 95 per cent and we are already at \$84 billion over our estimated approved budget. Now this will definitely affect your financial stance in 2016. So would you like to let me know what you have put in place to cover this cost or what projects you have stopped to cover this incurred cost?—because I figure you have to still add money to this now, to operate it.

Mr. Raymond: Right. There are a couple of other facilities that are readily available to the Sport Company. We are in discussions with the Ministry of Finance in terms of where we are going, how we are going to then allocate and there were some projects that we would have suppressed as well in order to complete that. Part of the scope under that project would have been six facilities that would have been constructed. There would have been the Aquatic Centre, the Cycling Velodrome, the Tennis Centre which you all would be familiar with, and a number of multi-purpose indoor state of the art facilities. We would have suppressed two of those facilities. One of the key reasons being that we could not find land in which to locate them, so we would have suppressed those as well.

We also had an opportunity through an ANSA bond facility to build nine regional sporting complexes as well. We would have suppressed, I think, maybe four of those or five of those as well. So there would have been some savings there and the idea being to repurpose that ANSA loan in order to bond facilities, in order to cover the cost of the national projects. Not just the Aquatic Centre, but

also the Cycling Velodrome and the Tennis Centre as well.

3.05 p.m.

Madam Chairman: I would like to recognize Member Baksh.

Miss Baksh: My question has to do with transparency, accountability and value for money. My first question to you is who constitutes the audit committee and how often are internal audits conducted?

Ms. Mendez: Internal audit will be carrying out their work programme on a weekly basis, because they will be responsible for auditing not only the Ministry but all the facilities. So they go out to the various facilities, sport facilities, and youth facilities, under our purview. The audit committee, at this time it will just comprise the auditor, but we are hoping to expand as we move towards getting our pre-qualification list in having an internal committee which will comprise the deputy permanent secretary or permanent secretary, our head of administration, our accounts and other different personnel in the Ministry. But that is to be finalized in probably a month or two.

Miss Baksh: Great. What were some of the corrective actions, if any, taken against persons in breach of policies and procedures?

Ms. Mendez: When I assumed duty at the Ministry, investigations were undertaken and the reports would have been sent to the Public Service Commission. So disciplinary action was initiated against the officers, and I was appointed investigator for about two of the disciplinary matters. The reports have been submitted to the Commission and we await the outcome. The officers are on suspension at this time.

Miss Baksh: My last question to you. In terms of the HR issues you have just outlined, in terms of training and development, recruitment selection, short-term contracts, what steps have the Ministry taken in addressing these challenges?

Ms. Mendez: Regarding the training and development, the Ministry has done a needs assessment and developed a training plan which we have provided to the Ministry of Finance. We have been getting funds and we do hope that we get other funds during the rest of the year. If not, it would be carried over to our next fiscal year.

Regarding short-term employment, a Cabinet-appointed committee was appointed a couple months ago and we await the report of the committee which will include strategies, how the ministries and departments will treat with short-term employment. In the interim, the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs, we had vacant positions on our contract establishment. We advertised and those persons who were qualified were asked to apply. We are now going through the interviewing process. So persons who were on short-term and they were qualified for the various positions we advertised were allowed to apply for contracts.

Madam Chairman: May I invite Member Cuffie?

Mr. Cuffie: Thank you, Madam Chair. I have two questions. The first is to the Deputy PS. Could you enlighten me about the financial consultant who advises on the reports to the Auditor General? Is this a position on the establishment? Is it a contract position? And how does it work? And the second question I have relates to the submission on page 7 on:

“the procedures to ensure compliance with parliamentary approval, proper management of resources”.

Now, that speaks to a system of internal checks and internal controls, but that seems to be at variance with the submission on page 8 where it speaks to the fact that the internal audit unit is currently understaffed and the complement of human resources, lack of expert skills in forensics. So on the one hand you are saying that you have the capability to address weaknesses and detect fraud, and the other page

you are saying that you are significantly understaffed and things may escape you. So I want to know how you marry those two.

Mr. Ramdahin: The position of financial consultant was a short-term engagement where the consultant was to come into the Ministry, examine systems and procedures, execute training and capacity building for staff members, and also help us in terms of the backlog, in terms of the Auditor General's responsibility because you know it was many. That person is a former Auditor II, very proficient in his work. The situation we had in the audit department was that the staff did not have much experience. Now, the thing about it, in terms of the internal controls, with audit you need to have work.

So after three months of work, the auditor would come in and evaluate, more on financial matters. Right? When it comes to project-related matters, the Monitoring and Evaluating Unit would go out and assess in terms of tracking schedule, manpower loading, all these different things that, you know, projects need to have under control to prevent cost overrun. Now, the internal auditor would not do that particular thing because that is not their scope, so the internal audit would only focus on the scope according to the financial regulations, and the monetary and evaluation which comes on the other side, would be the facilities in project examination.

So what we had was people who did not have much experience and we felt that we need to bring in someone with the experience to guide them and develop the capacity. So the consultant has been holding several training courses and staff from the accounts, the registry, clerical, administrative, have been trained in financial procedures.

Mr. Cuffie: So you advertise and you—

Mr. Ramdahin: Internal training. We have been saving cost by having our

internal consultant run internal training.

Mr. Cuffie: No, I meant in terms of the recruitment of the financial consultant. You put out an ad, you weigh the submissions, or was it somebody who was employed there before?

Mr. Ramdahin: It was a former employee who was retained—continuation.

Mr. Cuffie: The other part of the question in terms of the systems of internal control to detect fraud, and on the other hand you are saying that you do not have the staff to do it.

Mr. Ramdahin: Right. So, basically, a lot of the work in terms of correcting the anomalies and all the malpractice within the Ministry of Sport is basically headed by my office, Deputy PS, because of my experience in terms of trying to profile the organization, looking at all the systems and process mapping of how the flow goes in terms of when you generate a project, how it is justified and sanctioned, up to the PS. So I am basically the vetting point where, before anything goes to the PS for signing I would proof-check these applications and try to red flag issues and bring it to the PS's attention. In doing that, a lot of questionable applications that would have been submitted in the past is no longer being submitted. So we have been basically streamlining operations within the Ministry.

Mr. Cuffie: I do not want to be too long, but I know of the history of the Ministry of Sport. On page 9, you know, I am alarmed at the fact that you say that:

“The internal audit unit is currently understaffed. The complement of human resources, lack of expert skills in forensic, accounts, auditing, value for money auditing”

—and you cannot give absolute assurance that noncompliance or irregularities do not exist. So it is alarming in terms of the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs and the history that that situation still exists, but yet you give the assurance, you know,

you have the procedures to detect weakness and fraud.

Mr. Ramdahin: Basically, the detection part is spearheaded by my department. Once I see something that is questionable, once you could recognize it, let us say like failure to submit three quotes, I would red flag that, send it to the audit department. The audit would do an enquiry why it is there were not three quotes. It may be that the timeline was not sufficient for getting three quotes, because a lot of applications come in last minute for sponsorship.

Another thing—some things like what we were doing, we were receiving goods without having a delivery note. Right? Now, this was a normal practice. By flagging this and telling the auditor or the relevant administrative staff that you cannot receive a good without having a delivery note to quantify what has been delivered, whether it matched what was in the invoice order versus what is in the delivery note. So reconciliation, simple things that we were doing in terms of trying to correct.

Another aspect that we tackled was the inventory management, making sure only the authorized persons have control over the access to stocks within the Ministry, because we had a situation where certain persons had copies of keys, and we stopped that by changing all the keys and only one person has the keys, plus the PS and myself.

Madam Chairman: I just would like to intervene here and ask the Deputy Permanent Secretary again, based on the same audit functioning, it would appear to me as if you are central to the audit function even though you have an internal auditor.

Mr. Ramdahin: Yes.

Madam Chairman: There is a statement saying that the last audit was done first quarter 2015. Is that still the current position?

Mr. Ramdahin: That would—basically, the first three months of the fiscal year—

Madam Chairman: Which fiscal year?

Mr. Ramdahin: Let us say 2016. So we are looking for like October to December, so your audit will have to have information for that three months in terms of—so they may start the audit in January. So for this second quarter that would have passed, they would have to wait on that particular three months to collect the information to do the reconciliation.

Madam Chairman: Yes, but your statement says the internal audit unit conducted a series of audit exercises during the first quarter of 2015. So I am really asking if that was the last time any internal audit exercise was undertaken. That is really what I am asking.

Mr. Ramdahin: I have been advised by the PS, this was a typo.

Madam Chairman: Excuse me?

Mr. Ramdahin: This has been a typo. This is supposed to be 2016.

Madam Chairman: Oh, this is 2016.

Mr. Ramdahin: Yes.

Madam Chairman: Okay. Because it begged the question with respect to all of the interventions that I saw that you were making, whether they were working at all. Okay, thank you. I will give another Member an opportunity. I will call Member Dookie.

Mr. Dookie: Thank you, Madam Chair. I need some clarification based on your manpower establishment. Regarding the audit function, are you up to your manpower strength?

Ms. Mendez: At this time, no.

Mr. Dookie: In terms of numbers.

Ms. Mendez: In terms of numbers, because we had the auditor proceeding on

considerable leave. We are trying to minimize the accumulation of leave. Fortunately, the replacement came yesterday, but the auditor is to resume in two weeks' time. We had an auditing assistant at short notice decided to proceed on retirement at 56, and I think we have about two vacancies. So we are liaising with the Service Commission's Department to source either acting or filling of positions.

Mr. Dookie: Fair enough. And again for my own clarification. That is in terms of numbers, but in terms of skills and competencies you have a shortfall there as well?

Ms. Mendez: We have a shortfall and that is why it is planned, hopefully, during this next quarter, that we engage in some training in audit and forensic-type audit procedures, because we believe we can build the capacity with the persons who show the interest and really seem to have the passion for audit.

Mr. Dookie: So there is demonstrated ability within the organization?

Ms. Mendez: Yes, definitely. Yes.

Mr. Dookie: Fair enough. Continuing, Madam Chair, briefly, in your opening remarks you indicated that you are currently implementing new systems to improve inventory control. Could you give us some more details about those systems and how do you plan to measure the effectiveness of those systems going forward?

Ms. Mendez: Well, certainly, we have started a needs assessment and ensuring that all our assets are recorded in accordance to regulations, because in many organizations, not only in Ministry of Sport, you will realize that we do not have effective record-keeping in terms of our furniture, furnishings and different assets. And, of course, you will understand having so many facilities under the portfolio we need to be able to identify where things are.

We are also implementing, through our project, regarding upgrade in our ICT project, that we will move in terms of a more e-approach regarding our inventory. It has started, fortunately, under the IT unit and we hope to expand that system throughout, so we can easily identify where an item is.

Madam Chairman: Might I, Member Dookie, invite another Member to make a contribution?

Mr. Dookie: Sure, sure, sure, Ma'am.

Madam Chairman: Sen. Mark?

Mr. Mark: Thank you very much, Madam Chairman. We all know that the economy of Trinidad and Tobago is experiencing some difficulties. You did mention—that is the Permanent Secretary—in your opening remarks, that there were certain challenges that the Ministry seemed to be facing as it concerns the implementation of the capital programme. I would like you to, first of all, elaborate on those challenges for us.

The other area I would like to ask you to share with this Committee, we all know that there has been a 7 per cent reduction in expenditure. Could you provide this Committee with a ballpark figure of the size of the value involving this 7 per cent cut in expenditure in your Ministry? And under the heading “Current Transfers and Subsidies”, Madam Chair—and this is my final question for round one—I would like to ask the Permanent Secretary to indicate to us, as we prepare for Football World Cup 2018, we prepare our national football team within the framework of a national development football plan, the whole issue of funding is critical here, could you share with this Committee whether there is a plan in place to fund this campaign of our national football team as we prepare for 2018, in order to avoid previous financial issues that arose in past campaigns? And could you outline the plan, taking into consideration players and staff salaries,

accommodation, flight, food, travel, gears, going forward? Madam Chair, these are the three areas I would like to have clarified.

Ms. Mendez: Thank you, Member. Regarding our capital projects, as you are aware, and our CEO, Mr. Raymond would have indicated, that the Sports Company, being the implementing agency, most of our capital projects fall under their purview. However, what we had faced in coming into this financial year were many outstanding commitments from the previous financial year, which eroded our current allocation. So that was one of the challenges we have faced. And, basically, during the first quarter, our disbursements really were tied to our recurrent expenditure. We are now seeing more disbursements and funding towards our capital projects. This is the second part of the financial year.

Regarding the 7 per cent operating reduction that we had to do, I think it was approximately \$34 million but I cannot say if that is the figure. We are waiting, from the Ministry of Finance following the mid-year review last week, to get the actual breakdown in respect of the allocation that we would have received in terms of the revised budget.

The campaign towards 2018 with Football World Cup campaign, what we have asked is that we are working with the TTFA in respect of their budget and their request that—they do come in timely. But regarding the funding constraints, we ask for specifics in their flight arrangements. And their cost for the coaches we usually will ask for the budget, and the disbursement is taken from the Sports Company's subvention. So Mr. Raymond will give you the various procedures and systems that they have operating and that we work very closely with, through the Ministry of Sport, ensuring that we get value for money. So Mr. Raymond will take it up from here.

Mr. Raymond: The Sports Company has been given a budget and has given the

TTFA a commitment with regard to the campaign that the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, through the Sports Company, will cover all flight arrangements and all accommodation, locally and internationally. How that usually works is that through Sports Procurement Unit we will book the flights through various travel agencies or airlines. The reason that is done is that we have 16 national governing bodies of sport under us and a multitude of national teams. So therefore, we are able to make particular arrangements with particular airlines and particular travel agencies too because we are giving you this value of business and we can get it at a better rate. So that all of that is passed through us, once they submit all the information on time, and that covers players from across the globe that are coming into camp in Trinidad and then moving on to wherever the various locations would be, where they would have their various games. This covers both qualification matches and international friendlies, which are seen as integral, as part of their preparation for the legitimate qualification matches.

In terms of accommodation, the same thing is done. We will—particularly locally, we will work with local hotels in terms of being able to get a best rate. Because you come through the Sports Company you are guaranteed to have a certain level of business, so we are able to negotiate better rates. Internationally, depending on where the game is taking place and also other factors, for example, if it is that it is an issue of time and adjusting to times, or if there is an issue of adjusting to altitude, that will determine how early the team goes. Where we can make a direct wire transfer to the particular hotel or wherever they are staying, we do that. If not, the money is released to the TTFA who must then provide all the necessary bills, et cetera, and basically we will be able to kind of reconcile it that way.

If there is, for some reason, an issue where a player misses their flight or has to stay back later and there is an adjustment, there is a reimbursement that takes

place. In addition to providing other support, what we will do is that for the games in Trinidad and Tobago, there is absolutely no charge. We underwrite a lot of the operational costs associated with staging the games here: electricity, water, T&TEC, even the extra security. Even VIP and protocol services are provided. A member of the Sports Company sits on the Local Organizing Committee with the TTFA, the idea being if we can reduce as much as possible their operational costs and Trinidad and Tobago comes in to support the team, the gate receipts can supplement and be a source of income for the TTFA to cover their salaries.

Madam Chairman: Thank you very much. So might I invite Member Bodoë, please?

Mr. Bodoë: Thank you, Madam Chair. My questions relate to the Youth Affairs projects on page 32 and 33 with regard to Project 001 and 003:

“Save the youth in marginalized communities and youth in especially challenging circumstances”.

Both appear to be, you know, well intentioned in terms of perhaps even addressing the present crime situation. But I note that these projects have been deferred to financial year 2017. Madam Permanent Secretary, can you give an explanation as to why?

Ms. Mendez: Thank you. As I indicated, in the period of transition we had to get the various handing over from the previous Ministry in respect to these projects. We are undergoing a review in terms of what would have been delivered in the project deliverables that would have been prepared. And also, we have determined that some of these projects, in order to save the money, we can collaborate with other agencies who carry out similar surveys. The tertiary institutions, they carry out certain research. We thought we can work with those institutions. We have other social service delivery ministries who have undertaken surveys. So we are

looking and exploring those options.

Mr. Bodoë: If I can, a supplemental. So is the Committee to understand then that in the interim that some of these activities are still going to be taking place?

Ms. Mendez: Yes. The review is being undertaken and we are liaising with the tertiary institutions as well as Ministry of Social Development and Family Services. We have a very important initiative: Development of a Youth Employment Policy, and we are collaborating with the Ministry of Labour and Small Enterprise Development in treating with that particular project, and hopefully we can implement in fiscal 2017.

Mr. Bodoë: One further question, if I may, Madam Chair, and it relates to the Sport Development Officers. I note that there are 36 Sport Development Officers. Can you indicate to the Committee how these officers are allocated throughout the country? And also, what are their objectives and what is done to ensure the country gets value for money in terms of the deployment of these officers?

Ms. Mendez: Well, as of March 31, the contracts had ended—the three-year team of engagement. The actual job description and specification is under review. As I indicated at the introduction, the Ministry is transitioning into more policy-oriented monitoring and evaluation and auditing. So the work of the Sport Development Officer has to be changed in keeping with the new thrust of the Ministry. Formerly, the work of the SDOs dealt with the community and engaging in projects with different organizations and clubs. What we are hoping in the transition Ministry formation, we will be empowering those agencies to do the work rather than the Ministry being the implementing, executing sort of entity. So, as I said, it is a period of transition and we are looking at a review of the job description and specification of the Sport Development Officer.

Mr. Bodoë: Thank you, PS.

Madam Chairman: Member Olivierre?

Miss Olivierre: Thank you, Madam Chair. The question I have relates to the oversight of entities which are recipient of subventions from the Ministry, and particularly the Sports Company. I recognize that the Sports Company is the implementation arm of the Ministry and is responsible for the capital projects. Now, in your response as to how you assess the effectiveness of these entities you indicated that you review the monthly and annual reports. So my question, really, is twofold. In terms of the Ministry itself, are your annual reports that are to be submitted to Parliament, are those up to date? And in terms of the Sports Company, have you received those annual reports as well, with audited financials? Are they up to date, and have they been submitted to Parliament within the stipulated time frames?

Ms. Mendez: Thank you, Chair and Member. We are in the process of bringing all the administrative reports for the Ministry of Sport—of the then Ministry of Sport—as well as the Sports Company. We should be approaching Cabinet next week for the outstanding reports for the Sports Company 2013/2014 and by the following week, 2015. The outstanding reports for the Ministry of Sport and Youth—Ministry of Sport, I should say, is being finalized as well for submission. But I will pass to Ms. Gregoire, who is in the process of preparing the reports so she can provide some details.

Ms. Gregoire: Good afternoon everyone. In terms of the Ministry of Sport's report, the administrative report, as indicated by the Permanent Secretary, the fiscal years for 2013, 2014 and 2015 have been drafted and submitted for review. Once I get the directive to proceed, we would submit the administrative reports to the Cabinet for approval.

3.35 p.m.

Miss Olivierre: Well with that being the fact then, how can you assess the effectiveness of these entities, given that you are now reviewing the reports? Is it that over the past couple—I guess since 2013 that no administrative reports and certainly no audited financials have been provided for the Sports Company in particular?

Mr. Raymond: Let me try and answer that. The Sports Company has been up to date with regard to its audited financials. The situation that we face is that from August of 2014 to April 2015 there was no active board. So even though the audited financials were completed for 2014 and we were not able to have an AGM, in which case the shareholder, corporation sole, could accept the audited financials. That was done this year, for 2014 as well as for 2015, in February of this year. And because of that, because you have to have those approved audited financials being a part of the administrative report that goes before the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs, we were not able to do that. Because we now have had that happening, because we now have an active board, we have done that.

So the administrative reports would have been completed and submitted, but there would have been absence of the audited financials. That has now been done, but what I can say is that regardless of that, all the monthly and quarterly reports that were required under the State Enterprises Performance Monitoring Manual would have also, as well, been submitted on time to the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs, as well as the Ministry of Finance, and that may have helped in some of the monitoring and evaluation.

Ms. Mendez: In addition, I will want to add we work very closely. Almost on a daily basis we are in communication with the Sports Company. CEO, I think, he gets tired of hearing from me, but we have to do that, basically how the economy is

running and also to keep on top of various activities that are happening either at the Ministry or at Sports Company, and also to get best value. Many times we have to engage in some activity in the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs, and we will collaborate with Sports Company who can readily get the resources going.

So coming back to your point in monitoring, I play a very active role regarding the financial statements that are submitted through us, to the Ministry of Finance, and if there are any anomalies, any certain challenges, the CEO will bring it to my attention, or need be if I have to raise any issue with the CEO and Sports Company it is done. So it is really constant communication.

Madam Chairman: Sen. Ramkissoon.

Miss Ramkissoon: Thank you, Madam Chair. I have two follow-up questions, one, in relation to the question that Dr. Bodoë posed in relation to the youth affairs. It was submitted by the Committee that one of the projects that would be embarked on would be “save the youths in the marginalized communities” and approximately \$1 million was allocated to that. I would like to know if this would be one of the projects that would be embarked on and how many communities would you be looking at?

Ms. Mendez: Thank you, Member. Actually the \$1 million allocation is an outstanding bill we have regarding that project, that we are awaiting Ministry of Finance to disburse funds. As I said, we have couple outstanding commitments for service providers and consultants, so we would have allocated that million to clear outstanding bill.

Miss Ramkissoon: How many communities?

Ms. Mendez: It would have been two communities.

Miss Ramkissoon: And my second follow-up question was in relation to what I have asked about the overdraft in the approved budget for the project with the

swimming pools, and I would like to know—well one of the comments given was the procurement of substandard materials. I am guessing that is what you mean by China, because not everything coming out of China is bad. There is also good, but it is value for money. I saw in one of the answers there is an implementation of a pre-policy procurement process, I would like to know if there is an existing procurement policy; and if it is, how this was not picked up in the procurement process?

Mr. Raymond: What I would say is that at the time that the contracts had been drawn up for all of the national projects and stuff like that, there was a supplemental amount that was determined for furniture fixtures and equipment, et cetera. At the time, the Sports Company did not have an active procurement department. We had a procurement officer, full stop. Since then the Company has recruited. We have a senior manager procurement, as well as a number of procurement officers as well. They are a very, very aggressive group, very much focused on value for money. We do have a procurement policy that is in draft that follows the, again, the State Enterprises Performance Monitoring Manual.

The draft was submitted to the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs for review. It was also submitted to the Ministry of Finance for review, who gave back some comments, et cetera. Those were put into the new draft—and this is over a period of time. Right now because we have now put it forward before our current Board, who have also had a couple of changes that they want to make and stuff like that, following that we will then resubmit to the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs and to the Ministry of Finance for them to review based on the recommendations they would have done, but what we are doing is that we are using the draft as part of our procedure. So we are just at that cusp where it will be no longer in draft but it will be actual policy, but it is what we are using to operate

right now.

Miss Ramkissoo: Just for clarification in relation to that. So we are at a draft stage in the procurement process and we are also selecting contractors and bidders based on a department view, or based on something—

Mr. Raymond: No. The thing is that you would have the technical review. So, for example, if it is we are talking about, say construction of a facility, we do have a Projects Unit and they would do—so what procurement would do would be an oversight of the process, but there will be that technical input from the senior engineers or project managers, et cetera, wherever that particular area of expertise is. Where procurement comes in is to make sure that the processes and procedures have been followed, that we are getting the necessary quotes, that they are followed and they are providing all the very necessary information that they are pre-qualified, that they are registered, and that they cover basically all the tenets under the policy, that that has been followed through.

If there is a particular anomaly, they become the agent that will do, through their monitoring evaluation, pick up that particular anomaly and bring it forward for review, or bring it forward if it is that there is any change that needs to be done. Does that answer your question?

Miss Ramkissoo: I am not sure if that is what I am trying to get out of you. Because in the response on No. 8, you were speaking about establishing a list of limited number of suppliers or contractors, and I want to know if you are not following a process right now because you are in a draft stage? What are you doing, or what are you following to select these contractors or these bidders because there is not open tendering, this is a selective group that you are now narrowing down, may be five people, two people? That is what I am asking.

Madam Chairman: I think the Permanent Secretary might be better equipped to

answer that.

Ms. Mendez: In respect to that response, it is really dealing with our process at the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs, not Sports Company. So DPS who is spearheading that initiative will speak to that issue.

Mr. Ramdahin: Thank you. Basically looking at procurement, the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs, just after the procurement Act was announced, we basically started our research and we have basically advanced pretty much in terms of having drafted instruments put in our guidelines, so that when the procurement authority sets up we would be ready to roll.

One of the things, value for money, coming from the energy sector, project monitoring oversight, where you engage third party to vet projects as they are being executed from basically the planning, the design, commissioning, all these phases going through. Big problems happen at the planning phase where projects are planned and you are not too sure what is happening in the execution. A typical example, we build facilities without a business plan, so when we are ready to start up we do not know how we are going to be making money. So from the oil/gas sector you do not do that. You basically have to start with the business plan whether it is feasible or not to proceed. Big downfall with how Government operates.

Based on my background, I would have—we already have implemented certain things, put certain guidelines in place in terms of when we execute projects we have to have frequent monitoring oversight, site visits, checking the quantity and quality of material as delivered. Same thing like you pay for equipment and you are not sure if the equipment is broken down on site. The spread rate of the equipment, the manpower loading on the site, how many workers you have on the site, sometimes it is padded. So we are basically setting up that system right now.

We have it being advertised. Actually today it is going out.

Once we get these independent parties now come in, we will be able to engage them in terms of having the monitoring and value for money assessment. One thing the sport utility could advise us is that we did one project actually where the bank would have engaged a third party and, Mr. Raymond, he could basically elaborate on how that would have transpired in terms of bringing value.

Madam Chairman: May I at this stage just stop you and allow Member Rambharat to ask his question?

Mr. Rambharat: Thank you very much. This question goes to the heart of this Committee's business. When you have to reduce expenditure already approved by the Parliament, as you have had to do, what criteria do you use to suppress a project; and how is this decision communicated to the Parliament?

Madam Chairman: Madam Permanent Secretary.

Ms. Mendez: Basically for the operating and recurrent, you will look at your overall work programme. The various divisions would have provided their work programme, and you will indicate in terms of priority which are the plans and projects that you need to have done to fulfil the objectives that the Ministry has set or has been set up to do.

Regarding in terms of communicating to Parliament, this will have to be, I guess, through Ministry of Finance. We would provide Ministry of Finance a revised list of our projects and programmes. And in compiling, the Ministry of Finance will provide, I think, an overall for all Ministries and Government departments, the revised prioritized projects.

But I would want to add when we had to do our 7 per cent cut it was a very collaborative approach between not only the Ministry, but with Sports Company. I think we sat at the table for, must be, four/five hours and really looking at what

would be the impact if we remove these projects. Our community programmes, you know—we need our community programmes, but how can we fill that gap if we remove that? If we have to cut our subventions to the NGBs (the National Governing Bodies) how would that impact in their implementing their sport programmes, seeing that we are pushing for sport development? So these are some of the aspects we would look at when we are reducing expenditure.

Mr. Cuffie: I just wanted to ask a question in terms of the delineation between the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs and the Sports Company. So I see the budget has, for example, rural projects and I have a rural constituency. I know there are projects that are handled by the local government bodies, some are handled by Sports and some are handled by the Ministry, and it is hard to determine what is what, so I am trying to get, how do we know what is a sport project, what is a Ministry project? The DPS said that he monitors those, but does he monitor the ones that are done by the Sports Company?

Ms. Mendez: Okay. I will have Mr. Burton, the Assistant Project Coordinator treat with the projects under the purview of Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs, and then I will ask Mr. Raymond to identify the projects that fall under Sports Company.

Mr. Burton: Thank you. The projects under the purview of the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs are the upgrading of swimming pools which deals with the community swimming pools that already exist. We have the improvement of the indoor sporting arenas and the—well really it is the Dwight Yorke Stadium. We do not do any regional or rural projects. That is the Project Management Unit.

Mr. Raymond: To answer your question. The Sports Company of Trinidad and Tobago among the many projects we have to do would be the upgrade and rehabilitation of corporation grounds which would take place in rural communities

as well. In terms of how the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs does a certain level monitoring evaluation where that is concerned, ever so often at least once a quarter, sometimes twice a quarter, members of the Ministry's team, and sometimes even members of the Ministry of Finance, as well as the Ministry of Planning and Development, will go on site visits to various projects across the country. That is usually determined at random

They may determine that they want to go to this particular project, or that particular project, and apart from which, through the Permanent Secretary as well, we provide information in terms of how we spend under the IDF, and it gives also an update in terms of the completion rates and what has occurred under the various projects under our purview. So there is both administrative oversight through the submission of reports, et cetera, and as well as there is practical oversight because there are site visits that are made by members of the Ministry's team.

Madam Chairman: Mr. Raymond, how frequently are site visits done, if there is a system, and when last would have been site visits to any of these?

Mr. Raymond: Generally, I know that at once a quarter, sometimes twice a quarter. I cannot say that it is necessarily systematic per se. I think sometimes it depends on the life cycle of the project. So, for example, if it is that there is a situation where the walls go up, or a pavilion goes up, et cetera, and that kind of thing, there will be at that point in time a need for a visit because sometimes depending on the work that is being done to the human eyes you are not really seeing much. So a lot of times it depends on where the project has reached within the contract period in terms of completed works.

Madam Chairman: And when was the last site visit to any of the projects? If you could give me the last site visit as relates to each project.

Mr. Raymond: As relates to each project?

Madam Chairman: Yes.

Mr. Raymond: We have approximately 30-something active projects under us right now. I cannot give you a listing of each one. I do not have that information right now. There may have been one, I think, within the last quarter.

Madam Chairman: Okay. So could I ask then for that information to be supplied in writing—

Mr. Raymond: No problem.

Madam Chairman:—to Committee, and we will give you till the middle of next week to have that presented to us.

Mr. Raymond: Okay. No problem.

Madam Chairman: You have a follow-up question on your question, Member Cuffie?

Mr. Cuffie: Yes. I am happy that you raised the issue of site visits. I want to give you a practical example. There is a project, a Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs project, in Las Lomas No. 2, and there is a big sign, it is a sport project, the renovation of the Brazil Recreation Ground. Now the Brazil Recreation Ground is in Brazil, the sign is Las Lomas No. 2, so I want to know when you do a site visit that nobody recognized that the sign was in the wrong place and the expenditure that was earmarked for the Brazil Recreation Ground was actually—I do not know whether it was spent in Las Lomas, but that is where the sign was.

Madam Chairman: Mr. Raymond.

Mr. Raymond: I do not have the specifics of that, but I can investigate and look into it. Thank you for pointing it out and I will reply in writing.

Mr. Cuffie: Thank you.

Madam Chairman: May I call on Member Webster-Roy.

Mrs. Webster-Roy: Thank you, Madam Chair. I want to ask about the Elite

Athlete Assistance Programme. I want to know the amount disbursed to date under the programme; how many athletes benefited and how has the programme helped in any way to shape sport development in Trinidad and Tobago, internationally?

Ms. Mendez: Thank you. Deputy Permanent Secretary has the information that he can provide you.

Mr. Ramdahn: Thank you, again. Basically, in looking after the elite athlete we have those who in certain categories, the top 10, top 30, but there are those who are aspiring also who can make the cut and make the most elite, and those are being given grant funding also. Basically the EAAP, which is Elite Athlete Assistance Programme and grant funding disbursement for the fiscal 2015/2016 was \$1,111,800. That is basically grant funding. When you look at the total, the elite would be \$1,543,758. Total to date for both grant and elite, \$2,805,770.

Mrs. Webster-Roy: The elites. The second part of the question.

Mr. Ramdahn: How many elites? In the breakdown we have 20 elite athletes who would have received the \$1.5 million so far, and we have basically 26 receiving grant funding. Now, the thing about the grant funding is you have a lot of those who may not be an elite, but actually making the points to move up and qualify for Olympics. So we are basically prioritizing, for this period, those who could qualify for Olympics and assist them as much as we can.

Madam Chairman: Mr. Mark.

Mr. Mark: Thank you, Madam Chair. We know that sports play a very important role in youth development, and we also recognize the link between active sporting activities and the simultaneously reduction in crime in our communities. I wanted to ask under the heading “Current Transfers and Subsidies”—and that is under the National Football Development Plan—there has been a 40 per cent reduction in the

Government's subvention to the Pro League clubs from \$83,000 to \$50,000; and even with this reduced figure it has not been paid out as yet in 2016, plus the prospective of less attractive kick-off times and a failure to deliver promised community grounds have left top-flight clubs literally limping.

The question I want to ask the Permanent Secretary, would this reduction in subvention affect the league in such a way that the National Football Development Plan would also be affected through less funding for teams, along with the unavailability of community grounds as promised? For example, you may have teams dropping out of the league along with players as an example. So that is the first question, Madam Chair, I would like to have clarified.

Under the Development Programme, Consolidated Fund, with regard to the funds allocated for improvement, upgrades, management and installations, does the Ministry have a record of start and completion dates for these exercises; and also has the software package been installed as promised by the hon. Minister of Sport and Youth Affairs in December of 2015 to determine when the necessary repairs are needed; and if not, when will it be installed? These are the two questions, Madam Chair, I would like to ask the Permanent Secretary.

Ms. Mendez: Thank you, Chair and member. From our review it came to our attention in respect to the additional subvention that was given to the Pro League clubs was not authorized. So the additional amount to the tune of \$83,000 had not gotten Cabinet's approval. That was one of the situations. But secondly, with our reduced allocation, this is what we could have really strive to maintain what was original, which would have been the \$50,000.

We have been working with the TT Pro League, in that we think that the Pro League should now assimilate or acquire new business model in dealing with getting additional funds and reducing the reliance on government's subvention.

Actually when we looked at the records and the approval that would have been granted over 10, 15 years, it was noted by Cabinet that the reliance on government's subvention should have been reduced since almost five/six years ago, but it was continued. But we have reached the point, in that, we really did not have the funding to provide that \$83,000 per team.

So we hope that—and we saw in terms of some of the engagement with TT Pro League that they are moving towards making the sector more profitable by engaging other private sector agencies in assisting. We want to collaborate and hopefully we can do that in the next fiscal year, in improving the recreation grounds, in that if we have it contained, we have it fenced and upgrade the pavilions, that they can get gate receipts and that will go towards the pro leagues in even helping in defraying their expenses. So we are looking at various strategies to help the different clubs.

We do wish that the members will understand that we all have to face the sacrifices. Yes, it is going to be difficult, but there are ways to make the adjustment individually, and as much as the Ministry and Sports Company can provide assistance, we will do so given our allocation. I will ask Mr. Raymond to add any information regarding the recreation grounds because they have been doing some upgrades in some of the fields.

Mr. Raymond: I can provide the Committee information on all of our current active grounds in terms of where they are in terms of their completion. Part of the issues that we have had, the PS would have mentioned earlier, is the rate of releases that we are having under IDF, simply because for many of the smaller contractors they cannot go beyond a particular date where they do not receive their payment. Once it goes beyond 56 days, they may have to slow down, or they may actually have to stop works altogether. So that it would be a little bit unfair of me

to kind of give you a specific end date.

What I can tell you is that we are hoping, based on where we are at in terms of the percentages, that we will have all the active ones finished within this particular financial year and we will move on to the next set. Because what the Sports Company usually does, there is a Cabinet approval for approximately over 100 recreation grounds, but we do it on a phase basis in each financial year. Depending on the scope of work the turnaround time could be anywhere from three to six months and that includes the procurement process.

In terms of the software that Minister Smith would have mentioned, that would have been aligned with the opening of the national sport facilities. It would have been part of the technical maintenance package in terms of what we have been looking at.

So that is meant to be included with whoever the company is that wins that technical maintenance package. That is included in part of what they are supposed to provide. What we would expect is that the software package is fluid enough that it cannot—well it has to be, because we are looking at the national projects as a whole. So you are looking at a tennis centre, a cycle velodrome and an aquatic centre, in addition to a multipurpose facility in Sangre Grande.

So once the software package is fluid enough, it is something that we will want to utilize across the board at all of our facilities. That is part of it as well. So it is coming. We would expect that either before the end of this financial year, or certainly early within the next financial year, that that software package will be up and running.

Mr. Mark: Madam Chair, just a follow-up. The question of that decision to bring it to the real figure that was supposed to be there in the first place, \$50,000 and not \$83,000, an analysis would have been done in terms of the cost and the benefits of

that new low, or that new figure, on the overall operations of the Pro League.

An analysis would have been done in terms of the cost and the benefits of that new low or that new figure on the overall operations of the Pro League.

4.05 p.m.

Therefore, I am asking, based on what you have just said, is the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs along with Sports Company of T&T, would you or would you both be engaging in a very proactive way, the Pro League, to try to, as you said, encourage them to seek corporate sponsors? So that what can happen is that even though they have to make adjustments, it would not be that drastic that would negatively impact on the process, and the actual game itself and the amount of young people who are engaged in this particular activity. Could you tell us, for instance, if any activity is being arranged between your Ministry, the Sports Company and the Pro League to get corporate sponsors to assist this very important league and the youths that are involved in this league?

Ms. Mendez: Madam Chair and Member, we have had two meetings with the TT Pro League engaging in that similar conversation. We have a project that we hope that we can embark upon which is called SELL SPORT. So we are hoping, through Sports Company, to have an expo and we can market the various sporting disciplines. We will invite the TT Pro League and bring in the business sectors to see if we can build that synergy and of course, that engagement between public-private relationships. So we do have some things that we are looking and doing our brainstorming at the Ministry and at Sports Company, how we can help meet the deficits that not only the TT Pro League but some of our NGBs will be facing with our reduced allocation.

Madam Chairman: May I ask Dr. Bodoë to intervene at this stage?

Dr. Bodoë: Thank you, Madam Chair. This question really is a follow-up

question and the issue of the corporation grounds raised previously. I just wanted clarification as to whether the upgrade of corporation grounds is solely the responsibility of the Ministry of Sport or is it done in conjunction with the local government bodies. That is one part of the question. And the second, if I am to refer to page 27 regarding the allocation for the upgrading of corporation grounds, I see an allocation of \$19 million and funds disbursed of \$2.85 million. If I could get an update on the actual amount expended on this area.

Ms. Mendez: Madam Chair and Member, the purview of the upgrade of recreation grounds falls under the responsibility of the Sports Company in collaboration with the regional corporations and Mr. Raymond will elaborate.

Mr. Raymond: In order for any corporation ground to be considered for upgrade or rehabilitation, first of all, it has to be approved by Cabinet then a determination is made in terms of which grounds—it is done on phase basis because we obviously do not get the money to do it within one financial year. Once the ground has been identified, we will engage with the regional corporation under whose purview it is, under the ground. We will also then, therefore, seek their advice in terms of engaging with particular stakeholders to make a determination as to what are the particular areas of focus they would like to be done. Whether they would like the field rehabilitated or a pavilion redone, et cetera, and that kind of thing and as well, what additional sports are taking off within that particular community so we can make accommodations for that. You would appreciate generally, yes, it is football and cricket but sometimes it is a situation where we have to upgrade a basketball court or there is a children's play park that is required, et cetera, and we make those particular interventions, et cetera.

In terms of the allocation, there are a number of outstanding fees and bills that are as well have been submitted, and the way the IDF works is basically like just-in-

time accounting. What we will do is that once the works have been completed and certified, we will then submit those bills, et cetera, and reports to the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs who will then submit it to the Ministry of Finance. The Ministry of Finance will release that specific amount of money under that specific vote for these particular works being done. We are currently awaiting some funds to be released but the majority of the grounds, under the purview, are really nearing their completion stage.

Dr. Bodoë: Can you indicate the number of grounds that are currently—”

Mr. Raymond: Active grounds right now?

Dr. Bodoë: Yeah.

Mr. Raymond: 14.

Miss Ramkissoon: Thank you, Madam Chair. I would like to ask about project no. 121, which is the Dwight Yorke Stadium, and what was presented to the Committee: approved cost, \$760,000, percentage of project completed, 0 per cent; financial allocation for 2015, \$500,000. Did I read that correctly? Just for clarification. Thank you.

Mr. Burton: The Dwight Yorke Stadium, we have an issue there where there are major upgrades to be done at that facility, and the works that we undertake now is to keep the facility up and running until such time as the major works can commence. For this financial year, we have not started any work at the Dwight Yorke Stadium as yet. That project is under review and well, there is where we are with it.

Ms. Mendez: What I would like to add is that we are partnering with the Tobago House of Assembly who fortunately had some funds, so some upgrades had to be done with the mass lighting and some of the areas regarding maintenance. So they are assisting through the Sports Company providing project management services.

I think the work would have been completed because we had some games about two or three weeks ago. So we are looking, not only within our allocation, but also working with the Tobago House of Assembly in getting some of the works undertaken.

Miss Ramkissoon: Okay, thank you. Just for clarification, the \$500,000 is maintenance cost and the \$760,000 that we would like to get is upgrade cost. Is that what you are saying?

Mr. Burton: The level of maintenance that needs to be done, we need to undertake it as a project. We had to do some adjustment to the scope of the work to meet the allocation and, well, like I said, that is where we are.

Madam Chairman: Member Webster-Roy.

Mrs. Webster-Roy: Just a follow-up to Member Ramkissoon's question. Why do we have to wait for it to get to that extent of disrepair? Is there a maintenance schedule in place? Why do we have to wait until it gets that bad and then say we do not have the funds?

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

Mr. Burton: I am not sure I can answer that question.

Ms. Mendez: Well, this is the proactive approach we hope that we are taking now in setting some maintenance schedules and hopefully if we really get that software package, those are some of the systems would be put in place for all our facilities so we would not reach that point. That we will know what are the early signals of areas that we need to have interventions and get the works done.

Miss Ramkissoon: I would like for the panel to, through the Chair, advise the Committee why they took the path of going with a \$500,000 maintenance plan instead of the upgrade plan which was \$760,000. I would like to know that and if you all can submit it in writing to the Committee, please. Why that process was

done instead?

Ms. Mendez: Basically, it would have been what the Ministry of Finance would have provided, so you have to cut according to what you are given. So I believe, what the Assistant Project Coordinator would have indicated, the maintenance schedule and the scope of works would have been modified to fit what was provided through the Ministry of Finance.

Madam Chairman: Member Cuffie.

Mr. Cuffie: Madam PS, I just want to get an idea—I did not see it, maybe it is here—about the process and the cost for the electrification of recreation grounds. I see them all over the place. There are several in my constituency and sometimes the lights go out and nobody knows who pays the bills, how to get it back on. What is the process?

Ms. Mendez: Actually, Chair, that project falls under the Ministry of Public Utilities, not the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs.

Madam Chairman: Member Mark.

Mr. Mark: Yes, thank you very much. Madam Chair, through you to the Permanent Secretary, sport tourism can generate not only vital foreign exchange for Trinidad and Tobago but it can generate employment opportunities for our young people and for workers who are displaced in this country. Given the hundreds of millions of dollars that the taxpayers have invested in so many world-class facilities in Trinidad and Tobago, as outlined by Mr. Adrian Raymond in terms of a number of facilities throughout the country, could you advise us in what ways do the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs, along with the Sports Company, plan to make significant contributions to this country's Gross Domestic Product after the upgrading, the improving and the construction of so many world-class facilities over the last few years. That is a question, Madam, I would like to ask

the Permanent Secretary.

Ms. Mendez: Madam Chair, thank you, Member. This is quite consistent with our thinking at the Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs and the Sports Company. At this time, our Deputy Permanent Secretary sits on a committee chaired by the Ministry of Tourism and they are treating with a sport tourism policy. But while we wait on that, we have been working with Sports Company and really, with Ministry of Finance for us to open our national sporting facilities. I will let Mr. Raymond highlight the line-up we have in terms of the demand for the use of some of our facilities pre-Olympics. Thank you.

Madam Chairman: May I just ask, Madam Permanent Secretary, if in terms of the question, I think it may have required a much greater answer than the time would have permitted and therefore, I will invite you to also put that submission in writing for us, and you know, present it to us by next Wednesday.

Ms. Mendez: But we can share, preliminary, some of the engagements that Sports Company would have been receiving.

Madam Chairman: Yes. And that is why I am saying, in terms of the question, if the wider answer could be put in writing and submitted to the Committee by next Wednesday. Yes?

Ms. Mendez: Certainly, Madam Chair.

Madam Chairman: Member Ramkissoon.

Miss Ramkissoon: I would like to just say, before I ask my question, I would recommend that we really have a procurement process speedily. Okay, I would like to recommend that because even the project in relation to the cycling track we have seen in the submission that is over-budgeted as well, so it is very, very crucial. In relation to that, I saw that the Ministry has a draft policy on conflict of interest, ethics and code of conduct. Would you like to share with us, the

Committee, what is the stage of that process and what it entails to bring?

Ms. Mendez: In respect to the code of conduct, we are following the public service regulations regarding the code of conduct that has been approved a number of years. At that time, it would have been one of your Members who would have been there, the Minister of Public Administration who would have spearheaded that particular regulation. So we do have a code of conduct but we are defining it in terms of our internal policy and this activity is spearheaded by the Deputy Permanent Secretary.

Madam Chairman: Madam PS, might I just ask, in terms of the first submission under Boxing Board, rent, utilities and so on, that is Sub-Head 005, 02, if I understand it well, the amount that would have been already transferred then was \$744,000 and then, I saw under stipend, if I understand it well, \$326,000. In the revised submission which I would have expected would have been at a later date, I am seeing Boxing Board, rent, the same \$744,000 but the stipend in a bracket—I do not know if to read that as being negative—\$156,000. Could you explain that to me, please?

Ms. Mendez: What was realized, there was a double payment, so it would have been adjusted but we can provide the accounting details.

Madam Chairman: Just before. So what we are saying here is there was an error in saying \$326,000 and really the correct figure is \$156,000?

Ms. Mendez: What was realized, at a particular time, there was a payment that was made twice in a particular month, so we would have to do some accounting adjustments regarding the payment of the stipends that would have been made. In a particular month, they might have been in receipt of—

Madam Chairman: So, if I understand, this is not just a book adjustment. I would think, then, that going forward, there would be maybe a month that a

payment would not be made or it would be adjusted reduced proportionately in subsequent months. Is that what I am understanding?

Ms. Mendez: It will have to be adjusted immediately because a new board is soon to be appointed. This stipend would have—

Madam Chairman: Just excuse, I do not understand the word “adjustment”. Reduced? I am not sure. Adjust, I am seeing, could be just a book entry and I want to know in reality, what it means.

Ms. Mendez: If there was an identification that there is an overpayment, it will—I will have to use the word “adjust” or varied in the accounting records. So the figures here would certainly be the revised figures that should have been shown for this month because the overpayment would have taken prior to—in the previous submission that we would have submitted, those figures would have been picked up.

Madam Chairman: Okay, so the \$156,000, what does the bracket mean or that is an error? Is that, too, an error?

Ms. Mendez: The total figure for the board members’ stipend is \$26,000 per month, by six months will give you the total figure of \$156,000. Yes?

Madam Chairman: Right, so that it is only \$156,000 has been paid. And then, I want to ask in terms of auditing, does the Ministry or the Sports Company audit any of the entities to which transfers are made?

Ms. Mendez: The internal audit audits the Boxing Board of Control. Sports Company will have their own internal audit system and of course, their external audits for their audited financials. Regarding our national governing bodies and other agencies, this is how we are hoping to strengthen, regarding our monitoring and evaluation system. We are going to be putting that particular personnel to be engaging. through their monitoring and evaluation process, an audit rule regarding

their subventions and moneys that are disbursed to these entities.

Madam Chairman: So until this new system comes into place, has there been any auditing, monitoring or evaluation of your national governing bodies?

Ms. Mendez: Well, when they do apply for funding, they are to provide certain documents. One of which will be their audited financial statements and their expenditure accounts and what are some other—we would have provided some of the funding requirements. Their strategic plans, what are some of their programmes and the expenditure. So we do within our internal controls that type of auditing but we are aware that we must be engaging in a more in-depth and more robust type of auditing.

Madam Chairman: Okay and you expect that to come on stream within this fiscal year?

Ms. Mendez: Next financial year because we need to do some capacity-building.

Madam Chairman: Okay, and then I would to want to ask then in terms of Boxing Board of Control, which you said that internal audit does, when was that last done for the Boxing Board of Control?

Ms. Mendez: Deputy Permanent Secretary also oversees the Boxing Board of Control. I know within the last financial year, a visit was done headed by the Deputy Permanent Secretary. When I say the last financial year, I should say the last quarter between October and December.

Madam Chairman: October and December 2015?

Ms. Mendez: Yes, 2015.

Madam Chairman: Okay. And then therefore, might I ask then what, if any, were the findings—and it is a two-pronged question—with respect to the audit of the boxing control board and also, I think, if I am correct, there would have been an internal audit exercise for the last quarter, meaning annual 2015, also in terms

of what were the findings with respect to the audit exercises with respect to the Boxing Board of Control and also the Ministry.

Ms. Mendez: Okay, Deputy Permanent Secretary will highlight but from my review of the statements, I will surely pick up if there are some anomalies because before funds are disbursed through my approval, of course having been sent from Ministry of Finance, I will ensure what would have been requested, in terms of their projects and activities, would have been spent for that particular year. So if I see certainly some sort of discrepancies, I will ask the Deputy Permanent Secretary to look into it and to get some responses before I approve any disbursements.

Madam Chairman: Okay, but that will be limited just to the financials?

Ms. Mendez: Yes.

Madam Chairman: You would not be able to pick up value for money or anything like that in your overview?

Ms. Mendez: No.

Madam Chairman: All right, so that in terms of the Deputy Permanent Secretary.

Mr. Ramdahin: Regarding the boxing board, certain controls were examined and it was also subjected to the Joint Select Committee. All right. There was an enquiry to the boxing board which we prepared a report and submitted. Basically, their internal controls were weak. Right now, in terms of before the boxing board prior to a fiscal year, they have to justify their fiscal projection for the year per month in terms of the salaries, recurrent, non-recurrent, and tally everything and submit it to us. There is monthly reconciliation. We do not release no money to the boxing board until we see what was the previous month in terms of their expenditure. Right. So there is basically monthly monitoring and profile of what it is they do.

Basically most of the money going right now is for salaries, rent. Prior to that,

there would have been releases for projects because the boxing board, as you know, is regulatory. Their role is, basically, whenever there is a boxing card, they have to pay for the officiating personnel, ambulance and all the other stuff to assist with the promoters. Right. So they would have expended state funds for that aspect. They would have also assisted with training in terms of mobilizing coaches and do training courses. Because one of the things we are looking at right now too is making sure that there is certification of the officiating personnel.

So we would have done a comprehensive audit. That was back then in 2015—no, correction, in 2014. When I came into the Ministry of Sport in June 2014, the audit would have been completed and I would have reviewed the report and sent it out to the board. Basically, the shortcomings that were flagged, we were basically using that as the criteria for monitoring in terms of doing a checklist so see what they were actioning and closing off. Right. So some of the things they did not have in place was an accountant. So right now, they have hired an accountant, have that person in place to do their monthly reconciliation and submission of reports to us.

They would have utilized certain funds in terms of we tightened the control. The members were paying themselves when we made the release, we stopped that. We said the funds have to come from the Ministry to pay the stipend for the board members and the releases we make would be for the board members to decide in terms of approving the payment for the salaries and rents. So we stopped the board members from having decision of paying themselves. So several controls were executed and I would say that they are more in streamline operation right now.

Madam Chairman: So just for my clarification, is it 2015 or 2014 the last audit was done?

Mr. Ramdahin: We would have done a follow-up in 2015 based on the 2014

audit because you would go back and do the same audit and find the same thing.

Madam Chairman: So are you satisfied that the controls that you have put in place are producing greater efficiencies in the operation of the board?

Mr. Ramdahin: Yes, I am satisfied because there is also a punch list based on the Joint Select Committee, they recommended corrective actions for improving the operations that they are also using as the punch list for executing and improving their operation.

Madam Chairman: Yeah, so they have been complying with those recommendations?

Mr. Ramdahin: Yes, yes.

Madam Chairman: And in terms of the wider Ministry, in terms of if you could share with us your findings with respect to the last audit which you would have done.

Mr. Ramdahin: I do not have that information right now but we will make it available.

Madam Chairman: So you can supply that? A fresh submission by next Wednesday, please.

Mr. Ramdahin: Yes, will do.

Ms. Mendez: Madam Chair, in addition to the provision of the audit findings in writing, what we have seen as gaps particularly in the auditing of the areas of accounts, we have intervened by having training for the particular staff, whether it is voucher preparation, vote control, reconciliation. Training was implemented two weeks ago and at this time, we are implementing training in the preparation of increments and pension leave because those were some of the areas of concern in our internal audit.

Madam Chairman: Thank you, Madam PS, and I guess what you have just said

there follows with my question, if you are satisfied that there are adequate procedures and controls in place to ensure that on a regular and continuing basis, senior management considers the effectiveness of the control environment and whether the risk assessment and mitigation controls required need change or updating.

4.35 p.m.

Ms. Mendez: Yes, what we will do in terms of our divisional heads meeting, we will identify some of the issues from the management top executive level between myself and the Deputy Permanent Secretary and bring it as an issue on the agenda and have the heads treat with it.

We are also, through the human resource management unit, ensuring everybody understands his role and responsibility. Each desk must have a position description and a desk manual. So these are some of the controls and systems we are also hoping to implement, as we embark on recruitment of new personnel, that we have strong orientation and induction programmes; people understand the role of the Ministry, instil the new culture of managing conflict of interest, ensuring people abide by the code of conduct, understanding the regulations. So, in all, I am satisfied that there are improvements that are happening.

Madam Chairman: I also saw continuous monitoring and assessment and compliance.

Ms. Mendez: Yes. We have implemented quarterly performance appraisals, which come to me, so I can see what areas of improvement and what supervisors are doing in order to assist their staff members.

Mr. Mark: Thank you, Madam Chair. May I ask the Permanent Secretary, under Sub-Head 09: Development Programme, Consolidated Fund, the Ministry and its implementation arm is engaged in a number of projects—in fact Mr. Raymond

advised this Committee that there are over 36 active projects that you are engaged in—I wanted to ask if you could provide, through the Chair, details on your project management strategies that you have adopted to ensure efficiency and efficacy in the delivery of projects under Sub-Head 09? That is the first question, Madam Chair.

The second question, my colleague, Miss Melissa Ramkissoon, asked whether there is need for consideration of a new procurement approach to how you do business in the Ministry of Sport and in the Sports Company. I did not get your response to her question as to whether you are in agreement as a recommendation that there needs to be a new approach to procurement at the Ministry and through the Ministry, its implementing agency, the Sports Company of T&T.

And finally, could you help us to help you by sharing with us what would be some of your recommendations, coming under these three headings: Transfers and Subsidies, Development Programme, Consolidated Fund, and the infrastructure programme? Could you help us to advise as to how can we and how can you assist in improving that whole process, right? How can you, given these stringent conditions that the economy of T&T must go through, given what we are in at this time experiencing, that is collapse in energy prices; given those stringent conditions, what recommendations would you wish to advise and advance to ensure that a number of your projects are realized at the end of fiscal 2016, given the stringent conditions that you have to operate under?

Maybe you cannot answer, Madam Chair, all these questions immediately and maybe what would be required is for you to put in writing those recommendations for the consideration of this Committee so we will try to help you as you try to help us, because the whole objective is to see how we can collectively assist your Ministry in becoming more efficient, more effective and more economical, in these

stringent conditions, to deliver still high quality goods and services to the people of T&T. Madam Chair, those are the questions.

Madam Chairman: Thank you very much, member Mark. I think you anticipated the direction in which I would like to go and I would ask the Permanent Secretary if these three questions could be sent by written submission by next Wednesday to the Committee.

Ms. Mendez: Certainly, Madam Chair.

Madam Chairman: I will allow one more question and this would be from member Rambharat.

Mr. Rambharat: Just on the issue of public administration and the efficiency of public administration, I just have two quick questions. One is on the audit reports. The question is: Whether any of your audit reports have pointed to goods and services being provided to the Ministry by employees of the Ministry, either personally or through affiliates? That is the first question. Do you want me to ask the second one?

The second one deals with a pervasive issue in Government, which is overlap. I recognize that the youth affairs portfolio of the Ministry will have overlaps with youth programmes of national security, those in community development, those in the Ministry of social services, in education and even in agriculture.

Then you just highlighted another one, which is not really an overlap of programme but an overlap of responsibility with the Ministry of Public Utilities being responsible for turning on and turning off the lights at recreation grounds. So, one, the issue of audit reports and employees of the Ministry, and two, in relation to the efficiency of public administration, this issue of overlap and duplication, as it relates to the youth affairs portfolio.

Madam Chairman: And if I may be allowed to interject, I would again, ask the

Permanent Secretary to submit the responses in writing, because I suspect maybe on the issue of goods and services, the members may not have come prepared for that sort of response, having regard to what we had identified. But I do think it is an important question which the Committee would like to get a response to. So if those two questions could also be written, if we can get those submissions by next Wednesday.

Ms. Mendez: Certainly, Madam Chair.

Madam Chairman: Because we next meet on the 27th. Okay?

Ms. Mendez: Certainly Ma'am.

Madam Chairman: So, at this stage, I would like to suspend this hearing. I would like to thank the Permanent Secretary, the Deputy Permanent Secretary, the acting CEO of the Sports Company and the other functionaries; the Assistant Project Coordinator, the Project Coordinator, the Project Manager and the Project Analyst for coming, for their cooperation with respect to the questions which were asked. The Committee would communicate with the Permanent Secretary after receipt of the written submissions on next Wednesday and we would indicate then if the members would be required to return on the 27th. So, just putting you all on notice that you may have to come back on the 27th of April to assist the Committee further in its deliberations.

I would like to thank the members also of the Committee for their thorough engagement in the process. I would also like to thank the listening public for participating in their viewing and lending their ear to this process, all in the aim of realizing better efficiencies for the people of Trinidad and Tobago. And, therefore I now suspend this meeting. I thank you.

4.45 p.m.: *Meeting adjourned.*