

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, October 16, 2019

APPROPRIATION (FINANCIAL YEAR 2020) BILL, 2019



[Fifth Day]

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

[Chairman: Mrs. Annisette-George]

3.00 p.m.

Madam Chairman: Good afternoon everyone.

Hon. Members: Good afternoon.

Madam Chairman: This meeting of the Standing Finance Committee will now resume. Kindly have a seat.

Hon. Members, in accordance with Standing Order 81(2) and (8), the Estimates containing the details of the financial requirements along with the Appropriation Bill have been referred to this Committee for consideration. As indicated yesterday, the documents before the Committee therefore include the *Draft Estimates Details of Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure, Draft Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure of the Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies and of the Tobago House of Assembly, Draft Estimates of Development Programme* and the Appropriation (Financial Year 2020) Bill, 2019.

In accordance with Standing Order 85(1), the consideration of the clauses of the Bill will be postponed until after the consideration of the Schedule which lists the Heads of Expenditure to be approved. The Heads will be considered in the order submitted by the Leader of the Opposition. Our proposed work schedule, hon. Members will be reminded that the Committee agreed to meet as follows: today, starting at 3.00 p.m., tomorrow Thursday October 17, 2019 at 10.00 a.m.,

UNREVISED

Friday October 18, 2019 at 10.00 a.m., Monday October 21, 2019 at 10.00 a.m. and Tuesday October 22, 2019 at 10.00 a.m. I would like to take this opportunity to also remind the Members that the Committee must consider a minimum of nine Heads today in order to complete its work programme in the five days allotted.

Members again are reminded for the procedure for each Head. Hon. Members, you are reminded that the procedure for each Head of Expenditure shall be as follows: One, the Head and the amount to be appropriated will be announced by the Chairman. The Minister will then be given the opportunity to make a brief opening statement. The Chairman will then propose the question that the sum proposed stand part of the Schedule. For each Head of Expenditure, the Chairman will call the Sub-Head followed by the Item. I will not call the Sub-Items. However, discussion can ensue on the Item called or the relevant Sub-Item and clarification sought. Once the Committee moves to another Sub-Head, questions from a previous Sub-Head will not be entertained. The Chairman will repeat the procedure for the *Development Programme*. Once this is concluded, the Chairman will then put the question that the sum stand part of the Schedule. This procedure will be repeated for each Head of Expenditure.

As regards to the speaking time, hon. Members, in accordance with Standing Order 45(1), the speaking time in Standing Finance Committee shall not exceed five minutes on each intervention. We have invited accounting officers and technocrats to arrive at specified times during the day. So we have to try to adhere to agreed schedule and also be sensitive to the time. So we now start with Head 42: the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government.

Head 42: Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government, \$2,442,496,811.

Madam Chairman: I will now invite the Minister of Rural Development and Local Government to make a brief opening statement not exceeding five minutes.

Minister.

Hon. Hosein: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. It is indeed my pleasure to report to the Standing Finance Committee and the people of Trinidad and Tobago on the performance of the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government. As one of the primary agencies providing essential services to the citizens and contributing to the overall development of our country, it is my privilege to highlight progress made by the Ministry.

Approximately three years ago, I was afforded the opportunity by the hon. Prime Minister, Dr. Keith Rowley to serve in the capacity of Minister of Rural Development and Local Government. Madam Chairman, I would like to recognize and thank the dedication of our Permanent Secretaries at the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government, the Deputy Permanent Secretaries, all the Mayors across the country, the Chairman, especially the councillors, all the public servants and all citizens. We were able to persevere despite the challenges we encountered last year and today I can say as we continue along this road, we intend to make great strides. Thank you very much. [*Desk thumping*]

Question proposed: That Head 42 stand part of the Schedule.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Members, the sum \$2,442,496,811 for Head 42: Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government is comprised of moneys proposed for expenditure under the following Sub-Heads and Items to be found in the *Draft Estimates of the Recurrent Expenditure*, the *Draft Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure of the Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies and of the Tobago House of Assembly* and the *Draft Estimates of Development Programme*. We shall now proceed to consider the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure*. Member for Tabaquite.

Dr. Rambachan: Thank you, Madam Chair. On page 263 of the *Draft Estimates*

Details of Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure. There is under 01: Personal Expenditure, Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance. There is an increase of \$20,232,936 there and I am wondering what is the reason for this substantial increase?

Madam Chairman: Minister.

Hon. Hosein: Hon. Member, the—this is concerning the filling of the vacant positions that we have vacant.

Dr. Rambachan: The existing vacant positions?

Hon. Hosein: Yes.

Dr. Rambachan: There were several vacant positions last year also. Is it that they have not been filled and you are going to try to fill it again?

Hon. Hosein: Hon. Member, especially the municipal police that we are now in the process of filling.

Dr. Rambachan: Have you made any provision in this sum of \$20,232,000 for posts associated with the reform of local government structure? Have you made any provision for that additional staff that is in the reform document that would be required? Is it included under this 20 million?

Hon. Hosein: Yes, we have made arrangement for staffing for that.

Dr. Rambachan: On the \$20 million?

Hon. Hosein: Change management and so on.

Dr. Rambachan: This is at the level of the head office or at the level of the corporations?

Hon. Hosein: At the head office level.

Dr. Rambachan: Okay.

Hon. Hosein: You see, the corporations got a separate amount of money for that.

Each corporation got a million each.

Dr. Rambachan: A million each?

Hon. Hosein: Yes.

Dr. Rambachan: And you think that that million each will satisfy the cadre of new personnel required at the level of local government under the reform legislation?

Madam Chairman: Member for Tabaqite, while I do not want to cut your line of argument. As you guided me, we are under really 001: General Administration so as regards the municipal corporations, I would ask you if you could hold those two questions. Okay?

Dr. Rambachan: I responded to what the Minister said.

Madam Chairman: Yes so for the guidance of Members we under 01: Personal Expenditure; Item 001: General Administration. Member for Caroni Central, yes.

Dr. Tewarie: Just a follow-up, Madam Chair. I want to confirm that Minister said that the \$20 million is for Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government and not for any of the corporations. Is that what you said?

Madam Chairman: Minister of Finance.

Mr. Imbert: The increase is primarily for salaries and allowances for municipal police which is in the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government allocation for this year. Okay? They are recruiting at this time.

Dr. Tewarie: Okay, but that is done centrally but basically distributed through—I am trying to just understand here.

Mr. Imbert: They recruit them through the Ministry of Rural Development Local and Local Government.

Dr. Tewarie: Okay.

Mr. Imbert: And there are costs associated with the recruitment, okay?

Madam Chairman: Member for Tabaquite.

Dr. Rambachan: And therefore, Minister of Finance, through you Chair, it is not for additional staff under the reform local government structure.

Mr. Imbert: Municipal police.

Dr. Rambachan: Thank you.

Madam Chairman: Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Sub-Item 04.

Madam Chairman: 04.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Allowances Monthly-Paid Officers. The Estimates in 2019 was 3.1 million but Revised Estimate was 6.7 million and now the Estimates for 2020 is 15.8 million. Monthly-Paid Officer Allowances. Could you, Minister, explain the increases from what was estimated in 2019 and then the larger increase between 2019 and 2020 the Estimates from 3.1 to 4.7 to 15.8, if possible. Page 263; Sub-Item 04: Allowances – Monthly-Paid.

Hon. Hosein: Allowances are for the municipal police.

Dr. Gopeesingh: The allowances?

Hon. Hosein: The allowances, yes. For 10 corporations.

Dr. Gopeesingh: So the municipal police has been increasing and therefore you had to pay more monthly allowances for them?

Hon. Hosein: Meal allowance, housing, special duties, et cetera.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Okay, all right.

Madam Chairman: Member for Couva South—

Dr. Gopeesingh: And then—

Madam Chairman: You are not finished?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Yeah, I am finished with that.

Mr. Indarsingh: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. To the Minister, based on the utterances of the Minister of Finance, the \$20-plus million is for the recruitment of municipal police officers, we have been hearing this in in last four budget presentations and at the moment, for example, Couva/Tabaquite/Talparo Regional Corporation has a complement of about 30. Could you give a breakdown based on the 14 municipal corporations, how much municipal police officers you intend to recruit and how they will be distributed amongst the various regional corporations?

Hon. Hosein: The intention was to take on 100 municipal officers in each corporation, except Port of Spain, where they will have 200. We have started the recruiting process and two batches are out: 199 was the first batch, 201 was the second batch, and next week Thursday, a next batch will be coming out at 200. So you want the breakdown of the corporations?

Mr. Indarsingh: No, well, I want you tell me how much you will recruit with this \$20 million allocation, increased allocation for 2020?

Hon. Hosein: In the last year, over 600 officers were out on the—I have the breakdown in writing here. If you want I could—

Mr. Indarsingh: Mr. Minister, I am trying to be as logical with you and I am simply asking you to provide the meeting with the information. If you have it at your disposal, why all this semantics?

Hon. Hosein: No, it is not semantics but I will give it to you if you want it.

Mr. Indarsingh: I do not want it. I want the public of Trinidad and Tobago—

Madam Chairman: All right, all right. So in terms of, you want for all 14?

Mr. Indarsingh: Madam Chair, I am—

Madam Chairman: I am just trying find out so that we can assist the process.

Mr. Indarsingh: Madam Chair, I have asked—the Minister has said—I have heard the Minister of Finance, I have heard the Minister of Rural Development and Local Government. They have said that there is an increase in terms of salaries and cost of living of \$20,232,936 for fiscal 2020. They have that said that it is specifically for the recruitment of municipal police officers and I am simply asking how much will be recruited in 2020 and how they will distributed or allocated amongst the 14 municipal corporations.

3.15 p.m.

Hon. Hosein: Hon. Member, I will provide the answer for you in writing, but at each corporation there will be 100 officers.

Mr. Indarsingh: No, but I think we are suppressing some kind of information here that is needed.

Madam Chairman: Member, Member, Member, Member, Member for—

Mr. Indarsingh: Well, we want to know how much Couva getting, Chaguanas, Port of Spain, Diego Martin, Tunapuna/Piarco—

Madam Chairman: Member for Couva South.

Mr. Indarsingh:—or is this information being withheld because of electioneering tactics and strategies?

Madam Chairman: Member for Couva South, I believe what was told to you is that the information would be given to you in writing. [*Crosstalk*] Member for Caroni Central, Member for Caroni Central.

Mr. Deyalsingh: No man, we should not let that stand. Madam Chair, please, is it that I heard the Minister to say, clearly, 100 municipal police officers will be recruited per corporation.

Mr. Indarsingh: Madam Chair, I hearing that for the last four years.

Madam Chairman: Member for St. Joseph, I am sure that the record will indicate—

Mr. Indarsingh: Who is the Minister of Rural Development and Local Government, Madam Chair?

Madam Chairman: Member for Caroni Central. Thank you.

Dr. Tewarie: Ma'am, I am not sure it is the right—I was going to ask something on 02, are you there yet?

Madam Chairman: No, we are not at 02 as yet.

Dr. Tewarie: All right, okay, sorry.

Madam Chairman: Okay, therefore, I will go on to 02: Goods and Services. 001: General Administration. Is that where you are Member for Caroni Central? Member for Caroni Central?

Dr. Tewarie: Yes?

Madam Chairman: I am now calling 02, Goods and Services; 001: General Administration.

Dr. Tewarie: Yes,

Madam Chairman: Yes?

Dr. Tewarie: I was going to ask a question, Madam Chairman, on the issue of uniforms, where there is a significant increase, and I wanted to know, is that one set of uniforms for one set of workers? For instance, you know, not in this Ministry. You have for instance, CEPEP, things like that, or is it different uniforms, et cetera? And I wanted to know if there was one supplier?

Hon. Hosein: The corporations, CEPEP they have different suppliers.

Dr. Tewarie: Okay.

Hon. Hosein: Each corporation will have a different supplier.

Dr. Tewarie: Is it for one set of uniforms? That is to say one type of workers for CEPEP?

Hon. Hosein: Yes. Yes.

Dr. Tewarie: Okay, but you have different suppliers?

Hon. Hosein: Yes.

Dr. Tewarie: For this amount? And is there any reason why there is such an increase?

Hon. Hosein: Some of the workers have not received uniforms for a while, so we are providing the uniforms for them.

Dr. Tewarie: Okay, so it does not represent any additional recruitment?

Mr. Imbert: Madam Chairman, I can assist. I have some info from the Budget Division.

Madam Chairman: I think what you should really do in that case is ask your friend to give way and then you answer.

Mr. Imbert: Would the Minister of Rural Development and Local Government give way?

Hon. Hosein: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Imbert: Thank you very much. The information I have from the Budget Division is that in previous years uniforms were procured by individual statutory bodies. The Ministry of Rural Development and Local Development took a policy decision to procure the uniforms for the municipal police of 10 municipalities through the head office, and that is why the allocation is there.

Dr. Tewarie: So it is for police bulk?

Mr. Imbert: It is a bulk procurement by the Ministry of Rural Development and

Local Government for 10 municipal corporations.

Dr. Tewarie: And then it would be related to the earlier question which would be the amount of police?

Mr. Imbert: Yes. Okay.

Dr. Gopeesingh: My question was whether it is specific for the police officers because I heard the issue of CEPEP as well, so we need some clarification on that, whether it is for CEPEP and police officers, or whether it is for police officers alone, as the Minister of Finance—

Mr. Imbert: It is only for municipal police.

Dr. Gopeesingh: And that would be taking care of how many police officers?

Mr. Imbert: It is for 10 municipal corporations, and the Minister already told you the amount.

Dr. Gopeesingh: At 100, so about 1,000? So if it is 1,000 for 12 municipalities—

Madam Chairman: Member for Tabaquite. Okay. All right, so we are moving on. Sub-Head 03: Minor Equipment Purchases; Item 001.

Dr. Rambachan: I note there is a substantial increase in 2020 of \$23 million, \$23.263750 for Other Minor Equipment, and you know, I am wondering what is the reason for that substantial increase, and what is it intended to buy?

Madam Chairman: This is Sub-Item 004?

Dr. Rambachan: 004 yes, sorry.

Madam Chairman: That is okay.

Hon. Hosein: Hon. Member, this is for the arms and ammunition for the municipal police for 10 corporations.

Dr. Rambachan: Right, okay, done.

Hon. Hosein: And this will be undertaken by the head office.

Dr. Rambachan: Thank you.

Madam Chairman: Sub-Head 04: Current Transfers and Subsidies; Item 007: Households. Member for Couva South.

Mr. Indarsingh: Thank you, Madam Chair, I am just seeking some information in relation to gratuities to contract officers, in relation to the allocation of \$4.1 million as a new Item.

Mr. Imbert: Madam Chairman, may I ask the Minister to give way? This is a Ministry of Finance directive. What the Ministry of Finance has done in this year is, we issued a circular whereby the money for gratuity payments is now distributed across the public service. In the past, it would have been paid centrally through the Treasury Division. It is now being distributed through every Ministry. So you are going to see this repeated in other Heads. So, this is for gratuity payments to employees within the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government. Okay? It is a new thing, it would not have been there before.

Dr. Rambachan: Are there any other transfers?

Madam Chairman: No. Oropouche East.

Dr. Moonilal: Ma'am, I am on page 266, 009, 04.

Madam Chairman: We have not reached there as yet.

Dr. Moonilal: Okay, well keep me in mind.

Madam Chairman: Right, so if there are no questions, we now go on. I will now call Item 009: Other Transfers. Member for Oropouche East.

Dr. Moonilal: Thank you very much, Madam. I will direct my question to the very hon. Minister of Rural Development and Local Government. Minister, we note the decrease in the subvention to the CEPEP company, and in light of the increase in the wage at all levels of the CEPEP, at the lowest level, at management

level, supervisory level and so on, with a decrease of \$21.7 million, would you indicate at what time during the fiscal year the Ministry may approach the Ministry of Finance for additional funds to satisfy the CEPEP company?—bearing in mind that the increase has also awarded to contractors, all contractors, management fees and so on. When do you expect that you will go to the Ministry of Finance for further subvention on this matter? And second—well look, I have another question when he is through.

Madam Chairman: I think you should give the Minister an opportunity to answer your first, and I will take you on the second.

Dr. Moonilal: Sure.

Hon. Hosein: Thank you very much. Thank you, Member. If the need arises we are looking at the midterm review which is around April/March.

Dr. Moonilal: Yes, thank you. Minister, since the presentation with Budget, have you and your staff, including the CEPEP company staff, worked out carefully, and in a very, very clear manner, the application of the policy introduced in the budget vis-à-vis the 15 per cent increase where 7,000 workers more or less at this time are receiving the minimum wage of \$15? With the increase of 15 per cent it will be under the new minimum wage. Could you clarify once and for all on the record, Minister, that the application of that 15 per cent increase is on the new minimum wage and not on the old minimum wage?

Hon. Hosein: I will give way.

Mr. Imbert: Permission of the Minister of Rural Development and Local Government, I dealt with that yesterday. The minimum wage will apply to all workers, and therefore, CEPEP labourers will receive \$17.50.

Dr. Moonilal: So effectively, at that level it will be a 16.6 per cent increase?

Mr. Imbert: I think I have said everything I needed to say.

Dr. Moonilal: Thank you.

Dr. Rambachan: Mr. Minister, I noted in 2018 on the same line Item, Community-Based Environmental Protection and Enhancement Programme, CEPEP, the actual amount spent on CEPEP were allocated as transfers 447.997 million. In 2019, the allocation was 375.9 but you actually revised it to 369. So between 2018 and 2019 there is a reduction of about \$81 million in CEPEP allocation and now it is going down to 347. So you have moved from 447 in 2018, to now an allocation of 347, cut by \$100 million under CEPEP. Now, what does this mean? Does this mean that you have cut down the number of workers in CEPEP? You have cut down the numbers of contractors in CEPEP? You know, how are you explaining this cut in \$100 million?

Hon. Hosein: We have—a team consists of 30 people now, 10 by three, 30, and we had the increase last time because we had health sector initiative workers to pay. That is when they did work on the health centres, et cetera. We are dealing with that, and separately, the contractors are being paid. They agreed, because we have a process with the attorneys and the quantity surveyors and so on, most of them accepted. It was supposed to be 158 million. When you tally everything it came up to under—close to 50 million. So the money was used to pay off some of these contractors.

Dr. Rambachan: Was that in 2018? My question says that you had an allocation of—

Hon. Hosein: Was this 2019?

Dr. Rambachan: Yeah, but what I am saying, you had an allocation of 447.997 million, right, in 2018? And then, that was cut down in 2019 to \$369 million,

right, so that is virtually 81 million, about \$88 million cut. And now you are coming down again to 347 million, so effectively between 2018 and your estimates and now, we have a 100 million drop. But you are saying that that 158 million or whatever you owed to the contractor is not included in this. So is it that less workers are being employed by CEPEP? Because if not, how are you paying the same number of workers with less money?

Hon. Hosein: No, at the mid-year review we got an increase. Member, at the mid-year review we got an increase.

Dr. Rambachan: But would that mid-year review not have been reflected in the figures here? In the Revised Estimates?

Hon. Hosein: We had savings from the contractors, from the previous—or we had savings from the same health sector initiative. We had savings from that.

Dr. Rambachan: It is not adding up, Mr. Minister. Even if you had savings which means that you are paying less. But your allocation has been reduced.

Hon. Hosein: Because we had a balance in the account before.

Madam Chairman: Minister of Finance, maybe you can assist—

Mr. Imbert: Madam Speaker, my notes tell me is that in 2019 there was a payment with respect to that health sector initiative, which is in litigation in the sum of \$38 million. That is not expected to be carried over into 2020. And in addition CEPEP is a body corporate, and when it receives money from the State, it is allowed to keep it. So they had a balance in their accounts as they went into 2019, and also into 2020.

Dr. Rambachan: So even if you have a balance in the account, Mr. Minister, even if you have a balance in the account, that is a cash account. That is different to what you are allocating and here you are showing that you are allocating \$100

million less between 2018 and 2020.

Mr. Imbert: Correct, but the expenditure would be the money in the account and the appropriation for the fiscal year.

Dr. Rambachan: Okay, but then if that is the case you expended 369 million in 2019, but you expended 447 million in 2018. So—

Mr. Imbert: Because there were other expenses in that year that are not carried over into '19 and '20, and in addition, there was a balance in the account.

3.30 p.m.

Dr. Rambachan: But would you agree, Mr. Minister, that the allocation is different to what you have in the account? The allocation does not include what you have in the account. The allocation is not allocation.

Mr. Imbert: What you would see in the Estimates is what is appropriated. But if they have a balance in their account they can use that for their expenditure, so therefore the money available to them to pay salaries and wages would be what they have in their account plus what is appropriated for the fiscal year.

Dr. Rambachan: So what they have in their account that was used up, you are saying it is not reflected in the 369.6 million—

Mr. Imbert: It would not be reflected—

Dr. Rambachan: No, no, I am just asking a question, please.

Mr. Imbert: I am answering you.

Dr. Rambachan: Yeah, well, you know maybe your mind works faster than mine. The 369.6 million does not include what is in the account?

Mr. Imbert: Correct, that is what I said three times. So they have money in their bank account, savings in their bank account from previous years plus what is appropriated for this fiscal, and I want to make the point that there were payments

made under the health sector initiative, that litigious programme in '19 that would not carry forward into '20. So that is a saving of \$38 million in 2020 that they do not need to expend. So you can immediately add \$38 million to what you are seeing, okay, in terms of what is available to them.

Madam Chairman: Member for Oropouche East.

Dr. Moonilal: Thank you very much. My question directed to the Minister: Minister, could you state categorically, at this moment, that in the coming fiscal, and notwithstanding what is budgeted, that there will be no cuts in the labour force and the contractors at CEPEP. You are a very honourable man, and could you indicate that that assurance that you are giving is not a Petrotrin assurance?

Hon. Hosein: Circumstances are permitted.

Dr. Moonilal: Could you indicate what you mean by circumstance? You mean you cannot give the assurance that there will be no cuts? I do not want to interrupt the Minister, he is listening to his colleagues.

Hon. Hosein: If the need arises and we have to, we will do but as of now, no.

Dr. Moonilal: As of today?

Hon. Hosein: Yes.

Dr. Moonilal: But that can change tomorrow?

Hon. Hosein: Yes.

Dr. Moonilal: Can I ask another question then? So Mr. Minister, it seems like a Petrotrin assurance. The question at 03: Rural Development Company, I am seeing here just for clarity, I think this is just a point of clarity. Are you there, Ma'am?

Madam Chairman: Are all the questions finished for 09: Other Transfers? And if so, therefore I will now call Item 011: Transfers to State Enterprises. Member for Oropouche East, I think that is where you are.

Dr. Moonilal: Just to clarify I am seeing here the Rural Development Company, is it in existence? Because you have—what is the status of the company given what is in the document before us simply?

Hon. Hosein: The company is operational.

Dr. Gopeesingh: So there is no money.

Dr. Moonilal: But you have not budgeted 2020 a penny. Is it that they would make money some other how?

Madam Chairman: Minister of Finance.

Mr. Imbert: If the Minister of Rural Development would allow me. This company earns money for its operational expenditure through project management fees, and therefore it is expected in 2020 it will earn sufficient revenues for those fees and charges to meet its operational cost. And therefore, there is no need to have an appropriation for it under this Head.

Dr. Moonilal: Could the Minister therefore indicate to us in fiscal 2018/19, how much money did this company earn?

Mr. Imbert: We will provide that later.

Madam Chairman: This is revenue you want?

Dr. Moonilal: Could we have an undertaking, because we are being told that this company earns revenue and that is why they have not provided a cent. I am sure this company employs persons and so on and they must be paid. So I will just ask for 2018/19, how much revenue this company generated?

Madam Chairman: All right, so—

Dr. Moonilal: I do not need it, but we could get an undertaking.

Madam Chairman: Minister, would you give that undertaking.

Hon. Hosein: I will give it in writing.

Dr. Moonilal: And related to that, could I ask you to give us an undertaking that you also present for us what is projected in terms of the revenue from this company based upon their project management fees and other sources of revenue?

Madam Chairman: Member for Oropouche West.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, when I looked at the different corporations and I go specifically to Penal/Debe—

Madam Chairman: Okay, one minute, one minute please Oropouche West. You are ahead of us. Member for Tabaquite.

Dr. Rambachan: I just wanted to ask and I think my question might clarify the issue with Rural Development Company.

Madam Chairman: Yes, that is where we are at.

Dr. Rambachan: Is it Mr. Minister that the Rural Development Company acts as an executing agency for development projects on behalf of the Ministry and it is from that it gets its revenue?

Hon. Hosein: This is under the IDF programme.

Madam Chairman: So can we go on to Sub-Head 06: Current Transfer to Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies. And I like to say new book. Hon. Members, we will now move on to the *Draft Estimates of the Revenue and Expenditure of Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies and of the Tobago House of Assembly*. Sub-Item 23, we are at page 218 of that book. Sub-Item 23: Port of Spain City Corporation; Sub-Head 01: Personnel Expenditure. We are at page 280. Is that where you are at, Member for Oropouche West? Okay, all right in the meantime while you find your stuff. Member for Chaguanas West.

Mr. Singh: I am further down.

Madam Chairman: All right. Member for Couva South, is that your hand I am

seeing?

Mr. Indarsingh: Yes, Ma'am.

Madam Chairman: So we are at Item 001: General Administration.

Mr. Indarsingh: Thank you, Madam Chair. Personnel Expenditure, Port of Spain City Corporation. Madam Chair, to the Minister, I could recollect the Minister of Finance in his presentation indicated that daily paid pension plan will be executed within fiscal 2020, and I have been looking for some new line Item or Head as it relates to Government allocation for this particular announcement that was made in the budget presentation for the benefit of all potential retirees within the 14 municipal corporations.

Madam Chairman: Minister of Finance.

Mr. Imbert: If the Minister of Rural Development allows me, pensions are paid by the Ministry of Finance, not by statutory authorities. So the proposed pension that will be paid, will be paid through the Ministry of Finance.

Mr. Indarsingh: So just as how the Government's contribution to the group health insurance, there is a line Item, there will be no line Item as it relates to the Government contribution in this particular scenario, Mr. Minister?

Mr. Imbert: I think it goes without saying if it is going to be paid by the Ministry of Finance, it will be in the Ministry of Finance's allocation.

Madam Chairman: Member for Tabaquite.

Dr. Rambachan: Madam Chair, you know you gone from Item 06 to the big book, right. But there is a global figure on Item 6 in the *Draft Estimates Details of Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure* which I wanted to ask. But you took, you took, you went under—

Madam Chairman: No, no, no, I even announced new book.

Dr. Rambachan: No, no, no. Hold on, Madam Chair, with due respect, when the Member for Oropouche West wanted to raise on that Item there you moved on to the new book.

Madam Chairman: Yeah, okay. But this summary at page 266—

Dr. Rambachan: I know it.

Madam Chairman:—is what we are dealing with at page 280.

Dr. Rambachan: There is a very important question that could have been asked and should be asked in the global figure. And it is this, that under that 06: Current Transfer and Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies, why is it, what are the reasons for the drop of 72 million in terms of the Estimates and Revised Estimates for 2019 that corporations globally receive \$72 million less?

Madam Chairman: All right, so—

Dr. Rambachan: I mean, we can move on and take it one by one.

Madam Chairman: But, Member, I guess we could take it one by one.

Dr. Rambachan: But you see with corporations complaining of the amount of money they did not get, here was a chance globally to understand why is that they got \$72 million less. What is the reason they got \$72 million less?

Madam Chairman: Remember is at page 266—

Dr. Rambachan: Some corporations more than others.

Madam Chairman: Remember it is at page 266 of the *Draft Estimates of the Recurrent Expenditure* where there is the summary of 06: Current Transfers to Statutory Bodies. All right.

Mr. Imbert: I see an increase of 140 million. What is he talking about?

Dr. Rambachan: If I may explain on page 266, read the numbers, right.

Madam Chairman: Yes.

Dr. Rambachan: In 2019, the total Current Transfer of Statutory Bodies and Similar Bodies, local government bodies was 2.031 million. However, that was the Estimate, by the actual Revised Estimate \$1,959,000,000. Now that 172 million less that they got in terms of their releases based on the Estimates. And my question is, why is it that they go \$72 million less? It is that the Government did not have the money to release? Or what happened? You know, different corporations got different amounts. So Port of Spain got all that they wanted. San Fernando got only 2 million less. Chaguanas got 12 million less. Sangre Grande got 4 million less. Couva got \$11 million less. Mayaro got \$25 million less. Debe got \$3 million less. Princes Town got \$6 million less and so on. You going down and you are seeing differences in terms. You know, there must be a reason why this has happened, because corporations keep complaining for one reason they are not getting money. Is it that they did not apply on time for the money? What is the reason? I would like to know. Because it speaks about deficiency either at the Ministry of Local Government, or the capacity of the Government to provide the funding, or administrative management at the level of the corporations.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Critically important, Suruj.

Mr. Imbert: That is a complex question.

Madam Chairman: Minister of Finance.

Mr. Imbert: Madam Chairman, in each case it will be different. Some corporations would not have applied for the funds. Some would not have provided the supporting documentation. It is a very complex question. You are talking about 14 entities, and you are talking about thousands of entries; it is very difficult to answer. But the number of reasons that you have listed all of them would apply, all. Because in fiscal 2019 the expenditure based on cash flow was approximately

\$2 billion less than budgeted for the entire Government so that all entities would have suffered reduced disbursements, so that this Ministry is no exception.

Dr. Rambachan: All I am trying to establish is this, corporations get a lot of licks from the public when they tell the public they do not have money, and the public does not believe them that they have not received the money. So I am asking the question in the interest of fairness to the corporations where they have been denied money. Not denied, they have not received the money.

Mr. Imbert: Madam Chairman, it is impossible to answer a general question. Some corporations would have vacant posts which would not have been filled by the Statutory Authorities Service Commission or the Public Service Commission, depending on which commission is responsible for filling those posts. Some corporations would not have submitted the paperwork for the release of funds. It is a complex question. There would be many different explanations for it. There are many reasons why money is not released as you know. So I cannot answer it in generalities, I could only answer specific questions.

Madam Chairman: So can I suggest that we go into the details where each corporations will be looked at individually, and therefore a more direct question could be posed, and a more specific answer. Okay?

Dr. Gopeesingh: A wider question on just this aspect because I would not be able to put it in on the individual corporations. I just wanted to ask what policy decisions are taken with the Ministry of Local Government to give a corporation X a particular increase and a corporation Y another increase, but what allows of the differentiation of the increases as we see here?

3.45 p.m.

Madam Chairman: I suspect that that is a similar type of question. It is just

phrased in a different way to what the Member for Tabaquite was trying to get.

Dr. Gopeesingh: I would not want to ask individually for the 14 corporations. So I was just asking, what was the policy direction? Why a particular corporation gets X and another corporation gets Y? What is the formula for arriving at a determination of an increase X and another one increase Y?

Mr. Imbert: Madam Chairman, I think I understand now what the former Minister is driving at, because when he was in Government the same formula was used. It is based on a variety of factors, based on the number of workers in the corporation, their responsibilities, their liabilities, their historical allocations, the population of the area, whether it is urban or rural. This has been going on since 1990 when municipal corporations were created, and under the five years of your Government this is what happened. You have different number of councillors, different formulas. It has been going on since 1990, for 29 years. I cannot answer that.

Dr. Gopeesingh: You are very kind to allow me to ask a question. But you have Port of Spain and San Fernando City Corporations with the larger increases and they may have smaller populations than the others which have larger populations and do not get a significant increase. How can you answer that?

Mr. Imbert: But an urban area would have greater expenses in some areas than others. In Port of Spain, for example, garbage collection will be affected by the number of businesses in the area where corporate garbage could out number residential garbage. Each area is different and this has been, as I said, the case since 1990 and before.

Dr. Gopeesingh: But have you ever considered the issue of allotting finance to a corporation based on the amount of persons living in a corporation? Has that ever

been considered?

Mr. Imbert: That would be one of the considerations but not the only one. It is the level of infrastructure; it is the level of waste, whether industrial waste, commercial waste or residential waste being produced. It is the number of paved roads, for example, in an area. You might have a rural area which might only be forest, it might have a large land mass. So there are a number of different considerations given to allocations and the same formula that is being used now was used under the UNC Government of 2010 to 2015. It is a number of different factors. There is no one size fits all.

Madam Chairman: Okay. So can I suggest now that we continue? We are at 23, Port of Spain City Corporation, page 218. Sub-Head 01: Personal Expenditure; Item 001: General Administration; Item 002: Public Health and Disposal; Item 003: Abattoirs, Markets and Dining Shed; Item 004: Transport and Cleansing; Item 005: Squares, Playgrounds and Trees; Item 006: Stores, Works and Repairs; Item 007: Cemeteries and Crematorium; Item 008: Woodbrook Estate.

We now go on to Sub-Head 02: Goods and Services. This is at page 220. Item 001: General Administration; Item 002: Public Health and Disposal; Item 003: Abattoirs, Markets and Dining Shed; Item 004: Transport and Cleansing; Item 005: Squares, Playgrounds and Trees; Item 006: Stores, Works and Repairs; Item 007: Cemeteries and Crematorium; Item 008: Woodbrook Estate.

Sub-Head 03: Minor Equipment Purchases. Item 001: General Administration; Item 002: Public Health; Item 003: Abattoirs, Markets and Dining Shed; Item 004: Transport and Cleansing; Item 005: Squares, Playgrounds and Trees; Item 006: Stores, Works and Repairs; Item 007: Cemeteries and Crematorium.

Sub-Head 04: Current Transfers and Subsidies. We are at page 225. Item 007: Households; Item 009: Other Transfers.

Hon. Member: 007.

Madam Chairman: We reach Item 009: Other Transfers.

Hon. Member: I had a question 007.

Madam Chairman: 24, San Fernando City Corporation. We are on page 236. Sub-Head 01: Personal Expenditure.

Dr. Rambachan: Madam, you are not taking the global figure on 233. You are going straight to 236.

Madam Chairman: Well, you know, we have had an experience with the global figure—

Dr. Rambachan: No, you see this is the point. When I asked the question about the 72 million drop, I was trying to find out where is the drop. Because you see, again, I want to come back. I want to be fair to the corporations out there who are getting beaten up by the public in terms of the public saying they are not providing services. And I examined these corporations one by one and there is one Item, Goods and Services, if I may just take it, on page 233.

Madam Chairman: So you are on page 233.

Dr. Rambachan: And you will see there that the cut has come in the Revised Estimates for San Fernando for about \$5 million in Goods and Services, right, and you may not allow me to jump forward, but Tunapuna had eight million cut, Sangre Grande, a three million cut and Chaguanas had 12 million cut under Goods and Services. And it is in the area of Goods and Services that they cannot get the gravel, and they cannot get the oil sand and they cannot get the materials to do the work that they have to do. So we are paying a lot of people under personnel and

we are keeping people there but we are being inefficient by not having the resources to allow them to do a job and the corporations are getting blamed for something that they have no control over.

Mr. Imbert: Is there a question on a line Item?

Dr. Rambachan: The question is, why such a drastic cut?

Mr. Imbert: Which line Item?

Dr. Rambachan: All right, well I will take the one we are on, San Fernando City Corporation, Goods and Services.

Madam Chairman: Page 233.

Dr. Rambachan: 233. From 30.4 million to 25.9 million.

Mr. Imbert: This is the problem I am having. We are discussing the 2020 budget. And in 2020 the allocation for Goods and Services for the San Fernando Corporation has been increased by \$4.6 million.

Dr. Rambachan: But, Mr. Minister—

Mr. Imbert: So hold on, wait, I am not finished. Please, thank you. Madam Chairman, through you, I let you go to the end of your sentence. So that I keep hearing this talk about cut, cut, cut, cut. All I am seeing for 2020 are increases. So I want the public to know that there is in fact an increase of \$4.6 million for Goods and Services for San Fernando in 2020. So please explain your question.

Dr. Rambachan: Madam Chair, with due respect to the Minister, he said all he is seeing is increases. But in 2018 Goods and Services was 28.1 million. In 2019, the Estimates was 30.4. So you had promised more in 2019 but they actually only get 25.9 in 2019. So what you are saying—

Mr. Imbert: What is the question?

Madam Chairman: Just one minute.

Dr. Rambachan: The question is, why has there been such drastic cuts under Goods and Services.

Mr. Imbert: I will explain that, again, for yet another time. In 2019, the gross expenditure figure for the Government was \$2 billion less than the original estimate. So there was a reduction in expenditure based on the original estimates across the board, not just in local government, but everywhere. And, in fact, it is 26 million to 30. So it is almost 90 per cent of the original allocation that was received. And we have put it back in 2020 to 30.57 million, which is in fact more than the original 2019 estimate.

Dr. Rambachan: But Minister, you will agree that if the price of oil falls and the price of gas falls and you know what their revenue will also go back down like it went down in 2019.

Mr. Imbert: That is not relevant. You have asked why.

Dr. Rambachan: A promise is only good if it is delivered.

Mr. Imbert: That is not a question. You have asked why and I have told you why. In 2019 we had a reduction in overall expenditure of \$2 billion distributed across the board, Ministry by Ministry, Department by Department. And the San Fernando Corporation got 90 per cent of its Goods and Services allocation in 2020.

Dr. Rambachan: But for a local government corporation—

Mr. Imbert: In 2020 we have put it back up to 30.5 million.

Dr. Rambachan: Mr. Minister, you do not want me to make a statement, but I will say it—

Mr. Imbert: No, it is a question you have to ask.

Dr. Rambachan: I will say it. I will say it, that for a corporation \$5 million in a rural area means a lot.

Mr. Imbert: It is not a debate, right?

Madam Chairman: The Members have five minutes on each intervention. So that it is a little different in that, I think a question can follow a preamble in five minutes. So maybe we need to look at the time, but that is what they are allowed.

Dr. Rambachan: I am trying to be short, Madam.

Mr. Imbert: Good joke.

Madam Chairman: So your question is—your intervention was really the statement.

Dr. Rambachan: Yes, I am finished.

Madam Chairman: Okay. So if we could proceed. So we are at Item 001: General Administration, page 218. We are at Item 001: General Administration, under Sub-Head 01, page 236. Item 002: City and Departments of Maintenance; Item 003: Institutions; Item 004: Parks, Playgrounds and Cemeteries; Item 005: Transport; Item 006: Local Health Authority.

Sub-Head 02: Goods and Services. Item 001: General Administration; Item 002: City and Departments of Maintenance; Item 003: Institutions; Item 004: Parks, Playgrounds and Cemeteries; Item 005: Transport; Item 006: Local Health Authority.

Sub-Head 03: Minor Equipment Purchases. Item 001: General Administration; Item 002: City and Departments; Item 003: Institutions; Item 004: Parks, Playgrounds and Cemeteries; Item 005: Transport; Item 006: Local Health Authority.

Sub-Head 04: Current Transfers and Subsidies. Item 005: Institutions; Item 007: Households.

Mr. Charles: Thank you, Madam Chair. I am looking at Items 01, 02, 03. I take

it this is the San Fernando City Corp—it is the San Fernando City Corporation. Gratuities - Monthly Paid; Gratuities - Daily Paid. And I am seeing an increase of 400,000 for the Estimates for 2020. The Minister did announce that he would be giving a pension, I think, to daily-paid workers. Could you indicate when is the starting date of the pension? Secondly, is it allocated here or elsewhere or could you just clarify why only 400,000?

Mr. Imbert: Madam Chairman, through you, first let me ask for God's grace. I said that we are distributing gratuity allocation throughout Departments. So you are going to see—I told the Member for Couva South that, that you are going to see allocations for gratuities within individual Departments and agencies for the first time. I also said that pensions are going to be paid by the Ministry of Finance. So you would not see any reference to pensions in the local government estimates. I said that clearly and unambiguously.

Mr. Charles: Could the Minister then disaggregate what is pension payments here and the pension payments that you propose to pay? I am looking at 01.

Mr. Imbert: Madam Chairman, I have just said we have allocated gratuity moneys within the corporations, not pension moneys. And therefore, you cannot disaggregate something that does not exist.

Dr. Rowley: Say it again.

Mr. Imbert: The pension—you cannot disaggregate something that does not exist. The pension moneys will be in the Ministry of Finance allocation.

Mr. Charles: But look at 01; 01, there is an allocation for pensions and it is here, Minister. It is.

4.00 p.m.

Madam Chairman: One minute. Member for Naparima, in fairness, your first

question did not deal with 01. Your first questions dealt with 02 and 03. Okay?

Mr. Charles: Right.

Madam Chairman: And I think the responses were based on 02 and 03. You are now asking something with respect to 01.

Mr. Charles: It was asked on the basis of his clarification. But at 01, pensions are allocated here, then why the—

Madam Chairman: You want to know what these pension are, basically?

Mr. Charles: Yes.

Mr. Imbert: What page is that?

Madam Chairman: We are at page 242, 007, Households; 01 Pensions.

Mr. Indarsingh: I would hate to think, Madam Chair, the Minister produced a bogus document here.

Madam Chairman: Member, Member, Member. Member, I know sometimes we like to make light, but I think there are some things that should not be made light. Okay?

Mr. Indarsingh: I know he is an honourable man.

Madam Chairman: And not meaning “light”, giving light. Okay?

Mr. Indarsingh: Bulbs. I hope it is not bulbs.

Mr. Imbert: It turns out that historically some of the corporations pay pensions and others do not. This has nothing to do with the daily-paid workers’ pension that is in the budget—absolutely nothing to do with it.

Madam Chairman: Member for Naparima, are you finished?

Mr. Charles: Yes.

Madam Chairman: Member for Couva South.

Mr. Indarsingh: Again, Madam Chair, based on what the Minister has just said, I

would like for it to be clarified, because my colleague asked a very relevant question—Member for Naparima—when will the daily-paid pension plan for the daily-paid employees come into effect? And we want to know what is the Government's allocation based on the amount of local government workers for fiscal 2020.

Mr. Imbert: Madam Chairman, for yet another time, the pension will be dealt with by the Ministry of Finance. We are in Local Government. Do I have to say that 100 times?

Mr. Indarsingh: Yes.

Mr. Imbert: We are dealing with the Ministry of Local Government. There are 14 corporations. You will ask that question 14 times?

Mr. Indarsingh: There are local government workers who do not trust you, Minister.

Madam Chairman: Okay. 009, Other Transfers.

25: Arima Borough Corporation. Member for Tabaquite, do you have an overall question for this? Okay. Sub-Head 01: Personnel Expenditure, page 253. Item 001: General Administration; Item 002: Public Health; Item 003: Markets and Abattoirs; Item 004: Parks and Recreation Grounds; Item 005: Works; Sub-Head 02: Goods and Services; Item 001: General Administration; Item 002: Public Health; Item 003: Markets and Abattoirs; Item 004: Parks and Recreation Grounds; Item 005: Works; Sub-Head 03: Minor Equipment Purchases; Item 001: General Administration; Item 002: Public Health; Item 004: Parks and Recreation Grounds; Item 005: Works; Sub-Head 04: Current Transfers and Subsidies; Item 007: Households; Item 009: Other Transfers.

We go on to 26: Point Fortin Borough Corporation. Member for Tabaquite, any

overall question? So can we go on then to page 264? Sub-Head 01: Personnel Expenditure. Item 001: General Administration; Item 002: Local Health Authority; Item 003: Public Places; Item 004: Transport and Roads; Sub-Head 02: Goods and Services. Item 001: General Administration; Item 002: Local Health Authority; Item 003: Public Places; Item 004: Transport and Roads; Item 005: Corporation Properties.

Sub-Head 03: Minor Equipment Purchases. Item 001: General Administration; Item 002: Local Health Authority; Item 003: Upkeep of Public Places; Item 004: Transport and Roads; Item 005: Corporation Properties; Sub-Head 04: Current Transfers and Subsidies. Item 007: Households; Item 009: Other Transfers.

27: Chaguanas Borough Corporation. Member for Tabaquite, any overall question, or we can go straight to the details?

Dr. Rambachan: The question I would have asked again had to relate to Goods and Services and the cut by \$12 million under Goods and Services, but the Minister said because they did not have money.

Madam Chairman: So therefore, we go on to page 274. Head 01: Personnel Expenditure. Yes, Member for Caroni Central?

Dr. Tewarie: I want to ask a question because I need a clarification.

Madam Chairman: And we are at where?

Dr. Tewarie: It is on page 274, the Personnel Expenditure.

Madam Chairman: Okay. So I am just going to ask—so can I call the Item?

Dr. Tewarie: Yes.

Madam Chairman: All right. So, Item 001: General Administration. Member for Caroni Central.

Dr. Tewarie: Okay. We discussed earlier the global figure of about \$20 million having to do with new personnel. They then said that that had to do with corporation police. And then we saw the allocations for each of the corporations before, the lowest one being the one before which was just over 3 million, and I see here there is an allocation which is—just one second. No, I made an error here because I am looking at the increase. I am sorry.

Madam Chairman: Okay. All right. So, Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Yes, thank you. 04: Current Transfers and Subsidies, it is page 268—

Madam Chairman: Wait, wait, just now. We are at page 274, 01: Personnel Expenditure. Item 001: General Administration. That is where we are at. That is where you are at? Item 002: Cemeteries; Item 003: Markets and Abattoirs; Item 004: Maintenance of Buildings, Grounds and Pastures; Item 005: Local Health Authority; Item 006: Maintenance of State Traces, Local Roads.

Sub-Head 02: Goods and Services. Item 001: General Administration; Item 002: Cemeteries; Item 003: Markets and Abattoirs; Item 004: Maintenance of Buildings, Grounds and Pastures; Item 005: Local Health Authority; Item 006: Maintenance of State Traces, Local Roads.

Sub-Head 03: Minor Equipment Purchases. We are at page 277. Item 001: General Administration; Item 003: Markets and Abattoirs; Item 004: Maintenance of Buildings, Grounds and Pastures; Item 005: Local Health Authority; Item 006: Maintenance of State Traces, Local Roads.

Sub-Head 04: Current Transfers and Subsidies; Item 007: Households; Item 009: Other Transfers. 28: Diego Martin Regional Corporation, page 282. Sub-Head 01: Personnel Expenditure. Item 001: General Administration; Item 002:

Cemeteries; Item 003: Markets and Abattoirs; Item 004: Maintenance of Buildings, Grounds and Pastures; Item 005: Local Health Authority; Item 006: Maintenance of State Traces, Local Roads.

Sub-Head 02: Goods and Services. Item 001: General Administration; Item 002: Cemeteries; Item 003: Markets and Abattoirs; Item 004: Maintenance of Buildings, Grounds and Pastures; Item 005: Local Health Authority; Item 006: Maintenance of State Traces, Local Roads.

Sub-Head 03: Minor Equipment Purchases; Item 001: General Administration; Item 005: Local Health Authority; Item 006: Maintenance of State Traces and Local Roads; Sub-Head 04: Current Transfers and Subsidies; Item 007: Households; Item 009: Other Transfers.

We go on to 29: San Juan/Laventille Regional Corporation. We are at page 291. Sub-Head 01: Personnel Expenditure. Item 001: General Administration; Item 002: Cemeteries; Item 003: Markets and Abattoirs; Item 004: Maintenance of Buildings, Grounds and Pastures; Item 005: Local Health Authority; Item 006: Maintenance of State Traces, Local Roads. Sub-Head 02: Goods and Services. Item 001: General Administration; Item 002: Cemeteries; Item 003: Markets and Abattoirs; Item 004: Maintenance of Buildings, Grounds and Pastures; Item 005: Local Health Authority; Item 006: Maintenance of State Traces, Local Roads.

Sub-Head 03: Minor Equipment Purchases. We are at page 294. Item 001: General Administration; Item 003: Markets and Abattoirs; Item 004: Maintenance of Buildings, Grounds and Pastures; Item 005: Local Health Authority; Item 006: Maintenance of State Traces, Local Roads; Sub-Head 04: Current Transfers and Subsidies; Item 007, Households; Item 009: Other Transfers.

30: Tunapuna/Piarco Regional Corporation. Can we go on to the details?

Head 01: Personnel Expenditure, page 299; Item 001: General Administration; Item 002: Cemeteries; Item 003: Markets and Abattoirs; Item 004: Maintenance of Buildings, Grounds and Pastures; Item 005: Local Health Authority; Item 006: Maintenance of State Traces, Local Roads.

4.15 p.m.

Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services. Item 001, General Administration; Item 002, Cemeteries; Item 003, Markets and Abattoirs; Item 004, Maintenance of Buildings, Grounds and Pastures; Item 005, Local Health Authority; Item 006, Maintenance of State Traces, Local Roads.

Sub-Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases. We are at page 302. Item 001, General Administration; Item 004, Maintenance of Buildings, Grounds and Pastures; Item 005, Local Health Authority; Item 006, Maintenance of State Traces, Local Roads.

Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies. Item 007, Households; Item 009, Other Transfers.

31 - Sangre Grande Regional Corporation, page 307. Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure. Member for Caroni Central.

Dr. Tewarie: I want to ask a general question. Is there any allocation in local government to these corporations that takes into account the possible passage of the legislation and the functioning of local government under the new law? Is there any allocation?

Hon. Hosein: As I said before, it is one million per corporation and four million at the head office.

Dr. Tewarie: And those allocations are meant to cover that eventuality?

Hon. Hosein: That is for the transformation initiative.

Dr. Tewarie: Okay.

Madam Chairman: Can we proceed or you have another question, Caroni Central?

Dr. Tewarie: Yes. Well, it is a little troubling but—

Madam Chairman: What we are dealing with here is just recurrent.

Dr. Tewarie: So it is like a transition amount? Is that it, Minister?

Madam Chairman: I think you asked if there is and I believe there is, but it is not under the recurrent. So I guess the questions you want to ask when we come to DP.

Dr. Tewarie: Okay.

Madam Chairman: All right? So 31, we are at Sangre Grande Regional Corporation. Sub-Head 01, which is Personnel Expenditure. Having regard to our recent history, we are between the pages of 307 and 308, are there any questions under Item 001, General Administration; 002, Cemeteries—that is where you are?—003, Markets and Abattoirs; 004, Maintenance of Buildings, Grounds and Pastures; 005, Local Health Authority; 006, Maintenance of State Traces, Local Roads. Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services. That is where you are, Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister of Local Government, line Item 22—

Madam Chairman: And that is under what because I did not call a Line Item?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: You said 02.

Madam Chairman: Yes, but it is under what? Item 001, where?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Yes, 02, 001, line Item 22, Short-term Employment. If the hon. Minister could indicate how many persons will be employed on short-term

with this increase of 25,000?

Hon. Hosein: Member, that is at the level at the corporation. They will decide on who they will be hiring to work on short-term contract.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Line Item on the same 001, 43 and 46. For 43 and 46, I noticed there is a decrease and I am asking how will this decrease impact upon security services as well as the ability to assist in natural disaster?

Hon. Hosein: As I said before, we will utilize what we have, and if the need arises we will ask for more at the mid-year review.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Can I go on to page 309 under 02, line Item 68?

Madam Chairman: Yes, the same thing.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you. This increase of 150,000, does this increase represent arrears owed to the trucking persons, or is this an increase in terms of taking care of the needs of the constituency that require water almost on a daily basis? There are some communities, Minister, that require truck-borne water. They do not have pipe-borne water and I know that a number of communities were not able to receive water because the trucks were not paid, so I want to know if this 150,000 represents arrears, moneys that are outstanding are being paid, or is it that you have increased the allocation for this new fiscal?

Hon. Hosein: In the area of Sangre Grande where water is not available, this is where the water trucking services come in.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: I am aware of that, Sir. I am aware of that.

Hon. Hosein: What is the question?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: I am asking if this money, the increase here, is to settle arrears, or is it an increase that you have given in this new fiscal year understanding that some communities require truck-borne water and is sometimes

not available because of the fact that there are moneys that are not available and the viring of funds sometimes does not happen on a timely basis?

Hon. Hosein: Well, the increase is to really supply the water in areas that are available.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: So you do not know if it is for arrears?

Hon. Hosein: Well, if “it have” arrears they will pay the arrears.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: All right. Okay. Thanks, Minister.

Madam Chairman: Can we go on to Head 03, Minor Equipment Purchases? Any questions between Items 001 to 006? And therefore, we move on to Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies. Item 007, Households; Item 009, Other Transfers.

32 - Couva/Tabaquite/Talparo Regional Corporation at page 315. Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure. Item 001, General Administration. Member for Couva North.

Ms. Ramdial: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. To the Minister of Local Government: Minister, in the 2019 Revised Estimate there was an allocation of 27 million which is a reduction from the 37 originally estimated, can you give a reason for that decrease of 8 million in allocations for Goods and Services?

Madam Chairman: Could you just assist us in telling us where you at?

Ms. Ramdial: 313, Couva/Tabaquite/Talparo Regional Corporation, Personnel Expenditure: 02, Goods and Services.

Madam Chairman: So this is the global figure.

Ms. Ramdial: Yes, the global figure. Minister, can you—

Hon. Hosein: Minister of Finance just answered that.

Ms. Ramdial: He did?

Hon. Hosein: Yes.

Ms. Ramdial: Minister of Finance, can you repeat your question please? I may have missed it earlier.

Mr. Imbert: I do not ask questions.

Ms. Ramdial: Your answers, sorry. Your answer. I may have missed it earlier.

Mr. Imbert: Could you repeat the question, please?

Ms. Ramdial: Give us a reason or the reasons why there was an 8 million decrease for Goods and Services in fiscal 2019 in your Revised Estimate?

Mr. Imbert: Which page?

Ms. Ramdial: Page 313. I just said it!

Madam Chairman: Order! Order! Order! Order!

Mr. Imbert: Madam Chairman, I am seeing an increase of \$8,219,500.

Ms. Ramdial: Yes Minister, why the decrease?

Mr. Imbert: I am seeing an increase.

Ms. Ramdial: Where are you seeing that increase?

Mr. Imbert: In the 2020 Estimates. This is the 2020 budget after all.

Ms. Ramdial: I am speaking about the 2019 Revised Estimate.

Mr. Imbert: I am speaking about the 2020.

Ms. Ramdial: So am I not allowed to ask about the 2019 Revised Estimate?

Mr. Imbert: Am I not allowed to speak about the 2020 Estimates?

Ms. Ramdial: I do not understand these games. The Minister is being very puerile.

Mr. Imbert: Madam Speaker, this is the 2020 budget, not the 2018 budget.

Ms. Ramdial: No, I do not understand that. Last year was the same problem, Madam Chair.

Madam Chairman: Can we have a little order, please? Minister of Finance, while I agree we concentrate on 2020, I will allow the question just in the event it is a lead up to a question to follow. [*Crosstalk*] I am just going to ask us all, it is very early in the day, so let us sort of contain ourselves so we will have some fuel towards the end. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Imbert: Yes, I want to make the point that we are looking—we are going through—

Madam Chairman: Member for Couva North, I think you are getting your answer.

Ms. Ramdial: Thank you.

Mr. Imbert: I just would like to make the point that we are going through the estimates in order to approve the estimates for 2020, and in 2020 there is an increase of \$8.2 million. If there is a difference between the original estimate for '19 and the revised, that would have been for a multitude of reasons as I told the Member for Tabaquite, lack of requests, bad paperwork, all sorts of reasons. But there is an increase of 8.2 million in the allocation for Couva/Tabaquite for Goods and Services in 2020 over 2019.

Ms. Ramdial: To the Minister of Local Government, Madam, just a follow-up. I understand from the Couva/Tabaquite Regional Corporation that they have been applying for funds in 2019 and they were not able to get access to those funds for Goods and Services. So probably the reasons that the Minister is citing are not really the reasons that allowed for the decrease in 2019, and I think that the Minister of Local Government is the appropriate individual to answer. [*Crosstalk*] Madam Chair, he is giving his reasons and I am giving my reasons.

Madam Chairman: Just now. Minister of Finance, as I say before, the Standing

Orders, and which I have read when we were setting the table here, allows for an intervention of five minutes. An intervention, five minutes. Not a question, an intervention. Those are the Standing Orders that were agreed to here. Yes Member, so do you have a question or you just made your statement and I can go ahead?

Ms. Ramdial: I just made my statement and I acknowledge what the Minister has said, and I hope he acknowledges my statements also.

Madam Chairman: Okay, Member for Tabaquite.

Dr. Rambachan: Thank you. Mr. Minister, there has been across the board as we saw a reduction in Goods and Services, across the board. The hon. Minister of Finance says he did not have the money, there was a shortfall of \$2 billion overall and everybody got a cut. But at the same time, if my reading of the figures are correct, the Government borrowed \$5.46 billion locally under the domestic market, how is it that the Minister did not decide to use some of that borrowing in order to finance local government so that rural communities could have benefited and not be cut these small amounts which are very important to the development?

Mr. Imbert: I do not think that is relevant to this line Item, Madam Speaker.

Dr. Rambachan: Madam Speaker, it is relevant because the Government borrowed money and allocated it for capital projects and other projects. Is it that local government, therefore, was not given the kind of priority that the Government claims that it is giving it because of its reform intent? Is it that they did not consider local government to be important?

4.30 p.m.

Madam Chair, I said and I say again eight or nine or five million in a rural community to a corporation is a very important sum of money when you have

drains to fix and roads to clean and local bridges to build. So how come you did not take some of that money you are borrowing and say, look, you know, local government is important, rural communities are important, let me allocate some to that?

Madam Chairman: Minister of Finance.

Dr. Rambachan: It is irrelevant, right?

Mr. Imbert: Madam Chair, and really we have to look at these Standing Orders. I cannot see how interventions could be all over the place like that, but this is not the line Item that deals with projects and as a former Minister of Local Government, you should know that. This is Goods and Services. You do not build bridges with Goods and Services. That is under the Development Programme.

Madam Chairman: Okay, so Item 001: General Administration. Member for Oropouche East.

Dr. Moonilal: Ma'am, the question was asked and not answered.

Madam Chairman: Okay. Member for Couva South, are you under 001?

Mr. Indarsingh: No, I am on 002.

Madam Chairman: Okay, Item 002: Cemeteries. Member for Couva South.

Mr. Indarsingh: Madam Chair, I want to move to—

Madam Chairman: No, where we are at, we are at Sub-Head 01.

Mr. Indarsingh: I am on 318 when you reach.

Madam Chairman: Okay, thank you. Item 003: Markets and Abattoirs; Item 004: Maintenance of Buildings, Grounds and Pastures; Item 005: Local Health Authority; Item 006—005?

Mr. Indarsingh: 006.

Madam Chairman: Item 006: Maintenance of State Traces, Local Roads.

Member for Couva South.

Mr. Indarsingh: Yes, to the Minister, Madam Chair, under Materials and Supplies, we see in 2019, there was an allocation of \$2 million—

Madam Chairman: All right, just now, we are still at page 316. That is where you are?

Mr. Indarsingh: No, I am on 318.

Madam Chairman: Okay, we have not reached there as yet. Member for Pointe-a-Pierre. Okay. So Sub-Head 02: Goods and Services. We are now at page 316, Item 001: General Administration. Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.

Mr. Lee: Thank you, Madam Chair. To the Minister, line Item 93: Operations of Electoral District Offices for Councillors of Municipal Corporations. In 2019, you had estimated 1.1 million, there is a Revised Estimate of 800,000. Could the Minister state, at the ending of the fiscal year, if there were any offices in arrears for councillors, and what is the status of that and why that happened?

Hon. Hosein: Most of them were paid afterwards.

Mr. Lee: Are there any in arrears?

Hon. Hosein: No, none in arrears.

Madam Chairman: Okay, so we move on. Member for Tabaquite, you have a question?

Dr. Rambachan: No.

Madam Chairman: Okay. Item 002: Cemeteries; Item 003: Markets and Abattoirs; Item 004: Maintenance of Buildings, Grounds and Pastures; Item 005: Local Health Authority. That is where you are, Member for Couva South? Item 006: Maintenance of State Traces, Local Roads. Member for Couva South.

Mr. Indarsingh: Thank you, Madam Chair. To the Minister, Materials and

Supplies. On the 2019, there was an allocation of 2,617,000 and the Revised Estimate was \$210,900. Minister, could you explain this figure in terms of its difference? Is it that there were no releases made to the Couva/Tabaquite/Talparo Regional Corporation?

Hon. Hosein: The releases—we did not have the releases then.

Mr. Indarsingh: You did not have the releases then?

Hon. Hosein: No.

Mr. Indarsingh: So what you are doing in 2020 in relation to an allocation of \$2,280,000?

Hon. Hosein: You know, Member, I would like to address this question, eh.

Mr. Indarsingh: No, I am asking, Minister, is it a question of the figures—

Madam Chairman: You are getting a response. Member for Couva South.

Mr. Indarsingh: Is it the figures are being cooked here?

Madam Chairman: Member for Couva South, you are getting a response to the question as asked. Wait for the response and then you could have your follow-up question. I think the Member was about to answer you. Okay? So, Minister.

Hon. Hosein: In case of the Couva Corporation that you are speaking about, once they make the request early but some of the corporations take long to make their request.

Mr. Indarsingh: Minister, could I ask you and to provide the evidence because you are saying, in this instance, the Couva/Tabaquite/Talparo Regional Corporation made an application for release of funds late? Is this what you are saying?

Hon. Hosein: Yeah, I am sticking to that.

Mr. Indarsingh: “Yuh sticking to that?”

Hon. Hosein: Yeah.

Mr. Indarsingh: So this is why they have only been given \$210,000 in 2019 to repair local roads and so on?

Hon. Hosein: I could research it and get back to you.

Mr. Indarsingh: But you just told me that they applied late and “yuh telling me yuh want time now to research?”.

Hon. Hosein: Member, I think you spoke to me about this already and I told you once they make the request, they will get it on time. Most of the corporations take long to make their request.

Mr. Indarsingh: So if you are saying, Minister, that there was an allocation only of 210,900 in 2019, really you are not giving them an increase of \$2,069,000 in 2020. You are giving them for what you denied them in 2019 and hence the bad and deplorable condition of all local government roads in Couva South, Madam Chair.

Madam Chairman: All right, so that— that is a statement.

Mr. Indarsingh: It is a statement of fact. [*Laughter*]

Madam Chairman: All right. Is there any response coming from here? If not, we move on. Sub-Head 03: Minor Equipment Purchases; Item 001: General Administration; Item 004: Maintenance of Buildings, Grounds and Pastures; Item 005: Local Health Authority; Item 006: Maintenance of State Traces, Local Roads.

Sub-Head 04: Current Transfers and Subsidies. Item 007: Households; Item 009: Other Transfers.

33 - Mayaro/Rio Claro Regional Corporation. We are at page 323. Sub-Head 01: Personnel Expenditure. Item 001: General Administration; Item 002: Cemeteries; Item 003: Markets and Abattoirs; Item 004: Maintenance of Buildings,

Grounds and Pastures; Item 005: Local Health Authority; Item 006: Maintenance of State Traces, Locals Roads.

Sub-Head 02: Goods and Services; Item 001: General Administration; Item 002: Cemeteries; Item 003: Markets and Abattoirs; Item 004: Maintenance of Buildings, Grounds and Pastures; Item 005: Local Health Authority; Item 006: Maintenance of State Traces, Local Roads.

Sub-Head 03: Minor Equipment Purchases; Item 001: General Administration; Item 005: Local Health Authority; Item 006: Maintenance of State Traces, Local Roads.

Sub-Head 04: Current Transfers and Subsidies. Item 007: Households; Item 009: Other Transfers.

34 - Siparia Regional Corporation, page 331. Sub-Head 01: Personnel Expenditure. Item 001: General Administration; Item 002: Cemeteries; Item 004: Maintenance of Buildings, Grounds and Pastures; Item 005: Local Health Authority; Item 006: Maintenance of State Traces, Local Roads.

Sub-Head 02: Goods and Services. Item 001: General Administration. Member for Fyzabad.

Dr. Bodoë: Thank you, Chairman. Chairman, through you to the Minister, I note with regard to Repairs and Maintenance - Equipment, 15, there is no allocation in 2020 and I just want to connect that as well to no allocation for the same Item under Maintenance of Buildings, Grounds and Pastures. So I am just wondering if that is a policy decision, Minister, with regard to no allocation for maintenance.

Hon. Hosein: We have a general increase across the board so if you need to vire, they could vire. Okay?

Dr. Bodoë: So that is the reason?

Hon. Hosein: Yeah.

Dr. Bodoë: Okay. And under Markets and Abattoirs, Chairman, it is under Security Services. I know that in 2019, there was no allocation at all, no expenditure for Security Services but I see an allocation again in 2020. Can the Minister explain that?

Madam Chairman: Item 003.

Hon. Hosein: Member, you are saying it is a decrease or—

Dr. Bodoë: I am saying that there was no expenditure at all.

Hon. Hosein: But it is an increase.

Dr. Bodoë: No, in 2019, despite the fact that there was an allocation of 150,000, there was no expenditure at all. Is there an explanation for that?

Hon. Hosein: I am being advised the contract for the security firm came to an end and they are in the process of retendering.

Dr. Bodoë: All right. So does that mean that there was no security provided or security is being provided but pending a new contract to sign?

Hon. Hosein: They have the municipal police—

Dr. Bodoë: Who is taking care of that in the meantime?

Hon. Hosein: Yes.

Dr. Bodoë: Thank you.

Madam Chairman: Okay, so under Sub-Head 02: Goods and Services. Item 001 to 006, any other questions? Okay. Sub-Head 03: Minor Equipment Purchases. Item 001: General Administration; Item 004: Maintenance of Buildings, Grounds and Pastures; Item 005: Local Health Authority; Item 006: Maintenance of State Traces, Local Roads.

Sub-Head 04: Current Transfer and Subsidies. Item 007: Households; Item

009: Other Transfers.

35 - Penal/Debe Regional Corporation. We are at page 339. Sub-Head 01: Personnel Expenditure. Item 001: General Administration; Item 002: Cemeteries; Item 003: Markets and Abattoirs; Item 004: Maintenance of Buildings, Grounds and Pastures; Item 005: Local Health Authority; Item 006: Maintenance of State Traces, Local Roads.

Sub-Head 02: Goods and Services. Item 001: General Administration; Item 002: Cemeteries; Item 003: Markets and Abattoirs; Item 004: Maintenance of Buildings, Grounds and Pastures; Item 005: Local Health Authority; Item 006: Maintenance of State Traces, Local Roads.

Sub-Head 03: Minor Equipment Purchases. Are there any questions between Item 001 to 006?

Sub-Head 04: Current Transfers and Subsidies. Item 009: Other Transfers.

4.45 p.m.

36, Princes Town Regional Corporation, page 346. Sub-Head 001: Personnel Expenditure. Item 001: General Administration; Item 002: Cemeteries; Item 003: Markets and Abattoirs; Item 004: Maintenance of Buildings, Grounds and Pastures; Item 005: Local Health Authority; Item 006: Maintenance of State Traces, Local Roads.

Sub-Head 02: Goods and Services. Item 001: General Administration. Member for Princes Town.

Mr. Padarath: Thank you, Madam Chairman. Madam Chairman, with respect to line Item 08: Rent Lease, Office Accommodation and Storage, hon. Minister for the past three years I have been asking about the relocation of the Princes Town Regional Corporation, in light of the corporation's building having failed two

OSHA tests. Every year I am told that they are looking for a new building while we continue to put the public and the employees at risk. The question is: Is there any plan in this year to move the corporation, or is it like most of the budget promises, coming soon?

Hon. Hosein: Member, I want to let you know that I always liaise with all the corporations, and I know for a fact this corporation has been looking for a building and apparently they cannot get one to suit because up to about two weeks ago I spoke to the chairman and they went to see some building and no reply.

Mr. Padarath: Hon. Minister, are you aware that there are two recommendations that have been made within this year with respect to buildings located in the area of Princes Town?

Hon. Hosein: No.

Mr. Padarath: No, you are not aware of that?

Hon. Hosein: No.

Mr. Padarath: Maybe I will furnish you with a copy of a letter at the end of it, because I have the letter dated in April of this year that has been sent and has been acknowledged by your office.

Madam Chairman: You are still under 001?

Mr. Padarath: Yes, Madam.

Madam Chairman: Yes, Member.

Mr. Padarath: Madam, at line Item 68: Water Trucking Services, it is a very similar question that was raised by the Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla. You would recall, Madam, that we have had problems, major problems, with water supply in the constituency of Moruga/Tableland, Princes Town and Naparima, which the Princes Town Regional Corporation services. Now, under line Item 68:

Water Trucking, you see an increase of 197,900. But Minister, you would recall that in the last financial year, suppliers refused to supply water trucking services, because there was an outstanding arrears to many of them. The question is: Does this reflect an increase going forward with respect to water trucking services or is this increase to eliminate the arrears? Because last year, when we had the arrears, suppliers refused to provide the service until the arrears were cleared off and many thousands of households were left without a water supply because of this problem.

Hon. Hosein: Okay, as I said before and I will say it again, if the arrears have to be paid off, it will be paid off and when the mid-year review comes in April, we will apply for more money.

Mr. Padarath: Hon. Minister, are you saying at this time that you are not aware, with respect to all the corporations, all 14 corporations, of the areas of arrears for the last financial year?

Madam Chairman: Well, Member for Princes Town, I would not ask about all the 14—

Mr. Padarath: Well, I am asking particularly with Princes Town but I know my colleague from Cumuto/Manzanilla asked about Grande.

Madam Chairman: We are on Princes Town and I will ask you—

Mr. Padarath: I will be very specific Ma'am, thank you. Could the hon. Minister indicate at this time, because I am seeing several technocrats behind the hon. Minister, and one would think that if you are coming to the Standing Finance Committee that you would have this information at your fingertips, that you would be prepared to answer questions. [*Desk thumping*] Because you have answered no questions to the budget debate. Several of you have not spoken and there are more questions than answers.

Madam Chairman: Member for Princes Town, the question. You were going to ask a question about the water trucking.

Mr. Padarath: Madam, the question is: Is the hon. Minister aware of what is the arrears right now with respect to water trucking services?

Madam Chairman: For Princes Town?

Mr. Padarath: For the Princes Town Regional Corporation.

Hon. Hosein: Okay, I will liaise with the chairman of the corporation and get the answer.

Mr. Padarath: So, Minister, you are telling me that you are not aware?

Hon. Hosein: Not aware.

Mr. Padarath: You are not aware.

Hon. Hosein: Other things, but not the water trucking.

Madam Chairman: Member for Naparima.

Mr. Charles: Thank you, Madam Chair. Item 02, 46: Natural Disasters. And there was 120,000 budgeted in 2019 but only 12,200 spent. Now, Princes Town Regional Corporation serves Naparima, Moruga/Tableland and Princes Town. That is an area prone to floods, prone to landslips, mud volcanoes, et cetera. Could the Minister indicate the reason why only 12,200 was spent, when I know that the demand was great?

Hon. Hosein: Member, I would provide the information for you.

Mr. Charles: Excuse me?

Hon. Hosein: Member, I would have to provide the information.

Mr. Charles: Okay and I could ask, you could probably provide that information. Is there a policy framework that informs the allocations? Because we know, given the issues with the volcanoes and whatnot, it is possible that there is a rationale for

the increase of 107? And if so, if you could provide that to us, please?

Hon. Hosein: Yes, I will.

Mr. Charles: Thank you, with respect to water trucking, Item 68. I know my colleague from Princes Town asked questions on that area. I know that—and up to today I got calls from constituents from Sahai Trace, some from Cunjal Road, Realize Road, Iere Branch Road, et cetera, complaining about water not being available. The question is: Given the fact that the reservoirs are low, and the dry season has not started as yet, could you indicate why—*[Interruption]* Why do you not behave yourself, Port of Spain North/St. Ann's East? Could you indicate if this allocation is enough to cater for the expected drought next year, or shortfall in supplies next year, given the situation with the reservoirs as we speak?

Hon. Hosein: As I said before, and I will say it again, we will utilize what we have and if we need more, we will have it in the mid-year review.

Mr. Charles: I am not hearing.

Hon. Hosein: We will utilize this allocation and if there is need, we will apply for more in April in the mid-year review.

Mr. Imbert: Madam Chairman, could I just interject here, with the permission of the Minister of Rural Development and Local Government? I just want to make the point, because it might not occur to the public listening that in 2019 the Princes Town Corporation received 95 per cent of its allocation for water trucking, and its allocation has been increased in 2020 by 50 per cent.

Mr. Charles: Yes, but I was informed Minister that that had to deal with arrears that had been built up.

Mr. Imbert: It does not matter, they got 95 per cent of their allocation.

Mr. Charles: And a lot of the persons who were supplied had refused to supply.

Mr. Imbert: A 50 per cent increase.

Mr. Charles: Whatever, Minister.

Mr. Imbert: Those are the facts. A 50 per cent increase for water trucking for Princes Town.

Mr. Padarath: He makes up the figures.

Mr. Imbert: Make up the figures?

Mr. Padarath: Yes.

Mr. Imbert: Four hundred thousand, 402,000 in 2019, 600,000 in 2020. That is a 50 per cent increase for water trucking.

Mr. Charles: And the question—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Imbert: That is not made up. That is their—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Charles: I am asking—[*Interruption*]

Madam Chairman: Yes, and the question.

Mr. Charles:—is that, given the realities on the ground, this allocation is entirely inadequate. So when you made the point—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Imbert: Which allocation would you like me to cut—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Charles: The 600,000.

Mr. Imbert: Which allocation would you like me to cut to provide more? [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Chairman: One minute.

Mr. Imbert: “Tell meh which one.”

Mr. Charles: The index pension for MPs. Cut that.

Madam Chairman: Okay, right. Can we proceed? Item 002: Cemeteries; Item 003: Markets and Abattoirs; Item 004: Maintenance of Buildings, Grounds and Pastures; Item 005: Local Health Authority; Item 006: Maintenance of State

Traces, Local Roads.

Sub-Head 03: Minor Equipment Purchases. Item 001: General Administration; Item 004: Maintenance of Buildings, Grounds and Pastures; Item 005: Local Health Authority; Item 006: Maintenance of State Traces, Local Roads.

Sub-Head 04: Current Transfers and Subsidies. Item 007, Households; Item 009: Other Transfers.

37: Regional Corporation Services General. We are at page 354. Sub-Head 04: Current Transfers and Subsidies. Item 007: Households.

38: Trinidad and Tobago Association of Local Government Authorities. We are at page 358. Sub-Head 01: Personnel Expenditure; Item 001: General Administration.

Sub-Head 02: Goods and Services. Item 001: General Administration.

Sub-Head 03: Minor Equipment Purchases. Item 001: General Administration.

Hon. Members, we shall now proceed to the *Draft Estimates of Development Programme*; different book. We are at page 100. Sub-Head 09: Development Programme. Consolidated Fund, page 100; Item 003: Economic Infrastructure. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Madam Chair. Line Item 001, 003, 010, and 015; it is the same question.

Madam Chairman: So you are looking at 001, 003, 00 what?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: 010, 015: Restoration of Landslips.

Madam Chairman: Yes. Okay. Page 100.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Yes?

Madam Chairman: Yes.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: For those, if the hon. Minister can identify the projects concerning the restoration of local roads and local bridges and drains and landslips, the projects in my constituency of Cumuto/Manzanilla, and in 020: Local Roads and Street Signage. Given the decrease in allocation utilized for fiscal 2019, what changes can be anticipated for fiscal going forward, with regard to the Sub-Item?

Madam Chairman: So, let me ask.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: I am asking. There was a decrease in—the Revised Estimate was 723,000 as opposed to the allocation of 7 million. And then you have for this estimate 7 million. So I am asking: Really what was the total estimated cost of this project for the fiscal 2019? And what areas will benefit from this project in this fiscal 2020?

Hon. Hosein: Member, I would have to get the list of the projects in writing for you.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: And would you be able to identify the areas that will be—

Hon. Hosein: I will identify the list of projects and the areas.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: All right, thank you.

5.00 p.m.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, under line Item 003, Roads and Bridges, in 2019 the Estimate was \$18.6 million, but the Revised Estimate in 2019, the revised one shows 3.778, let us say \$4 million. So \$14 million was not spent it would seem, or probably not released for Roads and Bridges which are needed so badly across the country. You had 18 million allocated to it and only 4 million approximately was released or spent. Could you give a reason why that necessity has not been implemented?

Madam Chairman: Member, you are looking for the overall? That is the whole

economic infrastructure.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Yes. Well, I have it here, it is marked D. I do not know.

Madam Chairman: Yeah, but that is not—I think you started to talk about roads.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Roads and Bridges.

Madam Chairman: Roads and Bridges.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Yeah, you will see it there.

Madam Chairman: That is the overall, eh?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Yes. So he would probably explain the other Sub-Items in it if he wants to.

Hon. Hosein: But, Madam Chairman, I will provide the list for you in writing.

Dr. Gopeesingh: But, Minister, as the lead Minister for it and the line Minister, do you not find that that is something that is unacceptable when the budget allocates 18 for that, for Roads and Bridges, and you only spend 4 million. Did you, during the course of the year, did you analyze what was going on and could you give a reason why that did not happen? We as line Ministers in the past, we did that. We would look at to see how we are spending the money.

Hon. Hosein: Yes. But, I will provide it for you in writing.

Dr. Gopeesingh: But I would expect that you are coming today, a big Item like that you would have that. I mean, what is the use of this when this exercise is finished and then you have to provide the answer later on. The country wants to know why this is happening. That is the responsibility of a Minister.

Dr. Tewarie: Just a follow-up question, Ma'am. Just wanted to ask the Minister, the Revised Estimate represents a significant reduction from what was estimated which was 18 million and in 2020 we now have 16.5 million. Now, all of these things here, local roads, local bridges, Bailey bridges, et cetera, landslips, local

drains, are needed everywhere. Now, in my particular constituency I remember raising a number of issues with the corporation, and there were requests to the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government both as MP and through the corporation. And there were issues that arose, for instance, Bailey bridges had to be done between Ministry of Works and Transport and Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government, et cetera. Is there—was the problem in 2019 a lack of disbursement or was it that the projects were not identified early enough to execute and therefore to expend the money?

Hon. Hosein: What area do you want to find out for, Member?

Dr. Tewarie: Well, I am very interested in Caroni Central. You know, we sent a list to the Minister of Rural Development and Local Government and we followed up with the corporation.

Hon. Hosein: Okay. In Caroni Central, we had proposed the third junction of temple Arena, road rehabilitation 150 metres by 6 metres, estimated cost. You want to know in detail? We have just a road.

Dr. Tewarie: It was done?

Hon. Hosein: Proposed.

Dr. Tewarie: This is, okay, projected. Okay.

Hon. Hosein: And we have another one in Rambarran Trace, Freeport. A box drain.

Dr. Tewarie: Okay, could I ask then Minister, if there was a problem last year, I mean, you do not need to go into that if you do not want to. But can I ask if the matters that we sent to you will be attended to in 2019?

Hon. Hosein: Yes, yes.

Dr. Tewarie: All right. Okay, that is all I want.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, Sub-Item 020, Local Roads and Street Signage Programme. You had 7.6 million allocated for it and utilization was 723,000. In light of what the hon. Prime Minister had indicated sometime this last fiscal year, that he wanted to increase and improve the signage across the country, did you take that into consideration, or it seems as though you did not bother with what the Prime Minister wanted to do and just left \$7 million not spent. If I were the Prime Minister I would ask you to account why the signage was not being done. [*Crosstalk*] I “doh” need to be there and I “doh” want to be there.

Madam Chairman: All right. So could the little banter be controlled? Minister.

Hon. Hosein: This will not be affected in any way, it is well within the budget and we expect to have savings from this project due to efficient management. We have started—

Dr. Gopeesingh: Minister, you are accounting what has been spent, a certain amount has been allocated, 7 million; 700,000 spent on signage, what happened? People not doing their work?

Hon. Hosein: What is the question?

Dr. Gopeesingh: You had 7.625 million allocated for Local Roads and Street Signage Programme, Item 020, that is with your Estimate, and your Revised Estimate means which is almost complete, that is the amount you spent, is 723,000. So you did not utilize close to \$7 million. Is there a reason why that happened? When your Prime Minister wants improved street signs and all of us need it.

Mr. Indarsingh: Just say Rambarran Trace in Caroni Central, Couva South.

Dr. Gopeesingh: “They doh do it, they doh do the work they supposed to do.”

Hon. Hosein: The street sign programme is on its way, but the bills have not

come in as yet.

Dr. Gopeesingh: All right, Minister, I got your answer.

Dr. Bodoë: Thank you, Madam Chair. If I may through you, Madam Chair, to the Minister. The Roads and Bridges, Restoration of Landslips, I just want to ask the Minister specifically because there are two outstanding landslips in Fyzabad, specifically if Namdeo Trace and Murray Trace are included in that allocation for 2020?

Mr. Imbert: Madam Chairman, I just want to make a general point. Each corporation will have an allocation of this, you know. This is the head office allocation.

Dr. Bodoë: Thank you, Minister.

Mr. Imbert: This is always a very small allocation. It cannot possibly be intended to cover the entire country. The allocation for each constituency or region is in separate Estimates.

Dr. Bodoë: I understand, Minister, I did not want to miss the opportunity here, because when I go to Siparia Regional Corporation, I did not see a specific line item for restoration of landslips.

Mr. Imbert: Local Roads and Bridges. It will fall under that.

Dr. Bodoë: Minister, would you care to answer?

Hon. Hosein: You are enquiring about—

Dr. Bodoë: Namdeo Trace and Murray Trace.

Hon. Hosein: Murray Trace, San Francique?

Dr. Bodoë: Yes.

Hon. Hosein: Yes. That project is approved and it is a wall, construction of a retaining wall. It is approved and it will start shortly.

Mr. Charles: Same question. St. Croix Road, anything at all, any allocation?

Hon. Hosein: That is in Naparima?

Mr. Charles: “Um-hmm.” Or you could answer it later.

Hon. Hosein: There is one in Nanan Trace.

Mr. Charles: Very good, very good.

Hon. Hosein: And there are others proposed.

Mr. Charles: I am happy, very happy.

Madam Chairman: Item 005: Multi-Sectoral and Other Services. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla. [*Crosstalk*]

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you—

Mr. Charles: Minister of Finance, tell him to discard it.

Hon. Hosein: This was completed. Nanan Trace was completed. I informed you of it.

Mr. Imbert: He knows very well it was done already. He is just wasting time.
[*Interruption*]

Hon. Hosein: I will give it to you.

Madam Chairman: So, Members, we are going to Item 005: Multi-Sectoral and Other Services. These are contained in pages 101 to 109. And therefore, to assist us in moving forward, what I propose is that we look at the various project groups. Okay? So that we first consider A. Administrative Services, which is on page 101.

Mr. Indarsingh: Thank you, Madam Chair. I see under 050, Municipal Police Equipment, an allocation of \$2.6 million, a new project. Could the Minister provide some details on this for us please?

Hon. Hosein: Member, this is for guns, ammunition, CCTVs, vehicles, et cetera.

Mr. Indarsingh: Could you tell us how this is to be procured?

Hon. Hosein: Normal procurement measures. Usual procurement measures.

Mr. Indarsingh: Usual procurement measures. And could we tell the nation because you said that 100 municipal police officers, what is the time frame for the procurement?

Hon. Hosein: This is based on the recruitment and we are recruiting incrementally.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Madam Chair. 005, 06, General Public Services, 024. I see there was—

Madam Chairman: Just a minute. You are 005?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: 101, yeah. Page 101.

Madam Chairman: 06. We are in A. Where are you?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: 024, A.

Madam Chairman: Yes, thank you.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Can the hon. Minister indicate, I see you in 2019, Revised Estimate was 894,000 and in 2020 you have a 2.5 million Estimate. Can the hon. Minister indicate how this project is intended to benefit citizens? And really and truly, what is the purpose of this particular project please?

Hon. Hosein: The explanation, the increase will be used to pay outstanding payments from last fiscal and upgrade communication and response equipment.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Okay. And line Item 028, I see that the project has been reactivated. What exactly does this project entail?

Hon. Hosein: That is the refurbishment of the San Fernando dog pound.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Refurbishment?

Hon. Hosein: Refurbishment.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Do you have dogs currently there, Sir, hon. Minister?

Madam Chairman: What is that please?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Hon. Minister indicated this is refurbishment. So I am asking if currently there are any canine—

Hon. Hosein: They have some dogs, a few dogs.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Well, I should hope so. How many dogs are currently kept at this facility?

Hon. Hosein: There are six kennels at the dog pound.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Okay. And you are going to refurbish the six kennels.

Hon. Hosein: Yes.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Okay.

Hon. Hosein: With the refurbishment we will add another seven so it will be 13 in all.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: All right.

5.15 p.m.

Dr. Tewarie: Yes. Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, 026, Design of a Comprehensive Local Area and Regional Development Planning Process. It looks, given that you have 14 corporations, that you will get—either you do a plan which takes every region into account, involving this 1.5 million or maybe it will be spread around to about 100,000 a piece. Can you explain Minister what is going to happen here in terms of this comprehensive local and regional development plan?

Madam Chairman: Member, just maybe if you have a ruler, just let us see if we are on the same line.

Dr. Tewarie: Yeah, I think it is.

Madam Chairman: The estimates for this year under that?

Dr. Tewarie: Oh. So there is nothing for that? [*Crosstalk*] So you are not doing

anything related to that then? In 2019 a million was allocated.

Hon. Hosein: Well, we are using the local expertise resident within the Ministry.

Dr. Tewarie: And then 040, Support for the Automation of Construction Permitting Process. I am on the right line here? I think so, two million.

Hon. Hosein: What is the question, Member?

Dr. Tewarie: Well, I want to know what is happening there with Local Government and the automation process for construction permit. Does that mean that the devolution is going to take place? [*Crosstalk*] You are driving that?

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: Sorry. Madam Chairman, I would just like to indicate that that is a project that is in the Ministry of Planning and Development.

Dr. Tewarie: Okay. Where you are working with them?

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: And we are working with them. Because, of course, as you would know with the PAF, they will be doing simple construction. So it is the Ministry of Planning and Development, the Ministry of Trade and Industry, the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government, the Ministry of Works and Transport, their Drainage Division. We are all working together on this project.

Dr. Tewarie: Okay. And then the other one, just below, 045, Implementation of Local Government Reform. This is the institutional—

Mrs. Robinson-Regis:—strengthening, yes.

Dr. Tewarie:—strengthening that you are talking about?

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: Yes, yeah.

Dr. Tewarie: Okay.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: Thank you.

Madam Chairman: Member for Caroni East?

Dr. Gopeesingh: The answer was given by the Minister of Planning and

Development.

Madam Chairman: Member for Oropouche West. Okay. So can we go on to F. Public Buildings? Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: No, no.

Madam Chairman: No? A. Port of Spain City Corporation.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Yeah.

Madam Chairman: Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, I do not know if you will permit me, but it is a line Item in 035 that would be relevant to all the corporations. That is the Procurement of the Motor Vehicles and Equipment.

Madam Chairman: So would you ask each in it still?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Well, I am wondering if I could just ask a general question, and it is pertaining to all the—at a meeting of the Public Administration and Appropriations Committee, Madam Chair, held on the 21st of May, 2019, on the administration of disaster relief, the committee was informed that the Ministry was struggling with the upkeep of vehicles and were in need of backhoes and trucks, et cetera. When questioned about the availability of resources at municipalities, the Ministry stated that funding was needed to repair its vehicles and once satisfied, relief items would have been ready for the hurricane season.

In light of the fact that you are asking line Item 035 and throughout the various corporations, I am asking if the figures allocated here—they are varying for each corporation—if the allocation stated will assist the corporations in satisfying this need and what vehicles will be procured for fiscal 2020 and what is the cost of these vehicles?

Hon. Hosein: The moneys would be used to expand the fleets—backhoes,

excavators, trucks, et cetera.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Is it that you will be renting these vehicles or purchasing?

Hon. Hosein: No, no, purchasing. We do not rent.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: At these figures, hon. Minister?

Hon. Hosein: Yes. It is across the corporations. [*Crosstalk*]

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Let us not talk about the wire transfer today.

Madam Chairman: But Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla, the question you asked is with respect to all. Yes?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Yes.

Madam Chairman: Do you have a figure to put to all?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Actually it is not aggregated, you know. It would have—I could call out for each one if you wish. For Arima, sorry—for Port of Spain it would be 1.5 million; San Fernando City Corporation, 800,000; Arima, 800,000; Point Fortin, 800,000; Chaguanas Borough, 1,000,070; Diego Martin, 800,000; San Juan/Laventille, 800,000; Tunapuna/Piarco, two million; Sangre Grande Regional Corporation, 800,000; Couva/Tabaquite/Talparo, 800,000; Mayaro/Rio Claro, 800,000; Siparia, 800,000; Penal/Debe, 800,000 and Princes Town, 800,000 and when you look at the allocations the question is, what vehicles will be procured, in light of the fact that the Minister just indicated that, you know, it is backhoes and trucks and then you have repairs? So will this figure, in fact, be able to adequately procure the necessary vehicles that you are referring to in addition to repairing what it is you are indicating? Because I can tell you, Minister, during the flood, we were at a loss and had to wait for assistance with regard to vehicles and backhoes and so forth. So I know that it is necessary. Sangre Grande Regional Corporation is a very large area. It includes Matelot, it includes Manzanilla.

Madam Chairman: Which one are you on?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: I am on the same line Item, Madam.

Madam Chairman: Yeah, but remember the line Item—

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: It refers to the allocations stated for the Procurement of Vehicles and Equipment.

Madam Chairman: Yeah, but we are at Port of Spain. We are at Port of Spain. What you asked is—no, no. [*Laughter*]

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: I know that, Madam Chairman. [*Crosstalk and laughter*]

Madam Chairman: Could we just have a lil order? I allowed you to put it as a total question.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Right.

Madam Chairman: I asked you to put the total allocation, and you asked the Minister—you have not given us the total figure, you gave us the breakdown, but you had asked if that figure was adequate—

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Yes.

Madam Chairman:—to meet all of the needs.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Agreed, all

Madam Chairman: Including repairs?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Including repairs.

Madam Chairman: All right.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you.

Madam Chairman: And I believe I have allowed that question, but then you went on to ask another question about a particular area, which I had asked you to—

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: No problem.

Madam Chairman: Right, sure.

Hon. Hosein: Repairs are paid under recurrent, and we have an all-of-corporation approach now. So if Tunapuna has a problem, Penal/Debe will assist with a backhoe, as has happened recently with the flood. The Penal Corporation sent up some equipment and assisted Tunapuna. This is an all-of-corporation approach that the Ministry has introduced and it is working right now. It worked with the water crisis also.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: I beg to differ.

Madam Chairman: Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Yeah. Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, Port of Spain City Corporation, Drainage and Irrigation Programme, 014, 5.5 million was allocated and you spent 4.549, but you now allocating for 2020, 6.5 million. Bearing in mind the heavy flooding in Port of Spain, could you just give us a little understanding of where we were with the expenditure of that 4.5 and do you think that 6.5 million will be enough and how you think you are going to spend that to alleviate Port of Spain flooding, because it is a bit worrisome where quarter million people are disturbed on any day that there is flooding?

Hon. Hosein: Remember this is to construct, repair box drains, retaining walls, curb and slipper drains and to allow proper water flow.

Dr. Gopeesingh: So where would the—if you want to undertake a project looking at the drainage problem in Port of Spain, where will that be found, if that is what you are stating there it only incorporates those areas? Because I would expect it to come under that heading, Drainage Programme for Port of Spain City Corporation.

Hon. Hosein: We could look at it as a special project from through head office.

Dr. Gopeesingh: I think you should probably look at that separately. One more question, Madam Chair.

Madam Chairman: Yes, still under A?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Yeah. Local Road and Bridges Programme; well nothing was spent from the 6.5 million. Is there a reason? You have lots of roads in Port of Spain and you have a few bridges. What happened? Why was nothing done? You got to get your Ministry working, you know. Same thing the Prime Minister speak about productivity. It is not there and I could understand when he speaks about productivity. People do not want to work.

Hon. Hosein: Member, they received the allocation late at the end of the financial year, so it is not showing up here.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Or, it still has to be accounted for?

Hon. Hosein: Yeah.

Dr. Gopeesingh: But you have a heading on—all right. That is for a revised estimate. I can accept that.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, at line 038, Latrines Eradication Programme. I am seeing a \$1.7 million allocation. I just need to know what has happened, because for the three subsequent years nothing was spent. So is it that programme has been abandoned? What is the status of it?

Hon. Hosein: No, it has not been abandoned, and the head office took over this project under the IDF Programme.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: And it will be for the rest of the corporations also, because in some of the other corporations it is the same thing?

Madam Chairman: Well, I will allow you to ask that under each corporation.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: All right.

Madam Chairman: Okay? All right. So can we go on to B. Arima Borough Corporation? C. San Fernando City Corporation; D. Point Fortin Borough

Corporation; L. Chaguaramas Borough Corporation; M. Diego Martin Regional Corporation; N. San Juan/Laventille Regional Corporation; P. Tunapuna Piarco Regional Corporation; R. Sangre Grande Regional Corporation; T. Couva/Tabaquite/Talparo Regional Corporation. Member for Couva North.

Ms. Ramdial: Thank you, very much, Madam Chair. Line Item 265, Local Roads and Bridges Programme. I am seeing an allocation in 2019 of 6 million and then 2020, 5.5. Minister can you give an explanation for the reduction of .5 million?

Hon. Hosein: Some of the projects have been under head office.

Ms. Ramdial: Okay. So head office will be undertaking these projects?

Hon. Hosein: Some of the projects, yeah.

Ms. Ramdial: Some of them. Okay, thanks.

Hon. Hosein: And this is to improve roadway infrastructure by rehabilitation, et cetera.

Ms. Ramdial: Thank you.

Mr. Indarsingh: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Minister, under 265, Local Roads and Bridges, in relation to the 2019 Revised Estimate, could you advise or inform this meeting if this sum of money was, indeed, released to the Couva/Tabaquite/Talparo Regional Corporation?

5.30 p.m.

Hon. Hosein: Yes, it was released. It is being reflected in the estimates.

Mr. Indarsingh: Minister, you said earlier that you have been in constant contact with the respective regional corporation—

Hon. Hosein: Once they contact me, I will be in contact with them.

Mr. Indarsingh: I want to tell you, I have been in contact with the Couva/Tabaquite/Talparo Regional Corporation up until today and they have

advised me that they applied for this sum of money since January of 2019 and it has not been released.

Mr. Young: Madam Chair, can the Member identify exactly who he spoke to so we could verify the veracity of that statement?

Madam Chairman: Member for Couva South.

Mr. Indarsingh: I asked a question to the Minister of Rural Development and Local Government—

Madam Chairman: No, no, no, no. No, no, I think you really challenged something the Minister said—

Mr. Indarsingh: Yes.

Madam Chairman:—so that for him to be able to answer you specifically—

Mr. Indarsingh: Madam Chair, I asked a question to the Minister of Rural Development and Local Government and I am awaiting his response.

Madam Chairman: And you asked him whether he is aware that you were in touch with the corporation up to today?

Mr. Indarsingh: Yes. And I asked if it was released.

Madam Chairman: And I think he has answered—

Mr. Indarsingh: “Doh put any words in meh mouth.”

Madam Chairman: I am not putting any words in your mouth. Okay? I would not put myself there at all. [*Desk thumping and laughter*] What I am saying to you, you asked a question which was answered. Apparently from other information you have, you are challenging that question, and therefore the matters that you are putting to the Ministers would be matters purely in your knowledge, because you cannot ask him if he is aware that you were in touch with them up to today. That is in your knowledge.

So that I am saying to assist the Minister in giving you an answer for a challenge you have put, you may want to say at what level you have been in touch so then he could answer it, okay?—because we would get nowhere. He cannot be aware of what you have done.

Mr. Indarsingh: Madam Chair, for a fact, I know that the Minister is supported by his Permanent Secretary and also I have been guided by the councillors of the Couva/Tabaquite/Talparo Regional Corporation.

Madam Chairman: U. Mayaro/Rio Claro Regional Corporation. Member for Mayaro.

Mr. Paray: Thank you very much, Madam Chairman. Minister, line Items 292 and 361, I do see some increases in the allocation for both Items, can you tell if any portions of this allocation is for arrears?—because I know several times when you go to the corporation and you ask about some of the projects, they say, well, you know, bills are outstanding, contractors do not want to do the project. Any portion of this is for arrears or are these two allocations for new projects?

Hon. Hosein: These are new projects.

Mr. Paray: New projects, okay, thank you. Madam Chair, under line Item 380 I am seeing an allocation—

Hon. Hosein: These are projects in Biche and Poole, and so on.

Mr. Paray: Yeah. So new projects, okay, thank you. Line Item 380, \$800,000 allocation for a municipal police station, has a location been identified for this?

Hon. Hosein: No, not as yet, Member.

Mr. Paray: Not as yet, so the allocation is just there pending an identification of a location. Okay. One more question, Madam Chair. Line Item 365, under Disaster Preparedness, Mr. Minister, I know there was a project that was executed in our

constituency with regard to CERT where we had several residents trained up in disaster preparedness, first response. I did see a demonstration just about two weeks ago in terms of the work that they were doing and the demonstration looked very well. What I want to find out, would these units be tooled in terms of, specifically for Mayaro, dinghies, flashlights, first aid kits, you know, some of these things? If that allocation is there, we are just looking to tool, because while I am not hoping or wishing for flooding this year, but I saw what they were doing and I think they are well trained, but I want to know if they have the tools to operate in the event we get flooding again this year.

Hon. Hosein: Yes. The answer is, yes.

Mr. Paray: So would we be getting any of those allocations before the year is over in terms of getting some of those Items? Is it included in that Disaster Preparedness allocation?

Hon. Hosein: Yes.

Mr. Paray: Okay. Yes, it is affirmative. Thank you, Minister.

Madam Chairman: V. Siparia Regional Corporation. Member for Fyzabad.

Dr. Bodoë: Thank you, Madam Chairman. I just wanted to ask in relation to line Item 307 on page 108 regarding that Local Government Tourism Programme. I see it is Project No. 307-Reactivated Project, can the Minister just shed some light on what that project is about?

Madam Chairman: Minister.

Hon. Hosein: Thank you, Madam Chairman. This is to develop local tourism through the growth of local entrepreneurship for the historical ecotourism sites in this district.

Dr. Bodoë: Could the Minister provide any further details at this point in time or

no projects have been identified as yet?

Hon. Hosein: The Daisy Voisin Museum is one and other icons they have within the municipality.

Dr. Bodoë: Thank you.

Madam Chairman: Member for Oropouche West.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: Thank you. I will follow through with 307 line Item also, Madam Chairman. To the Minister, this “Reactivated Project”, in Penal there is a Bunsee Trace mud volcano, is that also identified in this so you could develop local tourism?

Madam Chairman: Is Penal in this?

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: It is in Penal, yes.

Madam Chairman: Would it be in Siparia?

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: In Siparia.

Madam Chairman: Okay, sure.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: It will fall under Siparia.

Hon. Hosein: This is based on the corporation’s request and the corporation did not request that one as yet. Probably they have it in mind, but those are the two we have.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: And if we are really to stimulate tourism that is an area that we really need to explore in.

Hon. Hosein: So your recommendation is taken.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: That is it.

Madam Chairman: W. Penal/Debe Regional Corporation. Member for Oropouche West.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: I thank you. When I look at line 003, hon.

Minister, Disaster Preparedness, you would note that Oropouche West and Oropouche East are flood prone and I am seeing the allocation here of \$900,000, do you think that would be sufficient because last year we got flood three times and in 2017 we had Storm Bret? Do you think this allocation is sufficient to service both east and west?

Hon. Hosein: What they could do is utilize the \$900,000 and if the need arises, as I said before, they could request and I would make the request in the mid-year review.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: Okay.

Madam Chairman: Member for Oropouche West, yes.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: Item 318, we have Local Roads and Bridges Programme, I just need to enquire, hon. Minister, if this \$4 million—we have two massive landslips in San Francique, if this would also be covered with this \$4 million, and since 2017 it was promised by the Ministry that it would have been completed.

Hon. Hosein: Once the request is made we would look at it.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: Yeah. Since 2017 it was made, so perhaps it could be included?

Hon. Hosein: Is it at Murray Trace?

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: No, this is in San Francique Main Road. Thank you.

Madam Chairman: X. Princes Town Regional Corporation. Member for Princes Town.

Mr. Padarath: Thank you, Madam. Madam, Item 338 to the hon. Minister. Hon. Minister, with respect to the Development of Cemeteries and Cremation Facilities,

I know on the books for a while we have been discussing the issue of an Islamic cemetery to accommodate those in Princes Town and Naparima, can you indicate whether any consideration or proposal was put forward with respect to this particular 338?

Hon. Hosein: No, I have been advised the corporation did not make the request.

Madam Chairman: Infrastructure Development Fund, page 203, Item 003: Economic Infrastructure. Member for Chaguanas East.

Mr. Karim: Thank you, Madam Chair. I am seeing some figures there in 2020, \$27 million; that is Item 42; 003: Economic Infrastructure, but we are not seeing any allocation for that, could you indicate what is the reason for it?

Madam Chairman: Minister.

Hon. Hosein: Member, this was transferred to the Ministry of Works and Transport two years now.

Mr. Karim: Normally we would get a note on the explanation indicating it was so transferred, was it omitted?

Hon. Hosein: It was two years now, it was two years ago that happened. It was transferred two years ago.

Mr. Karim: Well, the point I was making is that even it was transferred normally in the explanation, once you have a figure it would say so.

Madam Chairman: It would have most probably been there last year. Right? That is when it would have come up. Any other matters under this, Item 004.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Yeah.

Madam Chairman: Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Madam Chair, the amount that was provided in 2019 for the Social Infrastructure programme under this IDF was \$58.6 million and the Revised

Estimate showed that only 10.5 per cent was spent, which is probably less than 20 per cent. Could the Minister explain why such an important thing like the Infrastructure Development Fund where work needs to be done, only less than 20 per cent of the work or 16 per cent of the work has been implemented? Just look at Community Development under A, out of 58 million for that, the same thing, is 10.5 spent.

So you have Development of Rural Communities, and so on, the money is allocated to you, hon. Minister, and your line Ministry and you utilize 10 million out of 58 million. So when 58 million was allocated in 2019, the Minister of Finance see that you did not spend it, he is allocating only 23 million now, what is going on, Minister, why less than 16 per cent of our IDF funding for Community Development under the IDF is only spent are not so much? Why could we not utilize the 100 per cent of the IDF?

Hon. Hosein: The RDC was able to commit 56 million in projects in the last fiscal year.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Yes, we are aware of that—

Hon. Hosein: In addition to the 10.5 million reflected on the Revised Estimate for 2019, an additional 24.8 million was submitted to the Ministry of Finance to be processed, and an additional estimate of 14 million in invoices being processed at the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government.

Dr. Gopeesingh: So in summary what you are saying, that at this time there are invoices outstanding that ought to be paid?

Hon. Hosein: Yes.

Dr. Gopeesingh: But does not the Minister of Finance, before he produces his budget this year, he gets a total understanding of where we are with the finance?

Why at the end of 2018/2019 invoices are now coming in and so the Minister of Finance would not be able to account to the nation about what was spent in 2018/2019? That is supposed to—if the Minister would explain that.

Mr. Imbert: Madam Chairman, I am listening to the Member. I do not really understand why we would want to ask about 2018/2019 in a 2020 budget exercise.

5.45 p.m.

Dr. Gopeesingh: But, Minister, your Revised Estimate indicates the amount of money, approximately what was spent. That is why you have a column, “Revised Estimate”, and this is where we get an understanding of what happened in 2018/2019. You have an Estimate, then you have Revised Estimate that tells us how much was spent or how much was approximately spent. We are hearing now the Minister of Rural Development and Local Government saying that invoices are now coming in. Invoices are now coming in, one for 14 million and one for 24 million. What has happened to your Ministry of Finance? You could probably answer that now, because you have been answering for everybody else before. Answer it.

Mr. Imbert: It is a disconnected question. Would you connect the sentence and the verb, please?

Dr. Gopeesingh: No, you just failed to understand it. You are in Parliament over 20 years and you know this, but you are failing to answer.

Mr. Imbert: It is a disconnected question. He asked me what happened to Finance.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Answer it “nuh”. Minister, keep your honour and explain it. We give you that privilege.

Mr. Imbert: That is a disconnected question. Please ask the question properly.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Sometimes I wonder what is wrong with you, you know.

Madam Chairman: Minister, if you could ascertain what the point is, if you could kindly answer the question.

Mr. Imbert: It is impossible. He said what is going on in the Ministry of Finance.

Madam Chairman: No, I think it is really in terms of—

Dr. Gopeesingh: Could you explain? Madam Chair, thank you for helping me out, because the Minister seems oblivious or he does not want to answer. You usually would be brisk in answering questions. What is happening?

Mr. Imbert: Again, he is asking why I am not brisk in answering. That is a disconnected question. Ask a proper question, please.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Why are those issues of the invoices that the Minister of Rural Development and Local Government spoke about not reflected in your Revised Estimate?

Mr. Imbert: It is impossible to do that, as you well know, because the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago since Independence, has operated on a cash basis. Therefore, if money is not spent, it cannot be reflected in the Revised Estimate. It first has to be spent. So if work was done in the last fiscal year and the invoices for that work are produced and submitted in this fiscal year, then that expenditure will be reflected in 2020. It cannot possibly be reflected in 2019. We operate on a cash basis, as you know.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Yes, well I know that because we have been there.

Mr. Imbert: That is why I said the question was disconnected. You asked me what happened in the Ministry of Finance. The invoices are not coming to me.

Dr. Gopeesingh: No, I understand. But hold on. Why are you allowing

Ministries, like the Local Government, to have invoices there as the Minister is saying and not furnished to you in an appropriate time so you can close off the year?

Mr. Imbert: Again, progress payments are made on an interim basis at regular intervals. Projects transcend financial years. A project will begin in one financial year, it will end in another financial year. An item will be ordered in one financial year, it will be delivered in another financial year, and the invoice might come in another financial year. These are all standard accounting procedures of which you are well aware. It does not just operate in the Government, it operates in private business as you are well aware.

Dr. Gopeesingh: I will ask you the last question. Bearing in mind the Minister of Rural Development and Local Government has said that there are invoices to be processed for 14 million and 10 million, which is equivalent to almost 24 million, you have 23 million for 2020 Estimate, how do you intend to deal with that?

Mr. Imbert: Madam Chairman, the Member was a Minister of Government. It was not a happy time, but he was a Minister of Government, and therefore he knows that the Infrastructure Development Fund is a rolling fund and has a balance at the beginning of the fiscal year, and that carries forward into another fiscal year. And he knows that the Minister of Finance can make adjustments to allocations in the Infrastructure Development Fund without coming back to Parliament for an adjustment, a variation or a supplementation. It is the one fund that was set up to allow state enterprises to carry on their work efficiently.

The Minister of Finance, your Minister of Finance, the Minister of Finance before that, can move funds around in the Infrastructure Development Fund. Every mid-year, every single mid-year, Ministers of Finance move billions of

dollars in the Infrastructure Development Fund, because for that reason. You know this very well. You know very well that the Minister of Finance can reallocate and adjust appropriations in the Infrastructure Development Fund. You know that.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Sure, I accept that.

Mr. Imbert: “Good, ah glad yuh know.”

Dr. Gopeesingh: The Minister said that 24 million of invoices are going to come in. You will have to make adjustments on the IDF.

Mr. Imbert: The Minister of Finance makes adjustments every single year with respect to allocations under the IDF, and no parliamentary appropriation is required for that. The fund was set up in that way many, many years ago, and you have been in government and you know that.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Madam Chairman. Line Item 003, Development of Rural Communities. What are the expected deliverables of the programme, and what are the key performance indicators, Minister of Rural Development and Local Government?

Hon. Hosein: What is the question?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: What are the expected deliverables of this programme? The development of the community—line Item 003, I said that before, Deputy.

Mr. Imbert: Impossible.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: What are the key performance indicators? How many communities benefited from this programme and will benefit, hon. Minister?

Hon. Hosein: All. [*Laughter*] No, is true, all the communities.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: What communities benefited, Minister?

Madam Chairman: Okay, so let us have a little order. Yes, what communities?

Member?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: You finished answering the question?

Madam Chairman: No, I just wanted you to re-ask it.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Oh, sorry, sorry. What communities will be developed under this Sub-Item for fiscal 2020? You would have probably had communities identified already for you have to have a figure? You have identified a figure so I would assume that you have communities identified under this programme to be developed.

Hon. Hosein: This came with the recommendation from the MPs, which include bridges and crossings, landslips, retaining walls, roads and drainage, and pavilions, et cetera.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: If that is the case then, hon. Minister, then this line Item has failed to provide the necessary development in the communities as indicated, especially in my constituency. I have serious landslips and need for bridges, and if there is so much money that was allocated in 2019 that has not been utilized then it means that this line Item has not really provided the development that you anticipated.

Hon. Hosein: This has been used throughout the country, you know, not in one community.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: No, no, I understand that, but you have an allocation in 2019 of 56 million, the revised for 2019 is 10.5. And then you have the Estimate for 2020 of 20 million, and you are saying that this is throughout—

Hon. Member: He just explained that.

Madam Chairman: Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla, if you want to make an intervention as a statement, I would allow that. But I do not know that there is any

question there. It is being argumentative. So if you want to make an intervention as a statement I will allow that and let us go on.

Mr. Imbert: Madam Chairman, just to clarify and to refute the allegation made. We just went through this process where we said that invoices for work done are coming in at this time for payment, and therefore you would not see in the expenditure amount, work that has been done. What you would see is what has been paid for, but not what has been done, because those invoices are coming in now. So you cannot draw that kind of conclusion.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Okay, then I stand corrected.

Mr. Imbert: You are corrected.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: If that is the case, are you indicating that 20 million is sufficient then to be able to develop the rural communities throughout Trinidad where there is an extensive amount of landslips?

Hon. Hosein: Yes, we could utilize the 20 million, and if we need more we will request it.

Mr. Imbert: And they will get it.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Line Item 010: the Latrine Eradication Programme. Can the hon. Minister indicate how many households does he estimate will benefit from this project?

Mr. Indarsingh: The light bulb programme will benefit more.

Mr. Imbert: The light bulb? The light bulb does not have anything to do with local government. "Look, behave yuhself."

Hon. Hosein: The first phase of this project was approved by Cabinet in 2019 after consultation and standardization of the design across four corporations: Port of Spain Corporation, Sangre Grande, which you would have interest in, San

Juan/Laventille and Mayaro Corporation. The allocation this year would be utilized based on the needs assessment. To date, 75 per cent of the programme has been completed. [*Desk thumping*]

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: 75 per cent of the programme?

Hon. Hosein: Mayaro Regional Corporation 19, Sangre Grande 18, San Juan/Laventille 17 and Port of Spain 18.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: And this was at the cost of how much, Minister? How much is one—

Hon. Hosein: Cost per unit is 30,000.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: \$30,000 for a latrine eradication programme? Okay, thank you.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Last question for the hon. Minister. 005, Sub-Item 060 under Public Buildings, construction of administrative complexes, the Estimate in 2019 was \$40 million and the Revised Estimate is 1.793 million. Meaning that if I take the word of the Minister of Finance, either he is possibly expecting more invoices to come in or only 1.793 million has been utilized. Minister of Finance or Minister of Rural Development and Local Government, would you be kind enough to answer that question? Administrative complexes, public buildings, 40 million allocated, 1.8 million spent according to the Revised Estimate of 2019. So do you have invoices still to come in, or no work was done?

Hon. Hosein: The design for the Diego Martin Complex has been finished—the design.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Go ahead, the answer is incomplete.

Hon. Hosein: Construction is supposed to start at the end of November of the Diego Martin Complex.

Dr. Gopeesingh: So this 40 million was allocated generally for what? When the Minister gave you 40 million as Minister of Rural Development and Local Government to spend under IDF, what were the projects there?

Hon. Hosein: Penal/Debe.

Mr. Imbert: My understanding is—thank you for allowing me to answer this Minister of Rural Development and Local Government—two complexes are earmarked for construction, one in Penal, one in Diego Martin. At this time design work for one of them has been completed, and I presume Diego Martin. I presume Penal is in progress? The design for Penal is in progress and construction will begin during this fiscal year.

Dr. Gopeesingh: So basically you are telling us and the people that you are probably one year behind time, because 40 million was allocated but one year later you are still in the design phase. Not so, Minister?

Mr. Imbert: What I do know is that construction will begin on these projects in this fiscal year.

Dr. Gopeesingh: I think I have made my point that you are one year behind.

Mr. Imbert: And I think I have made my point too.

Mr. Padarath: Hon. Minister, with respect to the same line Item, you have an expenditure of 1.793 million. Earlier you indicated that this was with respect to design for both Diego Martin and Penal/Debe. Could you confirm that, that this expenditure of 1.793 was for the designs for both?

Hon. Hosein: It is only for Diego Martin.

Mr. Padarath: So you spent \$1.793 million for just the design of the Diego Martin Administrative Complex?

Mr. Imbert: Yes.

Mr. Padarath: 1.793 million just for the design. There has been no construction, of one administrative complex?

Mr. Imbert: That is much lower than the industry average. You used to spend 100 million on design.

Madam Chairman: Member for Chaguanas East.

Mr. Karim: Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, line Item 065: Development of West Park. There has been a revised of 6.4 million, and an allocation in 2020 of 4 million. Could you give us an update of the status of what this is and how far it has reached? Where is it, what is it, West Park?

6.00 p.m.

Hon. Hosein: It is 95 per cent completed. The West Park, it is expected to finish before the end of November.

Madam Chairman: Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 42 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Madam Chairman: Thank you, Minister, thank you, PS, and your technical team. Members, I propose we try to deal with Elections and Boundaries Commission and then we will take a short break.

Head 08: Elections and Boundaries Commission, \$108,912,200.

Madam Chairman: I will now invite the Minister of Finance to make a brief opening statement not exceeding five minutes. Minister of Finance. [*Desk thumping*] Minister of Finance, a brief opening statement not exceeding five minutes.

Hon. Imbert: Thank you, Madam Chairman. The Elections and Boundaries Commission is an independent institution whose members are appointed by the

President of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. The commission is charged with the conduct of free and fair elections which it has done for so many years. In this particular year the allocation for the EBC has been increased in view of upcoming local elections, and if necessary it would be supplemented with respect to the 2020 general election.

Question proposed: That Head 08 stand part of the Schedule.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Members, the sum \$108,912,200 for Head 08, Elections and Boundaries Commission is comprised of moneys proposed for expenditure under the following Sub-Heads and Items to be found in the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure* and the *Draft Estimates of Development Programme*. We shall now proceed to consider the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure*. Sub-Head 01: Personnel Expenditure. Member for Chaguanas East.

Mr. Karim: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, might you be able to—I am on line Item, of course, 01: Personnel Expenditure, Salaries and COLA. Might you be able to indicate to us the number of persons employed at the commission as of the 30 September, 2019, under this line Item?

Hon. Imbert: 327.

Mr. Karim: 327. And do you have any categories of those in terms, on the establishment and contract?

Hon. Imbert: Well that would be in one of the documents that has been given to you.

Mr. Karim: Okay.

Hon. Imbert: One of the books gives you the full establishment of all Departments of Government, so just go and look inside of there.

Mr. Karim: Sure. Madam Chair, may I continue?

Madam Chairman: Yes.

Mr. Karim: Lower down you will see the vacant posts with an allocation of \$75,000. Might you be able to tell us what these vacant posts are for this small sum?

Hon. Imbert: Human resources and audit.

Mr. Karim: Human resources?

Hon. Imbert: And audit.

Mr. Karim: And audit. Okay.

Madam Chairman: Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: I might probably be going a little too fast, but are you on 002 yet?

Madam Chairman: 002: Election Expenses.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Yeah. Hon. Minister, could you give us an appreciation of, with the EBC who is there with you, the overtime for monthly-paid officers for 2020 which is \$4 million. This overtime would be paid—could you give us an explanation of that?—what it means. Overtime for monthly-paid officers—4 million?

Hon. Imbert: Could you just tell me the page?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Page 44, Minister of Finance.

Hon. Imbert: You are going backwards?

Dr. Gopeesingh: No. 002.

Madam Chairman: 002/003.

Dr. Gopeesingh: 002. Thank you, Madam Chair. Poor thing, he is over-worked.

Hon. Imbert: What is the question?

Dr. Gopeesingh: The question I asked you, give us an appreciation of—well who

is getting overtime? Is it contract officers, is it permanent positions? What do you expect?—because know it is election time, so we could know what is happening.

Hon. Imbert: It would be a combination of both contract officers and senior staff who are entitled to overtime at the approval of the commission.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Okay. And if your officers there can give us an appreciation of what would be done during that overtime period? What they expect to have be done during that overtime period?

Hon. Imbert: I would think that—

Dr. Gopeesingh: That is not normal now?

Hon. Imbert: I would think, Member—

Dr. Gopeesingh: Yes.

Hon. Imbert:—that you have been involved in, at least, one election, and therefore, you would know that during election period the EBC offices are kept open long after usual working hours, long after four o'clock. They are sometimes there on weekends to accommodate requests from political parties, so I do not understand why you are asking.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Okay. So that is one answer, to answer questions and be there. Is there any field work that would be done based on that overtime? That officers within the EBC would be going out into the fields for verifications and so on? I am asking this, just let me finish, I am asking this because as the alternative government and the election to come, we have been doing our work on the field, and we have found that there are 1,684 inconsistencies and anomalies in areas of St. Joseph, Tunapuna, Moruga, Tableland, La Horquetta/Talparo, and these people according to your list we have found they are not residing there. So would this overtime for the officers allow them to go and check and verify what is happening

on the field? [*Desk thumping*] Would that be part of it or would you have to employ more people or would they not try to verify it whatsoever?

Hon. Imbert: How many questions have you asked there?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Three.

Hon. Imbert: Whether they will do it? Whether they will not do it? Whether they will be there? Whether they will not be there? Which one of those questions would you like me to answer?

Dr. Gopeesingh: I asked, first of all, would that verification exercise which we are entrusting to the EBC, would these officers who are on overtime be part of that process for the verification?

Hon. Imbert: Yes.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Would they be going out on the field for the verification?

Hon. Imbert: Yes.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Okay. And bearing in mind that the election is on December 2nd, when is it going to be completed?

Hon. Imbert: When is it going to be completed?

Dr. Gopeesingh: That verification exercise.

Hon. Imbert: Member, you have contested at least one election, you are very well aware that after the President issues the writ of elections in accordance with the Representation of the People Act that there is a period of electoral registration which can only take place after the writ is issued. The writ was only addressed within the last day or two and therefore, electoral registration will begin shortly and must be completely statutorily by a prescribed period before polling day. You know all of these things.

Dr. Gopeesingh: No. I just want to complete my—

Hon. Imbert: You do not know?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Yes, of course I know.

Hon. Imbert: Well, if you know, why are you asking?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Because we have deadlines for certain things. That is why I am asking you, because we as a party see [*Desk thumping*] 1,684—

Hon. Imbert: Madam Chairman, I just want to make the point. No, this is an important point, Madam Chairman.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Yes.

Hon. Imbert: There is a law, the conduct of elections is governed by the Representation of the People Act. There are statutory timelines in that law. There are periods for beginning and ending, it is all there, and you are very well aware of them.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Yes.

Hon. Imbert: So do not try and insinuate that there is something strange there.

Dr. Gopeesingh: No. No. I am just asking you, you are paying the \$4 million overtime, would these officers be part of that verification on the field?

Hon. Imbert: Yes.

Dr. Gopeesingh: And we are guaranteed that?

Hon. Imbert: I said yes already.

Dr. Gopeesingh: All right.

Madam Chairman: Member for Oropouche East.

Dr. Moonilal: Thank you very much, Madam Chairman. Madam Chairman, just to follow up on this matter and the Minister can seek advice from the colleagues at the EBC. The United National Congress has submitted to the EBC on October 4th a document pointing out 1,684 inconsistencies in several seats including St. Joseph,

Tunapuna, Moruga, Tableland, La Horquetta/Talparo. The EBC has not responded yet. Does the EBC—would the EBC come here to respond on that?

Hon. Imbert: What line Item is this?

Dr. Moonilal: Concerning the programmes that they are embarking on to verify the accuracy of their list. You have spoken. You have said—

Hon. Imbert: Madam Chairman—

Dr. Moonilal:—they are going out to verify—

Hon. Imbert: Madam Chairman, he is on a frolic of his own.

Dr. Moonilal: I am asking whether they will verify? I have five minutes to talk.

Hon. Imbert: You are on a frolic of your own—not to talk stupidity.

Dr. Moonilal: But I have five minutes and you are taking my time.

Hon. Imbert: Not to talk stupidity.

Madam Chairman: All right. Okay. [*Crosstalk*]

Dr. Moonilal: I want my next three minutes.

Madam Chairman: One minute. Okay? Now, remember, I think, Member for Oropouche East, part of your question was really asked by the Member for Caroni East and answered with respect to the 1,600 people and he had given the various areas and so on, so that part of your question was asked and answered.

Dr. Moonilal: I am asking the Minister, I am going one step further, Ma'am.

Madam Chairman: Okay. Yes.

Dr. Moonilal: Bearing in mind that the EBC received a letter on October 4th, does the EBC intend to respond to that letter?

Hon. Imbert: It is not a matter for the Finance Committee. The EBC is an independent institution. Do not try that.

Dr. Moonilal: At this date—

Madam Chairman: All right. So, Member for Oropouche East—okay.

Dr. Moonilal: Could I ask another question?

Madam Chairman: Member for Oropouche East, okay. Member for Oropouche East, I would have to rule on that, and I agree that is not the question, while it might be a burning issue, that is not a question for the Finance Committee. So, of course, once it is a relevant one, it would be answered.

Dr. Moonilal: Sure. Bearing in mind that the Minister has given an appreciation of the process and also outlined the legal parameters of that process, could I ask the Minister now, if as part of that process being advised by the EBC, does the EBC receive and respond to concerns from the public, individuals and organizations on inconsistencies that they have found? Is it the policy of the EBC to respond?

Hon. Imbert: What line Item is the Member on?

Dr. Moonilal: But you gave us a lecture on the law and process.

Madam Chairman: All right.

Hon. Imbert: Line Item, please?

Madam Chairman: Members, and Minister of Finance. Member for Oropouche East, I would not allow that. That response about the law came from a question that was asked by your colleague, the Member for Caroni East. Do you have another question that relates to the matter that we are involved in?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Yeah.

Madam Chairman: The Estimates.

Dr. Moonilal: I will give way to Caroni.

Madam Chairman: No. No. I am sorry, I am in charge here. I know you love to hear me say that. Chaguanas East, he was on the list before. Thank you.

Mr. Karim: On the Item of Election Expenses, Overtime - Monthly Paid Officers,

you indicated that this is a verification exercise.

Hon. Imbert: No. I indicated that this Item is to pay for overtime. Overtime is incurred in a multitude of activities including field verification, but it would also include the staff being present at the head office and various other offices outside of normal working hours to deal with matters relating to the conduct of the elections, so it is not just for field verification exercises.

Mr. Karim: All right. Can I ask with respect to the verification aspect of the overtime, could you explain to us what the verification involves? And also, I have a sense as to what it is. [*Crosstalk*] No. No. I have a sense as to what it is, but I want to hear from the EBC. What is the verification exercise? So let me go to a rhetorical situation. Is it that people from your office are going into the field and meet people at their homes and have the list and verify that they are, in fact there to avoid voter padding? I want to know what the overtime is for?

And secondly, I would like to know how many field verification officers will be assigned per regional corporation? As a Member of Parliament in Chaguanas I would like to know that. So these are the two questions, Madam Chair.

Hon. Imbert: Well, I think the first question has already been answered.

6.15 p.m.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: Madam Chairman, I just want to ask a question. Is that question relevant for the Standing Finance Committee?

Madam Chairman: No. The second question I would allow in terms of if it is for overtime, they want to know how many people [*Desk thumping*] and it is something that we allow under all kinds of Personnel Expenditure.

Hon. Imbert: Chairman, I think if the UNC has those kinds of issues, you should

have a meeting with the EBC. This is not a matter for this forum. What I can say, however, we have allocated sufficient funds for overtime for the conduct of elections.

Mr. Karim: All right, in that regard can I ask, when has the verification, the field verification exercise started, and is it ongoing? [*Interruption*] No, I just want to know.

Hon. Imbert: It is being done on an ongoing basis.

Mr. Karim: Okay, thank you.

Mr. Padarath: Thank you, Madam Chairman. Madam, under Personnel Expenditure could the hon. Minister indicate whether or not this reflects the salary of the Chief Election Officer, and how is this person selected for that position? And whether or not the incumbent is a relative of a member of the PNM sitting in this House today?

Madam Chairman: All right. So, Member for Princes Town, I allowed you to make your statement, I am not going to allow those questions.

Mr. Padarath: But Madam, it is a legitimate question. [*Crosstalk*]

Madam Chairman: Member! [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. Imbert: It is an illegitimate question.

Mr. Padarath: No, no, no, no, very legitimate. It is under 01, Personnel Expenditure. The Chief Election Officer will fall, yes or no, on the list. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Chairman: Member!

Mr. Padarath: It is because you are shielding the person—[*Crosstalk*]

Hon. Imbert: Madam Chairman.

Madam Chairman: Member for Princes Town! Member for Princes Town, I am

not going to allow those outbursts. And secondly, I have ruled. Anytime you do not like the ruling you could always go out and come back. I would not even put you out. You go out and you could remonstrate out there and come back. Okay? Member for Caroni East. [*Interruption*] Member for Princes Town! Member for Princes Town!

Hon. Imbert: That is an illegitimate statement.

Madam Chairman: Member for Princes Town. Minister of Finance.

Hon. Imbert: Out of order.

Madam Chairman: Minister of Finance. Right! Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Madam Chair, we are being asked to have an appreciation of \$4 million for overtime, but we do not have a clear understanding of what this overtime is going to entail in terms of the duties? So, we are paying for something, but give us an understanding of what is being paid for?

Madam Chairman: Okay, and I hear you, I think a particular route was suggested on that question which has been asked repeatedly.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Okay.

Madam Chairman: Member for Naparima.

Mr. Charles: I—[*Inaudible*]

Madam Chairman: Member for Couva South. Thank you, Madam Chair, I see that there is overtime for monthly paid officers, is there any overtime for persons who do not fall within the monthly paid bracket? And in previous instances how it was allocated between monthly paid and outside of the monthly paid?

Madam Chairman: I would not allow you about the previous instances because I do not know what time frame you are talking about. You are asking about 03?

Mr. Indarsingh: Yes.

Madam Chairman: I think, I believe that question was answered already, but I may be mistaken.

Hon. Imbert: Let me just add to this, Madam Chairman, if the description of the Item is Overtime-Monthly Paid Officers, it is counter intuitive to ask whether this refers to anything other monthly paid officers. That is a ridiculous question. It is overtime for monthly paid officers.

Mr. Indarsingh: I am asking outside whether there is another group or category of workers within the EBC.

Hon. Imbert: Which line Item? What line Item?

Dr. Moonilal: Listen to the question, “nah”.

Mr. Indarsingh: I am asking.

Hon. Imbert: Which line Item?

Mr. Indarsingh: I am entitled to ask. [*Crosstalk*]

Madam Chairman: Minister of Finance, one minute.

Hon. Imbert: It has to be on a line Item.

Madam Chairman: Member for Couva South, let me hear your question and we will know if it is allowed. Question.

Mr. Indarsingh: I am saying within the organization, Madam Chair, they have allocated or they have calculated three point—20, no, 4 million for monthly paid officers, and I am saying whether this was taken into consideration as it relates to another category of employees within the organization? That is all I am asking.

Hon. Imbert: That is a ridiculous question.

Mr. Indarsingh: Why?

Hon. Imbert: This is for monthly paid only.

Mr. Indarsingh: So, only monthly paid officers are allowed to claim overtime

within the EBC?

Hon. Imbert: What line Item are you on?

Madam Chairman: I do not think—Member for Couva South, I do not think that that is a correct question to ask.

Mr. Indarsingh: No, because I am asking it in the context—

Madam Chairman: Member!

Mr. Indarsingh:—of overtime.

Madam Chairman: No, no, no. You had pointed me to 002/03, which says Overtime-Monthly Paid Officers. You asked if that was for a category other than monthly paid officers, the response is that it is described as monthly paid officers and therefore it is only for monthly paid officers. I do not think it is fair then for your next question to say that it is only monthly paid officers get overtime, so I would not allow that question. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Madam Chair, the same line Item.

Madam Chairman: Which one is that?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: 03, Overtime.

Madam Chairman: Yes.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Who determines which employees are selected to work overtime?

Madam Chairman: That is operational. Member for Oropouche East.

Dr. Moonilal: Thank you. Thank you so much. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. [Laughter] Ma'am I just want to dwell again on this Overtime-Monthly Paid Officers. Clearly, of course, we have an increase, and one has a sense of why. But would the Minister in consultation with the officials indicate the number of people who are currently employed and whether this includes more persons coming on

board given the year that we face? And whether those persons will have any responsibility for supervising the verification exercise of the 1,684 inconsistencies that have been pointed out to the EBC?

Hon. Member: So far.

Dr. Moonilal: So far.

Madam Chairman: I believe a question was answered about the number of people employed. I believe I heard that already. Okay? I believe I heard 327, so I do not think I am paying any greater attention than anybody here, so I am not going to allow that question.

Dr. Moonilal: So, that is new persons? No, and how much new?

Madam Chairman: You are asking under 002/03, which is monthly paid?

Dr. Moonilal: Yes, but are there new persons to come on board?

Madam Chairman: Okay, you asked how many people were employed, and I believe that question was asked and answered. Next question.

Dr. Moonilal: How much new persons to come on board?

Madam Chairman: How many.

Dr. Moonilal: How many.

Madam Chairman: Good.

Hon. Imbert: You cannot have new monthly paid officers. They are appointed by the Public Service Commission.

Dr. Moonilal: Do you foresee—

Hon. Imbert: You know that.

Dr. Moonilal:—that you will have the how many coming in?

Hon. Imbert: Then ask the Public Service Commission.

Dr. Moonilal: Are there vacant positions that can be filled?

Hon. Imbert: Ask the Service Commission that question.

Dr. Moonilal: So, you do not have a sense of how many positions are vacant, and what is the process by which, and when, they might be filled?

Hon. Imbert: We have no control over the filling of posts and the operations of the Public Service Commission. Ask them.

Hon. Member: And they know that.

Hon. Imbert: And you know that.

Dr. Moonilal: Madam Chair, how many times he will do this?

Madam Chairman: How many?

Hon. Imbert: How many times you are going to ask the same question over and over?

Madam Chairman: Sub-Head 02, Goods and Services. Item 001, General Administration.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Madam Chairman, I had my hand up.

Madam Chairman: Where are you?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: 08/001/01.

Madam Chairman: Oh you—

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: 01.

Madam Chairman: 08, that is rent?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Vacant Post, Salaries and COLA.

Madam Chairman: No, no, no. We are at 002, Elections Expenses, are you there?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Go ahead, go ahead.

Madam Chairman: No, no, no. Excuse me, it is not go ahead, go ahead. That is where we are. If you are there, I will allow. If you are going back, I would not

allow you. So let us understand the rules. Are you there?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: I am not there.

Madam Chairman: Thank you very much. Naparima.

Mr. Charles: Thank you very much, Madam Chair, and I refer to 002/62, and I will be taking my five minutes. *[Laughter]* Under Promotions, Publicity and Printing, I think that will be a critical role in the elections to help citizens understand the operations of the EBC. I have been getting a lot of questions from my constituents about the rationale for the shifting of polling divisions in a way—for example, and I will just say just generally, and this is not you but historically, and I have five minutes. A lot of people cannot understand, for example, how an area like Palmiste, that is demographically in many ways linked to San Fernando West in terms of class, education, culture, et cetera. How a place like Palmiste, upper class, and San Fernando West is upper class, has been put with Debe, which is agricultural, rural, historical. The general question is, how do you intend to explain rationally the shifting of boundaries to persons who tend to think that it favours one party or not?

Hon. Imbert: I do not think that question is relevant. Ask your party to have a meeting with the EBC. We are talking here about allocations, not operations.

Mr. Charles: You are talking about the use of the allocation, and that is a valid question.

Hon. Imbert: Madam Chairman, I have answered the question. Go and meet with the EBC. *[Interruption]*

Madam Chairman: Sub-Head—Caroni Central?

Dr. Tewarie: Are we under 02?

Madam Chairman: We are under Sub-Head 02, Goods and Service.

Dr. Tewarie: Yes, the allocation here for Goods and Services in general is \$33 million more, and when I look down at the number of things that have increased, but when I look down I see Contract Employment, and I also see Short-term Employment. I understand that if you are going into an election season you are going to need more hands on deck. I appreciate that. What kinds of work will constitute the Contract Employment, and what kinds of work will constitute the Short-term Employment?

Hon. Imbert: The work of staff of the EBC is well-known. It is all aspects of the conduct of the election. You must know that. It is everything associated with the conduct of the election. Have you not been in a polling station before?

Dr. Tewarie: Oh gosh man.

Hon. Imbert: You never vote? You did not see the staff there?

Dr. Tewarie: I am asking a question, and you can give the answer you feel appropriate.

Hon. Imbert: I have answered you. It is staff required for the conduct of the election, and preparation for the election, setting up polling stations, making sure everything is correct, organizing the paperwork for the election. The ballot boxes. You know very well what is involved in an election. You should not be asking this question.

Dr. Tewarie: No, there are two things: One, the Contract Employment might involve contract employment to assist the EBC in making sure that everything is ready for the election. And the Short-term Employment might, for instance, involve activities on election day, and I just want to have that clarified.

Dr. Francis: You just clarified it.

Dr. Moonilal: It is consulting.

Mr. Singh: Clarify it for Moruga, not for yourself.

Dr. Francis: I understand English. [*Interruption*]

Madam Chairman: Member for Moruga/Tableland, Member for Couva North, Member for Couva/Tableland—Member for Moruga/Tableland, Member for Couva North, you know we could take a “lil”—I think the tea ready, so Members are allowed to filter out and come back, if that might help.

Hon. Imbert: Madam Chairman, the Member knows that when you have an election there are different activities, you would have verification of the voters list, which quite often would be done using contract employment, and then on polling day you are going to have thousands of people on a short-term basis. I am told in this particular case, 15,000, and therefore you are asking answers. The Contract Employment is to deal with verification and preparation, and the Short-term Employment is to deal with polling day, and you know that. I do not know why you are asking things that you know.

Madam Chairman: Okay, Member. Yes, Caroni East.

6.30 p.m.

Dr. Tewarie: Can I follow up?

Madam Chairman: Yes you can.

Dr. Tewarie: You see, I mean when you look at it for the Short-term Employment there is no increase you know and I am looking at this as the increase in the context of elections. So given the Minister's recent answer which is that you need these thousands of people on election day, et cetera, for Short-term Employment, I would have expected an increase. And then the other one which is Contract Employment, I can understand that because there is an increase of \$300,000 for the verification of lists and so on, that he mentioned.

So, I mean I can realistically make an assessment of how many people might be involved in such an exercise, given where we are in the context of verification for an election. But what I was seeking to understand there is \$300,000 is a relatively small sum, given that it is an election exercise and no increase for the short term in an election season is something that I want to understand. So that is why—I was not asking any trick question.

Hon. Imbert: You finish?

Dr. Tewarie: Yes.

Hon. Imbert: I want to give back my UWI degree.

Dr. Tewarie: If you give it, it would not make any difference [*Laughter*] in terms of your capacity to deceive or your capacity to be arrogant.

Hon. Imbert: Go to page 46 and you will see the increase for Short-term Employment, \$18 million. Madam Chair—

Madam Chairman: No, no, no.

Hon. Imbert: Madam Chairman, there was a long talk there and on page 46 the increase under Election Expenses is \$18 million. What is wrong with you? Can you not read? The increase is \$18 million. Why can you not see that?

Dr. Tewarie: I asked you two specific things, I did not ask you a global figure.

Madam Chairman: No, no, no. I have to intervene. I think what we may be missing here is that Elections Expenses has its own category Item, Head, Sub-Item, okay, so that the question I think you have asked—

Dr. Tewarie: Have no increase.

Madam Chairman: Yes. It is quite founded, but it is under a specific, Election Expenses. So if we turn the page, Member, you may then want to interrogate there. Okay? All right. Member for Chaguanas East.

Mr. Karim: Thank you, Madam Chair. In respect of your advice, I am just asking question, line Item 17, on page 45 and may I give notice that I will also be asking line Item 17, on page 46, based on your advice. On this page 45 I would like to ask about the training, what is it? Who will get it? And also in terms of line Item 28: Other Contracted Services for \$2 million, could we get some explanations in terms of those two Items: 17 and 28?

Hon. Imbert: The first item, and thank you for looking at page 46, unlike your colleague. The first Item of Training is in-house staff, customer service and so on. And the second Item of Training would be for election day for polling.

Mr. Karim: Can I ask when we come to page 46, Madam Chair, can I ask some more details on that? But can you give me some more explanation on line Item 28: Other Contracted Services.

Hon. Imbert: Which one you want, the one under Election Expenses?

Mr. Karim: No. I will come to that one, this is page 45 number 28, the Other Contracted Services. I just want to get a sense of what that involves.

Hon. Imbert: The allocation for Other Contracted Services on page 45 is for software.

Mr. Karim: Is for what?

Hon. Imbert: Software.

Mr. Karim: Okay. I do not know if I can ask a question. Madam Chair, you can tell me if it is in line with the line Item. Since the hon. Minister of Finance indicated this is for software, will we be in a position to know, for example, the amount of additions or deletions over a period of time to the electoral list?

Madam Chairman: “Ah doh” think I could allow that.

Mr. Karim: Okay, sure. I just want to ask in terms of the—

Madam Chairman: No. [*Interruption*] Member for Chaguanas East—

Mr. Karim: How that become ridiculous? We cannot ask a question.

Madam Chairman: Member for Chaguanas East. Member for Chaguanas East, listen to me, you asked and you—okay, and therefore—yes, please. Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.

Mr. Lee: It was asked already.

Madam Chairman: Member for Oropouche East.

Dr. Moonilal: Thank you very much. My question, again I am guided, because I am not sure if the answer came because the Minister is agitated. Madam Chair, the Short-term Employment, did we yet get a figure for the—[*Crosstalk*] Madam Chair, the Minister needs to contain himself.

Madam Chairman: Member for Diego Martin North/East.

Dr. Moonilal: Somebody get some pills or something for him.

Madam Chairman: Yes, Member for Oropouche East.

Dr. Moonilal: Now that I have your undivided attention, Minister. Through you, Madam Chair, could the Minister indicate when we look at the increase to the 17.9 million for Short-term Employment, if we have an estimate of the number of persons that they may have in mind to recruit and to indicate the process—

Hon. Imbert: Are you on page 46?

Dr. Moonilal:—of those persons—

Hon. Imbert: Are you on page 46?

Dr. Moonilal: Could I finish please?

Madam Chairman: Wait, wait.

Dr. Moonilal: He wants to distract me so I could lose my train of thought.

Madam Chairman: No, no, no. I think what you need to just tell me, Member

for Oropouche East to assist you, are we under 001/01, and you are looking at 28 there.

Dr. Moonilal: Yes, Ma'am, Sub-Item 22.

Madam Chairman: 28.

Dr. Moonilal: Is it 28? 22.

Madam Chairman: Okay, fine 22.

Dr. Moonilal: So my question is, do we have a sense of the estimate of persons and the process to be used and would those persons investigate the 684 inconsistencies pointed out to the EBC on October 4th for which a letter of acknowledgement of receipt has not been forthcoming from the EBC.

Hon. Imbert: Madam Chairman, the Members are trying to turn this into some enquiry into the Election and Boundaries Commission. I must object. This is the discussion of the estimates. If they want to have a meeting with the EBC, like any other political party—

Dr. Moonilal: But they are in front of us now.

Hon. Imbert:—they are free to do that. “Nooo”! It is about estimates.

Dr. Moonilal: Why waste time for another meeting?

Hon. Imbert: You are being mischievous.

Madam Chairman: Member for Oropouche East. I know you understand mandates.

Hon. Imbert: You are being mischievous.

Madam Chairman: Okay, I know. I know you do. Okay. So Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: I will just piggyback, Madam Chair. I will just piggyback on my colleague's question to ask, approximately how many individuals will be employed under the Short-term Employment because it is about 17 or 18 million.

So give us an appreciation of how many.

Hon. Imbert: Member, for the third time—

Dr. Gopeesingh: No, hold on. No, you—

Hon. Imbert: For the third time, 15,000. For the third time.

Dr. Gopeesingh: 15,000.

Hon. Imbert: Now for the fourth time, 15,000 persons will be hired on a short term basis for the conduct of the polls.

Dr. Gopeesingh: And, Madam Chair, the addition to this question. What methodology or criteria would be used for the selection of these 15,000 people to come on—

Hon. Imbert: That is a matter you need to address to the Election and Boundaries Commission. It has the procedure they have used for the last umpteen elections by advertisement, interview and selection. They have done that year after year after year after year. I think you better address that—

Dr. Gopeesingh: Okay. Advertisement, interview and selection.

Hon. Imbert: Ask them.

Dr. Gopeesingh: All right. Madam, last one. Line Item 43: Security Services. Election of 100,000 allocated for Security Services for election and that is such a critical an important area. I am a bit surprised that that is the allocation. Or is that included in your umpteen thousand that you spoke about for security. But then they will have no understanding of what is their role.

Hon. Member: What!

Madam Chairman: What is the question?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Security, 100,000—

Madam Chairman: Yeah, you say 100,000. You find that is not—

Dr. Gopeesingh: That is not adequate to provide the security for election. Any comment on that?

Hon. Imbert: Madam Chairman, I want to make the point. Members need to read the estimates carefully otherwise you ask questions that makes no sense. We are on Goods and Services. This is Goods and Services. [*Crosstalk*] And therefore, Madam Chairman, this is for technology, this is for CCTV at the warehouse and the head office, so that people will not break in—[*Interruption*]

Dr. Gopeesingh: You could have easily answered the question rather than being rude.

Hon. Imbert:—to the EBC office and try to interfere with their equipment.

Madam Chairman: So, Member for Caroni East maybe sometimes we should not ask what we call “a loaded question”. Okay? And therefore if—because your question had a certain assumption, okay, right. So we will look at how we ask our questions. You have another question.

Dr. Gopeesingh: I was looking to see where the real security for Election Day is but I am not seeing it.

Madam Chairman: Okay, all right. So while you look for that I will ask the Member for Chaguanas East. I think you had some questions here under Election.

Hon. Imbert: Madam Chairman, just let me deal with that. It is provided by the police, he knows that. Every election it is provided by the police. He knows that.

Dr. Gopeesingh: All right, okay.

Hon. Imbert: You are asking questions and you know the answer. You are just trying to be mischievous.

Madam Chairman: The Member for Chaguanas East.

Mr. Karim: Thank you, Madam Chair. I had given notice before on page 46, line

Item 17. Could you just indicate to us the categories of persons who would be trained, what kind of training? And I know that there is always a notice, a sequence of events.

Hon. Imbert: This is election expenses. So it will be election day people.

Mr. Karim: All right. Could you tell us by when we might be able to see that notice—I know you advertise asking people to submit their names and so on.

Hon. Imbert: I suggest you ask your political party to address that question to the Election and Boundaries Commission.

Mr. Karim: Okay, all right. How many persons, Madam Chair, through you, how many persons do you think would be trained through this Vote?

Hon. Imbert: 15,000—

Mr. Karim: All 15,000?

Hon. Imbert: For the fifth time.

Mr. Karim: For 4.5 million?

Hon. Imbert: 15,000 people, for the sixth time.

Mr. Karim: Okay, thanks.

Madam Chairman: Sub-Head 03: Minor Equipment Purchases; Item 001: General Administration.

Sub-Head 04: Current Transfers and Subsidies. Item 007: Households.

Hon. Members, we will now move on to the *Draft Estimates of Development Programme*. Sub-Head 09: Development Programme, page 30. Head 08: Sub-Head—yes, 09. Yes, page 13, Consolidated Fund; Item 005: Multi-Sectoral and Other Services.

Dr. Moonilal: Thank you very much, Ma'am. Administrative Services. There is an Item: 005 here. From my reading of the document it appears that this is a new

Item. Could the Minister, with advice from the EBC, indicate: what is the nature of this programme? When would it start and what is the objective of this programme? And I will ask a further question after. It is estimated at \$4 million.

Hon. Imbert: This is an upgrade to the registration system.

Dr. Moonilal: Okay. In upgrading the registration system, does this entail any element of field work so that you can verify the 1,684 plus inconsistencies pointed out on October 4th for which we have not had a reply yet?

Hon. Imbert: You know you have been asking that question in different ways about 10 times now. This has nothing to do with that.

Dr. Moonilal: So you are not verifying voters? This is not voter verification?

Hon. Imbert: Equipment and software.

Dr. Moonilal: But what is the software is for the real problems you face in the real world? So I am asking, are you upgrading the software to deal with the challenges the EBC faces. One of the challenges that they face is inconsistencies in the electoral roll for which we have submitted a document on October 4th with 1,684.

Hon. Imbert: How many times are you going to say that?

Dr. Moonilal: And we have not received an answer.

Hon. Imbert: How many times would you say that?

Dr. Moonilal: 25 more times, but I am not getting an answer from you.

Hon. Imbert: This is for equipment and software.

Dr. Moonilal: Madam, through you, I speak to the officials of the EBC. Does this involve—

Madam Chairman: No, no. The thing about it is, again, as you well know Member for Oropouche East, mandate, you speak to the Minister. I did not make

the rules, I just enforce them, right.

Dr. Moonilal: Madam, through you, I speak to anyone.

Madam Chairman: The Minister.

Dr. Moonilal: To the Minister: We know his answer, because if we know the answer for everything what would we come for a Standing Finance Committee, if we know the answer for everything. [*Desk thumping*] Madam Speaker, I asking if this software upgrade has anything to do with planning and designing electoral boundaries so we will not have the inconsistencies in boundaries which appear to be scattering left, right and centre without rhyme or rhythm.

6.45 p.m.

Hon. Imbert: Madam Speaker, as he very well knows, he knows—

Dr. Moonilal: But what are we here for if we know everything?

Hon. Imbert:—it has nothing to do with that. This is for software and hardware to upgrade the electronic voter registration system.

Dr. Moonilal: So this is what, to buy a computer?

Hon. Imbert: Yes.

Dr. Moonilal: And what are you putting in the computer?

Hon. Imbert: Data.

Dr. Moonilal: The same inconsistencies you have now, the same thing with the 1,684 names inconsistent that we [*Desk thumping*] submitted on October 4th and for which we have not received a reply?

Hon. Imbert: How many times you will say that?

Dr. Moonilal: So that will go into the new computer with the new software that will have defective and inaccurate data?

Hon. Imbert: Madam Speaker, what they are doing, they are trying to tarnish the

reputation of the EBC. I object.

Dr. Moonilal: I am asking a matter on finance.

Hon. Imbert: This is a travesty. Over and over and over, regurgitating this fake news.

Dr. Moonilal: But we are spending \$4 million. [*Desk thumping*]

Hon. Imbert: Over, and over, and over, and over. Over and over and over.

Dr. Moonilal: We are spending \$4 million. Four million dollars we are spending.
[*Crosstalk*]

Hon. Imbert: It is just wrong. I object, Madam Chairman. This is wrong!

Dr. Moonilal: Four million dollars we are spending!

Madam Chairman: Okay. So we could have some order now. Member for Couva South, I have asked for order. Member for Naparima, you have another unrelated question?

Mr. Charles: I have a question.

Madam Chairman: A relevant—?

Mr. Charles: And relevant.

Madam Chairman: But unrelated.

Mr. Charles: “But why yuh asking meh all ah dis?”

Hon. Members: Waaaay!

Madam Chairman: No, no, no.

Mr. Charles: I am supposed to ask.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Members, we will now move on.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 08 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Head 61: Ministry of Housing and Urban Development, \$803,290,381.

Madam Chairman: Head 61: Ministry of Housing and Urban Development, \$803,290,381, page 305. I will now invite the Minister of Housing and Urban Development to make a brief opening statement not exceeding five minutes. Minister.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development is responsible for the formulation and execution of Government's policy with respect to housing, urban development, security of tenure and, in fact, the Ministry's core responsibilities involve Government subsidized housing, monitoring and evaluation of housing trends and markets in the country, home improvement grants and subsidies, regularization of tenure, housing for squatters, land settlement and urban development. And this policy is executed through agencies such as the Housing Development Corporation, the Land Settlement Agency, Trinidad and Tobago Mortgage Finance Company Limited, East Port of Spain Development Company, New City Mall and East Side Plaza, Sugar Industry Labour Welfare Committee.

Madam Speaker, the Ministry intends to increase home ownership through its accelerated housing programme with its associated mortgage programme, the Aided Self-Help Programme and the Housing and Village Improvement Programmes, the public/private partnership Housing Construction Incentive Programmes and several other initiatives that will assist the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago in affording housing, shelter and land settlements, Madam Speaker. Thank you.

Question proposed: That Head 61 stand part of the Schedule.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Members, the sum of \$803,290,381 for Head 61, Ministry of Housing and Urban Development is comprised of moneys proposed for

expenditure under the following Sub-Heads and Items to be found in the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure*, the *Draft Estimates of the Revenue and Expenditure of the Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies and of the Tobago House of Assembly*, and the *Draft Estimates of Development Programme*. We shall now proceed to consider the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure* and we are at page 305. Sub-Head 01: Personnel Expenditure. Item 001: General Administration.

Madam Chairman: Member for Oropouche East.

Dr. Moonilal: Thank you very much, Madam Chair, just a quick question on 01. The issue at 01, Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance, provision for vacant posts in the Ministry, I imagine, could you give an estimate of the number of positions that are vacant now, and, if possible, to provide in writing the nature of vacancies in the establishment?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: The total number of positions are, in fact, 91. There are 75 with incumbents, 10 vacant and three suppressed. And three posts to be classified in terms of procurement officers.

Madam Chairman: Sub-Head 02: Goods and Services. Item 001: General Administration. Member for Oropouche East.

Dr. Moonilal: Thank you. 02, Madam Chair—and I am at 08, Rental. There is an increase of \$1.7 million, from '19 to '20. I just wanted to get a sense of the purpose for the increase, and then I will go to something else.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: That is 08, rental? Rent/Lease - Office Accommodation? Am I on the same position with you? 08, Rent, right?

Dr. Moonilal: Yes, yes, 08.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: And the increase of—that is based on reimbursement to

HDC. That is with respect to rental of the second floor, the car park, and so on, facilities, rental, also at Jobco Building. That is the other building that we have under our charge.

Dr. Moonilal: So it is to pay some arrears—

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Yes, some outstanding rental fees.

Dr. Moonilal: At 16, Contract Employment, I wanted to ask a question. Would this have included any of the so-called summer programmes or intern programmes that the Ministry embarked upon over the last year?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: No, it does not include those under the summer programmes.

Dr. Moonilal: Is the stipend paid to interns, and so on, would you be in a position to indicate the cost of the programme?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: We did not have any interns for this last fiscal year.

Dr. Moonilal: Was it done at the HDC?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: I would have to provide you with costs. It was done at the HDC but I will have to provide you with that cost.

Dr. Moonilal: Okay. Well, I will raise the matter when we get to the HDC.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Sure.

Madam Chairman: Sub-Head 03: Minor Equipment Purchases. Item 001: General Administration; Sub-Head 04: Current Transfers and Subsidies; Item 007: Households. We are at page 307. Member for Oropouche East.

Dr. Moonilal: Thank you. I am now at the Trinidad and Tobago Housing Development Corporation which is properly under 009, Other Transfers. Okay?

Madam Chairman: Are there no questions under 007?

Dr. Moonilal: No. But I do not know if my colleagues have questions.

Madam Chairman: So we could go to 009.

Dr. Moonilal: Yes, sure.

Madam Chairman: Okay? Other Transfers, 009.

Dr. Moonilal: Sure. Minister, I will now put the question that I asked earlier, squarely because we are with the HDC. So if I can get an appreciation of the cost of that programme—you may not have it here, but I would like in writing an undertaking from you to prepare and present in writing the cost of the programme, the number of persons engaged in the programme and the method that was used to recruit, to hire persons on the programme and, of course, the outcome of the programme—some assessment of the outcome of the programme.

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

Dr. Moonilal: Yes, you can provide that.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Certainly.

Dr. Moonilal: Could I ask, therefore, then, on 01, there is a decrease in the HDC, Housing Development Corporation subvention of \$59.4 million, for an explanation as to why this is so, and what has happened that you can manage with that decrease given the ambitious programme announced by your good self in that address you made a couple days ago? Or was it—I cannot remember when it was, but—

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: On Monday.

Dr. Moonilal: On Monday, yes. Given that address you made, and the projects and so on, you outlined in some detail, it appears that the HDC will not have resources to meet your ambition. And I wanted to get some assessment as to why the cut and what will be the implication.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: The decrease was due as a result of loans maturing within the period 2019 to 2020, which would result in a reduction in interest payments.

And this reduction was taken into consideration for the recurrent subvention for fiscal 2019/2020.

Dr. Moonilal: That is the explanation?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Yes. That is the reason for the decrease.

Dr. Moonilal: Could I ask, therefore, if you can give an undertaking to present in writing, the loans that came to an end and the payments made so that we will have an appreciation of what we closed the book on, so to speak? You can prepare and give an undertaking to send it in writing.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: We can so do, yes.

Dr. Moonilal: Could I also ask if you have an appreciation with this reduced subvention to 602 million, more or less, as to what would be the annual budget for the HDC with the accelerated housing programme?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: The annual budget is \$260 million.

Dr. Moonilal: Minister, clearly, you know, that 260 million will not match the ambitious programme outlined. So you will have to—

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Of course there would be loans, and so on—will fill that.

Dr. Moonilal: Yes. So could you now in the Chamber, or again commit to writing to give an appreciation of the nature of assistance that HDC may need by way of loan support?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Yes. In addition to the allocation we also have the—as the Minister of Finance mentioned, the tax-free housing bonds would be coming on stream also to complement that.

Dr. Moonilal: Minister, you are depending on the tax-free housing bonds for construction in fiscal 2020?

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

Dr. Moonilal: Could I also ask to the status of the PPP programmes in the HDC, given that you also spoke of that in the budget, and the support for those programmes should come from this allocation as well.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Status in terms of what? In terms of—

Dr. Moonilal: The completion, the—

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Completion, based on the amount—

Dr. Moonilal: On the moneys, because we are dealing primarily with money here; the moneys that are available for the PPP programmes that you spoke about as well in the—

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: The PPP programme in itself is based on the contractors themselves, design/build/finance, to a large extent.

Dr. Moonilal: But there is an outlay to go to them—

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

Dr. Moonilal:—from the HDC, from the Government. Would you have it now, or would you commit again to do in writing, some type of assessment of the outlay for the next fiscal for the PPP programmes that you support? Because when the contractors build—

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Yes, but the PPP again is paid from mortgage, eh, assessed mortgage, yes?

Dr. Moonilal: But the HDC has no component for infrastructure, for support for construction and the final \$100,000 payment.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: You are talking about the PPP or the Housing Construction Incentive Programme? That is where the 100,000 comes.

Dr. Moonilal: Okay. I want to stay with the PPP for now.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Yes, stay with the PPP. The proceeds come from

mortgages, so that the HDC does not put out anything.

Dr. Moonilal: The other matter relating to this, Minister—because you can identify the really one big ticket Item is really this line. The challenges that the HDC faces now, concerning matters of outstanding payments to contractors, to what extent would this support any attempt to meet some of those claims which the HDC has already verified and confirmed their commitment to pay?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: I think we are well on our way of reducing some of those outstanding payments to the contractors by conversion of mortgages, and so on. We have been doing quite a job thus far in reducing it. We have reduced it considerably—

Dr. Moonilal: Minister, could you give an undertaking to provide, in writing, an assessment of the outstanding amounts owed to contractors, and how much has been paid in the last fiscal?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: I think we should be able to give you that. The amount paid to contractors in fiscal 2019, last contractors, a total of \$507,307,524. Monthly, we have really paid out about—if you look at the total amounts between that period, it is about \$987,166,781. That was paid out.

Dr. Moonilal: Paid out?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Yeah.

I can also provide you with the total debt due to suppliers as at 30 September, 2019, 659,301,326.

7.00 p.m.

Dr. Moonilal: And could I just confirm, as you are on to this, that these are figures calculated on the base of verifiable and verified data, and completion certificates, and commitment to pay, not matters that would be before any tribunal,

or any arbitration, or court or anything. These are completed and verified, these numbers represent that?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Yes. The best of my understanding, yes, I have been informed that they are.

Dr. Moonilal: Could I ask because it maybe too tedious even if you have it now, if you can present this breakdown in writing, the list of the contractors paid and how much have been paid that made up the 507 million and the debt of 659 million?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: I am not too sure if I can. I will have to seek some advice whether I can provide that, the detailed information that you asked before because it will be telling you what a contractor would get and so. So I would have to check on that. Once I can so do I will do.

Dr. Moonilal: You can give an understanding that you will on advice—

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: On advice I will provide accordingly.

Dr. Moonilal:—if it is you can present it in writing.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Certainly.

Dr. Moonilal: One matter again related to this, Minister. There is a current situation for an arbitration involving the Indian Trail, I believe, housing project that involves substantial amount of money on the part of the HDC, and so on. Do you have an assessment of where that issue is at this time?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: The parties concerned have been meeting to treat with the matter.

Dr. Moonilal: To treat with the matter. Okay, that is fine.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Just one issue on that, hon. Minister. You have 602 million allocated for HDC—

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

Dr. Gopeesingh: 01 under Other Transfers—and I was just trying to get an appreciation of where the \$1 billion bond, housing bond, is going to be located; and the utilization of that, how is it going to be interacting with the HDC of 602 million. Where is that going to be located?

Mr. Deyalsingh: Madam Chair, could you point to the line Item because that bond is under the Ministry of Finance?

Dr. Gopeesingh: No, no, no, let the Minister of—

Mr. Deyalsingh: No, no, no, no, no.

Madam Chairman: In terms of—Member for Caroni East, I think you got an answer to the question. You had asked it in terms of 01 and you are being told that that comes under the Ministry of Finance and not under this.

Dr. Gopeesingh: What I want to ask is whether the HDC will be seeking to draw down from that \$1 billion bond in pursuant of the housing development.

Madam Chairman: I will not allow that under 01.

Mr. Deyalsingh: What line Item is that, please?

Dr. Gopeesingh: You watch yourself. I am not asking you.

Madam Chairman: Wait, wait, wait.

Dr. Gopeesingh: When it comes to health, I will—

Madam Chairman: All right.

Dr. Gopeesingh: You are out of place.

Madam Chairman: Well all right. Member for Caroni East, I think you have now cancelled out each other. Member for Oropouche East.

Dr. Moonilal: Let me get back to this—yes, Ma'am. Could I ask the Minister for some clarity on an HDC related matter that again involves money from this line

Item? You must be aware of the conflict arising in the Moruga estate with the prices and the residents complaining of HDC changing the price of homes on them. Would the HDC be taking any steps to reduce the cost of the housing units there in light of that conflict that has been brought to your attention I believe through a pre-action protocol letter?

Madam Chairman: I will not allow that question in the estimates. Okay? Thank you. So Item 011: Transfer to State Enterprises. Member for Oropouche East.

Dr. Moonilal: Thank you very much. I just wanted to ask an overall question, but the normally talkative Minister of Finance is not in the House. But I just wanted to ask the Minister if he is aware, with the advice of the Permanent Secretary, these Items shifted to various Ministries. They were here in the first place because of UDeCOTT. Now the UDeCOTT has gone to the Office of the Prime Minister and I notice these Items are now going to Health, National Security, Public Administration, and so on. Is there a reason for this farming out of the UDeCOTT debt in the context of not going to its parent Ministry for accountability purposes? It is not the paying issue, but the accountability issue because as you—let me just complete the point because I think the Minister of National Security, who is also a Minister in the Office of the Prime Minister, can respond. They were all placed under the Ministry of Housing when UDeCOTT was there although they dealt with different sectorial projects involving several Ministries. Now that UDeCOTT has gone to the Office of the Prime Minister, I am just asking for accountability purposes why they spread out over the different Ministries and not properly under the Office of the Prime Minister for reporting? That is all.

Madam Chairman: Minister in the Office of the Prime Minister.

Mr. Young: Thank you very much, Chair. The answer for that is all of those per

the projects of the various Ministries. So like UDeCOTT and National Security, that will be the construction of the police stations and the fire stations, and a decision was taken by the Ministry of Finance to let each line Ministry handle their own projects and to provide the money via the line Ministries rather than now through the Office of the Prime Minister, and that provides for better accountability because we manage our own projects.

Madam Chairman: Okay? So Members, we are now going on to Sub-Head 06: Current Transfers to Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies. Hon. Members, we will now move on to the *Draft Estimates, Revenue and Expenditure of the Statutory Board and Similar Bodies and of the Tobago House of Assembly*. 18 - Sugar Industry Labour Welfare Fund Administration, page 437.

[*Chairman: Mr. Forde*]

Mr. Chairman: *Draft Estimates of the Revenue and Expenditure of the Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies and of the Tobago House of Assembly*, and we are on page 437.

Dr. Moonilal: 437 Sir, not 435?

Mr. Chairman: 437.

Dr. Moonilal: Okay.

Mr. Chairman: Sub-Head 01: Personnel Expenditure. Item 001: General Administration.

Dr. Moonilal: Could I ask a question, please? Thank you. Chairman, in the book the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development begins with the Sugar Industry Labour Welfare Fund 434 and 435, I am just enquiring whether or not we have skipped that for any particular reason?

Mr. Chairman: No, those are summary pages, Member.

Dr. Moonilal: Can I then ask—

Mr. Chairman: 437.

Dr. Moonilal: May I?

Mr. Chairman: Yes, line Item?

Dr. Moonilal: Thank you. To the Minister of Housing and Urban Development: Minister, in looking at the structure here and the provision made for the Sugar Industry Labour Welfare Fund I wanted to ask—

Mr. Chairman: Member, line Item then you can go into your discourse please.

Dr. Moonilal: Well, the Item is Personnel Expenditure.

Mr. Chairman: No, give me the number, it will easier for me to follow.

Dr. Moonilal: Salaries and cost of living.

Mr. Chairman: Give me the number please, Member.

Dr. Moonilal: 01.

Mr. Chairman: Fine. Thank you.

Dr. Moonilal: Mr. Minister, you are providing funding for the organization and for the personnel here, what is the policy of the Ministry with regard to the Sugar Industry Labour Welfare Fund in terms of its continuation?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: The Cabinet has made a decision to dissolve the Sugar Industry Labour Welfare Committee. There is an interministerial committee that has been put in place to look at the dissolution of the SILWC and they are right now treating with that. But however, the staff is still there so we have to provide for the administrative part to take place and hence the reason why you will see—

Dr. Moonilal: Would you have in the decision as well a time frame within which you will dissolve this committee?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: There is time frame and as a matter of fact the committee

has asked for an extended time frame. They have just asked for some additional time because of issues within SILWC itself. So they have asked and it is just before Cabinet to get an extension of that time frame now.

Dr. Moonilal: Could I ask in the process of doing that whether or not the committee or any other relevant agency in the Government for this matter would be undertaking consultations with the relevant stakeholders related to the sugar industry—

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: The stakeholders are in fact part of the committee and part of the board. All the stakeholders are involved in the board itself. The board is there and this committee works in terms of dissolving the SILWC. But the board is still there and all the stakeholders are on the board.

Dr. Moonilal: And could I confirm with you that as part of the consultation the Ministry and the board also consults with residents those in areas—

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Residents play a very important part because there are several issues with the resident themselves that must be taken into consideration.

Dr. Moonilal: Thank you.

Mr. Chairman: Sub-Head 02: Goods and Services. Item 001: General Administration. Sub-Head 03: Minor Equipment Purchases. Item 001: General Administration.

We now go on to Land Settlement Agency. Sub-Head 01: Personnel Expenditure, page 446. Item 001: General Administration. Sub-Head 02: Goods and Services, page 446. Item 001: General Administration. Sub-Head 03: Minor Equipment Purchases, page 446. Item 001: General Administration; Sub-Head 04: Current Transfers and Subsidies, page 447. Item 007: Households; Item 009: Other Transfers.

Hon Members, we will move on to the *Draft Estimates of Development Programme*, and as the Chair mentioned earlier, different book. *Draft Estimates of Development Programme: Sub-Head 09: Development Programme - Consolidated Fund*, page 125. Item 004: Social Infrastructure and pages 125 to 127. Proceed, Oropouche East.

Dr. Moonilal: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, and through you, to the Minister of Housing and Urban Development. Minister, at 004: Social Infrastructure, can we get an appreciation of the reason for the increase in the 2020 fiscal from 60 million to 79 million, some of the projects, some of the areas that the Ministry would embark on that would account for this increase of roughly \$20 million?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: That would be further explained if you look under 075 in terms of the rehabilitation and maintenance of HDC rental apartments and so on.

Dr. Moonilal: Could I ask, therefore, if it is possible to provide in writing the list of the areas that are identified for Social Infrastructure upgrade to coincide, to synchronize, with the \$79 million provided?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: I can provide you, but the areas are really in terms of the housing estates, the housing grants such as the home improvement grants, emergency shelter relief grants. So those are some of the areas, but if you want a more detail I can provide you with that in writing.

Dr. Moonilal: If you could, thank you.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Sure. Certainly.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, Item 4 spans three pages as identified, therefore, I would also announce them in project groups. So, for instance, B, Land Development on page 125. Any questions there? All right. So Couva South.

Mr. Indarsingh: Thank you, Deputy Chair. Based on the policy position that the Minister announced as it relates to SILWC, Minister, in relation to upgrading of SILWC Housing Development I see no allocations going down the road, but I am asking it in the context of the policy position that you would have made; and if you are aware that former Caroni workers probably would have made payment for their residential housing lots and if you are aware based on the fact that there will be no further housing development from that point of view if there are a number of ex-Caroni workers who are being owed sums of the moneys by SILWC and, if so, how much and when they will be refunded?

Mr. Chairman: Minister, you could provide that information?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: All that is being addressed by the committee that has been put in place in terms of the outstanding funds. In fact, everything that concerns the stakeholders is being addressed by the committee including what you mentioned

Mr. Chairman: Oropouche West.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: Thank you. Hon. Minister, line 002: Squatters Settlement Regularization.

I am seeing there is no allocation. What is the status of this programme and do you have a number for—or I should ask if you know how many squatters you have existing right now in Trinidad?

7.15 p.m.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: I am not too sure. Could you repeat the question? “I think ah lost there somewhere.”

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: Yes. The Squatter Settlements Regularization Programme, I am seeing no allocation. There was initially in 2018, we are not

dealing with that. This programme, I am asking has it been abandoned or are you dealing with the squatters? How many squatters are there?

Mr. Chairman: Minister, you could shed light?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: The reason why you are seeing there is no allocation, that was under the old IDB loan so there is no allocation under that. You will find allocations under subsequent loans in other areas.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: And the other part of the question. Do you have any idea of how many squatters we have in the country?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: I cannot give you a precise figure. We are in fact doing a mapping right now, an exercise right now to identify squatter areas. So I cannot give you a figure. It is not possible to do so right now.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: Okay.

Mr. Chairman: Caroni East, your mike is on?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Yes.

Mr. Chairman: Proceed. Now we on—

Dr. Gopeesingh: E. Settlements, 235 and 236.

Mr. Chairman: Okay then, hold on. One second. Do we have any other questions? Oropouche East, you have any questions on B, on Housing Estates, Settlements, Other Services? All right, so proceed. Which one you are on?

Dr. Moonilal: I am on Housing Estates.

Mr. Chairman: Housing Estates, so it is page 125. Go ahead.

Dr. Moonilal: Thank you. Minister, the Estimate of \$20 million, is it possible for you to provide in writing a list of the Estates and the scope of works that will be embarked upon for the next fiscal because clearly, you cannot do everything and satisfy every housing estate with their programmes and problems.

And if I could just draw your attention at this moment. There are serious problems in the Union Hall Housing Estate. A meeting was held with the HDC on June 22, 2019, and the HDC officials were there and did a good job representing and discussing with the residents. Several of the problems include the garbage collection problem, structural problems, street signage, street lights, crime and criminality in the area, the need to complete the community centre and play park and so on.

Mr. Chairman: Member, again, make a general statement rather than to get into the specifics.

Dr. Moonilal: Yes. So the example I was giving you are some of the problems that the housing estate in Union Hall face but it is in several estates. There are problems right through. This money cannot deal with everything clearly. If there is a priority for the estates that you intend to rehabilitate or work on and so on, we could get in writing a list of those estates and some of the work that will be done in the next fiscal with this particular allocation of \$20 million.

Mr. Chairman: Minister.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Right. We are looking at all estates right now for the similar issues that you mentioned to see how best we can address them and of course, based on our survey, we will then do some prioritization and address them accordingly.

Dr. Moonilal: Sure.

Mr. Chairman: Right. Oropouche West, on which one? We at D or we can then go to E, Settlements.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: Line number 235 or you have moved forward?

Mr. Chairman: Right, under Settlements, proceed.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: Yes, 235. Hon. Minister, under Housing and Village Improvement Programme, how many persons have benefited under this programme and have you identified or prioritize areas in the country?

Mr. Chairman: Minister.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Just now, I can give you a figure in a while, just bear with me. Over 600 persons have been employed and over 100 families have been in first phase one of the programme which took place in Moruga. So they are in Moruga as I mentioned on Monday, 30 houses were completed, 10 homes were repaired, 100 persons benefited from employment opportunities within the area. So the 30 houses or 30 families. All right.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: And is it then that persons from Oropouche West also can benefit on this programme?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Well, again, it is possible that anybody throughout Trinidad and Tobago can benefit because we are doing a complete, an island-wide social survey. We have hired a number of young people, we are doing an island-wide social survey and it is based on the reports of the social survey, then it will determine who would benefit from the programme.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: So you have fixed criteria?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Yes, there is criteria.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: Thank you.

Mr. Chairman: Caroni East, I recognize first.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Yeah, thank you, Chair. Line Item 237: Regularisation of Squatter Communities and just a while ago, there was an issue of Squatter Settlements Regularization and I think the Ministry of Housing indicated that there is no further allocation for that but there is an allocation under 237 for

Regularisation of Squatter Communities. So could we get some little clarification—

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: As I mentioned a while ago, the first one was based on a loan, that loan has been closed off, so we no longer would have an allocation under that particular one, hence the reason you saw no allocation there, but you will see it under 237.

Dr. Gopeesingh: That would be across Trinidad and Tobago?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Of course, yes. It is.

Dr. Gopeesingh: And last one there as we are on that, the Greater Port of Spain Region— Regularization and Regeneration of Communities.

Mr. Chairman: Line Item please.

Dr. Gopeesingh: 236. Could you just give a little explanation of what that entails?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: 236. All right. 236 looks at what you consider the urban communities. There are squatters within the urban communities of Port of Spain, Diego Martin, Laventille. There are squatters within those areas, within urban areas, so this what you call the Greater Port of Spain is really from the west from Carenage all the way back to the east. So there are various squatter settlements within those areas that are being addressed under this Vote.

Dr. Gopeesingh: So what would be your aim in terms of what you consider—

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: It would be in terms of addressing issues such as roads, drains, in some cases, you have to build steps to go up the hillside where the squatters are or railings to go upstairs. Those are some of the areas that we know.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Thank you, you have made it clear.

Mr. Chairman: Oropouche East, you still have a question?

Dr. Moonilal: Thank you, yes. Just to go back a minute for this Housing and Village Improvement Programme.

Mr. Chairman: Member, please, just now, we are going backwards you said.

Dr. Moonilal: No, but we are on the same heading eh, Settlements.

Mr. Chairman: All right, go ahead, proceed.

Dr. Moonilal: There was an Actual of \$1 million more or less in 2018 and you are now going for \$15 million in 2020 so clearly you intend to accelerate this programme. Could I ask if you can put in writing please in the last fiscal, the policy, the objective and the list of beneficiaries and the process by which applicants across the country can access this programme from the Ministry?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Well they can access it but it has to be based on the social survey and that determines who we provide the service to.

Dr. Moonilal: Okay, then may I ask this one? Your young people, as you said, doing their social surveys, what is the basis upon which they go to anywhere? Do they get a call, a letter—

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Yes. There is a list of criteria and we know the areas through the Land Settlement Agency so that there is a criteria that the Land Settlement Agency use to address—

Dr. Moonilal: Okay and I will just give an example to make my point. If there is a particular place in Debe that the people believe that they can use this programme, it is helpful, do they write to the Land Settlement Agency, to the Permanent Secretary in the Ministry, to the Minister? What do they do and if there is a booklet that you can share on this programme, you can tell us about the booklet and maybe communities can familiarize themselves with it?

Mr. Chairman: Minister.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: No, the programme does not run on somebody applying to join to—to take part in the programme. It is based on the social survey that is done throughout most of the state lands that are occupied by persons. Most of them are state lands that are occupied by persons.

Dr. Moonilal: So you are saying—is this the case of Moruga where you have done some work in this programme, the LSA was responsible for identifying that and recommending that area?

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

Dr. Moonilal: Fine. Good. Thank you. Could I ask as well on the Government Aided Self-Help Programme, the same issue as to the policy and the process which is used to provide assistance and how would persons or communities access the programme?

Mr. Chairman: No, hold on, one second. Member, now we are getting into some operational issues here. Right. Minister, you are willing to give a quick synopsis?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Yeah, I can. I can give a quick. The Government Aided Self-Help Programme is different from the Housing and Village Improvement Programme. This is based on land. Now it was in fact advertised, about 5,000 applicants. There was a random selection. Of about 1,000 persons were selected randomly based on that. What this programme is about, it is about providing—it is what replaced what under your time, it would have been called Land for the Landless so it is a provision of land. The programme provides land at 30 per cent of the market value for individuals who are 21 years who qualified for about \$320,000. They are given two years with which to purchase the land. But the selection is based on a random selection, right, of the applicants. So that about 5,000 people applied. There was a random selection to choose 1,000; 1,000 were

chosen. So far 700 has been interviewed, 500 have acquired their mortgages and so on and a number of them have required deeds for those lands. The lands are developed lands under the designated lands under the LSA. So their lands are already developed in terms of water, in terms of lights, in terms of drainage and so on and the LSA provides technical drawings for the individuals and of course provisions of project managers and so on to assist them.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Minister. Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Hon. Minister, based on what you have just indicated concerning line Item 239, would you be able to provide a list of the beneficiaries, please?

Mr. Chairman: That was requested already? List of beneficiaries. Right, so that will be provided, Minister?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: I will provide that under guidance, I am not too sure if beneficiaries want everybody to know that they have benefitted from the programme but I can provide it. I can provide it under guidance of course.

Dr. Moonilal: But just to be clear, in the Parliament when you ask a question, generally for written answer, the beneficiaries of the HDC programme, when you on Saturday, you give out keys and so on, we are presented with a nice beautiful answer with all the names and so on so I imagine it is the same principle. If persons have accessed lands, then there can be no issue of privacy.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: And it is transparent so it is not problem.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: Other Services, G, page 125; H, Housing Opportunity Programme. A, Community Development, page 127. Item 005: Multi-Sectoral and Other Services, page 128. Question, Oropouche East.

Dr. Moonilal: Yes, I am looking at page 128 at Administrative Services, 009. Is that permitted?

Mr. Chairman: Proceed.

Dr. Moonilal: Yes. To the Minister, there is an Item, Support to the Urban Upgrading and Revitalization Programme. It is a new project. Would you be in a position to indicate the policy objective, the structure and process for this programme as well?

Mr. Chairman: Mr. Minister. All right, briefly please.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: This is the preparatory work for the IDB loan.

Dr. Moonilal: Well, a further explanation. What IDB loan, to do what and where and how and when was this negotiated and how much money is the IDB loan?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: We are still in the process of negotiating that loan.

Dr. Moonilal: An IDB loan.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Yes.

Dr. Moonilal: For what purpose?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: That is for squatter regularization, for subsidies, institutional strengthening and urban regeneration.

Dr. Moonilal: Okay.

Mr. Chairman: Infrastructure Development Fund, page 215. Same book. Item 004: Social Infrastructure, page 215. Oropouche East.

Dr. Moonilal: 215, Social infrastructure, we have an Estimate here from Actual 284 in 2018, a downgrade 2019, 210 and now \$300 million. Could you give some type of explanation as to what new works intended in this fiscal to move from the estimate of 210 to 300 essentially?

Mr. Chairman: Minister.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: One second. That Social Infrastructure involves Housing and Settlements and of course Settlements. So we are looking at the Accelerated Housing Programme is one such under that. Under the Accelerated Housing Programme, we do have an allocation of 260 million as I mentioned a while ago. There is also—let me give you the other areas in a while, just bear with me.

Dr. Moonilal: Sure.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Urban Redevelopment under East Port of Spain Development Company; that falls under that also. That is part of that.

7.30 p.m.

Mr. Chairman: Item 09.

Dr. Moonilal: Is he finished? I have more questions.

Mr. Chairman: A minute, please. You have more questions there, Oropouche East?

Dr. Moonilal: On this area here.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: And then you have the proposed loan. Then you have the proposed loan.

Dr. Moonilal: Yeah, I wanted to ask a question on that, if you do not mind.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: I think you missed it earlier.

Dr. Moonilal: A moment ago, when we looked at the million dollars, you were talking about the proposed IDB loan, and said that was to prepare some process. But then now you have a \$30 million allocation for 2020, under the same heading and that is—is that the loan itself or what is that 30 million for?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: That is the loan itself.

Dr. Moonilal: So that is the loan itself.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: And the other one is for preparatory work.

Dr. Moonilal: For preparatory work.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Yes.

Dr. Moonilal: And this is the loan itself.

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

Dr. Moonilal: So there is a loan of—is it an IDB loan of \$30 million, or the annual support for this programme of 30 million? What is the 30 million?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: That is support for this year; for this fiscal.

Dr. Moonilal: But that is the Government support. It is not the loan support. I am not sure if a loan finds itself this way.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: Thirty million is the actual loan.

Dr. Moonilal: So we have here in the Infrastructural Development Fund loans. It is part of the money?

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: It is part of the loan for this—*[Interruption]*

Dr. Moonilal: Or is it what you would call the Government part of a loan? You know when you take the contributory—

Mr. Chairman: One second, Oropouche East. Hold on, hold on.

Dr. Moonilal: The contributory or the counterpart or advance or something like that; contributory because I do not think it is the loan itself you put here.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: I will provide you with some information in writing on that.

Dr. Moonilal: Okay.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: I will clarify that.

Dr. Moonilal: You can clarify.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: I would clarify that and provide you with the information.

Dr. Moonilal: Okay, but also the information we are probably more interested in really is again, the policy and the programme for the year, exactly what works to be undertaken.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: That could be provided.

Dr. Moonilal: Yeah? Sure.

Hon. Maj. Gen. Dillon: That can be provided.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, Members, Item 005: Multi-sectoral and Other Services, page 216.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 61 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Minister. Thank you Madam PS and your senior technical team from the Ministry.

Members, we now move on to Head 70: Ministry of Communications.

Mr. Chairman: Welcome, Madam Minister. Welcome to your senior executive team. Madam PS, welcome back to the Parliament.

Head 70: Ministry of Communications, \$227,165,000.

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

Hon. Cox: Thank you very much. The Ministry of Communications coordinates and implements the Government's communication strategy, manages the creation, security, storage and dissemination of all information, thereby creating a more accessible and transparent government.

Our key service areas are: Government communication and information, public access to information, archival research services, government printing services, security of private data collected by public institutions, and administrative

and technical services.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you.

Question proposed: That Head 70 stand part of the Schedule.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, the sum of \$227,165,000 for Head 70: Ministry of Communications is comprised of moneys proposed for expenditure under the following Sub-Heads and Items to be found in the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure, the Draft Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure of the Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies and of the Tobago House of Assembly and the Draft Estimates of Development Programme*. We now proceed to consider the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure*. So again, Members, we are on *Draft Estimates, Details of Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure* book. Sub-Head 01: Personnel Expenditure, and we are on page 366. I will recognize the Member for Chaguanas East.

Mr. Karim: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Hon. Minister, might you—

Mr. Chairman: One second. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Imbert: Yes, Minister.

Mr. Chairman: No, I am not a Minister. Address me properly please, Sir? Okay. Proceed, Chaguanas East.

Mr. Karim: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Hon. Minister, would you be in a position to let us you know how many persons are employed at the Ministry as of the 30th of September, 2019, please?

Mr. Chairman: Madam Minister.

Hon. Cox: We have the number of positions, 582; permanent officers, 115; vacant posts, 467; vacant positions with bodies, 123; vacant positions without bodies, 345.

Mr. Karim: Okay, what is the plan for filling these vacant posts?

Hon. Cox: Actually we are in the process of doing that.

Mr. Karim: And by what time do you think you will have, at least a close, you will never have the full, but how is it progressing and if you could give us a sense of some numbers?

Hon. Cox: Well we are working with the DPA at the moment, so I would say in the next—within the year.

Mr. Karim: There has been an increase in the expenditure from 2019/2020. Would you be able to tell us what changes you expect as a result of this increase?

Hon. Cox: Yes, definitely.

Mr. Karim: If you could tell us what some of those changes might be?

Hon. Cox: Well, actually there is a Minister of Communications, Permanent Secretary, DPS. Of course, that would increase cost. Also, we have increased our publications and promotions, and so on.

Mr. Karim: Okay. Those might be operational. Any strategic ones?

Hon. Cox: Well, particularly, I think part of it is also staffing.

Mr. Karim: Okay, thank you.

Mr. Chairman: Item 002: Government Printery, page 366. Fyzabad, you still have a question?

Dr. Bodoë: Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: Line Item?

Dr. Bodoë: Through you to Minister, line Item 14: Remuneration to Members of Cabinet-appointed Committees. Minister, might you be in a position to just provide a list of those Cabinet-appointed Committees and the members who serve on those committees, in writing. It refers to line Item 14, the Remuneration to Members of Cabinet-appointed Committees.

Hon. Cox: That would be the Film Censor Board. Just one.

Dr. Bodoë: Just one, thank you.

Mr. Chairman: On this Sub-Head, Member for Naparima?

Mr. Charles: 002, 01: Salaries, Cost of Living. It jumped from 4 million in 2018 to 12. Was that recruitment of new staff or establishment or filling of vacancies?

Mr. Chairman: Now, Member, you are on Government Printery 02, and you are on line Item 01.

Mr. Charles: Line Item 01.

Mr. Chairman: Right, Salaries and cost of living.

Mr. Charles: Close to 4 million to 13 million, and it stabilized and the estimates have increased and you said the Minister—does it suggest that the staffing has stabilized now?

Hon. Cox: Yes, and there has been some staff promotions.

Mr. Charles: Okay.

Mr. Chairman: Item 003: National Archives, page 367. Sub-Head 02: Goods and Services, page 367. Item 001: General Administration. I recognize Chaguanas East and then Pointe-a-Pierre.

Mr. Karim: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Hon. Minister, might you be able to give us some details or explanation about a line Item 16: Contract Employment, where you have an increase of 1.8 million and the allocation of 2.8 million.

Mr. Chairman: Minister.

Hon. Cox: Okay, this has to deal with filling of vacancies.

Mr. Karim: Okay.

Mr. Chairman: Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.

Mr. Lee: Yes, Chair. To the Minister, line Item 22: Short-term Employment.

You had budgeted 2 million and now you estimate only \$600,000, a 1.3 million decrease. What was the rationale in the first place with that type of short-term for that figure of 2 million initially, and now it is now budgeted to be 600?

Hon. Cox: Because we have filled some of the contract vacancies.

Mr. Lee: So they moved over to—okay, sure.

Hon. Cox: Yes.

Mr. Chairman: Fyzabad.

Dr. Bodoë: Thank you, Chairman. Through you Chairman, to Minister. Line Item 62, which would be on page 368, Promotions, Publicity and Printing. There is a substantial increase there of 5,051,130. Minister, can you indicate what would have accounted for this substantial increase?

Hon. Cox: Okay, one minute.

Dr. Bodoë: What new activities, for example, would lead to that?

Hon. Cox: Okay, I am just checking to ensure. Okay, that has to do with the creation of increased promotional videos, graphics for our campaigns, website upgrades and maintenance, and our One Voice, One Message campaign, rebranding of the Ministry of Communications and promotional items.

Dr. Bodoë: Can you indicate what methods are used and the effectiveness of these outreach programmes? Do they have any value—

Hon. Cox: Well, actually this is—

Mr. Chairman: Hold on Minister, again operational. Right? But Minister, you want to shed briefly? You want to make a point?

Hon. Cox: No, it is okay.

Mr. Chairman: It is okay. Right, now again we are getting into operational there, Fyzabad and we would probably like to deter. Naparima, do you have a question?

Mr. Charles: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: Go ahead, proceed.

Mr. Charles: Thank you, 08: Rent Lease. In the 2019 Estimate, it was 575. In the Revised Estimate it went down. And in the 2020 Estimate it is reduced by 62,000. But at the same time, if you look at the Electricity 04, the electricity rates are remaining the same, while either the rent is going down; either you gave up places, I do not know.

Hon. Cox: Okay, well the Ministry moved to TIC building in Morvant, which is state-owned, but they carry out the same functions. So electricity rate stays.

Mr. Charles: And even with the LED, you are not catering for that to reduce electricity. Sorry. Good. We could move on.

Mr. Chairman: Item 002: Government Printery, pages 368 and 369. Item 003: National Archives, page 369; Item 004: Freedom of Information Unit, page 370. Member for Fyzabad.

Dr. Bodoë: Thank you. Minister can you indicate the number of persons employed at the Freedom of Information Unit?

Mr. Chairman: Minister?

Hon. Cox: Four persons.

Dr. Bodoë: Okay.

Mr. Chairman: Item 005: Office of Information Commissioner, page 370. Sub-Head 03: Minor Equipment Purchases, page 370.

Mr. Charles: What page are we on?

Mr. Chairman: 370, we are on.

Mr. Charles: 005, I am seeing Office of the Information Commissioner? Who or what is that?

Hon. Cox: That vacancy has not been filled.

Mr. Charles: What is it intended to do?

Mr. Chairman: Minister.

Hon. Cox: That came out of the—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Charles: Because you have budgeted for it.

Hon. Cox: —Data Protection Act. The creation of that post that has not been filled as yet.

Mr. Chairman: Sub-Head 03: Minor Equipment Purchases, page 370. Item 001: General Administration, page 370; Item 002: Government Printery, page 370; Item 003: National Archives, page 371. Sub-Head 04: Current Transfers and Subsidies, page 371.

Item 001: Regional Bodies; Item 004: International Bodies, page 371; Item—Naparima, question there? Okay. Item 007: Households, page 371; Item 011: Transfer to State Enterprises, page 372. I recognize the Member for Naparima.

7.45 p.m.

Mr. Charles: Thank you, Chairman. TTT, I am seeing Estimate, 16.6; Revised Estimate '19, it went up. And now it is going up, 23. But I thought as conceived TTT was renamed in order to become financially self-sufficient. This is not borne out by the—and the expenditure seems to be going up.

Mr. Imbert: TTT's equipment is very old and outdated. This is for purchase of new equipment; it is not part of their recurrent expenditure.

Mr. Charles: This is a one-off expenditure? More or less.

Mr. Imbert: One would assume.

Mr. Charles: So next year—

Mr. Imbert: It would be over a period of maybe two years or so.

Mr. Charles: So next year we should see a decline?

Mr. Imbert: Possibly.

Mr. Charles: Possibly.

Mr. Imbert: But it is for that.

Mr. Charles: But, you understand that the idea is for it to become financially—

Mr. Imbert: It has very old and antiquated equipment.

Mr. Charles: Would you care to tell us how it—forget if we could take off that element of the new equipment which you are required to purchase. Could you tell us if that were excised, it would show some level of profitability?

Hon. Cox: Well, actually yes, the equipment is old and there is a consistent effort to increase or to improve the efficiency of it. So, therefore there is more equipment to actually change and so that would be for over a period of time. All right?

Mr. Charles: I am just asking because I want the thing to work, eh, and I knew in years past that they used to encourage state enterprises and government agencies to advertise there. Is that policy still in place?

Hon. Cox: Yes, that is happening.

Mr. Charles: So, therefore a significant component of the finances would go in that direction?

Hon. Cox: Hopefully.

Mr. Charles: Good.

Mr. Deputy Chairman: Member for Caroni Central. We are on page 372, Transfer to State Enterprises.

Dr. Tewarie: Yes Chair, to the Minister—

Mr. Deputy Chairman: Proceed.

Dr. Tewarie:—you mentioned a little bit there about policy. Is there policy clarity for how TTT is supposed to operate as state media in relation to the domain of media in Trinidad and Tobago?

Mr. Imbert: For years there has been an attempt to have TTT compete commercially with the other stations. I do not think any other government has succeeded, because it just does not have the market share, and I am not sure if TTT could ever compete with TV6 and CNC3 and so on.

Dr. Tewarie: Probably not, I do not think it can, actually.

Mr. Imbert: But that is the model that was tried since it was CNMG. The policy at that time and it continued through several governments was that to try and make TTT compete with the other commercial stations, but they still need a subvention, they have always needed a subvention.

Dr. Tewarie: As a state media though, I mean, does the—is TTT—do not be offended by the question. Is TTT as free and as open as let us say, private media, is it?

Hon. Cox: What do you mean by free and open?

Dr. Tewarie: Okay. The reason I ask is because someone indicated to me that they were asked to do an interview on TTT, and it was indicated to them that, of course, you would have to be approved. So I found that a little odd, I did not continue the conversation. So I am just asking if in the operation of the media and matters of information, news, et cetera, TTT is as free and as open as the other media.

Hon. Cox: Much more, freer than it was in the past. And actually that information cannot be true because I—approved by whom?

Dr. Tewarie: Well, I would stand by the information I have. And that is what

prompted the question.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Another question, Member?

Dr. Tewarie: One final question. Now, the Minister of Finance said and I agreed with him that, you know, it is very difficult for state media to compete with the rest and be profitable. Now, I know that there was some talk about trying to pursue that mandate of profitability. Do you think that that—are you pursuing that policy, first of all? Do you think it is realistic or would TTT continue to require some subvention?

Hon. Cox: In the short term, yes, TTT will require some subvention. And we are looking at profitability that they should be able to make some profit and they have been trying.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Member for Chaguanas East, still have a question? Proceed.

Mr. Karim: Yes, Sir. Thank you very much. Can I go to line Item 53, Sub-Head 06, with your permission?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: No, we are not there yet, Member.

Mr. Karim: I know, but I am on page 372, eh.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Okay. Hold on, one second. Member for Naparima, what is your concern? One second, Member for Chaguanas East.

Mr. Charles: It is a follow-up question to what my colleague from Caroni Central was asking. The question of profitability. One of the problems—and this has nothing to do with you or the present Government, that is an historical problem—when one looks at the BBC and we learnt recently that the BBC is independent, arm's-length of the State. The board is appointed, about four independent persons on the board and they have to sign a code of ethics and there are a number of

conventions to make them an arm's-length relationship.

One of the problems with TTT is a perception rightly or wrongly that it gives you Government news, right? And whether it is us or whether it is you, there is a perception of not an arm's-length relationship. Are there any steps being taken given experiences with similar state enterprises, state-owned media, BBC, Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, the ABC, Australian Broadcasting Corporation, is there any conscious effort being given by this Government to create an arm's-length relationship in order to give it that autonomy and independence that will facilitate profitability?

Hon. Cox: Well, I think the Government has already taken an arm's-length position, because as a matter of fact when there was the re-branding of TTT from CNMG to TTT, no one at TTT could say that they are being controlled by this Government.

Mr. Charles: Would you give consideration to say, the Chamber of Commerce having a nominee on the board? TTMA and whatever—[*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I would like to move on now, Member. I think the Minister has clarified. Proceed, Minister of Finance.

Mr. Imbert: I would like to make one point—[*Crosstalk*—yes on this. Just one point. I just want to make the point—[*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Listen, Members. Members on both sides, please. Minister of Finance, I recognize you.

Mr. Imbert: In comparison to the BBC which is a statutory corporation with a royal charter, the BBC is not profitable, that is a myth. The BBC receives a subvention from the British Government in excess of the equivalent of TT \$2 billion per year, probably even closer to 3 billion, £278,000,000 a year. They are

not profitable. They rely on the British Government to survive. So I just want to make that clear. So that is the BBC. And TTT is a wholly owned state corporation, the board of directors is selected by the Government, by the Cabinet and it relies on the Government for survival. If the Government did not give TTT a subvention, it could not survive.

So I just want to show, it is an identical situation with the BBC without that 2 billion—

Mr. Charles: Are you taking on board the licence?

Mr. Imbert: No, I am just saying without that—I am saying they require from the Government of Great Britain over \$2 billion a year, if they did not get that, they would collapse, okay? And that is after they get all their revenue.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Member for Chaguanas East, once we go to the next book, you will be able to get your question answered. The point that you were going to make in the last book is identified in the book that we are going to now, right. Sub-Head 06: Current Transfers to Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies. So we now move over to *Draft Estimates of the Revenue and Expenditure of the Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies and of the Tobago House of Assembly*.

Hon. Members, we will now move on to the *Draft Estimates of the Revenue and Expenditure of the Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies and of the Tobago House of Assembly*; 53 - National Library and Information System; Sub-Head 01: Personnel Expenditure, 491. Item 001: General Administration. I give the Members “a couple time” just to get to the page 491. Okay, Members, move on now? Right. Sub-Head 02: Goods and Services, page 491. Item 001: General Administration, pages 491 and 492. Member for Fyzabad.

Dr. Bodoë: Thank you, Chairman. Minister, I see a substantial increase for Books

and Periodicals, that is line Item 11. I am just wondering in terms of more usage of, you know, online materials and so on and less printing of paper. How would you explain that?

Hon. Cox: Yes, the library has—there has been increased libraries. This year alone there were three libraries.

Dr. Bodoë: So it is for books for the libraries.

Hon. Cox: Yes. So it is particularly for libraries.

Dr. Bodoë: Sure. Thank you.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Sub-Head 03: Minor Equipment Purchases, page 492. Item 001: General Administration, page 492. Sub-Head 04: Current Transfers and Subsidies, page 492. Item 007: Households, page 492.

Hon. Members, we will now move to the *Draft Estimates of Development Programme*. Different book, Development Programme. And we are going to page 152, Sub-Head 09: Development Programme, Consolidated Fund. Page 152, Item 004: Social Infrastructure. And I recognize Chaguanas East. Page 152.

Mr. Karim: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Page 152. Hon. Minister, might you be able to indicate why is there no sum allocated for Item 001, Training of Librarians?

Hon. Cox: Okay, just checking. Actually, there is a report that has to be submitted to Cabinet before more money is released for this training. And there are some persons abroad, already, due to return soon.

Mr. Karim: Okay.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Hon. Members, we will now move on to Item 005: Multi-Sectoral and Other Services, page 153. Member for Naparima.

Mr. Charles: 004, would the Minister care to explain Strategic Redevelopment of

TTT, 2020? And I thought that would have been done prior to the changing of the name?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Minister, we are on 004.

Mr. Charles: It is \$5 million.

Hon. Cox: All right, this pertains to equipment and software upgrade at TTT.

8.00 p.m.

Mr. Chairman: Infrastructure Development Fund, page 232, Item 005: Multi-Sectoral and Other Services, page 232. Pointe-a-Pierre.

Mr. Lee: Chair, to the Minister. Under Public Buildings, Construction of the Chaguanas Library, about 10 million have been allocated. When is that project expected to start, the construction of that Chaguanas Library?

Mr. Chairman: Minister, 231.

Hon. Cox: To me that library, the construction started already actually. So, I am going to check to see the date.

Mr. Lee: What is the percentage? When it is, you know, what is the percentage of?

Hon. Cox: It is 68 per cent completed.

Mr. Chairman: Pointe-a-Pierre, you are okay?

Mr. Lee: Yeah, yeah.

Mr. Chairman: All right. Hon. Members, the question is that the sum of \$227,165,000 for Head 70: Ministry of Communications, stand part of the Schedule. Members? Minister of Finance? Minister of Finance.

Mr. Imbert: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: I need to hear the declaration, please.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 70 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you, Madam Minister. Thank you, Madam PS and to the senior technocrats of the Ministry. Thanks for coming.

Members, we will now move to Head 48: Ministry of Trade and Industry. Madam Minister, you are ready?

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: Yes, thank you.

Mr. Chairman: Welcome Madam Minister, welcome to you Mr. PS and also to the senior technocrats of the Ministry of Trade and Industry.

Head 48: Ministry of Trade and Industry, \$154,779,354.

Mr. Chairman: I will now invite the Minister of Trade and Industry to make a brief opening statement for a maximum of five minutes. Madam Minister?

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. The Ministry of Trade and Industry is responsible for leading and overseeing the implementation of Government policy for business development, trade investment and consumer empowerment. Our work is aligned to supporting the measures and targets defined in *Vision 2030* under Theme IV Building Globally Competitive Businesses.

Based on the *Draft Estimates of Expenditure* for fiscal 2019/2020, the Ministry of Trade and Industry has been allocated \$119,458,474 for recurrent expenditure and 66,575,00 has been allocated under the Development Programme. Under this allocation, the Ministry of Trade and Industry will continue the implementation of initiatives within its approved strategic plan.

In addition, during fiscal 2020, the Ministry of Trade and Industry will continue to improve its efficiency and strengthen its institutional capacity with the focus on development imperatives of good governance, value for money and service excellence as we seek to support the achievement of the targets and goals

defined in the National Development Strategy, *Vision 2030*. Thank you.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you, Madam Minister.

Question proposed: That Head 48 stand part of the Schedule.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, the sum of \$154,779,354 for Head 48: Ministry of Trade and Industry, is comprised of moneys proposed for expenditure under the following Sub-Heads and Items to be found in the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure*, the *Draft Estimates of the Revenue and Expenditure of the Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies and of the Tobago House of Assembly* and the *Draft Estimates of Development Programme*. We shall now proceed to consider the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure*. So we are in the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure* booklet. Sub-Head, 01: Personnel Expenditure, and we are on page 296. I recognize the Member for Mayaro.

Mr. Paray: Good evening, Minister.

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: Good evening.

Mr. Paray: Minister, line Item 05: Government's Contribution to NIS, I noticed there is an increase of \$235,000. What would account for that increase in NIS at this time?

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: Yeah. An outstanding payment was made to NIB during fiscal 2019, and so there is still some amount outstanding.

Mr. Chairman: Item 002: Weights and Measures Inspectorate, page 296. Item 003. Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.

Mr. Lee: Minister, under Weights and Measures, 01: Salaries, you had a Revised Estimate of \$76,000, no estimate in 2020. Could you tell us what is happening in Weights and Measures? Those individuals that were there are they no longer there—they have moved, they are relocated somewhere else?

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: Okay, so the Weights and Measures Division is now completely closed off, and so the work that was done there is now being done under metrology within the Bureau of Standards, the Trinidad and Tobago Bureau of Standards. So the division is completely closed, and that is why you would find that there is no expenditure at all for 2020.

Mr. Lee: So what became of those employees that were there last year, this year?

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: By attrition.

Mr. Lee: By attrition?

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: Yeah.

Mr. Lee: They all reach retirement age?

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: Yeah, they have.

Mr. Lee: Okay.

Mr. Chairman: Item 003: Consumer Affairs Division, page 297. Item 004: Research and Planning, page 297. Item 005: Consumer Outreach and Protection Unit, page 297. Sub-Head 02: Goods and Services—hold on one second—page 298. Item 001: General Administration, pages 298 and 299. Who do I start with? Chief Whip, Pointe-a-Pierre. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Lee: Madam Minister, line Item 34: University Graduate Recruitment Programme.

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: 34?

Mr. Lee: Line Item 34 on page 298, University Graduate Recruitment Programme. A million dollars, once again, has been budgeted. For the last four years that line Item keeps popping up as being budgeted. Has the Ministry of Trade and Industry ever utilized that line Item since you have been Minister of Trade and Industry?

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: We have not utilized it at all.**Mr. Lee:** So why your Ministry keeps budgeting for that when you have not utilized it in the last four years?

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: It is something to always consider, but you will have to remember that the Ministry is a very specialized Ministry in that you hire very technical people trained in the field of trade and that kind of thing. So, bringing on person, we have to ensure that we find the right people who are well qualified for the positions and, at this time, there are other positions under contract allotments, and that is where we are focusing for the time being—other positions to be filled under contracts.

Mr. Lee: So then there is no need to budget for it then?

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: We may, we may resort to it during the course of the year.

Mr. Lee: And how many individuals that \$1 million that has been budgeted to take in or employment—if they were to utilize that \$1 million, how many individuals that will be for?

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: We have not looked at it. It depends on the level of the individual that is coming in with, the salary range. We have not looked at it in detail.

Mr. Lee: So, it is just a number figure then?

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: Yes, it is an approximate figure.

Mr. Paray: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Minister, under line Item 05: Telephones, I noticed there is a sharp increase of \$1.365 million for telephone charges. How would you explain that?

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: Again, there is a significant outstanding balance which we will attempt to pay very early within this fiscal year.

Mr. Paray: Line Item 08, I noticed also a very sharp increase in Rent/Lease-Office Accommodation of over \$2 million.

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: Again, we are three months behind in our rent for the Nicholas Tower property.

Mr. Paray: And, lastly, 04, under same Item for “Electricity”, I am seeing a reverse in terms of—when I looked at the electricity charges from 2018, it came down to 60,000 and now it is further being reduced. Are you reducing the amount of locations that you are operating in that would cause that bill to go down that much?

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: We now occupy one floor less.

Mr. Paray: Okay.

Mr. Chairman: Item 002: Weights and Measures Inspectorate, page 299. Item 003: Consumer Affairs Division, page 298 to page 300. Item 004: Research and Planning, page 300. Item 005: Consumer Outreach and Protection Unit, page 300. Sub-Head 03: Minor Equipment Purchases, page 301. Item 001: General Administration, page 301; Item 003: Consumer Affairs Division, page 301. Sub-Head 04: Current Transfers and Subsidies, page 301. Item 003: United Nations Organization. I recognize Mayaro first.

Mr. Paray: I had a question, sorry, Mr. Chairman, under Other Transfers, 009.

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: What page?

Mr. Chairman: No, hold on. We have not come to that as yet.

Mr. Paray: Okay.

Mr. Chairman: Pointe-a-Pierre, Naparima.

Mr. Lee: No, I will defer.

Mr. Chairman: Naparima?

Mr. Charles: 001, I see we have 800,000—

Mr. Chairman: Member, wait. Hold on one second. You gone back to General Administration, 001?

Mr. Charles: No, I am on 04; 01. It is United Nations Industrial Development Organization.

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: Yes.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, proceed, proceed.

Mr. Charles: In 2019 Estimates, 800,000 was budgeted, but only 203 spent. Right? Is this an annually allocation? Because if it is, it means that you will have to budget for the fact that you did not pay last year and the year coming and you could indicate, why?

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: We are owing for 2018 and 2019. In 2018, €65,000 and for 2019, €55,000. So that is €120,000 and the equivalent will be about 986,000. So that is where we are at this time and we want to, at least, settle 2018 and 2019.

Mr. Charles: Okay. So 2020 will be in arrears still?

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: Yes.

Mr. Charles: Okay.

Mr. Chairman: Pointe-a-Pierre.

Mr. Lee: The question was asked.

Mr. Chairman: Item 007: Households, page 302. Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.

Mr. Lee: Yeah. Madam Minister, line Item 40, Gratuities to Contract Officers of \$1.3 million.

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: Sorry, line Item?

Mr. Lee: 40, Gratuities to Contract Officers, on page 302.

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: Page 302?

Mr. Lee: Gratuities to Contract Officers.

Mr. Chairman: Gratuities to Contract Officers, 40.

Mr. Lee: Is the first time you are allocating, budgeting an amount of \$1.3 million?

8.15 p.m.

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: I just want to find it. Sorry.

Mr. Lee: Sure.

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: What page are we on?

Mr. Chairman: We are on page 302 and we are on line Item 40: Gratuities to Contract Officers.

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: It is that the Treasury formerly paid those contract officers and for this first time now we will begin to pay them.

Mr. Lee: Okay.

Mr. Chairman: Naparima.

Mr. Charles: Are we in 009?

Mr. Chairman: No, not yet. Item 008: Subsidies, page 302; Item 009: Other Transfers, page 302. Naparima, you have a question there?

Mr. Charles: Yes, I do.

Mr. Chairman: Proceed.

Mr. Charles: Item 009, 19: Single Electronic Window for Trade and Business Facilitation, I take it, Minister, that this has to do with the ease of doing business?

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: No—well, yes, but this particular line Item is for the operational aspects of it, the salaries of the staff, and so on. So it is just the operational cost for the single electronic window unit.

Mr. Charles: And is the 2.5 million adequate to get us to a higher ranking in the ease of doing business or is this part of a fine?

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: No, no, I would tell you why it is adequate because it is not only the business of the Ministry of Trade and Industry, we drive it. But remember, we are engaging with a number of Ministries and agencies to achieve the ease of doing business, so we drive it and we have a unit. I think we probably have about nine people now in it. But we have a unit, and as the vacancies come in we fill, but it is enough; 14, I am told.

Mr. Charles: Right. So you are giving us an assurance that this is adequate to get us to the targets that you have set?

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: That is right.

Mr. Charles: Okay. Item 08: Operations of the Trade Facilitation Co. in Cuba, I heard you—was it on the radio, saying—no, in Parliament, saying the trade between Trinidad and Cuba was—you have an idea of the figure, I think it was 2 million or so?

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: Increased.

Mr. Charles: It was increased by 2 million. What it is now, approximately?

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: No, we are not discussing the trade figures, but trade has doubled. And your question will be?

Mr. Charles: The question is, the operations of the Trade Facilitation Company is to increase the trade?

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: That is right.

Mr. Charles: And we are spending \$2.4 million, could you give us an idea of—I am thinking in terms of the results that we achieve from this, what is the quantum of the trade between, not the increase?

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: I do have the figure, but we have had 143 per cent increase so that the figure is now 27 million, up from 11 million. But apart from that, one

would have to remember that it is the system of doing business and that exporting to Cuba is very bureaucratic, so the stage we are at now, it is where the office has really brought all of these businesses up to speed and we are actually now waiting for orders. So we have gone through the bureaucratic process, but it is absolute necessary to have that office there because of their peculiarities of doing business.

Mr. Chairman: Member for Caroni Central.

Dr. Tewarie: Just one quick question, Mr. Chairman. I noticed here that there is a subvention for—

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: Where are you?

Dr. Tewarie: Sorry, page 302, and it is under Other Transfers 009, but it is really three line Items I want to refer there that are similar. One is the Trinidad and Tobago Chamber of Industry and Commerce which has a subvention, then you have Manufacturers Association which has a subvention, but I notice that Trinidad and Tobago Coalition of Services Industries which had a subvention last year does not have one, could you explain that?

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: But they do, they do have one. The Estimates are 700,000.

Dr. Tewarie: They have 700,000, okay, sorry. I missed it.

Mr. Chairman: Member for Caroni Central, you care to get one? You have one?

Dr. Tewarie: Yeah, I have it.

Mr. Chairman: Well, yeah, make use of it to ensure that you go straight across.

[*Crosstalk*] Now, Members, please. Mayaro.

Mr. Paray: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Minister, I just want to go back to line Item 08—

Mr. Chairman: No, Member—

Mr. Paray: We are on Other Transfers still.

Mr. Chairman: All right, go ahead.

Mr. Paray: Which is 009, but line Item 08.

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: Cuba?

Mr. Paray: Yes. The World Economic Forum Report identified that the trade figure between Trinidad and Cuba was about one-tenth of 1 per cent of our total exports and when you look at over the last two or three years the investment in that unit, that facilitation unit has been upwards of TT \$6 million, are you satisfied that the work coming out of that unit is adequate for the expense based on the returns that we are getting from that work that is being done?

Mr. Chairman: Minister.

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: Definitely. And I could understand your concern but it is definitely worth it. It is difficult to build trade in countries where you have peculiarities like language and different systems of governance, and so on. Cuba has its peculiarities and so do a lot of Latin American countries as well, so that it is very good to have people on the ground. Before we had just two persons, now we hope to increase that to a third. It is an attractive place of business for us because of the relationship. Trade is about relationships, relationships between countries, relationships between people. Having somebody on the ground, having a team on the ground has been of immense help to us, and you will begin to see the growth, the rapid growth because they have done the work.

As I said, the registration process is very tedious, very, almost burdensome but it has been done, and they have been able to bring our manufactures on board. You would recall that in 2016 I would have gone with about 100 persons on a mission and so there is active follow-up. It is difficult to do it if you are remaining in your office in Trinidad, we need to do it there. And, as I said, the relationship is

strong and relationship brings business.

Mr. Paray: So we can expect some increases coming on over the next fiscal year?

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: But I just identified to you that there was 143 per cent increase.

Mr. Paray: Mr. Chairman, I just want to follow up with line Item 24—

Mr. Chairman: Proceed.

Mr. Paray:—which is InvesTT, there is an \$8 million allocation to InvesTT. Again, when you look at the flatline of our non-energy exports based on the bullet in the *Review of the Economy* that was presented to the Parliament where we flatlined basically at about \$30 billion over the last couple of years; we have not, on the non-energy side, is InvesTT doing enough in terms of driving?

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: Yeah, but are you quoting figures or are you referring to figures on the export side?

Mr. Paray: That is correct, on the export side

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: InvesTT is more involved with inward—

Mr. Paray: Inward side.

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: On the inward side bringing in investments.

Mr. Chairman: Chaguanas East.

Mr. Karim: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Hon. Minister, may I refer you to line Item 23: Trinidad & Tobago Creative Industries Company, you have an allocation of almost \$11 million, might you be able to tell us, what are some of these Items or projects that this would be expended for?

Mr. Chairman: Minister.

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: Thank you. The projects I would tell you about are under the DP.

Mr. Karim: It is what, sorry?

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: Under the Development Programme, I can speak to the projects.

Mr. Karim: Okay.

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: So this is really for the administrative expenses, staff, and of course we want to bring on a CEO so that is an additional expense, but this is operational. So it is the cost of the location, the building that they occupy, and the cost of running CreativeTT.

Mr. Karim: Okay. Can I ask whether any of these expenditures have to do with the Bespoke Tailoring Programme?

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: No, this is the operational costs relative to the company—

Mr. Karim: I was just wondering whether you had anybody on the payroll here, any operational cost associated with CreativeTT, but since you say it is the DP, when we come there I will ask the question.

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: It is the DP.

Mr. Chairman: Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.

Mr. Lee: Madam Minister, line Item 16: Fair Trading Commission, \$1.7 million, an increase of \$400,000. Could you state how many employees are there at the Fair Trading Commission and how many individuals make up that board?

Mr. Chairman: Minister.

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: I did not get the last part of the question.

Mr. Lee: The Fair Trading Commission, how many employees?

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: There are four people, four employees.

Mr. Lee: Four employees—

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: That is right.

Mr. Lee:—in that Fair Trading Commission—

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: That is right.

Mr. Lee:—and this 1.7 million takes care of their remunerations, correct?

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: That is all of their expenses, but you would see an increase.
Yes?

Mr. Lee: Yeah.

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: And that is because we hope to have it proclaimed this year, and with the proclamation we would want to ensure that an organization like this one, which is Fair Trading, is independent, so we have catered for it operating out of the Ministry of Trade and Industry. Right now it exists within the Ministry of Trade and Industry.

Mr. Lee: So you have four employees there presently and you have a board?

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: We have four, and when it is proclaimed and there is increased business then we would move to higher

Mr. Lee: Do you have a board presently?

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: There is a board.

Mr. Lee: How many members make up that board?

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: The board is probably four persons.

Mr. Lee: Who is the chair of that board, please?

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: Dr. Ramkissoon.

Mr. Lee: And they also get board fees out of this 1.7 million?

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: They would get board fees, yes.

Mr. Lee: Okay. Thank you.

Mr. Chairman: Naparima.

Mr. Charles: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Back on 08, Operations of the Trade

Facilitation Co. in Cuba, given encouraging but low returns on investment and the possibility of significant trade in Guyana, is there a thought being given to developing some similar type facility in Guyana in Georgetown?

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: Well, certainly not a trade office, but I think that when the Minister of Foreign Affairs comes that he would speak to you about the establishment of a mission there.

Mr. Chairman: Mayaro, you still have a question?

Mr. Paray: Yes.

Mr. Chairman: Proceed please.

Mr. Paray: Thanks, Mr. Chairman. Minister, my apologies for the last question, I was referring—sorry—to 01 in terms of Financial Assistance to ExportTT. I am asking the same question in terms of the non-energy exports, in terms of getting that boost, the money that we are investing in this unit, given the return that you expect in terms of boosting that non-energy export side of the table.

Mr. Chairman: Minister.

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: But boosting your exports is not only dependent on the agency alone and the size of the agency, and so on, and how much you are spending, there are a lot of other factors. The products you have to export; its complementarity, its markets. So there are a number of other factors that play into this figure that you are talking about of non-energy exports, it is not just the agency. But I will tell you, the agencies are of concern to us, and on the last week we had two people in from the International Trade Centre spending time in the agency. So that we are looking at our gaps and looking to see the areas that need to be improved. We need this agency to be top-notch so that we expect this agency to almost be in transition, because it is a project that we will take on to see the

improvements in the service that they offer so that we can really maximize the output and help to increase our exports.

Mr. Chairman: Item 010: Other Transfers Aboard, page 303. Hon. Members, we will now move on to the *Draft Estimates of the Revenue and Expenditure of the Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies and of the Tobago House of Assembly*, new book, as we say. Sub-Head 06: Current Transfers to Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies. 44 - Trinidad and Tobago Bureau of Standards. Sub-Head 01: Personnel Expenditure, page 423. [*Crosstalk*] Members, you all with me? Page 423, Item 001: General Administration, page 423. Sub-Head 02: Goods and Services, page 423. Item 001: General Administration, page 423. Chaguanas East.

Mr. Karim: Item 02: Goods and Services, can I ask under that? Line Item 16, Minister, could you give us a sense as to that level of expenditure, Contract Employment?

Mr. Chairman: Contract Employment?

Mr. Karim: Yeah.

Mr. Chairman: Minister.

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: Okay. It is quite a large organization with about 221 persons in their organizational structure, with about 156 persons currently employed. I could not tell you at this time how many of them are on contract.

8.30 p.m.

Mr. Karim: Can you supply us in writing?

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: Yes, I can.

Mr. Chairman: Provide it in writing, Minister?

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: Yes, I can.

Mr. Chairman: Sub-Head 03: Minor Equipment Purchases, page 424. Item 001:

General Administration, page 424. Sub-Head 04: Current Transfers and Subsidies, page 424. Item 007: Households, page 424. Item 01: Other Transfers Abroad, page 424. 45, Trinidad and Tobago Racing—where are you, Member for Caroni Central?

Dr. Tewarie: When you complete this Item, I just want to make a comment to the Minister in order to follow up on a question in Development when we get there.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, Member. Sub-Head: Trinidad and Tobago Racing Authority. Sub-Head 01: Personal Expenditure, page 429. Item 001: General Administration, page 429. Sub-Head 02: Goods and Services, page 429. Item 001: General Administration, page 429. Proceed Pointe-a-Pierre.

Mr. Lee: Minister, what is the role of the Racing Authority and the Ministry of Trade and Industry? Is there any role that you all are playing now, because I am not seeing any subventions or anything being given?

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: It is regulatory, that is their role. So it is a governance. They govern races; that is it. It is largely regulatory, and he knows. [*Crosstalk*] He knows.

Mr. Chairman: Minister.

Mr. Lee: How I know, Minister? [*Laughter*]

Mr. Chairman: Okay, let us move on. Sub-Head 003: Minor Equipment Purchases, page 429. We are on page 429, Members. Item 001: General Administration, page 429. Sub-Head 004: Current Transfers and Subsidies, page 429. Item 007: Households, page 429. Item 009: Other Transfers, page 430. New book, Development Programme.

Hon. Members, we will now move on to the *Draft Estimates of Development Programme*, Sub-Head 09: Development Programme. Consolidated Fund, and we

are on page 121. Consolidated Fund, page 121. Item 003: Economic Infrastructure, page 121. I recognize Mayaro.

Mr. Paray: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Are we using that section listed under “R”?

Mr. Chairman: Yes, proceed.

Mr. Paray: 024: National SheTrades Chapter. Minister could you give us an idea of what this project is about, the objectives and the benefits to be accomplished from it?

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: When we had gone up to Geneva for the Trade Policy Review, we also visited with the International Trade Centre, and during our course of meetings we found out about this programme. So it is an online platform that is established globally, and it is for women entrepreneurs. So it is strictly women. So there are about one million women on this platform already. So we applied to have a chapter here in Trinidad, and they have actually come down and done one visit and sent us a recent report, which I have not looked at as yet, but we think this is going to be very good for e-commerce and for women in business.

Mr. Paray: Under line Item 016, with the enhancement of the SEW, I know over the period of time we have been allocating quite a bit of funding.

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: What page are we on?

Mr. Paray: This is the same page 121.

Mr. Chairman: We are on page 121, line Item 016, Madam Minister.

Mr. Paray: The question is, what is the status in terms of the implementation of this particular project? How far along are we? Are we anywhere close to the completion of it in terms of being able to maximize the full benefits of the having this SEW?

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: Do you want to speak in terms of dollar value or do you want in terms of where we are, or do you want to speak in terms of the projects?

Mr. Paray: Where we are in terms of how far along we are and how long again for completion, to maximize the benefits of it?

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: Right. I think by 2020 we would have some significant achievements. In my delivery yesterday in this House I had said that we had done about 47 e-services, but we have not looked at significant ones like trading across borders, which required a massive business process reengineering project for which we did a multimodal gap analysis. We now have this master plan to improve trading across borders. So we are at that stage. But before we got to the stage where we had the master plan, you would realize that we had to do two consultancies to do the inquiry and to have all of the exchanges among all the agencies and so on. So we had a firm, EcoRisk UK, in here doing that. There are a number of others, and there are some things that are completed and some things in train. E-payments are in train as well. The construction permit in process, as I told you—the roll out in Port of Spain, which is the pilot, would be in November of this year. We had hoped to complete in September but we have taken into consideration local government reform. So the pilot roll out will be in November, and once we are satisfied, because it is a very complex piece of software arrangements that are in place, and we will do the national roll out after. But we are also doing the digitization of all of the maps and records, which is again an extensive—that is another project. Along with the Ministry of Planning and Development they are the ones who are driving it more than ever, because it affects them. We are also preparing spatial guidelines, so that is another programme. This SEW programme that we are on is massive and extensive. As I said the big

ticket items—while we did everything, and under the last administration they did continue the work which was started in 2009, but nobody really tackled the big ones, and that is what we are doing now. If you are to ask me, I would say that we are at the halfway mark, but you should see some significant improvements by the end of 2020.

Mr. Paray: Is water and power included in terms of the permit system in that facility?

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: That is right. All of that is taken into consideration, even local government, because the regional authorities do have an impact, a place in the process as well, and that is why we held back a bit to engage reform. So it is all going to be completed. When this is done, it is not just simply about walking in and getting your designs approved. It will include all of the other requirements as well, all of the other approvals as well: WASA and so on.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you, Madam Minister.

Mr. Karim: Hon. Minister, we come to line Item 023.

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: 023?

Mr. Karim: Development of the Fashion Industry, the allocation of \$5 million. I was asking before if you can tell us what amount of this money, if any, is allocated to the Bespoke Tailoring Programme.

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: I am just going to find it in my notes. Just give me a minute, please.

Mr. Chairman: 023 is the line Item.

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: Okay, so Development of the Fashion Industry. You are asking, sorry, with regard to the Bespoke Tailoring?

Mr. Karim: Yes.

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: The Bespoke Tailoring certificate programme is completed.

Mr. Karim: It is completed?

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: That is the first year. So in 2020 we are doing a new programme which is the follow-up, which is a train the trainers programme.

Mr. Karim: Could you tell us how much money has been expended to the Bespoke Tailoring programme, and how much will be expended to train the trainers?

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: With regard to the Bespoke Tailoring, and I am going to include sums of money that were necessary to equipped MIC. So it includes everything, including the administrative staff and the rental fee at MIC. So I am giving you a ballpark figure 4,900,000.

Mr. Karim: So almost \$5 million?

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: That is right.

Mr. Karim: When this programme was first mentioned in this very honourable House by the Minister of Finance it was under the University of Trinidad and Tobago. It subsequently found a home—

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: Many years ago?

Mr. Karim: Not too long, just about two or three years ago. [*Interruption*] No, no, no, let me ask the question. When this programme was first mentioned in this House by the Minister of Finance in the budget statement, I can tell you the page, 54, the top left hand, one paragraph, Bespoke Tailoring Certificate. It was under UTT and we found out subsequently it found a home at MIC. Both institutions are under the Ministry of Education. I am asking another question as well. How did it land up under the Ministry of Trade and Industry? How did it reach to the Ministry of Trade and Industry, having moved from the Ministry of Education?

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: Okay. In the budget it is under the CreativeTT which is under the Ministry of Trade and Industry. There is some affiliation with MIC because within the programme there are some basic courses that are a little bit apart from the Bespoke Tailoring courses, the actual cutting and fashioning and that kind of thing. When someone comes into that programme they are involved in math classes. I think it is math classes and some administrative courses that are taught at MIC. So at the end of the day they are ready for work. It is part of the programme.

Mr. Karim: How many persons graduated so far with the certificate?

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: I think it is 26.

Mr. Karim: What would be the per capita cost of training that would have been expended? How much did it cost to train one person and graduate, and what is the duration of the programme, do you know?

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: One year.

Mr. Karim: So over one year what was the cost of training a person to graduate over one year in a tailoring course?

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: Well, you can work it out.

Mr. Karim: You are the Minister, I am asking you.

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: I do not have a calculator.

Mr. Karim: Well then I would like to know—

Mr. Chairman: Again, hold on. Minister, you could provide it in writing for us.

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: I just called the figure out, 4.9 million, total cost and 26 students.

Mr. Karim: So I do not have the calculator in front of me either.

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: MIC cost is built in. Everything is built into it.

Mr. Karim: And how much would have been paid to the facilitator of the programme, the tutor?

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: It is not one tutor, but the tutoring fee—and you remember we expanded it to include an evening class as well. So it is fees, tutoring fees for the full-time class and tutoring fees for the evening class. Those would total about \$3.4 million.

Mr. Karim: You know, Mr. Chairman, through you if I would ask the Minister if she would be kind enough to give us something in writing about the breakdown of the costs. The other thing is that this training of trainers, who will be conducting the training of trainers programme? This is an expenditure in here?

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: It is an expenditure in here.

Mr. Karim: How much money out of this 5 million is allocated to training of trainers, for how many persons and who will be delivering the training of trainers?

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: It is the very same tutors. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Karim: Who is the head tutor in this project? Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: One second.

Mr. Karim: I am just asking with respect to a line item expenditure.

Mr. Chairman: Madam Minister.

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: Yes, it is the same tutors as I said. And you wanted to know—Prof. Andrew Ramroop.

Mr. Karim: The question I am asking is more about the expenditure. So if you can give us some details about the programme, the one year, how many trainees, the per capita cost.

Mr. Chairman: Member, I think that has been cleared already.

Mr. Karim: But I asked another question, Mr. Chairman, and if I cannot get the

answer I want it in writing.

Mr. Chairman: No, but remember the Minister said—

Mr. Karim: The training of trainers that I am asking that is in this line Item.

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: It is.

Mr. Karim: I am asking: What is the cost of the training of trainers, who will do the training of trainers, how many persons will be trained?

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: I am going to give that information to you in writing.

Mr. Chairman: Naparima, you still have a question.

Mr. Charles: Thank you very much. 016, and my colleague had asked questions on it. All I want to get an idea— [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Chairman: I recognize Naparima.

Mr. Charles: Thank you. I was told that this line Item had a lot to do—

Mr. Chairman: Which is?

Mr. Charles: 016, the Ease of Doing Business. Our ranking is 105 right now out of 190 countries. Does the Ministry have a target ranking, and by what time would we expect to get there and how does this fit in?

8.45 p.m.

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: You are being very—I think your question is a little bit subjective, but what we want to do is to have Trinidad and Tobago as the ideal place for doing business.

Mr. Charles: No. But it has to be benchmarked, Madam Minister.

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: Number one.

Mr. Charles: Number one. Excellent. And what time frame?

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: Within the medium, I would say between—

Hon. Member: When we win in 20—

Mr. Chairman: Who is answering the question, please? All right. Caroni Central.

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: Three years.

Mr. Chairman: Caroni Central, and no questions?

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: Three years. Three years. Three years. Number one, three years.

Dr. Tewarie: I have a simple question of—

Mr. Chairman: Okay, Minister.

Dr. Tewarie: A simple question of 304. You have—

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: I am sorry. Which one is this?

Mr. Chairman: 304, page 121.

Dr. Tewarie: Yes.

Mr. Chairman: Export Capacity Building.

Dr. Tewarie: Yes. All right. The question I am asking is that you had 2 million allocated and it was not used, there might have been various reasons, and you now have 1.5 million allocated to that. What is it that you are doing and is it related to ExporTT or is it something else?

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: Well, it is export capacity building—

Dr. Tewarie: Yeah, I know.

Hon. Gopee-Scoon:—and is related to ExporTT, and most of these programmes are, in fact, run there. So it is gearing probably more for the small- and medium-sized exporters—

Dr. Tewarie: So you are trying to get that in shape.

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: Small- and medium-sized exporters are being trained in the business. So I can tell you that we do a number of co-financing, and we are aiming this year to benefit 20 companies. There are a number of export competitiveness

programmes as well, international standards programmes, exporter training programmes, exporting to new markets, how do you get there. There is an international trade specialist course which you could do online, and we hope to have 25 persons qualify in that regard, so that there are a number of programmes that are conducted at the training room at ExporTT.

Dr. Tewarie: Okay. I understand you. It is not just the institutional building in ExporTT, but it is the institutional building in the exporting companies.

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: Of course, that is what I am saying, it is for exporters.

Dr. Tewarie: Okay.

Mr. Chairman: Item 005: Multi-Sectoral and Other Services, pages 122 and 123. Hon. Members, Item 005 spans two pages, therefore I will announce the project groups: B. Bureaux of Standards, pages 122 and 123; A. Administrative Service, page 123. I recognize the Member for Mayaro.

Mr. Paray: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Minister, line Item 008, in terms of that inward investment for non-petroleum initiatives, could you give us an idea of exactly what that project is about in terms of driving that non-petroleum area in terms of our exports?—I assume.

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: Yeah. I was just trying to find it in my—sorry.

Mr. Paray: Page 123, Ma'am.

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: Sorry. Okay. Yes.

Mr. Paray: 008.

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: Sorry.

Mr. Paray: 123, line Item 008, an understanding of that inward investment for non-petroleum initiatives. What exactly is the project about?

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: So this year, for instance, so it is all associated with yachting,

well the focus is on yachting. So this year we would have developed a guide book for sustainable and environmental practices for boatyards and mariners. We would have also supported a regatta in 2019, and also we would have advertised in regional and international magazines. So we are going to continue the implementation of the existing plan which we have for developing the yachting industry. And also engage with the—sorry, we will hold regattas again, participate in yachting events and host stakeholder-networking events and that kind of thing. It is about promoting and developing the yachting industry locally.

Mr. Paray: Any other area besides the yachting that you have earmarked?

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: The focus here on this line Item has been yachting for the last two years.

Mr. Paray: So the investment of that \$2 million between last year and the 1 million that we are giving this year—

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: We did not spend last year, because if you look at the actual spend, it was quite small, 176,000. This year, because we were building out the guidebooks and so on and that takes time, and working with the EMA and now we are going to focus more on the rest of the implementation plan.

Mr. Paray: Okay. I just look at size of the spend just for yachting alone, I feel it is a little on the high side in terms of one Item.

[MADAM CHAIRMAN *in the Chair*]

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: Let me tell you, when you see this, this is not going to make it happen, we work also with other yachting bodies to grow the industry. Now, we are doing a huge project with the Trinidad and Tobago Yacht Club, we are doing a big project with them. So we are working hand in hand with other agencies, also YSATT which is another yachting agency as well to develop the industry. So this

alone would not do it, but they certainly will be participating in the growth of the industry.

Madam Chairman: So we go on to the Infrastructure Development Fund. this is at page 212. Item 005: Multi-Sectoral and Other Services.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 48 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Madam Chairman: Thanks, Madam Minister—

Hon. Gopee-Scoon: Thank you very much.

Madam Chairman:—PS, and the other technocrats.

Head 23: Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs, \$343,771,000.

Madam Chairman: I will now invite the Minister in the Ministry of the Attorney General to make a brief opening statement not exceeding five minutes.

Hon. Hinds: Thank you very warmly, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, the Office of the Attorney General and Ministry of Legal Affairs is now a combined ministerial entity pursuant to our Government's policy to merge Ministries as a cost-saving measure. The Office of Attorney General and Legal Affairs conducts a range of affairs prescribed under the *Gazette* and also pursuant to our constitutional roles in civil law, in criminal law and in the 15 portfolios that are supervised by our office.

Just a sample of these include: alternative dispute resolution, anti-money laundering, counter financing of terrorism, and proliferation financing, appointment of quasi-judicial bodies, the Children's Authority, constitutional reform, construction of court facilities for the Judiciary, the criminal justice system, intellectual property, legal service complaints, legislative agenda, just to name a few. Some of the statutory boards include: the Central Authority unit, the Council of Legal Education, the Equal Opportunity Tribunal and the Industrial

Court.

Madam Chair, it is important to note that over the past four years we had a number of major projects and initiatives executed, these would include: the installation of security and voice data infrastructure at the tower where we are now resident, construction of a modern vault basement at that tower, the fit out of the public search room on the lower floors for the Registrar General's Department, the fit out of the Chaguanas office of the Legal Aid and Authority, modernization of the Companies Registry, strengthened information management at the Registrar General's Department, and the relocation of the Solicitor General and the Chief State Solicitor to Tower C of the Waterfront Complex which we did in April of this year.

So, Madam Chairman, I think those opening remarks are sufficient, and I am very much available to my colleagues for any questions they may have in respect of the matters in front of us. I thank you.

Question proposed: That Head 23 stand part of the Schedule.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Members, the sum of \$343,771,000 for Head 23, Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs, is comprised of moneys proposed expenditure under the following Sub-Heads and Items to be found in the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure* and the *Draft Estimates of Development Programme*.

We shall now proceed to consider the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure*, we are at page 157. Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure. Item 001: General Administration; Item 002: Law Reform Commission; Item 003: Equal Opportunity Commission; Item 005: Law Revision Commission; Item 007: Intellectual Property Office; Item 009: Criminal Law Department. Member for

Pointe-a-Pierre.

Mr. Lee: Thank you, Madam Chair. To the Minister, line Item 08: Rent/Lease - Office Accommodation and Storage, 2019 the Revised Estimate is 2 million, 2020 it is been revised to 8.6 million an increase of 6.6.

Madam Chairman: Just now. Are you in Sub-Head 01 or are you in Sub-Head 02? We are at page 160.

Mr. Lee: Page 165.

Madam Chairman: No. All right? So, you are just a little ahead of us, we will get there. All right? Item 010: Sentencing Commission. Sub-Head 02: Goods and Services. Item 001: General Administration; Item 002: Law Reform Commission; Item 003: Equal Opportunity Commission; Item 005—

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: Madam—

Madam Chairman: Yes. Member for Oropouche West, where are you?

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: I am sorry, Madam, but I am on page 161 and I had some questions if you would be grateful.

Madam Chairman: Well, you are well behind us.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: Behind.

Madam Chairman: You are well, well behind us, because we have reached Item 005: Law Revision Commission. And I know Members must be a bit tired, I would just ask us to summons whatever little strength we have to follow and keep up. Item 007: Intellectual Property Office, this is where you are with? Item 009: Criminal Law Department, page 165 to 166. Yes.

Mr. Lee: Line Item 08 under the Criminal Law Department, Minister, the Rent/Lease Office Accommodation and Storage an increase of \$6.6 million for 2020. Could you give some clarity why is that?

Hon. Hinds: The Criminal Law Department, as must be well known by my colleagues, is our reflection on the Office of DPP, independent as it is, we are responsible for the management of finances in this way, and that will reflect rental of new accommodation to make them more efficient in the performance of their duties. As you know, we have acquired rental arrangements for them in Tobago, in San Fernando, and spanking new offices in Port of Spain, as well as, of course, outfitting those their use and benefit.

Mr. Lee: The offices in San Fernando, is that in Gulf City Mall?

Hon. Hinds: It is indeed something that you have raised with us before in debates, and yes, the answer is still, yes.

Mr. Lee: And have they taken occupancy in Gulf City Mall as yet?

Hon. Hinds: It is now being outfitted, and they expect to take occupancy rather soon, as you also had raised and you are fully aware.

Mr. Lee: And the one in Tobago, is also in Gulf City Mall?

Hon. Hinds: The one in Tobago in Gulf City Mall?

Mr. Lee: The offices—

Hon. Hinds: Unless if you put it there, but—

Mr. Lee: But the Tobago Gulf City Mall—I am asking.

Hon. Hinds: Gulf City Mall?

Mr. Lee: In Tobago. Okay. Could you tell me where the offices are?

Hon. Hinds: In Lowlands Mall.

Mr. Lee: Lowlands Mall.

Hon. Hinds: Yes. Yes.

Mr. Lee: Which is owned by Gulf City? Okay. Thank you.

Madam Chairman: Okay. Item—Member for Oropouche West, do you have a

question here?

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: The buildings, Madam Chairman, under 08, Rent/Lease - Office Accommodation and Storage, I just need to know if those buildings that you have procured, are those buildings OSH compliant?

Hon. Hinds: As far as we are aware, all buildings that we occupy are to be in keeping with our statutory requirements.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: But that is not the upper question I asked. If asked if they are OSH compliant?

Hon. Hinds: Well, those that the UNC might have rented may not be, but we are aspiring to ensure that they are, and as we go forward we will ensure that they are.

9.00 p.m.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: No. 16, Contract Employment.

Hon. Hinds: Yes.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: Minister, how many vacancies you have with this? Or, how many persons are in contract employment at this point in time?

Hon. Hinds: Seventy-eight persons. Seventy-eight positions are vacant.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: And how many persons are on contract now? You said vacant positions.

Hon. Hinds: Fourteen of those positions are filled.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: And the duration of the contract, is it one year, two-year, three-year?

Hon. Hinds: It would vary, but for the most part it is three years.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: Okay. Can we proceed?

Hon. Hinds: Sure.

Madam Chairman: We are still on—

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: Criminal Law Department.

Madam Chairman: We are still under Criminal Law Department?

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: Yes, 165.

Madam Chairman: Yes.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: So, under 02, Goods and Services, turning the page or no?

Madam Chairman: Yes, you can. Once you are under criminal law.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: Fees, Madam, 166, 23. Line Item 23, and I am seeing that—

Madam Chairman: Just one minute please, you are where? On page 165 or 166?

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: 166.

Madam Chairman: And what line Item number?

Mr. Ramadhar: Madam, page 166 under line Item 23, Fees of—

Madam Chairman: So we are now speaking with the Member for St. Augustine?

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: Yes.

Mr. Ramadhar: Thank you, I am sorry, my apologies.

Madam Chairman: Yes, sure.

Mr. Ramadhar: Could the hon. Minister indicate in what context these fees are payable and to whom?

Hon. Hinds: I missed the question. What is it?

Mr. Ramadhar: Yes, the fees of \$20-odd million in relation to what issues are these fees payable?

Hon. Hinds: Well, traditionally the Office of the Attorney General has often contracted out some of its legal responsibility when there are specific matters in the court, and we consider for any reason because of the complexity or whatever else,

we consider that our internal legal resources could not handle it, traditionally it has been contracted out, and it is in that context.

Mr. Ramadhar: Now, this is specifically under the Item of Criminal Law Department which is the DPP's office from what you have told us. Are these for special prosecutors, the fees?

Hon. Hinds: Not necessarily, some of them are in civil matters, constitutional matters.

Mr. Ramadhar: From the DPP's department?

Hon. Hinds: No, not from the DPP's department—

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: And you have civil?

Hon. Hinds: Financed by the Office of the Attorney General.

Mr. Ramadhar: Yes, no, but let us be clear, please. This is under heading 009, Criminal Law Department, which you have indicated represents the DPP's office.

Madam Chairman: Page 166, 23.

Mr. Ramadhar: Yes, thank you, Milady.

Hon. Hinds: Yes, thank you.

Mr. Ramadhar: The DPP is retaining persons for civil matters?

Hon. Hinds: We have some particular matters that are being handled by the office of the DPP, and those would be fees commensurate with that.

Mr. Ramadhar: I would appreciate you would not have the details so I shall not press you further on that, but thank you very much.

Hon. Hinds: My pleasure.

Madam Chairman: Item 010, Sentencing Commission.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: Yes.

Madam Chairman: Member for Oropouche West.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: Hon. Minister, I would just like to know where is this Sentencing Commission located?

Hon. Hinds: Okay, sure. While they are formally established and operate as far as practicable out of the office that we now have, we are awaiting the PRESID, Property and Real Estate Division of the Ministry of Public Administration to identify a particular location for them, and that is well underway.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: The place has not been identified as yet, is that what you are saying?

Hon. Hinds: No, it has not yet been identified.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: And we have an allocation for half a million dollars for rent?

Hon. Hinds: Well, one expects that it would be rather quickly or sometime during this fiscal year.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: All right. So, how many persons make up this Sentencing Commission?

Hon. Hinds: Right now we just have the commission which is about three persons so far, and of course once we get appropriate accommodation it will be better staffed.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: So it means no contract employment also?

Hon. Hinds: Well, I could not say in advance whether there would be contract employment, though I would expect that.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: Okay.

Mr. Ramadhar: Forgive me, sorry, are you finished?

Madam Chairman: Just one minute. Are you finished, Oropouche West?

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: Thank you.

Madam Chairman: Okay, Member for St. Augustine.

Mr. Ramadhar: Forgive me if I missed it, but could you for the edification of most of us here and for the population generally, what is this Sentencing Commission about?

Hon. Hinds: The Sentencing Commission, as the name implies, is going to be responsible for looking at the sentencing policy and establishing guidelines in that regard, to try to arrange for—

Mr. Ramadhar: Uniformity?

Hon. Hinds: Reform and all the other necessities in relation to sentencing.

Mr. Ramadhar: Thank you very much.

Madam Chairman: Okay, Sub-Head 03: Minor Equipment Purchases. Item 001: General Administration. Just let me make sure, Member for Oropouche West and Member for St. Augustine, I am seeing your lights on?

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: Oh, sorry.

Madam Chairman: Okay, that is fine. I just want to make sure. Item 002: Law Reform Commission; Item 003: Equal Opportunity Commission; Item 005: Law Revision Commission; Item 007: Intellectual Property Office; Item 009: Criminal Law Department; Item 010: Sentencing Commission; Sub-Head 04: Current Transfers and Subsidies; Item 005: Non-profit Institutions; Item 007: Households; Item 00—are we on Households?

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: 170, but 010, Milady.

Madam Chairman: All right, so I am now going to call it. Item 009: Other Transfers. Member for Oropouche West.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: Thank you, line Item 01, the United International Bureau for the Protection of Industrial Property, and 02, I will take it collectively,

hon. Minister. Could you tell us what is the status of those?

Hon. Hinds: I am unable to say at this time, but I could provide that in writing.

Mr. Indarsingh: Thank you, Madam Chair. I had my hand up as it relates to 007. Under this new Sub-Item of Gratuities to Contract Officers, if the Minister could elaborate, and how many persons are to benefit?

Madam Chairman: Okay, so just so that people would not think that I am being inconsistent. I really saw your hand but I felt it was for this new 009, so it is on that basis I will allow us to go back to 007. I really saw your hand.

Mr. Indarsingh: Thank you.

Hon. Hinds: Yes, what is the question, my friend?

Mr. Indarsingh: Just a clarification on the information as it relates to this new Sub-Item, and how many people are due to benefit?

Hon. Hinds: One hundred and sixty-three have so far been prepared and issued.

Mr. Indarsingh: One hundred and sixty-three persons?

Hon. Hinds: Yes, yes.

Mr. Indarsingh: It means their contracts have come to an end?

Hon. Hinds: Well, to be issued. To be issued.

Mr. Indarsingh: Okay.

Hon. Hinds: At the end of the three-year contract. But just for the benefit of my friend for Oropouche West, in relation to the question that she raised regarding 01 and 02, United International Bureau for the Protection of Industrial Property and the International Union for the Protection of new varieties of Plants, actually the allocations are to pay subscriptions for our participation and benefits in respect of those.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: Subscription?

Hon. Hinds: Yes.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: For membership?

Hon. Hinds: Yes, akin to membership fees.

Madam Chairman: Okay. Item 010: Other Transfers Abroad. Hon. Members, we will now move on to the *Draft Estimates of Development Programme*, we are at page 59. Sub-Head 09: Development Programme, Consolidated Fund. Item 004: Social Infrastructure. Member for Oropouche West.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: Hon. Minister, we are looking at the Establishment of a Law Museum? What is the rationale for this law museum, one, and is it, or should it be under Legal Affairs or would it have been better placed under the University of the West Indies or Hugh Wooding Law School or so?

Hon. Hinds: I do not think I should comment on where it should be better put. Let me confine myself to saying where it is.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: And what is your rationale?

Hon. Hinds: It is under our watch, and, yes, there is already a law museum situated next to Cabildo on St. Vincent Street, and of course it is just for the upkeep of that. The allocation is for the upkeep of that.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: So why was it established, a law museum? That is what I was asking.

Hon. Hinds: I am unable to say, but I could see the value of a law museum, which I am sure you as an attorney-at-law could see.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: So, who oversees the procurement then of those items?

Hon. Hinds: Who oversees the procurement?

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: Yes, to have it in the law museum? Yes. What are

you putting in the law museum?

Hon. Hinds: Well, when you take an opportunity to visit with it you might find out, but I am unable to tell you—

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: You could put it in writing then. You want to put everything in writing.

Hon. Hinds: Well, I am unable to tell you what is in there.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: Okay. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Ramadhar: Thank you very much. Madam, under page 59—

Hon. Hinds: But I could provide you with an inventory if you wish?

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: Sure, you can do that.

Hon. Hinds: Okay.

Madam Chairman: So, the Member for St. Augustine now has my ear. Member for St. Augustine.

Mr. Ramadhar: Thank you, Madam Chair. Page 59, under heading 080, Anti-Corruption Investigation Bureau, now—

Hon. Hinds: Where is he?

Madam Chairman: Oh, 078, yes?

Mr. Ramadhar: Oh, I beg your pardon.

Madam Chairman: That is fine.

Hon. Hinds: Where are we, Madam Speaker?

Madam Chairman: We are on page 59, D. Judicial and Legal Services, 078.

Mr. Ramadhar: Thank you much, Preparation of suitable accommodation for the Anti-Corruption Investigation Bureau. Forgive me, but was it not announced that the ACIB was being removed or had been removed from under the remit of the Attorney General's office?

Hon. Hinds: The answer to your question is absolutely yes, and in fact it has been removed. That is the reason why you would see no allocation for it.

Mr. Ramadhar: But there is an estimate for \$300,000.

Madam Chairman: That was in 2019.

Mr. Ramadhar: Yes, when was it removed?

Hon. Hinds: There is no allocation for this fiscal year.

Mr. Ramadhar: Thank you very much.

Hon. Hinds: My pleasure.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Members, Item 005 spans two pages, therefore I would announce the projects in groups. So this is Item 005: Multi-Sectoral and Other Services, A. Administrative Services. Member for Oropouche West.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: Hon. Minister, line Item 018, to strengthen the information management at the Register General's Department, what does this involve that requires this large loan of 30 million?

Hon. Hinds: Well, the Register General's Department is central to a lot of what has happened and is happening, and is likely to happen in the development of this country. Of course, it is the repository of critical information, it produces critical information documents, birth certificates, marriage certificates, and that sort of thing, and many—deeds and what have you, and therefore its strengthening, and the strengthening of the information management capacity is very, very critical. We have found over the years that it has been breached because of weaknesses in those systems, and action has been and is being taken, supported by the IDB in order to do that. And the project in particular is aimed at streamlining the property registration process, which includes automating the Land Registry, and creating an electronic register of land conveyance documents. This project, as I indicated, is

funded by the IDB and the allocation is accordingly set aside for it.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: Hon. Minister, is there a separate allocation for the RPO section and property ordinance where you have many issues with lost certificates of title and persons taking five and six years?

Hon. Hinds: That is a subset of what I have just told you, and we are trying to improve all of that.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: Is it that now you are scanning CTs, or is it still common law deeds are being scanned at this point in time?

Hon. Hinds: Well, we are creating an electronic database altogether. The work is ongoing, I cannot tell you particularly where they are at, but I know it is an ongoing work, and the system has been improving as a consequence. And the answer I have just found out from—I am advised that the answer to your question is actually, yes.

9.15 p.m.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: Yes, to which one, the CTs, Certificate of Titles? Which one?

Hon. Hinds: Yes. Yes. And the money is precisely for that, among other things.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: And is it also then being like resourced with personnel because that department is—a want for a better word—very handicapped, because you cannot get things done at the RPO department.

Hon. Hinds: Well that is not correct. That is a very awkward overstatement of the situation. The work is happening now, lawyers are reporting to me personally, those who utilize those facilities very regularly, that the system has improved substantially and the work is continuing.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: Hon. Minister, for clarification, if you make an

application for a lost Certificate of Title, it takes at least three to four years now. I am telling you, now. That is from my personal experience. So it is something else happening.

Madam Chairman: All right, so, is this under 018? [*Crosstalk*] So can we go on to F. Public Buildings. Member for Oropouche West. [*Crosstalk*]

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: Page 61, Madam Chair.

Madam Chairman: Yes.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: Provision of Accommodation for the Legal Aid and Advisory Authority, \$6 million.

Madam Chairman: 028.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: The rationale for this, Minister.

Hon. Hinds: Say again.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: The line Item 028. What is the rationale for this increase?

Hon. Hinds: We have as has been announced on diverse occasions from this forum, we have introduced or we are about to introduce a public defenders system which would allow persons to be assured of counsel when they are faced with criminal charges as exists in other parts of the world. The original legal aid system operated such that very often the legal aid lawyer was not always available, he had other matters and persons charged with offences will report to the courts that they were before that they had to wait on their particular attorney to treat with the matter. This new system will obviate that and they would have qualified and suitable counsel on every occasion in order to proceed through the criminal courts as we seek to quicken that.

And in keeping with an attempt to quicken that, we have, as you know,

established criminal rules, a Criminal Division of the High Court and we will be establishing and we have passed the legislation for it already, district criminal and traffic courts. So this is part of the process as we modernize and make things easier and better for the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: Is it also too, Minister, that attorneys will be given their fees with some sort of alacrity. Because if I can just expound on it, is that when I came out in 2000 and—

Hon. Hinds: Which line Item is this?

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: I am telling you this with legal aid.

Hon. Hinds: Your name appears next to it?

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: Legal Aid advisory. I am talking about whether the—I am speaking of whether the attorneys will also be given their fees when they have completed matters with speed and alacrity because—

Hon. Hinds: I would expect so. I will go further to say, I hope so.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: Because I am still waiting since 2005 to get fees.

Hon. Hinds: You must declare your conflict before you continue making your submission.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: Since 2005.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 23 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Madam Chairman: Thank you Ministries, thank you PS, thank you Madam Technical Officer.

Head 03: Judiciary, \$410,723,700.

Madam Chairman: Head 03: Judiciary, \$410,723,700. I will now invite the Minister in the Office of the Attorney General and Ministry of Legal Affairs—

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: Madam Chairman, the Minister is the Acting Attorney General.

Madam Chairman: Oh, is the acting. Thank you very much. I will now invite the Acting Attorney General to make a brief opening statement not exceeding five minutes.

Hon. Hinds: Thank you very much, Madam Chair, again. Just over 20 years ago the Judiciary of Trinidad and Tobago embarked upon an ambitious journey of transformation aimed at improving service delivery and modernizing the judicial system. The Judiciary recognized that to have courts working more efficiently and effectively with a focus on service delivery among the areas needing attention were tools used across the organization to administer justice. In that time the organization embarked upon Judicial Sector Reform, a key element of which was case flow management. Case flow management was introduced in the Civil High Courts between 1998 and 2007 and the Family Courts in 2005.

It is now being introduced as well, Madam Chair, in the Criminal Courts enabled by new Criminal Procedure Rules and legislative reform aplenty across the criminal sphere. Critical to effective case flow management has been the implementation of proper information systems and the introduction of new technologies. Information technology, Madam Chair, is an essential and critical tool in modernizing the judicial system.

In furtherance of these initiatives undertaken in 2018 to 2019 and being further developed in this fiscal year '19 to '20 are enhanced information technology development geared towards improved service delivery, efficiency and accountability, improved management systems and structures and court facilities development, court buildings to address long worn and decayed court housing

stock. That should suffice for the time being, Madam Chair, and I am in your hands.

Question proposed: That Head 03 stand part of the Schedule.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, the sum of \$410,723,700 for Head 03: Judiciary is comprised of moneys proposed for expenditure under the following Sub-Heads and Items to be found in the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure* and the *Draft Estimates of Development Programme*. We shall now proceed to consider the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure*. We are at page 12.

Sub-Head 01: Personnel Expenditure. Item 001: Judiciary Trinidad.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Hon. Minister Hinds, does this expense here of 70, the Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance, does that include the judges' salaries? And there is another line Item, Salaries, under 41 or 46 million.

Madam Chairman: So in terms of 01—

Hon. Hinds: It does not. Judges' salaries are a direct charge on the Consolidated Fund, which you ought to know.

Dr. Gopeesingh: I “cyah” remember that. I did not remember.

Hon. Hinds: Okay, thank you.

Madam Chairman: Item 002: Judiciary Tobago. Sub-Head 01: Goods and Services. Item 001: Judiciary Trinidad; Item 002: Judiciary Tobago.

Dr. Gopeesingh: I crave your indulgence just to ask a question on Judiciary Trinidad, just a short one. Minister, could you tell the difference between the Item 01, which is Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance, and Item 23, which is Direct Charges. Could you explain the difference there?

Madam Chairman: Where are you? Where are you please?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Trinidad, Judiciary Trinidad under 01. I know you went past it

to Tobago.

Madam Chairman: Wait, wait, wait. Are you under Sub-Head 02?

Dr. Gopeesingh: No.

Madam Chairman: I am so sorry, I was going to allow you Trinidad, Sub-Head 02: Goods and Services; Item 001. Is that where you are?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Yeah. 001, I just wanted to—

Madam Chairman: The page. If you help me with the page maybe I can help the Minister find it. You are on page what?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Page 12.

Madam Chairman: You are on page 12. So you have gone to Personnel Expenditure and unfortunately I cannot go back that far. Okay?

Dr. Gopeesingh: All right. But I could probably—

Madam Chairman: So Sub-Head—unless you want to, I will entertain you if you are at Sub-Head 02: Goods and Services; Item 001. I have gone back just to entertain you. This will be at pages 15 to 16.

Dr. Gopeesingh: No, it is not Goods and Services, at Salaries.

Madam Chairman: Okay, good. So we are now at Sub-Head 03: Minor Equipment Purchases, page 19. Item 001: Judiciary Trinidad.

Sub-Head—yes, Member for St. Augustine.

Mr. Ramadhar: Forgive me Milady. I truly am too slow for you. But we had a major question and I seek your indulgence then to look back at page 14 under the heading Judiciary Family Court, 003.

Madam Chairman: You see, as I said, I understand that we all must be getting a little tired and while I will, you know, indulge people by going back a bit, I really cannot go too far back. So even though I am on page 19, I am prepared to

entertain people, pages 15, 16, 17. Okay?

Mr. Ramadhar: Okay. I am grateful. Thank you much.

Madam Chairman: So sorry. Sub-Head 03: Minor Equipment Purchases, page 19. Item 001: Judiciary Trinidad. Are we all there?

Sub-Head 04: Current Transfers and Subsidies, page 20. Item 002: Commonwealth Bodies; Item 007: Households; Item 009: Other Transfers.

Hon. Members, we shall now move on to the *Draft Estimates of Development Programme*. New book.

Sub-Head 09: Development Programme. We are on page 2, Consolidated Fund. Item 005: Multi-Sectorial and Other Services which span pages 2 and 3. I will therefore announce the project groups. A. Administrative Services which is at page 2. Member for Oropouche West, did I see your hand?

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: Thank you. I am looking at line Item: 006, Restoration of the San Fernando Supreme Court Building. What is the status of this restoration?

Madam Chairman: Oh, you are at F.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: Yes, please.

Madam Chairman: Anybody at A? Okay. So F, public buildings, Member for Oropouche West. Item 006.

Hon. Hinds: Member for Oropouche West, last year we attended to the air-condition system, the flooring and the housing of the Magistracy temporarily in that location. This year we intend to address the roof, the windows, the basement and we are having some problems with water infiltration and completion of the work on the air-condition. That gives you an exact insight into the status of things.

9.30 p.m.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: And 009, provision of accommodation for the San Fernando Magistrates' Court.

Hon. Hinds: Well, we have identified a building at Irwin Street—a space at Irwin Street—and we are in the process of designs and getting ready for construction of that.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: Hon. Minister, it is the last four years we are hearing this same thing and the attorneys have to be doing, what you call, a shift system, moving from the High Court to the Magistrates' Court.

Hon. Hinds: That is not correct. We would not have been dealing with this for the last four years, but we are dealing with it now and aiming to get on with it promptly.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: So how are we dealing with the shift system from San Fernando Court to the magistrate, to the High Court?

Hon. Hinds: You know, it could not be for the last four years because the real problem was created when we had the earthquake in 2018, I think it was, which affected, very badly, the then existing Magistrates' Court. And it is as a result of that, that we had to hasten to find another site with a view of putting another building there to house the Magistrates' Court, which, as you know, is now sharing space with the Supreme Court.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: So when is the projected date of commencement for this new Magistrates' Court, then?

Hon. Hinds: Well, as I indicated, I could not truthfully tell you the exact date of commencement as we speak, but I can assure you that we expect that it will take 18 months for construction. But we are now settling designs and getting ready for that construction phase.

Madam Chair: Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: I just had a small question for you, Minister, under 003 and 006: Refurbishment of the Magistrates' Courts and Restoration of the San Fernando Supreme Court Building. There was an allocation in 2019 of—no, well that is the estimate. That is what was spent then. So I take back the question.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 03 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Madam Chair: Thank you, Acting Attorney General.

Hon. Hinds: Thank you very warmly.

Madam Chairman: Thank you to the Court Administrator, thank you everyone. Reach home safely. Attorney General, today is your day.

Head 04: Industrial Court, \$24,231,280.

Madam Chairman: Head 04: Industrial Court, \$24,231,280. I will now invite the Acting Attorney General to make a brief opening statement not exceeding five minutes.

Hon. Hinds: Thank you very much yet again, Madam Chair. The Industrial Court was established on March the 20th, 1965, by section 5(1) of the Industrial Stabilisation Act. This Act, as it then was, was repealed and replaced by the Industrial Relations Act, Chap. 88:01 on the 31st of July, 1972. The Industrial Court is a superior court of record, and thus it has the status and it is equivalent to that of the High Court of Justice. Additionally, it is a specialized court with its own peculiar jurisdiction and it is responsible for dispensing social justice.

In addition to its inherent powers as a superior court of record, the court has jurisdiction to hear and determine trade disputes; to register collective agreements and to hear and determine matters relating to the registration of such agreements;

to enjoin a trade union or other organization or workers, or other persons, or employer, from taking or continuing industrial action; to hear and determine proceedings for industrial relations offences under the Industrial Relations Act and, of course, to hear and determine any other matter brought before it pursuant to the provisions of that Act.

The role and function of the Court, the principal role, is to settle unresolved disputes and other matters which arise between employers and trade unions representing workers employed by the employers. And it is all resolved under the Industrial Relations Act, the Retrenchment and Severance Benefits Act, the Maternity Protection Act, the Minimum Wages (Amdt.) Act and the Occupational Safety and Health (Amdt.) Act.

This Industrial Court sits in two divisions: the General Services Division which exercises jurisdiction of the Court as set out in section 7 and, of course, the Essential Services Division which exercises jurisdiction as set out in the said section 7. Thank you very much, Madam Chair. That should suffice.

Question proposed: That Head 04 stand part of the Schedule.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Members, the sum of \$24,231,280 for Head 04, Industrial Court, is comprised of moneys proposed for expenditure under the following Sub-Heads and Items to be found in the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure* and the *Draft Estimates of Development Programme*. We shall now proceed to consider the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure*. We are at page 22. Sub-Head 01: Personnel Expenditure. Item 001, General Administration

Mr. Indarsingh: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Hon. Acting Attorney General, the sum of \$8,400,000 under Salaries and cost of living, recently at the opening of the Industrial Court's term for 2020, the President of the Court

indicated that there were a number of vacant positions as it relates to Verbatim Reporters. Does that allocation take care of hiring of those vacant positions?

Hon. Hinds: Yes, it does.

Mr. Indarsingh: So how many of the vacant positions will be filled?

Hon. Hinds: For the moment I am advised the Court is focusing on improving its technology and the people who operate those technologies, CAT Reporters, and so on. So this allocation would be to treat with those in the immediate short-term.

Mr. Indarsingh: Are you aware, Acting Attorney General, that it was in the public domain as a result of the President's address, that there were 20 vacancies existing? And I am simply asking, out of the 20, how many will be filled?

Hon. Hinds: I am told—I am advised—that it is difficult to recruit persons because it is equally difficult, or difficult to find people with the requisite skills. You will notice in the Judiciary, if I may just hark back, they are engaged in a process of training people. It seems that that might be necessary here for their purposes because they are finding difficulty finding people with the requisite skills.

Mr. Indarsingh: So, based on what you have said, that leads me to the issue of: is there an existing backlog of judgments at the court, in terms of the delivery of judgments?

Hon. Hinds: I gather from the information available to me that there is no crisis. There is no major issue, and that they are managing. But, obviously, more staff will lead to greater efficiency.

Mr. Indarsingh: I hear you and I like your language—the use of the language. I am asking you, based on what has been stated, is there a backlog of judgments to be delivered at the Industrial Court?

Hon. Hinds: No more than normal. My information is that whatever backlog they

may have is no more than is normal and usual in the business of the courts. No crisis, in other words.

Mr. Indarsingh: Whilst I like the use of your language, the President of the Industrial Court—[*Crosstalk*]

Hon. Hinds: Madam Chair, this seems to be bordering on dealing with operational issues.

Mr. Indarsingh: I am asking, is there a backlog on how many judgments are to be delivered?

Hon. Hinds: I am unable to tell you how many. I answered your question.

Mr. Indarsingh: Could you avail yourself to do the appropriate research?

Hon. Hinds: No. It is not a matter on finance. It is not a matter on the budget. Those are operational issues.

Mr. Indarsingh: I am linking it, Madam Chair, to the staffing issues at the court and I am simply asking if the Acting Attorney General would be so kind as to do the appropriate research and furnish me with the appropriate answer.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: Madam Chairman, may I enter?

Madam Chairman: Minister of Planning and Development.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: Thank you very kindly, just to say, Madam Chairman, the Industrial Court lays an annual report in the Parliament. So that information, if there is any information in relation to that, is in the Parliament. It is within the public domain and as a consequence of that, given that this information is not part of what we are here to discuss, part of the Standing Finance Committee information, we would like to suggest that the annual report, which has been laid, the Member for Couva South can avail himself of the information therein.

Hon. Hinds: Thank you very much, my colleague.

Mr. Indarsingh: I would have thought, Madam Chair, that the Acting Attorney General would have come fully furnished to guide this debate.

Hon. Hinds: To deal with matters of the budget.

Madam Chairman: Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: No.

Madam Chairman: All right. So we go on to Item 002, South Office.

Sub-Head 02: Goods and Services. Item 001, General Administration; Item 002, South Office; Item 003, Tobago; Sub-Head 03: Minor Equipment, Purchases. We are at page 25. Item 001, General Administration. Sub-Head 04: Current Transfers and Subsidies. Item 007, Households.

Hon. Members, we shall now move on to the *Draft Estimates of Development Programme*—new book.

Sub-Head 09: Consolidated Fund. We are at page 5. Item 005, Multi-sectorial and Other Services.

Mr. Indarsingh: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Could I go to buildings, and so on?

Madam Chairman: Yes.

Mr. Indarsingh: Okay. Could I find out as it relates to what has happened to the accommodation for the Tobago office of the Industrial Court?

Madam Chairman: So that is F. Buildings—Public Buildings, 004.

Hon. Hinds: As my friend would notice, there is no immediate allocation for this, but we are assured it will be addressed in the midterm review.

Mr. Indarsingh: So the commitment to establish an office of the Industrial Court in Tobago has collapsed?

Hon. Hinds: Far from it. It is as firm as you can have it, and an allocation will be

made subsequently for that.

Mr. Indarsingh: It seems to not be in the pipeline for 2020 while you found \$20 million for a house in Tobago.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 04 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Madam Chairman: Thank you, Minister. Thank you, Registrar. Thank you.

Head 05: Parliament, \$149, 979,560.

Madam Chairman: Head 05: Parliament, \$149,979,560. I will now invite the Minister of Finance to make a brief opening statement not exceeding five minutes.
Minister.

Hon. Imbert: Thank you, Madam Chairman. The Office of the Parliament provides administrative and apolitical support to the Parliament of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. It is part of the three branches of the country, being the Executive, the Judiciary and the Parliament.

Mr. Young: The legislative arm.

Hon. Imbert: The legislative arm, yes. This is true.

9.45 p.m.

I am advised it has its origins in the department of the Colonial Secretary's Office, which was in existence up to Independence in 1962. The duties involve the provision of timely specialist advice and procedure on parliamentary law, and the Secretariat services to the House of Representatives and the Senate. It is also responsible for the management of administrative functions essential to parliamentary operations. Within the Office of the Parliament, institutions such as the Office of the Leader of the Opposition and the Ombudsman.

Question proposed: That Head 05 stand part of the Schedule.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Members, the sum of \$149,979,560 for Head 05: Parliament is comprised of moneys proposed for expenditure under the following Sub-Heads and Items to be found in the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure* and the *Draft Estimates of Development Programme*. We are at page 27. Sub-Head 01: Personnel Expenditure, page 27. Item 001, General Administration. Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: I notice that the salaries have been reduced, not by very much, but there is a reduction in the Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance for the Parliament and I am just wondering—

Madam Chairman: You are at 01?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Yeah.

Madam Chairman: Yes.

Dr. Gopeesingh:—with the amount of work they have here in Parliament, why are we are seeing a reduction in Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance? There should be an increase to give some more help.

Madam Chairman: Minister of Finance.

Hon. Imbert: Provision is adequate.

Dr. Gopeesingh: We need to give Jacqui some more help.

Madam Chairman: Excuse me?

Hon. Imbert: The provision is adequate.

Madam Chairman: Item 002: Office of the Ombudsman. Sub-Head 02: Goods and Services. Item 001: General Administration, page 28 to 29. Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.

Mr. Lee: Thank you, Chair. I just want to deal with line Items 16 and 64. I am just seeking clarification. 16: Contract Employment, 2020 budget Estimate is

\$37.9 million, an increase of 4.6. That Contract Employment takes care of the different MPs offices' staff?

Hon. Imbert: No.

Mr. Lee: No. What line Item would that be, 64?

Hon. Imbert: Constituency offices. It should be obvious.

Mr. Lee: Oh, so it includes the rental of the MPs—

Hon. Imbert: That should be obvious from the word “operation” of constituency offices.

Mr. Lee: Madam Chair, line Item 64 then.

Madam Chairman: One minute please. I can only hear one person at a time. Yes, Pointe-a-Pierre.

Mr. Lee: Line Item 64, 35 million estimated in 2020, an increase of 4.9. The increase of 4.9, is it to take care of arrears or deficits of non-payment of rental of MPs offices? Also, we have been getting the MPs stipend to run the office late between June, July and August; also the staff have been getting their salaries late, so I was just wondering from the Minister of Finance what would have caused that issue?

Hon. Imbert: The allocation for 2020 is adequate.

Mr. Lee: So could I seek clarification why the allocation or the releases for the June, July and August have been late for those three months as far as payment of staff and also for the MPs offices' expenses?

Hon. Imbert: But there was an appropriate disbursement in fiscal 2019. Not so?

Hon. Member: You did not get your money?

Hon. Imbert: You did not get your money?

Mr. Lee: Very late.

Hon. Imbert: You got it though?

Mr. Lee: At one point. Okay.

Hon. Imbert: So what you complaining about? You got it.

Mr. Lee: I am seeking clarification for the staff of MPs offices that they have been getting their salaries late, and I have been wondering—

Hon. Imbert: The provision for 2020 is adequate.

Mr. Lee: Okay.

Madam Chairman: Member for Caroni East, do you have a question?

Dr. Gopeesingh: The same question. The same—

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: The same question. You cannot ask the same question. It was answered.

Madam Chairman: Just one moment please.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Why are the staff of the MPs offices getting their salaries late? Minister, you must try to give some explanations for that.

Hon. Imbert: For 2020?

Dr. Gopeesingh: For 2019 they got it late.

Hon. Imbert: I am dealing with the 2020 Estimates.

Dr. Gopeesingh: There is a line Item 2019 Revised Estimates, you know.

Hon. Imbert: It was adequate.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Ah?

Hon. Imbert: It was adequate.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Right, adequate, but if it is adequate why are they getting paid late?

Hon. Imbert: 2020 is also adequate.

Dr. Gopeesingh: That is not the question. We are not asking—

Hon. Imbert: That is the answer.

Madam Chairman: All right.

Dr. Gopeesingh: We are asking you about the timeliness—

Hon. Imbert: I am telling you this allocation is adequate. It is adequate.

Madam Chairman: Minister of Finance and the Member for Caroni East—

Dr. Gopeesingh: No, he is evading the question, Ma'am.

Madam Chairman: No, no. Just one minute. I think the question was asked—

Dr. Gopeesingh: A few years I will be shouting at him, but it is a good thing—

Madam Chairman: What I would say Member for Caroni East—Member for Caroni East, I would say thank God we have all matured. Okay? So if we could go on please. Sub-Head 03: Minor Equipment Purchases. Item 001, General Administration; Item 002, Office of the Ombudsman. Sub-Head 04: Current Transfers and Subsidies. Item 002: Commonwealth Bodies; Item 004, International Bodies; Item 007: Households. Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.

Mr. Lee: Minister of Finance, line Item 40; Gratuities to Contract Officers. It is a new Sub-Item 40 and it is throughout most of the different Heads and I had asked for it earlier and you said it used to be paid by Treasury. Is it now that each Ministry will be responsible for paying the gratuities of their contract workers?

Hon. Imbert: I think I have said that seven times for the day. Would you like me to say it again for an eighth time?

Mr. Lee: Yes, it applies to Parliament.

Hon. Imbert: Well, I do not intend to. I have said it seven times for the day.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Members, we will now move on to the *Draft Estimates of Development Programme*. Sub-Head 09: Development Programme—new book—Consolidated Fund, page 7. Item 005: Multi-Sectoral and Other Services,

page 7.

Question put and the agreed to.

Head 05 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Madam Chairman: Thank you Clerk, thank you all members.

Members, I wish to commend you all for the overall display of discipline, tolerance and production which has facilitated us in completing the nine Heads under seven hours. [*Desk thumping*] This Standing Finance Committee is suspended to Thursday, October 17th at 10.00 a.m. Safe journey home everybody.

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