

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, October 22, 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]

10.00 a.m.

Madam Chairman: The meeting of the Standing Finance Committee will resume. We are at Head 15: Tobago House of Assembly.

Hon. Young: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Good morning everyone and Good morning to our colleagues from Tobago.

Madam Chairman: Just one minute, Minister, just one minute please, thank you.

Hon. Young: Sorry.

Head 15: Tobago House of Assembly, \$2,264,630,000.

Madam Chairman: It just shows that we are very eager to start. I will now invite the Minister of National Security to make a brief opening statement not exceeding five minutes.

Hon. Young: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, the Tobago House of Assembly is statutorily responsible for the delivery of public goods and services in Tobago as set out in its Fifth Schedule of the THA Act 40 of 1996. To effect this, the Assembly is comprised of 11 Divisions each headed by an administrator as an accounting officer to provide oversight, policy alignment, and the adherence to the principles of transparency and accountability and the delivery to the widest cadre of residents in keeping with both national goals and the policies derived by the Assembly.

UNREVISED

Positive trends of 2.2 per cent labour force growth rate between 2018 and 2019 and the general upward population growth rate of 1.5 per cent over the past 20 years suggest that Tobago is a demographic growth pole and as such the demand for public goods and services is increasing. Against this backdrop, the Tobago House of Assembly will endeavour to discharge its responsibility in the best way possible.

In fiscal 2019, a total parliamentary allocation of just over \$2.2 billion was received, of which 2.033 billion was for Recurrent Expenditure and \$230 million for the Development Programme. Major accomplishments include: the completion of the Orange Hill to Rockley Vale section at the Claude Noel Highway, at a cost of \$38 million; the initiation of construction of the Moriah Health Centre; the completion of the Roxborough Administrative Complex; the completion of 23 agricultural access roads across Tobago at a cost of 37.9 million.

The Assembly stands ready to mobilize these resources to the much needed benefit of the people of Tobago and to deliver these services in keeping with the standards set by various national policy goals like the Millennium Development Goals. For the upcoming fiscal year 2020, the Assembly is listing a few key projects for completion. These include: the coastal protection works at Roxborough; Studley Park; Milford Road; Pigeon Point. Construction of five early childhood centres with the annual school repair programme are our priorities as well as advanced preparations for the relocation of the Scarborough Secondary School and a number of other projects that are expected to improve and better the lives of our brothers and sisters in Tobago. And I am happy to say that the Tobago House of Assembly works extremely well along with Central Government. Thank you.

Question proposed: That Head 15 stand part of the Schedule.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Members, the sum of \$2,264,630,000 for Head 15, Tobago House of Assembly, is comprised of moneys proposed for expenditure under the following Sub-Heads and Items to be found in the *Draft Estimates of 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 the Revenue and Expenditure of the Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies and the Tobago House of Assembly*. Members we are at page 11.

Sub-Head 06: Current Transfers to Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies.
Division 01: Assembly Legislature. Sub-Head 01: Personal Expenditure; Item 001. Member for Couva North.

Ms. Ramdial: Ma'am, 02.

Madam Chairman: So there is nothing under 01?

Ms. Ramdial: No, no.

Madam Chairman: Okay. So then I will call Sub-Head 02: Goods and Services. Item 001: General Administration. Member for Couva North.

Ms. Ramdial: Thank you, Ma'am. Line Item 08: Rent/Lease-Office Accommodation and Storage. I am seeing no allocations for 2018 and 2019, but for 2020 we have 405,000 and it is listed as a new Sub-Item. Can you clarify?

Hon. Imbert: Yes. That is for the Office of the Minority Leader. Would you believe? Rental of \$30,500 per month for Mr. Duke. [*Crosstalk*]

Ms. Ramdial: I am glad he is being afforded that respect. I am very glad.

Madam Chairman: Anything else under 02: Goods and Services? Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Ms. Ramdial: Yes, Ma'am 02, yes.

Madam Chairman: Yes, Member for Couva North.

Ms. Ramdial: Line Item 64, page 12, Operation of Constituency Offices. I am seeing a Revised Estimate for 2019 at 5.1 million and then a reduced Estimate for 2020 at 4.8 with a reduction of 373,000. Why is that?

Hon. Imbert: Yeah, well if you look at the original 2019 it was 4 million and now this is 4.8. So it is actually an 800,000 increase over the original 2019.

Ms. Ramdial: So what is the extra for 2019 Revised Estimate that amounted to 5.1? What would that—

Hon. Imbert: The original 4 million would have been an estimate and the actual load would have been 5.1, and now the 2020 Estimates is 4.8.

Ms. Ramdial: So it is reduced.

Hon. Imbert: It would vary. Things like repairs and so on, would vary, okay.

Madam Chairman: So Sub-Head 03: Minor Equipment Purchases. Item 001: General Administration. Sub-Head 04: Current Transfers and Subsidies; Item 007: Households. Member for Couva North.

Ms. Ramdial: Thank you, Madam Chair, line Item 40: Gratuities to Contract Officers. It is listed as a new Sub-Item. How many contract officers for 1.5 million which is the 2020 Estimates?

Hon. Imbert: At this time the—on record, six persons are due gratuity. So this may actually be an over provision.

Ms. Ramdial: Thank you.

Madam Chairman: Division 02: Office of the Chief Secretary. Sub-Head 01: Personnel Expenditure. Item 001: General Administration; Item 007: Public Administration; Item 011: Planning. Sub-Head 02: Goods and Services. Item 001: General Administration. Yes Member for Couva North.

Ms. Ramdial: Thank you, Madam Chair. Line Item 16: Contract Employment. In the 2019 Revised Estimates it was 14million and it remains the same in 2020. But can you give me how many contract officers?

Hon. Imbert: 224.

Ms. Ramdial: Sorry.

Hon. Imbert: 2-2-4.

Ms. Ramdial: Thank you, Minister. Ma'am, can I continue?

Madam Chairman: Yeah, sure.

Ms. Ramdial: Line Item 34: University Graduate Recruitment Programme. I am seeing no Estimates for 2018/2019 and it is introduced as a new Sub-Item for 800,000. Can you tell me how many of these university graduates you intend to employ?

Hon. Imbert: Apparently this was done before. It is a resumption and they are catering for, between 160 to 200 students at tertiary level and 25 A level students.

Ms. Ramdial: Okay, line Item 37: Janitorial Services and line Item 43: Security Services. Could you care to explain those figures please? Janitorial Services at 1 million and Security Services at 2.5 million. And this is under the Office of the Chief Secretary. So is this just for his office?

Hon. Imbert: All offices.

Ms. Ramdial: All administrative offices.

Hon. Imbert: Yeah.

Ms. Ramdial: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Madam Chairman: Okay. So we go on. Item 002: Information. Member for Couva North.

Ms. Ramdial: Thank you, Madam Chair. Again, line Item 16: Contract

Employment at 3.5 million for 2020. How many contract officers you intend to employ?

Hon. Imbert: We will get back to you on that.

Ms. Ramdial: You are welcome.

Hon. Imbert: But as you can see it has not changed.

Ms. Ramdial: Yes, but knowing the amount—

Hon. Imbert: We will get back to you on that.

Ms. Ramdial: Yes. Thank you, Minister. Line Item 62, Madam Chair, 2.5million, 2020 Estimates, an increase by 500,000 for Promotions, Publicity and Printing. Can you clarify a bit?

Hon. Imbert: The THA is quite proactive in its information dissemination. It has programmes such as “Let’s Talk Tobago”, “EYE on Tobago” and then various media briefings, calendars, brochures, et cetera. That is what that is for.

Ms. Ramdial: And the increase by 500,000 would be the ramping up of such Promotions, Publicity and Printing.

Hon. Imbert: I would think so.

Ms. Ramdial: Election year.

Hon. Imbert: No. Just good communication with the public.

Mr. Indarsingh: Thank you, Madam Chair. Are you on 007?

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

Mr. Indarsingh: Okay. When you reach there.

Madam Chairman: I can now call that. Item 007: Public Administration. Member for Couva South.

Mr. Indarsingh: Thank you, Madam Chair. Minister, under Contract Employment, I see a consistency of \$4 million. What is the duration of the

contracts for the contract officers?

Hon. Imbert: Between two and three years.

Mr. Indarsingh: Between two and three years. So that means—how much contracts would expire in 2020 that would necessitate a \$4 million allocation?

Hon. Imbert: What line Item are you on?

Mr. Indarsingh: 16, Mr. Minister.

Hon. Imbert: So why you asking me about contracts that would expire?

Mr. Indarsingh: No, I want to know—well if the contract, if for example if a contract was issued in 2019 and if the duration of the contracts are for three years, certainly the contracts would expire in 2021.

Hon. Imbert: I understand that, but what is the relevance of that to the allocation of 4 million?

Mr. Indarsingh: No, I want to know how many contract officers are existing at the moment, when their contracts are due to expire and how many will be hired with this \$4 million allocation?

Hon. Imbert: Now you asking the question you wanted to ask. We will get that information for you.

Mr. Indarsingh: All right. Well, I see that you have not lost your trend of thought from yesterday evening.

Hon. Imbert: I have no idea what you are talking about.

Mr. Indarsingh: Well, I have an idea what I am talking about.

Hon. Imbert: I noticed that you have continued to ask irrelevant questions.

Madam Chairman: All right, Member for Couva North, do you have another question?

Mr. Indarsingh: And I will continue to be consistent in my approach.

Madam Chairman: Member for Couva North.

Hon. Imbert: Consistently irrelevant.

Mr. Indarsingh: You will not derail me.

Madam Chairman: Gentlemen, could we now—

Hon. Imbert: I cannot stop you being irrelevant.

Madam Chairman: Gentlemen, I am now recognizing the Member for Couva North.

Ms. Ramdial: Thank you, Madam Chair. Line Item 43: Security Services, an allocation of two million for 2020. Can you clarify exactly where these Security Services would be provided? Because we are still under the Office of the Chief Secretary under Public Admin.

Hon. Imbert: Everywhere.

Ms. Ramdial: But you said that before under another Heading.

Hon. Imbert: Not for Security.

Ms. Ramdial: Yes, you did on the page before.

Hon. Imbert: No I did not. This is Public Administration.

Ms. Ramdial: How many offices exist under Public Administration?

Hon. Imbert: Three.

Ms. Ramdial: Thank you. That is the answer I am looking for.

Hon. Imbert: Really! Well ask the question properly then.

Madam Chairman: Minister of Finance, I think it is very early in the morning.

Ms. Ramdial: Yeah, correct.

Madam Chairman: And I know it is our last day—

Hon. Imbert: And I think it is very early for her to be saying that she asked that—

Madam Chairman: Not “her”, the Member.

Hon. Imbert:—question before—for the Member to be saying she asked that question before.

Madam Chairman: And Minister, I think in terms of—

Hon. Imbert: I think it work both ways.

Madam Chairman: Yes. And all I am saying is, it does not mean an eye for an eye is the right way. Okay. So let us proceed.

Hon. Imbert: It is not an eye for an eye.

Madam Chairman: Are you finished with—

Ms. Ramdial: No. Line Item 50: Housing Accommodation, 2020 Estimates at one million. How many persons benefit from this Housing Accommodation at one million?

10.15 a.m.

Hon. Imbert: I cannot give you the exact number, but this is for Immigration, Customs, Judiciary, Trinidad and Tobago Police, in the areas such as Montgomery, Bloody Bay, Charlotteville, Tobago Plantations, Carnbee, Buccoo, Signal Hill, Lambeau and Plymouth.

Ms. Ramdial: Thank you, Minister. Now we are getting somewhere.

Hon. Imbert: There is no need for that.

Ms. Ramdial: I am thanking you for explaining.

Mr. Lee: Thank you, Madam Chair. Minister, could you clarify for me how the Revised Estimates under Public Administration, or before, are identical to the 2019 Estimates please?

Hon. Imbert: Pardon?

Mr. Lee: Could you clarify for me the 2019 Estimates, for example, under Public Administration that we are dealing with, are identical to the 2019 estimates?

Hon. Imbert: What is wrong with that?

Mr. Lee: Well—

Hon. Imbert: So when it goes up you vex, when it goes down you vex, when it is the same you vex.

Mr. Lee: Now, we have noticed in other books that the Revised Estimates do not coincide with the 2019 Estimates. So I was just wondering how they have the same numbers, because a revised estimate means that what was spent at a point in time.

Hon. Imbert: It means it is an estimate. The actual numbers would be in next year's books, and on the closing of the accounts in December as you know.

Mr. Lee: Okay.

Hon. Imbert: I am shocked that if something remains the same it is a problem.

Madam Chairman: Item 008: Tobago Emergency Management Agency.

Ms. Ramdial: Thank you, Ma'am. Line Item 16: Contract Employment, I am seeing 5.5 million for the 2020 Estimate. Exactly, how many persons you intend to hire?

Hon. Imbert: The plan is to hire 46 persons, sorry there are 46 persons now.

Ms. Ramdial: Okay, 46 persons.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Good morning, good morning all.

Madam Chairman: Good morning.

Dr. Gopeesingh: And morning to my colleague, Minister Imbert.

Hon. Imbert: That sounds ominous.

Dr. Gopeesingh: No, no.

Madam Chairman: Good morning.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Madam Chairman, when we go to Item 16 under 008, and we check the amount of Contract Employment, from the beginning it comes up close

to about 28 million so far, which this one is 5.5. Could the Minister indicate what is the rationale for just having everyone on contract employment? Is there not a role for permanent employment with the THA? Why it seems as though—well, when you look through all— going to page 15 we will find that there is \$13 million for Contract Employment across the THA. First of all, why employ this strategy rather than having some on permanent? I cannot understand why you only having contract employment, contract employment, contract employment. What is the rationale for that?

Hon. Imbert: You finish?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Yeah.

Hon. Imbert: Okay, for the umpteenth time, Government Ministries, and the Tobago House of Assembly, are not empowered to fill permanent positions for public officers. They are—I am now explaining this probably for the 15th time in the last five days. That is the responsibility of the Service Commission, and it will be imprudent, and impractical for agencies to just leave positions vacant while waiting on the Service Commission. Yesterday we heard the Service Commission is struggling to even fill its own positions which it has total control over, far less other Ministries and Departments. It will be gross negligence of the THA to leave posts vacant for years waiting on Service Commissions to fill them, and therefore like all other agencies for the last 40 years they rely on contract employment, until the permanent and pensionable positions are filled by the independent Service Commission. This is now the 16th time I have said that.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Well, the 17th time I will ask you. When was the last time the Tobago House of Assembly made representation to the Public Service Commission to fill their vacant positions? And we want to know how many vacant positions are

there under the THA, and what is the complement of positions, and how many are vacant?

Hon. Imbert: Early this year.

Dr. Gopeesingh: How many positions are there?

Hon. Imbert: Are you asking overall or are you speaking specific?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Yes, overall.

Hon. Imbert: I “cyah” answer you for overall.

Dr. Gopeesingh: You said that you cannot fill the positions.

Hon. Imbert: We are dealing with Tobago Emergency Management Agency.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Minister, you keep evading the questions that I—

Hon. Imbert: I object to what you are saying. You are playing for the camera.

Dr. Gopeesingh: How could you object? I am asking you a question.

Hon. Imbert: You are playing to the gallery.

Dr. Gopeesingh: I am asking how many positions are there in the THA.

Hon. Imbert: Madam Chairman, could I have a ruling here. Are we not dealing with 008: Tobago Emergency Management Agency; Sub-Item 16?

Hon. Member: All.

Dr. Gopeesingh: All the Heads that are under 16.

Hon. Imbert: That is what we are dealing with. You are playing for the camera.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Come on, stop talking foolishness all the time.

Madam Chairman: Okay, so—

Dr. Gopeesingh: You are back into that mode. When are you going to change?

Hon. Imbert: You are “gallerying” for the camera.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Your voice is pathetic.

Madam Chairman: Member, Member.

Hon. Imbert: You are insulting.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Your behaviour is bewildering.

Madam Chairman: Minister of Finance—

Hon. Imbert: Madam Chairman, he just insulted me.

Madam Chairman: —and the Member for Caroni East.

Hon. Imbert: He is insulting me. He is calling me names. He is breaking every rule in the book.

Dr. Gopeesingh: You are rude, and arrogant to your approach to the Opposition.

Hon. Imbert: You are playing for the gallery, pretending to be the victim, knowing fully well what you are asking is wrong. You know what you are asking is wrong.

Mr. Indarsingh: I do not think it is bewildering, you know.

Dr. Gopeesingh: How many positions are there in the THA to be filled by the Service Commission?

Madam Chairman: Okay, so gentlemen, I think you all have had—

Hon. Imbert: Madam Chair, can I have a ruling on this please.

Madam Chairman:—one minute please. I think you all have had enough opportunity to vent. I am now speaking. I am now speaking. All right, so in terms of this, I would like us to proceed in a much more respectful manner of each other. Is either we can answer the question, or we ask me to rule that is not a question to be answered, or we say that the information will be provided in writing. As far as our personal opinion of each other, I think we could trade that in another place, okay. I know, I know we have been here for many days, and we must all be very tried and weary, all right. Let us do not inflict that on the public, all right. So, in terms of this, Member for Caroni East, I think in terms of the overall global

question you want, I think you have an opportunity to ask that at another time, not necessarily under this Head, and maybe not even necessarily here, but you have an opportunity, because we continue to meet at other times, and I think you could most probably elicit that information at another time. Okay, so—

Dr. Gopeesingh: The Minister is not forthcoming with the answers.

Madam Chairman: Well, the thing about it is that I have—

Hon. Imbert: The ruling, Madam Chair.

Madam Chairman: I have ruled that the global question cannot be asked under this Head, and there is—it is acceptable if somebody finds that the question is not relevant that they do not have to volunteer an answer. Sometimes Members volunteer, sometimes they do not, all within rights that we have, okay. So, yeah, Member for Caroni East, new question.

Dr. Gopeesingh: This is under Planning, 011.

Madam Chairman: We have not reached Planning as yet.

Dr. Gopeesingh: All right, okay. [*Interruption*]

Madam Chairman: I do not need you, Minister of Finance, to assist in that regard. Thank you very much. We are still under Item 008—

Dr. Gopeesingh: 008.

Madam Chairman:—Tobago Emergency Management Agency. Are there any other questions here?

Dr. Gopeesingh: The question is then, how many people are employed under contract, under TEMA?

Madam Chairman: Under contract? I think the answer was 46.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Okay, thank you.

Madam Chairman: I think the answer was 46. Any other question? Okay, so we

move on to Item 010: Information Systems Department.

Ms. Ramdial: Thank you, Madam Chairman. Minister, line Item 16, again, Contract Employment. How many persons employed? Because I am seeing a 2020 Estimate at 1 million. How many persons?

Hon. Imbert: Eight.

Ms. Ramdial: Eight, and line Item 28: Other Contracted Services, 500,000 for 2020. Exactly what are these Other Contracted Services?

Hon. Imbert: Rental of minor equipment.

Ms. Ramdial: Thank you.

Madam Chairman: Caroni East, you have a question?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Under 011.

Madam Chairman: Okay, all right, so I will now call that. 011: Planning.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Could the THA or the Minister indicate how many contract employees are there under line Item 16 for Planning?

Hon. Imbert: Nine.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Nine. Nine at \$2 million for nine employees? So that is an average of 250,000 per employee which comes to more than 20,000 per month. So you have nine top positions there, because that 20/25,000 per month is the salary for top positions. So if you have nine employees getting 2 million, could you explain that?

Hon. Imbert: I am advised that the provision is for persons in position, and vacant positions they wish to fill, and therefore you cannot do that calculation that you did.

Dr. Gopeesingh: So how many vacant positions there then, if that is a consideration?

Hon. Imbert: We will get that information for you.

Dr. Gopeesingh: So you do not want to provide it.

Hon. Imbert: It is more than nine, so therefore your maths is wrong.

Dr. Gopeesingh: So how much, 40?

Hon. Imbert: I said I will get it for you. You see, you keep doing this.

Dr. Gopeesingh: All right.

Hon. Imbert: You keep doing this. You pretend you do not hear what I say.

Dr. Gopeesingh: I take down the information that you suppose to provide, you know.

Madam Chairman: Member for Couva North, do you have any questions?

Ms. Ramdial: Under 012, Ma'am.

Madam Chairman: All right, so we move on. Item 012: Land Management.

Ms. Ramdial: Thank you, Madam Chair. Again, Minister, line Item 16: Contract Employment. Your 2020 Estimate is 3 million, exactly how many positions are filled, how many are vacant?

Hon. Imbert: There are 23 persons there, and there are a number of vacancies. The exact number of the vacancies is not available at this time, but will be provided.

Ms. Ramdial: All right, line Item 22: Short-term Employment, at 388,000. Exactly how many filled positions, and vacant positions exist under this heading?

Hon. Imbert: Right now, there is no body in position, but they intend to employ people for land management in due course.

Ms. Ramdial: Do you have a number of how many at this time?

Hon. Imbert: We do not have that information at this time, but I will get it for you.

Ms. Ramdial: Okay, thank you very much.

Madam Chairman: Okay, so we move on to Sub-Head 03: Minor Equipment Purchases. Item 001: General Administration.

Ms. Ramdial: Thank you, Madam Chairman. Line Minister, 01: Vehicles. Now, Madam Chairman, if you would just permit a minute, last year I had asked many questions on this Vehicles Vote, because there was a lot of money allocated under every Vehicles Vote. I got no assurances from the THA with respect to clarification as to how many vehicles were purchased for fiscal year 2019. I am very much willing to hear at this time if you have the numbers. 01: Vehicles, I am seeing 340,000 for 2020, and 340,000 for 2019. So how many vehicles you would have purchased, or were these funds vired elsewhere?

Hon. Imbert: I have total figures, I do not have it broken down, okay sorry, I actually do. In 2019, they purchased five vehicles, and in 2020 they are planning to purchase a further five vehicles. With respect to this particular one, General Admin, it is spread among information department, TEMA, sorry 2020 going forward protocol information, TEMA, and 2019, chief administrator, property management and CERT.

Ms. Ramdial: Thank you. So five last year and five this year.

Hon. Imbert: Yeah, total, eh.

Ms. Ramdial: Total, yes.

Hon. Imbert: Total, eh.

Ms. Ramdial: Thank you very much.

Madam Chairman: Item 002: Information; Item 007: Public Administration; Item 008: Tobago Emergency Management Agency.

Ms. Ramdial: Yes, Ma'am, again 01: Vehicles, 2019 Revised Estimate at 1.2

million, 2020 Estimate at 1.2 million. Exactly, how many vehicles were purchased last year? How many you intend to purchase this year?

Hon. Imbert: Now, what I told you was that the five and five is for all departments, eh. Are you going into individual departments now?

Ms. Ramdial: Yeah.

10.30 a.m.

Hon. Imbert: Well, I may not have that level of detail. Two.

Ms. Ramdial: Two. And what type of vehicles.

Hon. Imbert: Ford Ranger.

Ms. Ramdial: Ford Ranger.

Hon. Imbert: Not a Porsche like what your Minister bought.

Ms. Ramdial: No need to be rude.

Hon. Imbert: It is not all right.

Ms. Ramdial: No need to be righteous in your comments.

Hon. Imbert: It was not all right for him to buy a Porsche.

Mr. Indarsingh: Your Chief Secretary bought a what—what type of vehicle they—

Hon. Imbert: The public needs to know your Minister bought a Porsche.

Madam Chair: Okay, so we move on. Item 010: Information Systems Department; Item 011: Planning; Item 012: Land Management. Sub-Head 04: Current Transfers and Subsidies. Item 005: Non-Profit Institutions. Member for Couva North.

Ms. Ramdial: Thank you, Madam Chair. Minister, line Item 01: Contribution to Non-Profit Organizations. I am seeing an allocation of 800,000. Can you tell me how many?

Hon. Imbert: Thirty-Five.

Ms. Ramdial: Thirty-Five. Okay, thank you.

Madam Chairman: Item 007: Households; Items 009: Other Transfers.

Ms. Ramdial: Yes Ma'am.

Madam Chair: Member for Couva North.

Ms. Ramdial: Thank you, Madam Chair. Line Item 02: Tobago Information Technology Limited. I am seeing that there is no Estimate for 2020 and I am seeing that it is—okay, it is transferred. Thank you.

Madam Chairman: Division 03.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Madam Chair, 009.

Madam Chairman: Sorry, Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Yeah, that is all right. Could you let us know what is this establishment of a Public Service Academy? Five million is for it and 5 million was spent already. So that will be 10 million for the Public Service Academy.

Hon. Imbert: It is a Training and Education Institute for Public Officers. The money is for consultants.

Dr. Gopeesingh: All right, okay.

Madam Chairman: Member for Chaguanas East—

Dr. Gopeesingh: Who is the consultant?

Hon. Imbert: He ask me who was the consultant?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Is it one consultant or a team?

Hon. Imbert: Only five. They are starting off with a single consultant, Mr. Roland Baptiste, former CPO.

Dr. Gopeesingh: But five million was spent already? Who was—

Hon. Imbert: Apparently that is an error.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Eh.

Hon. Imbert: Apparently that is an error. No money was spent.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Okay. So Revised Estimate at 2019 which shows 5 million, apparently that is an error?

Hon. Imbert: I have been advised by the officials of the THA. Remember I am simply here to communicate—

Dr. Gopeesingh: I am not blaming you.

Hon. Imbert: I know, but before you start to blame me, they are telling me it is an error.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Okay, I accept that.

Madam Chairman: Member for Chaguanas East, yes—Member for Couva South.

Mr. Indarsingh: Thank you. Minister, the Public Service Academy and this allocation, will it be spent on contract officers?

Hon. Imbert: Training.

Mr. Indarsingh: Yes, I know but training—

Hon. Imbert:—consultancy services.

Mr. Indarsingh: And the Public Service Academy will roll out whatever. Will it be there for training as it relates to contract officers?

Hon. Imbert: Everybody, they training everybody.

Mr. Indarsingh: Well, I know there are different terms and conditions, a public officer will be mandated, a contracted officer might tell you, that is not within my terms and conditions, I do not have to go.

Hon. Imbert: That is unnecessary speculations. The Training Academy is for everybody.

Dr. Gopeesingh: So, Minister—

Madam Chairman: Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Minister, Mr. Roland Baptiste will—his contract is for 5 million?

Hon. Imbert: No, I made that crystal clear. It is for consultancy services and the first consultant they intend to hire is Mr. Baptiste. Obviously, if he is the first there will be a second and a third and a fourth and a fifth.

Dr. Gopeesingh: For what period of time is Mr. Baptiste employed for 5 million?

Hon. Imbert: They are still in the preparatory stage. I said it is for consultancy, that is two, and it is not for \$5 million for one man and they are still finalizing the terms and conditions. The first consultant that they intend to bring on board some time in fiscal 2020 will be Mr. Baptiste. They will bring other people on board, experienced professionals such as he.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Could you indicate how many people will benefit from his training, approximately?

Hon. Imbert: 12,000.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Okay, right, the entire Public Service.

Madam Chairman: Division 03: Finance and the Economy. Sub-Head 01: Personnel Expenditure. Item 001: General Administration. Member for Couva North.

Ms. Ramdial: Thank you Madam Chair. Minister, line Item 14: Remuneration to Members of Cabinet Appointed Committees. I am seeing an allocation of 300,000; it is a new Sub-Item. Could you clarify what Cabinet appointed committee? How many members?

Hon. Imbert: Yes, it appears these are committees that would be appointed by the Executive Council of the THA itself. We are just using a term that is not entirely—does not fit, it is really appointed by the Executive Council. Okay and it would

be—they have an infrastructure and investment strategy committee—sorry multi-sectoral committee to lead the development of a Tobago infrastructure investment strategy. It involves planners, engineers, project managers other technical staff, representatives from the Public Utilities and environmental agencies as well as financial and economic analysts and social scientists to ensure that the proper harmonization of the work of the various divisions of the THA.

Ms. Ramdial: And what is the duration of these committees?

Hon. Imbert: It would be a permanent thing I would assume. It would continue.

Ms. Ramdial: Permanent thing?

Hon. Imbert: I would do so for the time being.

Ms. Ramdial: Okay.

Hon. Imbert: But the life of each committee is one year. So they would be renewed as and when and if required.

Ms. Ramdial: Thank you.

Madam Chairman: Item 002: Finance and Accounting.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Madam Chairman: Member for Caroni East

Dr. Gopeesingh: Line Item 01: Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance. Approximately 11.65 million, how many officers or what is the complement of persons for that?

Dr. Gopeesingh: There are 110 positions, 63 of them have been filled and 47 posts are vacant.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Does this figure include the cost of the 47 positions which are vacant or not included?

Hon. Imbert: Yes, it is a provision that includes for hiring of persons to fill the

vacant posts and that is for the entire finance division of the Assembly.

Dr. Gopeesingh: All right, thanks.

Madam Chairman: Item 003: Customs, Member for Couva North.

Ms. Ramdial: Thank you, Madam Chair. Line Item 003: Overtime - Monthly Paid Officers. Minister, I am seeing an exorbitant sum of 5.1 million. Please explain how many officers?

Hon. Imbert: Now firstly, you cannot make that statement, you have no factual basis—

Ms. Ramdial: Excuse me?

Hon. Imbert:—for saying it is exorbitant.

Ms. Ramdial: Well compared to the other Overtime Heads, Madam Chair.

Hon. Imbert: And secondly—I did not interrupt you—Madam Chair.

Ms. Ramdial: Madam Chair—this amount is extremely high.

Hon. Imbert: I did not interrupt her while she was speaking. I would like to be able to speak without interruption.

Ms. Ramdial: Okay, go ahead.

Hon. Imbert: Thank you. You cannot say it is exorbitant, because you have no facts to back up that statement. And one of your members recently complained about delays in the clearance of customs, goods, containers and other items that have to be inspected by Customs. So you cannot on the one hand complain about delays which found its way into the newspapers by one of your agents, and on the other hand, complain about paying customs officers for overtime. It is either you have it or you do not have it. So this is to ensure efficiency in the operations of Customs in Tobago.

Ms. Ramdial: How many officers, Minister?

Hon. Imbert: I cannot tell you off-hand but I can get an understanding of how the Estimate was arrived at. It would be based on previous years' experience.

Ms. Ramdial: Thank you.

Madam Chairman: Item 004: Inland Revenue; Item 013: Co-operatives. Sub-Head 02: Goods and Services. Item 001: General Administration. Member for Couva North.

Ms. Ramdial: Thank you, Madam Chair. Minister, line Item 16: Contract Employment. 2020 Estimate at 3 million. Exactly how many officers are on contract and how many vacant positions?

Hon. Imbert: 1-6.

Ms. Ramdial: Okay, no vacant positions.

Hon. Imbert: We will check and get back to you on that.

Ms. Ramdial: Thank you very much.

Madam Chairman: Member for Caroni Central—East sorry.

Dr. Gopeesingh: East. So Madam—Hon. Minister, for 16 people employed at 3 million that works out close to about 200,000.

Hon. Imbert: You gone back with that?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Yes.

Hon. Imbert: I have told you there are vacant positions involved. Why do I have to keep repeating myself. You doing fake mathematics and you doing it deliberately—

Dr. Gopeesingh: All right—

Hon. Imbert: You playing to the camera. You gallerying.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Hold on, I am not bothering to argue with you, eh.

Hon. Imbert: Thank you.

Dr. Gopeesingh: I am just stating facts.

Hon. Imbert: Thank you, thanks for not arguing, you galling.

Dr. Gopeesingh: We could argue outside.

Hon. Imbert: Good. Let us do that.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Three million was spent last year. So did that include the vacant position expenditure? It is the same 3 million allocated this year.

Hon. Imbert: Last year there was payment of gratuity I am told and this year the payment of gratuity will not be the same. And therefore, you all cannot look at a bare number and draw the conclusions that you are drawing.

Dr. Gopeesingh: So just repeat that.

Hon. Imbert: It is algebra, it is not arithmetic.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Last year you said the 3 million was paid for what?

Hon. Imbert: The 3 million in—I am going to talk slowly. The \$3 million spent last year included the payment of gratuity to contract officers. This year the gratuity payments will not be the same as last year because gratuity payments arise whenever a contract comes to an end. Contract employment is staggered and therefore gratuity payments arise at different times. So in this year, gratuity payments will not be the same as last year and therefore you cannot look at a bare number of 3 million last year and this year and conclude that the circumstances are identical.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Okay. Well thanks for the explanation.

Hon. Imbert: Thank you for listening.

Madam Chairman: Member for Couva North.

Ms. Ramdial: Thank you, Madam Chair. Minister, line Item 22: Short-term Employment, 800,000 allocated for 2020. Exactly how many positions at short-

term employment and are there any vacant positions, also?

Hon. Imbert: Five.

Ms. Ramdial: Thank you. No vacant positions?

Hon. Imbert: No.

Ms. Ramdial: Okay, Madam Chair, line Item 28: Other Contracted Services. I am seeing an estimate at 2020 for 2 million. What type of other contracted services?

Hon. Imbert: Servicing of elevators, pest control, air-conditioning repairs, management fees for the gym, waste disposal and landscaping services.

Ms. Ramdial: Thank you.

Madam Chairman: Item 002: Finance and Accounting. Item—Yes, sorry Member for Couva North.

Ms. Ramdial: Thank you, Madam Chair. Minister again, line Item 16: Contract Employment, an allocation of 2.5 million. How many contract employees and are there any vacant positions to be filled?

Hon. Imbert: 2-3.

Ms. Ramdial: 23. Any vacant positions?

Hon. Imbert: We will have to get back to you on the vacancies.

Ms. Ramdial: All right. Madam Chair, line Item 22: Short-term Employment at 1.5 million for 2020. How many positions and are there any vacant positions there?

Hon. Imbert: It is a provision. There are no persons employed in short-term at this time in this division.

Ms. Ramdial: Okay.

Madam Chairman: Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: With respect to line Item 16: the Contract Employment of 23 people, you have 2 million—2.5 million. Did that include gratuity as well for

2019?

Hon. Imbert: No. You want to do the maths?

Madam Chairman: Item 003: Customs. Member for Couva North, we are still in 003.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Yes.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Divide 2,500 by 43; you will see they only getting 9,000.

Madam Chair: Could I have some order in my meeting please. Member for Couva North.

Ms. Ramdial: Thank you, Minister, focus please. Line Item 37: Janitorial Services. I am seeing 2 million allocated for 2020. Can you—would you clarify a little bit on this 2 million janitorial services.

Hon. Imbert: It is for cleaning.

Ms. Ramdial: No, how many buildings or offices? Is it just for one building? Are there other buildings?

Hon. Imbert: One building.

Ms. Ramdial: Sorry.

Hon. Imbert: Do you know where the financial complex is in Scarborough?

Ms. Ramdial: Madam Chair, I will not answer that question. I am asking how many buildings, is it one building, two buildings?

10.45 a.m.

Hon. Imbert: All right, since it appears you do not know where the financial complex is. It is for the financial complex building in Tobago—

Ms. Ramdial: So it is one building?

Hon. Imbert:—which your Member for Couva South has correctly identified as the Victor Bruce Financial Complex in Scarborough in Tobago.

Ms. Ramdial: That is all well and good—

Mr. Indarsingh: In 20 years to build, Mr. Finance Minister.

Ms. Ramdial: It is one building? Two million for janitorial services for one building?

Hon. Imbert: It is a large building, if you knew where it was you would know it is a big building.

Ms. Ramdial: All right, line Item 43, Security Services.

Hon. Imbert: You must visit Tobago every now and then.

Madam Chairman: Minister, please.

Ms. Ramdial: I am seeing an allocation for 2.3 million for Security Services. Is it for that one building also?

Madam Chairman: Item 43.

Ms. Ramdial: Item 43, is it for that? [*Crosstalk*] Yes? Thank you very much.

Hon. Imbert: It is for that large Tobago financial complex.

Ms. Ramdial: Thank you very much to the THA officers of course, who are answering unlike the Minister.

Madam Chairman: Item 003: Customs.

Hon. Imbert: You are very rude, you know.

Madam Chairman: Item 004: Inland Revenue.

Ms. Ramdial: Ma'am, can we go back to 03 please?

Madam Chairman: Okay, so—

Ms. Ramdial: 03.

Madam Chairman: For the purposes of us trying to get through this, so that the officers of Tobago—

Ms. Ramdial: Yeah, he has started his games already.

Madam Chairman: Can we have one conversation?

Ms. Ramdial: Sure. Sorry, Ma'am.

Madam Chairman: I would like us to be mindful that the officers from Tobago also have another Head, and they also have to catch a flight. So I would like us to be very productive, so that they can make their flight, okay. Member for Couva South, and I want to remind the Member for Caroni East that I have given him a big responsibility with respect to that other half of the room which he told me disturbs him. So, I have given you a responsibility to help police that. Okay, Item 003: Customs. Member for Couva North.

Ms. Ramdial: Thank you, Madam Chair, to the officers from the THA who are very cooperative. Line Item 16, Contract Employment, I am seeing an allocation of 350,000.

Hon. Imbert: Madam Chairman, really, this is going too far, you are well aware that you have to ask me.

Ms. Ramdial: Madam Chair.

Madam Chairman: Minister, I think she was meaning cooperative in assisting you.

Hon. Imbert: No, she is being facetious.

Madam Chairman: No, she meant cooperative in assisting you.

Ms. Ramdial: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Madam Chairman: Item 16: Contract Employment.

Ms. Ramdial: Thank you. There is an Estimate for 350,000 in 2020. Can you tell me how many positions, and if there are any vacant positions?

Hon. Imbert: Currently, two persons employed, and there are vacant positions. I cannot give you the exact number now.

Ms. Ramdial: Thank you very much.

Madam Chairman: Anything else?

Ms. Ramdial: No, Ma'am. 004.

Madam Chairman: Item 004: Inland Revenue. Member for Couva North.

Ms. Ramdial: Thank you, Madam Chair. Line Item 16, Contract Employment. Again, I am seeing an allocation for 510,000. Can you tell me how many positions, and if there are any vacant positions?

Hon. Imbert: 1-4.

Mrs. Ramdial: 1-4, any vacant positions?

Hon. Imbert: And if they have vacancies, I will get back to you on that.

Ms. Ramdial: Thank you very much. Line Item 37, Janitorial Services, an allocation of 340,000. Minister, can you tell me how many buildings that Janitorial Services sum is for?

Hon. Imbert: One building.

Ms. Ramdial: Thank you very much.

Hon. Imbert: One floor of one building.

Ms. Ramdial: One floor, one building. Thank you very much.

Madam Chairman: Okay, so we move on to Item 008: Budget Division; Item 011: Business Development Unit. Member for Couva South, is that your hand?

Mr. Indarsingh: No.

Madam Chairman: Okay, good. Item 012: Consumer Affairs.

Ms. Ramdial: Yes, Ma'am.

Madam Chairman: Member for Couva North.

Ms. Ramdial: Line Item 16, Contract Employment, 1 million or thereabout, how many positions and are there any vacant positions?

Hon. Imbert: Five; yes there are vacancies.

Ms. Ramdial: Do you have an idea of how many vacancies exist at this time?

Hon. Imbert: No.

Ms. Ramdial: Thank you.

Madam Chairman: Can we move on?

Ms. Ramdial: Yes, Ma'am.

Madam Chairman: Item 013: Co-operatives.

Ms. Ramdial: Thank you, Madam Chair. Minister, line Item 16, 117,000 for Contract Employment. How many positions, and are there any vacant positions?

Hon. Imbert: There is one person, and there are vacancies.

Ms. Ramdial: Thank you very much. Madam Chair, line Item 22, Short-term Employment, an allocation of 60,000. This is for how many employees?

Hon. Imbert: None at this time.

Ms. Ramdial: None at this time?

Hon. Imbert: It is a provision—

Ms. Ramdial: Okay.

Hon. Imbert:—for some persons, 60,000 for the year.

Ms. Ramdial: Thank you.

Hon. Imbert: Caroni East, you want to do the math? It is too little? It is too small? [*Crosstalk*]

Madam Chairman: Member for Couva South, Member for Couva South.
[*Crosstalk and laughter*]

Mr. Indarsingh: Thank you, Chair. [*Crosstalk*]

Madam Chairman: Member for Couva South.

Mr. Indarsingh: I am trying to get the Minister of Finance to focus.

Madam Chairman: You have my attention, Member for Couva South.

Mr. Indarsingh: Thank you, Chair. Minister, in your budget presentation you enunciated the creation of an authority as it relates to co-operatives in Trinidad and Tobago, and will the co-operative continue to exist in the THA if and when this national authority is created?

Hon. Imbert: What line Item are you on?

Mr. Indarsingh: In terms of 16 and 22 from a Contract Employment and Short-term Employment point of view?

Hon. Imbert: I can assure you that the provisions here are for the co-operative division in Tobago in 2020.

Mr. Indarsingh: Under the THA, so—

Hon. Imbert: The co-operative division in Tobago in 2020.

Mr. Indarsingh: So this authority will—when it becomes a reality, will the employees be transitioned in, or will they continue to exist separate and apart? Based on your plans?

Hon. Imbert: I think I have answered, but I will try and answer again. This allocation is for Co-operatives in Tobago in 2020.

Mr. Indarsingh: Thank you, Minister.

Hon. Imbert: You are welcome.

Mr. Indarsingh: That means your co-operative authority will not happen in 2020.

Hon. Imbert: That question is not relevant to this line Item. This is for Co-operatives in Tobago in 2020.

Mr. Indarsingh: I can conclude whatever I want to conclude.

Hon. Imbert: You do, you always do.

Madam Chairman: Item 015: Financial Literacy Secretariat. Member for Couva

North.

Ms. Ramdial: Thank you, Madam Chair. Minister, line Item 16, Contract Employment at 1.4 million, how many positions and are there any vacancies?

Hon. Imbert: Four employed at this time, and there are vacancies.

Ms. Ramdial: Okay, thank you. Line Item—

Hon. Imbert: Do the math. [*Interruption*] “Doh” be ridiculous. There are vacancies, stop making up stories.

Ms. Ramdial: Continue, Madam Chair?

Madam Chairman: Member for Couva North.

Ms. Ramdial: 016, Madam.

Madam Chairman: Item 016: Youth Energised for Success. Member for Caroni Central.

Dr. Tewarie: I wonder if the Minister could explain what this programme is, and whether the Contract Employment, 16; 22, Short-term Employment; and 28, Other Contracted Services, all involve youth employment, or whether it sets up the administration to get the programme going?

Hon. Imbert: Just hold. The Youth Energised for Success Programme, was launched in 2012 by the then Chief Secretary of the THA. Its mandate is to nurture an environment that ensures employment and stability of youth. It collaborates with divisions of the THA, the private sector, and local, regional and international agencies to expand and enhance training employment and entrepreneurial opportunities for young Tobagonians. Thus preparing them to lead in the development of Tobago.

Some of the achievements in fiscal 2019 include facilitation of résumé writing and interviewing workshops at nine secondary schools; one tech-voc

school. Total number of participants was 412, which is a 25 per cent increase over 2018. Also, a continuation of the life skills training campaign exposing 38 participants to educational, social, health and economic relevance in our socioeconomic landscape, an increase of 39 per cent over 2018. Trained 47 persons in professional development; executed the sixth instalment of the Summer Internship Programme during the period July to August 30, 2018, facilitating 57 students. Facilitated two youth entrepreneurship workshops, there was 76 participants for 2019.

Dr. Tewarie: Yes, you were very generous in explaining—

Hon. Imbert: You asked.

Dr. Tewarie:—what it is, so I am happy for that.

Hon. Imbert: It is preparing young people for leadership positions in Tobago.

Dr. Tewarie: Yes, I heard you, Minister.

Hon. Imbert: I just thought I would repeat it.

Dr. Tewarie: I just—and I appreciate the elaboration; I have no problem. I just wanted to ask though, if the Contract Employment, the Short-term Employment, and the Other Contracted Services, and you can deal with them each if they are different, whether they relate to youth employment or whether it is the employment to establish the entity that would do what you were saying?

Hon. Imbert: That is for the staff of this unit to train youth for leadership.

Dr. Tewarie: To do the things you mentioned—right, right, okay, I just wanted to understand that clearly.

Madam Chairman: Member for Chaguanas East.

Mr. Karim: Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, I just want to confirm, all that you read out just now in terms of what this programme is about, is it that all of

these students are in school? Are these things conducted while they are in school?

Hon. Imbert: Yes, and some would have been done in the vacation period.

Mr. Karim: I know, but there are students within the school system.

Hon. Imbert: I said yes. Yes, has one meaning.

Mr. Karim: “You comin at me now, with this kind of—?”

Hon. Imbert: But I said yes.

Ms. Ramdial: Ma’am, 017. That is the next Head.

Madam Chairman: Okay, so we go on. Emergency Social and Medical Assistance Unit. Member for Couva North.

Ms. Ramdial: Thank you, Madam Chair. Minister, again, line Item 16, Contract Employment, you have an estimate for 346,000. How many persons and are there any vacancies?

Hon. Imbert: Two, and yes there are vacancies.

Ms. Ramdial: Thank you very much.

Madam Chairman: Item 018: Communication Unit. Member for Couva North.

Ms. Ramdial: Thank you, Madam Chair. Minister, line Item 16, Contract Employment, and 1.1 million. How many persons, any vacancies?

Hon. Imbert: Two at this time, and there are vacancies.

Ms. Ramdial: And for Short-term Employment, line Item 22, at 129,000?

Hon. Imbert: None at this time.

Ms. Ramdial: Sorry?

Hon. Imbert: None, no people employed at this time. It is an allowance, a projection.

Ms. Ramdial: Thank you very much.

Madam Chairman: Item 019: Economic Management and Research Unit.

Member for Couva North.

Ms. Ramdial: Thank you, Madam Chair. Line Item 16, again, Minister, Contract Employment at 2.5 million. Exactly how many persons and are there any vacant positions?

Hon. Imbert: 11, and vacancies.

Ms. Ramdial: Thank you very much.

Madam Chairman: Item 020: Investment and Public/Private Partnership Unit.
Member for Couva North.

Ms. Ramdial: Thank you very much, Madam Chairman. Minister, line Item 16, Contract Employment, one million. How many persons and are there any vacancies?

Hon. Imbert: Three persons, yes vacancies.

Ms. Ramdial: And—okay Ma'am, yes the next heading.

Madam Chairman: Item 021: Strategic Sector Support Unit.

Ms. Ramdial: Minister, line Item 16, Contract Employment, at \$1 million. How many persons?

Hon. Imbert: Four, yes vacancies.

Ms. Ramdial: Yes, vacancies. And the Short-term Employment at 150,000?

Hon. Imbert: None, it is a provision.

Ms. Ramdial: A provision. Thank you very much.

Dr. Tewarie: Yeah, could I ask what is the strategic sector that it supports?

11.00a.m.

Hon. Imbert: The private sector.

Dr. Tewarie: Eh?

Hon. Imbert: The private sector in Tobago.

Dr. Tewarie: Okay.

Mr. Young: Everything here is in Tobago.

Madam Chairman: Member for Chaguanas East.

Hon. Imbert: But he might think is Trinidad.

Mr. Karim: You missed, you missed but I will come back again.

Madam Chairman: Yes. Member for Caroni East, did I see your hand?

Dr. Gopeesingh: No.

Madam Chairman: Okay.

Hon. Imbert: Thank you for not putting up your hand.

Madam Chairman: We move on. Sub-Head 03: Minor Equipment Purchases. Item 001: General Administration; Item 002, Finance and Accounting; Item 003: Customs; Item 004: Inland Revenue; Item 008: Budget Division; Item 012: Consumer Affairs; Item 013: Co-operatives; Item 015: Financial Literacy Secretariat; Item 016: Youth Energized for Success. Member for Chaguanas East.

Mr. Karim: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. If I wanted to take a look at this location, where is it? Where I can find—*[Crosstalk]* Yes. *[Crosstalk]* Yes, that has one meaning.

Hon. Imbert: Item 016, the location of what?

Mr. Karim: I am on 016. I see you have office equipment and furniture and furnishings, and—

Hon. Imbert: You want to know where the equipment is stored?

Mr. Karim: Yeah, I want to know where I can visit this facility. Where the equipment is going?

Hon. Imbert: Victor Bruce Financial Complex.

Mr. Karim: Oh, in Victor Bruce. All right.

Hon. Imbert: In Scarborough—

Mr. Karim: Yeah, I know where it is.

Hon. Imbert:—in Tobago.

Mr. Karim: I know where it is.

Hon. Imbert: A large building.

Mr. Karim: I know where the building is.

Madam Chairman: Chaguanas East, are you finished? Item 017, Emergency Social and Medical Assistance Unit; Item 018: Communication Unit; Item 019: Economic Management and Research Unit; Item 020: Investment and Public/Private Partnership Unit; Item 021: Strategic Sector Support Unit. Sub-Head 04: Current Transfers and Subsidies. Item 005, Non-Profit Institution; Item 007: Households. Member for Chaguanas East.

Mr. Karim: Madam Chair, thank you, but I was going to ask if we could have gotten some information with respect to 005, the amount of \$46.1 million. If not now, in writing.

Madam Chairman: All right. Okay. So we are where?

Hon. Imbert: What information do you want? [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Karim: About the non-profit institutions that would benefit from this?

Hon. Imbert: You want to know who they are, how many of them, what?

Mr. Karim: Yes, yes, of course. Do you have a list?

Hon. Imbert: You said \$46 million, is that what you said? It is \$1 million.

Madam Chairman: It is 01.

Hon. Imbert: “Why yuh so?”

Mr. Karim: Okay. So 05, the contribution is \$1 million, what will that—

Hon. Imbert: Transfers and Subsidies.

Mr. Karim: So what will that mean, the \$1 million? You have a list of it?

Hon. Imbert: That is 11 organizations, we can get you the names if you want.

Mr. Karim: If you could give it to me in writing.

Hon. Imbert: But it is \$1 million, it is not \$46 million.

Mr. Karim: That is all right.

Hon. Imbert: It is not all right because you said we had the wrong thing.

Mr. Karim: I was just reading the Head at the time.

Hon. Imbert: Yeah, I know, deliberately.

Madam Chairman: Member for Couva North, are you under 005?

Ms. Ramdial: 007, Ma'am.

Madam Chairman: Okay. So we move on. Item 007: Households, Member for Couva North.

Ms. Ramdial: Thank you, Madam Chair. Minister, line Item 40: Gratuities to Contract Officers. I am seeing it as a new Sub-Item for \$2 million. How many contract officers to receive gratuity?

Hon. Imbert: Forty-two.

Ms. Ramdial: Forty-two, thank you very much.

Hon. Imbert: And thank you for not asking me what that is.

Ms. Ramdial: I know what it is.

Hon. Imbert: Tell Caroni East what it is, "nah".

Ms. Ramdial: Be nice, today is our last day.

Dr. Gopeesingh: I have a question for you, Minister.

Madam Chairman: Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Madam Chair, I was just wondering if in the other areas the Minister was saying that when we asked about the salaries, and so on, it included

gratuities. This is a separate heading by itself. Why is this not incorporated in one of the other Heads?

Hon. Imbert: You see why I told you, you had to tell him because he “doh” listen, you know. I will explain for the seventeenth time that in 2020 we are decentralizing the payment of contract gratuities, but by definition when I say in 2020 we are, future tense, it means that we did not do that in 2019. So in 2019 it was included in a lump sum in another Head.

Dr. Gopeesingh: But I see that you have also included in the other areas, gratuities in 2020 as well when you were asked the question.

Hon. Imbert: For the eighteenth time, we are—we are, future tense, decentralizing gratuities in 2020. In 2019 gratuities would have been paid otherwise. So if you look at '19 a gratuity payment might be included in the overall figure for contract employment—

Dr. Gopeesingh: Okay.

Hon. Imbert:—but in 2020 it is disaggregated. I have now said that nineteen times.

Dr. Gopeesingh: I did not see any special allocation for gratuities in the other Sub-Heads there. It was not—

Hon. Imbert: There are—every single Department and Ministry has a new Item, Gratuities. I cannot believe that you would say that. We have looked at about 100 such instances.

Dr. Gopeesingh: It was not known—

Hon. Imbert: That is not true.

Dr. Gopeesingh: If the Chair would allow me to go back, I will show you.

Hon. Imbert: No, you cannot go back, you could go forward. [*Crosstalk*] You

would have to go back to the first day of the Standing Finance Committee. Every day we are doing this, over and over, just for you, pretending you do not know. It is just a pretence.

Madam Chairman: Item 009, Other Transfers, Member for Chaguanas East.

Mr. Karim: Thank you very much. If the Minister is listening, when he is paying attention, I will then ask my question.

Hon. Imbert: I am always paying attention.

Mr. Karim: Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, line Item 28—

Hon. Imbert: “Ah like Hulk.” [*Crosstalk and laughter*] If you were a movie fan, Hulk said in a movie, he is always angry. [*Laughter*]

Madam Chairman: Minister of Finance—

Mr. Karim: Line Item 28, the Establishment of an Intelligent Island; \$3 million was spent and \$3 million allocated—[*Crosstalk*]

Madam Chairman: Okay, so we are at Item 009: Other Transfers—

Hon. Imbert: You know, Madam Chairman—

Madam Chairman: Minister of Finance, please—

Hon. Imbert: No, no, I am going to deal with it.

Madam Chairman: Minister of Finance, please, the Member for Chaguanas East has my ear, he is at line Item 28.

Mr. Karim: I just what to know what is this concept about, what was the \$3million spent on and what is the \$3 million again going to be spent on? It reminds me of Singapore, the Intelligent Island. [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. Imbert: Madam Chairman, perhaps the noise, [*Crosstalk*] like what is going on now, perhaps the noise had distracted you but he did ask the question and I was about to answer it; we spoke about this last year.

Mr. Karim: Sorry.

Hon. Imbert: We spoke about this last year.

Mr. Karim: It is all right, but I just wanted to know.

Hon. Imbert: I am just giving you a precursor.

Mr. Karim: Okay.

Hon. Imbert: We spoke about this last year.

Mr. Karim: You could speak about it this year.

Hon. Imbert: Essentially the Intelligent Island project is to make ICT readily available in Tobago, all forms of ICTs.

Mr. Karim: To every citizen?

Hon. Imbert: As far as it is possible.

Mr. Karim: So what was the \$3 million—Madam Chair—

Hon. Imbert: Again, I am simply reporting on behalf of the THA and I am advised that this was not spent.

Mr. Karim: Oh, it was not spent, and what is proposed to be spent? Why do you have—

Hon. Imbert: What is the question, please? I am waiting for the question because you asked multiple things there.

Mr. Karim: I was asking, hon. Minister, nothing was spent in 2019, why was it not spent and what is proposed to be spent in 2020?

Hon. Imbert: What I am advised is that the THA is in discussions with Huawei Technologies and bmobile, and they are looking towards a number of projects and programmes and strategies to improve ICT in Tobago, including enhancing ICT infrastructure across the island through the implementation of high-speed broadband connectivity, developing and installing digital infrastructure to improve

connectivity across the Assembly and between the Assembly and central government, standardizing digital tools and services across the Assembly for all events, products, services and programmes; providing incentives for international ICT professionals to share their expertise with local counterparts, to enhance the quality of local ICT products and services, as well as providing the necessary technical assistance and empowering young adults by providing capacity-building activities with specific focus on coding, user interface, user experience, design and animation.

And the \$3 million will provide for the engagement of TSTT to provide consultancy services for the Intelligent Island project. It includes marketing and sales, development of a skilled or high-potential workforce, training and development, identification of business partners with regional and global support networks, cloud and connected data centre services, fibre and submarine link communication. Is that enough?

Mr. Karim: Thank you.

Hon. Imbert: Are you good?

Madam Chairman: Member for Couva North.

Ms. Ramdial: Thank you, Madam Chair. Minister, line Item 26: Project Financing Repayments, \$18 million for 2020. Can you tell me for which projects these moneys are allocated for?

Hon. Imbert: Milshirv project.

Ms. Ramdial: Milshirv project.

Hon. Imbert: Do you know where that this?

Ms. Ramdial: Yes, I know that Milshirv project.

Hon. Imbert: Corner of Shirvan Road and Milford Road, the one you tried to

stop. [*Crosstalk*]

Ms. Ramdial: Madam Chair, can you caution the Minister of Finance, please. I did not ask for his opinion. I did not ask for your opinion.

Hon. Imbert: Let me repeat, that Item is for the Milshirv building—

Ms. Ramdial: Thank you very much.

Hon. Imbert:—a project the UNC tried to stop and lost in court, and our able Minister of National Security then in private practice was part of the victorious team, on part of the THA that beat the central government at the time, for which I congratulate him again. [*Desk thumping*]

Madam Chairman: Member for Caroni Central. [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. Imbert: And used my research; that is true.

Dr. Tewarie: My question was on the Project Financing Repayment.

Madam Chairman: Okay. Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: These Financing Repayments underline Item 26, how long is it going to continue for at approximately \$18 million per year?

Hon. Imbert: It is a BOLT project, build/own/lease/transfer. The period of the lease is 20 years. They are in the third or fourth year at this point in time.

Dr. Gopeesingh: So the total cost, would it be approximately \$360 million, 20 by 18?

Hon. Imbert: Do the maths.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Yeah. So we have paid four years out of 20 years so we have 16 more years to pay, \$18 million per year?

Hon. Imbert: I think at this time your arithmetic is almost correct.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Okay. It is generally correct.

Madam Chairman: Division 04: Food Production, Forestry and Fisheries;

Sub-Head 01: Personnel Expenditure; Item 001: General Administration; Item 002: Agriculture. Member for Couva North.

Ms. Ramdial: Thank you, Madam Chair. Minister, line Item 29: Overtime - Daily-Rated Workers, I am seeing \$1.8 million allocated. How many daily-rated workers do we have?

Hon. Imbert: We do not have a breakdown division by division, the total number of daily-rated workers for the entire Assembly is 520. Oh, I am so sorry, for the entire Division of Food Production, Forestry and Fisheries, the total number of daily-paid workers is 522.

Ms. Ramdial: Thank you very much, Minister.

Madam Chairman: Member for Caroni Central.

Dr. Tewarie: Item 01 and 02, Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance, 7.3 and Wages and COLA, \$32 million, are these sums all for office workers in agriculture or office and field workers?

Hon. Imbert: Everybody, in and out, inside and outside, field and office.

Dr. Tewarie: In office and field.

Hon. Imbert: Field and office.

Dr. Tewarie: Okay.

Madam Chairman: Member for Oropouche West.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: I would just like to follow up with the question that Caroni Central asked, how many persons that involve, in and outside, inside and outside? What is the total number?

Hon. Imbert: It is not disaggregated into this single division. What I can tell you is that in the Division of Food Production, Forestry and Fisheries, the permanent establishment is 336 of which 121 positions are being filled, that would be monthly

paid, and then in daily-rated there are 522 persons. So you are talking 643 persons in the Division of Food Production, Forestry and Fisheries.

11.15 a.m.

Mr. Chairman: Item 003: Marketing; Item 004: National Resources and Forestry; Item 005: Marine Resources and Fisheries.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Madam Chair, 004.

Madam Chairman: Sub-Head 02: Good and Services. Item 001: General Administration; Item 002: Agriculture.

Ms. Ramdial: What page are you on?

Madam Chairman: Page 36.

Ms. Ramdial: Could we go back to page 35, please, 002?

Mr. Imbert: Just so?

Ms. Ramdial: Madam Chair was moving fast.

Madam Chairman: So we are in Item 002: Agriculture.

Ms. Ramdial: Yes.

Madam Chairman: Item number?

Ms. Ramdial: 002: Goods and Services, under 08 line, Minister.

Madam Chairman: No, no, no. You are under General Administration then?

Ms. Ramdial: Yes.

Madam Chairman: But I am in Agriculture.

Ms. Ramdial: Can we go back, Madam Chair?

Hon. Imbert: No.

Madam Chairman: One minute please. What Item is that?

Ms. Ramdial: Line Item 08: Rent, Lease, Office Accommodation and Storage.

Madam Chairman: All right, I will allow it. Members, just try and pay attention.

Ms. Ramdial: Thank you very much, yes.

Madam Chairman: As I said, I know the lines are narrow, but let us try and pay attention, 08.

Ms. Ramdial: Minister, I am seeing an estimate of 2.8 million for Rent, Lease, Office Accommodation and Storage. Can you clarify for this amount, how many buildings or is it one?

Hon. Imbert: Four buildings, Tobago cold storage and warehouse, Shaw Park, then administrative offices, department offices, et cetera, in Glen Road. Four buildings in all.

Ms. Ramdial: Thank you. Madam Chair, line Item 16, Contract Employment. Minister, I am seeing an allocation for 8.2 million. Exactly how many officers for contract employment?

Hon. Imbert: We do not have it disaggregated. I can get that for you.

Ms. Ramdial: Total? So what is the total?

Hon. Imbert: Now remember, look at the top of the page, you would see Divisions 004: Food Production. So they have numbers of contract employees for the entire division which would be 111. They do not have it disaggregated among fisheries, natural resources, forestry, et cetera.

Ms. Ramdial: Any vacancies?

Hon. Imbert: Thirty-four.

Ms. Ramdial: Okay, thank you. Madam Chair, line Item 22: Short-term Employment, I am seeing an allocation for half a million. How many positions and are there any vacancies?

Hon. Imbert: Three so far and there would be vacancies.

Ms. Ramdial: Three so far. Okay, thank you.

Madam Chairman: Item 002: Agriculture. We are on page 36.

Ms. Ramdial: Line Item 43: Security Services, 5.5 million. Can you clarify a bit on the security services?

Hon. Imbert: There would be the four buildings that we spoke about that are rented at Shaw Park and Glen Road, and there are other buildings the THA owns which are not rented where this service is required.

Ms. Ramdial: Okay. Thank you very much.

Madam Chairman: Item 003: Marketing.

Ms. Ramdial: Line Item 37: Janitorial Services, 400,000. Can you clarify also for that? How many buildings?

Hon. Imbert: That is for the property in Shaw Park.

Ms. Ramdial: Line Item 43: Security Services at 600,000. Is it for the same property?

Hon. Imbert: Correct is right.

Ms. Ramdial: Thank you very much. Just to confirm, Minister. I know you told me that the overall figure covers all of the division for line Item 16: Contract Employment at three million. That is inclusive of the original figure you gave?

Hon. Imbert: The figure I gave originally—

Ms. Ramdial: Yes.

Hon. Imbert:—had nothing to do with Contract Employment. The figure I gave originally related to public officers in establishment positions and daily-rated workers on the daily-rated cadre. If you want assistance in terms of the terminology, you can speak to Couva South.

Ms. Ramdial: No, no. Then I will ask, Madam Chair, on line Item 16: Contract Employment, I am seeing a figure of three million. How many positions under

marketing?

Hon. Imbert: It is not disaggregated. I just said that.

Ms. Ramdial: You know that is what I was asking before, Madam Chair.

Hon. Imbert: No, no, no. I gave you the total for the—I said look at the top of the page, Division 04.

Ms. Ramdial: Yes, you gave me the total.

Hon. Imbert: I gave you the total of contract officers, public officers, daily-rated workers.

Ms. Ramdial: And that is why I asked if this particular line Item was inclusive of the numbers you gave me.

Hon. Imbert: If I said I gave you the total, by definition each one is included.

Ms. Ramdial: Madam Chair, can we move on? Thank you very much.

Hon. Imbert: You are just asking question for no reason.

Ms. Ramdial: Thank you very much, Minister. Let us move on.

Hon. Imbert: You are just being silly.

Madam Chairman: Member for Diego Martin North/West, let us stop with the adjectives.

Hon. Imbert: North/West? There is no North/West.

Madam Chairman: North/East. Let us stop with the adjectives please. Item 004: Natural Resources and Forestry.

Dr. Gopeesingh: It is time to get him out.

Hon. Imbert: After eight elections, try again. I know you campaigned against me last election and you failed.

Ms. Ramdial: Line Item 43: Security Services at \$1.3 million. Can you clarify?

Hon. Imbert: I will still give water to your constituents.

Madam Chairman: Line Item 43.

Hon. Imbert: Glen Road.

Ms. Ramdial: Glen Road, that is one building. For one building on Glen Road?

Hon. Imbert: Three locations on Glen Road.

Ms. Ramdial: Thank you very much, Minister.

Madam Chairman: Item 005: Marine Resources and Fisheries.

Ms. Ramdial: Thank you, Madam Chair. Minister, line Item 43: Security Services again, 1.6 million. How many buildings?

Hon. Imbert: All over Tobago.

Ms. Ramdial: How many? Do you have a number or figure?

Hon. Imbert: Several.

Ms. Ramdial: Do you have a figure?

Mr. Imbert: No.

Ms. Ramdial: Can you provide it in writing at a later date?

Hon. Imbert: Yes.

Ms. Ramdial: Thank you very much, Minister.

Madam Chairman: Sub-Head 03: Minor Equipment Purchases. Item 001: General Administration; Item 002: Agriculture; Item 003: Marketing.

Ms. Ramdial: Thank you, Madam Chair. Line Item 01: Vehicles. In 2019 you had a revised estimate of 425,000, this year you have an estimate of one million. Can you tell how many vehicles were purchased last year, how many you intend to purchase this year with this allocation?

Hon. Imbert: The Division intends to purchase two vehicles in this year.

Ms. Ramdial: Two vehicles? Any were purchased last year?

Hon. Imbert: I do not have the precise details but I am told yes. The vehicles this

year include one flatbed trailer truck, which you would appreciate is quite an expensive piece of equipment.

Ms. Ramdial: Thank you, Minister.

Madam Chairman: Item 003: Marketing; Item 004: Natural Resources and Forestry.

Ms. Ramdial: Line Item 001: Vehicles. Minister, you have an allocation of half a million here for 2020. Exactly how many vehicles you intend to purchase?

Hon. Imbert: We will provide you with that information.

Ms. Ramdial: Were any purchased last year for 275,000?

Hon. Imbert: We will provide you with that information.

Ms. Ramdial: Thank you very much, Minister.

Madam Chairman: Item 005: Marine Resources and Fisheries.

Ms. Ramdial: Line Item 01: Vehicles, again Minister. Last year you had a revised estimate at 250,000. This year you have it at half a million. How many vehicles were purchased last year and how many you intend to purchase this year?

Hon. Imbert: I am advised that none were purchased in 2019, and we will provide you with the info with respect to 2020.

Ms. Ramdial: Okay, thank you very much.

Madam Chairman: Sub-Head 04: Current Transfers and Subsidies. Item 005: Non-profit Institutions; Item 007: Households; Item 009: Other Transfers; Item 008: Subsidies.

Dr. Tewarie: Could I ask a couple questions on these to the Minister? Which agricultural incentive programme is this? This is an ongoing incentive programme similar in Tobago to what the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries mentioned yesterday in Trinidad?

Hon. Imbert: Yes.

Dr. Tewarie: Right. The second thing is that I see for Tobago Agricultural Society you have two sets of subsidies. One is 200,000 and the other one is one million. Can you explain what the difference is?

Hon. Imbert: The first one is apiculture. It is a typographical error.

Dr. Tewarie: And the other one is what, general?

Hon. Imbert: General agriculture. I do not need to tell you what apiculture is?

Dr. Tewarie: You want to tell me? I think I know.

Hon. Imbert: No, do not want to tell you. I just want to know if I need to tell you.

Madam Chairman: Item 009: Other Transfers.

Ms. Ramdial: Minister, line Item 01: Tobago Cassava Products Limited. I am seeing an allocation for two million in 2020. Exactly what is this allocation for?

Hon. Imbert: It is administrative payments.

Ms. Ramdial: Minister, can you also tell me how much revenue this particular limited generates?

Hon. Imbert: We will provide it for you.

Ms. Ramdial: How many employees at this particular company?

Hon. Imbert: Nine.

Ms. Ramdial: Thank you very much. Madam Chair, line Item 02: Fish Processing Company of Tobago. I am seeing an allocation for three million. What is this allocation for?

Hon. Imbert: Same thing, administrative expenses.

Ms. Ramdial: Do you have an idea of how much revenue this company generates?

Hon. Imbert: That will be provided.

Ms. Ramdial: And how many employees at this particular company?

Hon. Imbert: Will be provided.

M.s Ramdial: Thank you very much.

Hon. Imbert: You want to know how much fish they process too?

Ms. Ramdial: Yes, if possible.

Hon. Imbert: That will be provided.

Ms. Ramdial: You are welcome. You are being very kind today.

Hon. Imbert: You want to know the type of fish as well?

Madam Chairman: Division 05: Tourism, Culture and Transportation. Sub-Head 01: Personnel Expenditure. Item 001: General Administration; Item 002: Tourism.

Ms. Ramdial: Minister, line Item 29: Overtime for Daily-Rated Workers. I am seeing 1.3 million. How many workers, daily-rated workers?

Hon. Imbert: There are in the entire Division a total of 236 daily-rated workers. I will not be able to give you at this time a breakdown for a unit by unit within the Division of Tourism, Culture and Transportation. I simply have an overall number of 236 daily-rated workers in this Division.

Ms. Ramdial: Thank you very much, Minister.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Madam Chair, the same thing on 02. Minister, I heard you just—is it that you do not have the information on how many permanent positions and how many vacancies you have there too, under line Item 02?

Hon. Imbert: I never said that, you know.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Okay, well how many permanent—

Hon. Imbert: What I said I have for the entire Division, and in the entire Division

there are 85 establishment positions for monthly-paid officers, of which 44 have been filled and 41 are vacant, and there are 236 daily-rated workers in the entire Division of Tourism, Culture and Transportation.

Dr. Gopeesingh: All right, thank you for that.

Madam Chairman: Item 007: Culture. Sub-Head 02: Goods and Services. Item 001: General Administration.

Ms. Ramdial: Thank you, Madam Chair. Minister, line Item 08: Rent, Lease Office Accommodation and Storage. I am seeing an allocation for two-point 3.2 million. Exactly how many buildings or offices for this amount?

Hon. Imbert: Three.

Ms. Ramdial: Okay, thank you very much. Madam Chair, line Item 16: Contract Employment. I am seeing an allocation for \$7.2 million. How many contract officers?

Hon. Imbert: Ninety-nine.

Ms. Ramdial: Ninety-nine. Any vacant positions?

Hon. Imbert: Twenty.

Ms. Ramdial: Twenty. Okay, thank you very much. Madam Chair, line Item 37: Janitorial Services. I am seeing an allocation for 500,000.

11.30 a.m.

Hon. Imbert: It is for all of the buildings.

Ms. Ramdial: How many?

Hon. Imbert: I just said three.

Ms. Ramdial: Three. Okay. Thank you.

Hon. Imbert: It is the same three.

Ms. Ramdial: Line Item 43: Security Services, 1 million. Is it for all three

buildings also?

Hon. Imbert: Yes.

Ms. Ramdial: Okay. Thank you, Madam Chair.

Madam Chairman: So we move on. Item 002: Tourism; Item 006: Transport.

Ms. Ramdial: No. No. Madam Chair, 02: Goods and Services.

Madam Chairman: Okay. So I want us to try and keep up. Okay? Goods and Services.

Ms. Ramdial: Thank you, Madam Chair. Minister, line Item 16: Contract Employment, I am seeing an allocation for 4 million. How many positions? And are there any vacancies?

Hon. Imbert: As I said before, I have only a total, not disaggregated, and therefore, if you ask me, unit by unit, I will be unable to answer you now.

Ms. Ramdial: Line Item 43, Madam Chair, Security Services.

Hon. Imbert: “Ah hadda allyuh, allyuh doh hear”.

Ms. Ramdial: I am seeing an allocation for 4 million under Tourism. How many buildings does this amount cover for security services?

Hon. Imbert: It is the three buildings that I just identified plus other facilities such as on the beaches and so on, lifeguard facilities and so on.

Ms. Ramdial: Okay. Thank you very much. Madam Chair, line Item 62: Promotions, Publicity and Printing. I am seeing an 8 million allocation for 2020. Can you give us a little bit of information with respect to this?

Madam Chairman: 62: Promotions, Publicity and Printing.

Hon. Imbert: What exactly do you want to know?

Ms. Ramdial: Is this part of your international marketing strategy for tourism?
[Crosstalk] Yeah.

Hon. Imbert: We will provide it, but I am told the marketing is outsourced, international marketing is outsourced.

Ms. Ramdial: Okay.

Dr. Tewarie: Is that separate from this, Minister, if you do not mind?

Hon. Imbert: So I am told, but I will give you the breakdown.

Dr. Tewarie: Okay.

Madam Chairman: All right. So we move on, we are at Item 006: Transport; Item 007: Culture.

Ms. Ramdial: Thank you, Madam Chair. Line Item—now, line Item 91: Tobago Heritage Festival, I am seeing an allocation for 20 million. Can you clarify a bit exactly what this sum is for—the breakdown? Yeah.

Hon. Imbert: Look on page 44, the breakdown is on page 44.

Ms. Ramdial: Yes. But there is an allocation for 8 million for Tobago Heritage Festival in the breakdown; exactly what for this 8 million? And is it also to pay artistes, and artistes who have not been paid? Mr. Gerard Balfour of the THA?

Hon. Imbert: I do not have those details. I will get them for you. Have you ever been to a Tobago Heritage Festival?

Ms. Ramdial: Many times.

Hon. Imbert: Okay.

Ms. Ramdial: The next time I am going I will let you know.

Hon. Imbert: Then you know what it is for.

Ms. Ramdial: So you do not have the breakdown for the 8 million. Right? You will provide it at a later date.

Hon. Imbert: I have just said that.

Ms. Ramdial: All right. And the Tobago Folk Festival, Minister, do you have the

breakdown for that?—because I am seeing an allocation for 3 million.

Hon. Imbert: I will get you a breakdown on all of them to pre-empt your further questions.

Ms. Ramdial: Thank you very much, Minister.

Madam Chairman: Okay. Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Line Item 90, Minister, Folk and Arts Festival, an allocation of 2 million, but in 91, in the allocation of 20 million for the Tobago Heritage Festival, you have an allocation of 3 million there for Tobago Folk Festival. So the 3 million for the Tobago Folk Festival under line Item 91, how is it different from the line Item 90 which is the Folk and Arts Festival for 2 million. There is a subtle difference somewhere? Could you just tell us what is the difference? One is the Folk and Arts Festival for 2 million and the other is the Folk Festival for 3 million.

Hon. Imbert: I am advised that Item 90 is for trainers, tutors who train the persons, and the other Item is for the actual festival itself.

Dr. Gopeesingh: All right. You answered it, it is for training.

Madam Chairman: Sub-Head 03: Minor Equipment Purchases. Item 001: General Administration. Member for Couva North.

Ms. Ramdial: Thank you, Ma'am. Minister, line Item 01: Vehicles, I am seeing an allocation for 300,000 in 2020. Exactly how many vehicles do you intend to purchase? And also last year there was an allocation for 300,000. How many vehicles were purchased then?

Hon. Imbert: The plan is to purchase four in 2020. I do not have the 2019 data, but I will get it for you.

Ms. Ramdial: Okay. Thank you very much.

Madam Chairman: Item 002: Tourism.

Ms. Ramdial: Thank you, Madam Chair. Minister, line Item 01: Vehicles. In 2019 we had 385,000 being allocated, in 2020 we have 500,000 being allocated. How many vehicles were purchased last year? And how many you intend to purchase this year?

Hon. Imbert: The aggregate, the number I gave you was a total, four for the entire Division of Tourism and Transportation. One for the lifeguard unit, one for the Office of the Secretary, one for the Department of Culture. Actually two for the Department of Culture, so a bus, a SUV; a Fortuner, I think that is an SUV as well, and a Nissan Frontier, I believe that is a pickup.

Ms. Ramdial: Okay. Thank you.

Madam Chairman: Okay. So we could move on? Item 006: Transport; Item 007: Culture. Sub-Head 04: Current Transfers and Subsidies. Item 005: Non-Profit Institutions. Member for Couva North.

Ms. Ramdial: Thank you, Madam Chair. Minister, line Item 01: Contribution to Non Profit Organizations. I am seeing an allocation of 500,000. How many of these organizations?

Hon. Imbert: Twenty-one.

Ms. Ramdial: Twenty-one. And, Madam Chair, line Item 02: Assistance to Cultural Groups. I am seeing an allocation for a 1 million. Exactly how many groups?

Hon. Imbert: Five received in 2019.

Ms. Ramdial: How many to receive this year?

Hon. Imbert: It depends on requests.

Ms. Ramdial: Okay. And line Item 03: National Days and Festivals, another 1million allocated. Exactly—give me some clarification with respect to this?

Hon. Imbert: That is for what it says it is, National Days and Festivals, for example—

Ms. Ramdial: So exactly how many festivals?

Hon. Imbert:—for example—

Ms. Ramdial: Oh. Sorry.

Hon. Imbert:—Independence Day, Republic Day—

Ms. Ramdial: And what about the festivals?

Hon. Imbert:—Divali, Eid—

Ms. Ramdial: Okay. Eid.

Hon. Imbert:—Spiritual Baptist. Do you want me to give you a complete list of days and festivals? Do you want the whole thing? All? Do you not want them to celebrate Divali and Eid?

Ms. Ramdial: No. No. No. Minister, do not put words in my mouth. That is not what I said. I am asking for you to account to the country of Trinidad and Tobago. I do not know why he has to be like this, Madam Chair.

Hon. Imbert: Like what? Like what?

Madam Chairman: Okay. So—

Ms. Ramdial: Very condescending.

Hon. Imbert: I am condescending? You are being rude and disrespectful; rude and disrespectful.

Madam Chairman: Order! Order! Item 007: Households; Item 009: Other Transfers.

Ms. Ramdial: Thank you, Madam Chair. Minister, line Item 13: a Rolling Three-Year Tourism Plan, I am seeing an allocation of 150,000. No. I am seeing an allocation of 40 million. Sorry. Could you give me a little clarification with respect

to this?

Hon. Imbert: This is not new.

Ms. Ramdial: I know that.

Hon. Imbert: It is the same thing last year. This is airlift.

Ms. Ramdial: For airlift.

Hon. Imbert: Airlift, planes, things that fly.

Ms. Ramdial: All right. So since we are on airlift, Madam Chair, there was an issue with Virgin Atlantic last year where 10 million went missing. Do you have an update with respect to that?

Hon. Imbert: No.

Ms. Ramdial: Is that 10 million covered for in this 40 million?

Hon. Imbert: No.

Ms. Ramdial: Has that investigation been concluded?

Hon. Imbert: No.

Ms. Ramdial: No?

Hon. Imbert: No means no.

Ms. Ramdial: How soon before we get answers with respect to this—

Hon. Imbert: Which line Item are you on?

Ms. Ramdial:—with this lost 10 million.

Ms. Ramdial: Under this same Rolling Three-Year Tourism Plan with respect to airlift.

Madam Chairman: All right.

Hon. Imbert: My understanding is—

Madam Chairman: I cannot allow that.

Hon. Imbert: No. I can give information on what this is for. In this year 5.5

million for Virgin, 4.8 million for British Airways. Actually, it is two sets for British Airway, three actually: 4.8, 3.5, 7.1, Condor 1.97. Actually, two for Virgin, 5.5 and 5.6; this is for airlift in this fiscal.

Ms. Ramdial: Okay. Thank you. Madam Chair, line Item 16: Assistance to Sport Tourism Organisation and Others. I am seeing an allocation for 2 million. Exactly how many organizations?

Hon. Imbert: Twelve.

Ms. Ramdial: Twelve. Thank you very much. Line Item 17: Tobago Tourism Festivals, I am seeing an allocation of 15.3 million, an increase by 381,000. Which festivals exactly for 15.3 million for Tobago Tourism Festivals.

Hon. Imbert: Tobago Jazz, tourism week, Blue Food, Dragon Boat and sundry other festivals.

Ms. Ramdial: Thank you very much, Minister. Madam Chair, line Item 20: Tobago Tourism Agency Limited, I am seeing an allocation of 20 million for fiscal 2020. Can you give me some clarification with respect to this?

Hon. Imbert: This is the second year this agency has been established. It will be the first this year that just went, first full year of operations. The expenditure projected is for a number of things such as trips to Europe and interaction with travel agencies and so on.

Ms. Ramdial: Okay. Thank you very much, Minister.

Hon. Imbert: And it also involves the hotel association.

Ms. Ramdial: How so?

Hon. Imbert: They go on trips, they have meetings, they bring people to talk to them, they bring tour operators from Germany, from Virgin. They took them to Curaçao in August 2019, and they have interactions with Canada. It is a wide range

of tourism-related activities designed to showcase and market Tobago—

Ms. Ramdial: Very good.

Hon. Imbert:—to promote Tobago as a destination for tourism.

Ms. Ramdial: Very good, I am glad.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Minister, the line Item 17 for which 15.3 million as allocated, and it was said that jazz, Blue Food, tourism week, Dragon Boat, I just wanted to have some clarification. That is separate and distinct from the 20 million for the Tobago Heritage Festival, and 2 million for the Folk and Arts Festivals. They are separate issues.

Hon. Imbert: Well, they have different names.

Dr. Gopeesingh: But are they basically overlapping? Are they the same?

Hon. Imbert: I do not think that Blue Food overlaps with heritage festival.

Dr. Gopeesingh: So we have 20 million for the—15 million there and 22 million on the other side, but the clarity is not there, but perhaps—

Hon. Imbert: There is extreme clarity.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Yeah?

Hon. Imbert: In the list that you are referring to, the word “jazz” does not appear, the word “Blue Food” does not appear, and obviously these are different things.

Dr. Gopeesingh: So that is a total about 37 million that the THA spends in festivals and tourism promotion and so on, plus the 20 million for promotion, that is 57 million.

Hon. Imbert: Yes.

Dr. Gopeesingh: All right.

Madam Chairman: Are you finished? Member for Caroni Central.

Dr. Tewarie: Yeah. Just a quick question, if the Minister would help me. I know

he gave the individual figures for airlift for the various airlines. I did not catch all of them, and I just wondered how much it was? It sounded to me like somewhere between 15 and 20 in total, but if he could just indicate? I mean, I just need to understand.

Hon. Imbert: The information is contained on page 46 under Item 009/13.

Dr. Tewarie: Page 46?

Hon. Imbert: Page 46, 009/13.

Dr. Tewarie: Yeah. I have a little disadvantage because the book that I got, the pages between 40 and 57 are missing.

Hon. Imbert: I am sorry to hear that.

Dr. Tewarie: Okay.

Hon. Imbert: Could we provide the Member with—[*Crosstalk*]

Dr. Tewarie: I will use it.

Hon. Imbert: Okay. But if you run into that problem, again, we can get another book for you.

Madam Chairman: Member for Couva North.

Ms. Ramdial: Thank you, Madam Chair. Under line Item 17: Tobago Tourism Festivals, you mentioned, Minister, that the Tobago Jazz was catered for under this Vote. Can you tell me how much revenue was generated by the Tobago Jazz for 2019?

Hon. Imbert: That will be provided.

Ms. Ramdial: Okay. Thank you.

11.45 a.m.

Madam Chairman: Okay, we are at Item 0—

Ms. Ramdial: You can give me the overall figure.

Madam Chairman: One minute, please. We are at Item 002: Primary, Secondary and Vocational Education.

Ms. Ramdial: Yes.

Madam Chairman: I do not see an Item 16 here. Okay, so in the meantime I will take Caroni—

Ms. Ramdial: Oh, I went way ahead of you. Sorry, Madam Chair.

Hon. Imbert: You are not taking on the Whip.

Madam Chairman: Member for Caroni East.

Ms. Ramdial: I went way ahead, sorry.

Hon. Imbert: Listen to your Whip.

Ms. Ramdial: Do not mind my business.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Minister, could you give a little breakdown, if your team there with you can give you a breakdown of how many positions we have for Primary Schools, Secondary Schools, and Vocational? How many are filled and how many are vacant?

Hon. Imbert: It is not disaggregated like that. I can give you the total number of workers in each category, if you wish.

Dr. Gopeesingh: All right. Go ahead.

Hon. Imbert: There are 399 positions for public officers of which 144 have been filled, 255 are vacant, and with respect to daily-rated workers, there are 184 in this particular Division. And this underscores the point why they have to go for Contract Employment, because look at the amount of vacant positions in this Division, out of 399 positions, 255 are vacant, but they have no choice but to hire on contract.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Yes, but it needs to work on it, the Public Service Commission.

Hon. Imbert: It is not their fault.

Dr. Gopeesingh:—you have to keep pestering them.

Hon. Imbert: Do not blame them, you could not do it.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Yeah, we did it. I did, not all the vacancies.

Madam Chairman: Item 003: Library Services; Item 004: School Feeding Programme. [*Crosstalk*] I do not mind the conversation, once you are not competing with me. Item 007: Happy Haven School - Tobago Council for Haven School; Item 008: Tobago School for the Deaf, Speech and Language Impaired. Sub-Head 02: Goods and Services. Item 001: General Administration. Member for Couva North.

Ms. Ramdial: Thank you, Madam Chair. Minister, line Item 16, Contract Employment, I am seeing an allocation of 10.5 million. Exactly how many positions, and are there vacancies?

Hon. Imbert: Once again I would have to give you the total.

Ms. Ramdial: That would be great.

Hon. Imbert: There are 551 Contract Positions, of which 477 have been filled, 74 vacant.

Ms. Ramdial: Thank you very much.

Hon. Imbert: I cannot break it down into each unit.

Ms. Ramdial: Thank you.

Madam Chairman: Item 002: Primary, Secondary and Vocational Education. Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: The Contract Employment under 16, approximately 50 million. That is for what, Minister?

Hon. Imbert: I am tired, you know.

Dr. Gopeesingh: No.

Hon. Imbert: I just said I cannot break it down unit by unit. I have given a total.

Dr. Gopeesingh: No, I was referring, if you go back to 47, 002, that is where your answer was given, but this is a new area here under 002, page 49, Contract Employment.

Hon. Imbert: I gave you a total. If you look at the top of the page, this is Division 06. I did this with Division 05, and Division 04, and Division 03, and Division 02, and Division 01. I said I will give you a total of Contract Employment for the entire Division, and I am unable at this time to break it down unit by unit.

Dr. Gopeesingh: All right. Okay.

Hon. Imbert: This is in now the 21st time I have said that.

Dr. Gopeesingh: I appreciate your dilemma and I accept your dilemma.

Hon. Imbert: Twenty first time I have said that.

Dr. Gopeesingh: It is 22nd for my case.

Madam Chairman: Okay. So Item 003: Library Services.

Ms. Ramdial: I am still under 02. I had a question under 02.

Madam Chairman: Member, you are?

Ms. Ramdial: Janitorial Services, Ma'am. Line Item 37, Minister, I am seeing an allocation of 13 million. How many schools in all does this cover, you have a figure?

Hon. Imbert: No.

Ms. Ramdial: Okay, can you provide at a later date?

Hon. Imbert: Yes.

Ms. Ramdial: And for line Item 43, Security Services, 25.5 million, the same

please? The same figures.

Hon. Imbert: No and yes, again.

Ms. Ramdial: Thank you.

Madam Chairman: Item 003: Library Services; Item 007: Tobago Council for Handicapped Children - Happy Haven School; Item 008: Tobago School for Deaf, Speech and Language Impaired.

Sub-Head 03: Minor Equipment Purchases. Item 001: General Administration; Item 002: Primary, Secondary and Vocational Education; Item 003: Library Services; Item 007: Tobago Council for Handicapped Children - Happy Haven School; Item 008: Tobago School for the Deaf, Speech and Language Impaired.

Sub-Head 04: Current Transfers and Subsidies. We are at page 53. Item 005: Non-Profit Institutions; Item 006: Educational Institutions. Member for Couva North.

Ms. Ramdial: Thank you, Madam Chair. Minister, line Item 03, Trade Centres, I am seeing an allocation of 12.6 million for 2020. Can you tell me exactly how many Trade Centres and why we have that decrease by 300,000?

Hon. Imbert: There are two centres.

Ms. Ramdial: Two centres.

Hon. Imbert: I will have to get back to you on the decrease.

Ms. Ramdial: Okay, thank you very much, Minister.

Madam Chairman: Anything else there?

Ms. Ramdial: "Mm-mm."

Madam Chairman: Item 007: Households.

Ms. Ramdial: Yeah.

Madam Chairman: Member for Couva North.

Ms. Ramdial: Thank you, Madam Chair. Line Item 01, Minister, the School Feeding Programme, I am seeing an allocation of 37 million for 2020, an increase by 2 million. Exactly what does this increase cover?

Hon. Imbert: It is not an increase. The original allocation for '19 was 39. The allocation for 2020 is 37. It is a decrease of the original allocation. This is simply an estimate, based on the number of children who require meals.

Ms. Ramdial: Okay. Thank you.

Hon. Imbert: Which is obvious.

Ms. Ramdial: Line Item 09, Madam Chair, Early Childhood Care. I am seeing an allocation of 500,000, an increase by 400,000. Can you explain this?

Hon. Imbert: Where is that? Let me get back to you on that.

Ms. Ramdial: Thank you, Minister.

Hon. Imbert: But notice it is the same as the 2019.

Ms. Ramdial: So, is that arrears being brought forward to 2020, because you had a Revised Estimate of 100,000 in 2019?

Hon. Imbert: I will get back to you on that. I told you that.

Ms. Ramdial: Okay. Well, I am just responding to what you are saying, you know.

Hon. Imbert: I am simply saying it is the same as last year.

Ms. Ramdial: Okay, Minister, let us move on.

Hon. Imbert: I wish you would. I wish you would.

Madam Chairman: Item 009, Other Transfers.

Hon. Imbert: You have 30 more pages to go through.

Ms. Ramdial: 009 under Other Transfers, 01, Basic Grants. I am seeing an

allocation of 11 million, an increase by 500,000. Minister, can you clarify?

Hon. Imbert: It is not an increase from the original 2019 figure. The original 2019 is 12.5 million, this is now 11.

Ms. Ramdial: Minister, in the budget Estimates in front of me, under the line increase, there is an increase by 500,000. Can you appreciate what I am saying?

Hon. Imbert: It is an increase over the Revised Estimate, but it is a decrease over the original Estimate.

Ms. Ramdial: Yes, but I am dealing with 2020.

Hon. Imbert: Yes, so am I.

Ms. Ramdial: Okay, so can you clarify?

Hon. Imbert: It is an Estimate.

Ms. Ramdial: The Basic Grants?

Hon. Imbert: It is an Estimate.

Ms. Ramdial: How many persons benefit from these grants?

Hon. Imbert: It is for schools.

Ms. Ramdial: Yes, how many schools then?

Hon. Imbert: Three.

Ms. Ramdial: Thank you very much, Minister. Line Item 07, Tobago Hospitality and Tourism Institute, I am seeing an allocation for 6 million. Exactly what this allocation is for?

Hon. Imbert: 521.

Ms. Ramdial: 521?

Hon. Imbert: You are talking about necessitous students, what are you talking about?

Ms. Ramdial: Tobago Hospitality and Tourism Institute.

Hon. Imbert: Oh, I am so sorry. This Institute offers programmes in Culinary Arts, Tourism and Hospitality, and it is seeking to become accredited.

Ms. Ramdial: Okay. All right, line Item 0—

Hon. Imbert: I am coming back to the statement on Grants. It is actually for three schools plus all Anglican Schools and all cleaners at all Government Assisted Denominational Schools.

Ms. Ramdial: Okay, thank you.

Hon. Imbert: As in Trinidad.

Ms. Ramdial: Okay, and line Item 08, Madam Chair, Tobago Information Technology Limited. I am seeing an allocation of 5 million for 2020. Can you clarify a bit on this?

Hon. Imbert: It was somewhere else. It was somewhere else before.

Ms. Ramdial: It was what?

Hon. Imbert: It was way in Division 02. Look on the right hand side in the columns.

Ms. Ramdial: Yes, yes, I know, it is a transferred—it is being explained here. I am asking what the allocation is for. Salaries? For operating costs? Services—everything? Yes?

Hon. Imbert: Just a second. I am going to 02 which is what you should have done, and I am looking under Other Transfers, and it is there, the expenditure in 2018 was 5.95. The figure in 2019 Estimate was five, the Revised Estimate was five, which is for all those expenses. It is for all the expenses associated with this entity.

Ms. Ramdial: Thank you.

Madam Chairman: Member for Caroni Central.

Dr. Tewarie: I pass, Madam Chairman.

Madam Chairman: All right, okay, so we now move on to Division 07 - Community Development, Enterprise Development and Labour. Sub-Head 01: Personnel Expenditure. Item 001: General Administration.

Ms. Ramdial: Yes.

Madam Chairman: Member for Couva North.

Ms. Ramdial: Thank you, Madam Chair, under—02, sorry, Goods and Services.

Madam Chairman: Okay. Item 002: Community Development; Item 004: Labour. Member for Couva North, are you under Labour?

Ms. Ramdial: No, I am under 002, Good and Services.

Madam Chairman: Okay, fine. Sub-Head 02: Goods and Services. Item 001: General Administration.

Ms. Ramdial: Thank you, Madam Chair. Line Item 16, Minister, Contract Employment, an allocation of 3 million. Can you give me the overall figure for this Division?

Hon. Imbert: There are 156 positions, 83 filled, 73 vacant, contract.

Ms. Ramdial: Okay, thank you very much.

Hon. Imbert: And that is for the entire Division.

Ms. Ramdial: Entire Division, yes.

Hon. Imbert: And I do not have—

Ms. Ramdial: I hear you.

Hon. Imbert: Member for Couva North and Member for Caroni East, I do not have a breakdown by unit.

Ms. Ramdial: I hear you.

Hon. Imbert: So, “doh” ask, and I can get it, so “doh” ask that either.

Madam Chairman: We move on?

Ms. Ramdial: Yes.

Madam Chairman: Are we on to Item 002?

Ms. Ramdial: Yes.

Madam Chairman: Item 002: Community Development. Member for Couva North.

Ms. Ramdial: Thank you, Madam Chair. Minister, line Item 08, Rent/Lease - Office Accommodation and Storage, an allocation of 5.4 million, exactly how many buildings for Community Development?

Hon. Imbert: That would be provided.

Ms. Ramdial: Okay, thank you.

12.00 noon

Madam Chairman: Item 004: Labour; Item 005: Occupational Safety and Health; Item 006: Business Development Unit. Sub-Head 03. We are at page 59: Minor Equipment Purchases. Item 001: General Administration; Item 002: Community Development; Item 004: Labour; Item 005: Occupational Safety and Health; Item 006: Business Development Unit. Sub-Head 04. We are at page 60: Current Transfers and Subsidies.

Ms. Ramdial: Yes, Ma'am.

Madam Chairman: Item 005: Non-Profit Institutions. Member for Couva North.

Ms. Ramdial: Thank you, Madam Chair. Minister, Line Item 01: Small Grants. I am seeing an allocation of \$400,000. Exactly how many persons benefit from these small grants?

Hon. Imbert: Just one person got a grant last year.

Ms. Ramdial: Just one person. And how many intended for this year?

Hon. Imbert: It depends on application and process.

Ms. Ramdial: Okay. And what is this grant usually for?

Hon. Imbert: For various cultural and community-oriented activities.

Ms. Ramdial: Okay. Thank you very much, Minister.

Madam Chairman: Item 007: Households; Item 009: Other Transfers. Division: 08, Infrastructure, Quarries and the Environment. We are at page 62. Sub-Head 01: Personnel Expenditure. Item 001: General Administration; Item 002, Maintenance of Roads; Item 003, Maintenance of Buildings; Item 004: Transport; Item 005: Electrical Inspectorate; Item 007: Mechanical Shop; Item 009: The Environment. Sub-Head 02: Goods and Services. We are at page 64.

Ms. Ramdial: Yes, Ma'am.

Madam Chairman: Item 001: General Administration. Member for Couva North.

Ms. Ramdial: Thank you, Madam Chair. Minister, line Item 16: Contract Employment. I am seeing an allocation for \$16 million. Can you give me the total figure for this particular Division?

Hon. Imbert: 181 positions; 85 filled, 96 vacant. And I do not have a breakdown unit by unit.

Ms. Ramdial: Understood, Minister.

Hon. Imbert: Member for Couva North and Member for Caroni East, please do not ask me, but I will provide it.

Ms. Ramdial: Yes. Thank you.

Madam Chairman: Item 002: Maintenance of Roads—

Hon. Imbert: They dislike Tobago intensely. “Dey doh like Tobago. Dey hate Tobago.”

Madam Chairman:—Item 003: Maintenance of Buildings. Member for Couva

North. [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. Imbert: “Dey doh want Tobago tuh get one cent.”

Madam Chairman: Member for Couva North?

Ms. Ramdial: No, I am okay. Go ahead.

Madam Chairman: Item 004: Transport Division; Item 005: Electrical Inspectorate; Item 007: Mechanical Shop; Item 009: The Environment. Sub-Head 03: Minor Equipment Purchases, page 67. Item 001: General Administration; Item 002: Maintenance of Roads; Item 003: Maintenance of Buildings; Item 004: Transport; Item 007: Mechanical Workshop; Item 009: the Environment. Member for Caroni East, you are failing me down at that part. You are failing me. Member for Couva North.

Ms. Ramdial: Yes, Ma'am. Thank you very much. Line Item 01: Vehicles. I am seeing an allocation of \$540,000 for the 2019 Revised Estimate and \$540,000 for the 2020 Estimate for Vehicles. Exactly how many vehicles were purchased last year and how many do you intend to purchase this year?

Hon. Imbert: This year the Division intends to purchase two backhoe loaders and two dump trucks.

Ms. Ramdial: Was anything purchased last year?

Hon. Imbert: I “doh” have that information at this time, but we will give it to you.

Ms. Ramdial: Thank you.

Madam Chairman: Okay. So we go on to Sub-Head 04: Current Transfers and Subsidies; Item 005: Non-Profit Institutions; Item 007: Households; Item 009: Other Transfers. Division 10: Health, Wellness and Family Development. We are at page 70. Sub-Head 01: Personnel Expenditure; Item 001: General Administration; Item 002: Hospitals; Item 003: Health Centres; Item 004: Public

Health and the Environment; Item 005: Social Services. Sub-Head 02: Goods and Services, page 71.

Ms. Ramdial: Yes, Ma'am.

Madam Chairman: Item 001: General Administration. Member for Couva North.

Ms. Ramdial: Thank you, Madam Chair. Minister, Line Item 16: Contract Employment, an allocation of \$8.7 million. Can you give me a total figure for the Division and how many vacancies exist?

Hon. Imbert: There are 412 contract positions; 272 have been filled; 140 are vacant. And Member for Couva North and Member for Caroni East, I do not have a breakdown unit by unit, but it will be provided. Please do not ask me for it.

Ms. Ramdial: Thank you very much, Minister.

Madam Chairman: Anything else under here, Member for Couva North?

Hon. Imbert:—for the 27th time.

Ms. Ramdial: No, Ma'am.

Madam Chairman: Okay. So Item 002: Hospital; Item 003: Health Centres; Item 004: Public Health and the Environment; Item 005: Social Services; Item 007: Probation Services; Item 008: Litter Eradication Programme; Item 009: Gender Affairs. Sub-Head 03—we are at page 75—Minor Equipment Purchases. Item 001: General Administration: Item 003: Health Centres.

Ms. Ramdial: Yes, Ma'am.

Madam Chairman: Member for Couva North.

Ms. Ramdial: Thank you, Madam Chair. Minister, Line Item 01: Vehicles, I am seeing an allocation in 2019 for \$675,000 and the 2020 Estimate for \$281,000. Can you tell me how many vehicles were purchased last year and how many you intend to purchase this year?

Hon. Imbert: I do not know, what is your fascination with vehicles for Tobago, “yuh doh” want them to have vehicles?

Ms. Ramdial: Minister, I was elected into this Parliament by the people of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*] It is my duty to ask these questions. We are examining the budget estimates. I do not understand why you are giving me trouble to answer. Why are you doing this? [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. Imbert: You were elected by the people of Trinidad.

Ms. Ramdial: This is public money.

Hon. Imbert: You seem to dislike Tobagonians.

Ms. Ramdial: No. That is not true, and every right-thinking person can see where you are going with that statement.

Hon. Imbert: Including all Tobagonians—

Ms. Ramdial: You are being riotous in your statements.

Hon. Imbert:—who know that you do not like them.

Ms. Ramdial: Madam Chair, can he answer my question, please?

Madam Chairman: All right, so, next, Member—

Hon. Imbert: So, therefore—

Madam Chairman: Yes, let us hear the answer.

Hon. Imbert:—for Tobago, the THA intends to purchase one compactor for the public health department and a 4x4 SUV for the office of the County Medical Officer of Health. And even though you do not like them, I am sure they will provide services if you go there.

Ms. Ramdial: Madam Chair, let me make it clear that I love the people of Tobago.

Hon. Imbert: Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha.

Ms. Ramdial: That is why I am asking these questions. It is in their best interest

that they know how these moneys are spent.

Hon. Imbert: Joke. Joke. Joke.

Ms. Ramdial: The taxpayers' dollars.

Hon. Imbert: Joke. Joke. Joke.

Madam Chairman: All right. So, Member for Diego Martin North/East, the Member for Couva North has explained her interest of Tobago. Let us move on.

Hon. Imbert: I “doh” believe her.

Madam Chairman: Item 004: Public Health and the Environment.

Ms. Ramdial: Thank you, Madam Chair. Line Item 01: Vehicles—

Madam Chairman: Just one minute. Member for Caroni East, I think I am going to have to revoke the appointment. [*Crosstalk*] I will have to revoke the appointment and give somebody else the assignment. I thought with your very senior position of 20 years' service here—that is what I have heard you tell me on several occasions—that you were the right appointee.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Madam Chair—

Hon. Imbert: Twenty years mischief “insida” here.

Madam Chairman: Okay. So we are at Item 004.

Ms. Ramdial: 01. Minister, I am seeing a Revised Estimate for 2019 at \$2 million for Vehicles and then a 2020 Estimate at another \$2 million. Can you tell me how many vehicles were purchased last year; how many you intend to purchase this year?

Hon. Imbert: Same compactor.

Ms. Ramdial: Okay. Was any purchased last year?

Hon. Imbert: I will provide that.

Ms. Ramdial: Thank you very much.

Hon. Imbert: You really do not like Tobago, do you?

Ms. Ramdial: I love Tobago.

Hon. Imbert: In your dreams.

Madam Chairman: Item 005: Social Services—

Ms. Ramdial: More than you.

Hon. Imbert: In your dreams.

Madam Chairman: Item 008: Litter Eradication Programme—

Hon. Imbert: You hate Tobagonians.

Madam Chairman:—Item 009: Gender Affairs. Sub-Head 04: Current Transfers and Subsidies; Item 005: Non-Profit Institutions. We are at page 76.

Ms. Ramdial: Yes, Ma'am.

Madam Chairman: Yes, Member for Couva North.

Ms. Ramdial: Thank you, Madam Chair. Minister, Line Item 06: Special Social Programmes. I am seeing an allocation for \$3 million in 2020. Can you tell me a little bit about this programme?

Hon. Imbert: It is a payment of a subvention to the Family First Foundation and to pay officers under the Community Social Workers Unit.

Ms. Ramdial: Okay, thank you.

Madam Chairman: Item 007: Households; Item 009: Other Transfers.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Madam Chair—

Madam Chairman: Yes, Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Under Line Item 07, the TRHA, the Tobago Regional Health Authority, critically important, can we have a little idea of the composition of that which will bring about a total—

Madam Chairman: Page 77, 07.

Dr. Gopeesingh:—of \$349 million allocated for the TRHA, Tobago Regional? Can we get a little idea of the personnel and how much for personnel; how much for Goods and Services, if you have it? I know it is a difficult thing but you may have it, just like the RHAs in Trinidad.

Hon. Imbert: We will try our best to provide that to you in due course.

Dr. Gopeesingh: You will give us in writing?

Hon. Imbert: Well, certainly not verbally.

Dr. Gopeesingh: All right.

Madam Chairman: Member for Couva North?

Ms. Ramdial: No, Madam.

Madam Chairman: So we move on to Division 11: Settlement, Urban Renewal and Public Utilities. We are at page 78. Sub-Head 01: Personnel Expenditure. Item 001: General Administration. Member for Couva North.

Ms. Ramdial: Thank you, Madam Chair. Minister, Line Item 16: Contract Employment. You have an allocation for \$3.3 million for 2020. Can you give me the total figure for this particular division?

Madam Chairman: Just now, just now. So we are at page—

Ms. Ramdial: 79?

Madam Chairman: 78.

Ms. Ramdial: Oh, sorry.

Madam Chairman: That is okay. Item 002: Settlements; Item 004: Electrical Inspectorate. Sub-Head 02: Goods and Services, page 79. Item 001: General Administration. Is this where you are at, Member for Couva North?

Ms. Ramdial: Yes, Ma'am. Line Item 16: Contract Employment, an allocation of \$3.3 million for 2020. Can you give us the number of officers, number of

vacancies and probably for the entire Division if you can?

Hon. Imbert: There are 105 positions; 71 filled, 34 vacant.

Ms. Ramdial: Okay, thank you.

Madam Chairman: Item 002: Settlements; Item 004: Electrical Inspectorate. We are now at page 81. Sub-Head 03: Minor Equipment Purchases. Item 001: General Administration; Item 002: Settlements; Item 004: Electrical Inspectorate. Sub-Head 04: Current Transfers and Subsidies; Item 001: Households.

Hon. Imbert: Actually, it is 007.

Madam Chairman: Sorry. Item 007: Households. Thank you. Division 13: Sport and Youth Affairs, page 82. Sub-Head 01: Personnel Expenditure. Item 001: General Administration; Item 002: Sport; Item 003: Youth. Sub-Head 02: Goods and Services.

Ms. Ramdial: Yes, Ma'am.

Madam Chairman: Item 001: General Administration, Member for Couva North.

Ms. Ramdial: Thank you, Madam Chair. Minister, line Item, Contract Employment, an allocation of \$1.1 million for 2020. Can you give me the overall figure of employees and vacant positions for this Division?

12.15 p.m.

Hon. Imbert: One hundred and eighty-one, none of whom will vote for you.

Ms. Ramdial: That is okay.

Hon. Imbert: One hundred and seventy-nine positions filled.

Ms. Ramdial: That is all right.

Hon. Imbert: Not one contract officer in Tobago will vote for you—two positions vacant.

Ms. Ramdial: Okay. Thank you.

Hon. Imbert: Because you do not like Tobagonians.

Madam Chairman: Item 002: Sport; Item 003: Youth. Sub-Head 03: Minor Equipment Purchases. Item 001: General Administration; Item 002: Sport; Item 003: Youth. Sub-Head 04—we are at page 85—Current Transfers and Subsidies. Item 005: Non-profit Institutions. Member for Couva North.

Ms. Ramdial: Thank you, Madam Chair. Minister, line Item 02: Assistance to Sporting Organizations, I see you have an allocation for 2 million. Exactly how many organizations would benefit from this?

Hon. Imbert: Thirty-four, none of whom will vote for you.

Ms. Ramdial: Madam Chair, the Minister has to be crazy. I am the Member of Parliament for Couva North, it is obvious they are not going to be voting for me.

Hon. Imbert: UNC.

Ms. Ramdial: My constituents vote for me.

Hon. Imbert: None of them will vote for the UNC.

Ms. Ramdial: My constituents. However, voting for Watson Duke is a different story. [*Desk thumping*]

Ms. Ramdial: Line Item 03, Madam Chair, Youth Development Programme, I see an allocation of 500,000. Exactly how many youth would benefit from this?

Hon. Imbert: I do not have the information, but none of them will vote for the UNC.

Ms. Ramdial: Yeah, they will vote for Watson Duke.

Hon. Imbert: None of them will vote for him either.

Ms. Ramdial: That is who they will vote. I urge them to vote for Watson Duke.

Hon. Imbert: No chance. We getting all 12.

Madam Chairman: Item 007: Households. Hon. Members, we will now move

on to the *Draft Estimates of Development Programme*. Sub-Head 09: Development Programme, Consolidated Fund. We are at page 18.

Ms. Ramdial: Page 18, Ma'am?

Madam Chairman: Yes. Item 003: Economic Infrastructure. Members, you would observe that this Item consist of eight pages, therefore, I will announce the project groups. B. Extension Services; D. Fishing.

Ms. Ramdial: Yes, Ma'am.

Madam Chairman: Member for Couva North.

Ms. Ramdial: Thank you, Madam Chair. Minister, line Item 143: Improvement to Beaches and Landing Facilities, I see an allocation of 1 million for 2020. Exactly how many beaches; and if you can name them that would utilize this funding for fiscal?

Hon. Imbert: You want to know how many beaches they have in Tobago—

Ms. Ramdial: No, I want to know how many—

Hon. Imbert:—and you want me to name every one of them?

Ms. Ramdial: I want to know how many are going to benefit from this 1 million allocation, Minister. Do you understand?

Hon. Imbert: You could not be serious, but I will provide you with the information.

Ms. Ramdial: Thank you.

Madam Chairman: Are you doing that now, or are you doing that in writing?

Hon. Imbert: There is no way I could do that now. I do not even know myself. I will have to go and count all the beaches—

Madam Chairman: We move on under D. Anything else under D.?

Hon. Imbert:—and every grain of sand.

Madam Chairman: F. Land Management Services. Member for Oropouche West.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: Thank you. Hon. Minister, line item 463: Agriculture access roads, Tobago, I am seeing an allocation of 15 million. Can you let us know which areas these access roads have been constructed and the kilometres it covers? How many kilometres.

Hon. Imbert: You are talking about an allocation—

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: 46.

Hon. Imbert:—and you are talking past tense?

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: I am asking you about 463.

Hon. Imbert: Which Item you are on?

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: 4-6-3.

Hon. Imbert: No, which year?

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: 2019.

Hon. Imbert: You want to know about 2019?

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: So can you answer the question, respectfully?

Hon. Imbert: I have information on the 2020 allocation.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: So any one you want to give will be satisfactory.

Hon. Imbert: Fine. Bel Air Connector Road, Observatory One, Connector Road to Speyside, Silk Cotton Trace, Starwood, Lambeau Hill, Baptiste Trace, Putney Hill, Park Gully, Belle River, Richmond to Belle River, Richmond Great House, Top Hill to Doctor Road, Doctor Road to Goldsborough, Goldsborough Road, Charles Gully to Top Hill, Lashley Trace to Goldsborough, Money Hill, Windy Hill to Goodwood, Cradley to Mason Hall, Adelphi to Widows Lot, Connector Road to Easter Hill Road, Belmont Farm Road, Mount Dillon.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: And how much kilometres is that? How many?

Hon. Imbert: Plenty. [*Laughter*]

Madam Chairman: Minister, would you be able to provide that in writing?

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: Would you provide that in writing?

Hon. Imbert: I will give it to her and—

Madam Chairman: You will give it to the Member.

Hon. Imbert: I will give it to the Member and I would also say that some maintenance work will take place on Lot 31 to Speyside, Dam Road, Waterfall Road to Cameron Canals, Zion Hill to Long Bed, Bottom Ridge to Richmond Point and Level Bottom, Bushy Park, Mills Connector Road to Gran Gully, Saw Mill to Green Hill, Small Vale to Mason Hall, Belmont Farm Road, Trafalgar Trace, Aldephi Branch One.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: Okay. All right, Minister.

Hon. Imbert: No, no, no, let me finish.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: All right, Minister.

Hon. Imbert: You do not want to hear? You do not want to hear the work the THA is doing? St. Cecilia Link Road to Mason Hall, Craig Hall, Indian Walk, New Road in Les Coteaux, County Trace to Pentland, Courland Farm Road, all of this done by the PNM in Tobago. [*Desk thumping*]

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: And in addition, a follow-up question, Minister. All these roads and what crops the Tobago farmers are planting? All these roads to bring out what crops? You know? What crops are they planting, can you tell us? Is it bodi, tomato, pumpkin, what are they planting?

Hon. Imbert: Well actually I believe in Tobago they call it string beans.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: String beans?

Hon. Imbert: Yes.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: And they supply who? Who do they supply string beans to? Trinidad.

Hon. Imbert: To Tobagonians.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: Okay.

Madam Chairman: Member for Caroni Central. [*Crosstalk*]

Dr. Tewarie: Thank you, Madam Chair—

Madam Chairman: I would like to hear the question being asked, please.

Dr. Tewarie:—455, Agriculture Land Information System and Inventory of State Lands (Tobago).

Madam Chairman: 455.

Dr. Tewarie: Is the Minister in a position to give us the approximate acreage of land under ownership by the State in Tobago?

Hon. Imbert: I really do not have that. I do not mind giving you, but I do not have it. I can get it for you.

Dr. Tewarie: Right.

Hon. Imbert: State lands?

Dr. Tewarie: State lands, yes. And then the second question in relation to that—

Hon. Imbert: But historically a lot of the land in Tobago is private, eh.

Dr. Tewarie: That is what I thought. That is why I am asking.

Hon. Imbert: The THA has acquired quite a bit of land over the last 20 years or so. I do not have the exact acreage.

Dr. Tewarie: And then the second issue is the land trust. I see that that is not being funded and I wondered what happened. The land trust, is that for the acquisition of private lands by the State?

Hon. Imbert: Well, it was not funded in 2019 either. So I will have to get back to you on that. There was no funding in 2019 for it.

Dr. Tewarie: Okay. But was that established, that land trust, to secure private lands on behalf of the House of Assembly?

Hon. Imbert: I believe so, yes.

Dr. Tewarie: Okay. So could I also then get the information on any acquisitions that might have taken place with the establishment of the trust?

Hon. Imbert: Well, that is not in last year or this year.

Dr. Tewarie: I know that.

Hon. Imbert: So you “kinda” going far.

Dr. Tewarie: Minister, I am just trying to get the state land acquisition.

Hon. Imbert: I know what you are trying, but you kinda going far back.

Madam Chairman: H. Research and Development. A. Electricity. A. Drainage and Irrigation; D. Tourism.

Ms. Ramdial: Yes, Ma'am.

Madam Chairman: Member for Couva North.

Ms. Ramdial: Actually from page 22, line Item 349. Minister, Tobago Tourism Agency. I am seeing an allocation of 5 million for 2020, but I know under the Tourism Division previously there was an allocation of 20 million. So exactly what this 5 million is for?

Hon. Imbert: Promotion and marketing towards increasing Tobago's appeal as a tourism destination.

Ms. Ramdial: So this is the international marketing aspect that you were talking about earlier?

Hon. Imbert: I think this will be Tobago's appeal to everyone.

Ms. Ramdial: Okay. So it is for marketing. All right. Thank you.

Hon. Imbert: For people who like Tobago.

Madam Chairman: G. Business Services. D. Roads and Bridges.

Ms. Ramdial: Hopefully it can attract for visitors.

Madam Chairman: H. Sea Transport. [*Interruption*] Can we have one meeting, please? Item 004: Social Infrastructure. Hon. Members, Item 004 spans 15 pages, therefore, I will also announce the project groups. Member for Caroni East, I specifically ask you to keep to the assignment. Thank you.

Hon. Member: I thought you appointed him.

Madam Chairman: I have not appointed anybody else. So that was just a warning letter. B. Primary.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Madam Chair.

Madam Chairman: Yes, Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: 770, hon. Minister, Construction of Scarborough RC. You had 14 million spent in 2018, 6 in '19 was the estimate, 6 used, and no more for 2020, that school construction has been completed, and what was the cost?

Hon. Imbert: Is two questions you are asking there?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Yeah. Two in one. One follows the other.

Hon. Imbert: Does it? If you went there you would see the school is complete.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Yes. What is the cost of the construction of the school?

Hon. Imbert: I will get back to you on that.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Is it 85 million?

Hon. Imbert: I will get back to you on that.

Dr. Gopeesingh: I just wanted to ask—

Hon. Imbert: Stop asking questions I cannot answer.

Dr. Gopeesingh:—how did that cost 85 million?

Hon. Imbert: You are just playing for the camera.

Madam Chairman: Okay, so let us go on. C. Secondary; E. Special Education.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Madam Chair.

Madam Chairman: Yes.

Dr. Gopeesingh: I just wanted to ask one on 784, the establishment of the childhood centres.

Madam Chairman: But you see you yourself not sticking to the assignment.

Dr. Gopeesingh: All right, I am slow. I am a bit slow here.

Madam Chairman: You reach quite—

Hon. Imbert: Yes, you slow.

Madam Chairman: No, no—Minister of Finance.

Hon. Imbert: But he said he was slow.

Dr. Gopeesingh: I am saturated.

Madam Chairman: Minister of Finance, please. Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: The childhood centres, the establishment of 5 million for it, 5 million was spent already and no allocation. I thought there that was a construction of five early childhood education centres to come?

Hon. Imbert: That has been done elsewhere.

Madam Chairman: Minister of Planning and Development.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Member, with regard to this matter, this is—

Dr. Gopeesingh: IDB?

Mrs. Robinson-Regis:—being done with the IDB. We are in the process now of finalizing how the loan will be activated, because for the Ministry of Planning and

Development to take a loan for Tobago there is a little issue with how it is to be activated. So we are discussing it with the IDB, the THA and the Ministry of Planning and Development—

Dr. Gopeesingh: I wish you well and success in that.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: Thank you—and with the Attorney General's Department.

Dr. Gopeesingh: We had difficulty in the last year with IDB on that and we could not start it because of the same problem.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: We sorted out that issue that you all had, but now there is a legal issue with how—

Dr. Gopeesingh: Vis-à-vis Trinidad and Tobago.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: Yes—doing it for Tobago.

Dr. Gopeesingh: I wish the THA young children well. I mean the Tobago children well.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: Thank you.

Madam Chairman: Okay. So C. Secondary; E. Special Education; G. Educational Services. A. Hospitals; B. Medical and Dental Centres; C. Public Health Services; B. Land Development. We are now at page 33. A. Culture; C. Sports. A. Community Development. We are at page 36. C. Welfare Services; D. Youth Development. Item 05: Multi-Sectoral and Other Services. We are at page 39.

Hon. Members, Item 005 spans three pages. I will, therefore, call the project groups: A. Administration Services; F. Public Buildings; G. Equipment and Vehicles.

Ms. Ramdial: Madam Chair—

Madam Chairman: Member for Couva North.

Ms. Ramdial: Thank you, Madam Chair. Line Item 742: Purchase of Vehicles and Equipment, I am seeing an estimate for 2 million. Minister, can you say how many vehicles or equipment you intend to purchase for fiscal 2020?

12.30 p.m.

Hon. Imbert: “Yuh so fascinated with vehicles. Are you not?”

Ms. Ramdial: Yes, I am. Very much so.

Hon. Imbert: “Yuh want them to wuk?”

Ms. Ramdial: “Yuh want to know what else ah fascinated about?”

Hon. Members: Nooo! No, no, no. [*Crosstalk*]

Ms. Ramdial: Please answer my question. Madam Chair—

Hon. Imbert: I have no interest whatsoever. No interest whatsoever.

Ms. Ramdial: I will tell you after.

Hon. Imbert: Do not want to know.

Ms. Ramdial: I will tell you.

Hon. Imbert: Do not want to know.

Madam Chairman: We are at line Item 742. Minister, are you in a position to provide the information or?

Hon. Imbert: I am scared. [*Laughter*]

Madam Chairman: Well, we only want the information on vehicles and equipment.

Ms. Ramdial: Yes, please. Vehicles or equipment.

Hon. Imbert: Scared. I will provide it for you.

Ms. Ramdial: Thank you very much, Minister.

Hon. Imbert: I am afraid of what else you are interested in.

Ms. Ramdial: I will tell you after.

Hon. Imbert: It is frightening.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 15 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Madam Chairman: Thank you, Members of the Tobago House of Assembly.

Hon. Imbert: Yes, they were very good.

Head 16: Central Administrative Services, Tobago \$35,175,950.

Madam Chairman: I will now invite the Minister of State in the Office of the Prime Minister to make a brief opening statement not exceeding five minutes.
Minister.

Hon. Webster-Roy: Thank you, Madam Chair. Central Administrative Services, Tobago plays a critical role in Tobago ensuring that the services of the Office of the Prime Minister are available on the island and is responsible for supporting all central government agencies in Tobago. This mandate is executed under three main sections: administrative services which includes the Treasury, the Weights and Measures Inspectorate, general services, finance and accounting, information and communication technology, planning, monitoring and evaluation unit, human resources, internal audit and communication unit; meteorological services which provides reliable data on weather and other environmental conditions for aviation and the public, and Registrar General which provides a range of services to the public for the registration of births, marriages, death, business, land and other legal recordings.

Over the next fiscal year, the Central Administrative Services, Tobago plans to strengthen the internal capacity of the department as it relates to the flow of information and security and to invest in equipment that will improve the monitoring of weather systems to allow for more efficient aviation operations at

the ANR Robinson International Airport.

CAST remains committed to the development in Tobago and will continue to strengthen our internal capacity to ensure that our human resource is equipped. Furthermore, we intend to harness innovation to stay relevant in a new age of technology so that we can meet the needs of the people we serve. Thank you, Madam Chair.

Madam Chairman: Thank you, Minister.

Question proposed: That Head 16 stand part of the Schedule.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Members, the sum of \$35,175,950 for Head 16: Central Administrative Services, Tobago 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 at page 68. Sub-Head 01: Personnel Expenditure. Item 001: General Administration; Item 02: Trade and Industry; Item 005: Meteorological Services; Item 007: Registrar General. Sub-Head 02: Goods and Services. Item 001: General Administration. Member for Couva North.

Ms. Ramdial: Thank you, Madam Chair. Minister, line Item 16: Contract Employment, I see an allocation for 1 million. Can you give me the overall figure for Central Administrative Services in terms of contract employees and if there are any vacant posts?

Hon. Webster-Roy: Yes, Member. Okay, in terms of contract employees at OPM CAST, we have a total of 10.

Ms. Ramdial: Any vacant positions?

Hon. Webster-Roy: No.

Ms. Ramdial: Okay. Thank you very much.

Madam Chairman: Item 002: Trade and Industry; Item 005: Meteorological Services; Item 007: Registrar General. Sub-Head 03: Minor Equipment Purchases. Item 001: General Administration; Item 005: Meteorological Services; Item 007: Registrar General. Sub-Head 04: Current Transfers and Subsidies. Item 005: Non-Profit Institutions. Member for Couva North.

Ms. Ramdial: Thank you. Minister, line Item 01: Contribution to Non-Profit Organisations, I see an allocation of 400,000. Can you tell me how many organizations will benefit from this?

Hon. Webster-Roy: How many will benefit? Okay. In the last fiscal, approximately 10 organizations benefitted, however, it depends on the number of organizations apply and then the committee would evaluate and select accordingly.

Ms. Ramdial: Thank you very much, Minister.

Madam Chairman: Item 007: Households. Hon. Members, we will now move on to the *Draft Estimates of Development Programme*. We are at page 43. Sub-Head 09: Development Programme, Consolidated Fund. Item 005: Multi-sectoral and Other Services.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 16 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Members, I believe there is an agreement that we go to the Ministry of Foreign and Caricom Affairs. Yes, so we will take that now. [Crosstalk] Okay, could we resume some order, please?

Head 65: Ministry of Foreign and Caricom Affairs, \$273,047,930.

Madam Chairman: I will now invite the Minister of Foreign and Caricom Affairs to make a brief opening statement not exceeding five minutes. Minister.

Hon. Moses: Thank you, Madam Chairman. The Ministry of Foreign and Caricom Affairs has been resolute in the fulfilment of its mandate in support of Trinidad and Tobago's development objectives as are articulated in the National Development Strategy 2016—2030, otherwise known as *Vision 2030*.

The Ministry engages in strategic diplomatic engagement domestically and in a very dynamic and increasingly complex international operating environment to ensure efficient delivery of services and intensified representation and the protection of the interest of Trinidad and Tobago at home and abroad. The Ministry has supported Trinidad and Tobago's social and economic development efforts through planned and managed interaction with the international community. The focus, Madam Chair, was in ensuring the best outcomes of the negotiations of agreements, other bilateral and multilateral engagements and capacity-building opportunities for the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago.

The allocation to the Ministry of Foreign and Caricom Affairs for the 2019/2020 fiscal year will be used to build on the foundation laid over the last four years of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago's term in office. The intention is to strengthen relations with Trinidad and Tobago's partners and develop new partnerships while expanding the country's reach in other jurisdictions. The Ministry will continue on this trajectory during the fiscal year making adjustments as necessary with proper financial management. Aware of that, while the country's financial situation improved under the tenure of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, there is need for continued prudent management, flexibility and focus on the most beneficial outcomes of activities undertaken on behalf of the Government and people of our country. Thank you, Madam Chairman.

Question proposed: That Head 65 stand part of the Schedule.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Members, the sum of \$273,047,930 for Head 65: Ministry of Foreign and Caricom Affairs is comprised of moneys proposed for expenditure under the following Sub-Heads and Items to be found in the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure* and the *Draft Estimates of Development Programme*. We now proceed to consider the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure*. We are at page 329. Sub-Head 01: Personnel Expenditure. Item 001: General Administration. Member for Naparima.

Mr. Charles: Thank you, Madam Chair. Minister, Item 01: Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance, could the Minister explain the reason for the increase in the 2020 Estimates of \$1.4 million?

Hon. Moses: Madam Chair, as of the 30th of September, an amount of \$19,424,112 was expended. The difference, therefore, would be somewhat limited and that figure includes provision for vacant posts with incumbents. That is the situation, Madam Chair.

Mr. Charles: Okay. Could the Minister then give us an idea of the number of vacant posts with incumbents that relates to this expenditure?

Hon. Moses: Madam Chairman, allow me to give further information that will be helpful. Vacant posts, we have about 20 vacant posts in the Ministry at this time.

Mr. Charles: And that is at the level of the FSOs and IROs or throughout?

Hon. Moses: Madam Chair, all told, the figure is 20.

Mr. Charles: Okay. Minister, would you be in a position to tell us in terms of the salaries how many of the FSOs and the International Relations Officers are on contract and how many are permanent?

Madam Chairman: This is under 01? Under which Item?

Mr. Charles: Yes, 01, salaries.

Madam Chairman: So you want to know, how many are permanent?

Mr. Charles: Yes.

Hon. Moses: Madam, should I respond?

Madam Chairman: Please.

Hon. Moses: Thanks. More information is on offer and while slightly off course, I would say that on the establishment, there are 131 appointed officers, 107 in temporary or acting positions, 20 vacant, bringing the total number on the establishment to 303.

Mr. Charles: All right. Item 28: Remuneration to Cabinet-Appointed Representatives, see nothing was spent based on what we have here in 2019. Could the Minister indicate, again, the reason for this allocation and to whom does it refer?

12.45 p.m.

Hon. Moses: Madam Chairman, no one is targeted or envisaged. The purpose behind such a programme subsists. It relates to increasing the profile image of Trinidad and Tobago abroad, instilling hope in the youth of our country and mentorship programme. And there are no persons contemplated at this point in time. As I said, the need subsists and this provision would, we hope, amply cover such an undertaking.

Mr. Charles: So, this refers to like publicity and outreach?

Hon. Moses: Madam Chair, the response remains the same.

Madam Chairman: Okay, Item 002: Overseas Missions.

Mr. Charles: Just now. Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance, \$10 million. Could you give us a rationale for that?

Hon. Moses: \$10 million; the line Item?

Mr. Charles: Increase.

Hon. Moses: I look at 002: Overseas Missions; 01: Salaries and Cost of Living Expense. I notice a figure here of 44 million contemplated for the year 2020, 9,898,000. I take it that is the figure?

Madam Chairman: I believe maybe that is why the question may be, if I am permitted to recast it, is the reason for the increase. I believe that is what you are asking; the 10 million.

Mr. Charles: Yep.

Hon. Moses: So he has rounded off the 9,890 to 10 million. I think that is what the hon. Member is asking.

Hon. Moses: Okay, we continue at the level of the Ministry, Madam Chair, to be forward-looking in the filling of posts abroad in our missions, 19 of them. We have, through stringent and prudent management of the resources allocated to us, been operating while at a suboptimum level, but fully meeting our responsibilities. It is our intention in the upcoming year to make amends, to some extent, and that figure amply, hopefully, would cover such an intention.

Mr. Charles: Could the Minister indicate whether this refers to recruitment of staff or increases in existing salaries and emoluments?

Hon. Moses: Madam Chair, should I respond?

Madam Chairman: Yes, please.

Hon. Moses: I would have alluded earlier to the establishment. And those numbers I would have given would be linked to that provision. I can also further share, perhaps, in a liberal way, more information as regards the staff complement at our missions abroad.

Mr. Charles: That would explain the increase.

Hon. Moses: Madam Chair, the number of officers total 76 at our missions abroad, and these are home-based members of staff. The number relative to locally recruited in such locations amount to 144 persons.

Madam Chairman: Okay?

Mr. Charles: 04: Allowances, monthly paid, \$600,000. Does that relate to existing staff or those who have demitted office and therefore are owed? Sorry, sorry—

Madam Chairman: Are you asking for the reason for the increase?

Mr. Charles: Yes, the reason for the increase.

Madam Chairman: Okay. So what I would ask is, because maybe you are a bit more comfortable than a lot of us with these figures—

Mr. Charles: Okay.

Madam Chairman: So that, if you would take the care to phrase the question in the proper way so that we would all become comfortable too with what is being asked.

Mr. Charles: Okay.

Hon. Moses: Madam Chair, should I respond?

Mr. Charles: Let me rephrase the question—

Hon. Moses: Should I respond, Madam Chair?

Mr. Charles: Let me rephrase the question, Madam Chair, with your permission? I will bring it—

Madam Chairman: So, you are no longer in 04?

Mr. Charles: No, I will bring it under 02, and the question would be: That increase of 858, Wages and COLA, does that include payments to diplomats who have retired? Or is it for existing staff? 02: Wages and COLA.

Mr. Hinds: You paying retirees wages?

Mr. Charles: No, but you have arrears. You could have arrears of payments. Let him answer, Madam Chairman.

Madam Chairman: No, no, no, not "let him". That is the Minister. We have a little difficulty, and again as I say maybe you really so comfortable with it. But we have a difficulty in the way the question is being asked. Because I myself was shocked to hear that we are paying retirees wages. So if you want to ask if this figure includes any arrears, I think that might be a more comprehensive way.

Mr. Charles: Madam Speaker, wages refer to salaries and emoluments that you pay. But in that is a component of arrears. Is it? I am asking the Minister.

Hon. Moses: I, perhaps, could clear up a little doubt here. While the comfort might not be misplaced, Madam Chair, additional information could help. These figures here relate to persons alive and hopefully well. They are working persons. [Laughter] So it tells exactly what it says there, COLA and wages; working, living people. The other one goes as monthly-paid officers, that category, and so on. So it has nothing to do with ex officio persons or ex-Heads, or so on. [Laughter]

Madam Chairman: I would like to hear. I would really like to hear the responses and all the side conversations, really inhibiting my hearing.

Mr. Charles: So, therefore, it does not include arrears?

Madam Chairman: So where are we?

Hon. Moses: It has nothing to do with it.

Madam Chairman: New question, yes?

Mr. Charles: No, no question.

Madam Chairman: Okay, can we go on? Sub-Head 02: Goods and Services. Item 001: General Administration.

Mr. Charles: Item 16: Contract Employment. Could the Minister indicate the officers to which this would relate?

Madam Chairman: Officers to whom?

Mr. Charles: To whom this will relate, this Item.

Hon. Moses: Madam Chair, shall I answer? It will be business operational systems, IROs, International Relations Officers, Senior IROs, IT personnel and such monthly paid persons under contract.

Madam Chairman: Thank you, Minister. Anything else, Member for Naparima?

Mr. Charles: Official Overseas Travel, there is an 800,000 increase.

Madam Chairman: Line Item 27.

Hon. Moses: Twenty-seven, just one second. Revised figure, yes but what is the question? The question is what is contemplated/envisaged with this increase?

Mr. Charles: Yes.

Hon. Moses: The Official Overseas Travel, once again, Madam Chair, we have been operating at a level befitting our straitened economic times. And the need to interact with the international community to further the interest of Trinidad and Tobago remains as strong, and at the level of the Government, we intend to persevere with our remit and that amount, that increase is what we think would be adequate.

Mr. Charles: Item 25: Audit of Overseas Mission. We see an almost doubling of the figure. Does this indicate that there is need for additional? Do you intend to increase the level of audits that are done on various missions?

Hon. Moses: Madam Chair, just one second. I would really like to give the up-to-date figure as of the 30th September for that 127. So with our forbearance if I could just see overseas travel here, 940. We would have spent and—we intend to

increase that oversight function. That is what we intend to do. We would have recently completed the inspection of two missions, India and China, and we intend to continue in that vein. The increase is to treat with such commitment on our part.

Mr. Charles: Minister, there are 19 missions. Am I correct, or thereabouts? How many were audited last year and how many do you intend to audit in the coming fiscal year?

Hon. Moses: Madam Chair, 20 missions we have on the outside and we have not yet defined to the extent that the number can be shared of the missions that would be audited. It is dependent on which missions, and we have not yet come to such a determination.

Mr. Charles: Okay, could you tell us how many were audited in this fiscal year, in 2019?

Hon. Moses: I just mentioned two.

Mr. Charles: Two, okay.

Madam Chairman: India and China.

Mr. Charles: Okay. Item 51: Relocation of Overseas Staff. Minister, is that based on a policy of rotation of staff, or is this new missions that are being established? Is there a rotation policy for staff?

Hon. Moses: Madam Chair, the same rigour to which I would have referred to in preceding years subsists. That function resides squarely with the Ministry or Foreign Affairs, and as Minister we do what is required, both in the rationalizations, rotation of staff members and the staffing of our headquarters, and this amount here treats with the relocation. Sometimes there is delay or hangover from a previous financial year, and once again the determination has been made on our part of the Ministry that this sum is what is involved.

Mr. Charles: Okay. Missions India, Japan and others have a policy of two terms out, two tours of duty out and one in, so that staff in overseas mission do not lose contact with capital. Do we have such a policy, which informs this expenditure?

Hon. Moses: Madam Chair, inherent with what I just said, it includes all and every such possibility.

Mr. Charles: Okay.

Madam Chairman: All right? So we go on to Item 002: Overseas Missions.

Mr. Charles: 002?

Madam Chairman: 331 to 333.

Mr. Charles: Yes. Could I—is it possible I could just go back to 63, Madam?

Madam Chairman: No, let us—having regard to the time—go to Item 002. You have two pages here. You have anything there, Overseas Missions?

Mr. Charles: Yes, I do.

Mr. Charles: The rent, 08, there is an increase in \$2 million. Does the Ministry have a policy in respect of doing rental, as opposed to purchase options, in determining whether properties are rented or not?

Hon. Moses: Madam, the figure, the revised figure, in respect of the 2019 year, amounts to 10 million. The amount for 2020 is 12 million, two million more. In that figure there, we are—the Estimates, that is for Revised Estimates, we have two outstanding payments. One in respect of China, expensive location dare I add, and the other for Abuja. That would bring the figure up to the Estimates of around 12 million. So that figure there of 12 million is what is contemplated to pay off those two outstanding amounts.

And we are opening or we are in the process of opening a mission. In fact, two members of staff are in Guyana to operationalize that venture, the opening of

the mission in Guyana. And once more, that is the figure that we think would be appropriate in the circumstances.

1.00 p.m.

Dr. Tewarie: Ma'am, under Overseas Missions, I want to ask the Minister, and he can choose whether he would answer it. The Minister in his opening talked about strengthening relations with existing partners and building new partnerships. I wanted to ask the Minister if he could identify one or two of the new partnerships that they are trying to build on behalf of the country, and what might be the Overseas Missions that are involved in pursuit of this to support the Minister?

Madam Chairman: All right, but we are under Goods and Services; Overseas Missions. So, I do not know if you could maybe craft your question which seems to be a general one in terms of one of these line Items?

Dr. Tewarie: If he would accept it under 02, I asked it as a general question, but, you know.

Madam Chairman: Okay. The only difficulty I have with allowing that, Member for Caroni Central, is that right now we are interrogating 002: Overseas Missions, and I do not know if that could be crafted under any of these Heads, maybe when you get on to maybe the DP, there may be some—

Dr. Tewarie: Okay.

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

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, line Item 23, Fees, can you identify the fees that have been incurred and what are the reasons for these fees please?

Hon. Moses: Just one second.

Madam Chairman: Page 331, line Item 23.

Hon. Moses: These fees would be in respect of legal fees primarily, translation fees and the like, Madam Chairman.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Legal fees and translation?

Hon. Moses: By way of examples, Madam Chair.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Line Item 50, Madam Chairman, which is on the other page. Line Item 50, Housing Accommodation. Could the hon. Minister indicate who benefits from these housing accommodations?

Hon. Moses: Madam Chair, I would like to vary the benefit element as an integral part of the remuneration package of staff members. Housing is provided in a shared way and this figure covers members of staff, home-based members of staff located at our Missions abroad. And the figure of 20 million is the figure that corresponds to meeting such costs.

Madam Chairman: Thank you.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: And this would account for the care of our overseas immigration as well, for particularly our person in Venezuela?

Hon. Moses: Madam Chair, should I respond?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Would immigration come under—?

Madam Chairman: You would like to ask the Minister whether immigration officers are covered under this Vote?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Yes.

Hon. Moses: Madam Chair, our Missions abroad are an integrated affair and all members of staff, whatever their portfolio, would benefit from certain terms and conditions of their employment. And as I have just intimated, housing is one such.

Madam Chairman: Member for Naparima.

Mr. Charles: Thank you, Madam Chair. And Minister, you have spoken about

new initiatives, new partnerships—and I think my colleague from Caroni Central was referring to that. Looking at Item 17, and I find given the new initiatives and perhaps Missions being developed in Guyana, I understand one in Qatar, et cetera, I find the training is a little low, 7,000. What does this refer to and is it adequate in your view? Seven thousand for training.

Hon. Moses: Madam Chair, the evenness of experience and training is not what one would readily come up with. Our staff members abroad are highly trained and experienced and that training component in the current economic times, we think is adequate, and training beyond that would be met with that figure is provided we envisage, by members of the international committee with whom we have been able to cultivate over the years very close and meaningful relationships.

Mr. Charles: So—

Madam Chairman: Just one minute. Minister of Planning and Development.

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you for the opportunity to intervene here. Just to say that the Ministry of Planning and Development is the Ministry through which all training comes. And you would recall when the Ministry of Planning and Development was being examined, we talked about the new international division that we are setting up to deal with training and dealing with the UN and all other international agencies.

And quite a lot of the training that we do get for officers is done for free through grants and through offers of training, and all that we that we have to provide is a top-up in the travel and the other allowances. So this figure would reflect what the Minister has said, but training generally comes through the Ministry of Planning and Development.

Madam Chairman: Okay. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, line Item 58, Medical Expenses. Could the hon. Minister indicate how many persons would have been supplied? I mean, the revised figure in 2019 is 6.6 million and then, of course, we have an Estimate for 2020 of 7 million. How many persons really would have been submitting medical expenses throughout the Missions?

Hon. Moses: Madam Chair, I have an inbuilt wariness to treat with personal details of health issues where it is a staff member. So I would not seek refuge, but I would go back to the document detailing or rather the information of how many of our staff members, home based staff members are at our Missions abroad. The number is 76.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Seventy-six members and we have here a figure of 6 million being expended in Medical Expenses in 2019, and an Estimate for 2020 of 7 million.

Hon. Moses: I am not sure—

Madam Chairman: And the question is? Your question is, Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: How many persons really, I mean, was it that all 77, was it surgery? I am not asking for intimate details. But, you know, I find these expenses a little—

Madam Chairman: I think what, if I understood what the Minister said is that he has a difficulty in identifying people—

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: I know he has a difficulty, Madam.

Madam Chairman:—but what he says is that the figure when he says he takes resort in the figure, he is saying that that figure is used then as a projection to cover the overseas staff at the Missions. I think that is what I understood.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: That would be for 2020, but they would have had expended in 2019.

Hon. Moses: With your permission, Chair, those would be the eligible persons for receipt of health services and that figure, it was contemplated to cover such via insurance, health insurance policies.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: So out of the 77, how many persons are eligible?

Madam Chairman: So you are asking for 2019 and not 2020?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Yes. So if 77 are in the Missions, how many are eligible out of that 77? All?

Hon. Moses: As part of their remuneration package, Madam Chair, that is what I said earlier, an integral part.

Madam Chairman: Okay. So can we move on? Sub-Head 03: Minor Equipment Purchases. Item 001: General Administration; Item 002: Overseas Missions. Sub-Head 04: Current Transfers and Subsidies. Item 001: Regional Bodies. Member for Naparima.

Mr. Charles: Yes. 03, Minister, Grenada Consular and Trade Office, I think this relates to the fact that we pay for Grenada's Consular and Trade Office in Trinidad. Am I correct?

Hon. Moses: Madam Chair, this is a matter that predates the current Government. We hold as a Government great store and as a people, dare I say across the board, we hold great store in the ensuring that market access is maintained and expanded for our exporters, exporters of Trinidad and Tobago to the Caricom market. And the closest of the ties with our neighbouring countries is such that we have determined that continuation of this initiative is worthwhile, as I said, it predates the current Government.

Mr. Charles: So, Minister, this 302,000 increase relates to Trinidad officers in this office or Grenadians working there?

Hon. Moses: Madam Chair, I would add that this figure has an arrears component of one year and the payment of rent, I am not sure of the linkage between the number of persons of whatever nationality, I am not sure the linkage to the undertaking to meet such payments to ensure that our close relationship is maintained. I should add as well as an initiative of our Prime Minister, our standing in the region is once more something that we should all be proud of.

Mr. Charles: Minister, all I need is to find out whether this is an office to facilitate Grenadian representation in Trinidad, or Trinidad expanded exports in Grenada. That is all I asked.

Hon. Moses: The response has been ample and complete, Madam Chair.

Mr. Charles: All right.

Madam Chairman: Item 002: Commonwealth Bodies. Member for Naparima.

Mr. Charles: The Commonwealth Secretariat. I see we are in arrears of our payments, am I to assume, given the fact that there is no expenditure in 2019 Revised Estimates?

Hon. Moses: Madam Chair, as regards a Commonwealth Secretariat, as of the 30th of September we would have expended \$1,471,747 and we think this is the figure that we should work with given the quota contribution that is our commitment to meet with that organization.

Mr. Charles: So, Minister, you are just saying that this figure in front of us has been updated? And you have spent 1.7 million or thereabouts, correct?

Hon. Moses: Madam Chair, these figures are what they are, meaning that 002, Commonwealth Bodies; 01, Commonwealth Secretariat, the figure for the Estimate

is 1.7 million, I am saying that we paid 1.4 million and the figure that is in the Estimate amounts to 1.6 million and that is the correct figure in our estimation.

Mr. Charles: Okay.

Madam Chairman: Okay. So we will move on. Item 003: United Nations Organisations. Member for Naparima.

Mr. Charles: 01, United Nations Regular Budget and Working Capital Fund. I see nothing in front of me, I see nothing has been spent in 2019 and it goes similarly for 02, United Nations Programme of Assistance Exchange in the Field of International Law; 03, I would not spell it out; 04, 05 and 06, that is the International Criminal Tribunals. Could the Minister confirm whether this is correct or he has updated figures for us?

1.15 p.m.

Hon. Moses: Madam Chair, I would opt to provide useful information. In respect of the United Nations body, that is, UNECLAC, that is 003, 03, a sum of \$1.3 million—\$1,361,000 was paid as of September the 30th. A further sum amounted to just under \$5 million was paid, relative to the peacekeeping operations. That is 003, 04. Most of the others have not yet been paid. We continue to manage and husband funds allocated to the Ministry in such a way that our commitments are honoured. We maximize the benefits of participating in the international organizations, in this case, the UN bodies, and we will continue to make the payments and manage our affairs in a way befitting our circumstance.

Mr. Charles: Could the Minister indicate under 01, does the United Nations Regular Budget and Working Capital Fund, how much of the 5.7 was paid as of September the 1st?

Hon. Moses: Madam Chair, I just said it a while ago. I made mention of the two.

Mr. Charles: You said 03, 1 million and 04, peacekeeping, 5 million. Under 01, the 5 million relates to that?

Hon. Moses: Madam Chair, just by way of clarification, I opted to detail the two payments that were made, and I said most of the others have not yet been made, and I continue by detailing our approach. And I would further add that, currently, as indeed and when such issues arise—whether in respect of international organizations or the management of our Missions in terms of making payments and other administrative matters—we manage them in a certain way, and I could add that currently we are making our best efforts to meet the other payments, inclusive of the one referred, 003, 01.

Mr. Charles: I will recommend that you pay attention, Minister, to 01: United Nations Regular Budget and Working Capital, because it was published recently that we are one of 64 nations that are recorded as bad pay in the United Nations, and also the fact that we will be going for a non-permanent seat on the Security Council. We have an excellent Ambassador at the United Nations, Her Excellency Ms. Penelope Beckles, and I know how it is embarrassing when you are attending meetings and you are reminded that you have not paid your dues. So all I am just asking you is to use your good office with the Minister of Finance to ensure that Item 01 is paid expeditiously. Thanks.

Hon. Moses: Madam Chair, I cannot let this one go by. I do not think it is fair, given how we have been proceeding expeditiously, to lay a platform whether for personal aggrandizement or to go in a slant which I deem it not appropriate nor useful. We could have gone ahead without this. Thanks.

Madam Chairman: Item 007: Households. Item—

Mr. Charles: Severance Benefits, 01.

Madam Chairman: Naparima, you are under 007?

Mr. Charles: Yes.

Madam Chairman: Yeah.

Mr. Charles: 01: Severance Benefits. Does this increase of 1.8 relate to Ambassadors and High Commissioners and Councils General who demitted office in 2015? And could you give us a status of how many severance payments are outstanding to those officers?

Hon. Moses: Madam Chair, once more, these are for living persons in the employ or about to be separated or have just been separated. It deals with local recruited members of staff at the missions: butlers, drivers, maids and the like, and that is the figure contemplated. It does not have anything to do whatsoever with ex-Heads of Missions or any such person. Thank you.

Madam Chairman: Member for Naparima.

Mr. Charles: No.

Madam Chairman: Okay. Item 009: Other Transfers; Item 010: Other Transfers Abroad. Member for Naparima.

Mr. Charles: Madam Chair, through you, to the Minister. The same comment relates to 05, the group of 77 and GRULAC, the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States. Could the Minister give us updated figures, because in front of us we see that there was no payment for fees?

Hon. Moses: Madam Chair, these three are a group of 77, I continue, the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States and FEMCIDI, I think that even is a voluntary contribution, but whatever it is, those three. We are managing the payment in a way befitting our priorities and our circumstance and within the general framework of, of course, meeting our commitments.

Mr. Charles: Minister, with respect to the group of sorry—Item 06, the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States, \$5,000 ought not to have been a significant expenditure and, surely, we could have accommodated that, \$5,000.

Madam Chairman: This question has been answered?

Hon. Moses: There is no question there. That is a banter.

Mr. Charles: I will remind the Minister—again, I will remind that in order to get the kinds of posts for which we have submitted nominations, we need the group of 77 support and we also need GRULAC support, more importantly, GRULAC support, and I think an expenditure of 5,000 ought to have been spent.

Hon. Moses: Madam Chair, I would not respond but I would make a comment. In the House there is a substantive and excellent, dare I say, Minister of Foreign and Caricom Affairs. [*Desk thumping*] Excellent. [*Desk thumping*] So gallerying and carrying on would not carry us anywhere. [*Desk thumping and laughter*] I do not take it as an insult, just respect and those are the options that we exercise. Thank you.

Mr. Charles: I asked a specific question on a specific Item—there is no gallerying there—whether or not we paid 5,000 is a straightforward question requiring a straightforward answer. If you cannot answer, say so. Do not get into editorializing.

Mr. Chairman: Well, okay. So, I do recall a question being put in terms of, I have it 05, 06 and 07, and I heard the Minister say something that we are managing the payments. I think that is what I heard in terms of those three that you had put as a group. Okay? All right. So, hon. Members—any more questions? Hon. Members, we will now proceed on to the *Draft Estimates of Development Programme*. We are at page 138. Sub-Head 09: Development Programme,

Consolidated Fund. Item 005: Multi-Sectoral and Other Services. Member for Chaguanas East.

Mr. Karim: Can I ask under A. Administrative Services, when you get there?

Madam Chairman: Yes, you may.

Mr. Karim: Okay. Thank you. Hon. Minister, I want to deal with line Item 058 and 066. Now, what I can infer from this, it appears as though Qatar will now be the new embassy and what I can infer as well is that it will be a new embassy, but will it also be a trade office? I have a subsequent question when the Minister response.

Hon. Moses: The figure contemplated here, \$1.5 million, is to cover the opening of an embassy, an embassy. As I intimated earlier, it is an integrated whole unit, our missions abroad, and different portfolios operate within that space—whether there be trade attaches, trade specialists, immigration officials or otherwise.

Mr. Karim: Okay. Can you indicate to us, if you can or if you would like to, what is the reason for this movement to Qatar? Because you would have come here before—I would have been here—when you spoke about the UAE, and I asked the question in the context of the supervision of the under-relationship with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and in terms of the pilgrims who visit and business people as well. So what is the reason for moving to Qatar?

Hon. Moses: Our determination, based on a thorough analysis, at this time, was such that we took a decision to open the mission in Qatar.

Mr. Karim: Okay. Can you say by when we might expect, so we can advise our colleagues in the faith? This embassy, Qatar, will now replace Uganda which oversaw the relationship in terms of KSA. Am I correct?

Hon. Moses: The commitment and determination of our Government to pursue

this initiative is there. We have just had two persons go to Guyana to operationalize that office. We have some other constraints and we will endeavour to treat with the next opening as short as possible, but I cannot give you any undertaking as of now, but the commitment and goodwill is there.

Mr. Karim: And so the pilgrims can look towards the Qatar Embassy in case there are any concerns while they are in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia? Am I correct?

Hon. Moses: We take on board all the interest of all our nationals. So that is an integral part of the commitment of the Government to which I referred earlier.

Mr. Karim: And without a specific date, you expect that within this fiscal 2020 that the Qatar Embassy will be opened?

Hon. Moses: The provision spells out exactly what is contemplated.

Mr. Karim: Okay. Well I will communicate with those who are interested to know. Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

Madam Chairman: Member for Naparima.

Mr. Charles: Thank you, Madam Chair. Item 060: Re-Establishment of a High Commission in Barbados. I see in the Estimate, 1 million was put aside. Could the Minister indicate to us what informed that decision and has there been a change in that policy decision since nothing was spent?

Hon. Moses: Once more, Madam Chair, the invaluable resource that is represented by the Ministry of Foreign and Caricom Affairs that has determined that it is, at this time, preferable to open a mission in Guyana.

Madam Chairman: Member for Naparima.

Mr. Charles: Item 064: Re-Establishment of a High Commission in Guyana. Could the Minister indicate to us, what is the status of the Revised Estimate? Was

1 million spent? And why nothing, based on what I am seeing here, nothing has been allocated for 2020 in High Commission. This is such a priority, given the fact that, you know, developments are taking place in Guyana which we need to be on top of. Can the Minister then say why no figure?

Hon. Moses: Madam Chair, for all intents and purposes, we can take it as open. I was almost given to say operatives on the ground, but there are members of staff on the ground you have been posted there. We should have had a functional Chancery Office Headquarters but, at the last minute, it became unavailable, so we are busily engaged in the full establishment. So that no provision was required in that instance.

Mr. Charles: Item 009, Development of a National Diaspora Policy, 300,000 allocated 46 spent. Is the 46 figure still current and, if so, given the importance of the diaspora to our development, 300,000 citizens?

Hon. Moses: What line—Madam Chair which—

Mr. Charles: 009.

Madam Chairman: Development of a National Diaspora Policy.

Hon. Moses: Okay, okay, 46 Revised Estimate. Madam Chair, we had included a figure to treat with the establishment of a secretariat. Subsequently, we came to a determination that it can be opened within one of the divisions of the Ministry, and thereby that cost would not have been relevant to the exercise. That is why if you look carefully, you would see I think, 009, 300,000 in 2019 estimate and the revised figure much lower, 46,000. So the secretariat will be open within the Consular Division of the Ministry of Foreign and Caricom Affairs, so that is why you see such a drastic fall off in the figure contemplated.

Mr. Charles: But, Minister, it was for the development of a policy, and you are

referring to the operationalization of the policy.

Hon. Moses: The charges against that remain as I intimated earlier.

Madam Chairman: Member for Caroni Central.

1.30 p.m.

Dr. Tewarie: Yes, follow-up to the question I initially raised, Chair, with regard to 064 and 066, proposed embassies, High Commission in Guyana, and Embassy in Qatar. Do these represent two of the countries with which we are establishing—building new relations and are there other countries? These are line items here, so I assume that they are. Are there any other countries with whom we are engaged?

Hon. Moses: Madam Chair, the spread of our activities with members of the international committee is such that we do not need figures that would specifically treat with our advancing our interest in seeking out new partners in which to do business. For example, at international fora, whether at the United Nations or beyond, or specifically bilateral engagements, whether via summits between Caricom and a particular country, or indeed between Trinidad and Tobago bilaterally with a certain country, Romania, surprisingly comes to my mind, and we seek out the advancement of our interest in a very direct and concrete way. We have moved away from a foreign policy that resides with, once removed, or twice removed, inferring where benefits could come from; no, we must see concrete results, and tangible benefits coming out from our engagement.

So, whether at the level of advocacy in the case of the country I mentioned a while ago, who was at that point in time a couple of months back, occupied the presidency of the EU, we would have interfaced with them bilaterally so as to advocate on our behalf in fora, with regard to specific interests in correspondent banking, blacklisting, graduation of countries to mid-income, high-income

countries, thereby denying concessionary funding, and all that stack of issues. So, we go about our business, whether in the case of Venezuela, whether in the case of the United States, whether in the case of our traditional partners, or new ones, we seek out concrete tangible benefits for the people of Trinidad and Tobago. So it is no longer, once removed, twice removed, we do this, and this will influence this, and this will influence this, and eventually something might come back to Trinidad. No, it must be direct, either accessing raw materials, whether in the case of gas, or purchasing vessels for the sea transport between Trinidad and Tobago, or whatever, we make that determination and pursue it relentlessly. I could say that with the pointed incisive interventions of our Prime Minister, the results are all for us to see, however we feel and whatever.

Dr. Tewarie: Okay. So we are moving to a more transactional kind of approach country by country, and Romania is one of those countries?

Hon. Moses: I am not sure country by country, and transactional, transactional brings to mind some connotations that we would not want to go along with, but the drift is there, it is clear. We enter into these relationships as an extension of our domestic policy, to bolster and improve the welfare of our citizens. Transactional has connotations, and country by country, no, but, I think the drift—I think the notions are clear what I have conveyed.

Dr. Tewarie: Okay, Minister.

Madam Chairman: Member for Caroni Central, you finished?

Mr. Charles: Thank you. Minister, Item 005, Institutional Strengthening and Capacity Building, 800,000 estimated in 2019, 246,000 spent, and there is an Estimate of half a million in 2020. The Minister cares to enlighten us on the elements of this capacity building project?

Hon. Moses: Madam Chair, the Ministry of Foreign and Caricom Affairs is primarily based on the resources available, human resources that is, and in large measure we are populated with youthful citizens, young persons, and the profile is such, and even if it were otherwise we would need ongoing training and education. So, we have had a pilot project going to see which best option would fit our circumstance and we have gotten to that stage so we are now embarked upon rolling out a full-fledged training programme for members of staff. That is what those figures reflect.

Madam Chairman: Okay, Infrastructure Development Fund, page 233. Item 005: Multi-Sectorial and Other Services. Are there any questions? 223.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 65 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

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

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

Madam Chairman: This Standing Finance Committee shall resume and we are at the Ministry of Education.

Head 26: Ministry of Education, \$5,819,352,105.

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

Hon. Garcia: Thank you very much, Madam Chairman. The Ministry of Education as at present configured is an amalgam of three Ministries that existed during the last administration, 2010-2015. And these are Science and Technology, Tertiary Education and of course the main stream, Ministry of Education. Science and Technology is handled mainly by NIHERST; in the area of Tertiary Education and Skills Training, we have the University of the West Indies, the University of

Trinidad and Tobago, COSTAATT, MIC IT, NESC and YTEPP. Under the Ministry of Education we have the Early Childhood Education and Care Centres of which there are 139 existing; primary schools, there are 444 government and government assisted primary schools, and there are 139 government and government assisted secondary schools, all coming to a total of 732 schools under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education.

For the next year, special focus will be centred on children with special needs. We hold fast to the philosophy, that every child has the ability to learn and therefore no child must be left behind. Our overriding and overarching policy, equity, good governance and quality education will govern us throughout this fiscal year. The Ministry of Education will continue to work closely with all Ministries in keeping with our whole Government approach. Thank you very much, Madam Chairman.

Madam Chairman: Thank you, Minister.

Question proposed: That Head 26 stand part of the Schedule.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Members, the sum of \$5,819,352,105 for Head 26: Ministry of Education is comprised of moneys 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*. Sub-Head 01: Personnel Expenditure. Item 001: General Administration. Member for Chaguanas East.

Mr. Karim: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, I am on line Item 08, Vacant Posts - Salaries & C.O.L.A. (without incumbents). There was an

allocation in 2019 of 1.1, nothing was expended. We have another allocation of the same 1.1. Could you tell us how many posts that will be catering for? What are these posts?

Hon. Garcia: We have a number of vacant posts existing in the Ministry of Education and I will be very happy to give you a detail of all those posts that are existing, those vacant posts that are existing.

Mr. Karim: In writing.

Hon. Garcia: Yes, of course.

Mr. Karim: Okay, thank you.

Madam Chairman: Item—Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, Remuneration to members of Cabinet-Appointed Committees. I saw there was a decease, is it that the Cabinet-appointed committee is still in effect and if so, are they fully constituted?

Hon. Garcia: Under this Item there are two committees that we can describe as ad hoc committees. One is the Learning Materials Evaluation Committee and of course the life of that committee will come to an end shortly, and the National Advisory Committee. Now, the National Advisory Committee on Education is a committee that advises the Minister of Education. And of course as you know, the term of all Ministers will come to an end sometime next year and therefore that also is an ad hoc committee.

Madam Chairman: Item 005: Secondary Education, Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Madam, may I take the opportunity to say a special good day to the Permanent Secretary and the technical officers from the Ministry of Education, some of whom I had the pleasure and honour of working with, and a very special

good day.

Madam Chairman: Good day to the Minister.

Dr. Gopeesingh: The question now— [*Laughter*] I see Camille just—

Mrs. Robinson-Regis: That will not be happening again—

Dr. Gopeesingh: Camille, you are getting a little flustered. Hon. Minister, the Salaries and C.O.L.A. amounting to 1.193 million, you think you might be able to give us an appreciation of how many vacancies you have? I think the complement you said you will give us but, if you have it there, give us the complement now and how many vacancies you have without bodies.

Hon. Garcia: All right, let me begin by letting you know that this allocation will cover 6,844 employees that will consist of principals, vice-principals, teachers, heads of departments and so on, in both government and government assisted schools. In terms of vacancies there are 23—there are 282 vacant positions in the Ministry of Education of which there are 75 with bodies and 207 without bodies.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Right, thank you. That is in the secondary schools?

Hon. Garcia: Yes.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Right. Line Item 32, through you, Madam Chair, Remuneration to Substitute Teachers. Hon. Minister, I saw in 2018 not much was put for that, that is less than 600,000, and in 2019, 600,000 was spent. What has happened, are you no longer continuing to use substitute teachers? Or you have decided to—what has happened there? It is even a bit less this year.

Hon. Garcia: Your question is whether we will continue using substitute teachers?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Whether this has been disbanded altogether.

Hon. Garcia: Just now, I am having a difficulty in hearing you.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Whether the substitute teachers have been disbanded altogether

or it is just a small amount you are using now in secondary schools.

Hon. Garcia: No, that system has not been disbanded, we still have a number of persons applying to be substitute teachers both at the primary and secondary level. And where it is necessary we are employing them and bringing them onboard.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Yeah, but Minister, you must agree that 600,000 would not pay very many substitute teachers, so—

Hon. Garcia: Say that again.

Dr. Gopeesingh: I said 600,000 would not necessarily pay many substitute teachers. So you probably would have had about 20/30?

Hon. Garcia: Well, it depends on the need. Substitute teachers is really a system that is put in place where there is a need. So we will be bringing people in where there is a need. Where a need exists.

Dr. Gopeesingh: But if you have in the secondary schools 139 vacancies, there would obviously be some schools that need the topping up of teachers.

Hon. Garcia: All right, just let me correct something that might appear in your documents. The Actual expenditure for 2019 fiscal year was \$999,095.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Okay, approximately 1million.

Hon. Garcia: Approximately 1 million.

Dr. Gopeesingh: So, but how many substitute teachers might have been employed during that time?

Hon. Garcia: Forty-five persons in the secondary school and five persons in the primary school.

Dr. Gopeesingh: All right, well, I know you are answering number 32 on page 173. Thank you, hon Minister, I appreciate that.

Hon. Garcia: Okay.

Madam Chairman: Item 006: Primary Education. Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Minister, in a similar manner that you gave for secondary schools, 6,844 teachers with 282 vacant, could you give us an idea of the primary school situation?

Hon. Member: Your mike, he is not hearing you.

Dr. Gopeesingh: But strange, I have a loud voice. What is the position related to primary school teachers? You see, Madam Chair, you are hearing me.

Madam Chairman: I think maybe—

Hon. Member: Positioning.

Madam Chairman: Yes.

Dr. Francis: So, use your quarreling tone and we will hear you.

Dr. Gopeesingh: All right, good.

Madam Chairman: Or maybe you can use the other two mikes.

Dr. Gopeesingh: I will speak closer to the mike then, thank you.

Hon. Garcia: All right, in the primary school, in the sector they are 6,704 primary school teachers and that will involve principals, vice-principals, senior teachers and so on, okay?

Dr. Gopeesingh: And the vacancies?

Hon. Garcia: What is your second question now?

Dr. Gopeesingh: The vacancies.

Hon. Garcia: The vacancies.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Without bodies.

Hon. Garcia: In the primary sector there are no vacancies, in the primary sector. In the secondary sector there are—

Dr. Gopeesingh: You answered that already, I think 282.

Hon. Garcia: I answered that already, okay.

Dr. Gopeesingh: All right, thank you.

Madam Chairman: Okay, so can we move on? Item 011: Eastern Caribbean Institute of Agriculture and Forestry. Member for Chaguanas East.

Mr. Karim: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, line Item 01, could you tell us how many persons this catered for and with respect to how many vacant posts in ECIAF?

Hon. Garcia: You are at 01?

Mr. Karim: Yeah, line Item 01, Salaries and C.O.L.A., ECIAF.

Hon. Garcia: 29 monthly-paid employees. That caters for 29 monthly-paid employees.

Mr. Karim: And vacant?

Hon. Garcia: I do not have the number of vacancies. You will get that in writing.

Mr. Karim: Okay.

Madam Chairman: Item 012: Technical/Vocational Education. Member for Chaguanas East.

Mr. Karim: Hon. Minister, may I ask a similar question with respect to line Item 01?

Hon. Garcia: There are seven monthly-paid employees in this section and in terms of vacancies we can give you that in writing.

Mr. Karim: Okay.

Madam Chairman: Item 014: National Examinations Council. Member for Chaguanas East.

Mr. Karim: NEC as well, hon. Minister.

Hon. Garcia: Again, there are eight—sorry, there are nine monthly-paid

employees and I am not sure in terms of vacancies but we will find that out and we would give it to you in writing.

Mr. Karim: The nine that you have there, is it the optimum complement or—you said you have some vacancies that you will need to fill.

Hon. Garcia: Yeah, from the information that is available to me, that seems to be the size of the establishment.

Madam Chairman: Item 016: Scholarships and Advanced Training Division.

Mr. Karim: At the risk of repeating myself, Chairman, thank you very much. If you might do similarly so we are getting a running commentary of the establishment and the vacancies with the SATD.

Hon. Garcia: Say that again?

Mr. Karim: I am saying that we can get a running commentary with the permission of the Chair in terms of the establishment of the SATD and the vacant positions.

Hon. Garcia: In the interest of time we can give you a rundown in writing of the positions on the establishment and those that are with bodies and those that are vacant without bodies.

Mr. Karim: Okay, thank you.

Hon. Garcia: Okay? But I can tell you there are 35 monthly-paid employees under this section. But you are going to get all this information in writing, okay?

Mr. Karim: Sure, thank you.

Madam Chairman: Member for Caroni East, did I observe your hand?

Dr. Gopeesingh: No.

Madam Chairman: Okay, so we will go on. Sub-Head 02: Goods and Services.
Item 001: General Administration. Member for Chaguanas East.

2.45 p.m.

Mr. Karim: Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, may I point you to line Item 28: Contracted Services; and the explanation is that you have an allocation for school transport, and for other services. And with respect to school transport and all these payments, are they up to date or do they have indebtedness to school transport?

Hon. Garcia: You are referring to the maxi-taxi transport? We have outstanding just one or two fortnights that we are working on. And we are having—we are continuously meeting with the president of the association to iron out some of these difficulties. We have had some challenges with respect to PTSC, and all these challenges had been worked out.

Mr. Karim: Madam Chair, with respect to the Other Services, what will constitute that two million?

Hon. Garcia: Other Contracted Services?

Mr. Karim: Yeah.

Hon. Garcia: Okay, we have some service providers who are there to ensure that our schools are safe and comfortable for all those who reside therein. And as a result, we have Rentokil that provides that service to ensure that there is no vermin to retard the education of our children.

We have tent rentals, for example, the Toco Secondary School is now housed in a fairly well-order tent, and some of these things are there to ensure that education continues.

Mr. Karim: Can I ask a follow up, since you mentioned tent rentals and the school is housed in a tent. Is it Toco, how long has that been?

Hon. Garcia: Quite some time now.

Mr. Karim: And what is the plan to move from that?

Hon. Garcia: As you know Toco is one of the 27 schools that we have listed for priority treatment. But if you go up to Toco, and you have a look at what happens, or what is in existence, I am sure you will be pleased.

Mr. Karim: When do you propose that we might have a potential movement to the fixed facility?

Hon. Garcia: I just mentioned that there are 27 schools that is given—

Mr. Karim: Is this a priority?

Hon. Garcia:—priority treatment. Toco Secondary is one of those schools.

Dr. Gopeesingh: As the Minister is on that, Minister, are there any designs completed for that school to start? The early, very early, or still in the early phase of it?

Hon. Garcia: When this matter was discussed, both at the level of Cabinet and at the level of AFPPD, there are some designs that we are looking at that exist already, and that will cut short the whole process.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Okay. Madam Chair, can I ask the hon. Minister, line Items 16 and 22: that they may go hand in hand, the Contract Employment and Short-term Employment. The Contract Employment of 110 million, which is 41 million less than last year, which was 151. And the Short term Employment increase of 16 million, from last year 30 million, carrying it to 46. Hon. Minister, can you give us an idea? Contract Employment, Short-term Employment.

Hon. Garcia: Okay, let me first deal with contract employment. There are 1,491 contract employees existing in the Ministry of Education, 1,491 employees, okay. And in terms of short-term employment, we have persons who are on very short-term employment, for example the administrators, those persons who

supervise CAPE, CSEC, SEA exams and so on. So this area caters to those persons.

Dr. Gopeesingh: That is 46 million, so that is a large quantity of money. I mean—for it.

Hon. Garcia: Well, once a person has worked, that person has to be paid.

Dr. Gopeesingh: You “doh” know how much on short-term employment there?

Hon. Garcia: Pardon?

Hon. Garcia: How many on short-term employment?

Dr. Gopeesingh: 141.

Dr. Gopeesingh: One—

Hon. Garcia: 1-4-1

Dr. Gopeesingh: For \$46 million, something is wrong there you know. [*Crosstalk*] That works out to about 350,000 per year per worker.

Dr. Francis: You are on the wrong line.

Hon. Garcia: All right, I have just been advised that perhaps you are looking at the wrong line, and it is really line 22.

Dr. Gopeesingh: 28 million then. Still, 141 persons under—for 28 million is still quite high.

Hon. Garcia: A significant amount of arrears was paid in 2019 which explains the situation. We had arrears which we had to discharge in 2019.

Dr. Gopeesingh: So that took it to 32 million? Okay, and the contract employment?

Hon. Garcia: The contract employment, there are a number of employees who are under contract.

Dr. Gopeesingh: 1,491?

Hon. Garcia: Yes.

Dr. Gopeesingh: All right, okay.

Madam Chairman: Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, line Item 28; you indicated that Other Contracted Services also included the tent for Toco, and I was wondering in light of the fact that Sangre Chiquito Presbyterian and North Manzanilla are not in schools, not under a tent, they are not under a tent, but they are in similar situations, if the Minister can probably indicate if the 22 schools that are supposed to be benefiting from upgrades, would be these two schools are a part of—will be included?

Hon. Garcia: You would know that I spoke to you, and I told you that we are looking at North Manzanilla Government School, and we will be paying a visit there with technical officers to decide what is to be done where that school is concerned.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: And Sangre Chiquito Presbyterian?

Hon. Garcia: We will be looking at Sangre Chiquito School also. But just let me make the point, Sangre Chiquito has to be treated different from North Manzanilla Government School, because Sangre Chiquito belongs to the Presbyterian Board. And in dealing with those schools we have to get the concurrence of the Board before we can move further.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: I believe you have the concurrence of the Board, Sir.

Hon. Garcia: You know that? You are a member of the Board? [*Interruption*] Well, you must not say things you do not know about.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: I am asking on behalf of them, Sir.

Hon. Garcia: Yeah, but you are making statements that you are not supposed to

be making. We are here in Parliament, yes, you are not a member of the Board, and therefore you are not authorized to speak on behalf of the Board.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: I am authorized as a Member of Parliament, and I am here asking questions on behalf of them.

Hon. Garcia: Not on behalf of the Presbyterian Board, I am sure about that.
 [*Crosstalk*]

Madam Chairman: Member for Couva South.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Madam Chair, I want to ask the Fees, under line Item 23?

Madam Chairman: Member for Couva South, are you?

Mr. Indarsingh: Madam—

Madam Chairman: Excuse me, Member for Couva South.

Mr. Indarsingh: Yes, Madam Chair. Minister, with respect to 22 Short-term Employment; in your response to my colleague from Caroni East, you said that you dealt with a number of arrears as it relates to persons who would have worked for CSEC and supervising exams, have you cleared off all the liabilities owed to persons who would have worked in such instances?

Hon. Garcia: I am certain that we have cleared a substantial amount perhaps if there are one or two, it will be very small.

Mr. Indarsingh: But you have some outstanding liabilities to settle?

Hon. Garcia: Yes, we have some outstanding.

Mr. Indarsingh: You have an idea of the quantum? Because I have read in the public domain where persons—

Hon. Garcia: I do not have an idea of the quantum at this stage—

Mr. Indarsingh: Um-hmm.

Hon. Garcia:—and as I have been saying, we can make that information available

to you.

Mr. Indarsingh: Certainly, I would like to know that, and there are a number of people who have been writing the newspapers and so on complaining about this outstanding liability.

Mr. Karim: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I am not sure whether any of my colleagues raised line Item 23?

Dr. Gopeesingh: I was going to raise it but you raise it.

Mr. Karim: Okay, so hon. Minister, Madam Chairman, with your permission, line Item 23: Fees; I suspect I know what it is, but if you could give us some elaboration in terms of the increase of 16 million?

Hon. Garcia: The fees relate to payments principally to CXC. Right, we have to pay CXC fees, CXC administers these exams, CSEC, CAPE and SEA, and these are the fees that we are supposed to pay them.

Mr. Karim: Do we have any outstanding amount going to CXC? For both CSEC and CAPE?

Hon. Garcia: No, we do not have any outstanding payments.

Dr. Gopeesingh: On that same thing. Same line Item, hon. Minister, 46 million was allocated in 2019, and you paid 30 million, so where the other 16 million? And you came back to ask and you are receiving now 46 million. So, 16 million more from the Revised Estimates of 2019. What is the real fees, 30 million or 46 million to CXC?

Hon. Garcia: This will involve the payments to GATE for services that they have rendered.

Dr. Gopeesingh: To GATE?

Hon. Garcia: GATE E-service, electronic service provided by GATE.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Okay.

Madam Chairman: Item 005. Yes, Member for Chaguanas East.

Mr. Karim: I was just on page 177, if it is okay with you.

Madam Chairman: Go ahead.

Mr. Karim: I was going to ask line Item 34, but I will get 34 times that explanation the same thing so I would not go here. So can I go to line Items 37 and 43? Are they both being administered by the same company?

Hon. Garcia: 37 and 43?

Mr. Karim: Yes.

Hon. Garcia: No, under 37 there are some employees that fall directly under the Ministry of Education.

Mr. Karim: But, who will be the major provider?

Hon. Garcia: Who are providing the janitorial services?

Mr. Karim: Yeah, janitorial.

Hon. Garcia: Let us look at the Janitorial Services.

Mr. Karim: Sure.

Hon. Garcia: And as I was saying we have the employees from the Ministry of Education who provide those services. Security Services; we have a number of security providers who provide those services. Do you wish to get—?

Mr. Karim: If you can tell us who they are.

Hon. Garcia: We have: Building and Maintenance Services Limited; we have Caribbean Facilities Corporation Limited; we have Century 21 Janitorial Services Limited; we have Super Industries Services Limited; we have Magic Mist; we have LSA Health Care; and we have MTS.

Mr. Karim: Okay. Might we be able, through you, Madam Chair, to get—

Hon. Garcia: You want a copy of this?

Mr. Karim: Yeah.

Hon. Garcia: Of course, we will make it available to you.

Mr. Karim: Okay, thank you. Just a final question on both of these items: Are you satisfied with the quality of the services in both 37 and 43?

Hon. Garcia: Yes, we are satisfied.

Madam Chairman: Item—Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Hon. Minister, 205 million was allocated in 2019 for Security Services, but 131 under the Revised Estimate is depicted here, is shown here. So about 74 million was not utilized based on the 2019 Revised Estimate, could you give us a little?

Hon. Garcia: No, just let me explain, what you are saying is not totally correct. The actual expenditure for 2019 was \$171,334,425.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Okay, was there a shortfall in payment for anyone in 2019? To any one of the security companies?

Hon. Garcia: This increase is to cater for increases due to the increase in the minimum wage and for arrears.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Arrears; how much arrears is encapsulated in that 73 million?

Hon. Garcia: I do not have that. You know, one of our greatest philosophers once said that he keeps those bits of information in a book that he keeps in his pocket, not in his head, right, so you will get that information.

Dr. Gopeesingh: You have your PS right there, you have your technical officers—

Hon. Garcia: You will get that information.

Madam Chairman: 005: Secondary Education. Member for Chaguanas East.

Mr. Karim: Madam Chair, thank you very much. Hon. Minister, line Item 23, you gave us some fees on the previous page. What are these fees for?

3.00 p.m.

Hon. Garcia: Continuation classes which are located at government secondary schools.

Mr. Karim: Could you give us an idea, through you, Madam Chair, as to how many of these schools have continuation classes on evenings after school?

Hon. Garcia: We have 24 schools that provide continuation classes, these services, 24 of those schools.

Mr. Karim: Okay. Is it possible to get a list of those too?

Hon. Garcia: With this administration everything is possible.

Mr. Karim: Thank you, Minister.

Madam Chairman: Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: No—

Madam Chairman: All right. Item 006: Primary Education; Item 007: District Services Division; Item 008: Rudranath Capildeo Learning Resource Centre. Member for Couva South.

Mr. Indarsingh: Minister, I am really not asking a question, I am just asking you based on, in terms of Repairs and Maintenance, 21, I do not think that having spent \$54,500, \$145,500 will really do justice to what I am saying in terms of the deterioration of the Rudranath Capildeo Learning Resource Centre, and I would humbly ask if you could get your officers to review and see if there could be an upward movement in terms of the maintenance, and so on, at that facility.

Hon. Garcia: This is in the *Development Programme* and of course we have allocated \$200,000 so far and—[*Crosstalk*] Let us answer that question in two

phases. Under this line Item we have allocated \$200,000 but the major works will fall under the *Developmental Programme* and we have sufficient allocation there to cover some of the concerns that you have just raised.

Mr. Indarsingh: Thank you.

Madam Chairman: Member for Chaguanas East.

Mr. Karim: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, line Item 17: Training, there has been a substantial increase compared to what the—well, you had a big allocation but a very small usage of just \$8,100. Is this meant for training for the RCLRC staff or is it meant for training conducted at the RCLRC?

Hon. Garcia: You know, the RCLRC was established to provide training, as a training facility also, and once the physical conditions are up to standard, we plan to concentrate most of the training at the LRC.

Mr. Karim: Any reason why such a small amount out of the allocation was utilized in 2019?

Hon. Garcia: As I said before, the LRC was not in a state that would provide adequate accommodation for training.

Mr. Karim: Has it now been rectified? [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. Garcia: It is under repairs, yes.

Dr. Francis: It is under serious repair.

Mr. Karim: Oh, it is under serious repair?

Dr. Francis: Yeah, now.

Mr. Karim: Okay. May I also ask, Madam Chair, with your approval, line Item 22: Short-term Employment; while there has been again an increase, we see a decrease in 2020 of 142. Could you tell us, the Short-term Employment, how much that will constitute and the purpose of it?

Hon. Garcia: How much?

Mr. Karim: At the RCLRC, short-term employment, if you can give us an explanation as to what engages short-term employment, how many persons if possible?

Hon. Garcia: At the LRC a number of services are provided, for example, printing. You know, again it was established to provide printing material for all the schools and here is where we would be utilizing short-term employment.

Mr. Karim: Is the DES still located there?

Hon. Garcia: Yes, his office is still located there. The DES, the Director of Education Services and also the DCD, Director of Curriculum Development.

Mr. Karim: I am okay, Madam Chair.

Madam Chairman: Item 009: Early Childhood Care and Education Unit. Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Hon. Minister, I draw your attention to line Item 22: Short-term Employment for ECC. What does that incorporate?

Hon. Garcia: That incorporates 150 cleaners that are employed on a short-term basis to clean 138 centres.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Okay. Hon. Minister, you indicated earlier on that we have 139 ECC, what has happened to the private sector/public sector partnership with the ECC in terms of the Ministry of Education paying a certain amount for X amount of Early Childhood Education Centres for approximately 17,000 children to receive free early childhood education.

Hon. Garcia: That contract has come to an end and we are looking at this because we were able to discover a number of areas that needed closer attention, but in the meanwhile we are making sure that those children, or all the children who qualify

to be housed in an ECC centre, they have access to those centres.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Hon. Minister, 139 schools cannot house the 37,000 children who are between age three and four, so some of the children, half of this amount of children are being left out of school. Let us say 140 schools by even 40 students in one school.

Hon. Garcia: I do not think it is correct to say that a number or a large number of students are being left out of school.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Yes.

Hon. Garcia: No. So I take issue with what you are saying. You know, in many areas, that level of training is also provided in the home.

Dr. Gopeesingh: So, Minister, you are saying that you shifted the training of these Early Childhood Education students from the schools to home by abandoning the Partnership—

Hon. Garcia: Again, you are using words that you are not supposed to use. You are using words that bear no significance or bear no truth to the issue that we have at hand.

Dr. Gopeesingh: So, Minister, if I can ask you, 139 Early Childhood Education Schools, to give us a breakdown of the total amount of students in these schools, and then if I may go further to ask you how many students in each school so we can get a picture of what really is happening. And I can definitely tell you, that will not amount to 37,000 children who are age three and four in the country. So thousands of students are being left out of the Early Childhood Education system because of a policy that you—

Hon. Garcia: That is not correct. That is not a correct statement to make.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Okay then, well, can we have an account of how many students

in each one of these 139 schools in writing?

Hon. Garcia: I can give you that and you are going to see what you are saying is false.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Well, what I will show you, I would bring a Motion in Parliament to say that you are saying it is false and I am saying it is true. What has happened to the partnership—

Hon. Garcia: You could bring 100 Motions.

Dr. Gopeesingh: What has happened to the partnership with the—

Hon. Garcia: I am saying that there were a lot of problems associated with that partnership and we are looking at it.

Dr. Gopeesingh: So it is no longer there?

Hon. Garcia: A number of schools are still in operation. A number of those schools are still in operation and they are being run by private individuals, a large number of those schools. Okay?

Dr. Gopeesingh: But we gave 3,600—Minister, we gave \$3,600 per year per child in the Partnership for these ECCE centres that are providing private care. Now, you have abandoned that so half of the children are out.

Hon. Garcia: Caroni East, I was reluctant to enter into details, but since you are insisting I can tell you, in some instances, in spite of the fact that those providers or some of those providers were receiving financial assistance from Government, they also were charging fees, and that is just one of the areas. Okay? So let us not go down that road. There were some problems and we are looking at those problems.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Four years later, Minister? Four years later, that programme we left in 2010 running, that the world saw that Trinidad as a leader in Early Childhood Education and you abandon it?

Hon. Garcia: It was an area that was not carefully thought out.

Dr. Gopeesingh: What?

Hon. Garcia: It was an area that was not—

Dr. Gopeesingh: You took two years for the Ministry of Education to do that programme.

Hon. Garcia: I am saying it was an area that was not carefully thought out, as so many things were not carefully thought out.

Dr. Gopeesingh: I take objection to your statement there. I take objection to your statement.

Hon. Garcia: Well, you can take objection to anything.

Dr. Gopeesingh: That was well-thought-out, well-coordinated—

Hon. Garcia: It was not at all, not with the evidence that we have before us.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Would you bring the evidence that you have, Minister?

Hon. Garcia: The evidence that we have before us does not say that. [*Crosstalk*]

Dr. Gopeesingh: I will file a Motion on that, Minister.

Madam Chairman: Members, can we move on, please? Item 011: Eastern Caribbean Institute of Agriculture and Forestry; Item 014: National Examinations Council; Item 015: Spanish Secretariat; Item 016: Scholarships and Advanced Training Division. We are now at page 182.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Yeah, Madam, go ahead fast.

Madam Chairman: You are under Item 016?

Mr. Karim: Yeah.

Madam Chairman: Yes, Member for Chaguanas East.

Mr. Karim: Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, line Item 16: Contract Employment, \$21 million. Could you give us some details about that Item?

Mr. Garcia: There are 187 contract employees. That is the information that I have.

Mr. Karim: Any vacancies that need to be filled?

Hon. Garcia: This line Item here caters for the returning scholars and therefore there will not be any vacancies.

Mr. Karim: Okay. Since it is the returning scholars themselves, this allocation, it is also to ensure—this is the employment of the returning scholars?

Hon. Garcia: Returning scholars, yes.

Mr. Karim: Do you have a number of them who have returned and are unemployed? Can you tell us if there are any? Is there any or are there any returning scholars who are still awaiting—

Hon. Garcia: You know, that will be difficult, very difficult because those persons, first of all, they have to inform us of their return, and through the Ministry of Public Administration there is information that is shared with us and on that basis then we have them allocated to difference places of employment.

Mr. Karim: But based on your relationship with the Ministry of Public Administration, do you have any? Are you aware of any of those who are awaiting to be—

Hon. Garcia: No, at this point I am not aware.

Madam Chairman: Sub-Head 03: Minor Equipment Purchases. Item 001: General Administration. Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Line Item 04, hon. Minister, Other Minor Equipment, \$43 million was allocated in 2019, \$10 million spent but you have come back to reallocate \$40 million. Could you give us an appreciation of what happened there and what are the equipment that are being considered?

Hon. Garcia: Just give me one moment, please. What page are you on?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Page 182, Minor Equipment Purchases, line Item 04.

Hon. Garcia: Okay. Fine. And what is your question?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Forty-three million was allocated in 2019, \$10 million spent, according to the Revised Estimates and you are now reallocating \$40 million. What happened with the other \$33 million that was allocated? Was it not procured or was it procured and you are owing for them?

Hon. Garcia: What I could answer is that the allocation here would cater for the preparation of our secondary schools for e-testing. As you know, CXC has taken a decision that all examinations would be done online, but we have to make sure that our schools are perfectly equipped, our teachers are adequately trained, and our teachers also, likewise, are trained. So we are putting things in place to ensure that those things are ready before we can expose our students to this online testing.

The second thing I would like to share with you is that the Digital Enterprise Content Management System for the Ministry of Education administration, and this was approved by Cabinet. And this would be put in place, and also it will involve digital computing devices in support of classroom-based learning, and further, digital transformation initiatives at the Ministry of Education.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Okay. Ten million only was spent but 43 allocated in 2019. What happened there? Was it a lack of—?

Hon. Garcia: What line Item are you on?

Dr. Gopeesingh: The same line Item. What equipment that you had envisaged to be procured?

Hon. Garcia: This money was allocated to increase the bandwidth in our schools and that was not done as yet, and we are working on it.

Dr. Gopeesingh: All right. Okay. So which company you are looking at in terms of helping increase the bandwidth, TSTT or bmobile or Green Dot, or what?

Hon. Garcia: We have not taken any decision as yet as to who will provide that service.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Okay. Thank you, Minister.

3.15 p.m.

Madam Chairman: Item 008: Rudranath Capildeo Learning Resource Centre; Item 009: Early Childhood Care and Education Unit. Sub-head 04: Current Transfers and Subsidies. Item 001: Regional Bodies; Item 002: Commonwealth Bodies; Item 003: United Nations Organizations; Item 004: International Bodies; Item 006: Educational Institutions.

Mr. Karim: May I start with line Items—well, first of all line Item 20: Fees for students at private secondary schools. The sum of \$33 million. How many students are we talking about here?

Hon. Garcia: I will give you a breakdown in—

Mr. Karim: And do you have them by educational districts?

Hon. Garcia: Just one minute please.

Mr. Karim: Okay, sure.

Hon. Garcia: All right; there are 7,833 students who are enrolled at 12 private secondary schools.

Mr. Karim: Just for the calculation, since I do not have any calculator on me, could you give us what is the per capita cost per student?

Hon. Garcia: \$4,000.

Mr. Karim: Line Item 27 and 30, if I may take those two together, Madam Chair. It has to deal with Textbook Rental Management Unit in both the primary and the

secondary. Hon. Minister, will you be procuring textbooks for the new academic year?

Hon. Garcia: Well, we have put in place, which I mentioned earlier on, a committee “LMET”, Learning Materials Evaluation Committee. That committee submitted a preliminary report and the committee is to do some further work, and they will make the recommendation.

Mr. Karim: Assuming that they do, by what time you think publishers might be advised as to prepare to supply textbooks?

Hon. Garcia: We have been assured that the report will be presented to us way in advance of the new academic year.

Mr. Karim: Will the list of approved textbooks be made public, Minister?

Hon. Garcia: Yes.

Mr. Karim: If I may continue. I noticed line Item 34. Any reason why we have not seen any allocation for the expansion of ECC, universal ECC? Is it that that is completed? Could you answer that?

Hon. Garcia: This was the private/public partnership that was so rigorously argued by the Member for Caroni East.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, line Items 27 and 30. I just wanted to find out how many children actually benefited from this, because as far as I am aware a number of students did not access any textbooks.

Hon. Garcia: Benefited from what?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: How many children from both primary and secondary who are in receipt of textbooks? A number of students have not received.

Hon. Garcia: This line Item speaks to the management of the Textbook Unit. It does not talk anything about how many students benefit. I am having some

difficulty in understanding your trend of thoughts.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: It says the Textbooks Rental Management Unit at the line Item, Sir. At least the unit would be able to indicate how many text books were in fact provided to the students.

Hon. Garcia: This line Item—

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: And if they have evaluated, Sir, were they able to come back with a determination as to whether the textbooks are reaching where it is supposed to?

Hon. Garcia: With all the respect that is due to you, I am having some difficulty in understanding what you are saying.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: I understand that, Minister. I could understand you might have difficulty.

Hon. Garcia: We all have difficulties. We always have difficulty with the way you put forward your questions.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Hon. Minister, the grants to assisted secondary schools and primary schools under line Items 01 and 09, I see that you have utilized the funding that was appropriated for it and so paid them, but there were complaints around the year that they were not receiving the grants on time. Could you make some comments on that, if there was delay at any time, or if you would deny there was any delay in the grants allocated?

Hon. Garcia: No, I would not deny that there was any delay. There was a delay, and the delay was as a result of funding, the availability of funding at the time.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Thanks, I appreciate that. We all go through that.

Hon. Garcia: And I appreciate the clarity of your question, so different from others.

Hon. Members: No, no, no.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Do not underestimate where the Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla was going.

Hon. Garcia: I did not call anybody, you know.

Madam Chairman: Member for Caroni East, are you finished?

Dr. Gopeesingh: No, no.

Madam Chairman: So let us please keep focused.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Servol Junior Life Centres, Minister.

Hon. Garcia: What line Item is that?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Line Item 19, an expenditure of 4.6 million. That is for serving in what area? Servol has been a great partner of the Ministry of Education.

Hon. Garcia: Arima, Barataria, Freeport, Chaguanas, La Romain, Laventille, Mayaro, Point Fortin, San Juan, Sangre Grande, St. Ann's, Cascade; all these areas have life centres.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Right. Excellent. The fees for students of—Local School Boards, No. 22. Minister, from what I gather here in 2018 there was no allocation for local school boards, nor 2019, and one million for 2020. I could remember we had about 82 local school boards. I do not think one million would be enough to pay for the 82 local school boards that we had during our time. I do not know much you have now, how much you are supporting. When was the last time that a new local school board was appointed?

Hon. Garcia: We had written to all Members of Parliament to inform us of their recommendation with respect to persons who would sit on the local school boards. We are looking at revamping the whole local school board area, and I could safely say quite confidently that a number of these school boards have been back in

operation.

Dr. Gopeesingh: How many are back out of the—I remember 82.

Hon. Garcia: I have been told that there are 85 of those local school boards in operation.

Dr. Gopeesingh: From what time there, Minister? From when did they start?

Hon. Garcia: Within recent times.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Were they functioning for the first three years of your Administration?

Hon. Garcia: They were not functioning when we came into office.

Dr. Gopeesingh: No, no, no, they were functioning. Do not worry about that. Madam Chair, I want to just move on. I thank the Minister for his answers. Eric Williams Medical Sciences Complex—27 million given to EWMSC, is that for the medical students?

Hon. Garcia: What line Item are you referring to?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Forty-one. Between 41 and 44, I do not know if they might be overlapping.

Hon. Garcia: Okay, what is the question you are asking?

Dr. Gopeesingh: What is the funding for 27 million for Eric Williams Medical Sciences Complex?

Hon. Garcia: This is for Trinidad and Tobago nationals who are engaged in study at the Faculty of Medical Sciences at UWI.

Dr. Gopeesingh: That is for medicine, vet medicine, dentistry, et cetera?

Hon. Garcia: No, no, medicine, MBBS.

Dr. Gopeesingh: The subsidies of line Item 44.

Dr. Gopeesingh: MBBS. And the subsidies for Mount Hope students of 18

million?

Hon. Garcia: Pardon? Say that again.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Line Item 44, subsidies Mount Hope students, which is the same as Eric Williams. So that 80 million is paid for what differently from the 27 million?

Hon. Garcia: This would cater for school of medicine, school of veterinary medicine, dentistry and pharmacy.

Dr. Gopeesingh: So that \$80 million is for all? Thank you, Minister.

Mr. Karim: Hon. Minister, line Item 35: Direct University Services Current. Could you give us some information with respect to that Item of 630?

Hon. Garcia: This would cover 80 per cent of the economic costs for nationals at UWI campuses: Cave Hill, Mona, and St. Augustine, as well as funding for UWI Centre.

Mr. Karim: UWI Centre for what? You were saying UWI centre?

Hon. Garcia: Chaguanas East, being a past—

Mr. Karim: I thought you did not finish.

Hon. Garcia:—Minister of Tertiary Education, you would know that there is a university centre that resides in Jamaica.

Mr. Karim: Yes, I know that.

Hon. Garcia: “So why yuh asking meh question again for?”

Mr. Karim: I did not want to interrupt you. Do you have any outstanding sums for the St. Augustine Campus, hon. Minister?

Hon. Garcia: We try to make our payments to the St. Augustine campus on time.

Mr. Karim: So the sum of 200 million that is bandied about in terms of the participation of UWI into the children hospital, is that because of a debt? What I

was being told is that sums were owed to the University of the West Indies St. Augustine, and in exchange, if you would prefer, that would become, rather than you pay them the debt, that is what they would use as participation. Is that correct?

Hon. Garcia: That is in the hands of the Minister of Health, and I think we will deal with that in another forum.

Mr. Karim: Can I ask with respect to the Council of Legal Education which really pursues the LEC, that sum of money is for what?

Hon. Garcia: This money is to cover the economic cost for our nationals at the Hugh Wooding Law School. The Hugh Wooding Law School falls under the Council of Legal Education, and the Ministry of Education assists in covering the cost of our nationals in pursuing this programme.

Mr. Karim: Madam Chair, may I continue? Line Item 40: Medical Post-Graduate Programme. Is that in sync with the hon. Minister of Health needs for the sector in terms of specialization? In other words, is it responsive to the national economic needs or the health needs of the country?

Hon. Garcia: The simple answer to that question is yes.

Mr. Karim: Might you be able to tell us, if not now, and you could provide us with some of the areas of specialization and the quantum of persons who are being trained?

Hon. Garcia: No problem at all.

Mr. Karim: Could you give us a little bit of information with respect to the Herbarium Project, line Item 43?

Hon. Garcia: Just a while. Question?

Mr. Karim: I was asking if you could give us some information with respect to it.

Hon. Garcia: It is a project that involves the propagation of plants and orchids

and other ornamental plants that will have some economic value.

Mr. Karim: What is the reason for the substantial decrease the allocation to the IIR, line 42?

3.30 p.m.

Hon. Garcia: Again, this deals with the funding that we received, and if it is necessary, we will either, one, vire from other areas or look at our mid-year review and make other representations.

Mr. Karim: Okay. Madam Chair?

Madam Chairman: Yes, you may.

Mr. Karim: Line Item 46, hon. Minister, the National Training Agency. *[Interruption]* Sorry. Go ahead, with your permission, Madam Chair.

Madam Chairman: So, Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: If I may take the Minister back to this Direct University Services of 630 million.

Hon. Garcia: What line Item are you referring to?

Dr. Gopeesingh: 35, Minister, you have it before you, man, come on, 35, 630 million. The Prime Minister and the Minister of Health indicated that they owed the University of the West Indies \$200 million, and as a result of that they are going to give them 51 per cent share in the Couva hospital which they have done. So you gave—because you owed UWI \$200 million, you gave them an institution for \$2 billion with 51 per cent shares. So in other words, you swapped a 200 million that you owed UWI for a 1 billion in return to them. Does that make sense? What are your views on that?

Hon. Garcia: I do not think what you are saying makes sense. Certainly it does not make sense.

Dr. Gopeesingh: That is a fact.

Hon. Garcia: I have just answered that question when Chaguanas East posed that question, and that is in the hands of the Minister of Health.

Dr. Gopeesingh: The Minister of Health? I thought that should be under the Minister of Finance, he does not control health—

Hon. Garcia: It is a partnership.

Dr. Gopeesingh:—and we would like to hear what the Minister of Finance has on that.

Mr. Imbert: Common sense will dictate that all that has been netted off is the actual amount owing to the university in terms of value.

Dr. Gopeesingh: So you will net off 1 billion versus 200 million that they owed?

Mr. Imbert: Well, that is not common sense what you just said. Common sense will dictate that the amount netted off is the value owed.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Well, I cannot see—

Mr. Imbert: In other words, if 200 million is owed then the value credited is 200 million; common sense would dictate that.

Dr. Gopeesingh: But I read, Minister, that the UWI owns 51 per cent of shares.

Mr. Imbert: Oh you read? Where did you read that?

Dr. Gopeesingh: It is public.

Mr. Imbert: Where did you read that?

Dr. Gopeesingh: You changed the logo—

Mr. Imbert: But you are not answering me.

Dr. Gopeesingh:—on the Couva hospital to reflect.

Hon. Imbert: Where did you read that?

Dr. Gopeesingh: UWI.

Mr. Imbert: There is a special purpose company set up to manage the facility. Where did you read that 1 billion in—

Dr. Gopeesingh: How much UWI owns in terms of the Couva hospital?

Mr. Imbert: Common sense will dictate that the value owed is the value netted off.

Dr. Gopeesingh: How much was netted off?

Mr. Imbert: 200 million.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Okay. So they therefore own 10 per cent of the—which is a 2 billion institution.

Mr. Imbert: A company has been established to manage the facility. You are confusing equity with management.

Dr. Gopeesingh: No. No. I can prove what I have said here.

Mr. Imbert: You can prove nothing. I asked you, where did you read this?

Dr. Gopeesingh: But you have given, Minister of Finance, UWI, not that I am against UWI, I am a student of UWI and I taught there for 20-something years, \$1 billion in value for 200 million that you—

Mr. Imbert: That is not true.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Okay.

Mr. Imbert: I have just said three times—

Dr. Gopeesingh: Remember I will bring a Motion. It is recorded here.

Mr. Imbert:—that is not true.

Dr. Gopeesingh: It is recorded here—

Mr. Imbert: It is not true.

Dr. Gopeesingh:—if I bring a Motion on what you are saying.

Mr. Imbert: Where is it recorded? Where?

Dr. Gopeesingh: It is being recorded by *Hansard*, what your statements are.

Mr. Imbert: What? I am saying that what you are saying is not true.

Dr. Gopeesingh: I am saying—all right. What I am saying is not true?

Hon. Member: This does not pertain to our discussion.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Okay. We will disprove that.

Madam Chairman: Are you moving on to a next Item, Caroni East?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Yes. Yes. Advanced Nursing Education, line Item 39 and 40. What do they encompass?—because advanced nursing education is a big thing, you are giving them 300,000. What can that do and what is that doing?

Hon. Garcia: This is to support the nursing programme at the University of the West Indies.

Dr. Gopeesingh: 300,000 to support the university programme?

Hon. Garcia: Yes.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Where are they getting the money for the programme to teach then if 300,000—

Hon. Garcia: This is to assist or to support, and that is the allocation that we have. All right?

Dr. Gopeesingh: So how does the nursing education programme sustain itself at UWI, at Mount Hope? Where do they get the funding from to pay all the teachers and lecturers?

Hon. Garcia: We can deal with that subsequently. At this point I am focusing on the line Item here, and I am answering the question that you asked.

Dr. Gopeesingh: So 300,000 is given for nursing education at Mount Hope?

Hon. Garcia: To support, note my word, to support the nursing education programme at UWI.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Well, I want to know how they survive with 300,000.

Hon. Garcia: Pardon?

Dr. Gopeesingh: I want to know how they survive with 300,000.

Dr. Francis: That would not be the total amount.

Dr. Gopeesingh: And so is the post-graduate programme, the medical post-graduate programme where we have doctorates of medicine across Mount Hope for about eight different disciplines. Where do they get the funding from?

Hon. Garcia: This is the last time I am answering on this line item, eh. It is to support tuition fees. Okay? Remember I said just now, it is to support the programme in the area of tuition fees.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Minister, do you not think it is laughable that you are telling us that 300,000 and 400,000 is to support a teaching programme for nursing students and for post-graduate medical doctors? Is it not laughable?

Hon. Member: That cannot be the full amount.

Hon. Garcia: I think it more laughable at the questions that you are asking. Shall we move on, Madam Chairman? Shall we move on?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Yeah. Move on. Move on.

Madam Chairman: Member for Chaguanas East.

Mr. Karim: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, I just want to return to that discussion we had just now with respect to the UWI's participation in terms of netting off the 200 million. The decision to—

Hon. Garcia: I am not going to answer any more questions where that is concerned. Okay? So shall we move on? We have dealt with that sufficiently, we are wasting time now. All right? I am not going to answer any more questions where that is concerned.

Madam Chairman: Member for Chaguanas West.

Mr. Singh: Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, I want to deal with Items 27 and 30, Textbook/Rental Management Unit - Primary Schools and Secondary Schools, there is an allocation of 5 million for the 2020 Estimates on line Item 27, and an allocation of 2,500.

Minister, you are aware that the world is going into the arena of technology. Throughout the Caribbean they are moving away from hard textbooks into the areas of e-books, and that it is indeed a burden on children when they have to move with hand luggage to school. And where you see the direction of the digital age going into, is to use e-books which are interactive, which has a gaming technology link for learning, I think that we must look at it in the context, and that therefore, you will not affect the publishers, but you lighten the burden and take our children into the future. What are your thoughts on that? And more so in the utilization this technology, the CXC programme is going to be an online programme from 2020, I think it is. Well, you will decide that in terms of our agenda, but certainly I feel that e-books is something that we ought to look into.

Hon. Garcia: Chaguanas West, you came like a breath of fresh air, so different from others.

Hon. Member: Yes.

Hon. Garcia: We are at one with everything that you have said and you have made a lot of sense; congratulations.

Madam Chairman: Member for Chaguanas East.

Mr. Imbert: I just want to say something—

Dr. Francis: I totally agree with you.

Mr. Imbert:—at the level of the Ministry of Finance. The Cabinet has just gone

completely online with an encrypted e-Cabinet system, and we no longer have to carry these huge [*Interruption*] briefcases full of notes and so on. Oh, stop it, stop it—“woulda, coulda, shoulda”. So that I myself have experienced the benefit of moving from a, let us call it a manual system to the online database, and I cannot imagine why we did not have it before. And I would think that, I would support any programme from the Ministry of Education that takes our children towards online education especially e-books, so I am in full support of that. You are pushing an open door.

Dr. Francis: Member for Chaguanas West, if I could also help. We are moving towards implementing a school learning management system which will be unveiled soon. Going ahead these things will be online, and e-books, we are already looking at it as part and parcel of that, so this is already in train.

Dr. Gopeesingh: I think the students will be very grateful. After four years they are now getting it.

Hon. Garcia: Chaguanas West, you could understand—

Dr. Gopeesingh: After four years.

Hon. Garcia:—my joy in listening to your contribution, and the pain that I feel in listening to the questions of others, the pain. Yes.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Because they are real.

Madam Chairman: Member for Chaguanas East.

Mr. Karim: Thank you very much, Madam Chair, may I continue? I want to go to line Item 46, but may I just have a follow-up question since you are so very much impressed with the contribution of my colleague from Chaguanas West. Can you tell us when, or should I ask it in the positive way, when will be able to see e-books being launched for the new academic year 2020? And if so, how many?

Mr. Imbert: In the fiscal year.

Mr. Karim: The new academic year 2020.

Hon. Garcia: 2020 to 2021?

Mr. Karim: Yes.

Hon. Garcia: We are working towards that. Okay?

Madam Chairman: Member for Chaguanas East.

Mr. Karim: With respect to the National Training Agency—

Hon. Garcia: NTA?

Mr. Karim: NTA. I want to ask whether there are any residual sums of moneys located in the accounts of the National Training Agency being held on for the On-the-Job Training Programme. If the answer is yes, how much is that amount?

Hon. Garcia: All right. The Minister of Finance will deal with that.

Mr. Imbert: It is a fact that there was a significant sum of money that was left in the account of the National Training Agency when it had responsibility for the OJT programme. When we as a Government decided to make the OJT programme a division of the Ministry of Labour and Small Enterprise Development which has responsibility for OJTs now, we funded that programme, so there was no requirement to access those funds. But what we have done at the level of the Ministry of Finance now in fiscal 2020, we are posting that money now as revenue, and we are using it to provide the budgetary allocation for the OJT programme in the Ministry of Labour and Small Enterprise Development in fiscal 2020. The money was not required in 2019.

Mr. Karim: All right. Could you tell us how much is that sum of money?

Mr. Imbert: Over \$100 million, as far as I can recall.

Mr. Karim: And could you tell us what constrained the institution or the

Government from moving that for a period of four years?

Mr. Imbert: It is quite a complicated process to move money that is in the account of a body corporate into a Ministry. It is not an easy thing to transfer money from an authority or a state enterprise into the Consolidated Fund. We have to close the account. We have to get audited accounts for that particular entity, and that took quite a while. I would like to stop here, but if you push me I will say, it is because of the mess the accounts were left in.

Mr. Karim: I want to continue.

Madam Chairman: Yes, Member for Chaguanas East.

Mr. Karim: Madam Chair, hon. Minister, one of the synergies we have, you said earlier on in your opening statement that the Ministry of Education as is constituted now is an amalgam of three Ministries. One of the things that was very popular and continues to be necessary is career guidance for our students. We had located and we had launched two jobs and career coaches referred to as “JC 1” and “JC 2”. Can you tell us whether these buses are in working condition and serving?

Hon. Garcia: Could you advise me as to which line Item are you on?

Mr. Karim: Line Item 46, the National Training Agency, which has responsibility for the jobs and career coaches as part of their budget.

Hon. Garcia: And what is your question?

Mr. Karim: I was asking, hon. Minister, if these buses are serving the purpose? Are they in working order or are they down as we speak? And if so, why?

3.45 p.m.

Hon. Garcia: The information that is before me is that those buses are working and they are providing the service that is required of them.

Mr. Karim: Hon. Minister, through you, Madam Chair, may I just politely

indicate that that is incorrect information.

Hon. Garcia: Well, I am going to investigate that, because I said before, the information that is available to me would tell me that those buses are serviceable, but if you have other information I will investigate it.

Mr. Karim: And I will tell you where to find them in the—

Hon. Garcia: No, that is okay, I will investigate it. I will investigate it.

Mr. Karim: Could you also, while we are on National Training Agency, one of the major responsibilities and functions of the National Training Agency is to provide labour market reports to advise on the opportunities that are available in terms of job skills that are required. Could you tell us when was the last labour market report issued?

Hon. Garcia: I am not in a position to tell you that now, and perhaps I can give you that information in writing.

Mr. Karim: Okay, well I am sure, Madam Chair, if I may continue? Hon. Minister, I know you will be able to answer this one. Recently I saw you, or mentioned was made of the fact that you was present at the launch of a UNEVOC, UNESCO-UNEVOC Centre at the National Training Agency, and that is commendable, but that is an entity which was launched in the year 2002 and has its location in Bonn, Germany. Could you tell us what is the status of our regional institution?

Hon. Garcia: We are straying from the line Item.

Mr. Karim: The line Item is 46.

Hon. Garcia: We are straying from the line Item and I would suggest that we deal with that on another occasion.

Mr. Karim: No, no, Madam Chair, I am on line Item 46.

Hon. Garcia: I am telling you I am not going to go into that area.

Mr. Karim: All of these relate to the budget of the National Training Agency. You cannot dismiss these things. They are very critically important.

Hon. Garcia: I am—Chaguanas East—

Mr. Karim: This is why the economy has a problem [*Crosstalk*] of skills.

Hon. Garcia: Chaguanas East, I am not going along that road. Okay?

Mr. Karim: But you are refusing to answer the question.

Hon. Garcia: I am not going along that road.

Mr. Karim: So you are refusing to answer the question?

Hon. Garcia: That is not pertinent with respect to line Item 46.

Mr. Karim: I am raising the question again, Madam Chair, through you, whether he answers or not, to tell the country what is the position with respect to our regional institution call CANTA, the Caribbean Association National Training Agencies.

Hon. Garcia: That can be answered on another occasion but not on this occasion.

Mr. Karim: Well then I will go to line Item 48, Madam Chair.

Hon. Garcia: Yes, go ahead.

Mr. Karim: The University of Trinidad and Tobago.

Hon. Garcia: Yes.

Mr. Karim: And could you tell us what this allocation is for, and how many—well I will ask a supplementary question. What is the allocation for?

Hon. Garcia: The allocation is to pay severance of separation of non-academic staff from all campuses.

Mr. Karim: How many were terminated in the last fiscal year?

Hon. Garcia: If my memory—

Mr. Karim: How many were terminated—Madam Chair, through you, very respectfully, through you, I would like to know how many members of staff lost their jobs at the University of Trinidad and Tobago?

Hon. Garcia: Approximately—are you giving me an opportunity to answer the question.

Mr. Karim: Of course.

Hon. Garcia: Apparently you are trying to browbeat me, man, but you know you cannot do that.

Mr. Karim: No, I know you are refusing to answer, you see. You are my colleague.

Hon. Garcia: Of course, but I know that my friend, what is his name? Rambharat is out for you. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Karim: Which line Item is that? Which line Item is that?

Madam Chairman: Okay, so let us move on. [*Crosstalk*] Minister of Education.

Hon. Garcia: Yes, your question?

Mr. Karim: Yes, Ma'am. Hon. Minister, my colleague, I just wanted to ask how many persons lost their jobs at UTT in the last fiscal year?

Hon. Garcia: In terms of non-academic staff we had severed—or we had offered severance to 199. And in terms of academic staff we had offered severance to approximately 54.

Mr. Karim: Is there any intention to release any more persons from their positions at the UTT.

Hon. Garcia: No, not at this time.

Mr. Karim: Could you tell us as well, hon. Minister, if any of these sums would be going to the UTT Tamana campus?

Hon. Garcia: Which sums—I do not understand what you are saying.

Mr. Karim: Is any of this money going to be utilized at the UTT Tamana?

Hon. Garcia: We have an allocation under the *Development Programme* for UTT Tamana.

Mr. Karim: Okay, I would ask the question there. Is there any reason why we have a decrease, line Item 49, in a very important location, the Laventille Technology and Continuing Education Centre, decrease by 1 million?

Hon. Garcia: We are having some problems with respect to how we are going to administrate the programmes. As you would know, NESC they have jurisdiction over the building. They have jurisdiction over the land of the property. MIC is conducting most of the programmes. In fact, only today we were told that MIC has taken over administering all the programmes, and there are a few things that we need to straighten out, and this is one of the reasons why you see a decrease here.

Mr. Karim: Might you be able to tell us, through Madam Chair, how many students are currently on the programme at that centre in Laventille?

Hon. Garcia: I can get that information for you.

Mr. Karim: Line Item 50, hon. Minister, through you, Madam Chair. The Accreditation Council of Trinidad and Tobago, is there a board in place for the ACTT as we speak?

Hon. Garcia: Yes, there is.

Mr. Karim: There is a board.

Hon. Garcia: “Eh mm.”

Mr. Karim: Could you tell us how many TLIs have been accredited in the last four years? Not re-accredited, accredited? New ones?

Hon. Garcia: I can get that information to you also.

Mr. Karim: Okay. The HELP, that increase of 8 million, in fact there was an allocation in 2019 of 10 million and only 2 million was utilized. Could you indicate to us why, and you go back 10 million, an increase of 8 million?

Hon. Garcia: We have allocated 10 million because this was to cater for increase in fees of tertiary institutions and the reduction in GATE funding, as a result of the requirements of the MEANS testing.

Mr. Karim: Would you say that as a result of the new policies in GATE that there has been a notable reduction in the amount of persons accessing the GATE programme?

Hon. Garcia: No, I will not say that. It is just that the GATE programme cut out wastage. And in fact, the information that we have from the University of the West Indies was that there was a 4 per cent increase in the enrolment for the academic year 2019 to 2020.

Mr. Karim: As a result of the GATE programme, might you be able to tell us what the enrolment or participation rate in the tertiary sector is?

Hon. Garcia: You see again, you are going off track.

Mr. Karim: No, this is—

Hon. Garcia: We are talking about Higher Education Loan Programme, you are talking about GATE.

Mr. Karim: Well, you see the HELP—

Hon. Garcia: Yes, I am not going to allow you to do that again. You are going off track.

Mr. Karim: Could you tell us about line Item 53, that decrease for the Pleasantville MIC Technology Centre? Yeah, I mean, you are the Minister of—

Mr. Imbert: Chairman, let me come in here. The original allocation in 2019 was

10 million. The allocation in 2020 is 10 million.

Mr. Karim: Through you, the Minister—

Mr. Imbert: The original allocation was 10 million, the allocation in 2020 is 10 million.

Mr. Karim: If you look at the lines you have increase and decrease. If you look at the right side, decrease, you will see a number of decreases. I am quoting those figures.

Mr. Imbert: You should not do that.

Mr. Karim: Because those are the figures that are telling us—

Mr. Imbert: I have been at pains for this last five days to point out that you should also look at the original 2019 allocation. During the year things happen. Things go up, things go down. The allocation in 2019 original was 10 million, the allocation in 2020 original is 10 million. It is identical.

Mr. Karim: Could you tell us, hon. Minister, line Item 55, why is there no allocation for the HERF, when in fact there was a presence recently at UTT boasting about the research agenda?

Hon. Garcia: There was no activity, or there were no activities under this project in previous years, and that is the reason why there is no allocation in the 2020 Estimates.

Mr. Karim: But you are seeing in 2019 it was used.

Mr. Imbert: There was none in 2019.

Mr. Karim: But in 2019 you had an allocation that was used. Why are you saying that? Do not mislead the public.

Mr. Imbert: No, no, no, I am speaking facts. There was no allocation in 2018.

Mr. Karim: I am reading it from here.

Hon. Garcia: You are not speaking what I am speaking.

Mr. Karim: 2019 it was used.

Mr. Imbert: 2018 was zero.

Mr. Karim: But 2019, 300,000 was allocated and used, all of it.

Mr. Imbert: And there is no requirement for it in 2020.

Mr. Karim: That is a different thing you are saying.

Mr. Imbert: That is what he said.

Mr. Karim: Could you tell us a “lil” bit about the Chaguanas Technology Centre, hon. Minister? What is that centre about?

Mr. Imbert: How many did you establish? You did not establish one.

Dr. Gopeesingh: You all do not even have the power to even think about it.

Mr. Karim: Hon. Minister, line Item 57.

Hon. Garcia: Yes, Chaguanas Technology Centre.

Mr. Karim: What is that, hon. Minister?

Hon. Garcia: This is administered by NESC and they provide training in a number of areas. [*Crosstalk*]

Madam Chairman: Members, could you all kindly cooperate so that the Minister of Education can make his contribution.

Mr. Karim: The Chaguanas Technology Centre, you are saying hon. Minister?

Hon. Garcia: It is run by NESC.

Mr. Karim: Is NESC?

Hon. Garcia: NESC, yes.

Mr. Karim: It has nothing to do with MIC?

Hon. Garcia: No, NESC.

Mr. Karim: NESC, and the drilling school, line Item 58?

Hon. Garcia: Again it is NESC.

Mr. Imbert: And you should know that. You should know that very well.

Mr. Karim: I just wanted to get some information with respect to line Item 61. What is the workforce assessment centre all about, MIC, and what do they do?
[*Interruption*] I want to hear from the Minister, because I want to ask the other question.

Hon. Garcia: Well, ask the other question. You are the Minister of Tertiary Education, so ask the question.

Mr. Karim: How many awards have you given through the workforce assessment centre?

Hon. Garcia: I can provide you with that information.

Mr. Karim: Okay. The School of Nursing, hon. Minister, line Item 62?

Hon. Garcia: 63?

Mr. Karim: 62, which school of nursing is this?

Hon. Garcia: The Ministry of Health. The one that is run by the Ministry of Health.

Mr. Karim: Okay, and 63, Stipend. We saw that there was a recent issue with respect to nurses' stipend?

Hon. Garcia: And that was because of false information that was fed to the media, and that was corrected.

Mr. Karim: Okay, Madam Chair, I am all right with—

Madam Chairman: Okay. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: I just wanted to go back to line Item 27.

Madam Chairman: Line Item 27?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Yes, the Minister indicated that he was pleased to

announce that they were going to have—[*Interruption*]

Madam Chairman: Members. Hon. Members, again.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: He was pleased to announce that they are looking on the online e-books and online, and I was wondering how the unit and the Ministry intended to do that when you disbanded the laptop initiative.

Hon. Garcia: Again, you operate off—you are off the beaten track. You are off.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Line Item 27, sorry.

Hon. Garcia: 27 deals with the Textbook Management Units.

Mr. Karim: I doh speak dotish.

Hon. Garcia: You are off track.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: No laptop.

Madam Chairman: Member for Caroni East. [*Interruption*]

Dr. Gopeesingh: You are listening?

Hon. Garcia: I am listening to you.

Dr. Gopeesingh: You are getting flustered, calm down now, we are—

Madam Chairman: We are not hearing you.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Hon. Minister, the Health Economics Unit, UWI, the PNM had in their manifesto pledge in 2015 that they would bring out a National Health Insurance System—

Mr. Imbert: I did not.

Dr. Gopeesingh:—and the Health Economics Unit has been doing work in that regard, tell us where we are in terms of support for the Health Economics Unit?

Mr. Imbert: Madam Chairman, I must object, this has nothing to do with the Ministry of Education.

Dr. Gopeesingh: That is what you are saying.

Mr. Imbert: That is what I know.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Hey, listen, I am—[*Crosstalk*—]1995 to—

Madam Chairman: Just now, let us talk about—we are talking about the Estimates for 2020, okay, so where are we?

Dr. Gopeesingh: The health—

Mr. Young: Madam Chair, Madam Chair, the UNC Manifesto for 2019/2020 is the one that devalues the dollar, increases the repo and interest rates and goes after poor people.

Dr. Gopeesingh: We never said we were going to devalue the dollar. That is the myth and a fallacy. [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. Member: You were not going to devalue the dollar?

Hon. Garcia: All right, Caroni East, we are not discussing any manifesto here.

Madam Chairman: All right, so could we get back.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Let us get to 52, the Health Economics Unit. Where are we with that and what it is they are doing?

Mr. Deyalsingh: Madam Chair, may I come in here please? Madam Chair? Madam Chair? Yesterday, if you would recall, I spoke at length and I answered the Member for Caroni East at length—

Dr. Gopeesingh: This is education.

Mr. Deyalsingh: Madam Chairman, may I inform, yesterday in response to a question, when the Ministry of Health was being examined, I offered and volunteered a full explanation to the Member for Caroni East, where we are with the National Health Insurance. It is on the *Hansard*, and I suggest he refers to my statement.

Dr. Gopeesingh: I accept what you said, but to be asking the Minister of

Education that you are giving \$5.7 million for the Health Economics Unit of UWI, and that is in relation to—

Hon. Garcia: Just let me answer you briefly, it involves research. It involves research where health issues are concerned, working in conjunction with the Ministry of Health. It has nothing to do with UNC Manifesto 2019 to 2020.

Dr. Gopeesingh: I am sorry. Why are they not funded by the University since it is an arm of the University?

Hon. Garcia: That question does not apply. Irrelevance!

Mr. Imbert: Totally irrelevant.

Hon. Garcia: Totally irrelevant.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Very relevant.

Madam Chairman: All right. So, we are now moving on to Item 007: Households. Member for Chaguanas East.

Mr. Karim: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, I want to go directly to—I have other Items but I want to start first with line Item 19. Why is there no allocation for the retraining, which is a very critically important aspect in this country? Retraining Programme for displaced workers, it was 8.316 million, nothing has been allocated for 2020. May I ask why?

Hon. Garcia: Simply because funds will be transferred to other agencies.

Mr. Karim: Does this mean that this unit at the YTEPP is going to be disbanded?

Hon. Garcia: At the YTEPP?

Mr. Karim: This is YTEPP. This unit. May I ask—you said I was a former Minister, so let me just share with you that this retraining unit is located at YTEPP Limited in Chaguanas, and displaced workers—we have many of them who have lost their jobs.

Hon. Garcia: We have many—

Mr. Karim: Just hold on, hold on. We have many workers who have lost their jobs. It also has to do with the rehabilitation of inmates.

4.00 p.m.

Hon. Garcia: Wait, wait, wait, before you go off, I know you like to talk a lot, but, [*Laughter*] please, take your time, take your time, right? [*Laughter*] Let us start over.

Mr. Karim: Let me start over.

Hon. Garcia: Let us start over.

Mr. Karim: You want me to start over?

Hon. Garcia: Wait, hold on, hold on. Take your time and we will assist you, okay? The service that YTEPP has been providing will not discontinue nor will we abandon this programme that is under the jurisdiction of YTEPP.

Mr. Karim: Can I ask, now, my question?

Hon. Garcia: Yes, you can ask now.

Mr. Karim: Why has there been no allocation, because you have over 52 persons—

Hon. Garcia: Okay, that will be attended to, okay? I have been informed that that was an error and that error will be corrected.

Mr. Karim: Will the correction of that error be placed in writing to YTEPP?

Hon. Garcia: It will be corrected. I told you that. Why do you have to ask—you know, it reminds me of teaching some real students who have a learning disability, yes. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Karim: I mean—I just want to answer—

Madam Chairman: No, no. Wait, wait, wait. While you know I am happy for us

to have a little banter, I know everybody is tired and stressed, all right? Let us just try and keep in line here. All right? Please.

Mr. Karim: Madam Chair, if I may continue.

Madam Chairman: Yes, Member for Chaguanas.

Mr. Karim: To the Member, the helping youth, the HYPE Programme, line Item 20. Could you tell us how many persons will be catered for with this allocation in 2020?

Hon. Garcia: We are looking at 700 persons.

Mr. Karim: Seven hundred. And might you be able to tell us with the MuST Programme with that allocation, how many persons?

Hon. Garcia: Fifteen hundred persons.

Mr. Karim: And might you be able to tell us in line 27, with the MYPART Programme. Is that MYPART Programme at all still available through the Persto Praesto Youth Camp?

Hon. Garcia: I have to investigate this because I thought that this programme was being done at the former Mausica Teachers' College.

Mr. Karim: No, Sir. What you are talking about my colleague, Member of Parliament, through you, Madam Chair, you are confusing it with the MiLAT Programme.

Hon. Garcia: Okay, thanks for the correction.

Mr. Karim: No problem. I know you went to Mausica Teachers' College, but this programme is really at the NESCC in Point Lisas. [*Laughter*] And classes were also conducted at the Persto Praesto Youth Camp.

Hon. Garcia: Okay, fine, thank you very much. Do not try to show off your knowledge, your limited knowledge.

Mr. Karim: Oh God. [*Laughter*] Can I ask on line Item 28, please? Line Item 28, is this the FASP?

Hon. Garcia: What is the question you are asking, Sir?

Mr. Karim: Line item 28, Sir.

Hon. Garcia: Yes, what is the question?

Mr. Karim: Bursaries/Financial Assistance-Tertiary.

Hon. Garcia: Yes.

Mr. Karim: I was asking you whether this is the FASP.

Hon. Garcia: FAST?

Mr. Karim: “P”.

Hon. Garcia: FASP.

Mr. Karim: I could spell it out for you.

Hon. Garcia: This is Financial Assistance for Tertiary Education.

Mr. Karim: Yeah. So the FASP was really the Financial Assistance Studies Programme. Is this what it is?

Hon. Garcia: What has happened is over the last few years we have not been able to fund this programme—

Mr. Karim: I realized that.

Hon. Garcia:—but we have all intentions to start back funding where this is concerned.

Mr. Karim: Okay. Thank you very much. Line Item 37, Workforce Assessment—

Hon. Garcia: 37?

Mr. Karim: 37. 32, sorry, my apologies.

Hon. Garcia: You see, I always thought that you are challenged, intellectually

challenged. I know that. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Karim: You really want me to answer you educationally? [*Laughter and crosstalk*]

Madam Chairman: Item 32.

Mr. Karim: 32, thank you, Madam Chair. Workforce Assessment - NEET Programme.

Dr. Francis: What is the question?

Mr. Karim: I just wanted to know—

Hon. Garcia: How can I be of assistance to you where this is concerned?

Mr. Karim: I just wanted to know what is earmarked for this, the NEET Programme.

Hon. Garcia: When you say what is earmarked, what do you mean?

Mr. Karim: What this allocation will do, NEET. Do you have an idea what it is, Sir?

Hon. Garcia: As it says, a Workforce Assessment.

Mr. Karim: No, but NEET part of it. NEET, N-E-E-T. It really means, Neither in Education, Employment and Training. So it is conducted through—I believe this one, that is why I am asking. I believe this one might be located at the NESC Point Lisas Campus.

Hon. Garcia: You are correct.

Mr. Karim: So how many persons might you want to—

Hon. Garcia: Well, I do not have that information at hand, but I know it is located at NESC and if you want any further information I will be happy to give you that.

Mr. Karim: I would be happy if you could give us a projection as to what—

Hon. Garcia: You will get that.

Madam Chairman: Are you finished? Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Line Item 15, hon. Minister, Student Support Services Programme. Could you give us whatever information you can on the complement of the amount of Student Support Services, persons in the programme. And how many vacancies are there in the programme?

Hon. Garcia: This allocation, Member for Caroni East, is for the inclusive education initiative. It also includes, the National Parenting in Education Programme that will involve our schools, and it is also for the School-Based Team Training. Also, funds will be allocated to the Learning Enhancement Centres and annual career days and fairs and things that will assist in the parent/teacher/student development.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Okay, but if I am on that line Item, is it possible for you to consider giving us the information on the complement of the—

Hon. Garcia: I am honestly having a little difficulty in hearing you clearly.

Dr. Gopeesingh: I think you need a little hearing test. [*Crosstalk*]

Madam Chairman: All right. So let us get back to the matter at hand.

Dr. Gopeesingh: No, no. I want to ask him the question. Could you give us the complement of the amount of persons for the Student Support Services Division at the moment, and how many vacancies there are?

Hon. Garcia: Approximately 800 persons reside in that department.

Dr. Gopeesingh: And how many vacancies exist from the 800?

Hon. Garcia: Well, they are all on contract. Some are on contract.

Dr. Gopeesingh: All right, but can you give us a little picture of it?

Hon. Garcia: I have been told that there are 639 persons on contract and the others will be part of the establishment of the Ministry of Education.

Dr. Gopeesingh: So altogether you have how much now?

Hon. Garcia: I said approximately 800.

Dr. Gopeesingh: With contract and the Ministry of Education establishment.

Hon. Garcia: Yes, those on the establishment, yes.

Dr. Gopeesingh: All right, thank you.

Hon. Garcia: Thank you very much.

Madam Chairman: Item 009: Other Transfers. Member for Chaguanas East.

Mr. Karim: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, line Item 02. Might you be able to say how many persons are employed in the DLS?

Hon. Garcia: 02: Distance Learning? Is it that line Item? Which line Item, 02?

Mr. Karim: Yeah, 02.

Hon. Garcia: That is Distance Learning. I will have to give you that information in writing.

Mr. Karim: Line Item 04, Tamana In-Tech Park, 12 million. What is it going to be used for?

Hon. Garcia: The UTT - Tamana In-Tech Park?

Mr. Karim: Yeah. What is the status of it right now?

Hon. Garcia: Oh, the status of it. We have been told that the first block is almost ready for occupation and it is hoped that perhaps towards the end of this year or very early next year that block will be occupied.

Mr. Karim: Hon. Minister, is it possible that you can give us detail in terms of the amount of money this facility has cost the taxpayers of Trinidad and Tobago?

Hon. Garcia: Yes, I will be happy to provide you with that information.

Mr. Karim: I will go on to the next Item when you are there.

Madam Chairman: All right. Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Just the same line Item of Tamana In-Tech Park. Our understanding in 2018/2019 fiscal year, 300 million was removed from UTT to Tamana In-Tech Park by Prof. Ken Julien's team. Could you give us some understanding of that? Why was it removed?

Hon. Garcia: Again, Member for Caroni East, there is an allocation under the *Development Programme* that deals with that and perhaps we can attend to your questions and your concerns when we reach there.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Okay. I think it is the second time you are saying that and I appreciate it. [*Interruption*] Well, I was trying to find the area. I was wondering whether this is the area to ask it under. But you will direct me to the area where I can ask it.

Dr. Francis: Doctors are slow, apparently.

Madam Chairman: So we move on. Item 011: Transfers to State Enterprises. Member for Chaguanas East. [*Crosstalk*]

Mr. Karim: I was going to give way to my colleague for—02, National Schools Dietary Services Ltd. Could you tell us whether the outstanding payments will be made to the contractors? If so, the amounts and by when we will be able to see some—

Hon. Garcia: I can tell you first off that there is a balance owed. The actual balance we can make that available to you with our recommendation how we are going to deal with the payments.

Mr. Karim: MIC/NSDP, National Skills Development Programme. Could you tell us that allocation of 26.6? How many persons that will be catering for at the NSDP/MIC?

Hon. Garcia: 07?

Mr. Karim: Line Item 07.

Hon. Garcia: Repeat that question again, please.

Mr. Karim: The MIC/NSDP, the allocation, how many students will that be catering for in this fiscal?

Hon. Garcia: Again, I will have to give you that information in writing. I do not have that available to me now.

Mr. Karim: YTEPP, line Item 08.

Hon. Garcia: The same question?

Mr. Karim: Budget of \$45 million. Is that—in terms of the requirements to run these programmes, have centres been closed down since the last one of 55 million, programmes have been reduced? Could you give us any—

Hon. Garcia: We are due to have a meeting with the chairman and the CEO of YTEPP very shortly. Minister Francis and myself, together with the technical officers of the Ministry of Education will meet to see how best we can meet the needs of YTEPP. Do you perceive that in view of reduction here that there may be any loss of jobs?

Hon. Garcia: No, I do not perceive that.

Mr. Karim: Or reduction of centres for training.

Hon. Garcia: I do not perceive that. Whatever are the challenges, we will overcome those challenges as we often do.

Mr. Karim: May I go to line Item 09 with a similar question, with an allocation of \$10 million which is a far cry from what it was in 2018. I am just looking at the line Item. How do you plan to ensure the viability and in terms of the responsiveness of this training facility to the national needs of the—

Hon. Garcia: What liability are you referring to?

Mr. Karim: I am seeing that the shortage of funds—

Hon. Garcia: Yeah, but you talk about liability.

Mr. Karim: I am talking about the fact that they will now not have sufficient. I am sure they have bills to pay as well.

Hon. Garcia: You know, a very popular mantra of this administration is that, we do more with less. And if the allocation is less we are going to strive to do as much as possible with the allocation that we have.

Mr. Karim: Can I ask, through you, is there any plan to resuscitate the closed NESC centres like the one next to your colleague there, at Moruga, Point Fortin and Palo Seco?

Hon. Garcia: We have spoken about that at length in this Chamber and one of the principal reasons was the registration. And when we had one or two persons registering for the programmes it made no sense and I have made that known.

Mr. Karim: Hon. Minister, I mean with the greatest of respect to you, you have the Member for Moruga/Tableland next to you. You have substantial investments in agro-processing in Moruga; you have so much investment with the dry dock facility coming in La Brea and yet still you have these centres continue to be closed?

Hon. Garcia: What is the point you are driving at?

Mr. Karim: The point I am driving at is, is there going to be any revisiting of these centres that are closed for the opportunities of the young people?

Hon. Garcia: I have told you the reason why the programmes have been discontinued and the major reason was poor registration.

Mr. Karim: But poor marketing strategies too.

Hon. Garcia: Well, it is something we can look at.

Mr. Karim: Why do you not market the programmes properly? You have the Member of Parliament there.

Hon. Garcia: What are you trying to do, put a wedge between the two of us?

Mr. Karim: No, no, no.

Hon. Garcia: You will never succeed.

Mr. Karim: No, no, no, I am not doing that. I am not doing that at all.

Madam Chairman: So can we just revert to what we are doing? Anything else on 011?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Yes, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, the Minister has been saying I will find the information on the transfer of funding from UTT to Tamana In-Tech Park. I looked under everything under Transfers to State Enterprises, under 011 and I looked under Transfers to Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies—

Madam Chairman: We have not reached to Transfers to Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies as yet.

Dr. Gopeesingh: And it is not there.

Madam Chairman: We are just under 011.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Yeah, all right, but even though if I go further, it is not there. So could he direct me where I can find that?

Hon. Garcia: You are anticipating.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Yes.

Hon. Garcia: Please, hold your horses, hold on.

Dr. Gopeesingh: All right, well, tell me where we are going to find it. [*Laughter*]

Madam Chairman: So we go on now to Sub-Head 06: Current Transfers to Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies. New book, page 143. 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.

4.15 p.m.

01: National Institute of Higher Education, Research, Science and Technology. Sub-Head 01: Personnel Expenditure, page 143. Item 001: General Administration. Sub-Head 02: Goods and Services. Item 001: General Administration. Sub-Head 04: Current Transfers and Subsidies. Item 001: Households. 12: Board of Industrial Training, page 149. Sub-Head 01: Personnel Expenditure. Item 001: General Administration. Sub-Head 02: Goods and Services. Item 001: General Administration. Sub-Head 04: Current Transfers and Subsidies. Item 009: Other Transfers. 13: Trinidad and Tobago National Commission for UNESCO, page 154. 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.

We are going on now to page 159. 56: College of Science, Technology and Applied Arts of Trinidad and Tobago. Sub-Head 01: Personnel Expenditure, page 159. Item 001: General Administration. Sub-Head 02: Goods and Services. Item 001: General Administration.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Madam Chair, could the Minister, under line Item, Contract Employment ,16, and Short term Employment, 22, can you give us some information on the complement in these areas; positions filled? How many people do we have under Contract Employment with COSTATT?

Hon. Garcia: I will make that information available to you in writing.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Okay. And the Short-term Employment as well?

Hon. Garcia: Yes.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Okay.

Madam Chairman: Sub-Head 03: Minor Equipment Purchases. Item 001: General Administration. Sub-Head 04: Current Transfers and Subsidies. Item 006: Educational Institutions.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Is this not where I am finding it, Minister?

Hon. Garcia: No, it is IDF.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Not yet? All right.

Madam Chairman: Item 007: Households. Hon. Members, we will now move on to the *Draft Estimates of Development Programme*. We are at page 63. Sub-Head 09: Development Programme Consolidated Fund, page 63. Item 003: Economic Infrastructure; Item 004: Infrastructure. Hon. Members, Item 004 spans four pages, therefore I will also announce the project groups. D. Vocational and Technical; G. Educational Services.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Yes, Madam Chair.

Madam Chairman: Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Line Item 001: National Additional Scholarships Based on Advanced Level Examinations.

Madam Chairman: In G? We are at Educational Services, G.

Dr. Gopeesingh: G., 004.

Madam Chairman: 004: National Additional Scholarships Based on Advanced Level Examinations.

Dr. Gopeesingh: That is it, Madam Chair. Could you tell us, Minister, how many scholarships were awarded in 2018 and 2019, and the breakdown?

Hon. Garcia: I can tell you that there are 1,003 scholars and—

Dr. Gopeesingh: For which year?

Hon. Garcia: Just now. Let me finish, sorry, 103 local scholars and 493 foreign scholars, and we are catering for approximately 400 scholars based on the 2019 CAPE examination.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Okay, all right. You have answered it. Post-graduate Scholarships, Line Item 009, where are we with that? Because there was once a philosophy that those who get first class honours will be entitled to a post-graduate scholarship. Where are we in terms of that policy?

Hon. Garcia: Again, there is an allocation and we will be having discussions at our level to reopen this programme.

Dr. Gopeesingh: To reopen?

Hon. Garcia: Yes.

Dr. Gopeesingh: To reopen it. All right. But money was awarded in 2019, Minister, for 9.8 million. So I do not understand why you say reopening. It is there all the time. So are you—

Hon. Garcia: That was used to fund existing arrangements. Okay?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Oh.

Hon. Garcia: And we are going to move forward now.

Dr. Gopeesingh: All right. Okay. Thanks.

Madam Chairman: J. Science, Technology and Applied Arts. Member for Chaguanas East.

Mr. Karim: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Line Item 003, can you say whether any upgrading works will be done at Pointe-a-Pierre? “Operating of Technology Centres at Port of Spain, Pointe-a-Pierre...”—

Hon. Garcia: Okay. I have been advised that it is proposed that we do some upgrade where that is concerned.

Mr. Karim: And which is the entity that is responsible for these centres?

Hon. Garcia: MIC-IT.

Mr. Karim: But I was asking about Pointe-a-Pierre, particularly in the context that it is located on the compound of Petrotrin. Is there anything happening there, do you know?

Hon. Garcia: We will be looking at it. We will be meeting shortly to determine how we are going to treat with it, because this area has been the cause of some concern at the level of tertiary education. We are going to look at it.

Mr. Karim: Are there classes being conducted as we speak?

Hon. Garcia: Well, I am not aware of that. I do not know.

Mr. Karim: Can I go to Line Item 027, please, Madam Chairman?

Hon. Garcia: Sure, you can.

Mr. Karim: Line Item 027: Establishment of a National Science Centre. There was an allocation in 2018 and afterwards nothing was used. Could you give us a little sense as to what the National Science Centre is?

Hon. Garcia: I have been told that this project is in, what we refer to, as the close-off stage, and this money that has been allocated is to assist in the closing off of this project.

Mr. Karim: Where is this facility?

Hon. Garcia: This was supposed to be in D'Abadie, Maloney.

Mr. Karim: Is this the NIRHERST?

Hon. Garcia: Yes. In D'Abadie, opposite Maloney Gardens on the highway.

Mr. Karim: Okay. And is there any intention to utilize the property on the southern side of the Couva Hospital on the highway?

Hon. Garcia: I cannot answer that question at this point.

Mr. Karim: Line Item 032, page 66, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, could you give us some details as to what this facility is? There was an allocation in 2019. Nothing was used and we have another allocation of 6250. [*Crosstalk*]

Hon. Garcia: Sorry?

Madam Chairman: Excuse me? You mean for Agriculture? Is this for the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries.

Mr. Karim: No. Is this for the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries?

Hon. Garcia: No, no, no. it is for Mr. Rambharat who will be the next Member of Parliament for Chaguanas East.

Mr. Karim: Go ahead, nah—

Hon. Garcia: You did not understand?

Mr. Karim:—but tell us from your superior intelligence, tell us what this is about, nah.

Hon. Garcia: It would be utilized to construct the MIC-IT Technology Centre or upgrade works at the NESC centre.

Mr. Karim: Okay. Line Item 050. Could you tell us what this \$5 million for the establishment by the UTT of the Brian Lara Cricket Academy Phase 1? Tell us what it is about. Give us some details about it.

Hon. Garcia: All right. It will involve the construction of dormitories; it would involve equipment upgrade and upgrade works at the Academy and the outcome is being envisaged, one, the full use of a high-performance gym where national and international athletes can train and where our students would gain world-class experience and training. It will foster the ability to produce work-ready graduates who are able to adjust in any sporting programme worldwide. It will assist in the diversification of the economy. It will serve as the genesis of a viable sporting

industry in Trinidad and Tobago, top level graduates with a desire for entrepreneurship. And these are some of the things that we are thinking about. This matter is now before Cabinet and together with the Ministry of Sports we are working towards the quick resolution of this problem.

Mr. Karim: Line Item 051: Upgrade of UTT Campuses. Could you indicate which one of those? Are those \$5 million?

Hon. Garcia: There are plans to move to the Tamana Campus on a phased basis, and this would involve the relocation of staff from O'Meara to Tamana, and that is scheduled to begin shortly.

Mr. Karim: Could you tell us, through you, Madam Chair, whether any moneys will be allocated to the UTT Waterloo Research Campus as for upgrade; any of this money? Or what is the status of the Waterloo Research Campus, UTT? Is it functioning? Is it not functioning?

Hon. Garcia: I will get that information. I can assure you I will get that information for you.

Mr. Karim: So it is functioning?

Hon. Garcia: I do not have that information at the moment, although recently I visited there. But we will get more information for you. I just want to make sure whatever information I give today will be correct.

Mr. Karim: Okay. And will any of this money be utilized for the current campus at Valsayn?

Hon. Garcia: You would know—I do not know if you are aware of the fact that we are determined to leave Corinth as it is as a campus that is involved in training teachers for the primary schools. Where Valsayn is concerned, we are having some discussions where that is concerned.

Mr. Karim: Is there any other—apart from those three that we mentioned, any other campus that this sum of money—is there any allocation to—is there anything that is going to be used for any other campus?

Hon. Garcia: Well, we are looking at the Agora Campus and perhaps we can use that as a training facility. These things have not yet been concertized, but we are having discussions with the board of UTT and the Ministry of Education in an effort to see how best we can make use of these facilities. Recently we paid a visit to most these establishments and based on what we were able to gather and garner as a result of these visits, then we will come with a comprehensive plan.

Mr. Karim: Any plans for Tobago upgrade?

Hon. Garcia: Not at the moment. We think Tobago is well served.

Madam Chairman: Member for Couva North?

Ms. Ramdial: Thank you, Madam Chair. Minister, just to piggy-back on my colleague's question on UTT Waterloo building, I remember that that building had been earmarked by the Ministry of Education to temporarily house the Carapichaima AC School and the students there in the interim. Can you give an update?

Hon. Garcia: No, and that is the—now, you see, again, you are going off-track. You are talking about something that is totally different.

Ms. Ramdial: Well, he asked about the use of the UTT Waterloo Building.

Hon. Garcia: Yes, but you are going off-track.

Ms. Ramdial: So I just wanted to know if that was still the plan.

4.30 p.m.

Hon. Garcia: If I bend it to you, then I will have to bend to the Member for Caroni East and I do not want to do that. I will talk to you privately about it.

Ms. Ramdial: No problem. Thank you.

Madam Chairman: So we move on. Item 005: Multi-Sectoral and Other Services. Hon. Members, Item 005 spans two pages, therefore, I will also announce the project groups: A. Administrative Services. Member for Chaguanas East.

Mr. Karim: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, would you be able to give us an update in terms of line Item 031, Seamless Education System Project?

Hon. Garcia: That is a project that is coming to an end. As you know, it was involved or it was really put in place to look at the movement from early childhood primary/secondary and it is coming to an end, and we are about to close off on that programme also.

Mr. Karim: Is it a similar answer for line Item 032, Support for Enhancement of the Education Strategy?

Hon. Garcia: Yes, similar answer to that question.

Mr. Karim: Okay. Can I continue, Madam Chair?

Madam Chairman: Yes.

Mr. Karim: \$15 million has been allocated to line Item 037: School Improvement Project, Laventille Community, to date I am just looking at what have been expended, might you be able to tell us what are the outcomes of that project?

Hon. Garcia: Let me first of all make a correction. As you would see, 2019 Revised Estimates, 2265.70, that is an error.

Mr. Karim: Okay. What is it?

Hon. Garcia: What was spent was 7 million.

Mr. Karim: Seven million?

Hon. Garcia: Yes.

Dr. Gopeesingh: But that programme is supposed to be a very important programme.

Mr. Karim: Can you give us some idea as to what are the outcomes so far with the expenditure?

Hon. Garcia: As you know, the programme is built on four important foundations and we are very pleased to note that in many of the areas we are seeing tremendous progress. In the area of the parenting, we have been able to have a closer relationship between the parents and the schools, and in most of the schools there has been established parent/teachers associations, or parent support groups; that did not exist. In the area of literacy and numeracy, our officers have reported to us that there is a mass increase in the level of literacy and numeracy among the students in the school.

Of course, you will understand that it will take some time. You do not expect everything to happen overnight, but we are seeing improvements. In the area of discipline, and, of course, I have been saying this over and over, we have had tremendous success where that is concerned. We have not heard of any violation of the school codes, or any major infractions where discipline is concerned. And in the area of infrastructure that is one area that we need to push a little harder because we were having some little drawbacks, but again we are soldiering on and we are very happy to note that this is a programme that in the not too distant future we will want to offer it to other areas in the country.

Mr. Karim: Will Enterprise be one of those?

Hon. Garcia: Certainly.

Mr. Karim: Through, Madam Chair, as I am talking about Enterprise, could you

give us a little status in terms of the school improvement project in that area for Oasis—

Hon. Garcia: You are—

Mr. Karim: I know it is not a line—

Hon. Garcia: You are moving off again.

Mr. Karim: “Oh God, but you doh gimme the answer man.”

Hon. Garcia: No man, you are moving off.

Mr. Karim: All right, I will come back to it. I will come back to it.

Madam Chairman: So F. Public Buildings. Infrastructure Development Fund, page 183. Item 004: Social Infrastructure. Hon. Members, Item 004 spans three pages, therefore, I will also announce the project groups: A. Pre-Primary. Member for Chaguanas East.

Mr. Karim: Madam Chair, now I can ask the Minister and I am sure he will be happy to answer. With respect to improvement/refurbishment early childhood care and education centres, is the Dass Trace ECCE centre one of those in Enterprise where this might be of benefit to the opening of that facility?

Hon. Garcia: In order to ensure that all those schools that have not yet been completed, that we can complete them as quickly as possible.

Mr. Karim: And will it be opened for this fiscal year?

Hon. Garcia: Our hope and our desire is that that Dass Trace ECCE centre will be opened during this academic year.

Mr. Karim: Okay.

Madam Chairman: Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, 001, same line Item, I am also enquiring for the centre in Coalmine when it will be opened?

Hon. Garcia: What is the question you are asking?

Dr. Francis: Same question for Coalmine.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Yes, the same question for Coalmine.

Hon. Garcia: The allocation that we have here is for five ECCE centres to be opened. You are not paying attention to me. You asked a question; you are supposed to be paying attention.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: I am hearing.

Hon. Garcia: No, but you have to pay attention. We are looking at the La Pastora Government ECCE, the Marabella ECCE, the Tulsi Manas ECCE, the Maracas Valley and the Spring Vale ECCE. The money that has been allocated here would be to attend to these five ECC centres that I have just identified.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Madam Chair?

Madam Chairman: Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Hon. Minister, what we see allocated for primary schools—

Madam Chairman: We have not reached B as yet. We are still in A. Member for Couva North.

Ms. Ramdial: Thank you, Madam Chair. Minister, also under line Item 001, Early Childhood Care and Education, can you give some information with respect to the opening of the Waterloo ECCE centre?

Hon. Garcia: As I said before, there are a number of ECCE centres that have not been completed and we are trying our best to ensure that those are completed.

Ms. Ramdial: Can we look forward for it opening this fiscal year?

Hon. Garcia: Of course, you can forward to anything, but that is one of the things that we are looking forward to.

Ms. Ramdial: Thank you, Minister.

Madam Chairman: Member for Caroni East. Now we are still in A.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Yeah, 001: Pre-Primary, Early Childhood Care and Education. Hon. Minister, you have allocated 15 million for early childhood care and education construction, and from my memory we have close to about 30 ECCE centres to be completed. How is this possible with an allocation of \$23 million? That might complete three and we have about 30.

Hon. Garcia: We have, as you would know, Caroni East, identified some ECCE centres that we have placed on a priority listing.

Dr. Gopeesingh: How would you be able to determine that? All across Trinidad children need their early childhood education centre.

Hon. Garcia: We are aware of that.

Dr. Gopeesingh: How are you able to prioritize your thing? Is it those that are closest to completion?

Hon. Garcia: We were able to use information, data that was available to us, proven techniques; we are looking at the ability to complete as soon as possible; we will look at the states or the stage of completion, all of these things will be looked at.

Dr. Gopeesingh: But you will appreciate, I am sure you do, and the Minister of Finance is probably hiding when he knows that—

Mr. Imbert: What? No, no, no.

Dr. Gopeesingh: All right. Okay. Twenty-three million—

Mr. Imbert: Take back that.

Dr. Gopeesingh: I take that back. You are right there. But can you not help the Minister of Education by giving him more funding to help in the completion of more of these early childhood education centres?

Hon. Garcia: Are you making a plea on my behalf?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Yeah, why not.

Hon. Garcia: No—

Dr. Gopeesingh: Twenty-three million cannot do anything.

Hon. Garcia: I am perfectly in a position to make that plea.

Dr. Gopeesingh: All right. Okay. But did you make the plea to your Minister?

Mr. Imbert: Allow me to intervene. But firstly, are you going to ask that question on primary and secondary schools too?

Dr. Gopeesingh: Yes.

Mr. Imbert: Well, let me give you an all-embracing answer. We intend to raise loan financing to complete the priority list of schools.

Dr. Gopeesingh: I look forward with expectation.

Mr. Imbert: And so you shall receive.

Dr. Gopeesingh: And I look forward to implementation—

Mr. Imbert: And so you shall witness.

Dr. Gopeesingh:—of construction of the projects, completion of projects.

Mr. Imbert: So you shall see.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Well I do not need to ask any more on primary and secondary schools.

Madam Chairman: Okay. So we go on to B. Primary, and Member for Chaguanas East. So Caroni East, I heard you say you are not asking any more on this?

Dr. Gopeesingh: But just one more. One of my colleagues asked—

Madam Speaker: That is okay. I will call Member for Chaguanas East.

Mr. Karim: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Page 184, line Item 406, my

colleague asked me to raise this matter on his behalf, the Construction of Preysal Government School. He noted that there was no allocation in 2020. Could you give us a little update as to which is happening with the Preysal Government School?

Hon. Garcia: This is one of the schools that we are looking at. I know the—

Mr. Karim: That is a priority school?

Hon. Garcia: No, it is not a priority.

Mr. Karim: It is not a priority school?

Hon. Garcia: It is not on the priority listing, but I have been having discussions with the Member for Caroni Central and we are working together to see what can be done to ensure that those needs are met because this is one of the schools that is in about 70 per cent completion. So we would like to complete it.

Mr. Karim: So you expect it will be completed for this fiscal?

Hon. Garcia: Well I do not want to say this fiscal. I do not want to make promises that I cannot uphold, but I am telling you that we are looking at it. In fact, all these schools that have started, we want to make sure that in the not too distant future we will be able to complete them.

Mr. Karim: Thank you. Madam Chair—

Mr. Imbert: I want to intervene here and make the point that we are talking about a lot of money, eh. We are talking about billions of dollars. Not millions of dollars, billions to complete these projects. So it is not a simple thing. It is billions of dollars required.

Madam Chairman: Member for Chaguanas East.

Mr. Karim: I was just going to go on to line Item 414, since you indicated that you will try to open all of these schools. Will we expect that the Egypt Oasis

Primary, 414, with this allocation will be opened in January of 2020?

Hon. Garcia: I cannot give an exact date, but at our last visit the school was heavily and badly vandalized. And again, it will take some funding to put the school back in order so that it can be opened as soon as possible.

Mr. Karim: Do you think if not January then for the new academic year in September 2020?

Hon. Garcia: 2020—2021?

Mr. Karim: No, 2020.

Hon. Garcia: You say the new academic year.

Mr. Karim: Yeah, 2020/2021. Yes, that is what I mean.

Hon. Garcia: That is what I am asking 2020—2021.

Mr. Karim: Yes, will it be opened for the new academic year?

Hon. Garcia: Well we make every effort.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Madam Chair.

Madam Chairman: Member for Princes Town? You have one more, Chaguanas East?

Mr. Karim: I think he is advising the Minister what how to reply. So now that the hon. Minister of Finance advised you with this here, can I get a response?

Hon. Garcia: By the way, you say he tell me what to say, how could you say that?

Mr. Karim: No, I am just saying, I see you—

Hon. Garcia: You could climb into my mind and know what you are talking about?

Mr. Karim: So you could tell us about the Egypt Oasis Primary School, the question I asked whether in new academic year 2021 it will be available.

[*Crosstalk*] No, he did not answer that.

Mr. Imbert: He said he cannot tell you for sure.

Mr. Karim: He did not say January when I asked January. Now I am asking about the new academic year.

Hon. Garcia: There is an allocation here so it means that that is on the front burner.

Mr. Karim: So can I take it as the Member of Parliament for the area that it will be—

Hon. Garcia: You are the Member of Parliament?

Hon. Member: Yes.

Hon. Garcia: Sorry, my mistake. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Karim: So is it going to be—are you kind of—

Hon. Garcia: It will be attended to.

Mr. Karim: Line Item 424, my colleague asked me to raise this as well, Flanagan Town RC.

Hon. Member: Which one.

Mr. Karim: Caroni Central.

Hon. Garcia: Okay, what is your question?

Mr. Karim: Just the status in terms of Flanagan Town RC, 424, an allocation of 564,000. Is that a priority? Is it a priority school?

Hon. Garcia: No, it is not one of the priority schools, but there is an allocation here of \$564,000. So at least there is a start. It indicates that we are going to pursue this.

Mr. Karim: And finally—well I know this one is my colleague from Couva North.

Ms. Ramdial: Ask it. Go ahead.

Mr. Karim: Line Item 440: Construction of the Montrose Vedic School. A new project, 10 million, do you have a location for this new school?

Hon. Garcia: You know I have been saying repeatedly that schools that are owned by the denominational boards require, first of all, the concurrence of the boards before we do anything, before we make any step, we have to conclude discussions with the Vedic board to decide what is being done. Incidentally, I have not heard many complaints about any flea infestation so far, but we are hoping to continue, and I am saying continued discussion with board with respect to what we are going to do with that school.

So I cannot sit here and say we are going to do this and the next thing you know, the board is saying something different. So unless I get the concurrence of the board, I will hold my peace.

4.45 p.m.

Madam Chairman: Member for Princes Town.

Mr. Padarath: Thank you, Madam Chair. Minister, line Item 434, Construction of the Ramai Trace SDMS Primary School, in 2019, the Estimate was 11 million with an expenditure of 7.7 but in 2020, there is no allocation.

Hon. Garcia: There is no allocation because Ramai Trace Hindu is on the priority list. It is one of the priority schools, Ramai Trace Hindu School.

Mr. Imbert: That will be funded by loan financing.

Mr. Padarath: Okay. And is it expected that the school will be completed within this financial year?

Hon. Garcia: I cannot say. All I can say at this point is that it is one of the 27 schools that find themselves on this priority listing.

Mr. Padarath: Minister, can you indicate at this point what percentage of the school is completed?

Hon. Garcia: I cannot say that at this point.

Mr. Imbert: “Ramai Trace yuh say?”

Mr. Padarath: Yes.

Madam Chairman: Member for Couva North.

Ms. Ramdial: Thank you, Madam Chair. Minister, line Item 426: Construction of the Freeport SDMS Primary, there is an allocation of 5.9 million for 2019 and for 2020, there is a 700,000 allocation. Can you give an update with respect to this school?

Hon. Garcia: Once there is an allocation, it signals an intention of the Ministry of Education to attend to these schools. So at this point, I can tell you that it is the intention of this Ministry to attend to this school.

Ms. Ramdial: Thank you.

Madam Chairman: Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Yeah, I think the Member for Princes Town asked the question on Ramai Trace.

Madam Chairman: Okay. Member for Fyzabad.

Dr. Bodoë: Thank you, Madam Chair. Minister, with regard to Item 399 Construction of Siparia/Union Presbyterian, I see no allocation. Is that to be interpreted it is—

Hon. Garcia: It is a priority project also.

Dr. Bodoë: It is going to be a priority project. Can you confirm?

Hon. Garcia: Siparia/Union Presbyterian, yes.

Dr. Bodoë: It is a priority project. Thank you.

Madam Chairman: Okay, so can we go on to C. Secondary. Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Madam Chair, my colleague who had to leave just now from Couva South asked me to enquire of the Minister about the Couva West Secondary School which is not functioning and students—

Madam Chairman: Which Item number is that?

Dr. Gopeesingh: That comes under Improvement/Refurbishment/Extensions.

Madam Chairman: Or oh, so you are at 397? 331.

Dr. Gopeesingh: 331, yeah, improvement. So could you give us—because you said there was sabotage and the Member knows that there was no sabotage. My understanding is that there have been absence of maintenance causing a lot of the problems. How soon do you think that you would be able to implement the improvement there to the Couva West Secondary School so that the students can go back to their school?

Hon. Garcia: Again, Caroni East, you are making some statements that I have problems with. You are saying that that school is not functioning and that is not true.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Yes, the Member knows that it is not functioning. He left here a while ago.

Hon. Garcia: Not for the Member, say what you know. Say what you know.

Mr. Imbert: You keep saying these things.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Listen, I can—

Hon. Garcia: There is a problem with the school and the problem is mould, okay, and because of the—

Dr. Gopeesingh: “Is not mould alone.”

Hon. Garcia: The mould is because of faulty air-condition units and we have had to condemn the air-condition units and install split units. In doing that, the trunking or the piping, whatever you refer to it, was not closed off and there was moisture accumulated and that was the reason for the mould. Once that is attended to and I have been assured that that will be attended to, if not already, we will have no problem. So you cannot say sit here and say the school is not functioning.

Dr. Gopeesingh: At the moment, is the school functioning as we speak?

Hon. Garcia: Yes.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Are students in the school? I differ from you on that.

Mr. Young: Well it is 4.49, they would not be in school. [*Laughter and crosstalk*]

Dr. Gopeesingh: “You in semantics.” They have extra classes in the school and it is not functioning.

Madam Chairman: All right, so let us on go on please.

Dr. Gopeesingh: The Member for Couva South emphatically asked me to tell you that the school is non-functional, there are no students in the school. You are saying otherwise.

Hon. Garcia: I explained the problem.

Dr. Gopeesingh: And I will relay that to him.

Hon. Garcia: Yeah, relay it to him. Give him that information.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Because we know that is not true.

Dr. Francis: And asked him to visit the school.

Dr. Gopeesingh: We know that is not true.

Madam Chairman: Member for Couva North.

Ms. Ramdial: Thank you, Madam Chair. Minister, line Item 333:

Replacement/Construction of Blocks Within Secondary Schools, I see an allocation of 5 million. Would this cover the prefab classroom for the Carapichaima West Secondary, Forms 1 to 3? You paid them already?

Dr. Francis: We paid them—you do not go in—

Ms. Ramdial: You paid them already? That is what I am asking. Would this cost cover? I do not know whether you pay or not. I am asking.

Hon. Garcia: A still tongue leads to a wise mind. [*Crosstalk*]

Madam Chairman: Madam Chair, I am asking on behalf of my constituents and the Minister is refusing to answer.

Hon. Garcia: How am I refusing to answer? We said that has been seen about already.

Ms. Ramdial: No, I am not asking about it being built. I am asking: Has the contractor been paid for it?

Hon. Garcia: You are asking a different question. It has been built, it has been attended to.

Ms. Ramdial: If you had listened to me, Minister, then you would have heard the question properly.

Hon. Garcia: You see, you want to get back at me. We do not operate like that. [*Crosstalk and laughter*]

Ms. Ramdial: You attacked me first, you know.

Dr. Francis: Member, we built the classrooms.

Madam Chairman: Hon. Members, I am very comforted when I see you all being able to enjoy each other's company, but we have quite a few Heads still left and I am sure after this, there will be a great opportunity for you all to trade jokes and so on. Yes, so we are at 331.

Ms. Ramdial: So my question: Has the contractor been paid for this particular job?

Hon. Garcia: I am not in a position to give that information now but I can provide you with that information at a later date.

Ms. Ramdial: Thank you, Minister, “now yuh working”. Thank you.

Madam Chairman: Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, under line Item 322.

Hon. Garcia: 322.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: C. 184, 322.

Madam Chairman: On page 184, at the end of the page.

Hon. Garcia: Or okay, thank you.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: For particularly in Equipment, I am asking, I know that a request was made years ago for SWAHA to be equipped with an elevator and I want to know if—yes.

Hon. Garcia: This is to furnish the schools with furniture.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: And equipment.

Hon. Garcia: I am telling you furniture. Okay?

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Okay, I am just reading the line Item.

Hon. Garcia: And therefore, an elevator does not come in here.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Well it has equipment you know and I need to find out.

Hon. Garcia: Yes, but I am giving you the information. I am giving you information.

Madam Chairman: Right. E.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: So is SWAHA going to be equipped at all with it, Sir?

Hon. Garcia: This does not cater for the installation of any elevator in any school.

Madam Chairman: E. Special Education. Member for Chaguanas East.

Mr. Karim: Thank you very much, Madam Chairman. Hon. Minister, could you give us an update with respect to line Item 501 please? [*Crosstalk*] No, I said hon. Minister.

Hon. Garcia: Development of a School for Special Education at Pointe-a-Pierre?

Mr. Karim: Yes. What is the situation?

Hon. Garcia: There are some outstanding invoices and this allocation is to pay these outstanding invoices.

Madam Chairman: Member for Oropouche West.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: I am in J, Madam Chair.

Madam Chairman: All right, we have not reached there as yet. J, Science, Technology and Applied Arts.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, line Item 041: UTT Main Campus Tamana E-Teck Park. Can you kindly give us an update on the status of this?

Hon. Garcia: It is under construction and as I said before, block A will be ready for occupation towards the end of this year, if not, very early next year.

Dr. Francis: You said that already.

Hon. Garcia: Wait, nah. Yes, I said that again so Sumintra, yuh asking meh—oh sorry. [*Laughter and crosstalk*]

Madam Chairman: Member for Caroni East.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Thank you. [*Continuous crosstalk*] When there is some quiet.

Mrs. Gayadeen-Gopeesingh: Minister of Education, I will sort you out when you come here. I will sort you out.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Minister, I was looking under 2019, Revised Estimate. [*Crosstalk*] Now, let us get serious.

Madam Chairman: What line Item you are at?

Dr. Gopeesingh: 041: UTT Main Campus Tamana E-Teck Park Wallerfield. Where is the 300 million removed from UTT to Tamana InTech Park by Prof. Ken Julien? Where is that located in this? 300 million was moved from UTT to Tamana InTech Park. Minister of Finance, you have the revised estimate for UTT Main Campus Tamana InTech Park?

Mr. Imbert: May I ask what page this alleged 300 million is on?

Dr. Gopeesingh: You know it very well. If you pretend not to know it—

Mr. Imbert: No, no, no. What page is this alleged 300 million on?

Dr. Gopeesingh: I am asking it under the Revised Estimate under 041 where 90 million is being shown.

Mr. Imbert: What page?

Dr. Gopeesingh: That is page 185.

Mr. Imbert: There is no 300 million here.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Well, why is there not the 300 million there?

Mr. Imbert: [*Laughter*] “Look where he gone now”. [*Laughter and crosstalk*]

Dr. Gopeesingh: I have been carried on a journey for the whole evening, “ah will find it, ah will find it”, “ah eventually found it”. Why is the 300 million not accounted for? Where did it disappear to? Where did the 300 million from Ken Julien disappear to?

Mr. Imbert: Madam Chairman, for the record for persons who are watching these theatrics, on this page that the Member is referring to, in 2018, there is an allocation of 120 million; 2019, original 90.7; 2019 revised, 90.7; 2020, 80. At no

time on this page is there 300 million.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Well, because you are not doing your work. All right, your Revised Estimate—

Mr. Imbert: “Yuh” bringing up—

Dr. Gopeesingh: I am telling you it should be 390 million, not 90 million.

Mr. Imbert: It is a figment of your imagination.

Dr. Gopeesingh: Where did Ken Julien put the 300 million that he removed from Tamana InTech Park?

Mr. Imbert: Madam Chair, I will have to say it again. There is no 300 million on this page.

Dr. Gopeesingh: You have to tell the country where that \$300 million went.

Mr. Imbert: It is a figment of your imagination.

Madam Chairman: Okay, so we move on. Item 005 Multi-Sectoral and Other Services. [*Crosstalk*] Member for Fyzabad.

Mr. Imbert: You are making a fake point.

Madam Chairman: Member for Fyzabad, now has my ear.

Mr. Imbert: Fake news.

Dr. Bodoë: Thank you, Madam Chair. Minister, with regard to line Item 021: Repairs to Earthquake Damaged Schools.

Madam Chairman: We are at Item 021, please.

Dr. Bodoë: Can you indicate whether any consideration will be given to the Forest Reserve Anglican Primary School under this allocation that was damaged by the earthquake?

Hon. Garcia: Yes, that will be attended to and we, again, will be working with the Anglican board. As I have been saying repeatedly, before we take any major

decisions, we must get the concurrence of the board.

Dr. Bodoë: It is an old structure, Minister. Can you indicate whether it will be repaired or reconstructed?

Hon. Garcia: We have found a building that can house the students, okay, so that is the immediate step. In terms of the reconstruction of the school, that has to be—
[*Interruption*] All right, okay, the Minister will answer.

Dr. Francis: Member, we have located a building that we can house the entire school. We have it on our programme. It will be done either Christmas or next year.

Dr. Bodoë: Can you say where the location is?

Dr. Francis: That old Hi-Lo building which is a perfect site for the school.

Dr. Bodoë: Yeah. Thank you.

Madam Chairman: Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.

Mr. Lee: Thank you, Madam Chairman. Minister, just a follow up to Member for Fyzabad in respect to Claxton Bay Anglican School— [*Interruption*]

Hon. Garcia: Which school?

Mr. Lee: Claxton Bay Anglican School. What is the status of that because it had to be shut down?

Dr. Francis: Member, we have also found accommodation for them at the old Marabella South Secondary. We were doing some work to ensure that it is amenable for school's use and then on next year, we will be looking at replacing the structure itself.

Mr. Lee: Just a follow up. When would be the start date of that new location that you have found and the children will be able to attend?

Dr. Francis: We are sorting out the details on that now. But the new structure

will be done next year during the July/August vacation period.

Mr. Lee: But you do not have a start date for temporary housing at Marabella?

Dr. Francis: We are already looking at that structure now.

Mr. Lee: Yeah. Do you have a start date for that?

Dr. Francis: I will get back to you on that.

Mr. Lee: Okay. Thank you.

Madam Chairman: Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Chair. Just on line Item 21, if the Minister could identify the schools that were earthquake damaged and what remedial or immediate action that you will be taking? Just that.

Hon. Garcia: You are off-track, again.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: I know, I am asking for in writing. Thank you.

Mr. Imbert: What? [*Laughter*]

Dr. Francis: That has been ventilated in this Parliament so many times.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you. Thank you so much for providing the information.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 26 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Madam Chairman: Thank you, Ministers.

Hon. Garcia: Thank you very much.

Madam Chairman: And thank you, Permanent Secretary and your team.

5.00 p.m.

[*Mr. Forde in the Chair*]

Mr. Chairman: Okay, Members, we want to go to Head 13: Office of the Prime Minister.

Hon. Webster-Roy: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Chairman: I am coming to you.

Hon. Webster-Roy: Sorry, yes.

Mr. Chairman: Yes, I would like to welcome the Minister of State in the Office of the Prime Minister and also the Permanent Secretary and the senior technocrats from your office. Oh, you are working with the Minister of National Security also, or Minister also in the Office of the Prime Minister, welcome. We are going to Head 13: Office of the Prime Minister.

Head 13: Office of the Prime Minister, \$277,713,670.

Mr. Chairman: I will now invite either one of the Ministers to give a brief opening statement for no more than five minutes.

Hon. Webster-Roy: Thank you, Mr. Chair. The portfolios of the Office of the Prime Minister seek to ensure that our people are first. This is important to achieving the targets set out in the nation's National Strategic Plan, *Vision 2030*.

The Office of the Prime Minister provides professional coordinated support services to the Prime Minister in the execution of the business of government and leads the coordination and delivery mechanisms for child affairs, gender affairs and the national HIV/AIDS response. The past year was a continuation of the momentum, which started in 2015. In fiscal 2020, the Office of the Prime Minister shall continue to provide quality service to the internal and external clients of the office, propelled by its guiding values of integrity, accountability, transparency, equity, professionalism, commitment and diversity as articulated in its strategic plan 2017 to 2021.

The office remains committed to the goals of social transformation as it seeks to redefine the social landscape of our country. It is imperative that every

effort be made to consolidate and sustain the gains achieved over the last four years and to continue to navigate the journey ahead so that we reach our targets set out in *Vision 2030*. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you, Madam Minister.

Question proposed: That Head 13 stand part of the Schedule.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, the sum of \$277,713,670 for Head 13: Office of the Prime Minister is comprised of moneys proposed for expenditure under the following Sub-Heads and Items to be found the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure* and the *Draft Estimates of Development Programme*. We now proceed to consider the *Draft Estimates of the Recurrent Expenditure*. So we are in the recurrent expenditure booklet. We are at page 60.

Sub-Head 01: Personnel Expenditure, page 60. Item 001: General Administration, page 60; Item 002: Gender Affairs Division, page 60.

Sub-Head 02: Goods and Services, page 61. Item 001: General Administration, pages 61 to 62; Item 002: Gender Affairs Division, page 62.

Sub-Head 03: Minor Equipment Purchases, page 63. Item 001: General Administration, page 63.

Sub-Head 04: Current Transfers and Subsidies, page 63. Item 003: United Nations Organisations, page 63; Item 005: Non-Profit Institutions, page 63; Item 007: Households, page 64; Item 009: Other Transfers, page 64; Item 011: Transfers to State Enterprises, page 64.

Hon. Members, we will now move on to the *Draft Estimates of Development Programme*. Different book, Development Programme, and we are going to page 15, page 1-5.

Sub-Head 09: Development Programme, Consolidated Fund, page 15. Item

004: Social Infrastructure, page 15. I recognize the Member for Princes Town.

Mr. Padarath: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Hon. Minister, with respect to line Item 104, The Establishment of Two Reception Centres, which is listed as new projects, can you just give us the location of these two reception centres, please?

Hon. Webster-Roy: Okay, the new facilities will be going at Centeno.

Mr. Chairman: Both of them?

Hon. Webster-Roy: Yes, both of them.

Mr. Chairman: Okay. Item 005: Multi-Sectoral and Other Services, page 16. Infrastructure Development Fund, page 175 of the same book, page 175. Infrastructure Development Fund. Item 004: Social Infrastructure, page 175; Item 005: Multi-Sectoral and Other Services, page 176. Member for Princes Town.

Mr. Padarath: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Madam Minister, with respect to line Item 011, Construction of the Prime Minister's Residence in Tobago, there is an Estimate of 10 million in this 2020 financial year. In 2019, 5 million was estimated, over 3.9 was utilized and 10 million is reflected in 2020. Is the Minister in a position to say whether or not this figure reflects the completion, in terms of the total outstanding cost for this project?

Hon. Young: Thank you very much. Mr. Chair, through you, it is projected that this amount of money here, this sum of the 10 million would be able to cover the complete cost, because the residence in Tobago is now completed, within time, within budget and with a tremendous amount of savings compared to the projections before. And this amount of money here, this 10 million for 2020, will cover the bills.

Mr. Chairman: Additional question?

Mr. Padarath: Yes.

Mr. Chairman: Member for Princes Town.

Mr. Padarath: Thank you, Minister. Minister, would you be able to let us know what was the process for awarding the contract for this particular project and who was the contractor?

Hon. Young: Competitive tendering, and the contractor was—

Hon. Webster-Roy: The contractor was Parks International.

Mr. Padarath: Sorry?

Hon. Webster-Roy: The contractor was Parks International.

Hon. Young: And we are quite satisfied. And actually, I would like to congratulate Parks International, a Tobago firm, for completing this project within time, within budget, and to an exceptional level of quality.

Mr. Chairman: Additional question, Member for Princes Town.

Mr. Padarath: I have another line item, sorry.

Mr. Chairman: Proceed.

Mr. Padarath: 010, restoration of President's House, there was an allocation in 2019 of 40 million. There is no figure, in terms of the Revised Estimate. But in 2020, there is a sum of 30 million. Again, does this reflect a completion of this project in terms of costing?

Mr. Chairman: Madam Minister or Mr. Minister.

Hon. Young: All right. So, the President's House is expected to be completed within this fiscal. The sum of 30 million has been allocated. If there is a need to provide more money, we will come back in the mid-year review for it. Right now, it is still in the phases of completion. It is not yet completed.

Mr. Padarath: Similarly, Minister, would you be able to tell us what was the process for awarding this contract and who is the contractor?

Hon. Young: Similarly, the process for awarding this contract, I believe, if I remember correctly, it is a number of—it was a public competitive tender and Unicom won the contract.

Mr. Padarath: Okay.

Mr. Chairman: Member for Princes Town.

Mr. Padarath: Line Item 014, and if you would allow, Chairman, I would lump that with 015, seeing that they are both new projects and the question is actually the same with respect to both line Items. The hon. Minister can indicate whether or not these sums reflected in the 2020 Estimates will be the total sum that is expected. I know you cannot predict the future, but in terms of expected completion.

Hon. Young: These sums of money have been allocated for the next fiscal, for the work that we expect to do in the next fiscal. So, for example, of course, the San Fernando Waterfront Re-development Project, I wish it could cost \$2 million, but it is not going to cost us 2 million. But that should be sufficient to get the work that we have earmarked started over the next fiscal. Again, if there is a need, we will come back in the mid-year review.

Mr. Padarath: Hon. Minister, I know when the San Fernando Waterfront Re-development Project was announced, Government had indicated that it will be done through phases. Would you be able to tell us how many phases there are for this particular project, and whether or not those phases would be broken up in terms of different packages for competitive bidding?

Hon. Young: Correct, so there are different packages. There are different packages being handled by different Ministries. So, for example, of course, this is here under the Office of the Prime Minister. This is going to cover some land

reclamation to be done by UDeCOTT, the line Ministry for which is now the Office of the Prime Minister. In some of the other Ministries, for example, Ministry of Works and Transport, there are other packages that will go out for competitive tender to get various other items of work done.

Mr. Padarath: Okay.

Mr. Chairman: Okay.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 13 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you to both Ministers and Permanent Secretary and the senior executives from the Prime Minister's Office.

5.15 p.m.

Okay. Members, we now go to Head 07: Statutory Authorities Service Commission. I would like to welcome the executive officer from the Commission, welcome to the Parliament Chamber and your senior executives of the Commission.

Head 07: Statutory Authorities Service Commission, \$10,739,060.

Mr. Chairman: I will now invite the Minister of Finance to make a brief opening statement not exceeding five minutes.

Hon. Imbert: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The Statutory Authorities Service Commission is an independent body established by an Act of Parliament now, Chap. 24:01 of the Laws of Trinidad and Tobago. This Act actually dates back to 1966. It is typical of other Service Commissions, it has its origins in the British Civil Service tradition. The Act gives the Commission the power to appoint persons to hold or act in offices, to transfer, or promote, remove, and exercise disciplinary control over persons so appointed.

The Statutory Authorities Service Commission is responsible for staff in a number of Departments before two city corporations, Port of Spain City Corporation, San Fernando City Corporation and the two Boroughs, Arima Borough Corporation, Point Fortin Borough Corporation and other entities such as the Zoological Society, Agricultural Society and so on.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Minister.

Question proposed: That Head 07 stand part of the Schedule.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, the sum of \$10,739,060 for Head 07: Statutory Authorities Service Commission is comprised of moneys proposed for expenditure under the following Sub-Heads and Items to be found in the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure* and the *Draft Estimates of Development Programme*. We now proceed to consider the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure*. We are on page 40 of the Recurrent Expenditure booklet. Sub-Head 01: Personal Expenditure. Item 01: General Administration, page 40. Sub-Head 02: Goods and Services, page 40. I recognize the Member for Fyzabad.

Dr. Bodoë: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Through you, Chair, to the Minister. Line Item 17, on page 41, Training. I note the allocation of \$5,100,000 compared to much smaller allocations in 2018 and 2019. Minister, could you indicate what is envisaged for that sum?

Hon. Imbert: Well as I indicated, the Statutory Authorities Service Commission is responsible for the Port of Spain Corporation, San Fernando Corporation, Arima Corporation and Point Fortin Corporation. And this is for training of municipal police in those four entities. The Public Service Commission, just by the way, is responsible for the training of municipal police in the other 10 municipal corporations, the regions. But they are responsible for the two cities and the two

Boroughs—

Dr. Bodoë: Thank you.

Hon. Imbert:—in terms of training municipal police.

Dr. Bodoë: Just one further question under Fees, 23. I see no allocation in 2019, but 2020, \$130,000. Could you just indicate what that is for? Looks like a new item.

Hon. Imbert: It is a licence fee for electronic documents.

Dr. Bodoë: That is fine. Thank you.

Mr. Chairman: Sub-Head 03: Minor Equipment Purchases, page 41. Item 001: General Administration, page 41. Hon. Members, we will now move on to the *Draft Estimates of Development Programme*, different book and we are on page 11, page 1-1. Sub-Head 09: Development Programme—Consolidated Fund, page 11. Item 005: Multi-Sectoral and Other Services, page 11.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 07 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you, Madam. Thank you other members of the Commission.

Mr. Chairman: I would like to welcome Equal Opportunity Tribunal, the Acting AO IV and his assistant. Thank you.

Head 75: Equal Opportunity Tribunal, \$2,670,210.

Mr. Chairman: I will now invite the Minister of Finance to make a brief opening statement not exceeding five minutes. Mr. Minister.

Hon. Imbert: The Equal Opportunity Act of 2000, created two organizations of which is the Equal Opportunity Tribunal, the other is the Equal Opportunity Commission.

The Tribunal is a judicial body, it is a court of superior record, but before a matter can be filed with the Tribunal, it must first have been investigated by the Commission. The Commission then with the consent of the complainant can file a claim before the Tribunal. Once filed and lodged with the Tribunal the matter becomes a Tribunal matter and is subject to relevant court procedures as applied in the High Court of Justice.

An Appeal from the Tribunal lies to the Court of Appeal.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Minister.

Question proposed: The Head 75 stand part of the Schedule.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, the sum of \$2,670,210 for Head 75, Equal Opportunity Tribunal is comprised of moneys proposed for expenditure under the follow Sub-Heads and Items to be found in the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure*. We shall now proceed to consider the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure*. Sub-Head 01: Personnel Expenditure, page 374—*Recurrent Expenditure* booklet. Item 001: General Administration, page 374. Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla, I recognize you.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Just a quick question line Item 001, how many members of staff are currently accounted for this salary? And if there are any vacancies?

Hon. Imbert: You have a total of 19—

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: 1-9.

Hon. Imbert:—in all. In all the positions; contract and establishment.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Okay. And are there any posts to be filled?

Mr. Chairman: Plenty.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: And how does this impact upon the Tribunal's ability to—

Hon. Imbert: Like any other Department of Government, I am certain that they struggle just like Customs, just like Inland Revenue, just like the Service Commission itself, and they have to rely on contract employment.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: How many matters are before the Tribunal?

Hon. Imbert: Forty-four.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: How long have they been before the Tribunal?

Hon. Imbert: What I am told is that most of the older matters are completed and they are taking about six months to deal with a matter at this time on average. But, it is an average eh. So some would be three months, some might be 12 months that kind of thing.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Okay. And what is the oldest one that you have?

Hon. Imbert: I am told, based on the information available at this time, 2016.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: 2016.

Hon. Imbert: Yeah.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Okay. Thank you.

Hon. Imbert: Unresolved, all are unresolved cases.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Unresolved.

Hon. Imbert: That is what I am told.

Mrs. Newallo-Hosein: Okay. Thank you.

Mr. Chairman: Sub-Head 02: Goods and Services, page 374. Item 001: General Administration, pages 374 to 375. Sub-Head 03: Minor Equipment Purchases, page 375. Item 001: General Administration, page 375. Sub-Head 04: Current Transfers and Subsidies, page 376. Item 007: Households, page 376.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 75 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you, Administrative Officer and other senior executives, thanks for coming.

Welcome, welcome. Secretary to Her Excellency, welcome and your assistant. Thanks for coming. Hon. Members, Head 01: President.

Head 01: President, \$18,333,050.

Mr. Chairman: I will now invite the Minister of Finance to make a brief opening statement not exceeding five minutes. Mr. Minister.

Hon. Imbert: Certainly, just give me one second.

Mr. Chairman: Sure.

Hon. Imbert: The President, Her Excellency, Paula-Mae Weekes, is the Head of State of Trinidad and Tobago, Commander-in-Chief of the Trinidad and Tobago Defence Force. The Office of the President was established when our country became a Republic in 1976. Prior to that the Head of State was Queen Elizabeth. The last Governor General, Ellis Clarke was sworn in as the first President on the 1st of August, 1976. The Office of the President is responsible for a wide range of administrative functions, supporting Her Excellency in dealing with matters such as the appointment of members of independent service commissions and other important appointments, there is a wide range including appointment of the Chief Justice and so on. It is a very important office and the office provides the administrative support to Her Excellency.

5.30 p.m.

Question proposed: That Head 01 stand part of the Schedule.

Mr. Chairman: Hon. Members, the sum of \$18,333,050 for Head 01: President, is comprised of moneys proposed for expenditure under the follow Sub-Heads and Items to be found in the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure*. We shall now

proceed to consider the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure*, and we are on page 2, Sub-Head 01: Personnel Expenditure. Item 001: General Administration, page 2. Sub-Head 02: Goods and Services, page 2. Item 001: General Administration, pages 2 and 3; Item 002: Tobago Services, page 4. Sub-Head 03: Minor Equipment Purchases, page 4. Item 001: General Administration, page 4. Sub-Head 04: Current Transfers and Subsidies, page 4. Item 007: Households, page 4.

Question put and agreed to.

Head 01 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Minister, and thank you Secretary to the President and your assistant. [*Pause*]

Hon. Members, the question is that the sum of \$44,983,464,862 be approved as a grand total.

Question put and agreed to.

Schedule ordered to stand part of the Bill.

[*Mrs. Annisette-George in the Chair*]

Clauses 1 to 3 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Question put and agreed to: That the Bill be reported to the House.

Madam Chairman: The House will now resume. This meeting is suspended.

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

5.38 p.m.: *House resumed.*

The Minister of Finance (Hon. Colm Imbert): Thank you Madam Speaker. I wish to report with gratitude and with great satisfaction that a Bill to provide for the Services of Trinidad and Tobago, for the financial year ending on the 30th day

of September, 2020, was considered in Standing Finance Committee and passed without amendments. I now beg to move that it be read a third time and passed.

Bill reported, without amendment.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read the third time and passed.

SESSIONAL SELECT COMMITTEES

(APPOINTMENT OF)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Members, pursuant to Standing Order 89(2), I have appointed the following Members to serve on the Sessional Select Committees of the House of Representatives for the Fifth Session, Eleventh Parliament.

Standing Orders Committee

Mrs. Bridgid Annisette-George	Chairman
Mr. Faris Al-Rawi	Member
Mr. Anthony Garcia	Member
Mrs. Glenda Jennings-Smith	Member
Dr. Fuad Khan	Member
Mrs. Vidia Gayadeen-Gopeesingh	Member

House Committee

Mrs. Camille Robinson-Regis	Chairman	Mr. Colm Imbert
	Member	
Maj. Gen. Ret. Edmund Dillon	Member	
Mrs. Ayanna Webster-Roy	Member	
Dr. Roodal Moonilal	Member	
Mr. David Lee	Member	

Committee of Privileges

Mrs. Bridgid Annisette-George	Chairman
-------------------------------	----------

Mrs. Camille Robinson-Regis	Member
Mr. Fitzgerald Hinds	Member
Mr. Stuart Young	Member
Mr. Rudranath Indarsingh	Member
Mr. Barry Padarath	Member

Statutory Instruments Committee

Mrs. Bridgid Annisette-George	Chairman
Ms. Nicole Olivierre	Member
Mr. Stuart Young	Member
Dr. Lovell Francis	Member
Mr. Rudranath Indarsingh	Member
Mr. Rushton Paray	Member

Business Committee

Mrs. Bridgid Annisette-George	Chairman
Mr. Colm Imbert	Member
Mrs. Camille Robinson-Regis	Member
Mrs. Cherrie-Ann Crichlow-Cockburn	Member
Mr. Barry Padarath	Member
Mr. David Lee	Member

Madam Speaker: Leader of the House.

ADJOURNMENT

The Minister of Planning and Development (Hon. Camille Robinson-Regis):

Madam Speaker, before we take the adjournment, are you—you want me to adjourn and then you would—

Madam Speaker: Yes.

Hon. C. Robinson-Regis: Madam Speaker, I beg to move that this House do now

adjourn to a date to be fixed.

Diwali Greetings

Madam Chairman: Hon. Members, before I put the question on the adjournment, as we know, the Diwali holiday comes up on Sunday the 27th of October, 2019, so that I will now invite Members to express their greetings. Member for St. Ann's East.

The Minister of Community Development, Culture and the Arts (Hon. Dr. Nyan Gadsby-Dolly): Thank you kindly, Madam Speaker. I wish to extend warm greetings to our Hindu community as well as the national population, as we celebrate the inspiring and joyous occasion of Diwali. There are several religious accounts associated with Diwali, each carrying the same underlying principle that light, a metaphor for knowledge and consciousness, will always prevail over its negative counterpart. There is no other time in the Hindu calendar that rejuvenates the spiritual light in all of us more than Diwali.

As one of Trinidad and Tobago's most beloved festivals, Diwali climaxes with thousands of earthen lamps, or deyas, lighting the dark night, symbolizing the ever popular message of light prevailing over darkness. As such, the message of Diwali is the victory of self-knowledge and moderation. To celebrate Diwali means to enjoy inner bliss, reduce our personal needs, light the lamp of wisdom in the community and share our gifts with those in need.

It is the occasion where citizens of this multi-ethnic society celebrate the triumph of good over evil, light over darkness and knowledge over ignorance. So as we celebrate Diwali, let us remember the significance of this important festival and its values and traditions. Let us keep foremost in our minds that it is these values that have made us truly blessed as a model to the world, of how citizens, holding vastly different ideologies, can exist side by side in harmony.

The blessing of unity and harmony of the many races that share our shores must never be taken for granted. Ours is a nation of diversity and differences which form a divine tapestry that delights the Creator. This principled message is especially relevant around this time of year and we, the leaders of this great nation must, through our actions, inspire light and positivity in the hearts of our communities.

On behalf of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, Shubh Divali to the Hindu community and the wider citizenry of Trinidad and Tobago. May we always gravitate toward truth, wisdom and prosperity in each and every endeavour. Thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Barry Padarath (*Princes Town*): Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, with your permission, allow me to greet your good self, Members of this honourable House and the national community in the Hindu traditional way of Sita Ram om Namaste. Madam Speaker, Hindus believe in *beti aasheervaad hai*, which means, your daughter is your blessing. And, Madam Speaker, in the Hindu tradition of Divali, it is often believed that the Goddess Lakshmi, Maha Lakshmi who we pray to during Divali time, resides in our mothers, our grandmothers, our daughters, our sisters and our granddaughters.

Madam Speaker, we as Hindu see the divinity of the Goddess Adi Devi in each and every female; both in Trinidad and Tobago and throughout the world, and that is why as Hindus we believe that anywhere in which a society disrespects women that society will crumble.

Madam Speaker, in Hinduism, there is a concept called Shanti Bhavan and Shanti Bhavan means that you educate the girl child because you see Maha Lakshmi, the virtue of Maha Lakshmi, in the girl child. On the occasion of a Hindu wedding, the girl child is considered to be Maha Lakshmi while the groom

is considered to be Lord Vishnu himself. And that is why in every aspect and every Sanskar of the Hindu tradition, as we celebrate Divali, we are reminded of the divinity that we seek in each and every person.

Madam Speaker, in the Hindu faith, while we look at Divali, we also consider that each and every child, especially the girl children, Madam Speaker, they are the ones that are to be educated, because they are the ones that will light the world, that would nourish the families that would nourish children.

5.45 p.m.

Madam Speaker, and it was that concept in mind that Trinidad and Tobago became, in 2014, under the leadership of the Member for Siparia, Mrs. Kamla Persad-Bissessar, the country where we were notarized by the World Economic Forum to be among the best top three countries in the world for a girl child to be born. Madam Speaker, there are eight forms of the goddess Maha Lakshmi, and these forms are Adi Lakshmi which brings joy, and it is during this Divali time we hope that that form of Lakshmi brings joy over a nation that has found itself in despair.

Madam Speaker, another form of Maha Lakshmi is Dhana Lakshmi, Dhana Lakshmi who looks after the poor and downtrodden, and it is our hope on this side of the House that those who are in need and who face poverty will be blessed by Dhana Lakshmi. We hope that another form of Maha Lakshmi, Dhaanya Lakshmi, where no one goes hungry—Madam Speaker, like you and many others, we would recall, just a few weeks ago, a grandmother stealing food from a supermarket not being able to feed her family and her children, we in the Opposition pray that Dhaanya Lakshmi, that form of Maha Lakshmi, provides food and sustenance for all the people of Trinidad and Tobago that they continue to be blessed so that they will not go hungry.

Madam Speaker, Gaja Lakshmi provides prosperity. While there is massive unemployment we hope that Gaja Lakshmi will provide that prosperity for all the people of Trinidad and Tobago. Madam Speaker, Santana Lakshmi provides from the protection of our children, and it is our sincere hope that every child in Trinidad and Tobago and throughout the world will receive the blessings and the protection of Santana Lakshmi. Veera Lakshmi provides for courage and strength to overcome evil and negativity. Vidya Lakshmi provides for knowledge, Vijaya Lakshmi provides for victory, and we ask that Trinidad and Tobago continue to be victorious in every endeavour that we seek.

Madam Speaker, on the fourth day of Diwali—as you know Diwali is celebrated over a five-day period but we here in Trinidad and Tobago, we have the national holiday just being one day. But after the main day of Diwali, the fourth day, Hindus pray to Lord Krishna, and with your permission—you know, Madam Speaker, I always give a little joke in that before I became a politician I wanted to be another “p” and that was a pundit, a Hindu priest. And on the fourth day of Diwali we pray to Lord Krishna, and with your permission I would like to recite a verse of the Bhagavad Gita and then explain in English. Lord Krishna said:

“Yada Yada Hi Dharmasya
Glanirva Bhavathi Bharatha,
Abhyuthanam Adharmasya
Tadatmanam Srijami Aham.
Praritanaya Sadhunam
Vinashaya Cha Dushkritam
Dharamasansthapnaya
Sambhavami Yuge-Yuge.”

Madam Speaker, what Lord Krishna said in the Bhagavad Gita is when

righteousness in on the decline, when the world is in turmoil and when there is no one to turn to, I will come from age to age to relieve you from your problems. Madam Speaker, while the world is in turmoil, while we face our own difficulties here in Trinidad and Tobago, I ask that this Divali we look at the message that Lord Krishna passed on to us so that we are able to not only—in local parlance we often say that we wait for God, but God helps those who help themselves.

Madam Speaker, I would also like to use the opportunity, as we celebrate Divali 2019, to pay respect and homage to organizations like the NCIC, the Maha Sabha, Swaha, Chinmaya Mission. Madam Speaker, it was just two years ago I stood in this House and I paid tribute to the Maha Sabha for the work that they have done through the Lakshmi Girls' Hindu College. Last year they performed the hat trick where they were able to win the President's Medal for the third time. And that speaks about the value that Hindus place on education and the value they place on the name of Maha Lakshmi herself as we celebrate Divali 2019 in her honour.

Madam Speaker, on a personal note, I often say that we as Hindus we look for Maha Lakshmi in our own homes because we see our Maha Lakshmi—first of all as Hindus we say, “matrudevo bhava”, which means “Mother is our first God”. I lost my father when I was a very young child and I had the benefit of having two mothers; one, my biological mother who has me where I am today, and mother Kamla Persad-Bissessar who became a Lakshmi in my life and in lives of many people in this country, who dispelled darkness in any form or fashion. And today, Madam Speaker, as a descendant of a Hindu—Mrs. Persad-Bissessar being the Leader of the Opposition being a descendant, her father being a Hindu Brahmin pundit, today we are very proud to stand on this side and extend Divali greetings, Shubh Divali to the Hindu community, and not only just to simply extend Shubh

Diwali Greetings
Mr. Padarath (cont'd)

2019.10.22

Diwali to them but to pay homage for the contribution that they have made to the development of Trinidad and Tobago, standing side by side, the other communities, and holding up the red, white and black.

Madam Speaker, may Mother Lakshmi continue to bless all the people of Trinidad and Tobago, and on behalf of the Leader of the Opposition, my colleagues on this Bench, I say Shubh Diwali. But I also say, “Jai Trinidad and Tobago”, because to all the people of Trinidad and Tobago where we look at this Diwali season we ask that the darkness be removed from your lives, that ignorance be removed from your minds, but most importantly, Madam Speaker, that we have a clear path going forward with the light guiding our way. So, Madam Speaker, with those few words I say, Shubh Diwali to all the people of Trinidad and Tobago on behalf of the Member for Siparia and the Opposition Bench. I thank you.

[Desk thumping]

Madam Speaker: Hon. Members, I too join with you in conveying best wishes to the Hindu community and the nation as we approach Diwali 2019. As you know the name Diwali is derived from the Sanskrit term “Deepavali”, meaning row of lights. Diwali, the festival of lights, marks the victory of light over darkness, the dispelling of ignorance with enlightenment and the triumph of good over evil. The symbolism of the festival is one which stands as a beacon as we seek to triumph over various social ills that exist in our society and the struggle within ourselves to be and do better as citizens. In the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago we are certainly privileged and blessed with diversity and so many cultural traditions which allow us to join in unity, celebration and devotion regardless of our individual religious persuasion. As we mark the sacred festival on Sunday, October 27, 2019, our nationals are called to let their light show.

I recall the statement of the American author and one of the democratic

nominees of the 2020 American presidential elections, Ms. Marianne Williamson, who stated that, and I quote:

“Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness, that most frightens us.

We were born to make manifest the glory of”—the Divine—“that is within us. It is not just in some of us; it is in everyone and as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give others permission to”—lift their lights.

As Members of Parliament, public servants and citizens, we are called to be exemplars and to hold those around us in high esteem and with deep respect so in turn they too can hold others with the same regard in order to uplift each other as a nation. In closing, I hope that the light of Divali serves to uplift us all. Shubh Divali to us all. [*Desk thumping*]

Question put and agreed to.

House adjourned accordingly.

Adjourned at 5.52p.m.