

**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES***Tuesday, October 20, 2020***APPROPRIATION (FINANCIAL YEAR 2021) BILL, 2020**

[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:** Good morning, everyone. The meeting of the Standing Finance Committee will resume.

*Head 22:* Ministry of National Security, \$1,838,057,608.

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

**Hon. Young:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Good morning to all, in particular those who are looking on at our proceedings. Madam Chair, the Ministry of National Security is one of the most challenging Ministries. I think that is generally accepted. And what we would like to say from the outset is, despite all of the challenges we will continue to do all that is necessary and reasonable to protect not only the population of Trinidad and Tobago from a safety and security point of view, but more so the taxpayers of Trinidad and Tobago. That is something we take very seriously.

We recognize at the Ministry of National Security, and it seems to be a message that is missed by many, that the revenue that Trinidad once had, Trinidad and Tobago once had and experienced, has been significantly affected negatively, and in those circumstances we accept that there may be declines in the amount of money allocated to National Security, but we will continue to work with the

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Ministry of Finance as well as our stakeholders, those who are charged with the responsibility and the duty to do what is necessary to protect the safety and security of Trinidad and Tobago.

And in closing of this opening statement, I would like to take the opportunity through the Parliament to thank all of those persons, starting with the administrative staff at the Ministry of National Security, our defence force, our prison services, our police services, our immigration services, the probation officers, the cadet force, our life guards, immigration and all of the others, our fire services, who continue to do what has to be done 24/7 for Trinidad and Tobago, despite the difficulties including the global pandemic that we face. And National Security is always called upon to play not only a supporting role but sometimes a leading role in Government's response to many crises in Trinidad and Tobago in addition to our normal everyday duties. Thank you.

**Madam Chairman:** Thank you, Minister.

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

**Madam Chairman:** Hon. Members, the sum of \$ 1,838,057,608 for Head 22: Ministry of National Security, is comprised of moneys proposed for expenditure under six Sub-Heads to be found in the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure* and the *Draft Estimates of Development Programme*. We shall now proceed to consider the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure* and we are at page 125. Sub-Head 01: Personnel Expenditure. Item 001: General Administration; Item 002: Fire Service. Member for Barataria San/Juan.

**Mr. Hosein:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Good morning to the Chamber. At Item 01: Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance, Minister, I am seeing that the Actual expenditure for fiscal 2019 was 282 million. It was then revised in 2020 to

232 million and we have the same Estimate for 2021. I was wondering whether or not there is any reduction in the number of officers in the fire service?

**Hon. Young:** No.

**Mr. Hosein:** Can you account for the reason in the difference with what was actually spent in 2019 as compared to the Revised Estimate of 2020 then? That is a reduction of about \$50 million?

**Hon. Young:** Just give me one second. All right, so what had happened in 2019, there may have been some abnormal amounts that were expended in that period. It may have had to do with issues of—I am not quite certain but what we have been doing and it is consistent with last year is you will see the same amount as last year. So what happened in 2019 is there would have been some revision between 2019 and 2020 and the Fire Service has been functioning on this 232-odd million dollars.

**Mr. Hosein:** So then we do not have an explanation why there is—a proper explanation for the drop of \$50 million. Or the high expenditure of 2019 because it is quite abnormal as compared to 2020 and what is estimated for 2021.

**Hon. Young:** Well, what I can say is that the Fire Service continued to perform and to do what needed to be done at these levels and the Actual allocation it was a—the Actual allocation of the 232—232 million is what ran the Fire Service in an efficient manner. It did not lead to a reduction of officers, overtime, anything like that. I would just like to use this opportunity at the outset to point out that these figures are always figures prepared by the Budgets Division in the Ministry of Finance, right. So, we would put in this is how much we believe is estimated. We may have put in more in certain years if they wanted to do for example, additional recruiting, et cetera. But this is the amount that we were

provided with last year by the Budgets Division, we made it work, so we will make it work this year as well.

**Mr. Hosein:** Minister, can you tell us how many persons are currently on the fire establishment and the number of vacancies?

**Hon. Young:** Yes, I can. The establishment has 2,713 positions, 2,474 posts are filled. So that is 239 vacant posts. I see here, vacant with bodies, 204; vacant without bodies, 35. And you know what that means, that that is all to do with the promotion system and this type of thing. The number of officers we recruited in the fiscal 2020 was 116. Now, you are to remember, you should remember that we also have auxiliary officers.

**Mr. Hosein:** Does this also encompass the fire prevention officers?

**Hon. Young:** No, this does not include the fire prevention officers. That is a different Head.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Naparima.

**Mr. Charles:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Item 10: Remuneration to Auxiliary Fire Unit. The Actual in 2019 was 9 million, the Estimate in 2020 was 28 million but the Revised Estimate is down to 2.6 million which was the same for 2021, the Estimates for 2021. Could the Minister indicate—because I know there are issues with the auxiliaries, the regularization and what not. You hear it on Power 102 with the President of the Fire Services Association Second Division. Could the Minister state why it is so low in the context of an Estimate of 28 million in 2020?

**Hon. Young:** Again, as I just said a short while ago, these Estimates as you say are provided by the Budgets Division in the Ministry of Finance. What you all will know is that the auxiliary positions are exactly as defined, they are auxiliary. So it is as needed and that basis. So we will work with the amount of money that is

given, and it is always possible to vire money if we have any need to increase the amounts.

**Mr. Charles:** Is the Minister aware of some of the concerns of the auxiliaries?

**Hon. Young:** Absolutely.

**Mr. Charles:** You wish to enlighten us a bit? Just briefly. Because I think they keep saying that they do the work of a fire officer, in many ways they act for—

**Hon. Young:** Well, it is.

**Mr. Charles:** But they are not paid.

**Hon. Young:** An auxiliary officer is like the reserves just similar to special reserve policemen, similar to the Trinidad and Tobago Regiment reserves. So they do perform the duties of fire officers based on their scheduling and based on a call-out basis. So some of the issues they have had over the years and this is for—if I remember correctly, well over a decade now—is they are seeking, similar to the special reserve police officers, to get on the permanent establishment. Those are currently engaging discussions with the CPO.

**Mr. Charles:** How many auxiliaries are there in the fire service?

**Hon. Young:** What is that?

**Mr. Charles:** How many auxiliaries are there in the fire service?

**Hon. Young:** Four hundred and seventy-three.

**Mr. Charles:** One last question. Minister—

**Hon. Young:** On which line Item?

**Mr. Charles:** Line Item 02—sorry—no, 01. I do not know if my colleague had requested it but the number of acting positions in the fire service? If you have that available now or—?

**Hon. Young:** When you say the number of acting positions, persons who are

acting in the post and not promoted to the position as yet?

**Mr. Charles:** Correct.

**Hon. Young:** Just give me one second. It is around 258 persons in vacant offices, so that is—

**Mr. Charles:** That is acting?

**Hon. Young:** Acting, yeah.

**Mr. Charles:** And do you have an idea of the length of acting?

**Hon. Young:** No.

**Mr. Charles:** Not at all?

**Hon. Young:** Yeah, I mean for 250 it will be broken—

**Mr. Charles:** For average?

**Hon. Young:** It will be broken down.

**Mr. Charles:** Okay.

**Hon. Young:** I do not think we could average it.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Oropouche East.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair, and good morning to all colleagues, to the Minister and those officers and leaders supporting the work this morning. I just want to stay on the fire service issue, but to ask a broader question that will entail not just fire services but indeed all divisions and departments within the Ministry so I would not have to ask it for the whole morning. Minister, in regard to the Government policy of putting a freeze on the filling of vacant positions in the public service, could you confirm that that will by definition involve a freeze on filling all vacant posts within the fire service and all other departments and divisions of the Ministry of National Security?

**Hon. Young:** It will not affect the running of these various divisions so there will

continue to be recruitments, et cetera, if there are necessary promotions to be made, once the Public Service Commission recommends those promotions and they accept it, they will be made.

**Dr. Moonilal:** But could I just be very clear, the Government has announced a policy position that vacant positions will not be filled or frozen.

**Hon. Young:** Correct.

**Dr. Moonilal:** You are saying in the Ministry of National Security that policy position will not obtain for that Ministry.

**Hon. Young:** First of all, I am not seeing the line Item that it is related to but the answer is no, not when it comes to recruitment of persons in the defence force, in the prisons, in the fire, in the police service, et cetera. That is really in the administrative side of the various Ministries as has been stated time and time again.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Could I just ask? I am looking at the explanation, Includes provision for vacant posts with incumbents, and so on. I am saying not in regard to recruitment of new people. In positions in the fire service where someone is acting in a position, that person, given government policy, will not be confirmed in any position because there is a freeze on filling vacant posts.

**Hon. Young:** Madam Chair, I thought I was very clear on that.

**Dr. Moonilal:** So I am asking whether the policy of the Government obtains here.

**Madam Chairman:** And I think the Minister has answered several times. Part of your difficulty may be the all-encompassing nature of your question. And while you may be trying to pose it to avoid being repetitive, you may get the answer in a more granular way if you ask in terms of the line Item 01, under 002. But I think the Minister has answered the question—

**Dr. Moonilal:** Okay, I understand, Ma'am.

**Madam Chairman:**—more than once as broadly as it has been stretched.

**Dr. Moonilal:** So hypothetically, under 02 or 01—

**Madam Chairman:** Hypothetically or in reality? Which one is it?

**Dr. Moonilal:** If someone is a Deputy Fire Chief (Ag.), would they be confirmed?

**Madam Chairman:** Member, hypothetically or in reality? Which one are you dealing with?

**Dr. Moonilal:** I am dealing with Salaries and Cost of Living, 01, and I am asking if someone is acting for example, as Deputy Chief Fire Officer, will they be confirmed as Chief Fire Officer given the policy of the Government?

**10.15 a.m.**

**Hon. Young:** And the answer to this given a short while ago is yes, and as you would see, it includes provision for vacant posts with incumbents. So I am going to repeat once again, these promotions, et cetera, are based on the Public Service Commission. And if there are promotions to be made and recommended they will be made in the Ministry of National Security in these various divisions.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Sure, thank you.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Oropouche East.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Yes. My next question, regarding the remuneration for auxiliary fire units, which colleagues have already touched on, Minister, we accept earlier clock your statement that the Ministry will work with the provision made by the Minister of Finance, we did not expect a shutdown. We understand as well that there is a midterm review that will come and your Ministry of course will make further demands if a need be. Just to point out and ask for an explanation. In 2018, Minister, this exact line Item 10 had an Actual of 21 million. The Actual in 2019



was 9 million and now we are down to 2.6 million. Now, clearly that has been a progressive and dramatic drop. This has to do with manpower specifically, it is not equipment purchase and so on, what has happened with this unit that you would have gone from an Actual of 21 million to an Actual of 9 to a projection of two in terms squarely of manpower, because we are not dealing with equipment?

**Madam Chairman:** Is this not a question that has already been posed by Naparima? In substance, it is really the same question.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Well, we could move on if it is.

**Madam Chairman:** Okay, yes please. Same question in substance. Next question, Member for Oropouche East.

**Dr. Moonilal:** No, I am fine.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Caroni East.

**Dr. Seecheran:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Minister, on the line Item 04: Allowances for monthly paid officers under the Fire Service. In years before fire officers were allowed a \$5,000 allocation for dental services every year at registered dental providers. Does this allocation fall under line Item 04 and also, has this allocation been stopped?

**Hon. Young:** Madam Chair, just a point of clarity. I believe my friend—you are a dentist.

**Dr. Seecheran:** Yeah.

**Hon. Young:** Are you affected by this personally?

**Dr. Seecheran:** Yeah.

**Hon. Young:** Okay. Well, you should have said so. The answer is no. It is not affected. This is not the allowance that deals with dental and medical care.

**Dr. Seecheran:** All right. Thank you.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Couva South.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Thank you, Madam Chair, my colleague Oropouche East sought clarification from the Minister.

**Madam Chairman:** Okay, Item 004: Prison Services; Member for Barataria/San Juan.

**Mr. Hosein:** I will defer to Naparima.

**Mr. Charles:** My colleague, profusely. Item 03: Overtime Monthly Paid Officers; Prison Service, the actual in 2019 was 67 million. And the estimate in 2021 is 35 million, representing a 15 million reduction. Now, we understand the problems with the Prison Service Minister, they quarantined, a lot of them have had to be quarantined, et cetera, which would lead to an increase in overtime for those officers who are not affected by COVID. Do you not think that this—could you explain this decrease?

**Hon. Young:** All right. First thing is, as you rightly pointed out, and is not only reserved to the Prison Service, but many of our other arms and divisions have been frontline workers, have been affected negatively by the fallout of COVID-19 and have to self-isolate and quarantine. What is happening here again, this is a decreased allocation—this decreased allocation is really done by the Budgets Division. If it is necessary, we will seek the vire more money to this particular line Item and vote. And also in the mid-year review, if we see things, we are not able to manage it within this, we have been told by the Ministry of Finance to approach them. There are two specific policies that we are currently putting into place at prisons to deal with overtime. But I cannot get into the details of those for obvious reasons because you would not want that to be known by the public. But it is not

going to lead to a decline in the safety and security of either the clients i.e. the inmates or the officers at the prison service.

**Mr. Charles:** A follow-up question, Madam Chair. Could the Minister indicate how many prison officers have had to be quarantined over the past six months or so?

**Hon. Young:** The last figure I saw was somewhere around, I think 250 or so. But of course it is a rolling figure, a lot of them have been able to come out and this type of thing, safely.

**Madam Chairman:** Is it that Barataria/San Juan that you have given up your turn or you still wish to ask questions? Member for Barataria/San Juan.

**Mr. Hosein:** Minister, in light of this figure you just gave with 250 officers, I am on 01 Salaries.

**Hon. Young:** Okay, we were actually 03 just now, right.

**Mr. Hosein:** I am going on 01. You just give a figure of 250 officers that currently in quarantine.

**Hon. Young:** I did not say—I was asked the total amount have been quarantined.

**Mr. Hosein:** Do you have a number that the total amount is currently in quarantine?

**Hon. Young:** That is what I just answered.

**Mr. Hosein:** You said 250.

**Hon. Young:** Or, that are currently in quarantine?

**Mr. Hosein:** Yes, currently?

**Hon. Young:** Give me one second please. No, I do not have that current figure for today.

**Mr. Hosein:** And do you know, what is the manpower strength currently at the prison?

**Hon. Young:** The number of positions on the establishment 4,218. The number of positions/posts filled 3,511. You have 707 vacant posts. That does not include the civilian staff.

**Mr. Hosein:** Minister, in light of the figure given for 01: Salaries and Cost of Living.

**Hon. Young:** In light of the—?

**Mr. Hosein:** The figure, estimated for 01: Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance; 305 million, will this figure be reflective of any vacancies to be filled in this fiscal year? Is it the intention to fill any of the vacancies this year?

**Hon. Young:** It is, we will continue the recruitment drive as we have been doing with respect to the prison service, there will be a natural attrition as people leave, there will be natural moving up. As I just said to your colleague from Oropouche East, once the Public Service Commission makes any recommendations for promotion, et cetera, they will be facilitated.

**Mr. Hosein:** Because what I am seeing is an actual \$70 million decline from what has actually spent in 2019.

**Hon. Young:** Correct, so—

**Mr. Hosein:** The Estimates in 2020 and now the same Estimates in 2021. So I am just wondering whether or not this figure is enough to sustain the current system in the prisons.

**Hon. Young:** As I stated before, and it applies here as well. The figure that is provided here, these are the Estimates was provided by the Budgets Division and the Ministry of Finance, and the Budgets Division has told us to continue to work

with them throughout the fiscal. There is a mid-year review where we may come back, and we will vire funds as well.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for St. Augustine.

**Ms. Ameen:** Thank you, Madam Chair. To the Minister, given that you have officers in quarantine, can you indicate how this is affecting the work schedule within the prisons and the impact that will have on overtime, for instance, and if this has been—

**Hon. Young:** Which line Item, Member, 03?

**Ms. Ameen:** Yes. Given that officers have been in quarantine, how is this affecting their roster and their work schedule in the prison and the impact that will have on their overtime and so on, has this been allocated for?

**Hon. Young:** Okay, as I just said to your colleague from Naparima a short while ago, the prison system continues to function efficiently. The officers who are in quarantine, other officers come on, on shift, and we are doing two certain policy changes that will affect the overtime to take it downwards, but I cannot get into the specifics of that, for national security reasons. If there is going to be any issue with the payment of overtime, we are in constant conversation with the Ministry of Finance and if necessary we either vire funds or come back in the review. But we are trying to reduce overtime across the board.

**Ms. Ameen:** Does this allocation represent payment for any overtime due from the previous financial year?

**Hon. Young:** So as you are aware, that when they are carryovers of overtime, they will come from this line Item or, we will vire from other line Items.

**Ms. Ameen:** But do you have any overtime that will be paid, that is due to prison officers that will be paid in this financial year?

**Hon. Young:** Yes, there is overtime that is outstanding and that is currently being audited by the administration at Ministry of National Security.

**Ms. Ameen:** So they should receive it in this financial year?

**Hon. Young:** Once the audit is completed, we will go to the Ministry of Finance to—

**Ms. Ameen:** For additional funds.

**Hon. Young:** Yes.

**Ms. Ameen:** Hmm. All right, thanks.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 005:—I am sorry, Member for Naparima. Item 004.

**Mr. Charles:** Yes, Item 01: Does the Minister have a—01: that is Salaries and Cost of Living. And I am looking at the revised estimates for 2020 of 305 million. Does the Minister have an updated figure for this Item?

**Madam Chairman:** What you want the actual figure for financial year 2020?

**Mr. Charles:** 2020 to date?

**Madam Chairman:** What are you talking about, calendar year or fiscal year? Because you are talking about to date?

**Mr. Charles:** We are talking about fiscal year.

**Madam Chairman:** Okay, so I guess we will get that in the closing of accounts. Item 005: Regiment; Item 006: Coast Guard. Member for Barataria/San Juan.

**Mr. Hosein:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Minister, there is just one clarification I want to seek online Item 01 Coast Guard and line Item 23. One is Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance; the other one is Salaries, Direct Charges. Now, this is the only division of national security I am seeing this discrepancy with the salaries. Can you just explain the reason for having them under two separate line Items?

**Hon. Young:** Okay, under the legislation, there are certain departments that are direct charges and there are certain other ones that need to be provided, as you see at 01 throughout, so the Coast Guard falls under direct charges, as per the legislation.

**Mr. Hosein:** And what is the current manpower at the Coast Guard?

**Hon. Young:** All right, this is under—it is broken down so the number of office posts for officers, 167; the number of posts filled of officers, 118; so the number of vacant posts of officers, 49; the number of other ranks, 1,599; the number of posts filled in other ranks, 1,502 meaning a vacant post in other ranks of 97.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Naparima.

**Mr. Charles:** Thank you, Item 01. And in 2019, it was 321 million and subsequently revised 234 and the estimate 234. Today—excuse me?

**Hon. Young:** \$21,721.

**Mr. Charles:** Or, okay.

**Hon. Young:** So as I just explained to the Member for Barataria/San Juan, this is one of those divisions that falls under the legislation that is a direct charge.

**Mr. Charles:** Okay.

**Hon. Young:** So that would have been the civilians. [*Crosstalk*]

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Barataria/San Juan. One minute. I am directing the show here, so I am going to take it if when I call you, you pass it on to somebody else, means that you vacated your opportunity.

**Mr. Hosein:** I am so guided, Chair. Minister, in light of the acquisition of the two new vessels that will be in Trinidad shortly. Can you indicate whether or not there is any intention to fill some of the vacancies because, there is always a complaint that there is not enough officers, to man current assets that we currently have in

Staubles Bay. So I want to know whether or not we are going to increase the manpower, so that we could have enough officers so that we do not have the complaint that the borders are not closed due to a lack of manpower.

**10.30 a.m.**

**Hon. Young:** Okay. Madam Chair, just before I answer that, just for the purpose of clarity, in this line Item of 006, the difference between the Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance and the Salaries - Direct Charges, is the Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance is to deal with the civilian staff, as I suspected, assigned to the coast guard. With respect to the question asked by the Member for Barataria/San Juan, the answer is yes, there is going to be an increase in the recruitment. We are currently looking at the need for the increase in manpower and, if necessary, we will go to Cabinet with respect to that.

There is no complaint about a lack of manpower or an insufficient manpower with respect to the borders. As I have said, numerous times before, when you have maritime borders, it is impossible to have a full and impenetrable wall, as we see happening currently in the United Kingdom, other areas in Europe, even in the United States. So it has nothing to do with the manpower. But with respect to the two Cape-class vessels, there is going to be a recruitment to make sure that those vessels have sufficient crew for the rotation to have them out at sea.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 007: Immigration; Item 007: Probation Services; Item 009: Forensic Science Centre. Member for Barataria/San Juan.

**Mr. Hosein:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Minister, line Item 01, again, Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance. I saw that there is an increase from the actual in 2019 of 5.6 million to 7.1 million. Can you confirm whether or not we have enough staff now to run the centre at a better capacity? Because there are



several JSC reports and other complaints that the centre is not running optimum in terms of the ballistic testing. And also, does this figure cover—I will ask that question after with the forensic pathologists.

**Hon. Young:** So, there has been an increase in the number of professional staff at the Forensic Science Centre. We continue to push hard to increase those. As you know, expertise and experience, especially in the pathology side, is sometimes difficult to attract and to retain, but that increase that you see there, is as a result of some of the increases in the retaining of staff over the period of time, fortunately, and we will continue to do so.

**Mr. Hosein:** In terms of the ballistics department, can you indicate what is the staff there and whether or not there are any positions to be filled?

**Hon. Young:** The ballistics department, one of the ways we are dealing with that is we had a training course put on by the Forensic Science Centre for the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service to provide some of their officers—I think there was a complement of about 25—with the specific training for them to do the ballistics reports and test analysis, et cetera. So, that is going to be the supplement to deal with the backlog there.

**Mr. Hosein:** So, what you are saying is that there will be two sections now of ballistic testing for the Forensic Science Centre and also the TTPS?

**Hon. Young:** The TTPS always had that capability. But what we have done in the last fiscal is, we focused on the TTPS and building out, especially under SERU and a specific ballistics team for them to carry out that specialist work.

**Mr. Hosein:** And when we look at the forensic pathologists department, how many forensic pathologists do we have on staff right now?

**Hon. Young:** Unfortunately, right now, we only have two. At one stage, in the past

fiscal, I think we were up to four, but now we are back down to two and continuing the recruitment exercise and drive.

**Mr. Hosein:** And what is the stage of recruitment exercise? What stage are we at?

**Hon. Young:** That is unfortunately a rolling ball. So, we are still working with the UN, as one example. I think it is the UNDP has been working with us to try and fill those vacancies, but we have also gone out and done our own recruitment exercise. They are currently being evaluated.

**Mr. Hosein:** And did this have any adverse effects on the centre, having regard to only having two forensic pathologists and we have a lot of murders in the country?

**Hon. Young:** Obviously, it does affect the carrying out of the forensic pathology and it is an area of concern for us, and we will continue to work on it.

**Mr. Charles:** Minister, you said that there are two forensic pathologists and that at one time, there were four. What is the complement?

**Hon. Young:** Four.

**Mr. Charles:** Four?

**Hon. Young:** Yeah.

**Mr. Charles:** Have you engaged the relevant Ministry with respect to scholarships? Because this thing—

**Hon. Young:** Yes.

**Mr. Charles:**—predates your arrival.

**Hon. Young:** Correct. So you are quite right. And in 2015, I remember it vividly, we sat down as a Cabinet, and we looked at the scholarship system and, in particular, the specialist areas and forensic pathology is one of the areas that we provided for scholarships. It is not a very attractive area for some reason—I think it is a lil obvious—and people are just not rushing into that field, and if there are

nationals in that field, they are not coming home. We recently had some young people express an interest. So I think they are being evaluated. I hope they are being evaluated right now.

**Mr. Charles:** Is it a question of remuneration also?

**Hon. Young:** No, I do not think so.

**Dr. Bodoë:** Minister, just to follow up on that question. Can you provide—you may not be able to do so now—but can you provide the work schedule for the two forensic pathologists, including whether they work on weekends?

**Hon. Young:** I am not providing the work schedule of the forensic pathologists. What do you mean by that?

**Dr. Bodoë:** No, I am just trying to get an idea of, you know, whether the work is carried on seven days a week or five days a week.

**Hon. Young:** They carry on the work on an as-needed basis. I think if they have to work seven days a week, they certainly work seven days a week. And I would like to take the opportunity to thank them for it. I mean, very often, they have to come out at all hours and they do what needs to be done. I know one of the officers is quite an older person, but she just continues to do yeoman service and I would like to thank her for that.

**Dr. Bodoë:** No, that is fine, Minister. I was just trying to find out in terms of the backlog, you know, what arrangements—

**Hon. Young:** Well, there is not a current backlog, knock on wood, and let us hope it stays that way and let us hope that some young people will come forward and take up those two vacant positions.

**Dr. Bodoë:** Thank you.

**Mr. Hosein:** Thank you. Minister, back on that issue of the forensic pathologist. I

know that there is a certain number of working hours that a forensic pathologist should cover and anything in excess of that, I think it can be challengeable or it could discredit—

**Hon. Young:** I am—

**Mr. Hosein:**—whatever evidence it has.

**Hon. Young:** I am certain that the two professionals that we have will work within whatever the legal confines of what they are required to do to ensure that their evidence is admissible in a court of law.

**Mr. Hosein:** Because if you have only two forensic pathologists, and no backlog, it means that they were working overtime.

**Hon. Young:** No, it does not. There has been a decrease in murders. If you did not hear the Attorney General.

**Mr. Hosein:** I do not think so. We had six murders in one day, just last week.  
[*Crosstalk*]

**Madam Chairman:** Members, while we have five minutes for every intervention, I would like the interventions to be relevant to what we are doing. Okay? So, I think your point has been made, Member for Barataria/San Juan. Yes, Member for Barataria/San Juan.

**Mr. Hosein:** Thank you. Minister, the Forensic Science Centre, does this include the DNA custodian and the DNA bank?

**Hon. Young:** No, it does not.

**Mr. Hosein:** Thank you.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 012: Lifeguard; Item 015— Sorry, Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

**Dr. Ragbir:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon Minister, Lifeguard Service, seeing

that the beaches have been closed, what has been the responsibilities and duties of lifeguards during this tenure?

**Hon. Young:** The duties of a lifeguard do not change. Their jobs specifications would not change, whether there is COVID or no COVID. If the question you are asking is whether lifeguards were out at beaches during times when the beaches were closed, the answer is, I am certain that they were not performing their daily number of hours at the beach, but they would still be reporting to post, et cetera. In fact, I had quite a lot of conversations with those in Tobago with respect to the lifeguards in Tobago and they continue to do their jobs. But, fortunately, there is not the traffic at the beaches.

**Dr. Ragbir:** Thank you.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 015: Cadet Force. Member for Naparima.

**Mr. Charles:** Minister, you know—[*Inaudible*]

**Hon. Young:** Yes, I do.

**Mr. Charles:** You do? Right. And—

**Hon. Young:** Were you ever in the cadets?

**Mr. Charles:** No. I aspired to.

**Hon. Young:** We could arrange for it, you know.

**Mr. Charles:** I was in Cubs and Scouts.

**Hon. Young:** I would bend the rules—

**Mr. Charles:** I was in Cubs and Scouts.

**Hon. Young:**—for the first 70-year-old cadet, you know. [*Crosstalk*]

**Mr. Charles:** Now, could you indicate—Item 01, how this—I aspired to be a fireman and out water.

**Hon. Young:** A what? A fireman?

**Mr. Charles:** 01, how does this reflect the interest in crime prevention in getting our young people, males disciplined and to provide viable alternatives to a life of crime?

**Hon. Young:** The answer is the same as it has been for every single year. The cadet service is, obviously, one of the options that we would like young people in Trinidad and Tobago to join and to take active participation in—instil in them a sense of discipline, belonging and all of the positions attributed with the Cadet Force. So, it is an area that certainly, within the last two years, some emphasis has been placed on, and I think recently you had asked some questions and we had seen an increase in the number of cadet units in the various schools in the past two years, and I hope that they continue to do so.

**Mr. Charles:** Right. Could you provide, you know, figures for the number of schools, over, you say, the increase over the past two years or so?

**Hon. Young:** Yes, I am sure we could provide that.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 016: Air Guard. Sub-Head 02: Goods and Services; Item 001: General Administration. Member for Naparima.

**Mr. Charles:** Item 17, could the Minister indicate—well, it is insignificant—70,000, is that? What is training and who are the beneficiaries? Is it the administrative staff?

**Hon. Young:** [*Inaudible*]*—so, it will be the administrative staff, it could also be specialized training for pilots, mechanics, et cetera. What we have actually also been doing is the UTT has an aeronautical programme, engineering and mechanical programme, and they also do some work with the Air Guard. Again, when you see a decrease here, this is something that we will work with the Ministry of Finance on, if necessary, to vire funds or to get additional funds.*

**Madam Chairman:** Item 002: Fire Service; Item 004: Prison Service. Member for Barataria/San Juan.

**Mr. Hosein:** Thank you very much. I am at line Item 13, Prison, at page 133, Minister, Maintenance of Vehicles. Minister, I am seeing that there was a—recently, I met with the Prison Officers’ Association and they would have given me some complaints about the state of some of the vehicles at the prisons, and I am seeing that there was an allocation of \$3 million for 2020, but only \$987,000 was spent, less than a third of what was allocated. Can you give a reason why this was not spent to maintain the vehicles at the prisons?

**Hon. Young:** As you know, these figures are, as this point in time that the books were printed and it came from finance—let me just confirm what was the actual amount of expenditure. But, yes, that has been an area of concern with the prison service. It is something we have discussed and it is something that we are focused on at the Ministry to help them get in a proper maintenance arrangement for the vehicles that they have. Over the years, because of the use of alternative prison transport, they really did not pay enough attention, in my humble opinion, to the vehicles for the prison service and this is something that we are rectifying.

**Mr. Hosein:** And the service that is being offered for the maintenance of the vehicles, is it in-house or is this a contracted service?

**Hon. Young:** There is an in-house service there. So when I tour that service, the mechanical garage, it is an area that I have told them we need to place some focus and emphasis on to get back—there was once a period in time where their mechanics were able to maintain the vehicles, and I would like to get back to that position.

**Mr. Hosein:** Okay. And line Item 15, Minister, Repairs and Maintenance -

Equipment. I am also seeing that there is an allocation of 2.1 million for 2020 and \$554,000 spent. Can you indicate whether or not this line Item would include, for example, the alarm systems at the prisons?

**Hon. Young:** No, it does not. When we get to the Development Programme, you will see the specific allocations for the various security features at the prison which would include the alarm, CCTV, et cetera.

**Mr. Hosein:** What type of equipment does this line Item relate to in terms of maintenance and repairs?

**Hon. Young:** Office equipment.

**Mr. Hosein:** Office equipment?

**Hon. Young:** Yeah. So, it would not include, for example, where we procured in the last fiscal, the 250 firearms, the stab proof vests and these types of things.

**10.45 a.m.**

**Madam Chairman:** Item 005: Regiment; Item—Member for Naparima, where are you, at 005?

**Mr. Charles:** No, no, sorry. Sorry.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 006: Coast Guard. Is that is where you are, Naparima? Item 007: Immigration; Item 008—are you at Immigration?

**Mr. Charles:** Oh, yes, Immigration—sorry, are we on 006?

**Madam Chairman:** No, we are on 007, pages 136 to 137.

**Mr. Charles:** I had a question on 006.

**Madam Chairman:** And I stopped and particularly asked you and you did not, so we are at—if you want to ask on 007, that is where I am at.

**Mr. Charles:** No. Sorry.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 008: Probation Service; Item 009: Forensic Science



Centre. We are at pages 138 to 139. Member for Barataria/San Juan.

**Mr. Hosein:** I am at page 139, line Item 21: Repairs and Maintenance – Buildings. Can you just indicate currently where the Forensic Science Centre is? Is it still at—

**Hon. Young:** Still in Federation Park.

**Mr. Hosein:** Federation. And I am only seeing that there is a projected expenditure of \$60,000 after 2.1 million was allocated. It meant that there was some scope of works that was intended to be done at the centre if you had such a high allocation. Why only such a miniscule amount?

**Hon. Young:** Now, this is for repairs and maintenance, right, so the scope of works that was carried out, and it was successfully finally carried out at the Forensic Science Centre, is they were able to build out some new labs in a containerized platform and that is currently operational. So this would be for what you would expect, you know, the small maintenance and repairs of a building, fix a tile, fix part of a roof, and this type of thing. And, again, this is an allocation provided to us t by Budgets Division of the Ministry of Finance, and if there is a need be, as I suspect there will be, we would vire money to this line, and at the mid-year review we can always go back to the Ministry of Finance.

**Mr. Hosein:** Those containerized buildings, are they on the same compound?

**Hon. Young:** Yes, they are.

**Mr. Hosein:** And what is housed in those containerized buildings?

**Hon. Young:** Well, without giving away any of the national security items, we are actually—they have built out some state-of-the-art labs inside of there to help with the type of forensic work that they do. And we recently agreed to assist the Ministry of Health and allow the Ministry of Health to do some COVID testing there when there was the surge and the need for an increase in testing.

**Mr. Hosein:** Minister, the Forensic Science Centre being such an important part of the criminal justice system, do you not think it wise that we should have acquired such a permanent building instead of these containerized buildings?

**Hon. Young:** Agreed. And as you—well, you may not be aware being one of the newcomers, but one of the things that has been done is the Government of China, the People’s Republic of China have agreed a grant to Trinidad and Tobago to build a state-of-the-art forensic science centre and DNA lab. We are looking at an L-shaped, one is forensics and one is DNA. I think the land has finally been identified, and I am hoping that that work will begin in the next fiscal year. And when we get to the Development Programme we will actually see a sum of money put there for it.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Naparima, yes.

**Mr. Charles:** Item 17: Training, and I see no allocation. Given that the Forensic Science Centre, the technology is improving constantly, and when I looked at their accreditation, ANAB, they talk about constant retraining, and what not, is there a reason for—

**Hon. Young:** This training, not this line Item, is not the specific expertise type training, so this is really like for procurement procedures, leadership development, case management, records and vault management, first aid, OSHA, and this type of thing. If there is a need over the next fiscal for any training in that area, we will vire money.

**Mr. Charles:** So there has been no need last year and no need estimated for next year in those areas that you have identified?

**Hon. Young:** There was no allocation. There was no expenditure in the last fiscal in this area.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 010: Fire Service (Tobago); Item 011: Prison Service (Tobago). Member for Barataria/San Juan.

**Mr. Hosein:** Thank you very much. I am at line Item 05: Telephones. Minister, can you indicate why no allocation was made for telephones for Prison Service Tobago?

**Hon. Young:** That is the Budgets Division at the Ministry of Finance, and obviously there will continue to be a telephone service and we will need to vire money for that specific line Item.

**Mr. Hosein:** And the same applies to 06 also, the Water and Sewerage Rates, because there is no allocation there?

**Hon. Young:** Obviously, yes.

**Mr. Hosein:** I mean, that is such an important line Item it should have had an allocation.

**Madam Chairman:** That is it, Member for Barataria/San Juan? Yeah? Item 012: Lifeguard Service; Item 013: Immigration (Tobago). Member for Naparima.

**Mr. Charles:** Yes. Travelling and Subsistence at 01, given Tobago being projected as the tourism designation in our tourism strategy, no increases at all?

**Hon. Young:** Well, as you all would have heard over the past couple of days, I mean, COVID did affect the whole budgeting exercise. There would have been an obvious decrease in the number of arrivals and departures in Tobago and the need for immigration services since March of this year, so I suspect that is what affected the Budgets Division at the Ministry of Finance. Hopefully post COVID when things return hopefully to some sense of normalcy, if there is a need for an increase in immigration services, then we will vire the necessary funds.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 014: Defence Force Headquarters. Member for

Cumuto/Manzanilla.

**Dr. Ragbir:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, line Item 36: Extraordinary Expenditure, I would like to find out that the expenditure for the 2020 Estimates was 500,000, what caused it to go up to 3.7 million in the 2020 Revised Estimates?

**Hon. Young:** What line Item are you on?

**Dr. Ragbir:** 36.

**Madam Chairman:** Page 142.

**Dr. Ragbir:** 142, rent of 500,000 to 3.7 expenditure.

**Hon. Young:** HADR operations, humanitarian assistance operations where we went with 100 troops from Trinidad to Bahamas after they were hit by the hurricane and we provided service for a number of days. That is what is covered by this line Item.

**Dr. Ragbir:** Thank you, Sir.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 015: Cadet Force; Item 016—yes, Member for Naparima, 015?

**Mr. Charles:** 03: Air Guard, no allocation, no expenditure in 2020, no allocation in 2021 for Uniforms. Could the Minister tell us how many officers are there in the Air Guard—

**Hon. Young:** That is not under this line Item.

**Mr. Charles:**—and how the assets—and identify the assets which they work with.

**Madam Chairman:** Under what Item are you?

**Mr. Charles:** Item 03: Uniforms, their assets, the number of people who would make demands for uniforms, as I see no allocation.

**Hon. Young:** All right. So there are 108 positions for officers in the Trinidad and Tobago Air Guard. The number of officer posts, filled is 49. The number of posts

vacant is 59. Other ranks, 406. Posts filled of other ranks, 300. Vacant positions, other ranks, 106. As you all would be aware, as persons are aware the air guard's assets, in particular the AW139s were grounded in June 2017, if my memory serves me correctly. We have recently taken a decision at Cabinet to get one of those AW139s back operational, which I expect to happen within the next couple of weeks. The asset has been refurbished and is ready to take to the skies again. So during that period of time there was a reduction in the need for certain officers and pilots, mechanics, et cetera, and there will be a recruitment to get some of those personnel back on board.

We also have a smaller—two smaller helicopters that are currently—COVID had a setback in terms of—as you would be aware, pilots have to do sim training and to be recertified, that had slowed the process down, so that is taking place right now. We have the two fixed wing C-26 aircraft, both are operational and they continue to do their jobs, and when we get to the Development Programme you would see that there is some additional work to be done to those aircraft from a surveillance point of view, to increase the surveillance capability.

**Mr. Charles:** So for the 108 positions and the 106 other ranks, there would be no requests for uniforms for last year or next year?

**Hon. Young:** There were no requests for uniforms this year. If there is going to be a need for uniforms during this fiscal, which I suspect there will be, we will vire funds and we will seek additional funds in the mid-year review.

**Madam Chairman:** Okay. So that was Item 016: Air Guard; Item 017: Immigration Detention Centre. Member for Barataria/San Juan.

**Mr. Hosein:** Thank you. Minister, I am seeing 2020 Estimates for Short-term Employment at line Item 22, the Estimate was \$100,000, and then I see there is a

big jump to the Revised Estimates of 5.1 million. Can you explain the reason for such a large increase for fiscal 2021?

**Hon. Young:** The IDC officers, their contractual positions are normally the three-year contracts, so there would have been some periods of time where during the recruitment exercise, the evaluation process, there was the use of the short-term contracts. That is being worked on. It has been an area that we found it a little difficult to get persons willing to be IDC officers and there was this use of short-term contract employment.

**Mr. Hosein:** How many persons are currently on short-term at the IDC?

**Hon. Young:** Just give me one second. We have approximately 100 officers at the IDC currently and 70 are on short-term contracts.

**Mr. Hosein:** 70 short-term?

**Hon. Young:** Yeah.

**Mr. Hosein:** And the 30 would be on contract?

**Hon. Young:** What is that, sorry?

**Mr. Hosein:** The balance—

**Hon. Young:** The 30-odd, yeah, because I think it is actually about 105 officers there.

**Mr. Hosein:** And, Minister, is that sufficient manpower to have the centre running properly?

**Hon. Young:** Yes.

**Mr. Hosein:** There is no need for additional staff for fiscal 2021?

**Hon. Young:** What is that, sorry?

**Mr. Hosein:** There is no need for additional staff for fiscal 2021?

**Hon. Young:** No. We only have 12 persons at the IDC right now.

**Mr. Hosein:** Twelve?

**Hon. Young:** Yeah.

**Mr. Hosein:** Twelve persons at IDC. [*Crosstalk*]

**Hon. Young:** Not 12 staff members, eh, 12 persons who are contained at the IDC.

**Mr. Hosein:** Persons who are housed at the centre? Okay.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Naparima. Item 018: Volunteer Defence Force (Reserves); Sub-Head 03: Minor Equipment Purchases. We are at page 147. Item 001: General Administration; Item 002: Fire Service. Member for Naparima.

**Mr. Charles:** 01: are Vehicles here—this refers to what, not appliances, what we call appliances?

**Hon. Young:** No.

**Mr. Charles:** Okay.

**11.00 a.m.**

**Hon. Young:** You would see when we get to the developmental programme that where we are dealing with the appliances.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 004: Prison Service.

**Mr. Hosein:** Line Item 01: Vehicles. No allocation for 2021 and no money spent for 2020 after 1.4 million was allocated for that year. Can you give a reason why no vehicles were acquired for fiscal 2020?

**Hon. Young:** Let me just confirm that in fact no vehicles were required, and it was not acquired under another line Item, for example, the developmental programme, because I know we did procure or we were procuring vehicles for prisons. [*Interruption*] Exactly as I suspected. In accordance with the tender rules and procurement procedures, we did go out for procurement of vehicles for the prison services, and the tenders are currently being opened to be evaluated.

**Mr. Hosein:** How many vehicles do you all intend to acquire?

**Hon. Young:** My recollection is about three or four vehicles.

**Mr. Hosein:** For the purpose of transportation?

**Hon. Young:** For the purpose of exactly what the prison officers were discussing and talking about. Sometimes they would have a need for them to take prisoners, for example, to the nearest health centre and to do those types of exercises.

**Mr. Hosein:** Minister, line Item 04: Other Minor Equipment. What is the intention for the purchase for 2021, because I see a large allocation is being made, 3.6?

**Hon. Young:** So this would have been our response in the constant communications and conversations with the prison officers and the executive. This would be the area, for example, where we would look to get equipment for the prison services, vests, firearms and these types of things, as well as some of the equipment necessary, the minor equipment necessary for the admin side of the prisons.

**Mr. Hosein:** So this line Item you say would include the firearms and the stab vests?

**Hon. Young:** Yes.

**Mr. Hosein:** Now, I know that was one of the promises made in the 2020 budget, the additional stab vests and the 250 firearms, but I am not seeing an expenditure for 2020.

**Hon. Young:** Under the Revised Estimates—well it was expended. Okay what has happened is exactly as I suspected, what we have before us is produced by the Budgets Division and the Ministry of Finance. There is actual expenditure in that area of just under the million dollars, because what we have done is we had to pay a specific deposit for the procurement of the items.



**Mr. Hosein:** So the entire \$4 million was not spent? You said just under \$1 million?

**Hon. Young:** That is for the next round of procurement. So what we would have to do is we would have to provide the actual amount that was expended.

**Mr. Hosein:** So this 3.6 million would be really arrears for what was already procured?

**Mr. Hosein:** And additional, because what we are doing we are doing it on a rolling.

**Mr. Hosein:** For this fiscal how many additional vests and firearms you intend to procure?

**Hon. Young:** We have gone out for an additional 250 firearms, 200 stab vests. We are expecting the second round of stab vests to be delivered shortly as well as the second round of firearms to be delivered shortly, and then we will begin a third round.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 005: Regiment; Item 006: Coast Guard.

**Mr. Charles:** Item 01: Vehicles. I see no allocation in 2021 and nothing spent in 2020. Are these the vehicles that transport officers from Staubles Bay to like Cedros and the east?

**Hon. Young:** What we have done—well certainly under my tenure at the Ministry of National Security—throughout the whole public service prior there was this sort of unwritten attitude that once there was money, spend it, go and buy vehicles. We have not gone down that road. We are being very careful with the expenditure of money. So there has not been this purchase of new Prados and purchase of new vehicles every year for the various services. It is on as needs basis. They continue to utilize what they have and it has been working quite efficiently.

You would see under the Development Programme that one of the things we have done for the Defence Force is we are getting the Mechanics Division up at Cumuto properly equipped so they can maintain the vehicles that they have properly.

**Mr. Charles:** So as it stands, the Coast Guard has sufficient operational vehicles to deal with all the demands that are being placed on it throughout the country?

**Hon. Young:** They have been using the assets that they have.

**Mr. Charles:** Under Item 04: Other Minor Equipment, 2.3 million estimated in 2020, only 28,000 spent.

**Hon. Young:** This would fall under the same situation that I was just explaining to the Member for Barataria/San Juan, that these would be the figures that Budget would have gone to the printery with. That is not the correct amount of money that would have been expended. The expenditure statement as at the 30<sup>th</sup> of September, 2020, is actually just under \$500,000.

**Mr. Charles:** That is why in a previous time I was asking for an updated figure—

**Hon. Young:** Understood.

**Mr. Charles:**—because these revised figures do not reflect the present—

**Hon. Young:** I will speak to the Ministry of Finance.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 007: Immigration; Item 008: Probation Service; Item 009: Forensic Science Centre; Item 010: Fire Service Tobago; Item 012: Lifeguard Service; Item 014: Defence Force Headquarters; Item 015: Cadet Force; Item 016: Air Guard. We are at page 151. Item 017: Immigration Detention Centre.

**Mr. Hosein:** I am at line Item 01: Vehicles. How many vehicles are there currently at the IDC?

**Hon. Young:** Give me one second. We have six vehicles at the IDC.

**Mr. Hosein:** And is that sufficient for the centre at this time?

**Hon. Young:** Yes, it is sufficient. That is two per vehicle right now.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 018: Volunteer Defence Force Reserve. Sub-Head 04: Current Transfers and Subsidies. Item 001: Regional Bodies.

**Mr. Charles:** Item 05, could the Minister explain the significant drop in the Implementation Agency for Crime and Security—the Caribbean initiative body, from 13 million actual in—

**Hon. Young:** What line Item?

**Mr. Charles:** At 05.

**Hon. Young:** Item 05 under?

**Mr. Charles:** Current Transfers and Subsidies, IMPACS.

**Hon. Young:** Sorry, yes, I am with you.

**Mr. Charles:** Could the Minister explain the significant decrease in the transfers from 13.7 million in 2019 to 3.25 million? Is it reduced use of that body or?

**Hon. Young:** No, no, no. As you may be aware, IMPACS is the Caricom body, right, one of the bodies that deal with security. So this is once again an instance with the Budgets Division at the Ministry of Finance reducing the allocation, and there will need to be an increase in the allocation here, either in the mid-year review or I am certain the Ministry of Finance will give us permission to vire money from another line. We continue to make the contributions.

What I can say is in keeping with the initial statement I made about protecting taxpayers and there being less revenue in Trinidad and Tobago, we took a position as the Cabinet with respect to these regional bodies, under National Security, CDEMA, IMPACS and these bodies, to reduce the contributions going across. Because it cannot be that the Government and the people of Trinidad and

Tobago are reducing our expenditure, but these regional bodies to whom we contribute are increasing their expenditure, especially in the current climate where other Caricom countries are facing worse difficulties than we are from a revenue point of view. It is not 3 million. We have not reduced all the way down to 3 million, but there has been a 10 per cent reduction on what we had done for the fiscal 2019/2020.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Just a follow-up, Minister.

**Hon. Young:** Which one?

**Mr. Indarsingh:** In relation to 01 and 05, based on what you are saying, is there outstanding sums to these regional bodies and could you state the amount?

**Hon. Young:** I think we have cleared the contribution to CDEMA. We still have a sum outstanding for IMPACS, but of course as you know, having formerly been in the Ministry of Finance, with the end of the fiscal year and getting the releases, et cetera, we were not able to get that done in time. So IMPACS, we have about TT \$10 million that once we get the releases will be sent to them.

**Mr. Charles:** Thank you.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 004: International Bodies; Item 005: Non-Profit Institutions.

**Mr. Charles:** Vision on Mission, critical organization that deals with reducing recidivism and those things. Could the Minister explain?

**Hon. Young:** What has happened here is there is a Cabinet decision and a commitment to Vision on Mission. So you see the sum of the \$7 million, that is the Cabinet's position. So what we will do is we will work with the Budgets Division to ensure that we fulfil that. So again this was a line Item that was decreased by Budget. You would see the 1 million. We expended more than a million in 2020.

**Mr. Charles:** So you are giving us the assurance that Vision on Mission—

**Hon. Young:** Yeah. Yeah, absolutely.

**Mr. Charles:** —will receive its 7.2 million?

**Hon. Young:** What I can tell you, and I am glad I just got the confirmation, in 2020 the end of the fiscal, we gave Vision on Mission the \$7.254 million. So I can confirm that that was cleared by the end of the last fiscal, the 30<sup>th</sup> of September, and we will do the same for the next fiscal.

**Mr. Charles:** Thank you.

**Mr. Ratiram:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Can the hon. Minister advise us? There is a project at the Claxton Bay flyover that was being executed by the Vision on Mission, I believe it was a shelter for battered women. However, that shelter has temporarily been used—it is completed and it is being temporarily used to house persons with respect to the COVID situation. That is the information the community has received. Can the hon. Minister kindly advise if it is that that project will resume?

**Hon. Young:** So it is currently being used. Vision On Mission was kind enough to allow us to utilize—“us” being the prison service, to use those facilities for COVID hospital-type setting for prisoners who contracted and were positive with COVID, that is one of the facilities that we set up, and we are using for those from the prison system, the inmates from the prison system. That is the current use of it. Once we have gotten past all of this and hopefully COVID goes away or there is a vaccine, et cetera, then it will be returned to Vision on Mission, and they will utilize it for whatever they desire.

It was an unfinished set of premises and facilities. We went in and we finished it first of all to use it for deportees that were brought back sometime in

April, if I remember correctly. And then when we had some recent positive cases of prisoners with COVID, obviously we do not want to put them in Caura and in Couva, et cetera, so we converted these Claxton Bay facilities to accommodate them.

**Mr. Ratiram:** Hon. Minister, we are very happy that the facility has been made available, and it is being utilized for what you would have just explained. However, is there any alternative plan because we are uncertain how long COVID might actually exist? Is there any alternative plan for the initial purpose of that shelter?

**Hon. Young:** As I said, the shelter had been in an unfinished position for some period of time. Right now there is not a desperation or a need. We are not being told, look, there is a need for this immediately. Vision on Mission—and I would like to use the opportunity, Madam Chair, to give them credit where credit is due—they have been doing an excellent service, and will continue to have the support of this Administration and National Security for all of the jobs and duties that they perform and we will work with them. So if they come to us—and my colleague here from Tobago East is the person in the Cabinet who is driving the assistance in these various areas for these women, children and others. So we are in constant contact. If there is need for it, we will find an appropriate set of accommodations for them.

**Mr. Ratiram:** Thank you, Minister.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 007: Households.

**Mr. Charles:** Item 15: Could the Minister indicate has any moneys been disbursed in 2020?

**11.15 a.m.**

**Hon. Young:** The answer is yes.

**Mr. Charles:** And could you tell us how many?

**Hon. Young:** At least three families. So, at least \$3 million.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Barataria/San Juan.

**Mr. Hosein:** Madam, I am at 05, the MiLAT programme. I am not seeing any Estimates for 2021.

**Hon. Young:** All right. So both MiLAT and CCC were transferred from the Minister of National Security to the new Ministry, the Ministry of Youth Development and National Service.

**Mr. Hosein:** Also, the line Item 13: Criminal Injuries Compensation.

**Hon. Young:** Which one? Oh 13.

**Mr. Hosein:** 1-3. Minister, I am seeing that there is a \$2 million allocation that was made, 489 was approximately was paid off, \$489,000. Is it that that there is a delay in the processing of these claims?

**Hon. Young:** So, again, this unfortunately falls into when the book was printed. There was actual expenditure under this line Item, it was \$1.9 million.

**Mr. Hosein:** 1.9. And how many persons would have filed claims and benefited under this line Item?

**Hon. Young:** That was actually laid in the Parliament not too long ago, so if you go and find the annual report for the criminal injuries compensation, it is all contained in there.

**Mr. Hosein:** So you do not have the information on hand.

**Hon. Young:** I do not have the information on hand,

**Madam Chairman:** Item 009: Other Transfers. Member for Naparima.

**Mr. Charles:** [*Inaudible*]—Strategic Services Agency.

**Hon. Young:** “Like yuh like that body, eh?”

**Mr. Charles:** This is the only body that has gotten an increase and a significant increase. And the question is, what is so important—when we thought the cadets do not get, they get similar or a reduction but for a spy agency, 54. Could you enlighten us, as to the taxpayers, to value for money— when, for example— I am told if in Cedros, for example, there are families who have families in Tucupita, families in Cedros, and it is a taxi service. Nobody—the SSA should be telling us who are the fishermen who facilitate, who help in human trafficking, et cetera, but we hear nothing about this. So we are a little “squeezy”, concerned, that this money is badly allocated. Could you enlighten us?

**Hon. Young:** I am looking for your colleague, what is his name?—Ram. Okay. So with respect to this, this increase is actually with respect to the CCTV, the new CCTV camera system that we have spoken about, and this is state-of-the-art system that is currently being put in place, and you will see the results of that system.

With respect to all of the other commentary that you just made, the intelligence services have been doing their work, and in fact, there will be the coastal radar system picking up what we call the points of interest and contacts of interest that are going to and from. You would have seen some persons being charged over the period of time as we pick up these local, as you call them, fishermen, they are obviously not fishermen if they are engaging in illegal activity, in my humble opinion. The Strategic Services Agency is really a support body. It provides intelligence to the law enforcement authorities and has been doing quite a good job.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Naparima.



**Mr. Charles:** Could the Minister enlighten us about the Strategic Services Agency's role in crime prevention. For example, the gangs, we are told with the anti-legislation that we will see a reduction in gang activity and whatnot. And the Strategic Services Agency was pivotal in the reduction of crime due to gangs but we are not seeing it. Is it that they are working under the radar, that you alone know, that the TTPS alone knows but the society is not aware.

**Hon. Young:** If the society was aware, for example, what the MI6, the MI5, the CIA and these other agencies did on a day-to-day basis, there would be some level of outcry. The intelligence services are doing their job.

With respect to the gangs, gangs, as you—well, you obviously are not aware even though you are shadowing, gangs are very complex organizations and it takes a lot of investigative work and the conversion of intelligence into evidence to be able to prosecute them. There has actually been an uptick in the number of charges that we will be bringing to Parliament very shortly, the information related to it under the anti-legislation. I was tempted to say that some other Members in here may be able to help us with who are and who are not gang members, and who drinks where—

**Mr. Charles:** Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

**Hon. Young:**—and what bills they pay.

**Mr. Charles:** Yeah. You alone know.

**Hon. Young:** Who is it again? Oropouche. Okay.

**Madam Chairman:** Member. Member.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Is that not before the courts?

**Madam Chairman:** Are you finished, Minister?

**Hon. Young:** Yes, Ma'am, I am.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Naparima, you have—yes.

**Mr. Charles:** Years ago, when I came from university, I worked with Dr. Cuthbert Joseph and every morning we used to get and he would show me some special branch reports. There is nothing that happened in education, a meeting in a school and whatnot, that we did not know. Are we getting that kind of intelligence? Not with this kind of money.

**Hon. Young:** I am so happy that you have opened this door because those same reports that you have claimed to have seen and obviously had clearance to see, are the same reports that I brought the Committee chaired by Minister Hinds. And yes, we continue to get those reports, and I will tell you something. Some of the reports that we get are quite disturbing and see some of the names of persons who sit opposite me in those reports, as I have reported to the Parliament before. So, yes, we continue to get those reports.

**Mr. Charles:** Anybody on your side? [*Crosstalk*]

**Madam Chairman:** Okay.

**Hon. Young:** Let “meh” go and get my briefcase there.

**Madam Chairman:** One minute, please. Member for Naparima, are you finished?

**Mr. Charles:** Yes, I am.

**Madam Chairman:** I believe the Attorney General wanted to make an intervention to support—[*Inaudible*]

**Mr. Al-Rawi:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I just would like to amplify something that my colleague, the Minister of National Security has put in answer to the Member of Naparima. It is dangerous for this society to walk away with the point of view that the Anti-Gang Act is not working. The hon. Member for Naparima said that there is no evidence. When, Madam Chair, in the newspapers reported for

the entire public to see, is the uptick in gang arrests, in gang leaders, et cetera, and that legislation has been performing. So, to trivialize the work of the SSA, in particular in that regard, is a very dangerous thing for the psyche of this country, and I just had to put it on record because in the public domain, the uptick in gang charges is there for all to see. And for an hon. Member of this House to trivialize that work is to therefore pour scorn upon the entire national security services and the hard work that has gone in to protecting the people of this country. So I just wanted to put that on record.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Couva North. Member for Naparima, I will recognize you just now. You are down on the list. Member for Couva North.

**Mr. Ratiram:** I will give way for the Member for Naparima.

**Madam Chairman:** That means you are no longer interested in asking a question. Does that mean that?

**Mr. Ratiram:** On another Item.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Oropouche East.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, just to ask a specific question to the Minister. Minister, before you comfortably put on your political hat, you were saying before that the increase in \$54 million for the SSA had to do with the provision of the CCTV camera, yet when we look at the book that the Minister of Finance kindly provided us with, it says here, that this has to do with the provision for the National Operations Centre and National Security Training Academy. Now, is the CCTV camera captured here for this \$54 million or is some extension because I do not think you call it National Operations Centre anymore? You are referring to National Operations Fusion Centre, I think, is the new term. What else has to be done there? What is the increase in works at the

fusion centre that requires this and at the security training academy that requires this? And it could not be that this is for CCTV cameras.

**Hon. Young:** All right.

**Dr. Moonilal:** I have another question.

**Hon. Young:** So this is only line Item under recurrent for the SSA. All right? So the full sum of money that you see there, \$215 million, is for the running of the whole of the SSA. The National Operations Fusion Centre, which is here as the National Operations Centre is under the jurisdiction of SSA, so that is why this explanation is there, as is the NST which is—NSTA which is the training academy for law enforcement that is operational. So all of that is included in the 250 million, in addition to the day-to-day running of SSA. You would see an increase of \$54 million here to last year, part of that is towards the new CCTV system.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Could I ask, Minister, bearing in mind in January this year, you went on record to say that the contract for the new CCTV cameras was going to be completed that week you spoke. Are we closer today to completing that arrangement and having a full-time provider?

**Hon. Young:** Thank you very much for this opportunity because I did hear your reference in the budget debate last week, if I remember correctly to this, and there was a little bit of incorrect information provided by you in the budget debate. So, yes, the contract for the new CCTV entity was signed when I said it was to be signed, so that was executed earlier this year in January or February. So that has been executed, the provider is in the process of doing what needs to be done towards the implementation and operationalization of this new CCTV system. That is completely separate to the issue and the muddied waters of what existed previously with the TSTT provider. The TSTT provider, we paid them \$200

million just before the end of the closure of this fiscal and the Government's position is, that is the sum of money that will cover the cost from 2017 to date where we say it was on a month-to-month contract, and the previous arrangements were way, way astronomical and inflated and not accepted by this administration. And what continues to happen now is we are in the process of negotiating a month-to-month of about \$4 million, as opposed to the 20-plus odd million a year— a month, previously, for the service to be provided until the new CCTV system comes on board.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Minister, you were very clear to speak about the TSTT as the former provider. Could you indicate the new provider that has signed on? The identity of the new provider?

**Hon. Young:** It is a foreign provider and it is a joint venture, Johnson Controls.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Johnson?

**Hon. Young:** Controls. Now, they are providing the equipment. Right? They will not be the operators. At one point in time that is what TSTT was doing.

**Dr. Moonilal:** So TSTT was providing both equipment and operation. They are providing equipment alone?

**Hon. Young:** They are providing equipment and there will be a maintenance component of it, but—

**Dr. Moonilal:** Could I ask who—which entity would be the operating entity for this new CCTV camera arrangement?

**Hon. Young:** This CCTV camera arrangement will be utilized by the National Operations Fusion Centre and the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Are you saying that the NOC and/or the TTPS would be the operating arm for the CCTV camera system?

**Hon. Young:** As they—

**Dr. Moonilal:** As the technical operating arm?

**Hon. Young:** As they currently are.

**Dr. Moonilal:** No.

**Hon. Young:** No?

**Dr. Moonilal:** Minister, just to be clear. TSTT before, provided both equipment and operation. **Hon. Young:** TSTT was providing the—

**Dr. Moonilal:** You are saying the joint venture—

**Hon. Young:** TSTT—

**Dr. Moonilal:**—Johnson Controls is providing the equipment.

**Hon. Young:** TSTT—

**Dr. Moonilal:** Who is operating?

**Hon. Young:** TSTT was providing the service, let us put it that way.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Sure.

**Hon. Young:** All right? They were not in charge of the operational side of it, certainly not under us anyway.

**Dr. Moonilal:** And who will replace TSTT? The NOC?

**Hon. Young:** I just told you who will replace TSTT. It would be this new system provided by Johnson.

**Dr. Moonilal:** That is the equipment. Who will conduct the operation? The NOC?

**Hon. Young:** I just said that TSTT did not conduct the operations under this administration. I do not know what happened under the previous administration.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Listen, I do not want to continue here all morning. If Johnson Controls is providing the equipment, that is fine. Which arm of national security will provide the service, the transmission?

**Hon. Young:** It will be—the service is being put in place by Johnson, it will be maintained by Johnson and there is the SSA and the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service will be in charge of the operations and the use of the CCTV camera system.

**Dr. Moonilal:** I leave it there.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Naparima.

**Mr. Charles:** Item 19: Information and Communication Technology Unit, a \$4 million increase. What is the function—I have a note here spying but I would not—

**Hon. Young:** So, this is the unit that is necessary because what we are going to be building out is a cybersecurity platform for the Government, so this is the unit at national security that will be charged with that responsibility. As you know, we are moving towards further— and digitization of the whole government services, so you must have someone providing the security to deal with hacking and those types of things, and this is the body that is going to do it. It is also going to have firewalls, renewal of software licences, maintenance of generators, et cetera, is also provided under this, upgrade of servers, et cetera.

**Mr. Charles:** Item 27: Migrant Registration Framework, and I see nothing estimated for 2021. What is the plan for the—is it renew it automatically, annually, until the Venezuelan situation resolves itself?

**Hon. Young:** So it would be premature for me to say anything beyond the 31<sup>st</sup> of December, 2020. But as we have already demonstrated, this line Item was to cover the cost of migration registration programme that took place in March and April, or May of last year 2019, and that was whole cost associated. There is no more of that type of capital expenditure cost associated with it. So, right now, what it is, is a

renewal process and Cabinet will take a decision as to what happens beyond the 31<sup>st</sup> of December, 2020.

And I can say that I suspect what we will do is we will roll it. How long, I cannot say that at this stage.

**11.30 a.m.**

**Mr. Charles:** And lastly, indicate to the Attorney General that there is a difference between arrest and conviction with respect to gangs. Thank you.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Barataria/San Juan.

**Mr. Hosein:** Thank you. Madam Chair, I just want to go back to line Item 02, SSA. Minister, you indicated part of the increase of the \$54 million will be allocated towards the CCTV cameras. Can you just tell us how many cameras you are expected to—

**Hon. Young:** No.

**Mr. Hosein:** Why can you not give that information?

**Hon. Young:** Because we would not want to provide that information at this stage, because then that is a National Security Item.

**Mr. Hosein:** But Minister, you came to this very House and indicated how many cameras TSTT provided.

**Madam Chairman:** Any other question, Member for Barataria/San Juan?

**Mr. Hosein:** Can you give us the cost of the contract, the value of the contract awarded to Johnson for the provision of the cameras?

**Hon. Young:** \$80 million compared to \$380 million, which is the quote of TSTT.

**Mr. Hosein:** And can you give us the cost of the maintenance?

**Hon. Young:** No.

**Mr. Hosein:** You cannot give us the cost of the maintenance?



**Hon. Young:** The maintenance is included in the \$80 million.

**Mr. Hosein:** And how long is the maintenance contract for?

**Hon. Young:** Three years.

**Mr. Hosein:** I am on line Item 24, National Crime Prevention Programme. I saw \$1.9 million was spent in 2020 and a further \$3 million allocated for 2021. What are the achievements of this programme, the NCPP? Because it did not have an actual amount.

**Hon. Young:** The actual amount of money spent was 1.9 million. That is what is here. What, what, the achievements?

**Madam Chairman:** The achievements.

**Hon. Young:** This was a programme that was really been handled by the then Parliamentary Secretary in the Ministry of National Security, Mrs. Glenda Jennings-Smith. What they did, as other parliamentarians may know, they had roving caravans going throughout Trinidad and Tobago engaging certain communities; the young people, the older people, to get an idea of what was taking place, to have certain programmes in place that should lead to a reduction of crime in communities, to build out those types of programmes.

**Mr. Hosein:** But it did not contribute to any significant reduction in crime.

**Hon. Young:** Yes.

**Mr. Hosein:** And we are allocating \$3 million again.

**Hon. Young:** Yes. Compared to the 400 million for LifeSport and the Hoops of Life.

**Mr. Hosein:** I am at line Item 28, Electronic Monitoring Unit. Minister, I know that the regulations are before [*Interruption*] the House in terms of the Electronic Monitoring—no, can you indicate whether or not, can you indicate firstly, what is

the staff component at this unit, and will it be housed at the Ministry of National Security?

**Hon. Young:** So all of that was provided in the budget debate not too long ago. Yes, it is a part of the Ministry of National Security. There is a director, deputy director, staff members, monitoring persons, investigators. All of that was provided in the debate when we were debating the legislation, the amendments to the legislation to operationalize this.

**Mr. Hosein:** And with this allocation of \$200,000, would it be sufficient in order to have the unit up and running for this fiscal year?

**Hon. Young:** Once again, this is the Budget Division in the Ministry of Finance that allocated this. We will need to vire further funds here, or seek an increase in the mid-year review.

**Mr. Hosein:** And, back on SSA, when the Minister speaks of intelligence—

**Hon. Young:** Back where?

**Mr. Hosein:** SSA, when the Ministry speaks of Special Branch reports and all of these—

**Hon. Young:** Special Branch is not part of the SSA, Special Branch is part of the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service.

**Mr. Hosein:** I think the Minister should look at home first before he looks at other Members of this Chamber.

**Hon. Young:** What was that? What he said?

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Couva North.

**Mr. Ratiram:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, I heard the hon. Minister—I am speaking on Item 02, Strategic Services Agency, and I heard the hon. Minister explain that a foreign entity, Johnson, would be providing the

equipment, and the operations will be maintained by the local agency, National Security agency. However, it does not seem to totally add up, the integrated solution required to execute this service, because other than Johnson providing the equipment there is an ISP that needs to be identified, there is a transport backbone that needs to integrate into the service, and there is a lot of additional support service that would be required for the execution of this solution CCTV solution. Can the hon. Minister advise who would be the ISP? Who would be providing the transport backbone for this solution? And if there is any other local support service provider for the execution of this CCTV system?

**Hon. Young:** My friend seems to be quite concerned about this new CCTV system. I am now beginning to understand where the 300 million may have gone. So, Johnson is providing the equipment. Johnson are the ones who manufacture and know the equipment, et cetera, unlike TSTT. As far as I am aware, TSTT does not manufacture, so TSTT really was a middleman bringing this together. There will be a backbone service provider, obviously. With the necessary ISPs, with the necessary servers, all of that is in place at the NOFC, and in other areas, and this year they seem to be quite—so it is going to be fully operational. There is no concern about it not working. And when I say it will be used by the SSA and the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service.

**Mr. Ratiram:** The hon. Minister still did not identify who would be providing the transport backbone support. Will it still be TSTT doing that, or another company? You see for this solution to operate, it is not a piecemeal solution, it is an integrated CCTV that is supposed to provide the support for all the citizens of our country. So by looking at cameras being out there without a comprehensive integrated solution being put in place, I think what the hon. Minister—MP for

Oropouche was asking for, was who, if there are other support service providers that is included in the execution of this operation?

**Hon. Young:** So, Madam Chair, under this line Item, the money is going to be provided. It has been provided for a fully integrated new state-of-the-art CCTV camera system at hundreds of millions of dollars of savings to the taxpayers. It will work, and it will work well. And I do not know why there is such a level of nervousness with respect to it.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Oropouche East, you had another question.

**Mr. Ratiram:** So do I take that—Madam Chair, do I take that that there is no other support service provider for this solution?

**Hon. Young:** That is as much information as I am providing.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Oropouche East, nothing? Member for Chaguanas West.

**Mr. Rambally:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, just by way of clarification with line Item 27, you reminded me that—or us, about the exercise that took place in 2019, March and April. Would it be correct to say that the 2019 actual figures that are cited here covers what took place in that registration process, March and April last year?

**Hon. Young:** Madam Chair, I understand that my friend is new, but the fiscal year—this is for the last fiscal year, so this would have been September 2019 to—1<sup>st</sup> of October, 2019 to 30 September, 2020. The registration process took place in May of 2019, which was a different fiscal, and the fiscal before the one here in this book. So this would have been carried over cost and not the full cost. At the time when the registration process was carried out we gave the cost down to the cent, we particularized and itemized every single component of that cost with a usual

level of transparency.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Chaguanas West.

**Mr. Rambally:** Yes. Thank you, Minister, and that was the point I was going to get at, if it was carried over. The next question I would like to ask you, hon. Minister, is that the 2020 Revised Estimates, could you tell us what this 479, I know it is Estimate, what this would then cover? The same line Item.

**Hon. Young:** Again, I understand that my friend is new, but what this is, is Revised Estimates. So you will see under 2021 there is nothing for the next fiscal. If you go to the far column on the right it shows a decrease of 479. What that is reflective of is exactly as I just said, in the last fiscal which would have been from the 1<sup>st</sup> of October, 2019, to the 30<sup>th</sup> of September, 2020, that is the sum of money that was expended, which would have been payment of the remaining cost associated with the programme. So, in this fiscal there is no carry over cost.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Chaguanas West.

**Mr. Rambally:** Yes. Minister, thank you for that clarity there. So the 2020 Revised Estimate, for my, you know, on an account of my clarity, you are saying that this 479 really is representing something that was carried over from the last fiscal year?

**Hon. Young:** Correct.

**Mr. Rambally:** Thank you.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Couva North.

**Mr. Ratiram:** Than you, Madam Chair. I am on Item 06, National Drug Council. Madam Chair, what we would have seen over a period time is a lot of youths, young persons, getting involved in drugs and drug abuse and so forth. We see that happening in the social media, and a lot of them might come from homes that they

do not have the correct supervision, parenting and so forth. However, what I see in 2020 is an estimated figure of \$1 million whereas the Revised Estimate for 2020 was only 67,000. Can the hon. Minister kindly explain what would have caused this significant reduction?

**Hon. Young:** The amount of money that was expended—well, we do not have the amount that—the amount that was expended for the end of fiscal 30 September, 2020, was 118,137. This National Drug Council really is like a board, it then works with the other arms that would be involved in the type of programmes that you would expect to combat exactly what you have identified. So they are not the ones charged with the responsibility of implementing those programmes, et cetera. So they would be the ones collating the information, driving the Government's policy really at a kind of board level.

**Mr. Ratiram:** All right, with the close of the financial year of 187,000, as the Minister would have indicated, there would have been some plans for the 1 million estimated that may not have been implemented in the year 2020. Does the hon. Minister think that the allocation for 2021 would be sufficient for the National Drug Council to execute these plans?

**Hon. Young:** Again, under this—I am also being told that what happened in this fiscal, leading to that \$118,000 expenditure, is due to COVID-19, a lot of their activities decreased. All right? So the answer is with respect to the question you just asked, would the \$500,000 be sufficient? If it is not sufficient we would either seek to vire money or seek more additional funds in the mid-year review.

**Mr. Ratiram:** Thank you very much, Minister.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Couva South.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Thanks, Madam Chair. Chair, 16, Transit Police Unit. In 2020

Estimates there was an allocation of \$10,750,000, and in the Revised Estimates, approximately only \$5,198,690 was spent, and we see in the 2021 Estimates an increase of \$2,551,310. Could you account for this?

**Hon. Young:** What we are looking to do in collaboration with the Ministry of Works and Transport, the Minister he had a new—the Ministry of Works and Transport had a new programme. They released, I think, it is the U-Turn programme, so we are going to increase the number of transit police. So that is what you are seeing the increase here for.

**11.45 a.m.**

**Mr. Indarsingh:** And approximately in terms of numbers.

**Hon. Young:** What I could tell you is that they have 132 posts currently and only 49 were filled. So the 83 vacancies, that is where we are going to be looking to increase it.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Okay.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 011: Transfers to State Enterprises. Hon. Members, we shall now go on to the *Draft Estimates of Development Programme*, new book, we are at page 51. Sub-Head 09: Development Programme Consolidated Fund, Item 004: Social Infrastructure. Hon. Members, Item 004 spans five pages, therefore I will also announce the project groups. A: Coast Guard. Member for Barataria/San Juan.

**Mr. Hosein:** I am on line Item 044: Purchase of Specialized Equipment for the Coast Guard. I am seeing an allocation of \$5 million was made in 2020 and no money was spent for that year. Can the Minister indicate why no money was spent and what specialized equipment they were intended to procure for fiscal 2020?

**Hon. Young:** I cannot tell you what the specialized equipment was for obvious

reasons. I suspect what happened here is the procurement process, because the equipment would not be manufactured in Trinidad and Tobago and we also had a disruption of supply of equipment, even things like firearms, et cetera, due to COVID-19.

**Mr. Hosein:** And 048: Logistics Support for the—

**Hon. Young:** Which one?

**Mr. Hosein:** 048. Logistics Support for the Acquisition of Navel Assets. Can you just give us an indication of what this is for, what this particular line Item is for?

**Hon. Young:** This actually is an old line Item and this is with respect to the Damen vessels so it would have been the maintenance and logistics for the support of the Damen vessels.

**Mr. Hosein:** And are those vessels being maintained currently?

**Hon. Young:** Are they?

**Mr. Hosein:** Being maintained currently?

**Hon. Young:** They are, again COVID-19 has affected it because the Damen shipyard that they need to go to is in Suriname or in Curaçao. Those are the two closest shipyards. So that was affected by the recent COVID-19 and not being able to get there because of what those countries were facing. But they are being maintained and we are currently in the process of looking at—because the contract is about to expire for the five-year maintenance period—of an extension and tweaking the things that we thought did not work with it.

**Mr. Hosein:** So COVID give us an extension on the maintenance contract?

**Hon. Young:** No, we are in the process now of looking at. So with certain items that were affected by COVID the answer is, yes, from a legal point of view so they could not get certain parts to us, et cetera, they are going to fulfil their contractual



obligations.

**Mr. Hosein:** Currently how many coast guard assets do we have in terms of vessels?

**Hon. Young:** We would have to provide that information but in the past I am also very—we will provide that information.

**Mr. Hosein:** And how much—you can also tell us how many are operational.

**Hon. Young:** Yes.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Caroni East.

**Mr. Seecharan:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Minister, under line Item 044: Purchase of Specialized Equipment for the Coast Guard, I am not sure it will fall under the coast guard, but has equipment been purchased for the situation of where we would have a major flood and we would need inflatables to rescue people.

**Hon. Young:** Yes.

**Mr. Seecharan:** It may be under Regiment, I am not sure.

**Hon. Young:** Yes, the answer is, yes, and we also got some of it donated. And the coast guard do it, the fire services do it and ODPM also has some of the assets.

**Dr. Seecharan:** Do you have an idea of how many inflatables were purchased?

**Hon. Young:** No. As I say the vast majority that we got in the last fiscal would have been donated.

**Dr. Seecharan:** Thank you.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Couva North.

**Mr. Ratiram:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I am going back to Item 014: Vehicle and Equipment for the Coast Guard. Can the hon. Minister kindly advise if this included the refurbishment of the interceptor vessels? I recognize that the Minister did in fact [*Inaudible*] on two of the interceptor vessels that were

delivered to Charlotteville in 2019 and we commend the Minister for that. However, he did give a commitment that the additional 12 interceptors were being refurbished and if the Minister could identify if—

**Hon. Young:** The answer is, no. As we go through the Development Programme you will see a specific line Item that talks about refurbishment of interceptors.

**Mr. Ratiram:** Thank you.

**Madam Chairman:** B: Regiment; C: Air Guard. Member for Chaguanas West.

**Mr. Rambally:** Madam Chair, have we gone pass B? I would like ask a question under B, please, Regiment.

**Madam Chairman:** We are at C: Air Guard.

**Mr. Rambally:** Sorry, Madam Chair, I wanted to go at B.

**Madam Chairman:** E: Defence Force Reserves; C: Prison Service, we are at page 54; E: Immigration—

**Mr. Hosein:** You are at page 54, C?

**Madam Chairman:** C: Prison Service, page 54.

**Mr. Hosein:** Yes.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Barataria/San Juan.

**Mr. Hosein:** Line Item 008: Improvement Works to Prison Buildings. Minister, I saw that a \$3.8 million allocation was made for 2020, \$106,000 alone was spent. What works were done and what works are left to be completed?

**Hon. Young:** Those projects that were being pursued was the construction of a ration room at Golden Grove Prisons, the installation of the alarm system at the Golden Grove Prisons which were—the alarm was completed and we have had challenges with the contractor with respect to the ration room, completing the ration room works.

**Mr. Hosein:** Were there any issues with respect to alarm systems at the MSP that needs to be repaired and that were not repaired?

**Hon. Young:** You would see that there is a different line Item dealing with the alarm system at MSP.

**Mr. Hosein:** And also, I am also at 012: Purchase of Vehicles and Equipment. Would this be the same answer that you gave earlier on in terms of, I think it was four vehicles you indicated or this is for separate vehicles?

**Hon. Young:** Under this one what we are looking here at pursuing is the acquisition of vehicles for the mass transport of personnel. So they had requested some of the multi-seater buses.

**Mr. Hosein:** So these are for buses. How many buses?

**Hon. Young:** What we would call small maxis I guess.

**Mr. Hosein:** How many?

**Hon. Young:** The exercise is currently ongoing. I suspect this is at least two.

**Mr. Hosein:** Two buses. And 032: Programme for the Rehabilitation of Young Offenders. Minister, no money has been spent on this programme for the 2020. What is the reason?

**Hon. Young:** So the prisons service is currently engaged in developing the scope of works and the brief for this project and we are hoping to complete it during this fiscal.

**Mr. Hosein:** I am looking at 014 now, Maximum Security Prison Complex. Is this where the alarm system for MSP will—

**Hon. Young:** Yeah, yeah.

**Mr. Hosein:** What is the status of the alarms, is it that the repairs have been completed.

**Hon. Young:** They are 90 per cent completed.

**Mr. Hosein:** Ninety per cent.

**Hon. Young:** The COVID, the personnel—okay, I am actually seeing here—just give me one second, let me just clarify. Sorry, I was mixing up with the MSP CCTV system. So the alarm system is currently before the Central Tenders Board awaiting the award. So they have gone through the procurement process. Sorry, I was mixing it up with the CCTV system.

**Mr. Hosein:** And I am seeing CCTV at 36 and 37.

**Hon. Young:** Yeah, those are two different—that is the YTC and the Port of Spain.

**Mr. Hosein:** All of these cameras would be maintained by the prison service.

**Hon. Young:** What is that?

**Mr. Hosein:** The CCTV cameras will be operationalized and maintained by the prison service or is there external contractor?

**Hon. Young:** External contractor doing what?

**Mr. Hosein:** Maintaining, providing services—

**Hon. Young:** These pieces of equipment will always be maintained by external providers. The control of it will be with the prison service and they may feed into other areas as well.

**Mr. Hosein:** Is Johnson the same company that will be providing the service here?

**Hon. Young:** No.

**Mr. Hosein:** No.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Naparima.

**Mr. Charles:** Item 025: Refurbishment of Buildings at the YTC, and 5 million was estimated in 2020 but this document, nothing was spent and 300 allocated in 2021.

Could the Minister tell us what was contemplated in that 5 million that was not done and what is anticipated by the 300,000?

**Hon. Young:** So in fiscal 2020 the project was re-prioritized and funding was reallocated. It is planned to progress this project in this fiscal 2021. The prison service is currently engaged in developing the scope of works and the brief for this project. And we are expected to start during this fiscal.

**Mr. Charles:** Item 032: Programme for Rehabilitation Young Offenders—million, nothing spent again and 200,000. What does this do?

**Hon. Young:** Similar to the last one they deferred it in 2020 and right now the prison service is working on the scope and what it is that they would like to do and they will bring it to us shortly. What we had asked is for money to be allocated so we could at least start the programme.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Couva North.

**Mr. Ratiram:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Same Item 032: Programme for Rehabilitation Young Offenders. This is actually a project that was placed in the development book here from since 2019. When these projects are actually accepted by the Ministry of Finance there would be a project scope that would identify the project itself. Can the Minister explain what that project scope would have been for the commencement of the project in 2019 and also the Minister said that they are in the process of completing the scope of works and is hoping to complete it during this fiscal term? Is it that the scope of works for this project is going to be completed in this fiscal or the project itself will be completed at the end of this fiscal term?

**Hon. Young:** So these projects and programmes are not completed in a fiscal. I mean, it would be the start of the project. The prisons are the ones they asked to

reprioritize it. Very often in these instances persons will have, not changes of heart, but there may be other things that come up and they say let us try something different or let us look at it from a different angle. That is what happened here so right now we are waiting for the prisons to come back to us with a programme for the rehabilitation of young offenders.

**Mr. Ratiram:** Can the Minister kindly explain what was the initial scope for this project in putting it here into the book and the original start date when this project actually started, and when is the anticipated completion date for the project?

**Hon. Young:** So the project scope would have been to rehabilitate young offenders. I am not sure when it started and they are hoping to at least get it going in the next fiscal.

**Mr. Ratiram:** Is there an anticipated completion date for this project?

**Hon. Young:** I do not think you could have a completion date. It is going to be an ongoing project, because unfortunately we are always going to have young offenders. So it is to get the programme going and then it will be an annual thereafter. Once the programme reaches that stage we will take it off the Development Programme, put it into Recurrent.

**Mr. Ratiram:** Well, that is what I am asking, when do we anticipate based on the project proposal itself. Is it a three-year programme that we would like to implement and after it will move across to the operating revenue?

**Hon. Young:** As I have been saying for the third time now, I am waiting on the prison service to develop the scope. I am certain once they develop the scope it will answer all of those questions. They have not done so as yet. So it would be premature for me I say anything further on it. I do not know what the prison service is going to come with.

**Mr. Ratiram:** Would the hon. Minister be kind enough to share the information upon when it is available to him?

**Hon. Young:** Let us see what they come with first.

**Mr. Ratiram:** Thank you, Minister.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Barataria/San Juan.

**Mr. Hosein:** I am back on line Item 008: Improvement Works to Prison Buildings. Minister it is a recurring problem that we heard it from various JSC reports, from court matters of the conditions of the prison. We have international obligations. There are sometimes 10 to 12 prisoners or inmates in one cell. Is there any indication or any intention of the Government to try to improve the prison facilities throughout the country?

**Hon. Young:** So the answer is, yes, and when we get to the IDF you will see the specific projects.

**Madam Chairman:** E: Immigration; F: Fire Service. Member for Naparima.

**Mr. Charles:** Item 156: Purchase of Vehicles and Equipment for the Fire Service. Any of these vehicles and any of this equipment could deal with the possibility of fires in high-rise buildings.

**Hon. Young:** That is a good question. I know you have raised that before and that is something I will have to raise with the fire service.

**12.00 noon**

**Mr. Charles:** Okay. And secondly, fires in the Northern Range area or forest reserves in the Northern Range, do they have the equipment or capability to deal with those?

**Hon. Young:** They have been dealing with it, so the answer is yes. What you would want to prevent—I mean fortunately knock on wood we have not had to

deal like with some of the instances—

**Mr. Charles:** In California.

**Hon. Young:**—we have seen in Australia, on the West Coast of the United States and even in Colorado. So what they would be is to make sure that those forest fires do not get to residential areas. Knock on wood we have not had too much of that this year, in the last fiscal, but the fire service has done yeoman service and a great job in preventing the destruction of residences.

**Mr. Charles:** And Item 178: Improvements of Fire Service Buildings.

**Hon. Young:** To?

**Mr. Charles:** 178, improvements works—

**Hon. Young:** Yeah.

**Mr. Charles:** That building in Lady Hailes Avenue, is that a fire service building? It is being refurbished—it is a building near to the Water Taxi and stuff. It used to be the old Norwegian Centre.

**Hon. Young:** Yeah, I know. I do not think that is—

**Mr. Charles:** That is not the fire service?

**Hon. Young:** No.

**Mr. Charles:** Okay.

**Madam Speaker:** Item 005: Multi-Sectoral and Other Services. Hon. Members, Item 005 spans two pages, therefore I will announce the project groups. We are at page 56. A. Administrative Services. Member for Barataria/San Juan.

**Mr. Hosein:** Thank you. Minister, I am 045 and 046. I believe the both will go hand in hand, 12 million estimated for the fingerprint identification for Immigration and the upgrade of the machine readable passports to the e-passports, 15 million. Can you indicate why this project was not started or any money spent



for 2020?

**Hon. Young:** We had decided to delay the move away from the machine readable passports to the—when we say e-passports these are the new passports with the chips in it, et cetera.

**Mr. Hosein:** Like what the European countries use?

**Hon. Young:** Correct. So it is a prioritization of spend and I mean with the difficulties we were facing in 2020, COVID, et cetera, we decided to let us take a look at it in the next fiscal.

**Mr. Hosein:** So we are not certain whether or not we will be transitioning this year?

**Hon. Young:** It will not be a full scale transition. So everybody would not be required immediately to have these e-passports. But we are looking at it and again very mindful of the revenue streams of the Government and the prioritization. If it is not necessary to be done in the next fiscal, we may not do it.

**Mr. Hosein:** And what about the automated fingerprint identification system?

**Hon. Young:** It does exist. We have access to the AFIS system and it is the continuation of it, and what we are looking at doing is moving towards the biometric side of Immigration.

**Madam Speaker:** Member for Couva South.

**Hon. Young:** We already have a system and we are looking at the expansion and capabilities of the system.

**Madam Speaker:** Okay. Member for Couva South.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Thank you, Madam Chair, and my colleague has raised some of the issues. Minister, 046: Upgrade of the Machine Readable Passport to e-passport, and so and so. What does this entail in terms of the waiting time for an individual

now when he or she applies for a passport or a renewal and so on?

**Hon. Young:** Well, it does not entail anything. I mean right now we have not implemented the new e-passport system, but thank you for the opportunity and I would like to take the opportunity to thank Immigration for the tremendous work they have done. They have used COVID, they have upgraded their hardware, their software, and right now I am receiving messages on a daily basis that people are able to go online, get their appointments, go into Immigration, do what needs to be done. They can now go with a TTPost package and Immigration will post the new passport to them, and the turnaround time is now between four and five days for the renewal of a passport. So well done to Immigration.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** My information is contrary to that that is why I asked the question. For example, I got a WhatsApp this morning, someone has been waiting for their passport for more than three weeks now and they asked me if I could assist them in locating where their passport is having made the payments and so on. So while you may tell this meeting that, it is not redounding to the benefit of the ordinary citizen.

**Hon. Young:** You are talking about the ordinary citizens and talking about people like Jack, and Ish, and those kind of guys. Right? So if you have the name for us you could provide it. Immigration is here and we will see what we could do.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** I do not know anybody could wait so long for a passport. So I—

**Madam Speaker:** Okay. Your question asked—Member for Couva South.  
Member for Couva South—

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Yes, Madam Chair.

**Madam Speaker:**—can I move on please? Member for Couva North—I asked if you had anything else, but I guess not. Member for Couva North.

**Mr. Ratiram:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I would like to draw the Minister's attention to Items 011: Training of Fire Service Personnel. It was budgeted for in 2020 of 1 million, however in the Revised Estimates indicated that nothing was spent there. Can the hon. Minister kindly advise the activities that would have taken place related to this programme?

**Hon. Young:** Sorry, 011, the Computerization and the Forensic Science Centre? What are you referring—

**Mr. Ratiram:** 011: Training of Fire Service Personnel.

**Madam Speaker:** 011—11.

**Hon. Young:** Sorry. Okay. So again what this is, is that to get promoted into the executive side of the fire services you have to go abroad. Unfortunately that is what the regulations stipulate to the United Kingdom to a specific course. So Cabinet had approved that and then COVID came along and we took a decision that there would be no travel. Well, we took that decision in March of any public servants, et cetera. So that kind of put that on ice.

**Mr. Ratiram:** Okay. This was actual 2 million in 2019 and since no activity took place for this year, we will have this year plus—well last year and this year now so we will have two years. Will the 1 million be sufficient to facilitate the backlog of training?

**Hon. Young:** Again, we took—it would have been budgets, not budgets sorry. It would have been in consultation with the Ministry of Planning and Development and we said, “Look, let us just put some money there. No one knows what is going to happen with COVID and when things will ease up, and when they may get back to normal.” As you may know right now the United Kingdom is a hot bed. They have actually been rolling back, they have actually been taking their levels of

response up and the tiered response you have the Prime Minister fighting with Manchester and all these types of things. So we are just taking it one day at a time. Let us see when we reach there.

**Mr. Ratiram:** Thank you, Minister. I would like to draw the Minister's attention to Item 032: Citizen Security Programme. This was Actual 4.6 million in 2019, however for this fiscal term nothing has been budgeted towards that programme, the Citizen Security Programme. Can the Minister advise—?

**Hon. Young:** Yes. If you look down to Item 061 you will see a programme CURE Violence. So we have discontinued the CSP, Citizen Security Programme, and we have put in place a new modern response which is called CURE Violence and that is where you will find it.

**Mr. Ratiram:** Can the Minister tell us a little more about what this CURE Violence programme would be?

**Hon. Young:** CURE Violence is a system that has worked in places like Chicago, New York, and it is a response to gang activity and gang-related activity, and it is multifaceted and it will be focused in certain, I do not like using the term, but hot spot areas and worked with the community, doing mediation as well on the ground, and these types of activities.

**Mr. Ratiram:** So with the budgeted figure of 7 million we should expect to see a reduction over the next year with respect to the activities identified by the Minister, right?

**Hon. Young:** Well because of COVID but we still had certain interveners on the ground, but keeping within the health protocols with respect to COVID.

**Mr. Ratiram:** And with respect to these programmes in the communities I know the police youth clubs have been doing a lot of activity with the Minister and so

forth related to assisting in these communities, would this 7 million for CURE Violence programme be also available to assist places like police youth club or is it funded elsewhere?

**Hon. Young:** CURE Programme is a specific programme at the Ministry of National Security that deals with detection, interruption of potentially violence situations. The police youth clubs falls under the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service. I mean, it is something we fully support, but it is a completely separate set of programmes.

**Mr. Ratiram:** Thank you, hon Minister. Item 040: Training of Air Guard Personnel. It was budgeted for that training also for 1 million and well nothing was actually placed there for this year. Can the Minister advise?

**Hon. Young:** We will be looking to do it under recurrent. You would have remembered we were talking about training under recurrent when we looked at the air guard. So if there needs to be a virement of additional funds, we will speak to Ministry of Finance.

**Mr. Ratiram:** Thank you, hon Minister.

**Hon. Young:** Thanks.

**Madam Speaker:** Member for Barataria/San Juan.

**Mr. Hosein:** Line Item 006: Establishment of an Electronic Monitoring Programme for Trinidad and Tobago. Minister, can you confirm whether or not this year we will see the rollout of the electronic monitoring programme?

**Hon. Young:** Judiciary. We are ready, everything is in place. We have the 300-plus bracelets, the monitoring systems, the persons trained. The whole infrastructure exists. As you would recall, we recently laid the regulations as well and it is now for the Judiciary to start making the necessary orders and we are

ready to do our part.

**Mr. Hosein:** Minister, can you indicate to us who is the service provider for the bracelets?

**Hon. Young:** Again, we had gone through that in the debate, et cetera. The service provider who provided it was a joint venture between Amalgamated and an Israeli company. I cannot remember the name right now, but all of that had been provided in the debate.

**Mr. Hosein:** Amalgamated as in the same company that provides prison transport?

**Hon. Young:** Correct.

**Mr. Hosein:** And do they have any experience with respect to electronic monitoring.

**Hon. Young:** I said it was a joint venture with an Israeli company. The Israeli company is the one that brought all of the experience.

**Mr. Hosein:** And what is the cost of this contract, Minister?

**Hon. Young:** I had gone through all of that in the budget debate. From what I could recall it was around \$10 million, part of that includes the continued maintenance of the various hardware, software systems for a period of three or five years.

**Mr. Hosein:** Three years or five years?

**Hon. Young:** Three years. They would have included all of the setup of the hardware, et cetera, training, et cetera.

**Mr. Hosein:** And they are currently being paid as we speak?

**Hon. Young:** Yes, the staff that we have employed.

**Mr. Hosein:** Without the Judiciary making any orders?

**Madam Speaker:** Member for Couva South.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Just going back to this 046 Minister, Upgrade Machine Readable Passport. As it relates to—and I am not trying to blame. I am trying to assist people who may be having problems in the context of COVID and what. For example, the person's application ID 20545053 made a payment on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of the sixth month, 2020, and that person is having difficulty in relation to locating the availability of the passport.

**Hon. Young:** My information is that the person should go to the passport office and collect the passport. As we said over that period of time 49,000 passports were produced. So hopefully that person with the identification number you have just provided, his passport is included in that, and that person, he or she, should go to the passport office and collect his or her passport.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** I hear you and it is a communication issue because, as I said, I do not know if it is the rotation of staff. I really cannot say, but the individual has indicated that there are tremendous problems in getting through when they make the telephone calls and so on.

**Hon. Young:** Provide us with the individual's details offline or you could do it online if you wish and we will do what needs to be done.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Thank you.

**Madam Speaker:** Member for Barataria/San Juan.

**Mr. Hosein:** Thank you. Minister on 047: Institutional Strengthening of Immigration Division, and 050: Upgrade of Computer Hardware, Software and Maintenance for Immigration Division.

Minister, I do not know if you have visited the Henry Street office recently but there is need for that office to be properly refurbished and there is need for repairs. Can you indicate why no moneys have been allocated for 2020 having regard to

the state of that building?

**12.15 p.m.**

**Hon. Young:** Okay, that would not come under here, that would come under recurrent.

**Mr. Hosein:** It would not be a DP project in terms of—

**Hon. Young:** Well, if it is repairs and maintenance, as you are referring, it would come up the recurrent.

**Madam Chairman:** F. Public buildings; G. Equipment and Vehicles. Member for Couva North.

**Mr. Ratiram:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I would like to draw the Minister's attention to Item 011, Acquisition of Interceptors for Coast Guard. Minister, can you advise this? This is where you indicated earlier on that we will be addressing the refurbishment of the remaining 12 interceptors. Page 57.

**Hon. Young:** No, I am seeing it. I am just going to the IDF because my recollection is that it may have been under the IDF for the refurbishment. I had seen a specific line Item for refurbishment of the interceptors. This is not for the refurbishment of the interceptors. What we are going to be doing is we are going to be acquiring a couple new interceptors and this is not specific line Item is not for the refurbishment, this is for the acquisition. You will see at the end, project number 011, it is a new project, we are going out for the acquisition of new interceptors.

**Mr. Ratiram:** All right, well just a simple plea on behalf of fisherfolk from Orange Valley, Carli Bay, Brickfield, Felicity and Claxton, hon. Minister, with the acquisition of these new interceptors and the refurbishment works, we know that you would have given two out and you gave a commitment so we are hoping that



we can see some activities there to assist these fishermen with these new interceptors that you are referring to.

**Hon. Young:** Absolutely and what I ask and I will renew the plea that when fishermen are going out to fish, the legitimate fishermen, they should just touch base, they should notify persons where it is they are going. The coast guard are waiting to hear that look, we will be fishing in this area within the borders of Trinidad and Tobago and we will provide the necessary oversight.

**Mr. Ratiram:** Thank you, hon. Minister.

**Hon. Young:** Welcome.

**Mr. Ratiram:** I also want to suggest that you take into consideration the provision of GPS devices that the fisherfolk are willing to work with you with GPS devices.

**Hon. Young:** I welcome, we welcome—if you have constituents who want to operationalize GPS in their vessels, that is a conversation that we could have. We look forward to that.

**Mr. Ratiram:** We look forward to that conversation, hon. Minister. Thank you very much.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Barataria/San Juan.

**Mr. Hosein:** Ma'am, I just have one question on 011: Acquisition of Interceptors for Coast Guard. Minister, I saw this is a new project, the 011, this is for the acquisition of one interceptor?

**Hon. Young:** Madam Chair, that is the exact conversation I just had with my friend from down at the end. The identical conversation.

**Madam Chairman:** The Member wants to know the number of interceptors.

**Hon. Young:** And I said it will be at least two interceptors.

**Mr. Hosein:** The Minister is having difficulty in understanding.

**Hon. Young:** Well yes I do—

**Madam Chairman:** When we start taking out each other's eyes, we get nowhere. I recall much earlier in the conversation under another Head, the Minister said two—well prior to this, the Minister expanded and said two. So let us all be tolerant of each other and not practise an eye for an eye.

Infrastructure Development Fund, page 190. Item 004, Social Infrastructure. Hon. Members, Item 004 spans three pages, therefore I will also announce the project groups: A. Coast Guard; B. Regiment; E. Defence Force Reserves; C. Prison Services. Member for Barataria/San Juan.

**Mr. Hosein:** Minister, earlier on I asked a question regarding the upgrade of the prisons in terms of the conditions of the Remand and you said that I would have found it in the IDF. Now I am looking at these line Items and I am not seeing any specific line Item for the upgrade of the prisons having regard to the conditions of the facilities.

**Hon. Young:** So look at 008?

**Mr. Hosein:** Yeah.

**Hon. Young:** That is the work—I mean, it is put as a line Item here but that is the complete refurbishment of the Remand facilities at Golden Grove that is currently taking place.

**Mr. Hosein:** So you are confirming that the upgrade of plumbing and electrical systems at the Remand Yard will include better spatial arrangements for the officers?

**Hon. Young:** Well, as much as could be done and it is completely upgrading the Remand Yard facilities. That is taking place.

**Madam Chairman:** E. Immigration; F. Fire Services. Member for Naparima.

**Mr. Charles:** 004, construction of the San Fernando, I had asked about that earlier. As far as I know, it is not opened but I see the last expenditure is 2019. What is the status of that?

**Hon. Young:** So what has happened is what we did is we took a look at the prioritization of construction of new fire stations and this is not going to be one of them, and I heard your friend and colleague from Oropouche East quite rightly point out that that whole area now falls under the San Fernando Waterfront project.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services. Member for Couva North.

**Mr. Ratiram:** Madam Chair, this is the last part of the IDF for the Head 22, the Ministry. Right. However, I have gone through the entire IDF and I do not mean to be a pain but I am just trying to get some clarification from the hon. Minister here which indicated that the refurbishment work to the 12 interceptors, that 2018, he gave a commitment that those interceptors would be refurbished in a timely manner in 2018. I have not seen it anywhere in the IDF, so can the Minister point to me where that line Item is?

**Hon. Young:** There is a specific line Item with respect to the refurbishment of the interceptors. We will have to find it and provide it to you. What I can tell you is that when we went to refurbish the 12 interceptors, we got all of the material for it, we got the equipment. They all needed new engines, we bought all of the new engines. Unfortunately what happened with a number of them is they had not been maintained for so long and they were out of the water that when we put them into the water, the transom part of these interceptors broke and we could not repair some of them. So the maximum amount that were refurbished and useable has been done and that is why I have said, look, let us go now and buy new

interceptors because some of the others, the refurbishment could not work because the hulls could no longer take the type of pressure that they were originally designed to because they had not been in the water for so long and when you do not utilize it, a certain element of deterioration takes place.

It is under recurrent I am told so I will find the specific line Item and point it out to you.

**Mr. Ratiram:** Okay, thanks very much. Hon. Minister, if it is, you know, in going forward, you need the support from the various groups from within the constituency of Couva North, we have the Orange Valley Pirogue Association, Carli Bay Association and we have been liaising with Mr. Aboud and so forth and if you do need our support in anyway with respect to getting these things operational, we are here to provide that support.

**Hon. Young:** Thank you.

**Madam Chairman:** And, Member for Couva North, I wish to assure you as well as to every other Member in this Chamber, no one is considered a pain, even though at times, we might appear to be ruffled, no one is considered a pain. Okay?

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Head 22 ordered to stand part of Schedule.*

**Madam Chairman:** You are excused, Minister. PS, members of the various units and divisions and agencies, thank you very much.

Okay, Members, we are going on to Head 64, Trinidad and Tobago Police Service. We would have the same Minister of National Security. So while we make the change of the relevant officers, if Members wish to take a two-minute dash to stretch their legs, they are entitled to do so.

**12.30 p.m.**

[*Pause*]

Okay, we will resume now. While we do the formalities, hopefully, the other Members who are interested will join us. Member for Oropouche East could you designate somebody from your side to just see if anybody who is left, you know, is making their way back. Okay, thank you.

*Head 64:* Trinidad and Tobago Police Service, \$2,283,953,921.

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

**Hon. Young:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service is the body that is constitutionally charged with the duty and responsibility of protecting and serving the people of Trinidad and Tobago. I would like to take the opportunity as the Minister of National Security and as the line Minister for the TTPS, to thank all of the men and women in Trinidad and Tobago Police Service for the tremendous job that they have been doing, in particular, over the last 12 months going from having to deal with the end of last year, the calendar year, straight into Carnival preparations, providing the safest Carnival that we have had for decades, and including a ban on glass bottles, et cetera and then straight into COVID and their management of the law enforcement side of COVID, which has at times been very difficult.

So I use the opportunity, firstly as a citizen of Trinidad and Tobago to thank each and every member, of the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service, the Acting Commissioner here, the Commissioner who is abroad right now, and all of the men and women under their charge for what they have done and to give them the commitment that the Government will continue working along with them. And in partnership with them, in particular, in these difficult and trying times. To add to

that exactly, as I had said on the last—the commencement of the last heads, which was national security, we recognize that the Government is facing a situation with reduced revenue. And whilst there have been reductions, we will continue to work along with the Ministry of Finance to find the necessary interventions and bridge the gaps that may exist. Thank you.

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

**Madam Chairman:** Hon. Members, the sum of \$2,283,953,921 for Head 64: Trinidad and Tobago Police Service is comprised of monies proposed for expenditure under the following Sub-Heads and Items to be found in the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure* and the *Draft Estimates of Development Programme*.

We now proceed to consider the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure*. We are at page 313, Sub-Head 01: Personnel Expenditure; Item 001: Police Service. Member for Naparima.

**Mr. Charles:** Madam Chair, Item 01: \$48 million decrease. I am asking this in the context and you could enlighten me whether, this includes for municipal police as an ongoing or this is—that is somewhere else? Right. It does not.

**Hon. Young:** It does not include municipal police.

**Mr. Charles:** Neither does it include the Praedial Larceny Squad that was transferred to the TTPS?

**Hon. Young:** That was not transferred to the TTPS.

**Mr. Charles:** I think the Minister of Agriculture indicated. Okay. All right, how will this 85 million result in any decrease in the establishment any—what will be the net effect of such a significant decrease?

**Hon. Young:** What you would see when the Member refers to 85 million, that is the total decrease, right? So what you would see is the two main decreases under Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance, 48 million, and then the allowances to monthly paid officers, 48 million. So it does not decrease the current establishment, what it may affect, is it may affect arrears that are owing, for example, the SRPs, etcetera. But there have already been conversations with ourselves, the Commissioner of Police has also spoken directly to the Minister of Finance. And if there is a need for virement funds, and also the mid-year review, it will be addressed. But it is not going to decrease the current establishment.

**Mr. Charles:** And the current establishment is 7,000 or so.

**Hon. Young:** Approximately.

**Mr. Charles:** Approximately.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Oropouche East.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Madam, shall we be permitted to ask the Minister of Finance a question?

**Madam Chairman:** I think once you ask the question of the line Minister, and it is a question that the Minister of Finance can assist, it is open to the Minister of Finance or the line Minister.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Thank you. Let me pose the question because the line Minister has made it abundantly clear, for the entire morning that they will of course work with what they have and in the event of you know, need and demand, we can return to the Parliament for the mid-year review. So it is not a question specifically to the Minister of National Security, but to ask the Minister of Finance. Clearly there is a dramatic decrease in the TTPS allocation. And would the Minister of Finance tell

us what method, what policy, what approach, was used to slash so maliciously the budget of the TTPS or was it just ad-hoc, was it just by “vaps”?

**Madam Chairman:** What is that word you used there, Member?

**Dr. Moonilal:** I am looking at the decrease of 85 million.

**Madam Chairman:** I did not hear the word maliciously right?

**Dr. Moonilal:** No well—let us withdraw that.

**Madam Chairman:** “Eh?”

**Dr. Moonilal:** I will withdraw that.

**Madam Chairman:** Okay.

**Dr. Moonilal:** But could the Minister indicate what method did he approach this matter with, that the budget of the TTPS was cut in such a dramatic fashion? [*Crosstalk*] He is excited after winning that Privy Council.

**Mr. Imbert:** I am advised that the Member for Oropouche East, not for the first time, is operating on a false premise and making wild allegations that have no substance. In 2020, money was provided for arrears, and those arrears allocations are not required in 2021.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Oropouche East.

**Dr. Moonilal:** I did not hear him clearly but that is okay, let us proceed.

**Mr. Imbert:** But what I said is you are making wild allegations without substance. In 2020, under this line Item, funding was provided for arrears of payments. Those arrears of payments are not required to be funded in 2021, which is why there is a difference in the allocation. You heard me.

**Mr. Charles:** But Minister, Item 04 is allowances. It is not arrears of allowances, it is allowances are being cut, cut, cut by 48 million.



**Hon. Young:** As I indicated a short while ago, this only will affect an arrears position. So the current amount of the estimate covers all of the salaries, cost of living allowance and then further down, all of the allowances paid to monthly officers for the next fiscal. If a situation arises with respect to arrears, then it will be addressed by the Ministry of Finance.

**Mr. Imbert:** May I say, Madam Chairman, that arrears apply to all Items of personnel expenditure, whether they are salaries and wages, overtime, or allowances. They are all Items of personnel expenditure and therefore the total of 85 million was related to arrears in 2020 that are not required to be paid in 2021. Do I have to say that four times? Thank you.

**Madam Chairman:** Minister, just be patient, I think you now made it very clear to say when the arrears apply. Member for Naparima.

**Mr. Charles:** I am hearing that from the First Division and Second Division, but I would wait.

**Madam Chairman:** Sub-Head 02: Goods and Services; Item 001: Police Service Trinidad and Tobago. Member for Oropouche East.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Madam Chair, today Minister of National Security in the category here, 03: Uniforms. Now, the Government had indicated a policy position some time ago to re-outfit the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service with new uniforms, and that had certain implications in terms of security and fighting crime and so on, which I think was understood and even welcomed. There was an allocation in 2020 of 25 million for this. It was revised downward and then the estimate for 2021 is 6 million, which is more or less the same as 2020. My question is simply this, as the Government changed its mind, has the TTPS and the Government changed its mind on acquiring new

uniforms for the TTPS because the current allocation, may only satisfy purchase of uniforms for the existing cadre of officers and for new recruits, but cannot in any way, do a complete changeover for uniforms contemplated by initial Government policy a couple years ago. So what is the position with these uniforms?

**Hon. Young:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. The Member for Oropouche East is actually quite correct. This current allocation here is for the uniforms, the current uniforms that are taking place. What happened is the Cabinet has directed and it has actually been done, that an RFP went out—I mean “we should go and buy a Lotto ticket”—for uniforms and new uniforms and that was being evaluated. Once that evaluation is completed, I will go to Cabinet, I will take a Note to Cabinet to get Cabinet’s permission for us to go ahead and purchase new uniforms or begin the procurement process for new uniforms at that time, a new line Item will be included and money will be provided in the mid-year review for uniforms for the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 002, Police Service Tobago. Member for Barataria/San Juan.

**Mr. Hosein:** I had my hand up under 01.

**Madam Chairman:** Excuse me?

**Mr. Hosein:** I had my hand up for 001.

**Madam Chairman:** But apparently nobody saw your hand up?

**Mr. Hosein:** Just had one question on line Item 13.

**Madam Chairman:** Item where?

**Mr. Hosein:** Maintenance of Vehicles. Minister, I saw that there is a large allocation made for Maintenance of Vehicles.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 001: Item 13.

**Mr. Hosein:** I am seeing that there is a large allocation being made in 2020 for—  
[*Interruption*] 314. Yes, yeah. A large allocation is made for the Maintenance of Vehicles. And this was revised downwards to 19 million at the end of the fiscal. Now, I know the Commissioner has complained about the maintenance of vehicles. Why was not all of the moneys spent if it was allocated, this is about \$20 million, that was not spent for the maintenance of vehicles?

**Hon. Young:** [*Inaudible*]—are provided by the Ministry of Finance and I know there has been active conversation between the Minister of Finance, the Commissioner of Police, and I am also monitoring it as well, that the money that needs to be provided for maintenance of vehicles will be provided.

**Mr. Hosein:** Minister, I am asking for that fiscal year in particular 2020. Is there a reason why they did not use up all of the allocations?

**Hon. Young:** Well you see the reason why I answered it in the way that I answered it, is what we will need to know is whether requests for releases were made from the Ministry of Finance and whether those requests for releases were not fulfilled or not and that information is not available right now.

**Mr. Imbert:** That is actually something that I am actively checking.

**Mr. Hosein:** I cannot hear you. You have to speak louder, you have on a mask.

**Mr. Imbert:** The mike in the wrong place? Yes, it is something I am actively checking on right now. What I have been told so far, is that out of an allocation of approximately 500 million for Goods and Services, in 2020, the requests that were made was just below 400, or a little over 400. And that over 90 per cent of the money requested was released. What I am trying to find out is, if that information is true, why the other 100 million in Goods and Services was not requested. That is the first question I have asked. Firstly, is this true? And if so, how come, and

whatever the truth is, it does not matter because this is an Item that has been drawn to our attention, and we are going to sort it out and make sure that money is provided for this particular Item, the repairs of vehicles.

**Mr. Hosein:** So we may see an increase of allocation in the mid-year review?

**Mr. Imbert:** Well, we may authorize the police service to do a transfer, or a virement to provide sufficient funds to deal with any areas of payments for repairs to vehicles, and then supplement those Votes in the mid-year. Whatever the reason is, because we are doing two things, trying to find out what is the reason, was a request made? If it was not made, why was it not made; if it was made, why was the money not released? And then we will—those are administrative matters that we will try to correct that for the future. But no matter what the reasons are, we are going to make arrangements to make sure that the TTPS gets sufficient money to deal with the arrears for repairs of vehicles and to pay for repairs going forward.

**12.45 p.m.**

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Naparima.

**Mr. Charles:** Madam Chair, I am looking at Item 17: Training. And given the new demands on the police service in context of money laundering, white collar crime, cybersecurity, et cetera, is this 1.6 million adequate to meet the evolving needs of the TTPS?

**Hon. Young:** That 1.6 million is actually an increase over what was spent last year, by 241,000.

**Mr. Charles:** Yeah, I know.

**Hon. Young:** What we have managed to do quite successfully is get a lot of assistance with the training from our foreign partners, all right. And the police academy—Police Training Academy is doing a fantastic job and therefore we have

brought down the cost of the training. And one of the philosophies that we are applying is rather than send persons away for training, let us bring the trainer here, do some train the trainer. But also, make sure as many members of the police service have access to that training.

So, for example, when we were talking earlier in the morning about the ballistics, that is one of the programmes. So what we did is we used the Forensic Science Centre to train about 25 or 26 police officers to become ballistic experts and this type of thing. And that is the methodology we are using in these times. But if money needs to be vired and transferred for training it will be.

**Mr. Charles:** The EU for example has said that there are deficiencies in our money laundering capability. Are you satisfied that the training is adequate to deal with that specific problem?

**Hon. Young:** Where did the EU say that? You mean the Global Forum?

**Mr. Charles:** Yeah, they said that. I have a document. So are you satisfied with our money laundering capabilities?

**Hon. Young:** The EU gets a lot of things wrong. I mean, I also saw in that whole Global Forum conversation them saying we are a tax haven. I do not know who in Trinidad—who in the international world would be using Trinidad and Tobago as a tax haven.

**Hon. Young:** Minister, the question is: Are you satisfied with the capability of the TTPS in those areas? Yes or no?

**Hon. Young:** The TTPS as we have been seeing within recent times if there is a need for a supplementation of expertise, they are quite prepared to do it and they have been doing it.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Oropouche West.

**Mr. Tancoo:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I am at line Item 21: Repairs and Maintenance - Buildings. I note the budget for 2020 was 35 million, would suggest that the Ministry had the—sorry, the TTPS had some plan to do significant repair work, but that did not materialize in 2020. Can the Minister indicate what repair work was supposed to have been done which was not completed?

**Hon. Young:** So what actually took place and what the TTPS were doing is they looked at it and they prioritized the work that should be done. So you see the expenditure of that 14.6 million, major refurbishment included civil electrical plumbing works on all TTPS buildings, AC system for the admin building Riverside Plaza, a sewer upgrade at Morvant, Toco, Mayaro stations, roof works at St. James and San Fernando. So what is happening is the TTPS is actually prioritizing the projects and the repair and maintenance that needs to be done.

We have also been constructing a number of new police stations. And the Commissioner and his executive are also looking at the police stations that they may want to allocate for different uses, because the Commissioner believes that there are too many police stations for such a small place like Trinidad and Tobago.

**Mr. Tancoo:** Thank you, Minister.

**Madam Chairman:** Are you finished, Member for Oropouche West?

**Mr. Tancoo:** I am. Thank you.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Oropouche East.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. On Item 23: Fees. When we look at this Item we see there was an Actual expenditure in 2019 of 21 million. There was a 23 million Estimate, a couple million more. But this dropped significantly in 2020 Estimate, and in 2021 Estimates to 14 million more or less. Now, I just wanted to be clear if the Minister can tell us exactly what is covered by

this Item of Fees? And will this have any impact on the TTPS capacity to pay fees for using international software and investigation in technology and related criminal investigations and so on? Is there any serious implication of this? Because we are aware as you said, that as you go along in the year if you need to do something else and get something you can approach Ministry of Finance, but are there any immediate problems associated with this at this time?

**Hon. Young:** So what we would want to do is avoid any immediate problems. So right now this is the sum that is allocated, if there is a need for more, exactly as you just said, we will make the necessary request either for a virement and transfer, or that in addition to a supplementation. These Fees here would include legal forensic accounting and accounting fees but also things like the AFIS system for fingerprints, the RMS which is the Versadex and other tools that I would not want to get into right here. So yes, there may be a shortcoming here and it is an area that we will be addressing with the Ministry of Finance to make sure that none of those tools will be unable to perform the jobs and tasks that they are required to.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Yes, my second question on this area. I am looking at Item 58: Medical Expenses. Minister, this has been a sort of bugbear in the TTPS.

**Hon. Young:** Which Item, I am sorry?

**Dr. Moonilal:** Item 58: Medical Expenses. This has been sort of a bugbear in the TTPS where we have received complaints from officers and constituents who are officers and so on, about delays and failure to pay medical expenses for vouchers for you know, services and so on. And we have again, an Actual of 5 million. It was increased significantly in 2020 and now reduced to what appears here to be 1.5 million. Bearing in mind that serious surgery for example, could be significant you know, one officer or two officers could absorb \$1.5 million for a serious medical

matter. Again, what is the implication of this in paying outstanding bills and claims by police officers at this time, today? Rather than six months from now?

**Hon. Young:** Again, as you know the way this is a rolling bill because there will always be police officers who will in the line of duty if they are injured, et cetera, have to go to the private facilities. This is a conversation I have had with the Commissioner of Police and what will happen is if it needs to be supplemented, it will be supplemented in the same manner either via a virement and transfer, and I suspect at the mid-year review more can be provided but we are not going to allow our police officers not to have access to these facilities.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Couva South.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Minister, with respect to 13: Maintenance of Vehicles. This allocation of \$19,148,470, will this be for maintenance of vehicles solely as it relates to private garages?

**Hon. Young:** As opposed to—the police do not do very much maintenance in-house anymore so, yes. It is either private garages or at VMCOTT. And yes, it is for the maintenance of police vehicles at those establishments.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Okay, would you be willing probably in writing to give us a list of these private garages and so on?

**Hon. Young:** I am not sure that is something we would want to provide but I do not have a problem with that.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** You do not have a problem. And I could recollect in I think was the last fiscal Standing Finance Committee you had given a commitment as it relates to getting VMCOTT more involved in the repairs and maintenance of police vehicles. You want to provide a status on that?

**Hon. Young:** You are quite right and the Cabinet's position is that, and we have



spoken to the Minister of Works and Transport, that we would like to move more towards especially in National Security not only in Trinidad and Tobago Police Service—well, apart from the TTDF who are building out their own capacity—the other areas to use VMCOTT more, so that is an ongoing conversation. They have to have the capacity to be able to carry out the work.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Barataria/San Juan.

**Mr. Hosein:** Thank you very much. I am at line Item 16: Contract Employment. Minister, can you just confirm whether or not the SRPs are included in this line Item?

**Hon. Young:** They are not.

**Mr. Hosein:** They are not, okay. These are for civilian contracts?

**Hon. Young:** Yeah, this is people, the civilian staff throughout the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service including persons at the academy.

**Mr. Hosein:** How many contract positions are filled with this?

**Hon. Young:** Right now, they currently have 551 persons on contract with a duration of not more than six months.

**Mr. Hosein:** Thank you.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Couva North.

**Mr. Ratiram:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I want to draw the Minister's attention to Item 17: Training. The Minister did indicate about the Ballistic Training Programme, I saw it was launched on 01 June, 2020. Well, it was put in the public domain of the intent to launch this programme. Can the hon. Minister advise when this programme is scheduled to commence?

**Hon. Young:** When is the programme—?

**Mr. Ratiram:**—scheduled to commence.

**Hon. Young:** It is completed. It will be completed in the next few days. Unfortunately, some of the persons on the programme had to be quarantined.

**Mr. Ratiram:** So will there be a repeat or a continuance for those?

**Hon. Young:** I certainly hope so, yes. It is a good programme and we need to do it to clear the backlog and just to deal with the consistent flow of illegal firearms.

**Mr. Ratiram:** Thank you, Minister. Item 13: Maintenance of Vehicles. From the 2019 Actual of 32 million we see that it was estimated at 39 million in 2020, but only 19 million was expended, which would imply a significant amount of plans to repair were not executed. Are these vehicles still to be repaired? Is there an outstanding liability there?

**Hon. Young:** So what the conversation we just had a short while ago that involved the Minister of Finance is the current conversation we are double-checking to see whether there was a request for additional sums of money that was not released. But in any event the answer is, it is something that is attracting our attention and if there are outstanding sums to be paid to garages, that is going to be looked into by the Ministry of Finance, and they will make the payments as they see fit.

**Mr. Ratiram:** Thank you, Minister. Item 22: Short-term Employment, I recognize that the Actual figure from 2019 of 5.2 million has declined in 2021 to 3.5 million. Can the Minister explain if this decline in Short-term Employment—well, what the Short-term Employment entails and what would we expect to see with the decline in this Vote?

**Hon. Young:** So, this is for persons who are employed for six-month periods and less. So that is what is connoted as short-term employment. There are currently 41 persons employed throughout the services on projects such as clearing arrears of increments, reconciliation of suppliers' accounts, et cetera. And right now there is

a small shortfall and if that needs to be addressed, it will be addressed.

**Mr. Ratiram:** Thank you, Minister. Item 51: Relocation of Overseas Staff. From the Revised Estimate in 2020 we see an increase of 354,000, Item 51: Relocation of Overseas Staff. Can you identify what this is for?

**Hon. Young:** Well, first of all to explain the shortfall, the overseas staff that we had from the TTPS would be at missions and embassies abroad who were scheduled to come back. It did not happen during the last fiscal because of COVID, because since March what we did is we put a freeze, a halt on all travel of public officers. So those members of the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service at those embassies, consulates and high commissions are currently waiting to come back home to post, and we will send the new officers out.

**Mr. Ratiram:** Thank you, hon. Minister. And my last question to the Minister under Item 96: Fuel and Lubricants. For the 2019 Actual figure of 20 million, we have gone to a 2021 Estimate of 14 million. Can the hon. Minister indicate the reason for this significant disparity?

**1.00 p.m.**

**Hon. Young:** So, what you would actually see—what you should look at is how much was actually spent and expended in the last fiscal. So it was 10.5 million, and what has actually been provided is now an increase of 3.4 million over what was expended last year. So about \$14 million for the next fiscal, which is approximately a million dollars a month—well, just over a million dollars a month—if this proves to be insufficient, and it may not be when you look at what was spent in the last fiscal, then we will make the necessary request of the Ministry of Finance.

**Mr. Ratiram:** Thanks very much, Minister. However, this 10 million, from what

we were advised earlier, is not a true indication of the actual spend. It is a revised figure, and the actual we will get that later on. But the only actual that we have to work with is the Actual for 2019. The 2019 figures indicate that the Actual spend was 20 million. So is it that there was a lack of activities in 2020 that has caused this significant 10 million reduction in the spend?

**Hon. Young:** You said and you are partially correct, what we could do is just wait for the actual expenditure, we will see where it is. But, in any event, what we are doing now is, we are planning for the next fiscal—and that is what we are here doing—and an Estimate provided for the next fiscal is 14 million. So that is what we are interested in. I cannot change the past. So if there is a shortfall there, then the Ministry of Finance will do the necessary.

**Mr. Ratiram:** The Ministry, I understand, and I seek guidance from the hon. Minister here, would have rolled out programmes of putting GPS devices in our vehicles. Does this programme—

**Hon. Young:** Putting in whose vehicles?

**Mr. Ratiram:** Sorry?

**Mr. Ratiram:** You said the Ministry would have rolled out putting GPS in our vehicles. Whose vehicles?

**Mr. Ratiram:** Well, when I say “our”, I speak on behalf of the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago.

**Hon. Young:** Well, we have not put any GPS in any citizens’ vehicles.

**Mr. Ratiram:** No, when I say, “our vehicles” I am relating to the line Item, the Head. We were discussing the Head—

**Hon. Young:** “Our” means the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service.

**Mr. Ratiram:** Let us take it as “our” TTPS. All right? So the vehicles that are

utilized by the TTPS, that GPS would have been placed in some, if not all of the vehicles.

**Hon. Young:** What we are looking at is fuel lubricant?

**Mr. Ratiram:** The question that I am looking at—

**Hon. Young:** But which line Item are you looking at?

**Mr. Ratiram:** With respect to line Item 96: Fuel and Lubricants.

**Hon. Young:** “GPS doh use fuel.”

**Mr. Ratiram:** If you may allow me, Minister, to ask the question. What I wanted to ask is, we spoke about lack of activity in 2020 versus 2019. If it is that the GPS solution can provide, basically mileage of travelling of these vehicles it will help the Ministry to indicate where the lack of activities are and to say what measures need to be put in place to improve on the system.

**Hon. Young:** Madam Chair, I do not know who is the “we” that spoke of lack of activity. I, certainly—that was in their caucus. We certainly had no conversation on this side, nor did I indicate to the Parliament that there has been any decrease in activity on behalf of the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service. In fact, I commend them for what they have done in 2020, and in particular, in their response to COVID and other related items, but I never said that there was a decrease in the Trinidad and Tobago Police activity.

**Mr. Ratiram:** I might have misinterpreted what the hon. Minister would have said earlier. However, the impression I would have gotten from his initial response of the figure 20.4 million in 2019, to a revised figure of 10.5 million, the impression I would have gotten from his response—and I might be incorrect in that impression and I do apologize if I were—however, I do compliment the TTPS, all officers of the TTPs and the administration of the TTPS on the job that they have been

executing also, but I am just seeking to understand why this significant reduction of \$10 million from the Actual to the revised.

**Hon. Young:** Madam Chair, I responded to that a little while ago. According to the information we have in front of us, what we are seeing is an actual increase of \$3.4 million over the Revised Estimates for 2020, of 10.5. What we have been provided with for 2021, is 14 million. So it is an increase of 3.4. So, the actual, what we will do is when we get the actual figures, I am sure we can approach it at that stage.

**Madam Chairman:** And I think, Member for Couva North, that is what the Minister agreed with you on when you explained the difference between the Revised Estimates and an Actual. He agreed with you that your understanding was correct and he said that is why we should better wait on the actuals for 2020, which figure comes at the closing of the account.

**Dr. Ragbir:** Thank you, Chair, asked and answered.

**Mr. Tancoo:** Thank you, Chair. I just want to tie Item 96 with Item 13. I think there is a relationship between the reduction in the amount of money spent on maintenance and the amount of money spent on fuel and lubricants. But, the question I would like to ask is, how many vehicles does the Ministry have—that the service has right now which are operational and how many which are down for repair? If you can give me that figure for both 2020 and 2019, if possible, because we only have Actual for 2019. This is our first chance of looking at the actuals at.

**Hon. Young:** So the entire TTPS fleet is 1,679 vehicles. They have operational, 1,225 vehicles; non-operational, 454 vehicles.

**Mr. Tancoo:** Thank you, Minister.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Couva North, are you finished?

**Mr. Ratiram:** I am finished.

**Madam Chairman:** Okay. So Item 002: Police Service (Tobago). Member for Naparima.

**Mr. Charles:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Looking at Item 96 and comparing that, I see no allocation for 2021 for Fuel and Lubricants but, in Trinidad, just on the page before, Fuel and Lubricants, same 96, there is a 3.4 million increase and Tobago, there is no allocation. What is unique in Tobago that explains no allocation?

**Hon. Young:** All right. Well, as I have been saying throughout the course of the morning, these documents are prepared by the Budgets Division at the Ministry of Finance. That is obviously an area that needs to be addressed and will be addressed.

**Madam Chairman:** Sub-Head 03: Minor Equipment Purchases. Item 001: Police Service (Trinidad).

**Dr. Moonilal:** Thank you very much. If the Minister could just explain the line Item 03: Minor Equipment Purchases, 01: Vehicles. The Actual 10 million in 2019, and Estimate 2020, 40 million and then no provision for 2021. I thought there is a simple explanation.

**Hon. Young:** You would recall that last year when we were at the similar stage, we did say, well, we have provided the 40 million for purchase of new vehicles by the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service. What has happened is the procurement of the vehicles by the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service during the last fiscal, they requested of the CTB to purchase 117 new vehicles in March 2020. Unfortunately, COVID affected the CTB and they stopped working. The process was only restarted—this is the procurement process in August. So it is currently at the evaluation stage and the tender was not awarded before the end of the fiscal. So we will be pursuing it.

**Dr. Moonilal:** So, you are saying, for the record that in 2021, notwithstanding the zero allocation, you will be pursuing procurement of vehicles and you will probably go to the Ministry of Finance to get a virement.

**Hon. Young:** So what I would like to say, it is going to be 117 vehicles for Trinidad and 20 vehicles for Tobago, and it is currently before the CTB. They did not award the contract before the end of the fiscal. So we will be pursuing it.

**Mr. Hosein:** Line Item 04: Other Minor Equipment. Minister, I am seeing that there is an Estimate of 7 million for 2021 and that 7.2 million was the Revised Estimate for 2020. Can you indicate whether or not this line Item has to deal with the Tasers, the drones and those other equipment that was announced in the last budget?

**Hon. Young:** Yes.

**Mr. Hosein:** Can you indicate how many drones were acquired over the last year?

**Hon. Young:** What has happened, similar to the previous explanation I gave with respect to the procurement of drones, that is something that is being looked into and stalled somewhat by COVID.

**Mr. Hosein:** And the Tasers?

**Hon. Young:** There was the procurement of 700 Tasers.

**Mr. Hosein:** 700 Tasers? And any other equipment under this line Item that was procured?

**Hon. Young:** The police service is always procuring equipment. I mean, there would have been all sorts of bullet proof vests and these types of things. So, what we call public order equipment: helmets, shields, riot gear, polygraph equipment, body cameras, speed detection devices, breathalyser equipment, drug-testing kits, bullet proof vests and night vision binoculars.



**Mr. Hosein:** Minister, some of the officers, during the height of the COVID period were complaining of a lack of PPE. Was any PPE acquired under this Head under Minor Equipment?

**Hon. Young:** It would have been acquired under other line Items. And also what we were fortunate enough to do is, at National Security, we got a lot donated or we got through ODPM and we then passed that along to the various services.

**Mr. Hosein:** And since only seven of the \$19 million was spent, can you give an indication of why only 12 million was spent? Was it because of the non-acquisition of the drones or a lack of releases?

**Hon. Young:** It would not have been the drones alone. Once you are following proper procurement procedures, sometimes it takes a little longer. But I know from other areas of national security—so, for example, we are trying to procure equipment for both fire services as well as the prison services—COVID and how it affected the globe did affect the provision of a lot of equipment. That is the supply chain disruption. Correct.

**Mr. Hosein:** In that case, Minister, why was a similar allocation not given for 2021 as was estimated for 2020?

**Hon. Young:** I am not concerned, overly concerned about this at all, because we have already had conversation with the Ministry of Finance. The Ministry of Finance has indicated these figures are provided by the Budgets Division, that if the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service needs to procure more equipment under this line Item, they will have the discussions with Finance and Finance will either allow them to vire money or after viring money, replenish it in the mid-year review, et cetera.

**Mr. Ratiram:** Asked and answered.

**Madam Chairman:** Okay. Item 002: Police Service (Tobago). Sub-Head 04: Current Transfers and Subsidies. Item 001: Regional Bodies; Item 004: International Bodies; Item 005: Non-profit Institutions.

**Dr. Ragbir:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, I applaud you for increasing the amount of money you allocated to the Police Youth Clubs. My question is, how many youth clubs, Police Youth Clubs derived benefit from such?

**Hon. Young:** Okay. The number of youth clubs is 129 throughout Trinidad and Tobago. The number of functioning youth clubs is 95, and this figure, I am quite pleased with is the total membership of the youth clubs is 6,798. Of course, the activities this year, last fiscal, were curtailed and reduced due to COVID and the various health regulations.

**Dr. Ragbir:** Thank you, Minister.

**Mr. Ratiram:** Thank you very much. Madam Chair, I make reference to Item 01: Police Youth Clubs, and I take this opportunity also to compliment all persons, including the parent councils and all officers from TTPS who would have assisted our youths in the Police Youth Clubs. Madam Chair, I would like to bring the Minister's attention to the Estimate for 2020 was 6 million whereas the Revised Estimate was 600,000. Now, I know this is not the actual spend, but can the hon. Minister advise if he has any updated figures as of the close of the financial year?

**1.15 p.m.**

**Hon. Young:** No, we do not have those figures, but as I just said a short while ago, the activities of the youth clubs would have been similar to schools. It would have been curtailed during the period from March, all the way through to now.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Couva North.

**Mr. Ratiram:** Thank you, Minister. And the 95 functioning Police Youth Clubs,

do they get their releases based on activities, based on requests at the beginning of a financial term? They have a budget that is made available to them to draw down on? Can you explain how this funding is made available to the youth clubs?

**Hon. Young:** What would happen is over the period of the fiscal, as they need money, they would write to the administration of the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service, and exactly as I was about to say, they will get money released based upon request.

**Mr. Ratiram:** Based on their request. Thank you.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Barataria/San Juan.

**Mr. Hosein:** Asked and answered.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 007: Households. Member for Barataria/San Juan.

**Mr. Hosein:** Minister, I am at 02: Compensation to the Estates of Members of the Protective Services. I saw there was no expenditure for 2020—

**Hon. Young:**—[Inaudible]—reach—

**Mr. Hosein:** 02—

**Hon. Young:** Households.

**Mr. Hosein:** Households; Compensation to the Estates of Members, no expenditure for 2020 after \$2 million was allocated. Any reason why?

**Hon. Young:** They will have to provide the actual figures because money was allocated over the period of the last year.

**Mr. Hosein:** Good.

**Hon. Young:** What has happened— sorry, I was thinking about something else. There were no claims made over the last fiscal, thankfully, because this is for police officers killed in the line of duty.

**Mr. Hosein:** Minister, just as an administrative issue under this line Item, before

someone accesses the grant, is it that the beneficiary will have to obtain the necessary letters of administration or grants of probate?

**Hon. Young:** No.

**Mr. Hosein:** No?

**Hon. Young:** No. Because the other three that had made under the Ministry of National Security, we did not ask for that.

**Mr. Hosein:** Okay.

**Madam Chairman:** Okay. Item 009: Other Transfers. Hon. Members, we will now move on to the *Draft Estimates of Development Programme*. New book, we are at page 132. Sub-Head 09: Development Programme, Consolidated Fund; Item 004: Social Infrastructure. Member for Barataria/San Juan.

**Mr. Hosein:** Minister, I am at line Item 020: Refurbishment of the Justice Protection Unit, this is the witness protection programme?

**Hon. Young:** No.

**Mr. Hosein:** No?

**Hon. Young:** Let me use the opportunity to just explain to colleagues in the House, as well as members of the public, the witness protection programme is a programme that is actually institutionalized under legislation—

**Mr. Hosein:** Correct.

**Hon. Young:**—as you would know.

**Mr. Hosein:** Yeah.

**Hon. Young:** And that is that separate programme, that programme is run out of the Ministry of National Security, as well as the National—I believe, the National Security Council has a role to play there as well. And that is a completely separate programme, so there was never—fortunately, again, knock on wood, been any loss

of life of anyone in the witness protection programme. And that is a programme where we also operate and assist persons in other jurisdictions, et cetera. The Minister gives permission for those types of things.

This refurbishment of the Justice Protection Unit, under the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service, is something that is a lot more temporary and it is something that is run by the police service, separate to the witness protection programme. So they may have instances where they hear that there is a threat to life of a potential witness, et cetera, or someone they have just picked up in a crime scene, and they do this on a temporary basis here.

**Mr. Hosein:** So it is akin to what the witness protection—

**Hon. Young:** What is that, sorry?

**Mr. Hosein:** So it is akin to the legislative—

**Hon. Young:** Well, the witness protection programme as per the legislation, there is a lot of legality to it, persons have to sign an agreement, et cetera, et cetera. This is a much more ad hoc arrangement because you would imagine, things happen on the spur of the moment and people need to be protected, and they are protected by the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service.

**Mr. Hosein:** Minister, why no allocation was given for this programme?

**Hon. Young:** Well, this is refurbishment.

**Mr. Hosein:** Refurbishment, so we are good with—

**Hon. Young:** This is refurbishment, so yeah.

**Mr. Hosein:** Okay. Also, line Item 029: Refurbishment of Riverside Plaza, I noticed that an allocation of \$2.6 million was made in 2020 and there was no expenditure, which means that I do not know if any work was done. I know a lot of the officers were complaining of the conditions of the Riverside Plaza—

**Hon. Young:** No, I think the only—because I have visited Riverside Plaza a number of times. They actually did quite an extensive amount of refurbishment work and they have upgraded it. What was happening in the last fiscal is they had a sewer problem, so that would have been resolved by the Water and Sewerage Authority. And the actual expenditure was \$74,500 for the last fiscal.

**Mr. Hosein:** So, this will have to be updated? This is not—

**Hon. Young:** Yeah, this should be updated.

**Mr. Hosein:** Right. Now, I am looking at line Item 047, I am on the other page—

**Hon. Young:** At where? 47—

**Mr. Hosein:** For Purchase of Equipment for the Police Service. Minister, can you indicate whether or not, or how many body cameras would have been purchased by the TTPS?

**Hon. Young:** Okay. In the last fiscal—and as the number is given to me, I remember the Commissioner speaking about it. In the last fiscal, 150 new body cams were procured.

**Mr. Hosein:** And how many is the service intending to procure for this fiscal?

**Hon. Young:** One thousand.

**Mr. Hosein:** One thousand? Line Item 062: the Establishment of a Coastal and Riverine Patrol Unit. Minister, I know that this was an announcement in the last budget and this budget also, the Police Marine Unit, the allocation is very low, that being \$500,000. Is there a reason why the allocation is so low for the establishment of this most essential unit?

**Hon. Young:** The good news is, despite whatever the allocation is here, the unit has been established. The unit is operational and the rest of the allocation is under the IDF. But what I can tell the country is that the branch they have been training,

they have been recruiting, and they are doing the preliminary set of work we intend them to do.

**Mr. Hosein:** And how many assets we have in this unit? What is the number of assets?

**Hon. Young:** You know, I am always very reluctant to say how many assets it is we have in these types of units because I do not want those who are on the wrong side of the law to have that type of information. There is currently one and there are others that are in the process of being built out.

**Mr. Hosein:** Thank you.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Oropouche East.

**Dr. Moonilal:** The question is already answered and not answered.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Naparima.

**Mr. Charles:** Thank you. Item 047, I know my colleague has elicited a response in terms of body cameras, what other equipment is being purchased for the TTPS?

**Hon. Young:** Law enforcement equipment.

**Mr. Charles:** I have a note here from my staff, it is equipment to track phones and monitor social media, is that correct?

**Hon. Young:** You have a note from who?

**Mr. Charles:** Go on. Is it at all to track and monitor social media?

**Hon. Young:** The Trinidad and Tobago Police Service, on the last, budget announced to the country that they had set up a Social Media Monitoring Unit and there is a Social Media Monitoring Unit under the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service.

**Mr. Charles:** What does this do? I know “monitor social media”, it means if I write a story, something in the media it is tracked somewhere. Tell me, I am trying

to get the—

**Hon. Young:** “Doh bad talk” the Commissioner of Police—[*Crosstalk*]

**Madam Chairman:** Member—

**Hon. Young:** Yes, Ma’am, I answered the question.

**Madam Chairman:** What you asked— you are finished, Member for Naparima?

**Mr. Charles:** Despite as usual, I was asking a question in the interest of the constituents who want to know whether—and you said, yes, there is equipment, that is all I need to know. [*Crosstalk*]

**Hon. Young:** What about equipment? What I said—

**Mr. Charles:** Did we say equipment to—

**Hon. Young:** What I said, Madam Chair—

**Mr. Charles:**—monitor social media?

**Hon. Young:** What I said, Madam Chair, on the last occasion of the budget, the Commissioner of Police, even prior to that, announced that he, the Commissioner of Police was establishing a Social Media Monitoring Unit and that has been done.

**Mr. Charles:** And the question was, is this being used to fund that?

**Hon. Young:** This is for the purchase of equipment. By definition, if a unit has been established and is operational, it is doing what it needs to do.

**Mr. Charles:** A further question, is that equipment monitoring phones also? Yes or no?

**Hon. Young:** Is that equipment monitoring phones?

**Mr. Charles:** Yes or no, tracking phones?

**Hon. Young:** I would not know what that equipment is monitoring.

**Mr. Charles:** Okay. All right.

**Hon. Young:** I am not a social media—



**Mr. Charles:** The answer is, no.

**Hon. Young:** I am not a social media—“doh bad talk” the police service—  
[*Crosstalk*]

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Oropouche West.

**Mr. Tancoo:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I am at Item 046: Purchase of Vehicles for the Police Service. I note that there was a budgeted figure of 30 million in 2020 but only \$947,000-odd on was spent, can the Minister indicate—[*Crosstalk*]— no, no, no, hold on. In the previous response he gave, there was a budget under Minor Equipment for 40 million, which is the explanation he gave for 117 vehicles. Is it that this was also in addition to that allocation?

**Hon. Young:** So this is for the purchase of special vehicles by the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service, and in the procurement process, they only procured, I believe, one vehicle under this Item in the last fiscal, and that is what you see reflected here.

**Mr. Tancoo:** Can I ask why others were not reflected? You would have come up with this 30 million based on some decision to add to the service— the fleet of the service?

**Hon. Young:** So, as I said previously, Madam Chair, only one vehicle was procured in the last fiscal.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Barataria/San Juan.

**Mr. Hosein:** I am at line Item 037, Minister, at page 132, Establishment of Divisional Interview Suites—

**Hon. Young:** Line Item?

**Mr. Hosein:** 37.

**Hon. Young:** Oh, I thought he said “tutty-seven”.

**Mr. Hosein:** Are you with me?

**Hon. Young:** Yes.

**Mr. Hosein:** I am seeing that there is an expenditure of 159,000 for 2020, there is no allocation that year, which police station would have had this upgrade in terms of—is it the interview suites at the stations or is it a separate building?

**Hon. Young:** So, this is Establishment of Divisional Interview Suites, and you would see that nothing was there in 2020 because a lot of the work on these interview suites are—

**Mr. Hosein:** No, Minister, there is an expenditure for 2020.

**Hon. Young:** Where are you seeing that?

**Mr. Hosein:** Revised Estimate.

**Hon. Young:** Sorry, of 195.

**Mr. Hosein:** Yeah.

**Hon. Young:** Right. So, what—this has been a project that has been ongoing for sometime—sorry—so this is the completion of the project that took place in 2020. So all nine divisions are now completed.

**Mr. Hosein:** Okay. And also, I am seeing at line Item 057, that is on the other page, Upgrade of Detention Cells at Police Stations, a sum was spent in 2020, 1.4 million. Can you give us a list of the stations where the upgrade took place? And also—

**Hon. Young:** And a tour, man.

**Mr. Hosein:** I beg your pardon?

**Hon. Young:** We can arrange for you to be taken on a tour?

**Mr. Hosein:** Yeah, I could go, I have nothing to hide. I “doh” know if you could say the same.

**Hon. Young:** You have been in—what you say? You have been in police stations and—

**Mr. Hosein:** 2021, can you give us the stations where the upgrade is projected to take place also?

**Hon. Young:** Fifty-eight stations will be upgraded in 2021, and it would be the list of those that require it.

**Mr. Hosein:** With this expenditure of 1.4 million—

**Hon. Young:** In 2020, Toco, Sangre Grande, St. James and Rio Claro were completed. So, it is an ongoing project, as you would imagine they always have to keep upgrading the cells.

**Madam Chairman:** Okay? Item 005: Multi-Sectoral and Other Services. Member for Barataria/San Juan.

**1.30 p.m.**

**Mr. Hosein:** Minister, I am at 01, Development of a Computer System for the Police Service. Minister, one thing that slows down the criminal justice system is bail applications and the timeliness of character tracing— sorry, antecedents. Will this line Item be used in order to promote and try to get antecedents quicker to the court in terms of tracing done by persons who are charged?

**Hon. Young:** So, the tracing system, I find it a little strange, so that is an issue I will take up with the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service, because they actually do have quite an updated Versadex system, and they can get the information instantaneously. So I suspect what it is really is the administration between the VC, the charging officer and others, to get the information from the system, but the system already exists. What this is a separate project, not attributable to what you have just said, where they are computerizing all of the police stations throughout

Trinidad and Tobago.

**Mr. Hosein:** Line Item 003: Transformation of the Police Service. What does that entail?

**Hon. Young:** That is the work that the Commissioner of Police is doing to transform the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service. So he would have done some stuff when he came in initially.

**Mr. Hosein:** So these are just arrears?

**Hon. Young:** Yes.

**Madam Chairman:** Infrastructure Development Fund, page 230; Item 004: Social Infrastructure.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Head 64 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.*

**Madam Chairman:** Thank you, Minister. Thank you, Deputy Commissioner. Thank you all technocrats.

*Head 42: Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government, \$2,304,204,253.*

**Madam Chairman:** Members, just for early guidance, we are at page 252 of the recurrent estimates.

[MR. FORDE *in the Chair*]

**Mr. Chairman:** Welcome to the Minister of Rural Development and Local Government. Welcome Madam PS and to all the senior technocrats in your Ministry. Mr. Minister, you have five minutes to give any brief opening remarks. Proceed.

**Hon. Hosein:** Thank you very much. The Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government, through the 14 municipal corporations and its state agencies, CEPEP and RDC, play an integral role in providing essential services to all

citizens across the length and breadth of our beloved country.

Mr. Chair, I have been called to serve as the Minister of Rural Development and Local Government for yet another term, and while it has not been an easy road for the past four years, I want to express sincere thanks to the Permanent Secretaries, the Deputy Permanent Secretaries, to all mayors, all chairmen, all councillors and public servants, and all the citizens for their unwavering support and dedication.

Fiscal 2019 to 2020, was indeed a challenging one. However, we are able to persevere and will continue to do so despite the obstacles we have encountered as a result of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

Local government impacts every citizen on a daily basis through key services to communities, such as disaster management, mitigation, municipal police, clearing of minor drains and water courses. We remain fueled by the goals of ensuring that all citizens, especially those in rural areas, receive the much needed goods and services required for them to live a comfortable life.

This financial year, we at the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government recognize the need to reprioritize our expenditure where required, in light of the increased financial constraints and the adverse effects of the pandemic. Additionally, we remain committed to ensuring delivery and good service by putting people first.

Mr. Chair, it is indeed my privilege to report to this Standing Finance Committee of the progress made by the Ministry, and provide feedback on plans moving forward, given the draft estimates for the financial year 2021. Thank you.

**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you, Mr. Minister.

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

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Members, the sum of \$2,304,204,253 for Head 42, Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government, is comprised of moneys proposed for expenditure under the following Sub-Heads and Items to be found in the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure*, the *Draft Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure of the Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies and of the Tobago House of Assembly* and the *Draft Estimates of Development Programme*.

We shall now proceed to consider the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure*. Again, we are in recurrent expenditure estimate booklet, Sub-Head 01: Personal Expenditure, and we are on page 2-5-2—252; Item 001: General Administration. Sub-Head 02: Goods and Services; Item 001: General Administration, pages 252 and 253. I recognize the Member for St. Augustine.

**Ms. Ameen:** Mr. Chairman, my question is on 01, 251.

**Mr. Chairman:** So Item 001: General Administration? Okay. Proceed.

**Ms. Ameen:** Yes. I just wanted to ask the Minister, I see \$50,000 allocated for Remuneration to Members of a Cabinet-appointed Committee. This was not—

**Mr. Chairman:** Line Item 14.

**Ms. Ameen:** This was not there in the previous year, and I just want to ask the Minister what Cabinet-appointed committee you have that is \$50,000 for this fiscal year?

**Hon. Hosein:** We had a transition committee, and as we moved into the local government reform now, this will be used for that purpose.

**Ms. Ameen:** Will the Minister be able to provide in writing the members of that committee?

**Hon. Hosein:** Sure. I will have it to you as soon as possible.

**Mr. Chairman:** I recognize the Member for Couva North.

**Mr. Ratiram:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I would just like to bring the Minister's attention to Item 01: Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance. I recognize the actual figure of 2019 was 73 million and in 2020, it was estimated at 95 million. That is a significant increase there. Can the hon. Minister explain what that increase in the Estimate of 2020 would have represented?

**Hon. Hosein:** This, hon. Member, is for the increase of municipal police.

**Mr. Ratiram:** And can the hon. Minister identify how much municipal police would have satisfied this Vote, would have been recruited? How many municipal police would—

**Mr. Chairman:** Would be represented here.

**Mr. Ratiram:** Yeah.

**Hon. Hosein:** We started off at 213. At present, we have around 750, and we are in the process right now of recruiting, from the Public Service Commission, about 325.

**Mr. Ratiram:** If I may just get the figures correct. We started off at 213.

**Hon. Hosein:** No, 213 was the initial municipal police across the country.

**Mr. Ratiram:** 213?

**Hon. Hosein:** 213.

**Mr. Ratiram:** We are now at 750.

**Hon. Hosein:** And we started to do the recruiting process and whatnot, and we reached to 750, and we have a further—right now, there is a further recruiting going on, and they will take about 300 and something.

**Mr. Ratiram:** However, the figures in the Estimate here does not reflect an increase. If it is we are going to be bringing in that 300 additional during this fiscal term, is it that we will see that in the mid-year review?

**Hon. Hosein:** Well, that is normally the case. If we “doh” have enough funding, we seek additional funding at the mid-year review.

**Mr. Ratiram:** Thank you, Minister.

**Hon. Hosein:** You are welcome.

**Ms. Ameen:** Mr. Chairman, in 2020, you had an increased Estimate, but in 2020, you did not have an increase in expenditure. You were allocated 95 million, you spent 77 million. This is for this entire Vote right? So it may not only have to do with the municipal police?

**1.45 p.m.**

**Mr. Chairman:** Minister.

**Hon. Hosein:** Hon. Member, we had some arrears to pay, and we paid it off.

**Ms. Ameen:** Okay. And up to what date are you in terms of—what year salary are you paying?

**Mr. Chairman:** Minister.

**Hon. Hosein:** Up to this present year.

**Ms. Ameen:** Your last negotiation period?

**Hon. Hosein:** Yes.

**Ms. Ameen:** Okay.

**Mr. Chairman:** Sub-Head 02: Goods and Services, Item 001: General Administration, pages 252 and 253.

**Ms. Ameen:** 252, 02 Goods and—

**Mr. Chairman:** Member for St. Augustine.

**Ms. Ameen:** 02: Goods and Services, 08: Rent/Lease of Office Accommodation and Storage. We have a \$1 million there. Can the Minister indicate what facilities are rented to this cost?



**Mr. Chairman:** Minister.

**Hon. Hosein:** Trade Zone and the decentralization. The Trade Zone is where we have the archives from the Ministry and all the files and so which we cannot just get rid of, so there is a place in San Juan?—San Juan Trade Zone.

**Ms. Ameen:** And that is the only facility that the Ministry rents at cost or somehow?

**Hon. Hosein:** No. Yeah. I just said we have a decentralization building which is close to Kent House in front and we use that also.

**Ms. Ameen:** And is what totals this 1 million in rent every year?

**Hon. Hosein:** Yes.

**Ms. Ameen:** Okay.

**Mr. Chairman:** I recognize the Member for Moruga/Tableland.

**Ms. Benjamin:** Yes, Minister, 03, Uniforms. I saw an allocation of 12.5 million being estimated in 2020 and the revised reflecting 2.6 roughly. If the Minister could explain why this was not fully utilized seeing that local government is the first responder and with regard to having the proper uniforms?

**Hon. Hosein:** The hon. Member, this is for the police uniforms. We made the order, it was not delivered on time and we are awaiting it right now. There are ranks in the municipal police. Thank you.

**Mr. Chairman:** I recognize the Member for Couva North.

**Mr. Ratiram:** Thank you, Chairman. Item 17: Training, and the Actual figure in 2019 was 4.8 million and in 2020 we see a significant increase there of 7 million in Training. Can the hon. Minister indicate what additional training was supposed to be taking place in 2020?

**Mr. Chairman:** Minister.

**Hon. Hosein:** This Vote will be used to the municipal police training and staff at the head office.

**Mr. Ratiram:** So moving from 213 police officers to 750 police officers, while we would have estimated for it, we saw a decrease in the figures from 2019 to 2020 from 4.8 to 2.6 in the Revised Estimates. Is there an outstanding liability there that needs to be cleared? Or is it that the training did not in fact take place due to COVID?

**Hon. Hosein:** No, the training took place.

**Mr. Ratiram:** All right. And would the 2.6 estimated for 2021, would that sufficient to complete the training and complete training of the new recruits of 300 also?

**Hon. Hosein:** Hon. Member, one of the batches did not complete because of the COVID, so we had to push back. We had to hold on until they come.

**Mr. Ratiram:** I guess that is why we would not have seen the entire amount used.

**Hon. Hosein:** That is right. Yes.

**Mr. Ratiram:** All right? And would the hon. Minister advise if it is that the 2.6 would be sufficient to train all that is outstanding plus the new recruits?

**Hon. Hosein:** Yes. It will work because we our own—the municipal police have their own municipal academy now, so it will work. It is stationed in Marabella.

**Mr. Ratiram:** Thank you, Minister.

**Mr. Chairman:** I now recognize the Member for Chaguanas East.

**Ms. Mohit:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Minister, Item 03, Uniforms. You mentioned that the allocation would be utilized for municipal police uniforms. Can you identify which municipal stations would be receiving these uniforms? Seeing that we were in a pandemic I know some stations, some municipals stations within

our nation they have been requesting their uniforms due to, you know, limited amounts that they would have had in the past.

**Hon. Hosein:** Hon. Member, the funding in Uniforms is used also for messengers, drivers, vault attendants and the 14 municipal corporation officers around the country, the 14, and they were purchased in bulk.

**Ms. Mohit:** Yeah. But a follow-up question, Mr. Chair. In terms of the municipal stations which stations—would it be for all municipal stations?

**Hon. Hosein:** All.

**Ms. Mohit:** All?

**Hon. Hosein:** All.

**Hon. Hosein:** And just one follow-up. Mr. Minister, can you state if the Ministry is responsible for purchase of municipal uniforms solely and not the corporations?

**Hon. Hosein:** Last fiscal we got the allocation.

**Ms. Benjamin:** So the Ministry is responsible?

**Hon. Hosein:** Yes.

**Ms. Benjamin:** Thank you.

**Mr. Chairman:** Member for St. Augustine, I recognize you.

**Ms. Ameen:** Thank you. 253: Goods and Services, line 21, Repairs and Maintenance to Buildings, I see that you have a little \$20,000 allocated there. What repair and maintenance do you have budgeted for your building to the tune of \$20,000? What could that possibly be?

**Hon. Hosein:** Hon. Member, this Vote is used to do minor repairs at Kent House. Kent House is over 100 years old.

**Ms. Ameen:** Precisely, that is why I asked.

**Hon. Hosein:** Yeah. And there is another Vote with refurbishment of Kent House

in the tune of 1 million.

**Ms. Ameen:** Okay.

**Mr. Chairman:** I now recognize the Member or Couva North.

**Mr. Ratiram:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Minister, can you advise us with respect to the local government reform moving from how we are at present to what is being proposed in going forward, there would be some expenditures and personnel perhaps at committee that might be working on the transition and so forth. Can the hon. Minister—

**Mr. Imbert:** Can I ask what line Item is this, please?

**Mr. Ratiram:** It is—

**Mr. Chairman:** Hold on, one second. No. Finance Minister, he has five minutes. [*Crosstalk*] He has five minutes and then I will so decide. Go ahead.

**Mr. Ratiram:** Minister, Sir, I will help the Finance Minister.

**Mr. Chairman:** I am giving you the opportunity to proceed.

**Mr. Ratiram:** Thank you, Chair. Thank you. However, with respect to Items like Other Contracted Services, Item 08, 28 and all these other line Items, rental of building and so forth, there will be additional requirements to roll out the local government reform, and I know that is something very close to your heart because you continuously speak on the implementation of the local government reform. Can the hon. Minister advise us if there is any activities that we can see that will satisfy any of these line Items under this Head?

**Mr. Chairman:** I will not entertain that question. Right? You need to be specific with regard to the particular line Item, not a generalized statement as we go forward.

**Mr. Ratiram:** Thank you, Chair, and I will elaborate. All right. I am making

reference now to line Item 28: Other Contracted Services, if it is that we will require persons there, if it is under 22 Short-Term Employment. I make reference to line Item 08: Rent/Least Office Accommodation and Storage. Any one of these line Items, could the hon. Minister indicate if in the execution of his commitment to deliver the local government reform, if we will see any activity or perhaps revised in the mid-year review if we will see increases here?

**Hon. Hosein:** We got an allocation for local government reform so that will be utilized. It is not under the recurrent.

**Mr. Ratiram:** Okay. Thank you, Minister.

**Hon. Hosein:** You are welcome.

**Mr. Chairman:** St. Augustine.

**Ms. Ameen:** Mr. Minister, there is a line 458: Medical Expenses. In 2019, \$346,000 was expended under that Vote, in 2020, \$110, 000. In the last fiscal you had no expenditure under that Item and you have no allocation this year. Can you indicate what this Vote Medical Expenses is usually used for? And seeing that you have no allocation, what is the situation with that?

**Hon. Hosein:** All right. Thank you, hon. Member. To pay medical expenses for senior members of staff and for medicals for the newly appointed municipal police funds will be required under this Vote and it will be requested in the mid-year review.

**Ms. Ameen:** Mr. Chair—

**Mr. Chairman:** Member.

**Ms. Ameen:** Mr. Chairman, I just want it to be carefully noted that municipal police officers are at risk of being injured in their line of duty, and this Vote is important to ensure that our men and women who serve can be properly taken care

of if they are damaged in the line of duty.

**Mr. Chairman:** Any additional information here?

**Hon. Hosein:** I take note of the contribution and I will ensure that we take the necessary steps.

**Mr. Chairman:** I recognize the Member for Chaguanas East. Sub-Head 03: Minor Equipment Purchases, page 254; Item 001: General Administration. I recognize the Member for Tabaquite.

**Ms. Haynes:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I am on Item—under Minor Equipment Purchases line Item 04: Other Minor Equipment. I note that in the Estimates for 2020 was 23 million with a Revised Estimate being spent of 5 million for 2020. Could the Minister elaborate what purchases of minor equipment, what usually falls under this Vote for you that would serve the disparity between the Estimate of 23 million and only utilizing 5 million, and now subsequently being allocated just 3 million for fiscal 2021?

**Hon. Hosein:** Thank you, hon. Member, and this is for the procurement of equipment for municipal police. And this is also for the procurement of ammunition and bullet proof vests for the current officers.

**Mr. Chairman:** I recognize the Member for Oropouche West.

**Mr. Tancoo:** Thank you, Chair. I just want to go back to that same Item, Item 04, especially given that there was \$23.4 million Estimate for 2020. What was that for? Well, let me ask the question differently. There was an estimate of 23.4 which is significantly higher than was spent the year before which was 179,000. Of that 23.4 budgeted, only 500,000 was spent—sorry, 5 million was spent. So that leaves 18 million unspent. Can the Minister indicate what that 18 million was supposed to have been spent on that was not purchased?

**Hon. Hosein:** Okay. Hon. Member, thanks for the question. I would like to reiterate here, that the orders were made for firearms, et cetera, but because of the COVID we were not getting them in the country.

**Mr. Tancoo:** Thank you, Minister.

**Hon. Hosein:** You are welcome.

**2.00 p.m.**

**Mr. Chairman:** Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies; Item 001, Regional Bodies. Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.

**Mr. Lee:** 04, under Other Transfers, 04, Community Based Environment, CEPEP, Minister, in 2020 you had—

**Mr. Chairman:** One second—

**Mr. Lee:** Not there?

**Mr. Chairman:** So, you are ahead of us right now, Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.

**Mr. Lee:** Oh, sorry.

**Ms. Ameen:** 254.

**Mr. Chairman:** Member for St. Augustine, we are at Sub-Head 03. Sub-Head 04, Current Transfers and Subsidies.

**Ms. Ameen:** 04. Correct.

**Mr. Chairman:** 001, Regional Bodies.

**Ms. Ameen:** Yes. In our Regional Bodies, Mr. Chairman, we are a member of the Commonwealth Local Government Forum, and Trinidad and Tobago like other regions, other jurisdictions, we pay a membership fee. We have had numerous instances where our membership fee has gone into arrears. I observed that in 2019 we had 73,000 spent on this Vote; in 2020 no expenditure; in this year's allocation we have—

**Mr. Chairman:** 254?

**Ms. Ameen:** Yes, Current Transfers and Subsidies under 002, Commonwealth Bodies; 01, Commonwealth Local Government Forum.

**Mr. Chairman:** Okay, go ahead.

**Ms. Ameen:** I just want to ask the Minister, the fee for our membership is a standard fee. You have an inconsistency in the allocation and the spending in the three years that we have in front of us, and the allocation for this present year. I want to ask if our membership to the Commonwealth Local Government Forum is up-to-date, or if we are in arrears?

**Mr. Chairman:** The Minister.

**Hon. Hosein:** The annual fee is 182,200. That has been standard over the years. Okay sorry, in accordance with the Cabinet Minute 439 of April 2001, an annual membership fee is required and usually fluctuates. For fiscal 2019 to 2020 the cost was 39,722.00.

**Mr. Chairman:** Okay. Item 002, Commonwealth Bodies; Item 007, Households; Item 009, Other Transfers, and we are on page 255. Item, Pointe-a-Pierre you?

**Mr. Lee:** Minister, is it okay there?

**Mr. Chairman:** 04, right.

**Mr. Lee:** Yes. Minister, in 2020 the Ministry had budgeted 447 million and 2020 the revised was 400 million that was spent, so an increase of approximately 52 point something million, and the Estimate for 2021, again, is 400 million. Could the Minister advise, what was the reason for this increase of approximately 52 million firstly in CEPEP?

**Mr. Chairman:** Minister.

**Hon. Hosein:** Okay. Thank you very much, hon. Member. There was an increase



for workers and contractors. Yes, they had a 15 per cent increase, right. Contractors used to get 20,000 they are getting 23,000 now; operators which is the whackers and so on, they were getting 126, they are getting 145 now; foremen used to get 143.76, they are getting 165.31; and the labourers were getting \$90 and now they are getting \$123.78. So you have an increase in 15 per cent. That is why it went up.

**Mr. Lee:** Okay, I understood that, because that was one of the budget measures in the 2020 Budget.

**Mr. Chairman:** Correct. Yes, last budget.

**Mr. Lee:** So I was assuming when they would have done the Estimate in 2020 that that would have catered for that increase based on that 15 per cent or the new rates. It was not then.

**Hon. Hosein:** I have been advised, well, we got in the mid-year review, we got 57 million?

**Mr. Imbert:** Yes.

**Hon. Hosein:** 57 million.

**Mr. Lee:** Follow up question, Chair. During the fiscal year 2020, what is the labour force or the numbers in the CEPEP programme?

**Hon. Hosein:** It is contracted workers hon. Member, 9,840; internal, 148, bringing the total to 9,975 employees.

**Mr. Lee:** Okay.

**Mr. Chairman:** Member for Mayaro.

**Mr. Paray:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Minister, line Item 09/04., just to be clear. The \$50 million increase in allocation, the entire \$50 million is going towards an increase in the cost of labour, not an increase in the amount of what we

refer to as the CEPEP contractors or the CEPEP gangs as they say? Is it only for labour and not for the increase in gangs?

**Mr. Chairman:** Minister.

**Hon. Hosein:** Hon. Member, it is CEPEP teams, eh. We do not want to go into the gangs. So it is CEPEP teams, and I will give you—the increase was for the workers and the contractors and the management fees.

**Mr. Paray:** So, no increase in gangs?

**Hon. Hosein:** No.

**Mr. Paray:** Okay, strictly labour?

**Hon. Hosein:** Yes.

**Mr. Paray:** Now that being said Minister, in terms of, you have the CEPEP as a service throughout the country, is there a particular data set that you use to determine the amount of contractors in areas? Is it based on size, population? How do you determine whether one area needs four versus three versus two versus one?

**Mr. Chairman:** Minister.

**Hon. Hosein:** Hon. Member, I am being advised also that it is a combination of everything together. It is the contractors, the workers, the size of the community, things like that.

**Mr. Paray:** Last question on this, Mr. Chairman.

**Hon. Hosein:** Sure.

**Mr. Paray:** Taking what into consideration you said, and if I can use an example, for instance like the Mayaro constituency that is spread over 201 square miles. We have about 119 miles of roadway, but yet we have three CEPEP contractors that are servicing that entire region, which is quite inadequate. How does one rationalize what you have now said to the numbers that we have? Because it

creates quite a bit of problems for school children having to walk on the roads and so on. We have had incidents where—we have had a citizen bitten by a snake because there was no proper cleaning of some of the roadways about a year and a half ago. So, the question is Minister, how do we juxtapose what you have just said in terms of analysing how much workforce you put in an area, and using an example of we have three in Mayaro?

**Hon. Hosein:** Okay, hon. Member, I will get the figure for you. I think it is more than three, right.

**Mr. Paray:** Okay.

**Hon. Hosein:** But then we have the Ministry of Works and Transport cleaning the main streets, and then we have the corporation working. So there is a combination of the Ministry of Works and Transport, CEPEP, and the corporation.

**Mr. Paray:** Okay.

**Hon. Hosein:** Right. So we have a full force.

**Mr. Paray:** Okay, thank you.

**Mr. Chairman:** Chaguanas East, Member, you—Member for Chaguanas East.

**Ms. Mohit:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, Minister, could you provide—I know you may not be able to now but if possible—the CEPEP teams by constituencies for us so that we are able to know how many per constituency?

**Hon. Hosein:** Yes, that would be provided for you.

**Ms. Mohit:** Thank you.

**Hon. Hosein:** On timely basis.

**Mr. Chairman:** Member for St. Augustine.

**Ms. Ameen:** Mr. Chairman, the request from my colleague kind of covers the question I wanted to ask, because I want to ask about fair and equitable distribution

of CEPEP labour and the service that CEPEP provides throughout the country and throughout all constituencies. So when we get the reply on the number of teams in each constituency, expect some follow-up questions.

**Mr. Chairman:** It will be provided.

**Ms. Ameen:** No, in using the Parliament—

**Mr. Chairman:** Member for Couva North.

**Mr. Ratiram:** Thank you, Chair.

**Mr. Chairman:** Okay, Members.

**Mr. Ratiram:** Thank you, Chair. Chairman, I make reference to Item 04, Community Based Environment Protection and Enhancement Programmes, CEPEP. The actual figure of 2019 was 353 million and now a Revised Estimate of 2020, Minister, it was 400 million, and it is more or less the same figure for this year. However, it is my understanding, and you will guide me if I am inaccurate, that the number of teams that we would have had to service in the constituency of Couva North has declined, while we are seeing an increase in the allocation and the Revised Estimates. The figures do not reflect that on the ground, and we have a lot of corporate citizens coming forward to assist us, like Price Club and so forth. We say thank you to all the corporate citizens who assist us in executing the work that these teams are supposed to be providing. Can the hon. Minister advise if he has any knowledge in the reduction of the teams in Couva North, and if there is any plans to re-establish these teams?

**Mr. Chairman:** One second. Member, again, through a question raised by your colleague, Chaguanas East, a comprehensive list, plus also the Member for St. Augustine, seeking a list by constituencies, with regard to the CEPEP contractors. So, I think your question is along basically that same line, even though you may be

asking it for your particular constituency. Right? So that list would be provided as requested by your further two colleagues.

**Mr. Ratiram:** Well, more than just the list, Mr. Chairman. If I may, I am simply under this Item highlighting to the Minister that if it is in fact accurate that the team has been reduced, what I am asking from the Minister, is if he can indicate any intention with this increase here to return the team to the constituency?

**Mr. Chairman:** Again, if accurate, when provided, when I say, the hon. Members would then see what their constituencies have in terms of contracts, and then, you know, we would take it from there.

**Mr. Ratiram:** But will we have this opportunity to have the conversation with the hon. Minister? I thought this was the forum for this conversation under this line Item.

**Mr. Chairman:** No. So, let me be clear on the question that you asked. Ask your question, Member.

**Mr. Ratiram:** Hon. Minister, do you understand what I asked or would you like me to repeat?

**Mr. Chairman:** Again, please repeat the question.

**Mr. Ratiram:** Sure, Chairman. Hon. Minister, in 2019 the actual spend for 2019 was 353 million, however what we see is an increase from the actual spend of 2019 to 2021 Estimate of 400 million. There is an increase in what was actually spent in '19 to what we are actually budgeting for this year. Does this increase facilitate the return of the CEPEP team that has been removed from the Couva North constituency?

**Mr. Chairman:** Hold on. Minister of Finance, make a comment on this?

**Mr. Imbert:** Yes. All right, an explanation. In the 2020 budget we announced an

increase in wages for CEPEP workers and also an increase in the fees given to CEPEP contractors, a 15 per cent increase. That took effect in fiscal 2020, and therefore the expenditure in 2020 would naturally have been more than the expenditure in fiscal 2019. It is as simple as that.

**Mr. Ratiram:** Mr. Chair, just to follow up. When we see an increase in spending the citizens anticipate an increase in productivity. We cannot have an increase in spending here in CEPEP and teams being reduced, and less productivity within what is happening at the ground level.

**Mr. Chairman:** And again, I understand—

**Mr. Ratiram:** So, the Finance Minister—

**Mr. Chairman:**—hon. Member.

**Mr. Ratiram:** —explained something but he did not give the hon. Minister the opportunity to advise if this increase also facilitated the return of the team to Couva North.

**Mr. Chairman:** Okay, point noted. Oropouche West. Member for Oropouche West.

**Mr. Tancoo:** Asked and answered.

**Mr. Chairman:** Member for Mayaro.

**Mr. Paray:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Minister, just again line Item 09/04, just a follow up to the last response you gave me. I am taking into consideration that as you said, that state agencies are responsible for the maintenance of the roadway, do you know if there is a coordinating unit within those three organizations that determines or have a plan of action to ensure that the vast majority of the roadway gets cleared, for the limited funds that each organization would have, and if there is none would you be willing to put

something like that together for the benefit of constituents throughout the country?

**2.15 p.m.**

**Hon. Hosein:** Hon. Member, that is a very good question and I want to let you know today that the Ministry of Works and Transport has been liaising with CEPEP company and the corporations have been liaising with the CEPEP company. So we would not have any duplication of work along the line. When you look at it, the bottom line is cleaning, cleaning the main road ways and the thoroughfares and the side streets and so on, parks, play fields, communities, you know.

**Mr. Paray:** So just to confirm, there is a coordination happening between these three agencies.

**Hon. Hosein:** CEPEP has been cleaning not efficiently in one community but the whole of Trinidad and Tobago. And every one—[*Desk thumping*]

**Mr. Paray:** I just wanted to find out.

**Hon. Hosein:** And every one of us sitting here could testify to CEPEP does a good work in the community. [*Desk thumping*]

**Mr. Paray:** Absolutely. I applaud them as well, Minister. I just wanted to find out if you have confirmed a little while ago that there is coordination—

**Hon. Hosein:** Yes.

**Mr. Paray:**—between the three units and I am satisfied with that response.

**Hon. Hosein:** Yes. But Member, I know for a fact that Members sitting here, both sides, call the CEPEP company. I said there is a football match here or a picnic here or something happening and they get the CEPEP team in the area to go down and clean it. And it happens all over.

**Mr. Chairman:** Thanks, Mr. Minister.

**Ms. Ameen:** Chair—

**Mr. Chairman:** Member for St. Augustine.

**Ms. Ameen:** Chair, I just want to return—I acknowledge the Minister’s answer. The question has to do with duplication and possibly areas being neglected. The regional corporations have a responsibility to clean roads, the same roads that CEPEP has a responsibility to clean. The issue really is the coordination between all the agencies that have a responsibility to clean the same roads that CEPEP is assigned to. If the regional corporations have a coordinating mechanism with CEPEP, so that they would not have duplication, but I can tell you that is not what is happening on the ground. Because you will have CEPEP in an area, the regional corporation in that same area and you may even have URP working in that same area doing the same work. So the issue here has to do with what mechanisms are there in place to avoid duplication of resources when it comes to CEPEP going into areas to do their work.

**Hon. Hosein:** As I said before, there is coordination. Probably there needs to be more coordination but there is coordination where CEPEP clean the side roads and so on, and the Ministry of Works and Transport clean the main roads, and the highways, and the corporations clean where they are supposed to clean.

**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you, Mr. Minister. Item 011: Transfers to State Enterprises. Member for Tabaquite.

**Ms. Haynes:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I see here under line Item 03: Rural Development Company of Trinidad and Tobago , the Revised Estimate for 2020 was 389,000 with no estimates for 2021. The Ministry is the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government. Can you tell me what is going on with this Rural Development Company of Trinidad and Tobago?



**Mr. Chairman:** Mr. Minister, we are on—oh you made a switch there. We are on page 255, line Item 03—

**Ms. Haynes:** Rural Development Company of Trinidad and Tobago.

**Mr. Chairman:** Rural Development Company.

**Hon. Hosein:** Yes.

**Mr. Chairman:** You care to just repeat the question, Member for Tabaquite—

**Ms. Haynes:** Yes.

**Mr. Chairman:**—just for the record.

**Ms. Haynes:** So I am seeing no estimated allocation for fiscal 2021. And I am asking what is the position with the Rural Development Company?—as it is meant to play a pivotal role in the development of our rural communities.

**Hon. Hosein:** This will be financed off budget, hon. Member.

**Ms. Haynes:** So we will find it in the—

**Mr. Imbert:** In 2020 we financed a number of projects for the Rural Development Company and other state enterprises using loan financing which would not appear in the estimates. We intend to do the same thing for the Rural Development Company in 2021.

**Ms. Haynes:** Thank you, Minister of Finance. Can I ask—

**Mr. Chairman:** Follow-up question.

**Ms. Haynes:** Whatever question on line Item 09: The National Reforestation and Watershed. Yes, so we are seeing an increase of \$65 million for 2021. Could the Minister account for this increase for this particular programme?

**Mr. Imbert:** We plan to plant more trees.

**Ms. Haynes:** You plan to plant \$65 million worth of trees, Minister of Finance?

**Mr. Imbert:** Yes, yes.

**Ms. Haynes:** Well done.

**Mr. Imbert:** Yes.

**Ms. Haynes:** Well done. I do not know if the Minister of Local Government would care to elaborate on—[*Crosstalk*]

**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you, thank you, Minister of Finance, but I would like to hear the Minister of Rural Development and Local Government.

**Hon. Hosein:** Hon. Member, this programme is aimed at establishing and maintaining forest plantation on state land and designated park sites throughout the community. As you might know or hon. Members might know, this was passed on to the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries in April this year. So the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government, it started in June this year. So it is a couple months only in the Rural Development Company.

**Ms. Haynes:** Okay thank you. Well now I have a very specific question because the Brothers Road arm of this programme has been stopped since the beginning of this year and they have asked me to seek a specific update about the Brothers Road arm of the Reforestation on Watershed Rehabilitation Programme.

**Hon. Hosein:** Hon. Member, it is being reviewed right now because only two months it is by us and your recommendation is welcome from a national perspective.

**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you. I now recognize the Member for Princes Town. Member for Princes Town.

**Mr. Padarath:** Hon. Minister, line Item 09: National Reforestation Watershed Rehabilitation Programme. In light of the answer that you provided to the Member for Tabaquite, the question that I have is that last year we saw, and it was highly publicized that there were a number of protest and so on, from contractors who had

outstanding fees owed to them under this particular programme. Is the Minister in a position to indicate whether or not these fees have been settled or whether or not this increase of 65 million represents a figure that would cover outstanding fees that have not been paid?

**Mr. Chairman:** Mr. Minister.

**Hon. Hosein:** Hon. Member, as I said before the programme has been transferred to June this year. Since then everybody has been paid up-to-date and the Rural Development Company intends to review to see how we could better the programme.

**Mr. Padarath:** Sure. Minister, would you be able to give us the undertaking as well that, probably if you do not have it with you if you can give us it in writing, what is the criteria for selecting contractors for this particular programme seeing that it is now moved from agriculture to your Ministry, it may have a different mandate.

**Hon. Hosein:** Hon. Member, I assure you this will be provided to you in writing.

**Mr. Padarath:** Thank you.

**Mr. Chairman:** Member for St. Augustine.

**Ms. Ameen:** Mr. Chairman, planting more trees, although it is very commendable thing, I want to ask with this significant increase to \$85 million what is guiding this programme in terms of what data is guiding this programme and what areas are going to be targeted. I know it is something you may want to provide in writing but if you have the answer now and you could advise us. Do you have a study that provided that data? How did you come up on the areas that you will target for this reforestation programme?

**Hon. Hosein:** Hon. Member, the Ministry—

**Mr. Chairman:** One second, Minister.

**Hon. Hosein:** The Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries advises the reforestation programme.

**Ms. Ameen:** Okay, I appreciate that, but I know that the programme has moved to your Ministry now. So if at later at any point you could provide that information I will appreciate it.

**Mr. Chairman:** Attorney General.

**Mr. Al-Rawi:** I am just a little confused for your guidance please. Policy has nothing to do with line Items. The Minister is here to speak about the estimated expenditure on a particular line Items. The forestry programme has existed for a very long time based upon an inter-operation with the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries. It has always been the case. So to ask for a policy document in the course of a line Item examination, Mr. Chair, just seems unusually out of place.

**Ms. Ameen:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I think the Minister understood my question—

**Mr. Chairman:** Fair enough.

**Ms. Ameen:**—and he has agreed to provide the information.

**Mr. Chairman:** Thanks for that input, Mr. AG. Member for Oropouche West, Member.

**Mr. Tancoo:** Thank you, Chair. Just to expand on the request from my colleague for Princes Town, if the Minister in addition to providing the criteria for the selection of contractors, can also provide two additional places of information. One is the listing of the existing contractors and two, the areas in which this Reforestation and Watershed Rehabilitation Programme exist in terms of constituencies, because my own constituency is one of those which had perennial flooding and I would like to know specifically if any of this work is going to be

done in the constituency of Oropouche West.

**Mr. Chairman:** Mr. Minister.

**Hon. Hosein:** We would look at it but this will be done nationally, but it will be looked at. It will be looked at and this programme is done nationally.

**Mr. Tancoo:** I take it to your word. Thank you very much, Minister.

**Hon. Hosein:** You are welcome, Sir.

**Mr. Chairman:** Member for Couva North.

**Mr. Ratiram:** I was asking for the same list of the contractors so I guess the Minister will provide it.

**Mr. Chairman:** Okay, it will be provided. I recognize the Member for St. Augustine.

**Ms. Ameen:** Thank you. Mr. Chairman, under this Item the RDC is listed but I know that under Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government, you also have CISL and I think it is Palo Seco, another special purpose company. [*Crosstalk*] Can you advise where it is gone if it no longer in the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government.

**Mr. Chairman:** Minister.

**Hon. Hosein:** Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries.

**Mr. Chairman:** They have been transferred, okay, Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries.

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*. Item 23: Port of Spain City Corporation, Sub-Head 01: Personal Expenditure, page 2-3-2; page 232. Item 01: General Administration, page 232. Member for Couva North.

**Mr. Ratiram:** Would the Minister be able to advise the number of burgesses that this overall spend is benefit?

**Mr. Chairman:** Now again Member, it must relate to a specific line Item. You are making general request in terms of the number of burgesses within the region.

**Mr. Ratiram:** Okay, so the personnel expenditure.

**Mr. Chairman:** Line Item, Member.

**Mr. Ratiram:** Just one second.

**2.30 p.m.**

**Mr. Chairman:** Remember, it would be specific in order to the particular Port of Spain City Corporation, not necessarily in terms of the burgesses but in the terms of the employees on the information provided in the Estimates. Any other Member?

**Mr. Ratiram:** Yes, Mr. Chair. So I am dealing with Personnel 01; 001: General Administration.

**Mr. Chairman:** Right.

**Mr. Ratiram:** Could the Minister advise the number of burgesses that will benefit from this spend?

**Mr. Imbert:** Mr. Chairman, I object—

**Mr. Ratiram:** Would local government refer to the citizens as burgesses?

**Mr. Imbert:**—this is a line Item for Personnel Expenditure. This has nothing to do with that.

**Mr. Chairman:** Okay. Okay, Mr. Minister. Again, Member, as I identified to you just now, it does not pertain to this particular aspect. Any other Member? Item—Member for St. Augustine.

**Ms. Ameen:** Mr. Chairman, line 03: Overtime - Monthly Paid Officers. In 2020,

there was an allocation of \$150,000, however, we see a dash under Revised Estimates and there is also no allocation for this present fiscal. I know that the Government would be trying to reduce overtime work to reduce costs, however I know that in the City there are a number of night-time activities, for instance, scavenging and so on that take place. Can the Minister indicate what the reason for there being no expenditure in the last fiscal? Is it that there was absolutely no overtime that was done or do you perhaps have some outstanding requests for releases at the Ministry that might account for this?

**Mr. Chairman:** Minister.

**Hon. Hosein:** Hon. Member, this is for monthly paid officers and they usually do not get paid overtime. They get compensatory leave.

**Ms. Ameen:** And I have a question on Item 13, Mr. Chair.

**Mr. Chairman:** Go ahead, Member.

**Ms. Ameen:** Remuneration to Council Members. The allocation to pay council members would be standard unless there is an increase in the number of members of council, however, in 2019, you spent 1.8 million; 2020, your allocation was the same amount that you spent in 2019, however, there was a decrease, it is 1.7 million in 2020. Can the Minister account for that inconsistency? The amount has gone down.

**Mr. Chairman:** Minister.

**Hon. Hosein:** Hon. Member, the salaries are fixed with the Salaries Review Commission, and these are the fixed amounts that we got based on that. That is from the Budgets department.

**Ms. Ameen:** But you did not have a reduction in the number of councillors and you did not have a reduction in the remuneration to each member of council.

**Hon. Hosein:** Well, it worked in 2020.

**Ms. Ameen:** I am asking this question because I am aware that there are some corporations who would have made requests for releases under different Votes and the releases were not made, and they would then have to vire money and so on. So I am asking because in each—this Item, Remuneration to Council Members, is an Item that you can budget exactly for because you will know the number of council members and you know their remuneration. So the fact that the Revised Estimates has decreased is something that I would like you to pay some attention to.

**Mr. Chairman:** Minister.

**Hon. Hosein:** Hon Member, I will look into this and I will get back to you. We have different theories. Probably it is the chairman's allowance and so on, but I want to be more specific. Okay?

**Mr. Chairman:** Item 002. Couva North, on this same line Item?

**Mr. Ratiram:** Thank you. Item 01: Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance; Item 02: Wages and C.O.L.A. Can the hon. Minister advise the number of employees at the Port of Spain City Corporation monthly paid and daily-rated?

**Mr. Chairman:** The Minister.

**Hon. Hosein:** Hon. Member, I will definitely have to get that information to you because—

**Mr. Ratiram:** Thank you.

**Hon. Hosein:**—these 14 corporations are like 14 mini Ministries. So I will have to get the exact figures for you. [*Interruption*] Yeah, a report was laid. A report was laid.

**Mr. Chairman:** Item 002: Public Health and Disposal; Item 003: Abattoirs, Markets and Dining Shed; Item 004: Transport and Cleansing, page 233. Item 005:



Squares, Playgrounds and Trees; Item 006: Stores, Works and Repairs; Item 007: Cemeteries and Crematorium; Item 008: Woodbrook Estate, page 234.

Sub-Head 02: Goods and Services. Item 001: General Administration, page 234, and I recognize the Member for St. Augustine.

**Ms. Ameen:** Thank you. Mr. Chair, under this Item I want to bring two line Items to the attention of the Minister if you would allow me to. Item 16 which is Contract Employment, in 2020 there was an allocation of 506,000. None of that was spent; none of it was utilized. Under Short-term Employment you also had 2 million being allocated—we had a lil decent spending there, 1.8 million—but under Other Contracting Services—I am bringing these Votes to your attention, Mr. Minister, because in regional corporations they reached to the smallest man on the street and I know that the Government has indicated a freeze in hiring in the public service. But under Contract Employment if you are denying a corporation their allocation to hire people to do menial work, then that is an opportunity for employment that you are losing. So I am particularly concerned about this 506,000 that was not spent or not released to the corporation.

**Mr. Chairman:** You have a specific question, Member? I am not clear on the direct question.

**Ms. Ameen:** Yes. The question is: \$506,000 which was allocated in year 2020 under Contract Employment, line 16, can the Minister account for why the Revised Estimate is nil?

**Hon. Hosein:** Hon. Member, this Contract Employment is where the Mayor's staff is employed. This is used to pay the Mayor's staff and I do not know if they used it for this year 2020, but I will research it and get back to you.

**Mr. Chairman:** I recognize the Member for Oropouche West.

**Mr. Tancoo:** Thank you, Chair. Hon. Minister, I am at 06: Water and Sewerage Rates. I note in 2019 the rates were paid at \$3,436 with an Estimate of 3,000 for 2020. However, \$69 is listed here as the amount of money budgeted for 2020 and the same figure for 2021. Is that an error or is that the actual payment to WASA?

**Mr. Chairman:** Minister.

**Hon. Hosein:** Okay. Well, I will have to research this also and get back to you. If it is not the right amount we will have to get it from the review, the midterm review.

**Ms. Ameen:** Mr. Chair, now might be a good time to let the Minister know that in every regional corporation you had either a zero or very minuscule amount being put in there to pay WASA bills and I do not know if it has been brought to your attention, but I do not know if the Minister of Finance might have an explanation as to why we have no allocation here. I am just bringing it to your attention.

**Hon. Member:** It is standard.

**Ms. Ameen:** It is standard, yes. They usually get a standard amount—

**Mr. Imbert:** I would just like to make a general comment.

**Ms. Ameen:**—but they have no allocation. We will see it when we go on later on.

**Mr. Chairman:** The Minister of Finance will make a comment.

**Mr. Imbert:** I would just like to make a general comment. All of these Items in all of these book are simply Estimates. The head of a department with the accounting officer—let me correct myself. The accounting officer can vire funds within a Sub-Head. If something is required to be moved from one Sub-Head to another, it requires the approval of the Minister of Finance. So there is a lot of flexibility. I get requests for transfers all the time, and the Permanent Secretaries and the accounting officers, they do their own virements from time to time. So that even

though there are allocations here this is not cast in stone. Secondly—the money can be reallocated.

Secondly, the whole purpose of the mid-year review is to look at actual requirements of departments, statutory bodies and Ministries and determine whether they have excess funds or inadequate funds and make appropriate adjustments in the mid-year. So that even if you see a small number here for something like this, you have to look at the entire Sub-Head and see the total amount available, and you will see that there is adequate funding there within the first six months of the year to vire or transfer to deal with the matter at hand. So it is not something that is absolute. I get the impression Members believe these figures are absolute, that you have \$69 here, it means that is all you could possible spend in the fiscal. That is not so. It is just a guide.

**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you for the clarity. I recognize the Member for Oropouche West.

**Mr. Tancoo:** Thank you, Chair. Minister, the reason we are querying the figures quite frankly, is because these Estimates must be based on something. The Estimates are just not figures thrown in there and oftentimes it is based on historical costs, and the history has been \$3,000-odd, in this particular line Item 06, \$3,000-odd. So an allocation in a financial year, a budget which is \$69, clearly it strikes a reason for concern.

**Mr. Chairman:** Okay. Thanks for your comment, Member. Item 002: Public Health and Disposal, page 235. I recognize the Member for Couva North.

**Ms. Ameen:** No, I had a question on 234. All right, go ahead.

**Mr. Ratiram:** I was seeking your attention for Item 23—

**Mr. Chairman:** The previous Item?

**Mr. Ratiram:** Item 23/02/001.

**Mr. Chairman:** On what page you are at?

**Mr. Ratiram:** Page 234.

**Mr. Chairman:** Okay, go ahead. Proceed, Member.

**2.45 p.m.**

**Mr. Ratiram:** Yes. Can the Minister provide us with a detail of the fees that were actually paid out, to whom and for what?

**Mr. Chairman:** That is Item 23: Fees.

**Mr. Ratiram:** In writing.

**Mr. Chairman:** Minister, Item 23: Fees.

**Hon. Hosein:** Yeah, we will provide that.

**Mr. Ratiram:** Thank you.

**Hon. Hosein:** And that will include legal fees and other fees as well.

**Mr. Ratiram:** Thank you. Item 28: Other Contracted Services, the actual spend for 2019 was 1,094,000 Can the Minister explain what these other contracted services would have been for that actual spend?

**Hon. Hosein:** Any minor works to be done within the corporation, they usually go to this Vote to have it done under General Administration.

**Mr. Ratiram:** The Estimate, however, for 2021 is significantly lower to what was actually spent in 2019. Can the Minister explain why the significant reduction in this Vote?

**Hon. Hosein:** Hon. Member, as we go forward, you will see, especially this year, there have been a lot of reductions because of the economic situation, one and the COVID situation, two.

**Mr. Chairman:** Item 002: Public Health and Disposal. Member for St. Augustine.

**Ms. Ameen:** Mr. Chairman, I am just taking the opportunity to point out to the Minister that, again, you have no allocation to pay WASA bills for the regional corporation here. But I also want to go to line Item 13, Maintenance of Vehicles, there is a paltry \$6,500 allocated for the maintenance of vehicles— the public health vehicles in this corporation. Can the Minister share with us what would have accounted for that being reduced from 200,000 in the previous year of which 194,000 was spent?

**Mr. Chairman:** Minister.

**Hon. Hosein:** Yes, Member. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. These are Estimates and if additional funding is needed, especially for the public health or the maintenance of vehicles, et cetera, we will request the extra funding. Because I have been going through these books and we had a lot of decreases and I looked at it to be the economic situation that we are in right now.

**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you. Member for Couva North.

**Mr. Ratiram:** Thank you, Chairman. I would like to bring the Minister's attention to the line Item 10: Office Stationery and Supplies. I understand what the Minister would have indicated with respect to the difficult financial period that we are in, however, an allocation of \$187 for the entire fiscal term is something that is highly questionable because I am certain the department will require more than this, taking into consideration the actual spend of 2019 was 48,000. Can the Minister explain if this figure is actually an error?

**Mr. Chairman:** Member, you are on page—what page you are on?

**Mr. Ratiram:** Page 235, Item 10: Office Stationery and Supplies. We have moved from 48,000 to \$187. So is that a typographical error?

**Mr. Chairman:** Again, based on the comment made by the Minister of Finance

just recently on making a general comment— am I to say, Mr. Minister, the same thing goes here? Again, as the Minister said, transfers, vires can be made appropriately by making a request by the accounting officers. Member for Chaguanas East. Okay, you are fine.

Item 003: Abattoirs, Markets and Dinning Shed; Item 004: Transport and Cleansing; Item 005, Squares, Playgrounds and Trees, we are now on page 236; Item 006: Stores, Works and Repairs, page 236 and 237; Item 007: Cemeteries and Crematorium; Item 008, Woodbrook Estate.

Sub-Head 03: Minor Equipment Purchases; Item 001: General Administration; Item 002: Public Health; Item 003: Abattoirs, Markets and Dinning Shed, page 238; Item 004: Transport and Cleansing; Item 005: Squares, Playgrounds and Trees; Item 006: Stores, Works and Repairs; Item 007, Cemeteries and Crematorium.

We are on page 239. Sub-Head 04: Current Transfers and Subsidies; Item 007: Households; Item 009, Other Transfers.

We now move to 24 - San Fernando City Corporation. Sub-Head 01: Personnel Expenditure, page 250; Item 001: General Administration; Item 002: City and Departments of Maintenance; Item 003: Institutions; Item 004: Parks, Playgrounds and Cemeteries, page 251; Item 005: Transport; Item 006: Local Health Authority.

Sub-Head 02: Goods and Services; Item 001: General Administration, pages 251 and 252. Member for Couva North.

**Mr. Ratiram:** Thank you, Chair. I make reference to Item 03: Uniforms. Can the hon. Minister advise what is the obligation that the Ministry has with respect to the provision of uniforms to its workers? Is it one uniform per year, two per year?

**Mr. Chairman:** What page are you on, Member?

**Mr. Ratiram:** 251, 02: Good and Services; 001: General Administration; 03: Uniforms.

**Mr. Chairman:** Okay. The question is?

**Mr. Ratiram:** The question is, what is the obligation towards the provision of this uniform?

**Mr. Chairman:** Minister.

**Hon. Hosein:** This is used, hon. Member, for uniforms for drivers, messengers and maids.

**Mr. Ratiram:** And could the Minister advise what is the obligation? Is it that we provide uniforms once for the year, twice for the year?

**Hon. Hosein:** Once for the year.

**Mr. Ratiram:** What I am seeing here is a significant increase from the actual spent of 2019 to the 2021 Estimate from 142,000 to 420. Is it that we recruited a significant number of persons that we needed to provide uniforms for?

**Hon. Hosein:** This includes drivers, you know, Member. This includes monthly-paid drivers also, you know.

**Mr. Ratiram:** So it would be the same number of persons in 2019 and then, in 2020? So if it is the same number of persons and it is the same number of uniforms that we are actually purchasing every year, why the significant difference in the figures?

**Hon. Hosein:** Member, if more is necessary and this is the stand that we will take, that we will ask for more in the mid-year review because I work very closely with all the mayors and chairmen and councillors so I have a first-hand knowledge of what they need and what they do not need and they get my support, whatever

corporation they belong to across the board—[*Interruption*]—across the board.

**Ms. Ameen:** The question might be if you have the support of the Minister—

**Mr. Chairman:** Hold on, Member for St. Augustine.

**Ms. Ameen:**—of Finance to give you additional.

**Mr. Chairman:** Item 002: City and Departments of Maintenance; Item 003: Institutions, page 253; Item 004: Parks, Playgrounds and Cemeteries; Item 005: Transport; Item 006: Local Health Authority, page 254.

Sub-Head 03: Minor Equipment Purchases; Item 001: General Administration; Item 002: City and Department of Maintenance; Item 003: Institutions, page 255; Item 004: Parks, Playgrounds and Cemeteries, page 255; Item 005: Transport; Item 006: Local Health Authority.

Sub-Head 04: Current Transfers and Subsidies; Item 005: Institutions; Item 007: Households, 256; Item 009: Other Transfers.

And we will now move to 25 - Arima Borough Corporation and we are on page 267. Sub-Head 01: Personnel Expenditure; Item 001: General Administration; Item 002: Public Health; Item 003: Markets and Abattoirs; Item 004: Parks and Recreation Grounds; Item 005: Works, page 268.

Sub-Head 02: Goods and Services; Item 001: General Administration; Item 002: Public Health, page 269; Item 003: Markets and Abattoirs; Item 004: Parks and Recreation Grounds; Item 005: Works, page 270.

**3.00 p.m.**

Sub-Head 03: Minor Equipment Purchases. Item 001: General Administration; Item 002: Public Health; Item 004: Parks and Recreation Grounds; Item 005: Works, page 271. Sub-Head 04: Current Transfers and Subsidies; Item 007: Households; Item 009: Other Transfers.



We now move to 26: Point Fortin Borough Corporation, page 279, 2-7-9. Sub-Head 01: Personnel Expenditure, Item 001: General Administration; Item 002: Local Health Authority; Item 003: Public Places; Item 004: Transport and Roads. Sub-Head 02: Goods and Services; Item 001: General Administration, page 280. I recognize the Member for St. Augustine.

**Ms. Ameen:** Mr. Chairman, this corporation has no allocation at all for natural disasters, 46.

**Mr. Chairman:** 46?

**Ms. Ameen:** The market just blow away last week. The whole market blow away.

**Mr. Chairman:** And the question is, no allocations. Mr. Minister.

**Hon. Hosein:** Mr. Chairman, to the hon. Member, I will have to find out and get back to her because most of the corporations got for disaster management.

**Mr. Chairman:** Item 002: Local Health Authority; Item 003: Public Places; Item 004: Transport and Roads. Sub-Head 02: Goods and Services, page 280; Item 001: General Administration; Item 002: Local Health Authority, page 281; Item 003: Public Places; Item 004: Transport and Roads; Item 005: Corporation Properties, page 282.

Sub-Head 03: Minor Equipment Purchases; Item 001: General Administration; Item 002: Local Health Authority; Item 003: Upkeep of Public Places; Item 004: Transport and Roads, page 283; Item 005: Corporation Properties. Sub-Head 04: Current Transfers and Subsidies; Item 007: Households; Item 009: Other Transfers.

We now move to 27: Chaguanas Borough Corporation, and we are on page 289. Sub-Head 01: Personnel Expenditure; Item 001: General Administration, page 289. And I recognize the Member for Chaguanas East.

**Ms. Mohit:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Under Item 01: Personnel Expenditure: 001 General Administration. Mr. Chair, through you, Mr. Minister, in terms of Chaguanas Borough Corporation where you have at least four officers at best to perform the statutory obligations of the corporation, I am not going back to San Fernando but if you look at San Fernando in terms of their technical and clerical support all put together it is 23 positions, whereas Chaguanas at least has four to five. What is being done to deal with this imbalance in staffing? What does your Ministry have in place in terms of designing, you know, manpower plans to deal with this disparity within the Chaguanas Borough Corporation? Because this would definitely impact on the submission of timely estimates et cetera, to your Ministry and the Ministry of Finance to get funding on time?

**Mr. Chairman:** Mr. Minister.

**Hon. Hosein:** I was just advised by the PS that this will be addressed. The manpower audit is part of the reform that is to come.

**Ms. Mohit:** How soon, Mr. Minister? A follow up question, Mr. Chairman.

**Hon. Hosein:** Each corporation has an allocation under Transformation.

**Ms. Mohit:** Under Transformation. This will deal with WS III positions, et cetera?

**Hon. Hosein:** Right, well the manpower audit will deal with the needs of the corporation—

**Ms. Mohit:** Um hmm.

**Hon. Hosein:**—and from there we would know where we going from there.

**Ms. Mohit:** What is your time line for these events?

**Hon. Hosein:** Some of the corporations have started already. I do not know if Chaguanas has started, but the corporations have the obligation to have it done. So I do not know if Chaguanas started as yet. Chaguanas has not started as yet.

**Ms. Mohit:** But there have been, Mr. Chairman, if you would allow me? There have been requests for positions to be filled within the Chaguanas Borough Corporation going to the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government in terms of carrying out the statutory obligations which has not been fulfilled. There have been requests.

**Hon. Hosein:** That is monthly paid?

**Ms. Mohit:** Yes, inclusive of technical support.

**Hon. Hosein:** Monthly paid is dealt with by the Statutory Service Commission, not at the Ministry level.

**Ms. Mohit:** But sometimes through you, Mr. Chair, based on seniority persons are sent to various corporations. So if there is a WS III for example, Mr. Chairman, lacking you would have that filled.

**Hon. Hosein:** That is about acting positions in a higher position?

**Ms. Mohit:** Yes, at times.

**Hon. Hosein:** It would work like that.

**Ms. Mohit:** Um hmm. Mr. Chairman, thanks.

**Mr. Chairman:** Member for St. Augustine.

**Ms. Ameen:** Mr. Chairman, just to add to what my colleague is saying, there is an area in this booklet that we do not look at, but it is printed there and it has to do with the staff complement. And we only look at the allocation in terms of financial allocation, but I have observed that Arima Borough for instance which we just completed had about 25 additional persons coming from different Ministries, monthly paid officers that are assigned to the corporation that improves its strength, its manpower and its technical capabilities as well.

So in reflecting on the contribution of my colleague from Chaguanas East, if

this is a policy approach of the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government to provide support in terms of monthly paid staff where it is seriously lacking in regional corporations, then it must be so across the board and not only in specific corporations. And the lack that my colleague speaks of can be addressed in that way and maybe the Minister can pay some attention to that.

**Mr. Chairman:** Item 002: Cemeteries, we are on 289, all right Members, 289. Item 003: Markets and Abattoirs; Item 004: Maintenance of Buildings, Grounds and Pastures; Item 005: Local Health Authority; Item 006: Maintenance of State Traces, Local Roads, et cetera, page 290. Sub-Head 02: Goods and Services: Item 001: General Administration. Member for Chaguanas East.

**Ms. Mohit:** Thank you again, Mr. Chair. Mr. Minister, 02, 12: Materials and Supplies, the Revised Estimates for 2020 would have been \$80,000 and 2021 you have the same \$80,000, which is a decrease from the Estimates for 2020 which was originally 200,000. Mr. Chairman, why this decrease? And Mr. Minister, what are the expectations of the CDC seeing that municipal corporations are identified as essential, in terms of services provided to citizens in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic?

**Hon. Hosein:** In the economic situation, some areas you have to prioritize which we want more, which we need, because there are other Votes here you know, Markets and Abattoirs, this is specific to the General Administration.

**Ms. Mohit:** Yes, it is specific to the General Administration but whereas there are other Votes, they would also face decreases. And I am sure you yourself would be receiving a lot of complaints in terms of Goods and Services, Materials and Supplies. Should the need arise, would there be any further request in terms of this Vote?

**Hon. Hosein:** Minister of Planning and Development, you care to comment? Your mike please, thanks.

**Mrs. Robinson-Regis:** Yes, Mr. Chairman, you would see though, just to assist the Member for Chaguanas East, that the 2019 Actual is 84, and the 2020 Revised and the 2021 Estimate is in line with that amount. And as we have said throughout this exercise sometimes the Actual is more in keeping with what may have been estimated. So, given the fact that we have had to reduce the amounts that we have given in every single Ministry and corporation, this is closer to the actual figure and what would will be used by the corporation. So that is why it is this amount.

**Mr. Chairman:** Member for Oropouche East. Sorry Oropouche East—Chaguanas East.

**Ms. Mohit:** Mr. Chairman. Thank you, Member for Arouca/Maloney, I did not go back because I know throughout the years we have been facing decreases in allocations as well as releases. So that is why I did not go to 2019, but understood where you are going. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**Mr. Chairman:** Item 003: Markets and Abattoirs; Item 004: Maintenance of Buildings. Member for Couva North.

**Mr. Ratiram:** Item 003: Markets and Abattoirs, Other Contracted Services.

**Mr. Chairman:** Line Item number?

**Mr. Ratiram:** Line Item 28: Other Contracted Services, have moved from 45,000 to 6,000. Is this where if it is we have to do sanitization and so forth or our markets and abattoirs, is this the Vote that is responsible for those types of activities?

**Mr. Chairman:** Minister.

**Hon. Hosein:** Yes, but we also utilize unspent balances. We use unspent balances. The majority of the corporations have unspent balances, I sign them off every

month.

**Mr. Ratiram:** However, there are some—

**Hon. Hosein:** And in the last six months each corporation used \$1 million.

**Mr. Ratiram:** However, in planning for the budget—in budgeting is it that we are budgeting with unspent balances also?

**Hon. Hosein:** But you see—

**Mr. Ratiram:** Because I am not seeing the unspent balances here in any of the books provided or any of the accounts provided. So if it is that we are saying for the sanitization of the markets that this is the Vote responsible for it, and we are only budgeting 6,000 with the anticipation that we will use the unspent balances. So that is the guidance the Minister is providing?

**3.15 p.m.**

**Hon. Hosein:** But we could use this, we could use the unspent balances for us. That is like a plan B.

**Mr. Ratiram:** Plan B?

**Hon. Hosein:** Yes.

**Mr. Ratiram:** But I just wanted to know if this— [*Interruption*]

**Hon. Hosein:** Because in this time, in this time hon. Member, you have to use— [*Interruption*]

**Mrs. Robinson-Regis:** Mr. Chairman, may I intervene please?

**Mr. Chairman:** The Minister has given way to the Minister of Planning.

**Mrs. Robinson-Regis:** Thank you very much. In the first instance, if, as the Minister is saying, if there is a need, you can go to unspent balances but it would not be here. The second point is that the 6,000 is very similar to the amount of the

Revised Estimate for 2020. And in 2019, there was not even a figure put, the actual for 2019 was nothing.

**Mr. Ratiram:** Thank you. Thank you, hon. Minister.

**Mrs. Robinson-Regis:** Just to also say that the 45,000 would have been the amount that we put as our initial estimate. When we did the midterm review and sorry—mid-year—and also looked at the figures coming down to the end of the year for the budget, we realized that the amount was closer to the 6,000 so we put 6,834. But as we have been saying all along, if there is need for more money, the Ministry of Finance will deal with it. Or as the Minister said, in this particular instance, unspent balances can be used, but of course, the unspent balances would not be here. Okay?

**Mr. Ratiram:** Thank you, Minister.

**Mrs. Robinson-Regis:** You are most welcome.

**Mr. Ratiram:** However, while we see the Actual was nil for 2019, one of the situations that has been presenting itself to most local government corporations is that we budget for it and then they have difficulty with the releases. There is an allocation and there is releases. Is it an indication that no releases were given to the corporation for 2019, that is why we actually seeing nil? Because I am certain something would have been budgeted in 2018.

**Mrs. Robinson-Regis:** What you would see in the 2019 column is what was actually spent. So, whatever was budgeted, even if, let us say nothing was budgeted for it, but under this particular line Item, money was actually spent, you would see it here. Now, if they did, in fact, use unspent balances for this purpose, you would not see it here.

**Mr. Chairman:** Members, I just want to bring the information that 2019 is listed there, but remember we would have already dealt with it and discussed it in previous budgetary and standing finance committees. So, it is just there for information. It is not really for any discussion. Member for Chaguanas East.

**Ms. Mohit:** Mr. Chairman, I was really trying to save you all that time, but unfortunately you did not recognize. Through you, Mr. Minister, I was just asking to verify that Item 28 since you have mentioned sanitization of markets, Mr. Minister, which is usually done further down in a further Item under Scavenging. So this Other Contracted Services, if you can verify its use for sanitization, because to my recollection, being at Chaguanas Borough, sanitization is done under the Scavenging, Other Contracted Services under Local Health Authority. So can you verify that line Item, probably it may help.

**Mr. Chairman:** It is on 28, to verify, sanitization, or whether it is some other purposes for scavenging. [*Crosstalk*]

**Ms. Mohit:** I was helping your colleague.

**Mrs. Robinson Regis:** No. [*Crosstalk*]

**Mr. Chairman:** Members. Again, Members, Members. [*Crosstalk*] Minister, Minister, Minister. [*Crosstalk*] Members, Members, Minister of Planning and Member for St. Augustine, again, if you all want to have your own discourse, you all can freely exit the Chamber accordingly. But for now, right, we are dealing with the Estimates here.

**Ms. Ameen:** Thank you very much Mr. Chairman.

**Mr. Chairman:** Yes. The Member for Chaguanas East was to identify on page 291—

**Hon. Hosein:** Yeah.



**Mr. Chairman:**—Item 28: Other Contracted Services, whether to verify clearly if it relates to scavenging, or for sanitization of markets and places. Clarify please.

**Ms. Mohit:** What I said, Mr. Chairman, the Minister would have indicated that Item 28 is utilized for sanitization of the markets, whereas, if we had to go further down where you have not reached as yet, under Scavenging Contracts, they do sanitization of the markets. So I was asking for him to clearly identify Item 28 what it is used for. Because I am not sure it is used for sanitization of the markets.

**Mr. Chairman:** Minister.

**Hon. Hosein:** I will have to consult with the [*Inaudible*] corporation and get back to you.

**Mr. Chairman:** Item 003: Markets and Abattoirs; Item 004: Maintenance of Buildings, Grounds and Pastures, Item 005: Local Health Authority; pages 291 and 292. Member for Couva North.

**Mr. Ratiram:** Thank you, Chairman. Under Item 004: Maintenance of Building Grounds and Pastures , can the hon. Minister kindly explain the Item 28: Other Contracted Services? What in fact are the services that this line Item refer too?

**Mr. Chairman:** Member, I think by now, right, we need to be clear on the operation of the Committee. I would so identify the particular line Item, right? I would look up to ensure that no one has acknowledged a question as the case may be. So we need to ensure that, you know by now, we know yes we would give little opportunities in the past but as we going now to day three, you know, we need to ensure that we get that particular rhythm going. Right? So because we try not to go back, right, but in this instance, proceed.

**Mr. Ratiram:** Yes. Item 28: Other Contracted Services; here under the Maintenance of Building Grounds and Pastures. Can you Minister kindly explain what these Other Contracted Services would entail?

**Mr. Chairman:** Minister.

**Hon. Hosein:** Okay, well, my advice is this is being used to—maintenance to buildings, brush cutters, small and minor repairs.

**Mrs. Robinson-Regis:** Mr. Chairman, could I add? May I?

**Mr. Chairman:** Minister of Planning and Development.

**Mrs. Robinson-Regis:** Just to indicate, that under Item 28 under all of these, Other Contracted Services, can be used for scavenging, for repairs to roads and bridges, for management of contracts, for maintenance of water courses, laundering of uniforms, servicing of ceremonial wear, cable television services, and any other short contract; 28 is for those kinds of purposes. And, Mr. Chairman, you would see it appears as Item 28 under several of the Heads and it could be used for Other Contracted Services of any type. Yes, that is why it is there, for that purpose, to be flexible.

**Mr. Ratiram:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Supplemental on the same line Item. Hon. Minister, we recognize that this line Item has more or less significantly reduced by 100 per cent, from 153,000 in 2019, it was estimated at 200,000 in 2020. However, this year is only 70,000 place there. Can the Minister kindly explain why the reduction in this line Item?

**Mr. Chairman:** Minister.

**Hon. Hosein:** Under Contracting Services we tried to do—I understand from the corporations they try to do a lot of work in house. [*Interruption*] Yes I talk to the

corporations a lot. [*Interruption*] Definitely. Pick up the phone and call any councillor and they would tell you that; any Mayor or any Chairman.

**Mr. Chairman:** Item 005: Local Health Authority. Member for Chaguanas East.

**Ms. Mohit:** Mr. Chairman, 005/12: Materials and Supplies. In 2020, an estimate of 300,000 revised of 43,000 and then 2021, the same estimate of 43,500. Can the Minister state why this significant reduction and whether or not there were issues with releases?

**Mr. Chairman:** Minister.

**Hon. Hosein:**—3,500, I would advise the corporations to prioritize, use what they have, and as I said, this is an economic situation we in through out the country, not only in Chaguanas, Port of Spain, Point Fortin; is throughout the country. And I will be saying this a lot because the mayors and chairmen call me, and they call me for releases and I know what I have to do on their behalf. So, they have to prioritize what they need, and if there is need for any more, we will go to the mid-year. We have virements. You can use virement in transfers.

**Mr. Chairman:** Item 006: Maintenance of State Traces, Local Roads, et cetera, page 292. Sub-Head 03: Minor Equipment Purchases; Item 001: General Administration; page 292. I recognize Member for Chaguanas East.

**Ms. Mohit:** Mr. Chair I was on Goods and Services, you can go ahead.

**Mr. Chairman:** Item 003: Markets and Abattoirs; Item 004: Couva North, Member ? Okay. Item 004: Maintenance of Buildings, Grounds and Pastures; Item 005: Local Health Authority; page 293, Item 006: Maintenance of State Traces, Local Roads, et cetera.

Sub-Head 04: Current Transfers and Subsidies; Item 007: Households; Item 009: Other Transfers. We now move to number 28 Diego Martin Regional

Standing Finance Committee

Head 42: Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government

Corporation: Sub-Head 2; Sub-Head 01: Personal Expenditure; page 297. Item 001: General Administration; Item 004: Maintenance of Buildings, Grounds and Pastures; Item 005: Local Health Authority; Item 006: Maintenance of State Traces, Local Roads, et cetera.

Sub-Head 02: Goods and Services; Item 001: General Administration; pages 297 and 298. Item 002: Cemeteries; Item 003: Markets and Abattoirs; Item 004: Maintenance of Buildings, Grounds and Pastures; page 299. Item 005: Local Health Authority; Item 006: Maintenance of State Traces, Local Roads, et cetera.

Sub-Head 03: Minor Equipment Purchases. Item 001: General Administration; Item 005: Local Health Authority; page 300. Item 006: Maintenance of State Traces, Local Roads et cetera. Sub-Head 04: Current Transfers and Subsidies; Item 007 Households Items; Item 009: Other Transfers.

### **3.30 p.m.**

We now move to No. 29 - San Juan/Laventille Regional Corporation. Sub-Head 01: Personnel Expenditure, page 305. Item 001: General Administration; Item 002: Cemeteries; Item 003: Markets and Abattoirs; Item 004: Maintenance of Buildings, Grounds and Pastures; Item 005: Local Health Authority; Item 006: Maintenance of State Traces, Local Roads, etc., page 306.

Sub-Head 02: Goods and Services. Item 001: General Administration; Item 002: Cemeteries; Item 003: Markets and Abattoirs; Item 004: Maintenance of Buildings, Grounds and Pastures; Item 005: Local Health Authority, pages 307 and 308. Item 006: Maintenance of State Traces, Local Roads, etc.

Sub-Head 03: Minor Equipment Purchases. Item 001: General Administration; Item 003: Markets and Abattoirs; Item 004: Maintenance of Buildings, Grounds and Pastures, page 309. Item 005: Local Health Authority;

Item 006: Maintenance of State Traces, Local Roads, etc.

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

We now move to No. 30 – Tunapuna/Piarco Regional Corporation. Sub-Head 01: Personnel Expenditure, page 3-1-3, 313. Item 001: General Administration; Item 002: Cemeteries.

**Ms. Ameen:** Page 313, 001, 02: Wages and C.O.L.A. This is for your monthly paid officers; you have nothing allocated here.

**Mr. Chairman:** Page 313, 3-1-3. Right? General Administration, 02: Wages and C.O.L.A., no budgetary allocation. Minister of Finance, you care to comment?

**Mr. Imbert:** If you look at 2019, there was no expenditure. That is something we could look into but, as you can see, there was no expenditure in 2019, no Actual. There must be a good reason.

**Mr. Chairman:** Item 003: Markets and Abattoirs. Oh, I am sorry. Item 002: Cemeteries, page 313. Item 003: Markets and Abattoirs; Item 004: Maintenance of Buildings, Grounds and Pastures; Item 005: Local Health Authority; Item 006: Maintenance of State Traces, Local Roads, etc., page 314. Member for St. Augustine.

**Ms. Ameen:** No, 02: Goods and Services.

**Mr. Chairman:** No, so hold on. I need to pronounce it first. Item 006: Maintenance of State Traces, Local Roads, etc. Sub-Head 02: Good and Services, page 314. Item 001: General Administration, page 314. I recognize the Member for St. Augustine.

**Ms. Ameen:** Mr. Chairman, I just again want to draw the attention to the fact that there is no allocation for water and sewerage rates and the Tunapuna Corporation,

it is a big region, and their rate is usually about 20,000-plus per year. And this is why I was trying to ask earlier, if it is that the corporations are being given a directive to utilize some other funds to pay these recurrent things like WASA bills and electricity bills, and if that is a directive being given by the Ministry based on several corporations not being given an allocation for water and sewerage rates.

**Hon. Hosein:** Virements, transfers and midterm, the money will come. The money will not come all in at one time, but it will come.

**Ms. Ameen:** Item 68, Mr. Chair, Water Trucking. Mr. Chairman, there are several communities within this very large region that, because WASA is not very diligent in delivering pipe borne water or because those areas do not have pipelines, they require water by trucks, and this allocation in 2020 of 200,000, I am very surprised that under the Revised Estimates you see none. And I want to submit to this Committee, Mr. Chairman, that it is not because there was no need and there was no expenditure, because I personally know of instances where the corporation had to provide water. So it is a case of the releases not being made under this Vote. And I want to implore that based on—Water Trucking may not seem important, you know, to people who are making decisions and have water in their pipes. It may not mean anything to you, but it is so critical to communities that are not getting a regular supply of water. So, Mr. Chairman, it seems that the releases are not being made for Water Trucking and that is why you have a “dash” under the Revised Estimates, and the 2021 Estimates are based on the 2020 Revised Estimates, because it is presumed that the money was not used, but this is not the case here.

**Hon. Hosein:** Hon. Member, I want to say categorically that Water Trucking is important throughout the country, not only in some areas, but it is very important

throughout the country. That particular corporation under the DP Programme, they intend to buy a water truck. I am just being advised just now. So they will be buying a water truck.

**Mr. Chairman:** Follow-up, Member.

**Ms. Ameen:** Yes. Mr. Chairman, I just would like the Minister to just look at this Item and see what is happening in terms of releases, because even if the corporations own a water truck, they have to pay to fill that water truck to deliver it to citizens.

**Hon. Hosein:** And, hon. Member, I want to state here today that the 14 corporations under my watch for the last four years, because I am going in five years now, I have introduced an all-of-corporation approach. So if there is no water in Sangre Grande, other corporations come forward like Penal/Debe or San Fernando and they assist and that takes place—the Arima Corporation when the last Mayor was there—and this goes on all over. So I want to state that this all-of-corporation approach, it is working in the Ministry. I have introduced it and the chairmen and the Mayors of the 14 corporations have stated that they like this approach and they help. Up to yesterday, I think, on the chat, they were asking for something and Penal/Debe was offering and Tunapuna wanted something, and that is how it goes. So we are here in these times to work with each other and to ensure that the citizens are well serviced, because that is the bottom line. We are putting the people first.

**Mr. Chairman:** Item 002: Cemeteries; Item 003: Markets and Abattoirs; Item 004: Maintenance of Buildings, Grounds and Pastures; Item 05—Item 004?

**Ms. Ameen:** Yes.

**Mr. Chairman:** Okay, Maintenance of Buildings, Grounds—page 315.

**Ms. Ameen:** Yes. Mr. Chairman, this region has 72 recreational grounds and if I have any interest, I live in this region and the constituency of St. Augustine falls in this region. There are 72 recreational grounds that I know of in this region and it is from Blanchisseuse in the north coast, and they are given a measly \$10,000 for maintenance of recreational grounds and the buildings and the pastures. That includes all their pavilions. Mr. Chairman, in 2020, there was an Estimate of 100,000. It was not sufficient, but now it has gone down to \$10,000. This is totally insufficient. Does the Minister have other mechanisms to allow this corporation to maintain its 72 recreational grounds?

**Hon. Hosein:** When you speak of maintenance, maintenance on the grounds and so on?

**Ms. Ameen:** Well, this Vote 004 will be the Maintenance of Buildings, Grounds and Pastures. So it means that if there is a pavilion, that structure, as well as the actual ground itself, what they call the savannah. So it means cutting the grass, filling, rolling and if there are any repairs to be done to the toilets, for instance, in the pavilion and so on.

**Hon. Hosein:** All right. We got an increase under DP and exactly what you are saying, that is going to be done, the maintenance part.

**Mr. Chairman:** Follow-up, Member for St. Augustine?

**Ms. Ameen:** Mr. Chairman, I understand what the Minister is indicating. Right? I also looked at the DP allocation and I know we are not there, so I do not want to raise it. But, Mr. Chairman, even in the DP allocation it is \$800,000 in the DP allocation. Given the number of recreational grounds we have here, you are looking at about roughly \$8,000 to \$9,000 per ground for the year, and that is for development works which is very different from their routine maintenance that is



dealt with under the Recurrent. So just as CEPEP would step in to assist with cutting grass on the side of the road, I am asking, because this—

**Mr. Imbert:** Mr. Chairman, we have not yet reached the Development Programme.

**Ms. Ameen:** Yes, I know.

**Mr. Imbert:** So, could we wait until we reach there?

**Mr. Chairman:** Item 005: Local Health Authority; Item 006: Maintenance of State Traces, Local Roads, etc, page 316. Sub-Head 03: Minor Equipment Purchases.

**Ms. Ameen:** Yes, 006.

**Mr. Chairman:** 006? Member for St. Augustine.

**Ms. Ameen:** Yes. Again, Mr. Chairman, Materials and Supplies under Maintenance of State Traces, Local Roads, it went from 1.6 million in 2019, 1.9 million in 2020 and now they are down to \$173,000. This is in spite of several roads in this region, and I am not talking about the major roads, but the local roads and state traces that are in a very, very deplorable condition, and this work is to do routine maintenance which would include patching and so on, and this is separate from the DP. Mr. Chairman, I do not understand how in what is the region with the largest population in this country, they could go from 1.6 million for maintenance of state traces to \$173,000.

**3.45 p.m.**

**Mr. Chairman:** Again, as the chairperson, the same information counts, Mr. Minister? Any further comment? Minister of Finance, the same?

**Mr. Imbert:** No. I just want to make a general comment, there seems to be a lack of appreciation of two things—[*Crosstalk*] Mr. Chairman, why am I being insulted

by the Member opposite.

**Mr. Chairman:** Proceed. Proceed.

**Mr. Imbert:** No, but why is he insulting me?

**Mr. Chairman:** Proceed, Mr. Minister. [*Crosstalk*]

**Mr. Imbert:** He is insulting me.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** I asked—

**Mr. Chairman:** Member for Couva South, please.

**Mr. Imbert:** He is at it again.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Mr. Chairman, I—

**Mr. Imbert:** There it goes again. Stop insulting me.

**Mr. Chairman:** Listen, and he is giving it. He is giving it, Member for Couva South.

**Mr. Imbert:** Stop insulting me.

**Mr. Chairman:** Minister.

**Mr. Imbert:** There seems to be lack of appreciation of two things, that in 2020, a lot of outdoor activity would have been curtailed because of the Public Health Regulations that arose from the COVID-19 restrictions. So a lot of things, a lot of physical work, outdoor work would have been curtailed in 2020, so you cannot use 2019 as a guide as to what occurred in 2020 when you are dealing with outdoor work; that is one. And two, we are in a serious financial situation, so that the budget this year is lower than last year and it is going to be difficult, and if our Members are continuously saying, “Why don’t you put more money here?” and “Why don’t you put more money there?”, it betrays a complete acceptance of reality. We are in a financial situation, [*Desk thumping*] so you cannot just say, “Put more money here, put a million here, put million a 10 million there, put a 5

million there,” that is not reality. Okay? [*Desk thumping*]

**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you, Mr. Minister. Sub-Head 03: Minor Equipment Purchase; Item 001: General Administration, page 316; Item 004: Maintenance of Building, Grounds and Pastures; Item 005: Local Health Authority; Item 006: Maintenance of State Traces, Local Roads etc. Sub-Head 04: Current Transfers and Subsidies, page 317; Item 007: Households; Item 009: Other Transfers. We now move to number 31 - Sangre Grande Regional Corporation, page 321. Sub-Head 01: Personnel Expenditure; Item 001: General Administration; Item 002: Cemeteries; Item—

**Ms. Ameen:** 002: Cemeteries, Mr. Chairman—

**Mr. Chairman:** Yes, page 321—

**Ms. Ameen:** Yeah. This corporation has nothing allocated to their cemeteries, Mr. Chairman. People are dying, I mean, all the time, that is a part of life, and the cemeteries fall squarely on the regional corporations and they have—

**Mr. Chairman:** Member for St. Augustine, you are on page 321, we are on 002: Cemeteries.

**Ms. Ameen:** Oh, sorry, I am ahead of you, I am on—

**Mr. Chairman:** Okay, come on, Members.

**Ms. Ameen:** Yeah. Yeah.

**Mr. Chairman:** Right. Item 003: Markets and Abattoirs, page 321; Item 004: Maintenance of Buildings, Grounds and Pastures, page 321; Item 005: Local Health Authority, page 322; Item 006: Maintenance of State Traces, Local Roads etc. Sub-Head 02: Goods and Services; Item 001: General Administration, pages 322 and 323. Member for St. Augustine, do I recognize you here?

**Ms. Ameen:** Yes. My apologies, Mr. Chairman, I raised this matter a little too

early a moment ago. This has to do with the cemeteries in Sangre Grande region. The cemeteries fall squarely under the regional corporations for maintenance, there is no other agency that does maintenance here. Sangre Grande region, they have not had any allocation in—I mean, it might seem like a little bit, eh, but they have not had any allocation in 2020 or in 2021. And, of course, Mr. Chairman, my question to the Minister is based on the fact that this is a trend, it is not only unique to this corporation where there is either a reduced or zero allocation to cemeteries. I know you have been advising them to make virements but, of course, this affects other Votes. And—[*Crosstalk*] Yes. Yes.

**Hon. Hosein:** Well, there are wages provided to the corporations for maintenance, you know. We have workers assigned to clean cemeteries. I have a particular interest in cemeteries. As a matter of fact, I have a particular interest in local government and cemeteries too, because we all have to go there one day. And I have been visiting cemeteries last year all over the country and most of the cemeteries, the grass was six feet high, seven feet high, and I went to the corporations and we started to utilize the services of in-house labour, which is they have people assigned to clean the cemetery, and we get CEPEP to assist. So, you see, in every aspect, there must be proper management. Once you have proper—

**Ms. Ameen:** Mr. Chairman, I just want to plead the case. The grass was six feet high because they have been experiencing reduced allocations and—

**Hon. Hosein:** No. No.

**Ms. Ameen:** Well, in this instance here, you had nothing allocated to them, and when they are asked to take—of course, there is labour in the corporation, the workers for the road, the workers from health; they have workers, yes, but every time you take workers from another area, it deprives the service that they were

going to provide. It means that there are some drains that were supposed to be cleaned by those workers and they now have to go in the cemetery. So, Mr. Minister, that system that you are advising, respectfully, it cannot work. It could be used for emergency purposes.

**Hon. Hosein:** Hon. Member, one thing you are forgetting, that I was a councillor for 13 years—[*Desk thumping*]

**Ms. Ameen:** So was I.

**Hon. Hosein:**—and I was a Mayor. [*Desk thumping*]

**Ms. Ameen:** So was I. I was also a councillor and the chairman of a corporation.

**Hon. Hosein:** I was an alderman and a mayor for three years, [*Desk thumping*] so I know how to get the job done, [*Desk thumping*] that is why I took it upon myself to go around to all the cemeteries. I went to Couva, I meet with Chairman Awong. I went to Sangre Grande, I met with—the chairman then was Terry Rondon then. [*Crosstalk*] No, that is your opinion.

**Mr. Chairman:** Again—[*Crosstalk*] Hold on. Please, Couva South, please. [*Crosstalk*] What is the term you used, Mister, just retract it, please.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Bastard.

**Mr. Chairman:** All right. Okay. Just retract it. For the records, retract it.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Withdrawn.

**Mr. Chairman:** Withdrawn, right. Okay.

**Hon. Hosein:** Mr.—

**Mr. Chairman:** Hold on. Hold on. Hold on. Hold on one second, Minister. Now, listen, Members, the Minister of Finance on more than one occasion has made it clear, in terms of the necessary budgetary Estimates, right, in terms of where there may be a reduction, where there may be none mention. He has stated clearly how

the system is going to work as they go forward into 2021. Right? I know the Members, right, the Members have their right to ask the question, fine. We are going to entertain it, but again, as we go forward, I am wondering in terms of having the Minister, again, to continue to repeat and say the same thing as we go along. Right? So as we proceed, let us keep that in mind as we go forward with regard to that particular type of questioning. Not that I am going to stop you from asking your question but again, as the chairperson, I may have to direct accordingly in going forward. Right?

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Chairman, if I could make a comment, while the Minister has rightfully boasted about his track record in local government, there are a number of Members on this side who have a similar track record in local government [*Desk thumping*]

**Mr. Chairman:** Okay, point taken.

**Mr. Indarsingh:**—and they may want to ask the Minister some probing questions based on their experience, and so on.

**Mr. Chairman:** And again, Member for Couva South, they have that opportunity.

**Mr. Chairman:** Okay.

**Hon. Hosein:** Mr. Chairman—

**Mr. Chairman:** So we are now—

**Hon. Hosein:** Mr. Chairman, if I may, Sir—

**Mr. Chairman:** Minister.

**Hon. Hosein:** The hon. Member said I told him about 13 years as a councillor and three years as a mayor, but I have almost 30 years working in the corporation—  
[*Desk thumping*]

**Mr. Chairman:** Okay, we will move on. Thank you, Mr. Minister.

**Hon. Hosein:**—more than anybody sitting in this House here.

**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you. Okay, Members—okay, fair enough.

**Ms. Ameen:** I did not realize you were in the showing off phase.

**Mr. Chairman:** Okay, fair enough. [*Crosstalk*] Points have been made and we are moving on with regard to the Standing Finance Committee on the Estimates. We are now at Item 003: Markets and Abattoirs, page 323; Item 004: Maintenance of Buildings, Grounds and Pastures; Item 005: Local Health Authority, page 324. Member for St. Augustine.

**Ms. Ameen:** Yes, Mr. Chairman.

**Mr. Chairman:** 324, Item 005.

**Ms. Ameen:** 005 is Local Health Authority. Mr. Chairman, this is the Vote under which most of our watercourses, all our drains, especially our earthen drains, are cleared. Within this region, you have had some flooding, Mr. Chairman, and I know that there were some—sorry, the one I want to deal with first is 13: Maintenance of Vehicles. This has to do with the vehicles that fall under the Local Health Authority and where they have been allocated \$37,000. Mr. Chairman, this is not the only corporation affected by this, several regional corporations have their equipment down because of poor maintenance of the vehicles.

The vehicles are there and the parts that they require to get their fleet up and working is way more—would cost way more than this. And I want to make a special appeal. In our regional corporations, they are the first responders on this particular Head: Local Health Authority is where they use resources from to respond. So I am raising it here because this regional corporation has about one-tenth of the allocation they would have had previously, but it is not unique only here and it has a severe impact of the corporations' ability to respond to

flooding and especially flood mitigation, to stop it before it happens.

**Mr. Chairman:** Mr. Minister. [*Crosstalk*] Hold on. Any comment, Mr. Minister?

Item—[*Crosstalk*] On what aspect, Minister of Planning?

**Mrs. Robinson-Regis:** On that comment, please.

**Mr. Chairman:** Okay, a feedback. Minister of Planning.

**Mrs. Robinson-Regis:** Just to say, Mr. Chairman, that part of the objective of the Standing Finance Committee is if the Members on the other side have any suggestions as to where we should move money, they can make those suggestions you know. So if they think that Sangre Grande did not get enough for Cemeteries or for Local Health Authority, they can say, “Let us take it from Penal/Debe and give”—[*Crosstalk*] Yes, [*Desk thumping*] that is part of it. Yes, this is what we have. So if you are saying that Cemeteries need more, then take it from Penal/Debe or take it from Couva, or take it from Siparia, or Princes Town and put it in Tunapuna—[*Desk thumping*] [*Crosstalk*]

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Mr. Chairman, on what basis the Minister is making—[*Desk thumping*]

**Mrs. Robinson-Regis:** No, Mr. Chairman—

**Mr. Indarsingh:**—or arriving at such a conclusion—

**Mrs. Robinson-Regis:**—that is the objective. No.

**Mr. Indarsingh:**—to take it from Couva and to take it from Penal/Debe, and so on. [*Crosstalk*]

**Mrs. Robinson-Regis:** I am just giving an example. Mr. Chairman.

**Mr. Chairman:** Couva South, Couva South—

**Mr. Indarsingh:** On what basis the Minister is coming to this. I demand to know.

[*Crosstalk*] I demand to know, Mr. Chairman.



**Mrs. Robinson-Regis:** Mr. Chairman, I am on the floor, please.

**4.00 p.m.**

**Mr. Chairman:** No, Member for Couva South, you cannot demand at this time.  
Minister—

**Mrs. Robinson-Regis:** Mr. Chairman, I do have five minutes, I think. What I am saying, Mr. Chairman, this that we have here is the whole pot. Now, if you think that we have been unfair, let us just say, to Tunapuna or Sangre Grande, and you have looked at it—because you keep saying that you have looked at all and so on, could you say where we should take \$10 million and put it elsewhere? That is part of the Standing Finance Committee. It is not just to say we notice this or we notice that, come with suggestions. [*Desk thumping*] So if you have cut Education, cut hospitals, cut TTPS and put it here, I am sure the Minister of Finance will consider it. If you want to do it in the Development Programme, I as Minister of Planning and Development, I will consider it, for that is the objective of the Standing Finance Committee. [*Desk thumping*]

**Mr. Chairman:** Member for Couva North, you have a line Item? [*Interruption*]  
No, no, no, line Item.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Let “we” take it from the THA.

**Mr. Ratiram:** Chairman, I would just like to make some—

**Mr. Chairman:** Line Item.

**Mr. Ratiram:** Thank you, Chairman.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Could we take it from the THA?

**Mr. Chairman:** Member for Couva North, if it is a line Item, I am willing to entertain you. If it is not a line Item, I am not in a position to entertain you.

**Mr. Ratiram:** Thank you very much, Chairman.

**Mr. Chairman:** Item 006: Maintenance of State Traces, Local Roads etc, page 324. Sub-Head 03: Minor Equipment Purchases, page 324; Item 001: General Administration; Item 004— [*Interruption*]—Item 001: General Administration, page 324?

**Mr. Ratiram:** Chairman, I just wanted to get clarification—

**Mr. Chairman:** No, Member, one second. Is it on line Item 001?

**Mr. Ratiram:** Chairman, I received the guidance provided by the hon. Minister. I would have liked—

**Mr. Chairman:** Member, please, please, I am moving on, because again, we are moving on. Item 001: General Administration; Item 004: Maintenance of Buildings, Grounds and Pastures, page 325; Item 005: Local Health Authority; Item 006: Maintenance of State Traces, Local Roads etc.

**Mr. Ratiram:** Chairman.

**Mr. Chairman:** We are on line Item 006: Maintenance of State Traces, Local Roads, etc.

[MRS. ANNISSETTE-GEORGE *in the Chair*]

**Mr. Ratiram:** Thank you, Chairman. I was seeking your clarification for the last three line Items that you have gone through: Maintenance of Buildings, Grounds and Pastures; Local Health Authority and Maintenance of State Traces, Local Roads. There is not any budgeted allocation for these Items in 2021. Can the hon. Minister explain why there is no money allocated?

**Madam Chairman:** So we are at Item 006: Maintenance of State Traces, Local Roads etc, and I do not see any Estimate for 2021.

**Mr. Ratiram:** There are no Estimates there.

**Madam Chairman:** Right. So, what is the question or is that just the comment

you wish to make?

**Mr. Ratiram:** No, I was asking from the Minister if there is any reasoning behind a nil allocation for this line Item.

**Mr. Imbert:** That is not correct. There is an allocation of 1.3 million, so you are not correct, \$1,388,210 to be precise. So do not say there is no allocation, that is not true, and people are listening to you. Little children are listening and they might believe you. [*Desk thumping*]

**Madam Chairman:** Okay. So where we are at, Minister, we are under Sub-Head 03: Minor Equipment Purchases, which is on page 325; Item 006. I was about to say there is no allocation in 2021. This is what my record shows and therefore, if that is the comment the Member wishes to make, we note that as the comment because that is evident.

**Mr. Ratiram:** Madam Chair, there is no allocation under this line Item here. I do not know if the hon. Minister could direct me to the 1.3 he is talking about, because I am following the documents here and there is no figure allocated.

**Madam Chairman:** All right, one minute. We are at page 325, Minister.

**Mr. Imbert:** [*Inaudible*]

**Madam Chairman:** No, where we are at is page—no, we are at page 325, just above Current Transfers and Subsidies, and the Member for Couva North is asking with respect to—

**Mr. Imbert:** Madam Chairman, on page 324 there is 006: Maintenance of State Traces, Local Roads, and there is an allocation of 1,388,000. That is the point I am making.

**Madam Chairman:** Yes, but the point you are making—

**Mr. Imbert:** That is simply “Minor Equipment”, but for the main item:

Maintenance of State Traces, Local Roads, there is an allocation of 1,388,000.

**Madam Chairman:** What the Member for Couva North is asking is under the Sub-Head: Minor Equipment for Maintenance of State Traces and Local Roads.

**Mr. Imbert:** That can easily be adjusted out of the other 006, where you have \$1.3 million.

**Madam Chairman:** Okay. So that what you are saying is that if there is need for money there, it can be funded from elsewhere?

**Mr. Imbert:** [*Inaudible*]

**Madam Chairman:** No, no, Minister of Finance, we are having a conversation, and quite frankly, it is either we are in the conversation fully or we are not. Yes?

**Mr. Imbert:** What I am saying, Madam Chairman, for the benefit of those who may not fully realize what they are seeing here, is that there is an Item called 006: Maintenance of State Traces, Local Roads. In that Item, there is an allocation of 1.388 million. On the other page, you have a Sub-Item which is Other Minor Equipment for the same Maintenance of State Traces and Local Roads. Therefore, the point I am making, is that the \$1.3 million can easily accommodate Minor Equipment. And the accounting officer at Sangre Grande, in consultation with the Permanent Secretary in Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government, can easily take the 20 or \$30,000 required for Minor Equipment for Maintenance of State Traces and Local Roads from the 1.388 million allocation for the larger Item: Maintenance of State Traces and Local Roads.

**Madam Chairman:** Okay. Thank you very much.

**Mr. Ratiram:** Supplemental. As the hon. Minister would have referred our attention to line Item 006: Maintenance of State Traces and Local Roads, and he brought to our attention the 1.388,210 figure, I would just like to identify to the

Minister that this figure is a significant reduction to the 2020 Estimate.

**Madam Chairman:** We are not going back to there. We are under Minor Equipment Purchases, where you raised a particular issue, and the Minister has explained that the bigger allocation, if needs be, can be allocated in different ways to meet something under here. So I am not reopening 006 under the earlier Sub-Head, which would have been Sub-Head 02, which we have long passed. Do you have any further questions?

**Mr. Ratiram:** No, Madam Chair, thank you.

**Madam Chairman:** So we go on to Sub-Head 04: Current Transfers and Subsidies; Item 007: Households; Item 009: Other Transfers.

32 - Couva/Tabaquite/Talparo Regional Corporation. We are at page 329. Sub-Head: 01, Personal Expenditure; Item 001: General Administration; Item 002: Cemeteries; Item 003: Markets and Abattoirs; Item 004: Maintenance of Buildings, Grounds and Pastures; Item 005: Local Health Authority.

**Ms. Ameen:** Under 005; line 22: Short-term Employment. This again, Madam Chairman—

**Madam Chairman:** You are on 329?

**Ms. Ameen:** 332, sorry, Local Health.

**Madam Chairman:** Excuse me?

**Ms. Ameen:** Local Health?

**Madam Chairman:** Yes, and you are saying? Yes, you are seeing Item—

**Ms. Ameen:** I am a little ahead of you.

**Madam Chairman:** Okay, fine, thank you. Member for Couva North.

**Mr. Ratiram:** Item 30: Allowances- Daily-Rated Workers. There is a decline from what was estimated in 2020 of the 2.6 million, to an Estimate in 2021 of 1.9. Can

the Minister identify what the 2020 Estimate would have indicated and what the decline would result into?

**Madam Chairman:** Page 329.

**Mr. Imbert:** Item 005.

**Madam Chairman:** We are at 005, and we are looking at 30: Allowances- Daily-Rated Workers.

**Mr. Imbert:** As I said before, Madam Chairman, there are two reasons for different allocations here. One would be because of COVID, because of the public health restrictions, there would have been a reduction in activities generally, that is reason number one. That would cause a reduction in expenditure in 2020, compared to the original. And reason number two is that we are in a difficult financial situation and therefore, the allocations for 2021 would naturally be less in several cases than they were in 2020.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Thank you, Chair. Minister, I decided to ask this, and it is applicable to all the 14 corporations, with respect to Wages and COLA, overtime and allowances, and so on. What time period these calculations from a wages point of view? Wages, COLA.

**Mr. Imbert:** No, they are Wages and COLA right through. What are you talking about? What page, what line Item?

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Page 329.

**Madam Chairman:** The Member for Couva South is talking about 005, that is where we are.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** I do not know, Madam Chair, why the Minister of Finance is getting a bit—the Minister of Finance is apparently losing his cool.

**Mr. Imbert:** He is on Local Health Authority?

**Madam Chairman:** That is where we are.

**Mr. Imbert:** Local Health Authority.

**Madam Chairman:** So just one minute, let us all get our compasses right. We are at Item 005: Local Health Authority, on page 329. I have recognized the Member for Couva South, so he could only be asking under that Item.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** The Wages and COLA, Minister, is calculated on what collective bargaining period?

**Mr. Imbert:** Madam Chairman, I am having great difficulty in even understanding the origin of the question, because when you look at the Item, the allocation in 2020 original was \$14.4 million. The revised allocation in 2020 is \$14.4 million, and the Estimate for 2021 is \$14.4 million. There has been no change.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** No, and I understand you, Mr. Minister of Finance. I am simply asking the question, whether these figures that are reflected here are applicable to which collective bargaining period from a wages point of view.

**Mr. Imbert:** The other problem—the other difficulty I am having, Madam Chairman, is that—

**Mr. Indarsingh:** We are in 2020, so I am asking whether this is 2015.

**Mr. Imbert:** I am going to answer you. Madam Chairman, he asked the question, I am about to answer him. You are going to ask it three times now?

**Madam Chairman:** No, no, just answer the question, please Member.

**Mr. Imbert:** Fine. I am further confused because the hon. Member was a junior Minister in the Ministry of Finance and therefore, has some knowledge, experience and appreciation for Estimates of expenditure, and would have been involved in the preparation of Estimates of expenditure, and sitting on this side, would have been involved in responses with respect to questions on estimates of expenditure.

And therefore, he knows that all the Estimates are done on the basis of current information—current information. So therefore, you are asking a question for which you already know the answer that all these Items of Personnel Expenditure, whether it is wages and salaries, whether it is COLA, whether it is monthly-paid, whether it is daily-paid, it does not matter. It is based on a current situation, not on a future situation. Therefore, you know the answer to your question already, and that is the answer. It is based on the current situation.

**4.15 p.m.**

**Madam Chairman:** Okay. And I think— Yes, Member.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Madam Chair, the Minister is being very rude and—

**Madam Chairman:** Member. Member for Diego Martin North/East, I really think there might be an assumption that you are making. The Member has asked what bargaining period. So while it might be current, what he is asking is for what period.

**Mr. Imbert:** The period that is currently in effect.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Again, Madam Chair, the Minister is less than forthcoming with the reality. I am just asking whether these figures are calculated whether it is on 2020 wages or 2015 wages and I am just seeking that clarification from the Minister.

**Mr. Imbert:** Madam Chairman, it is self-evident it is based on current wages, 2020 wages. That is obvious.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Well I think, Madam Chair, the only thing I could conclude is that the Minister of Finance is really misleading this Committee.

**Mr. Imbert:** How? How?

**Madam Chairman:** Okay. All right. All right. So, Member for Couva South, it



may not be the answer as you would have given it but I do not think there is justification in the answer I have heard for you to conclude what you have concluded. Okay? Member for St. Augustine.

**Ms. Ameen:** Madam Chairman, if I may be permitted? Workers in the regional corporation have been indicating that they are working on 2013 salaries and I do not know if this is what the matter that we are trying to avoid because I do—

**Madam Chairman:** Who are the “we”?

**Ms. Ameen:** If that is the matter that we are trying to avoid because it should not be discussed in this line Item.

**Madam Chairman:** Who are we trying to avoid? Who are the “we” you are trying to avoid. Are you trying to make a point?

**Ms. Ameen:** Yeah.

**Madam Chairman:** Make your point without trying to say what we are trying to avoid—

**Ms. Ameen:** Okay, but Madam—

**Madam Chairman:**—because I am not part of the “we” and any avoiding.

**Ms. Ameen:** Madam Chairman, the Member for Couva South—

**Madam Chairman:** Do you have a point?

**Ms. Ameen:** Yes.

**Madam Chairman:** Make your point please.

**Ms. Ameen:** Madam Chairman, my point is that the workers from the regional corporations are working on 2013 wages at this time and that is a matter that requires attention.

**Madam Chairman:** Okay.

**Ms. Ameen:** And I think that is what I would like to bring to the attention of the

Committee.

**Madam Chairman:** Okay.

**Mr. Imbert:** Madam Chair, the point is as a parliamentarian I am working on 2011 salaries.

**Madam Chairman:** Well, the point about it is a statement has been made. It may not be necessary for anybody to respond to it. The Member is entitled in a five-minute intervention, and the point the Member has made on the record is that these are based on 2013 salaries. Yes? Okay. So I go on. Item 006: Maintenance of State Traces and Local Roads. Sub-Head, Member for Couva North, did I see your hand? Yes? Sub-Head 03: Minor Equipment Purchases, Item 001: General Administration. We are at page 332. Member for Couva North.

**Mr. Ratiram:** Madam Chair, 02: Goods and Services on page 330. You left out 30 and 31?

**Madam Chairman:** The last thing we did was Local Health Authority.

**Mr. Ratiram:** Yeah. And the next page is 330?

**Madam Chairman:** We are at page—all right. We at Sub-Head 02. That is where you are at?

**Mr. Ratiram:** Yes.

**Madam Chairman:** Good and Services. Item 001: General Administration.

**Mr. Ratiram:** Yes.

**Madam Chairman:** That is where you are at?

**Mr. Ratiram:** Yes, Madam Chair.

**Madam Chairman:** Yes.

**Mr. Ratiram:** Madam Chair, I would just like to bring the Minister's attention to Item 12: Materials and Supplies. While it would have been estimated in 2020 for

180,000, the actual releases were a lot less than this causing the regional corporation to be in a very challenging position with respect to materials and supplies for the period. I am not sure if this Item deals with things like toiletries or janitorial services. But I recall that the corporation had to send home workers at one point in time because there were no toiletries for the workers. I am seeing the same figure being allocated again based on what the Revised Estimates was, it is the same figure being allocated again, implying that the corporation will continue finding itself in the challenges it would have faced in the past. Can the hon. Minister kindly advise what solution we have in place to avoid these types of challenges from happening at the corporation?

**Hon. Hosein:** As I keep saying, these are the COVID times, these we are in tough economic times and it is a fact, it is not only Trinidad, it is around the world, and we have to learn to manage and we have to prioritize what we need. We have to do it in our homes, we have to do it in our workplace and we have to encourage everybody to work together, and that is the answer I have for you.

**Mr. Ratiram:** Supplemental.

**Madam Chairman:** Yes, Member.

**Mr. Ratiram:** I understand the response, Mr. Minister, however, what I made reference to is before COVID times. Before COVID times we were faced with similar challenges. I was referring to what transpired before the COVID. If you look at what went on in 2019, the actual releases for 2019 was even less than this. In 2019, the corporation only received \$44,000 whereas in 2020 the hon. Minister would have recognized that this was not sufficient and 180,000 was estimated for 2020. However, the challenges that this corporation is facing is, while we might budget high saying that the corporation is expected to get this amount, they have

significant difficulty with the releases. And what I see the budgeting here for 2021 is based on the releases for 2020. So this is—while COVID will give us a challenge at the point in time, this is a problem that we have been facing at the regional corporation even before COVID, and I am hoping, Mr. Minister, that you will use your goodly office to find some innovate approach to ensure that what happened in the past does not repeat itself in going forward.

**Madam Chairman:** Minister? Right? Item 002, Cemeteries. Item 003: Market and Abattoirs. Member for Couva North.

**Mr. Ratiram:** Madam Chair, I heard you call Market and Abattoirs. I wanted to continue with the Goods and Services.

**Madam Chairman:** I am at Markets and Abattoirs.

**Mr. Ratiram:** The Item for Other Contracted Services under Markets and Abattoirs is also nil for 2021. Under Item 28 this was budgeted for about 30,000 in 2020 but this year no moneys have been allocated there. Can the hon. Minister provide guidance in terms of what can be done? Should there be a need to utilize this line Item?

**Madam Chairman:** Minister.

**Hon. Hosein:** I would suggest that where we have savings we could do virements to assist in this area.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Chaguanas East.

**Ms. Mohit:** Madam Chair, can the Minister state how many virements were approved under this Ministry for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2020?

**Hon. Hosein:** I could give you that in writing. A lot of requests were made to me and all were approved.

**Ms. Mohit:** Across the board?

**Hon. Hosein:** Across the board.

**Ms. Mohit:** Okay. So if that could be, as you said, provided in writing.

**Hon. Hosein:** But it is fact. It is across the board. It is in Chaguanas, it is in San Fernando, Sangre Grande, Point Fortin. I have the facts. As I tell people in this country, my desk is the cleanest desk in the Ministry. Everything that comes to my desk, I sign it off the same day.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Couva North. Yes, you have another question?

**Mr. Ratiram:** Yes, thank you, Madam Chair. I have been hearing the Minister speak on virement however, the virement is moving funds from one Vote which would have been budgeted for into another Vote, and sometimes that may be very challenging because even the Votes, from what we are seeing here, they have insignificant reduction in most of the line Items. So to take a little from less makes it very challenging and difficult, which is why during the budgeting phase we try to ensure that something, even if it is a miniscule amount, is made available in that Vote, and when that is completed, if we need to move from other areas, at least, then we can do it.

But if you have nil here and other contractual services under Cemeteries is nil and Other Contracted Services in Maintenance of Buildings, Grounds and Pastures is nil and we have nil throughout with Other Contracted Services then, Mr. Minister, with all due respect it is very difficult to find a place where you can actually do that virement.

So this is why, even though it is a small amount that is placed, you know, what we are looking here in this conversation are some solutions to avoid workers having to go home because there is not toilet paper or the entire department finding itself in a difficulty where the efficiency of the corporation cannot, you know, be

executed.

**Madam Chairman:** It does not have to be a question, Minister, a Member can make an intervention. Okay. So we move on. Item 004: Maintenance of Buildings, Grounds and Pastures. Member for Couva North.

**Mr. Ratiram:** Thank you, Madam Chair. And I make reference to line Item 09, Rent/Lease Vehicles and Equipment. Again, nil in this Estimate for 2021. I take the Minister's guidance that he would have previously provided and, again, I make the same appeal to the Minister, if he can identify some solution in going forward, we will be willing to hear what that solution is but sometimes virement, moving less out of little is a very challenging thing.

Moving on to line Item 12: Materials and Supplies. This Materials and Supplies for the maintenance of our buildings, our grounds and our pastures, we have moved from a 2020 Estimate of 200,000 to only 25,000 here and, again, this is going to be very challenging and difficult for the corporation. Can you please identify why? What is the rationale for this significant decrease here?

**Hon. Hosein:** Hon. Member, I will say the same thing, and I know you said that we are virement from little into less but the reality is these are the facts. This is very economic times, challenging times and it is not only 2020 we are experiencing challenging times, this started since last year, since 2014 coming down to now. So we will have to work with what we have, have to work with it and find innovative ways where we can get money. And you would be surprised that the CEOs in the corporations know how to find the money, you know, they just do not share it with the councillors. It is a fact. It is a fact.

**Mr. Ratiram:** Thank you. Thank you.

**Madam Chairman:** Yes.

**Mr. Ratiram:** Thank you, hon. Minister, and I can offer some suggestions in terms of where we can find the money from because earlier we received guidance, you know, that we can actually cut from different areas.

**Mr. Imbert:** Madam Chairman, may I made a point, please?

**Mr. Ratiram:** So I just want to [*Crosstalk*] we continue with line Item—

**Madam Chairman:** Just one minute. The Member has the floor.

**Mr. Ratiram:** I just would like to continue with line Item 30.

**Madam Chairman:** All right. You just made a point. The Minister wants to make a point on that particular line.

**Mr. Imbert:** There is no finding any money or making recommendations. We are dealing with estimates of expenditure. The whole point of this Committee is to approve the estimates of expenditure. What the Member is talking about comes afterward, after the budget is approved in this House and in the other place and the Act is assented to, the appropriation Act is assented to, then the accounting officers have the flexibility to move things around. But in this Committee there is no question of telling us how to move things around.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Couva North.

**4.30 p.m.**

**Mr. Ratiram:** Madam Chair, can I move on please to line Item 37: Janitorial Services. Again, in the Janitorial Services here, 37, the Actual expenditure for Janitorial Services of 2019 was \$189,000. However, what is being budgeted for 2021, it is only 35,000. Again, the corporation is going to find itself in a very difficult situation with this type of budgeting that we see happening here, and this is a corporation that has to service 149,527 burgesses. When we work out the actual figures with the number of persons, citizens, that this corporation covers, to

the allocation, it is only \$666 for the year that this corporation has to spend for these citizens, whereas when we see other areas, there are things like \$5,897 per year for areas like Port of Spain which only have 37,000. So, what we see happening is a significant disparity in the distribution of the resources in the Ministry, and this is not something that we are talking about vireing within the Couva/Tabaquite Corporation, but this is something that we need the Minister's intervention to provide some kind of equal distribution or equitable distribution, so all our citizens will be treated fairly. [*Desk thumping*]

**Madam Chairman:** Okay. So I hear your point. I think even though I was not sitting here, I have heard the discourse with respect to “equitably” and “treated fairly”, and I think that was well ventilated across the floor. So, I have heard you and I have noted it. Minister of Finance, let me just—

**Mr. Imbert:** Yes, I would like to make a general point on—

**Madam Chairman:** One minute, let me just take the Member for Couva South and then I would allow your intervention. Member for Couva South.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Hon. Chair, in the interest of progressing with the meeting I would not want to make the intervention at this point.

**Madam Chairman:** Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Imbert:** Let me make a point, that when these Estimates are approved, it is for various Items including the provision of services to persons who may occupy these particular regions. The City of Port of Spain has an active population on a daily basis of 250,000 people, even though one would look at the number of registered voters within the boundaries of the City of Port of Spain as being a smaller number. For example, the hon. Member opposite to me is not a registered voter in Port of Spain, but he is here today, and the City of Port of Spain has to provide



services for that hon. Member, and for all these hon. Members here, and the other 249,000 people that come into Port of Spain every day. So it is not appropriate to merely look at the number of registered voters in a region and determine equity. Because Couva/Tabaquite/Talparo empties out during the day. There is nobody there, they go elsewhere. They go to San Fernando, they go to Port of Spain, and they go to other urban centres. So the point I am making, is that that is a sterile argument that does not take into account all of the realities in Trinidad and Tobago. And I want to make the point that the City of Port of Spain has 250,000 people in it on any given working day.

**Mr. Ratiram:** Madam Chair.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Couva South, you now want to make your intervention?

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Yes. They say, Madam Chair—I am continuing to listen to the Minister of Finance, and, as I do not want to get into a tit for tat here, the Minister cannot say that Couva/Tabaquite/Talparo does empty out during the course of the day. For example, on the Point Lisas Industrial Estate, there are thousands of people who come there; to the Port of Point Lisas, there are thousands of people who conduct businesses and so on. So, do not—Minister of Finance, I will ask you to make your sentiments with a bit of caution, taking into consideration all over the country, people move on a daily basis in the service of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*]

**Madam Chairman:** Okay, so we go on to another point. Member for Couva North, are we moving on to something else?

**Mr. Ratiram:** I just wanted to say that I take note of the guidance provided by the hon. Minister of Finance of the 249,000 that come into Port of Spain and so forth,

and highlight to him, that 149,000 are registered living in the constituency, plus those who visit the regional corporation, additional persons visit, so if it is that these are the figures that he has, 249 to 149, we would greatly appreciate some kind of equitable distribution still with those figures, because clearly, the figures are not reflecting that, Madam Chair. The figures are not reflecting that at all. So I humbly appeal to the hon. Minister in going forward, if it is that he can even use his own figures to provide some kind of equitable distribution to the citizens of Couva/Tabaquite/Talparo region and all the other regions would greatly appreciate that.

**Mr. Imbert:** Madam Chairman, these are not my figures. This is in official census data in censuses done by the PNM Government, done by the UNC Government. It is a fact that during the daytime the population of the urban centres increases exponentially. It is also common sense.

**Madam Chairman:** Okay, this point has been ventilated exhaustively, and I now go on to Item 005: Local Health Authority. Member for Couva North.

**Mr. Ratiram:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I would like to bring the Minister's attention to Item 22: Short-term Employment. For Short-term Employment, what we see, the Actual figure again—Madam Chair?

**Madam Chairman:** Yes.

**Mr. Ratiram:** Item 22: Short-Term Employment. And the Actual figure for 2019 was 556. The estimated figure for 2020 was 750, but the Revised Estimate, again, was 325. Again, we see significant disparity with what is allocated to what is released from the Ministry. So while we budget one figure, we are consistently seeing a decline and a decline year after year, and if we go into previous books we will see that there has consistently been a decline from what is allocated to what is

released. In 2021, it is budgeted for the 325,000 versus what was budgeted in 2020 of 750,000, and this is for Short-term Employment.

With this COVID situation that we are facing with, a lot of persons have become unemployed, a lot of companies have closed down, and people have been sent home, and most of them visit the councillor's office seeking short-term employment. They come to the MP's office seeking short-term employment. But by cutting this figure down, it is going to be a significant disservice to our citizens during this difficult time, and I hope that the hon. Minister could consider some kind of revision where this Short-term Employment figure is concerned.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 006: Maintenance of State Traces, Local Roads. Member for Couva North.

**Mr. Ratiram:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I wish to bring the Minister's attention to Item 12: Materials and Supplies under Maintenance of State Traces, Local Roads. This is where I believe patching material and repair material is made available to the various electoral district. Madam Chair, in 2020, this line Item was budgeted at \$2.2 million to provide service to the 14 electoral districts in the Couva/Tabaquite/Talparo area. However, only 400,000 was released. That is what we are seeing here. So again, when you look at 400,000 and you divide that by 14 it is a significant—less than 50,000 per electoral district, and to repair the number of state traces and local roads throughout Couva/Tabaquite, it is very, very challenging, again for the regional corporation. And I want to ask the hon. Minister if it is that he would grand the approval to the regional corporation to tap into the unspent balance, so that if it is there is not money budgeted here, and we need material to patch the potholes throughout Couva/Tabaquite, if we could use the unspent balance, we would greatly appreciate that.

**Madam Chairman:** Minister.

**Hon. Hosein:** Once you all apply for the unspent balances and state what it is for, I do not hesitate to sign off, because I live my life in local government, so I know what are the cries of the councillors and the people. I do not ever hesitate to sign off.

**Mr. Ratiram:** Thank you very much, Minister, and I will continue the conversation later with you.

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

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

33 - Mayaro/Rio Claro Regional Corporation. We are at page 338. Sub-Head 01: Personnel Expenditure. Item 001: General Administration; Item 002: Cemeteries; Item 003: Markets and Abattoirs; Item 004: Maintenance of Buildings, Grounds and Pastures; Item 005: Local Health Authority; Item 006: Maintenance of State Traces, Local Roads. Member for Mayaro.

**Mr. Paray:** Thank you very much, Madam Chairman. Madam Chairman, I am going to be very careful with my question to the Minister. I will try to avoid repeating anything that my colleagues would have said before. Madam Chairman, if I draw the Minister's attention to line Item 006/13, which is Maintenance of Vehicles. Minister, Maintenance of Vehicles, we have an allocation here of \$279,224.

**Hon. Member:** We are on?

**Mr. Paray:** 006, page 341.

**Madam Chairman:** We are still at 339, sorry. We are still at 339. Okay?

**Mr. Paray:** Sure.

**Madam Chairman:** Sub-Head 02: Goods and Services, page 339. Item 001: General Administration. Member for St. Augustine, this is where you are at?

**Ms. Ameen:** Yes.

**Madam Chairman:** We are at Sub-Head 02: Goods and Services. Item 001: General Administration, pages 339 and 340. Member for St. Augustine.

**Ms. Ameen:** Page 339; Item 12: Materials and Supplies. Madam Chairman, this corporation utilized \$86,000 under this Vote in 2019 and 2020. It was allocated \$50,000, and none of that was released to the corporation. So to date, at the present, you have no money being allocated. This is a very critical Vote for any regional corporation, Materials and Supplies. For any regional corporation to vire it from somewhere means that something else will suffer, so I want to ask the Minister, in your plea to the Ministry of Finance, to get supplemental funding under Materials and Supplies. This also applies to some other Votes like the State Traces and so on, but when we come to that, I will raise it.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Mayaro, do you have a matter you wish to raise under this?

**Mr. Paray:** No, Ma'am, under 006.

**Madam Chairman:** Okay. So we go on to Sub-Head 02: Goods and Services. Item 001: General Administration; Item 002: Cemeteries. Member for St. Augustine.

**Ms. Ameen:** Again, Madam Chairman, I want it to be noted that this corporation has no allocation for Materials and Supplies for Cemeteries.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 003: Markets and Abattoirs; Item 004: Maintenance of Buildings, Grounds and Pastures. Member for Couva North, we are at page 3—

**Mr. Ratiram:** 340?

**Madam Chairman:** Yes, we are at page 340.

**Mr. Ratiram:** Thank you, Madam Chair, and I would like to bring the hon. Minister's attention to Item 12/004, Item 12: Materials and Supplies. The Actual figure for Materials and Supplies under the Maintenance of Buildings, Grounds and Pastures for 2019 was 384,000, but this has been brought down significantly in 2021 to only 7,000.

**4.45 p.m.**

This would include goods and supply for whatever minor stuff they need. It is a significant reduction. And, again, I ask the Minister because I understand that we are in difficult times, can the corporation utilize the unspent balance if the needs be for this line Item?

**Madam Chairman:** Minister, is it that you are saying that there is an overriding policy that if there are unspent balances, if the corporations make the request to you all things being equal you seek to facilitate them.

**Hon. Hosein:** Exactly what it is for and it will be passed by me. Once it is audited and so on, it will come to me and I will sign off on it.

**Madam Chairman:** So that applies to all— [*Crosstalk*]—just now. That applies to all circumstances where there are unspent balances.

**Hon. Hosein:** Unspent balances.

**Madam Chairman:** Yes. Okay.

**Mr. Imbert:** There is a point in unspent balances I would like to make.

**Madam Chairman:** Yes, Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Imbert:** I amended the law—

**Mr. Ratiram:** However, we are dealing with—

**Madam Chairman:** Just a minute. There is a point on unspent balances.

**Mr. Imbert:** Yes, thank you.

**Madam Chairman:** Minister, maybe if you could also take the other mike and have it directed to you it might help with your audio.

**Mr. Imbert:** You are the Chairman after all.

**Madam Chairman:** Thank you.

**Mr. Imbert:** There is a point on unspent balances. We amended the law in this Parliament some time ago. Previously unspent balances could only be used for property. We amended the law to allow unspent balances to be used for anything for the service of the inhabitants of the region, which means virtually every single item of activity that a local government corporation would be involved in. So unspent balances can now be used for roads, for traces, for local health, for garbage collection, for anything that a corporation is responsible.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Couva North.

**Mr. Ratiram:** Thank you very much, Minister, for that clarification. The hon. Minister indicated earlier that we can utilize the unspent balances for areas where the allocation was reduced significantly and he just made mention of audited figures. Now, I know that there has been a backlog of audited figures with respect to the unspent balance in several corporations, the audit has not been completed. So I just need some clarification from the Minister because if you are saying that we can utilize the unspent balance the previous year, and several previous years have not been completed as yet. So we will find ourselves in some difficulties there because I know the Minister would have used his gracious office in providing

umbrage coverage to the corporation with the COVID-19 to provide assistance where he said he allowed them to spend 1 million out of the unspent balance. But that would have been out of the unaudited figure. So can they still utilize that and tap into those unaudited figures or do we need to wait until the audit is completed before we can apply for it?

**Hon. Hosein:** Well, in light of transparency I will prefer it be audited. And once you send the information to the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government and they audit and it will be sent to the Permanent Secretary, it will come to me and it will be signed off. But it must be done with some form of transparency and what it is used for. We cannot use it to have a party in a corporation. It must be done for the people, it must be done for the people.

**Mr. Ratiram:** And we are making reference to the specific line Items that we are seeking clearance to use it for. It is not for parties—

**Hon. Hosein:** No, I just—

**Madam Chairman:** You will get clearance here. I think what the Minister is explaining to you, there is a particular process that the regional corporations can activate, all right, and I think that is what as far as you can seek clarification for. I do not think that if the Minister says here, under Materials and Supplies there are unspent balances from last year, the corporation could use it. I do not think that that is an undertaking. He is explaining to you as a representative here but the process has to be followed through.

**Mr. Ratiram:** We understand, we understand that, Madam Chair. The actual auditing of these balances is that the responsibility of the Ministry or of the regional corporation? And I know this is not related to the line Item—

**Madam Chairman:** And I am happy that you have recognized that. Because I



think that you have really expended a lot of my leniency.

**Mr. Ratiram:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

**Madam Chairman:** It means that you really out on a limb. So that if we can get back to the process here, I think you got a general understanding that you can now go back to the regional corporation and explain to them what they need to do. Item 005: Local Health Authority; Item 006: Maintenance of State Traces, Local Roads. Member for Mayaro.

**Mr. Paray:** Thank you very much, Madam Chairman. Just very, very quickly. Line Item 013 Minister. Madam Chair, I will just be asking just this one question to cover—that will cover all my queries under this section and I would like to use line Item 30 as my example.

Minister, the allocation of \$279,224 for maintenance of vehicles. In the Mayaro/Rio Claro Regional Corporation, Minister, the fuel consumption for all the vehicles is about \$30,000 a month by itself. So from the outstart, before the budget is even passed, we are short of about \$80,000 just for fuel alone. Now, I understand that the Minister was quite clear, the Minister of Finance and I agree, I understand that we are in limited circumstances, challenging circumstances, and that if these corporations require more funding there is a process, there is a procedure that you can get the additional funding.

My question to you, Minister, is that, if I were to refer back to the last Auditor General Report, because 2019 was the last one. The Parliament would have approved about \$2.3 billion for the Ministry. But the money that was drawn down was about \$2 billion. So somewhere between the Ministry of Finance and Local Government, there is a stifling somewhere that the money does not reach. So the assurance that I need as the MP for the area as well, because you would well

imagine constituents come knocking at our door every day, is that when the situation arises, especially, and I know they will come to you for money for fuel, and some virement will have to happen, that that stifling that is happening between the Ministry of Finance and getting it into the accounts of the regional corporation that that is something that can be addressed so that the money comes in a timely fashion to address the concerns, especially when you look—that we had \$5.4 million decrease in Goods and Services. I am sure they are going to come back to you to fill those gaps and they will be needed very hurriedly. So the question is, can you give some assurance, can you give some commitment that when these requests for virements are made that that process to get that money from the Ministry of Finance, the accounts of the corporations will be dealt with expeditiously, Minister.

**Hon. Hosein:** Hon. Member, I agree with you when you speak about the bottleneck but there are reasons for the bottleneck and I could give you a couple of reasons. Inaccurate submission of documents, some requests submitted very late, sending documents with misinformation, lack of follow-up from the accounting officers. Now, you might take this for granted but these are officers that have a duty to perform and we might say they are taking long in the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government to reach in the Ministry of Finance. But these simple little things, because I have facts before me. And these simple things cause these bottlenecks. As I say we might take it for granted.

I intend—because I have been there four years at the Ministry because I came in one year late and I am back here once again—to meet with the 14 corporations to deal with this matter. Princes Town is one corporation that execute this very, fast, very, very fast. So they do not have any, they do not meet up any

bottleneck and so on. So I intend to meet with the 14 corporations, we will have no problem at all. I discussed this with the PS yesterday and people who know me when I say I am doing something I will get it done.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Mayaro.

**Mr. Paray:** Minister, I hear your explanation. Is there an opportunity for some sort of retraining and reassessing the skills of those public officers that you have spoken of so we can get rid of that causation, that matter that is causing the bottlenecks.

And if that happens then we will get the funding and so on, in a particular timing. And we must also realize too, Minister, that very few or none of the public servants' faces are on the posters for the election campaign. We are the ones who are targeted as MPs. We are the ones who are not getting the recreation ground cut, we are the ones not getting the sport facility sorted out. And we understand that that the problems of getting the money moving because of some of these issues. So, again, your commitment to work towards that perhaps in this fiscal year, I know it is the going to be challenging for the next five years and this is going to come up year after year and we will appreciate your commitment to resolve these matters going forward.

**Hon. Hosein:** Hon. Member, it does not come from the political arm, you know, it come from the administrative arm. Every local government representative knows it, but the administrative arm wants to be very precise and very accurate so they will send back one thing 10 times to make sure it is done right. I might not like it, the politicians might not like it, but it is the right thing to do. It is a process.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Couva North.

**Hon. Hosein:** I hear you and I will work along with you.

**Mr. Ratiram:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I would just like to highlight line Item 12: Materials and Supplies. In 2020 this was budgeted at 1.5 million, however for this fiscal term 2021 only 111,000 is budgeted for the eight electoral districts at the Mayaro/Rio Claro Corporation. Madam Chair, that Material and Supplies equates to approximately 13,000 per electoral district. For maintenance of the state trace and local roads and we all know the kind of bad roads we have throughout that regional corporation. Is there anything that the hon. Minister can propose as a solution for this significant decrease that we have here. What is the solution that the Minister would assist us with?

**Madam Chairman:** Member, I think that is the question you have been asking continuously. And while I have no difficulty in you highlighting it I think the Minister has answered that question under several iterations of materials and supply and so on for the last hour and half. So that if you want to highlight it I have no difficulty in you highlighting each one but I take it that the answer the Minister has given in each of those Heads remains the same. Do you have anything else you would like to highlight?

**Mr. Ratiram:** Under Other Contracted Services, for the 2019 Actual figures was \$1.4 million and we see in 2021, Other Contracted Services is only given \$3,000. So we are moving from 1.4 million to 3,000. We are moving in materials and supplies from 1.5 million to only 100,000 and we are seeing a consistent decrease in allocation here that is definitely going to be placing our local government representatives in a very difficult situation because they have deal with our citizens or on a daily basis and they will have to have the answers on how they are going to respond when the roads are extremely bad, how they are going to respond to the citizens.

**Hon. Hosein:** Hon. Member, I have been listening to you for the past couple of, an hour and something and the answer to this question is local government reform. And with the local government reform residential taxes are allowed to be collected. These taxes could be spent back into the community and local government representatives and the people in the community could then see what they want, how it could be done in a timely manner.

**5.00 p.m.**

So we are trying to get away from the property tax, but the residential tax is essential to this local government. I know that for a fact, it is essential. [*Desk thumping*] So the faster the reform comes, and jump high or jump low, local government reform is going to be here under this Government. [*Desk thumping*]

**Mr. Ratiram:** Thank you very much, hon. Minister. We have been hearing the conservation of local government since 2016 and that is why I started earlier by asking if the hon. Minister can indicate when we are going to be rolling it out and when the provisions are going to be placed into the—

**Madam Chairman:** Okay. I am not going to allow a discussion on local government reform. You asked the Minister for a solution under a particular Item and that is how he answered, but I am going to allow under any Item here, a discussion on local government reform. Member for St. Augustine.

**Ms. Ameen:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I just want to set the record straight. There is no way that—the property tax does not go to the regional corporations. It goes to the Consolidated Fund.

**Madam Chairman:** All right.

**Ms. Ameen:** But, I was—

**Madam Chairman:** Okay. So, again, I am not going to allow a discussion on

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property tax. I am sure there is going to be an opportunity for full discussion when those are substantive matters before this Chamber. All right? So can we go on? Sub-Head 03: Minor Equipment Purchases; Item 001: General Administration; Item 006: Maintenance of State Traces, Local Roads. Sub-Head 04: Current Transfers and Subsidies; Item 007: Households; Item 009: Other Transfers.

34 - Siparia Regional Corporation, we are at page 346. Sub-Head 01: Personnel Expenditure; Item 001: General Administration; Item 002: Cemeteries; Item 004: Maintenance of Buildings, Grounds and Pastures; Item 005: Local Health Authority; Item 006: Maintenance of State Traces, Local Roads. Sub-Head 02: Goods and Services, page 347; Item 001: General Administration; Item 002—001?

**Ms. Ameen:** Yes.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for St. Augustine.

**Ms. Ameen:** Minister, you have a cut in the allocation for Contract Employment, this is for General Administration. Right? So this is office staff. Given that you have a freeze in hiring by the public service and the General Administration is unlikely to get new monthly-paid officers, this Vote usually supplements the administrative staff. In this region, you have a cut in the Vote, it means that some persons who are currently employed under Contract Employment will lose their job or not have their—is it that people will lose their job or not have their contract renewed in this regional corporation?

**Madam Chairman:** Minister.

**Hon. Hosein:** I have just been advised hon. Member that we will use Public Service Commission to do acting in these positions, monthly paid positions, and we will use short-term—

**Ms. Ameen:** So, workers who are currently on contract employment will then technically lose their job. They would not have the employment—they would no longer have a contract if you intend to replace them with other officers.

**Hon. Hosein:** The corporations will have to review their contracts to see what post that they need. Everything is priority now. You must prioritize, and we have the manpower audit going on right now.

**Ms. Ameen:** Mr. Minister, this is what happens. When you cut all these Votes—it is a combination of things, eh. It is not one line Item but when you cut all these Votes, you back the regional corporations into a corner and then the headline is the “regional corporation fires workers”. But the truth is we are already faced with so many job losses and there is need for the workers at the regional corporation, and this is why I choose to highlight it. Thank you very much, Mr. Minister.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 002: Cemeteries; Item 003: Markets and Abattoirs. Member for Couva North.

**Mr. Ratiram:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I would just like to bring the Minister’s attention to line Item 37: Janitorial Services for Market and Abattoirs. Especially during this COVID time, there needs to be continuous cleaning and janitorial work needs to be done on a continuous basis. The figure for 2020 was estimated at 100,000, but the Revised Estimate indicates nil and 2021 Estimates is nil. There is a significant decrease there. Can the hon. Minister kindly advise if this is correct or what is the situation here?

**Hon. Hosein:** You can get a list.

**Mr. Ratiram:** Thank you very much, Minister. Item 43—

**Hon. Hosein:** So, cleaning of markets is an essential service and they get money for wages to wash down the market, and sweep, and things like those.

**Mr. Ratiram:** But we will need janitorial supplies—well, it will be under Material and Supplies. Okay. Thanks, Minister. Moving on to Item 43: Security Services. There is no any allocation here for this fiscal year, can the Minister indicate how we are going to provide the security services for the market?

**Hon. Hosein:** Well, you know, we have more municipal police now. So this security service you are talking about is like security other than the municipal police?

**Mr. Ratiram:** This security service at the market, in the past there would have been like watchmen and so forth in the past. I do not know what the current situation is and security personnel placed in the past. I am not sure if now that has been terminated and now the municipal police has the responsibility of posting an officer at the market.

**Hon. Hosein:** Well, the administrative arm will look at this very seriously because we have more municipal police now and instead of having security service, we will utilize the municipal police, and they are the more effective ones in any case.

**Mr. Ratiram:** Thank you, Minister.

**Hon. Hosein:** Because I used to be a charge hand, in charge of watchmen, so I now the operations of watchmen.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Oropouche West.

**Mr. Tancoo:** Thank you, Ma'am. I am referring to Item 21: Repairs and Maintenance - Buildings. I am not sure if the Minister is aware but we have some work required in the Siparia market. I think the allocation here would be a little bit insufficient for that purpose.

**Hon. Hosein:** We have to look at virement because this is an essential.

**Mr. Tancoo:** Thank you, Minister.



**Madam Chairman:** Item 004: Maintenance of Buildings, Grounds and Pastures. Member for St. Augustine.

**Mr. Ameen:** Madam Chairman, the Materials and Supplies, and the Other Contracted Services, 12 and 28 respectively. Again, I want to bring it to the Minister's attention and he keeps saying, "make a virement", vire from where, take from where? Almost every Vote here is insufficient.

**Hon. Hosein:** Hon. Member, you have been a former chairman, you should know, you could find the money in certain Votes and do it. I used to do it. I used to be a mayor in San Fernando. When it is coming down to the end, you are looking to spend the money we have. You do not want to send back no money, so you utilized what you have.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Chaguanas East. Still under 004.

**Ms. Mohit:** Okay. I will go at 005.

**Madam Chairman:** Okay, Member for Couva North.

**Mr. Ratiram:** Thank you. Madam Chair, again, Janitorial Services for 004: Maintenance of Building, Grounds and Pastures. There has been a significant reduction from the 2019 actual figure of 203,000, of what was actual in 2019 to now 100,000 in 2021—again, a significant reduction. Can the hon. Minister advise how do we proceed with this?

**Hon. Hosein:** Same as before, hon. Member.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 005: Local Health Authority. Member for Chaguanas East.

**Ms. Mohit:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I now refer to 005; 28: Other Contracted Services, which if I am to be correct, would deal with scavenging and sanitization, et cetera. Madam—sorry, Mr. Minister, in terms of SWMCOL who is known to

grant these contracts to scavenging contractors, is there any type of memorandum of understanding between the Ministry and SWMCOL, in terms of monitoring and evaluation when it comes to value for money, in terms of scavenging?—28.

**Madam Chairman:** Page 348, 005; 28.

**Mr. Imbert:** Madam Chairman, SWMCOL is under the Ministry of Public Utilities and its allocation in the Ministry of Public Utilities, not in the Ministry of Local Government allocation.

**Madam Chairman:** Okay. So this Vote does not relate to SWMCOL.

**Ms. Ameen:** Madam Chairman, I do know if the Minister of Finance is not aware but for many years, regional corporations pay under this Vote. The regional corporations pay the scavenging contractors. However, the procurement, the award of those contracts is done by SWMCOL and SWMCOL deals with the—

**Mr. Imbert:** Madam Chairman, that is also incorrect.

**Ms. Ameen:**—Ministry of Local Government for that.

**Mr. Imbert:** This is also not correct.

**Madam Chairman:** Just one minute.

**Ms. Ameen:** And then the regional corporations are then advised which contractors have been awarded to service which areas. Regional corporations are the ones paying and responsible for monitoring the service and the daily checking of it. However, when regional corporations encounter problematic contractors, it does not seem to be taken into consideration when SWMCOL does the procurement. There are contractors who are supplying poor service for years and years and years in regions and they are still being awarded those contracts, and the regional corporations pay under this Head. So the question—

**Mr. Imbert:** May I intervene now?

**Madam Chairman:** The first matter to be clarified—

**Mr. Imbert:** I would like to correct the record.

**Madam Chairman:** Just one minute—is whether Other Contracted Services include scavenging under this Vote. Who is going to deal with the issue? Is it the line Minister or the Minister of Finance?

**Mr. Imbert:** In respect to scavenging, what we discovered, as a Government coming in 2015, is that a number of scavenging contracts had been awarded by the previous Ministry of Local Government, and we sought to retender these contracts and the contractors took the Government to court.

**5.15 p.m.**

That matter is still in court and as a result, the Solid Waste Management Company has had nothing to do with the award of contract for scavenging now for more than the last seven years, Madam Chairman, and therefore there is no relationship between SWMCOL and scavenging contracts in local government bodies.

The current contracts were awarded by the Ministry of Local Government under the former administration and have been tied up inside of there in court ever since. Even though, as the Member has said, there are problems with these scavenging contractors because of the system they put in place and because of the very litigious nature of their people, these contracts remain with these contractors even though there are numerous complaints. SWMCOL is not involved and is not associated with this vote.

**Ms. Ameen:** Madam Chairman, I just want to ask, I know you said the Standing Orders apply here but this would probably be 48(6) because I do not think the Minister is suggesting that the UNC is part of the litigation or the Opposition is

part of the litigation because he said “your people”.

**Mr. Imbert:** Anand Ramlogan and Gerald Ramdeen are the lawyers, of course UNC is involved.

**Madam Chairman:** Let us move on. Can we go on now? We are going on to Item 006, Maintenance of State Traces, Local Roads. Member for Oropouche West.

**Mr. Tancoo:** I am sorry, Ma’am. I wanted to ask a question actually on 28. That is 005, sorry. The Other Contracted Services.

**Madam Chairman:** Is it a question that was asked already?

**Mr. Tancoo:** Not that I am aware, Ma’am. I wanted to find out from the hon. Minister specifically what these other contracted services are and who the providers are.

**Madam Chairman:** Minister, are you in a position to do that now or are you going to give that in writing?

**Hon. Hosein:** Madam Chairman, I will give it in writing.

**Mr Tancoo:** Thank you, Minister.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 006, Maintenance of State Traces, Local Roads. Member for Couva North.

**Mr. Ratiram:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Again, I would like to point out to the Minister, Item 28, Other Contracted Services, the actual spent for 2019 was \$832,123, however, this figure has been revised in 2020. The estimate here now is only \$3,000. We are moving from the 800,000 to 3,000 for Other Contracted Services. Can the Minister kindly advise how the corporation will be able to execute its responsibility with this type of funding?

**Hon. Hosein:** All I can say is, once again, we have to prioritize. It is difficult economic times and we just have to choose what we want and deal with it and if

you have votes that we could vire the money from, we go right ahead and vire the money into the vote.

**Mr. Ratiram:** Thank you very much, Minister, but we are not seeing that prioritizing taking place in other places like Arima and in San Fernando and in Port of Spain.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Couva North, as I said before, there are some points that you have made repeatedly and we accept those are going to be running points. I will allow you to highlight the various areas as we call them but I think it will not be in our best interest for you to regurgitate the same point to hear the same answer. So that you highlight that for the attention of the Committee and unless the Minister has something additional to add, we take it that his answer applies. Okay, so we move on.

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

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

35, Penal/Debe Regional Corporation. We go to page 354.

Sub-Head 01, Personnel Expenditure. Item 001, General Administration; Item 002, Cemeteries; Item 003, Markets and Abattoirs; Items 004, Maintenance of Buildings, Grounds and Pastures; Item 005, Local Health Authority; Item 006, Maintenance of State Traces, Local Roads. Member for St. Augustine.

**Ms. Ameen:** Madam Chairman, you would be aware that the Penal/Debe region has been tremendously affected by flooding. One of the things that flood does is destroy the roads. The maintenance of the state traces and local roads therefore is

very critical when a region is affected by flooding especially in the manner as Penal/Debe has been. This vote has dwindled from 1.5 million to—it is 1.1 million now but we also have the Other Contracted Services which has also been reduced under State Traces.

I want to share with the Minister that it is not only the existing roads and traces on the vesting order that Penal/Debe region has to see about. This region has been rapidly expanding. There are more developments.

**Madam Chairman:** What Item are you on, Member?

**Ms. Ameen:** 006, 12 and 28.

**Madam Chairman:** Excuse me? 12 and 17?

**Ms. Ameen:** 12 and 28.

**Madam Chairman:** 006 only has 02, 29 and 30.

**Ms. Ameen:** Maintenance of State Traces. All right, I am on the other page.

**Madam Chairman:** Sub-Head 02. Item 001, General Administration. Member for Couva North.

**Mr. Ratiram:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I would like to bring the Minister's attention again to Sub-Item 12, Materials and Supplies. From what was estimated in 2020 of 127,000, again, it was budgeted but the corporation has not been receiving releases. Only 50,000 was released and that is the figure that was used to budget for 2021. So, again, we have a significant reduction in Materials and Supplies from 127 to 50.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 002, Cemeteries; Item 003, Markets and Abattoirs. Member for Couva North.

**Mr. Ratiram:** Next Item.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 004, Maintenance of Buildings, Grounds and Pastures.

That is where you are, Member for Couva North?

**Mr. Ratiram:** Yes, thank you, Madam Chair. I would like to bring the Minister's attention to Item 21, Repairs and Maintenance - Buildings, there is no allocation for the maintenance of buildings under 004, Sub-Item 21.

**Madam Chairman:** Minister, any additional comment you would like to make?

**Hon. Hosein:** [*Inaudible*]—hon. Member has said but I want to reiterate that Penal/Debe is not singular in this situation, it is happening all over and it is the economic situation that we are in right now and the faster we come to reality and start prioritizing what we want—I mean this thing is serious, you know. I have been answering these questions whole evening but this is serious, you know. The country is not like how it used to be a couple years ago and we must know what we want and everything is important but we have to prioritize. That is the way we have—this financial year, we will be in this position for this entire year. I want to remind the hon. Member and further questions to come, it will be along that same line, I am going to answer you the same way.

**Mr. Ratiram:** I take note of the Minister's response for an Item like this, maintenance of the buildings, this is very serious also because if we do not maintain our buildings—

**Hon. Hosein:** I know, I know.

**Mr. Ratiram:**—if it is we do not service our air-conditioning units for one entire year, there is no money there. If we do not do what needs to be done, we create a bigger problem.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for St Augustine, yes.

**Ms. Ameen:** Madam Chairman, I just want it to be noted. I heard the Minister indicating that we are in unusual times, yes we are and we are in the Opposition

agree with that. I want to draw to the attention of the Committee and to yourself, Mr. Minister, none of the Members here today have been advocating for any luxury items to be dealt with.

We have not spoken about asking for additional funding for entertainment or hosting conferences because we do understand the situation. The issues that you will hear us articulating are the very basic necessities of the regional corporations and regional corporations make this provision for all constituencies. It is not about who is in Government or who is the MP but for across the board and these are the very, very basic, basic things. As soon as you step out your door, it is local government. If you do not attend to these basic things, you will end up with bigger problems that will cost the country more.

So I want to ask in being prudent that you ensure that some of these basic things are attended to so that in the long run, you will not put yourself in a further hole.

**Hon. Hosein:** I hear you, hon. Member, and I do not know if I should let you know this eh. I work at the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Development, I have an office there. I heard somebody said on the next side just now “my Ministry”, I have no Ministry, I work there. When rain falls in the Ministry in the office that I have, I have to put buckets, it is a sacrifice I have to make. The Permanent Secretary is here, she could testify to it. “Is pigeon living in the roof”, things like that but it is a sacrifice we have to make. It would not be like that forever.

And I understand what you are saying and you are right, but there is a time for everything. The money will come, the money would not come in one year but it will come. We just have to make the sacrifice and that is the reality of it. This is



not about politics you know, this is not about “ah UNC corporation or ah PNM corporation”, this is about sacrifice in difficult times.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 005, Local Head Authority. Member for Couva North.

**Mr. Ratiram:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I would just like to bring the Minister’s attention to line Item 12, Materials and Supplies under the Local Health Authority. The actual spend for this line Item in 2019 was \$138,881, the estimated figure for 2020 was 240,000 but that figure was revised down to 71,000 because again, before COVID, we had the same problem where it was budgeted for one figure and it was revised, the releases, the corporations were not receiving the releases even before COVID.

Now, we have 71,000 budgeted here for the Materials and Supplies. Again, it is going to be very difficult for the corporation to efficiently execute its responsibility with this reduction knowing that two years ago, the actual spend was more.

**5.30 p.m.**

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

36 - Princes Town Regional Corporation. We are at page 362. Sub-Head 01: Personnel Expenditure. Item 001: General Administration. Member for Couva North.

**Mr. Ratiram:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I will like to bring the Minister’s attention to line Item 13: Remuneration to Council Members. The Actual spend for this Vote was 2.1 million. I see the Estimate figure for 2021 is

1.5, is there a reduction in council members or a variation in the remuneration to the council members?—not that I know of.

**Hon. Hosein:** 2021 is the same as 2020. Right?

**Mr. Ratiram:** Sorry?

**Hon. Hosein:** I said 2021 is the same as 2020.

**Mr. Ratiram:** 2019, what we have hon. Minister, is we have the Actual figure for 2019, and the Actual figure was 2.1 million.

**Hon. Hosein:** Yes, but that was 2019. We are dealing with 2020 and 2021. And these are the figures we have to work with. And if there is any need for any extra money we know where we could get it from.

**Mr. Ratiram:** This is remuneration of council members which would have been the same figure for 2019.

**Hon. Hosein:** And exactly.

**Mr. Ratiram:** The Actual figure from 2019 will be the same figure for 2020 and for 2021.

**Hon. Hosein:** Right, well, I was just telling you how we could get the money—for the last council.

**Mr. Ratiram:** Thank you.

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

**Ms. Benjamin:** Under General Administration, 68: Water Trucking.

**Madam Chairman:** You are carrying us back?

**Ms. Benjamin:** I had my hand up, Madam Chair, sorry. I know it is a reduction that is not really significant, but when it comes to this regional corporation that services not only Moruga/Tableland but Princes Town and Naparima as well, we have a problem with regard to servicing the areas and areas without the WASA lines. So I would like to find out from the Minister as to why the reduction.

And I know you said Princes Town Regional Corporation does not have a problem with regard to requesting funds. So I know all the funds would have been requested, so it has to be a problem with releases. And I would like to advocate for this particular line Item because as we speak, I have a serious water problem in the Tableland area and Marac.

**Hon. Hosein:** Hon. Member, I have been liaising with you all for the last couple of years, four years going in five now, and I know water trucking is a very important aspect of that corporation. So, in this case where the money is allocated here, I will ensure and I will advise you all, Permanent Secretary will advise your CEO—the CEO sorry, the CEO up there, that virements could be made into this water trucking. Virement from the unspent balances because water is essential and I know how important it is with water in that corporation.

**Ms. Benjamin:** Thank you for that response, Mr. Minister.

**Madam Chairman:** We now go on to Item 002: Cemeteries; Item 003: Markets and Abattoirs; Item 004: Maintenance of Buildings, Grounds and Pastures. Member for Moruga/Tableland.

**Ms. Benjamin:** All right. Mr. Minister, I appreciate that you would have answered this question probably at length from my colleagues, but again I have to advocate for something I have a vested interest in. When it comes to the allocation underneath these particular line Items I can tell you it is not sufficient. We have 87

grounds in the municipality and it is not sufficient.

**Madam Chairman:** You are dealing with the overall Item or you are dealing with—?

**Ms. Benjamin:** We could deal with the overall Item because I know the Minister would have went at length and if go to itemize each one, then I will get the same answer as before.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 005: Local Health Authority; Item 006: Maintenance of State Traces, Local Roads. Member for Moruga/Tableland.

**Ms. Benjamin:** Appreciate. My question here again, Mr. Minister, when it comes to the maintenance of the local roads we would have sent up various correspondence to the Ministry, and you would have done several site visits in the George Village Area, namely Pooran Road, and you could attest to the state of the roads not only in Moruga/Tableland but when my colleagues would mention different roads in their areas like Garth Road. With regard to these particular allocations we do not have sufficient and then we have significant decreases.

Now, I know you said we could do virement and we could do unspent balances but what you also have to appreciate, what I did not hear mentioned here today is that corporations have bills that are carried forward, and those bills have to be addressed from these same line Items that have been significantly decreased. So we are in a rock and a hard place because Princes Town Regional Corporation would have had reduction of \$12 million. And this reduction happened in prior years. So every year we see significant reductions in the same line Items and this year it is very significant. So I know you are going to answer the same way but I have to point it out again because I have a vested interest.

**Hon. Hosein:** Almost the same way. But I am going to advise you to ask your

chairman to talk to me, and ask the CEO to talk to the Permanent Secretary and we will come up with ways where we could assist. Okay?

**Ms. Benjamin:** Appreciated, Minister.

**Madam Chairman:** Sub-Head 03: Minor Equipment Purchases. Item 001: General Administration; Item 004: Maintenance of Buildings, Grounds and Pastures; Item 005: Local Health Authority. Member for Chaguanas East.

**Ms. Mohit:** Madam Chair, Item 005/28, if you may allow me? Minister, is there any specific reason why a COVID-19 line Item has not been identified for each municipality, seeing that these municipalities play a critical role during this COVID-19 pandemic in terms of markets, et cetera?

**Madam Chairman:** Member, what page are you on?

**Ms. Mohit:** 365 with you, 005/28.

**Madam Chairman:** I think we have passed that.

**Ms. Mohit:** No, we are on that.

**Madam Chairman:** We passed that.

**Ms. Mohit:** No.

**Madam Chairman:** I am at Item 006: Maintenance of State Traces, Local Roads.

**Ms. Mohit:** 005, Madam Chair.

**Madam Chairman:** Okay, so let us try and get on track and let us all, you know, be virtually on the same page. I am at Item 006: Maintenance of State Traces, Local Roads. Is that where your question is?

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

Sub-Head 04: Current Transfers and Subsidies, we are on page 366. Item

007: Households; Item 009: Other Transfers.

38 - Trinidad and Tobago Association of Local Government Authorities. We are now at page 374, Sub-Head 01: Personnel Expenditure. Item 001: General Administration. Sub-Head 02: Goods and Services. Item 001: General Administration. Sub-Head 03: Minor Equipment Purchases. Item 001: General Administration.

Hon. Members, we will now move to the *Draft Estimates of Development Programme*, new book. Sub-Head 09: Development Programme. We are at page 97. Consolidated Fund, 97, page 97. Item 003: Economic Infrastructure; Item 005: Multi-sectoral and Other Services. Hon. Member, Item 00—

**Ms. Ameen:** Madam Chairman, you have hands up.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 005, spans 10 pages, therefore I will announce the project groups. Administrative Services: A. [*Interruption*] —yes, you have your hand up, we saw your hand up at Item 005. Okay, so Administrative Services, Member for Tabaquite.

**Ms. Haynes:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I am at line Item 024: Disaster Management Capacity. So I am seeing a \$2 million allocation for the Disaster Management Capacity in the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government. Now, my understanding is that you all are meant to serve as the first responders in times of natural disaster. So if you can explain this \$2 million allocation and the Disaster Management Capacity. I am on page 98, line Item: 024, under Administrative Services, A. So it says Disaster Management Capacity and there is an estimated allocation of \$2 million for fiscal 2021.

Now, my constituency has a lot of flooding issues and we depend heavily on the local government arms to respond. So, I am asking about this \$2 million

allocation and what it means for the Disaster Management Capacity of the local government bodies.

**Hon. Hosein:** Member, I could identify what this will be spent on.

**Ms. Haynes:** “Um hmm.”

**Hon. Hosein:** This allocation will be used to pay for outstanding payments from fiscal 2019 to 2020 which were expended for procurement of relief items such as tarpaulins, cots, mattresses, sandbags, communication equipment, and other relief support essentials. It would also be used for outstanding payments for phase 2 of the community flood early warning system that is at the Ministry, and training in Incident Command System ICS-100 and 200 for members of staff at the head office and the 14 Disaster Management Units. That is what this is used for.

**5.45 p.m.**

**Ms. Haynes:** You are stretching that \$2 million very far, Mr. Minister.

**Hon. Hosein:** Well that is what we have to do this year.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for St. Augustine.

**Ms. Ameen:** My hand was not up.

**Madam Chairman:** F: Public Buildings; A: Port of Spain City Corporation; E: Arima Borough Corporation;

**Ms. Ameen:** Arima Borough page 100, right. Mr. Minister, I see 1.5 million allocated municipal police station. If you just care to explain, Item 089.

**Hon. Hosein:** Item 089, this is for the expansion of existing municipal police stations to cater for CCTV cameras, surveillance control room, vault and office accommodation for officers.

**Madam Chairman:** C: San Fernando City Corporation; D: Point Fortin Borough Corporation; L: Chaguanas Borough Corporation;

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Chaguanas East.

**Ms. Mohit:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, L: 144. There would have been a decrease in Drainage and Irrigation for the 2021 Estimates. Madam Chair, if I may ask if I can be apprised of the reasons for the CBC, not being able to access its full 2019/2020 PSIP allocations, since Madam Chair, I was advised that they were forwarded to the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government and not addressed in a timely manner.

**Hon. Hosein:** Hon. Member, if that is the information you have I will have to find out the information at the Ministry level. I cannot give it to you just like that because you have the information. I have to verify the information. So I will get the answer for you.

**Ms. Mohit:** No problem.

**Madam Chairman:** Anything else, Member for Chaguanas East?

**Ms. Mohit:** Madam Chair, line Item 149 Item: 4 million in 2020. And the Revised Estimate of 1.3 million and 2021 2.5 million that would apply to the same question, relates to the same question I would have asked on 144, okay. So, if you can include that, Mr. Minister.

**Hon. Hosein:** You know, I would like to include it. But I would like to also like to let you know, hon. Member, that we have to prioritize. We must know what we want from what we do not want and this is to resurface, reform, pave and reconstruct bridges in the effort to improve the road infrastructure. So, if we got this release here, this is what we have to work with. This is exactly what we have to work with, this is the reality. If we want more the midterm review will be coming and we will ask some more. It is simple as that.



**Ms. Mohit:** Madam Chair, the reason why I would have asked, Mr. Minister, there were instances where projects which were submitted in a timely manner, there were two batches of projects submitted to the Ministry, one would have been existing/returning members from the Chaguanas Borough Corporation and the other would have been new members at the Chaguanas Borough Corporation. It is my understanding that the new members would have received the allocation for DP, whilst projects submitted prior to that would not have received their allocation. Hence the reason, Madam Chair, I would have asked the question and understood when the Member would have—when the Minister would have stated he will have to verify and give me that information. Okay, Madam Chair, thanks a lot.

**Hon. Hosein:** But, Madam Chairman, I want to reiterate right, Chaguanas Borough Corporation is one of the Corporations which I included here, with four points: inaccurate submission of documents, requests were submitted very late, sending documents with missing information, lack of follow up from the appropriate accounting officers. I am not saying that Chaguanas Borough Corporation falls in every category here, but I know for a fact that some of these reasons here alluded to some of the points from Chaguanas Borough Corporation.

**Ms. Mohit:** Madam Chair, I would prefer if the Minister can verify and provide us in writing, when he verifies with the Ministry, due to the fact that if projects were submitted prior and the ones that came after would have been approved and carried out, then there must be something happening there. So I would prefer that instead of him referring to documents and not verifying the documents he is referring to at this point. Thank you.

**Madam Chairman:** M: Diego Martin Regional Corporation; N: San Juan/Laventille Regional Corporation; P: Tunapuna/Piarco Regional Corporation;

R: Sangre Grande Regional Corporation; T: Couva/Tabaquite/Talparo Regional Corporation. Member for Tabaquite.

**Ms. Haynes:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Now Minister, while I appreciate your answers with respect to having to prioritize and using whatever allocation you have effectively, and I can appreciate that answer, however, on line Item 260, Drainage and Irrigation Programme, the Revised Estimate for 2020 has us at 5.5 million and this year, the Estimate is \$3.5 million. Now, if I have to prioritize, I would think drainage and irrigation in areas that are flood prone, should remain high priority given that this can be a preventative measure, giving your limited allocation for disaster preparedness. So if you can, Minister, give me an idea of the planned scope of works for this massive Couva/Tabaquite/Talparo Regional Corporation under the Drainage and Irrigation Programme for which we are allocating \$3.5 million, a decrease of \$2 million for fiscal 2021.

**Hon. Hosein:** This money is to improve the drainage infrastructure by properly channeling water through a safe drainage course, enhancing the physical appearance while elevating flood and reducing erosion. Due to the reduction in allocation, the corporation identified from its proposed listing, the more critical infrastructure development works to be done. We had initially proposed 47 projects across the 14 districts.

**Ms. Haynes:** Thank you again, Mr. Minister, but I think the point that I am making, again, is that you have gotten the reduced allocation, yes, but while you are getting \$2 million less, the problem is, and we have seen the problem and over the last month, the areas that I am speaking about, that you have listed these projects, and they are flooding almost every single time it rains. So, when you are talking about prioritization, I would like to very respectfully suggest that we do not

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decrease the priority on Drainage and Irrigation, because people are losing their homes all the time and these constituencies and it is 14 councillors that you are servicing but a lot of them are in flood prone areas. Thank you Madam.

**Madam Chairman:** Q: Mayaro/Rio Claro Regional Corporation, I am sorry, I go back to T: Couva/Tabaquite/Talparo. Member for Caroni East.

**Dr. Seecheran:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Just to build on that point on line Item 260. It would have been more prudent rather to increase line Item 282 Disaster Preparedness from 775,000 to 1 million, rather than decrease Drainage and Irrigation Programme for a disaster that may never come, compared to the preventative measure of drainage and irrigation. As well as, Minister, could you expand on line Item 292 the Municipal Police Station, a new project?

**Hon. Hosein:** Police Station right? Well I have the information here. The Municipal Police Station, phase 2, to erect HCV walls, construct roof, erect suspended ceiling, install AC, fire, data, electrical and plumbing, tile the building and paint. This funding was requested however there were no releases. The two projects would be done using 2020 to 2021 allocation.

**Dr. Seecheran:** And the location of the station?

**Hon. Hosein:** Yes, I will provide this in writing for you.

**Madam Chairman:** Q: Mayaro/Rio Claro Regional Corporation. Member for Moruga/Tableland.

**Ms. Benjamin:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, I would just like to ask the Minister why such a significant cut under Drainage and Irrigation, 2.5, when every time it rains this is one area that always makes the news. That is Mafeking area in particular. That is a really huge—

**Hon. Hosein:** Yeah. That is how we going, but I could let you know, box drains, curb wall, cylindrical crossing, box culvert, retaining walls, slipper drains are proposed to be constructed in the district of Biche, Poole and Mayaro and in this fiscal year 2019/2020, 26 projects were awarded. That is the information I have to give you.

**Ms. Benjamin:** Thank you, hon. Minister.

**Hon. Hosein:** You are welcome.

**Ms. Benjamin:** But as you would appreciate the flooding in that area is very significant and yes, we are thankful for the box drains and the retaining wall because when we reach to Princes Town Regional Corporation, I have a lot of questions pertaining to that. But when it comes to the drainage aspect of this vote that cut—that 2.5 million is very significant.

**Madam Chairman:** V: Siparia Regional Corporation. Member for St. Augustine.

**Ms. Ameen:** Thank you for recognizing me. The line Item 296: Drainage and Irrigation. There is a \$2 million decrease. This region also experienced some major flooding between that 2017/2018, as well as in 2020.

**6.00 p.m.**

**Hon. Hosein:** The cut, hon. Member? Madam Chair, I want to take this opportunity now to respond for the overall decrease across the 14 corporations because this keeps recurring, so I want to deal with it head on. The global economy has been severely impacted as a result from the COVID pandemic and Trinidad is no exception. In light of the 14 municipal corporations, we need to execute prudent spending and careful selection of programmes and projects in order to effectively provide the much needed goods and services to the municipalities. Where we will want to have more, we just have to work with what we have.

At this time, the main priority should be with preservation of life and provision of essential services, which is, garbage collection, water trucking, minor repairs to roads, et cetera. And you will realize that in the area of garbage collection and water trucking, in fiscal 2019 to 2020, releases were prioritized for all corporations, once this request was made.

We all need to realign our priorities in the best interest of the people we serve. We know that there have been cut in the budget. However, we must do our best with the resources and finances available. The global situation and economic downturn is not a Trinidad problem, it is happening across the world. If you observe from the draft estimates before, across each of the municipal corporations, allocations under Wages and C.O.L.A. have not been impacted. This shows that this Government remains committed to the well-being of citizens. People will not have to worry about losing their jobs. So that is an easy way we can appreciate this, and we will be going through this.

This is not a laughing matter, you know. This is a serious matter. We will be going through this and everybody is having a cut, everybody will get a cut, but we have to deal with it in reality. So laughing here will not solve the problem. [*Desk thumping*] Laughing here, you might feel comfortable, but the people watching on television and the people who we represent outside there, because all of us sitting in this room represent people, whether you are a Senator or a Minister, [*Desk thumping*] we are representatives of the people. So I am not going to sit here, whether it is here or in the other place where I belong, and laugh. This is not a laughing matter. This is a serious matter. We had cuts and we have to deal with it.

This year, we have to make a sacrifice. I would say it now, I am closing in a while because I spent almost four hours here, and I would say to you all, we have

to make a sacrifice in this country. We have to do it. Thank you very much, Madam Chair. [*Desk thumping*]

**Ms. Haynes:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Minister, now, I assure you that I do not think of flooding in any way as a laughing matter, having to deal with it on several occasions already. [*Desk thumping*] And I wanted to take your word for it, that we had cuts across the corporations, so I sat here and looked very quickly and that is not, in fact, true, Mr. Minister. [*Desk thumping*] If you take a look at Diego Martin Regional Corporation, they got an increase under the Drainage and Irrigation Programme. So that what—[*Interruption*] Pardon? Yes, but so is in Couva/Tabaquite/Talparo, and that is the point that we are trying to make. So we have to face a \$2 million cut. The Minister said—and I am responding directly to the Minister—we all have to take these cuts across the board, and I took your word for it almost, and then I looked and it is not, in fact, true.

Now, if it were that we were all taking the \$2 million cut fine, but we are not, in fact, all taking the \$2 million cut.

**Madam Chairman:** Okay. So, Member for Tabaquite and all Members, we have had this discussion already. This is five hours and maybe some of us were not in here for the duration of five hours. I was not here at the beginning but I have heard this discussion out there, I have heard it here again. So, us rehashing it, is not going to get us anywhere. [*Interruption*] Okay, wait, we are not having a conversation. Okay? I am making a determination. Okay? So, let us understand our roles here. We have had this discussion, the Minister has answered, whether we accept the answer or not, I do not know that rehashing it—your voice might be nicer than somebody else's own or you may know bigger words or different words—it does not change the essence of the conversation and the response you are going to get. I

think it is extremely counterproductive. Okay?

So the point about equitable, equity, fairness and equality, they have been made and they have been answered. So, apparently, you do not understand what I am saying. And Member, therefore, I am not allowing any further discussion on that. You have another point to raise, you can make it.

**Ms. Haynes:** Thank you, Madam Chair. The issue is on the public record and that there was—

**Madam Chairman:** And you have already answered it.

**Ms. Haynes:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

**Madam Chairman:** Next Member, please. Member for St. Augustine.

**Ms. Ameen:** Madam Chair, the Minister has indicated that preservation—

**Madam Chairman:** The Minister of Health?

**Ms. Ameen:** Pardon me?

**Madam Chairman:** The Minister of Health?

**Ms. Ameen:** The Minister has indicated—I said the Minister has indicated, in reference to Minister of Rural Development and Local Government—that preservation of life is one of the things that is priority and I do agree with him, and I want to implore that flood mitigation falls in that category. And you have referred to the cuts in allocation, Madam Chair—

**Madam Chairman:** Are we coming back to that same point? Are we coming back to that same point that I ruled on for the Member for Tabaquite?

**Ms. Ameen:** I am on 296.

**Madam Chairman:** Excuse me?

**Ms. Ameen:** I am on 296, yes.

**Madam Chairman:** Are you making the same point in another manner that I ruled

on with the Member for Tabaquite?

**Ms. Ameen:** No, no, no. Not with regard to the disparity.

**Madam Chairman:** Okay.

**Ms. Ameen:** I just want to make a plea to the Minister for flood mitigation to be a priority. We respond when there is flooding. People lose their property. There is also a tremendous public health impact. Children get sick. You have opened cesspits mixing in with the floodwater going into people's homes. So the health of our citizens is also jeopardized. And I want to ask that through this Vote and the other similar Votes for flood mitigation to get a priority from you, because we have not had compensation for flooding, for instance, in these regions and so on.

**Madam Chairman:** Member, if we are dealing with drainage and irrigation, I am not talking about compensation.

**Ms. Ameen:** Oh no. Yes, I am not talking about compensation. I am saying—

**Madam Chairman:** But I think I heard you say it.

**Ms. Ameen:** Right. So thank you very much, Madam Chair.

**Madam Chairman:** Right? Can we go on? W. Penal/Debe Regional Corporation. Member for Oropouche West.

**Mr. Tancoo:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I also want to join the appeal for a lil bit more attention to be put on the issue of drainage and irrigation programme. I know that the Minister has reduced the allocation and, in this particular area, perennially flooded. So, Minister, I would appeal for you to reconsider, maybe you could liaise with the Minister of Finance to see if you can get some additional funding to put under this Head to treat with it.

**Hon. Hosein:** I will do exactly that, what you said there. It is not what you do in life, you know, is how you do it. And you asked me to liaise with the Minister, and



I am going to liaise with the Minister and request, make a request, like how I have been making a request—for the last four years, when requests comes from the corporations it comes to me. When it comes to me, I make the request to the Minister of Finance. It just does not stay on my desk.

**Mr. Tancoo:** Thank you, Minister. Just one follow-up please, Minister. I understand that the Penal/Debe has made a request for some expenditure and some unspent balances of which \$1.5 million, most of it would fall under drainage and irrigation projects that would have been identified. I was wondering if you can also spend the time to consider that request. I do not think we have received the approvals yet.

**Hon. Hosein:** The request was made to me?

**Mr. Tancoo:** Yes, Sir. At the end of September, the request was made. As far as I am aware, we have not had any responses yet.

**Hon. Hosein:** Well, it is probably still in the stages where auditing is taking place and things like that. Because once it comes, the Permanent Secretary would send it to me.

**Mr. Tancoo:** Thank you very much, Sir.

**Hon. Hosein:** I approve it.

**Mr. Tancoo:** Much appreciated.

**Mrs. Robinson-Regis:** Madam Chairman, could I request that issues such as unspent balances are not taken up in this? Unspent balances appear nowhere. There is no line item for unspent balances. If that is the situation with Penal/Debe, I am sure, after we are finished with Rural Development and Local Government, the Member for Oropouche West can have a conversation with the Minister. There is no line item for unspent balances, Ma'am.

**Mr. Tancoo:** Ma'am, if I may? With your permission, Ma'am, unspent balances stem from the non-expenditure of—[*Interruption*—yes, Ma'am. So if we are dealing with expenditure—

**Madam Chairman:** Okay. So, Member for Oropouche West, Minister of Planning and Development.

**Mr. Tancoo:** Yes, Ma'am.

**Madam Chairman:** On the matter of unspent balances and maybe Member for Oropouche West, you might have been outside at the time. I know you have been here most of the afternoon, but I think there is a general covering statement by the Minister, which has come from a previous discussion that all issues of unspent balances, there is a certain procedure and once that procedure is followed by the regional corporation, that will be made available, once the procedure has been made. So we spent a long time talking about unspent balances with a sort of covering statement that explains all that there is. So it may have been that you were outside. Okay? So we rest that matter there. Member for St. Augustine.

**Ms. Ameen:** Madam Chair, these development programmes in all—

**Madam Chairman:** Which these? Where are we?

**Ms. Ameen:** In all the regional corporations—

**Madam Chairman:** No, no, we are under Penal/Debe Regional Corporation.

**Ms. Ameen:** We are on W. Penal/Debe—[*Ruler in hand*]

**Madam Chairman:** And Member, while you do not mean it, I really do not like you speaking to me like this. [*Ruler in hand*]

**Ms. Ameen:** Oh, I am sorry.

**Madam Chairman:** Just like you would not like me speaking to you like this.

**Ms. Ameen:** Sorry, sorry. I am using the ruler to get the line here. My apologies.

Please do not misinterpret, Madam Chair.

**Madam Chairman:** No, that is what I am saying. I am sure you do not mean it. So that is the end of the conversation. We are at W.

**Ms. Ameen:** We are on W. Penal/Debe Corporation. All of these programmes, most of these projects under DP are awarded to contractors. This corporation is not alone, but we have had concerns that persons who apply to—well, companies who apply to be contractors with that regional corporation, they are interviewed and sent to the Ministry and the Ministry of Rural Development and Local Government, in turn, has to send it to the Ministry of Finance, but they have not had their list of contractors updated for many, many, years. So that, again, provides—

**Madam Chairman:** Okay. So, I would not allow that under these Items. Member for Oropouche West.

**Mr. Tancoo:** Thank you, Ma'am. I refer to line Item 330: Disaster Preparedness. I know that we had an Estimate of \$900,000 budgeted for 2020 but a Revised Estimate of 180,000. Can the Minister indicate what was responsible for the reduction in the expenditure?

**Hon. Hosein:** Disaster preparedness? This allocation is to install a backup generator for the Disaster Management Emergency Operations Centre; to construct a 96-foot radio communication tower; to acquire one zodiac aluminium dinghy complete with 40 horsepower outboard motor.

**6.15 p.m.**

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Caroni East.

**Mr. Tancoo:** May I, just a follow-up, please, Ma'am.

**Mr. Chairman:** Member for Caroni East, I will come back to you Oropouche

West.

**Mr. Tancoo:** Thank you.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Caroni East.

**Dr. Seecheran:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Minister, could you give us some information on line Item 336: Municipal Police Station, the new project?

**Hon. Hosein:** New project, hon. Member, this is a continuation of the Debe Sub Office to provide proper and secure facilities to house the expected 100 new municipal police officers.

**Dr. Seecheran:** And would the project be completed in fiscal 2021?

**Hon. Hosein:** Yes.

**Dr. Seecheran:** Thank you.

**Hon. Hosein:** I was advised 2021.

**Dr. Seecheran:** Thank you.

**Mr. Chairman:** Member for Oropouche West.

**Mr. Tancoo:** Thank you, Ma'am. Minister, the details you provided of what the money was allocated for, I believe it was for 2021, correct? Well, let me tell you why I am asking, because the figure that was budgeted in 2020 was \$900,000 of which only \$180,000 was spent, I was just trying to figure out what was the reason for not expending the full amount for whatever the purpose was that was identified.

**Hon. Hosein:** You went back to 330?

**Mr. Tancoo:** Yes. Sorry. Sorry, Minister, I am back at 330. I am just trying to figure out why there was a difference between the budgeted figure for 2020, the Estimate, and the Revised Estimate.

**Hon. Hosein:** Well, I will have to check with the—you see, hon. Member, as I was alluding to earlier, we have 14 corporations, just like this come like 14 mini

Ministries, so I will have to consult, not everything I would know offhand. So I will consult with them. Most time I do consult with them and I will get back to you.

**Madam Chairman:** Can you get back in writing?

**Hon. Hosein:** Yes.

**Madam Chairman:** Thank you.

**Mr. Tancoo:** Thank you, Minister.

**Madam Chairman:** X. Princes Town Regional Corporation, Infrastructure Development Fund—sorry, Member for Moruga/Tableland.

**Ms. Benjamin:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Minister, just as my colleague would have asked that you liaised with the Minister of Finance and if we could get back the allocation, because you would have visited Barrackpore during many floods, many years—every year I should say, so you should know that it is needed. Right? So I will appreciate if the same service could be done and you beg on our behalf.

**Hon. Hosein:** Yeah.

**Ms. Benjamin:** We are dealing with Drainage and Irrigation, there was a budget cut of a million—[*Crosstalk*]

**Mrs. Robinson-Regis:** Sorry, what allocation?

**Madam Chairman:** Line Item 331, page 106.

**Ms. Benjamin:** I just made that comment.

**Mr. Chairman:** Okay. Infrastructure Development Fund, page 213, Item 004: Social Infrastructure. Member for Chaguanas East.

**Ms. Mohit:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Madam Chair, 010: the Latrine Eradication Programme, Minister, can you advise on the start date of this project, as well as the proposed number of recipients who are to benefit from this programme?

**Hon. Hosein:** Just now, hon. Member. Hon. Member, persons benefiting from this programme, 58.

**Ms. Mohit:** Could you repeat the number, I did not get it?

**Hon. Hosein:** Fifty-eight, 58, and we expect another 58 to benefit from this programme.

**Ms. Mohit:** In this fiscal year?

**Hon. Hosein:** Yes.

**Ms. Mohit:** Madam Chair, a follow-up question, can you provide a listing of those 58 persons you are saying would have benefited and those 58 who will be benefiting in this fiscal year in writing?

**Hon. Hosein:** You want the corporation, everything?

**Ms. Mohit:** In writing.

**Mr. Chairman:** And if you are in a position to say who are intended to be benefiting in fiscal 2020/21

**Hon. Hosein:** Madam Chairman, you know, I want to be very sensitive here eh. These people who benefit from these programmes are the very poor people, I do not want to put their names out in the public. [*Crosstalk*] I do not want to put their names out because these are people from Sangre Grande Corporation, from Princes Town Corporation, from Rio Claro Corporation. If you want it, I will do it, but I do not want to—Madam Chair, why I do not really want to publicize these names— [*Interruption*] I am speaking to the Chairman. I do not want to publicize these names of people.

**Ms. Mohit:** Madam Chair, in no way I would have asked for the names of persons to be publicized in writing, I would have asked for the 58 who would have benefited and the 58 who will be benefiting. If it is a better breakdown to ask for

the constituency of Chaguanas East, right, I will do so. But, Madam Chair, I am very well aware that these proposed recipients would have been forwarded to the Ministry, hence the reason I am just asking. Yeah? I have never asked for publicizing.

**Hon. Hosein:** Yeah, because, Madam Chairman, this is private, this is personal—

**Ms. Ameen:** She made it clear, it is not to be publicized.

**Hon. Hosein:**—these are poor people. If you want the corporation where it is coming from and the amount of people in the corporation—

**Ms. Mohit:** Madam Chair, I think I was clear in relating to the corporation of Chaguanas—

**Mr. Chairman:** The Minister is saying is that he is prepared to give you the information of number of persons per corporation. I believe that is what the Minister has said he is prepared to give you.

**Hon. Hosein:** Very simple.

**Ms. Mohit:** Madam Chair, I hear you. As I stated, I never asked for publicizing.

**Mr. Chairman:** No, you did not hear me, you heard him; you heard the Minister. Okay? Anybody else? Member for Moruga/Tableland.

**Ms. Benjamin:** My question was answered in the discourse.

**Mr. Chairman:** Member for St. Augustine.

**Ms. Ameen:** Madam Chair, I just want to ask if this allocation covers contractors who would have performed work on the last fiscal under this programme who have an outstanding—

**Mr. Chairman:** What are you looking at, the Latrine Eradication Programme?

**Ms. Ameen:** Yes.

**Mr. Chairman:** Yes?

**Ms. Ameen:** Who have outstanding payment.

**Mr. Chairman:** Line Item—we are on page 213 at 004, A., 010.

**Hon. Hosein:** Okay. I am just advised the programme is ongoing, and fast as the programme is—the construction is finished, payments are being made.

**Ms. Ameen:** Madam Chair, I asked this in light of a newspaper article, and the Minister may be aware where there were contractors who are claiming that they are owed outstanding amounts, so I am asking if this has been settled or if this allocation is—I will send the information to the Minister and maybe at that time he could provide the information, but thank you.

**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you. Member for Oropouche West.

**Mr. Tancoo:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Line Item 003: Development of Rural Communities, would the Minister be in a position to provide a listing of the projects which would have formed under this line Item?

**Hon. Hosein:** Okay. The listing could be provided to you.

**Mr. Tancoo:** Thank you, Minister.

**Mr. Chairman:** Item 005: Multi-Sectoral and Other Services.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Head 42 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.*

**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you very much, Madam PS. Thank you, Minister—you all are relieved.

**6.30 p.m.**

*Head 61: Ministry of Housing and Urban Development, \$844,028,300.*

**Madam Chairman:** Members, we will be resuming at page 295 of the recurrent estimates.

I will now invite the Minister of Housing and Urban Development to make a



brief opening statement not exceeding five minutes. Minister.

**Hon. Beckles:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair, and good evening to everyone. The Ministry of Housing and Urban Development is responsible for the formulation and execution of Government's policy as it relates to the housing and urban development sectors. The Ministry also acts as a facilitator for the implementation of these policies through its various units and affiliated agencies.

The Ministry's areas of responsibility include, but are not limited to, provision of Government subsidized housing, disbursements of home improvement grants and subsidies, regularization of tenure, housing for squatters, land settlement, and urban upgrading and regeneration.

The Ministry's two main units which provide direct services to the citizenry are the Housing Policy Facilitation and Implementation Unit, which administers a non-refundable grant of \$15,000 to eligible low-income households to carry out approved repair works, and the Programme Monitoring and Coordinating Evaluation Unit, which has responsibility for the implementation of the urban upgrading and revitalization programme. This programme is being facilitated through a 50 million loan agreement between the Inter-American Development Bank and the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago.

The objectives of the programme are to improve the living and housing conditions of low and low middle-income persons along the East-West urban Corridor, through infrastructural upgrades and land tenure security; for persons occupying state lands, the provision of home improvement subsidies and facilitation of new construction or purchase of affordable quality housing. We also seek to revitalize some of the country's public urban spaces and strengthen the capacity of supply side stakeholders to effectively satisfy the country's housing

demands and urban development needs.

Madam Chairman, with specific regard to the housing sector, the Ministry and its agencies focus on increasing homeownership for eligible applicants through the Accelerated Housing Programme, the subsidized Affordable Mortgage Programme, Aided Self-help Housing Programme, the Housing and Village Improvement Programme and the Home Construction Subsidy. We also focus on maintaining the country's existing housing stock through the HDC's estate maintenance and refurbishment programme, and the disbursements of home improvement grants and subsidies.

The agency with responsibility for increasing the access of affordable housing solutions for eligible low to middle-income applicants under the Ministry's housing programme, include the HDC, the TTMF and the LSA.

Lastly, Madam Chairman, the Ministry is also responsible for urban regeneration which is conducted through the East Port of Spain Development Company Limited. The urban renewal portfolio is intended to ensure that our towns and cities, particularly, our nation's capital, become modern and sustainable communities that are safe and attractive for those who live, work and play within its boundaries. Our plan is to transform and revitalize east Port of Spain and develop modern self-sufficient districts, with integrated housing design infrastructure, related businesses and social amenities.

In this regard, the Port of Spain shopping complex would play a vital role in securing economic sustainability for the area through the provision of entrepreneurial and education and skills training opportunities. This will go a long way towards making our citizens more self-reliant and less dependent.

As I close, I wish to record my thanks and appreciation to the Permanent

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Secretary, the Deputy Permanent Secretary, and the staff at the Ministry. Let me also record my thanks to the CEO of HDC and the Chairman, and the CEO and Chair of LSA, together with all the chair and board members of the organizations that fall under the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development. I thank you Madam Chair.

**Madam Chairman:** Thank you, Minister.

*Question proposed:* That Head 61 stand part of the Schedule.

**Madam Chairman:** Hon. Members, the sum of \$844,028,300 for Head 61, the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development, is comprised of moneys proposed for expenditure under the following Sub-Heads and Items to be found in the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure*, the *Draft Estimates of the Revenue and Expenditure of the Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies and of the Tobago House of Assembly*, and the *Draft Estimates of the 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 Couva North.

**Mr. Ratiram:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Item 01: Salaries and Cost of Living Allowance. There is an increase of 800,000. I am happy to see this increase. It would more or less imply more persons going to become employed. Can the hon. Minister indicate if this is for an existing and outstanding liabilities, or if it is to employ more persons?

**Hon. Beckles:** Yes, it would be to employ more persons. That is for vacant posts.

**Mr. Ratiram:** And would the hon. Minister be kind enough to provide us, possibly in writing, the positions that are going to be filled with this increase?

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**Hon. Beckles:** Yes, will do.

**Mr. Ratiram:** Thank you.

**Madam Chairman:** Sub-Head 02: Goods and Services; Item 001: General Administration.

**Mr. Ratiram:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I see there is an Item 08: Rent/Lease - Office Accommodation and Storage. There is an increase of \$839,900. Is this for a new property that is going to be rented?

**Hon. Beckles:** That is some arrears.

**Madam Chairman:** That is it? Sub-Head 03.

**Mr. Tancoo:** Sub-Head 02; Item 16: Contract Employment. I note there has been an increase by \$2 million. Can the Minister indicate what was the reason for that significant increase between Revised Estimate 2020 and Estimate 2021 going forward?

**Hon. Beckles:** There are some vacant contract positions and these positions are to be filled this year. That would be 22 positions. That is by virtue of a Cabinet decision in 2018.

**Mr. Tancoo:** Thank you, Ma'am.

**Madam Chairman:** Sub-Head 03: Minor Equipment Purchases; Item 001: General Administration. Sub-Head 04: Current Transfers and Subsidies; Item 007: Households.

**Mr. Hosein:** Minister, I see in the 2020 Estimates, \$970,000 was estimated for Gratuities to Contract Officers, but none has been paid for that fiscal year 2020. Can you give a reason why no moneys have been paid in gratuities?

**Hon. Beckles:** That is because no release. The Ministry did not receive the release.

**Mr. Hosein:** And this fiscal year—well, then can you tell us how many persons

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are entitled to gratuities based on the contract employment?

**Hon. Beckles:** Could you just repeat the question?

**Mr. Hosein:** Can you indicate to me how many persons are entitled to gratuity and what is the outstanding sum?

**Hon. Beckles:** Can I provide that information?

**Mr. Hosein:** Provide it in writing?

**Hon. Beckles:** Yes, please.

**Dr. Moonilal:** I am on 009: Other Transfers.

**Madam Chairman:** We have not reached there as yet. 009: Other Transfers.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Minister, on the new Sub-Item at line item 11, could you indicate briefly what exactly and where exactly is the Port of Spain Shopping Complex, and what is expected—what is the Ministry is expected to do with the \$6.6 million at the Port of Spain Shopping Complex? I have a second question I will ask after.

**Hon. Beckles:** Okay. The Port of Spain Shopping Complex is a combination of what is called the City Mall on Independence Square and East Side Plaza.

**Madam Chairman:** There a second part to your question?

**Dr. Moonilal:** Is it the former spot for Salvatori Building? Is it the site of the Salvatori Building you are speaking about?

**Hon. Beckles:** No, no, no. Just on Independence Square, remember there is the New City Mall there?

**Dr. Moonilal:** Sure.

**Hon. Beckles:** And then you have the East Side Plaza, which would be the one between George and Henry.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Okay, sure. Thank you.

**Mr. Ratiram:** Item 01: Trinidad and Tobago Housing Development Corporation.

There is an increase of \$40 million. Can the hon. Minister indicate this increase, if this will be for the construction of new housing units, or what this increase entails?

**Hon. Beckles:** I am sorry?

**Mr. Ratiram:** Item 01, under 009.

**Hon. Beckles:** Okay. This is an increase in allocation due to having to pay interest payments for 650 million loans taken out in HDC in May 2020. That loan was utilized for 411 million for the elimination of the HDC overdraft, 150 million for payments to small and medium contractors, and 89 million for small and medium construction incentive programme.

**Mr. Ratiram:** The 2020 Estimate would have been 600 million. Does this include the expenses for the construction of new housing units? Is that included in here?

**Hon. Beckles:** Yes, it is.

**Mr. Ratiram:** Would the Minister be able to provide the information of the number of housing units that were actually given out for 2019 and 2020, and the recipients by constituency, please? And if we can also get information in writing of the loan agreement that was taken out in 2020?

**Hon. Beckles:** Could you just repeat that question, please? Is that 01 still?

**Mr. Ratiram:** Still 01, with respect to the housing units that were actually given out to our citizens for 2019 and 2020, distributed by constituency.

**Hon. Beckles:** Just to correct what I said a while ago, it was to pay existing loans.

**Mr. Ratiram:** So, none of this 600 million was for new housing?

**Hon. Beckles:** No, that was to pay existing loans.

**Mr. Ratiram:** Okay. Thank you, hon. Minister. The new loan that was taken out in 2020, can we get a copy of the new loan agreement, please?

**Hon. Beckles:** Okay, yes.

**Mr. Ratiram:** Thank you.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Madam Minister, just to confirm because I had some doubts about your earlier statement, that when we look at 009: Other Transfers: T&T Housing Development Corporation, what part of the 600 million was to pay a loan from this line item?

**Hon. Beckles:** That was a loan entered to in 2020, and the increase was taken into consideration for the recurrent subvention for fiscal 2020/2021. It reflects—that is an increase of 40 million. This loan was executed in May 2020 and was drawn down between May 2020 and August 2020.

**Dr. Moonilal:** And August 2020?

**Hon. Beckles:** Yes.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Could I ask, apart from what my colleague has quite rightly asked for, if we can get, for example, the details of the loan arrangement, what it was used for and what moneys were paid and which areas it was paid?

**Hon. Beckles:** Okay.

**Madam Chairman:** Item 011: Transfers to State Enterprises.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Minister, just to raise a question, which I raised before when this matter came up. As it is stated here, it is very difficult to locate these loans for exactly what purpose they may be for, and if you could commit to say in writing—Transfers to State Enterprises—that you could just give us a short note, which is very short, on each area, exactly what loan it relates to? Because we are seeing UDeCOTT here, and we are still seeing UDeCOTT has some responsibility under housing, but UDeCOTT was moved to the Office of the Prime Minister. So just some clarity on that, and the detail as to what loan it is. For example, you see “Interest Payment...Fixed Rate Loan”, but for what purpose? That is all.

**6.45 p.m.**

**Madam Chairman:** So you are really asking for under 06, 07—

**Dr. Moonilal:** Yes.

**Madam Chairman:**—08?

**Dr. Moonilal:** Yes. Until it carries on the next page as well.

**Hon. Beckles:** Okay. Let me just provide you the information from the last one, eh, because it would have been—the question you asked before I just want to give that information, 411 million for the elimination of the HDC overdraft, 150 million for payments of small and medium contractors, and 80 million for small and medium construction incentive programmes, and that loan carried a period of 10 years.

**Dr. Moonilal:** This is the Housing Development Corporation?

**Hon. Beckles:** And then you asked for—

**Dr. Moonilal:** And that loan came from which financial institution?

**Hon. Beckles:** Republic Bank.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Sure. Thanks. And the follow-up here—

**Hon. Beckles:** Okay. The one in relation to UDeCOTT, that is 230 million, a 230 million bond. It was issued in 2012 for eight years and the interest payments are due to be made semi-annually at a coupon rate of 3.5 per cent. The last interest payment is due on October 2020 in the amount of 3,597,073.97.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Sure.

**Hon. Beckles:** Okay. The second one which is 07, I think, and that loan was taken to undertake the construction of the Real Spring Housing Development in Valsayn. The loan was executed on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of October, 2013 for a period of nine years in the sum of 237,970. Payments are made semi-annually on both principal and interest,



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and the principal repaid at every due date \$12,394,277.78. And the 2021 Estimates are therefore in keeping with the schedule of the semi-annual payments in fiscal 2021.

**Madam Chairman:** Minister, will you give these in writing? I think that is what the Member asked for. It may be a better use of time.

**Hon. Beckles:** Okay. Fine.

**Madam Chairman:** Okay. Member for Oropouche East, as you had asked for, it will be supplied to you in writing.

**Mrs. Robinson-Regis:** Could I just say, Madam, that most of these loans were taken during the time that the Member for Oropouche East was the Minister of Housing and Urban Development, so he should remember.

**Dr. Moonilal:** It has been a long and a very—but I cannot accept when the Minister is saying when they would have been taken out. The Minister of Housing and Urban Development has made a commitment to put in writing, and I do not think—

**Madam Chairman:** Just one minute. One minute please.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Yes. It is really unfortunate. Anyway we can proceed.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Oropouche East, any more questions? Member for Couva North, you have a question? Member for Couva South.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** 06.

**Madam Chairman:** No. No. We are still on—well if there are no questions, I will call it now. Sub-Head 06: Current Transfers to Statutory Bodies and Similar Bodies; Item 004: Statutory Boards.

Hon. Members, we will now move onto the *Draft Estimate of Revenue and Expenditure of the Statutory Bodies and Similar Bodies and of the Tobago House*

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*of Assembly.* Members, in the recurrent book, what you have is the summary. Okay? So we go to the details, and I guess this is where you are at, Member for Couva South. We are at page 453, 18: Sugar Industry Labour Welfare Fund Administration. Sub-Head 01: Personnel Expenditure; Item 001: General Administration page 453. Member for Couva South.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Minister, could you tell us in relation to the overall decrease of \$4,507,600 in terms of the general administration to Sugar Industry Labour Welfare committee what changes will take place in fiscal 2021?

**Hon. Beckles:** This decision was taken some while ago for the dissolution of this organization. Of course—well they indicated it should have been this year, we have extended the time almost three times. They have given us some assurance that they should have everything organized, at least, by the end of this year, January, so that is an indication therefore that moneys would not be needed for that purpose.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Given what you have stated, Minister, could you indicate what will become of the entity and the current liabilities of persons who have loan arrangements and so on under the Sugar Industry Labour Welfare committee?

**Hon. Beckles:** Well, that was the responsibility—that is why the board was set up. And you would see if you through some of the other Heads, you would see that in terms of loans, deeds that that has been the board's responsibility. Sometime ago, I do not remember exactly what year, but Cabinet wrote off all the loans, outstanding loans, so it is a question now of the board going through the exercise and making sure that everything is dealt with.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Just a follow-up in that particular regard also. Are there any liabilities on the part of the outstanding liabilities to former employees of Caroni

(1975) Limited who would have made payments to the Sugar Industry Labour Welfare Committee for their entitlement of what we would term the residential lots?

**Madam Chairman:** Member, what Item are you asking under?

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Well, I am asking it based on the Minister's statement as it relates to the future of the fund, Madam Chair.

**Hon. Beckles:** You mean—are you asking if there are any liabilities from the board to these persons?

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Yeah.

**Hon. Beckles:** I am not in a position to answer that.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** I would appreciate if you could check and say.

**Hon. Beckles:** Yeah.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** My information is that, and I stand to be corrected, approximately 132 persons are owed.

**Hon. Beckles:** Okay. Are owed by the—

**Mrs. Robinson-Regis:** Madam Chair, let me just say, that if there are any liabilities, in the winding up they will be dealt with by the Corporation Sole, if there are any liabilities. And as the Minister says, she will check it.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** And I know as the Minister of Planning and Development you will be very proactive in assisting your colleague in relation to the settlement of liabilities.

**Mrs. Robinson-Regis:** As I always do.

**Madam Chairman:** I think that is a compliment. [*Crosstalk*] Sub-Head 02: Goods and Services; Item 001: General Administration; Sub-Head 03: Minor Equipment Purchases; Item 001: General Administration; 54, Land Settlement Agency and we

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are at page 465. 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; Sub-Head 04: Current Transfers and Subsidies; Item 007: Households; Item 009: Other Transfers.

Hon. Members, we will go on to the *Draft Estimates of Development Programme*, new book. We are starting at page 123. Sub-Head 09: Development Programme Consolidated Fund, page 123. Item 004: Social Infrastructure. Hon. Members, Item 004 spans two pages. Therefore, I will also announce the project groups. D, Housing Estates. Member for Oropouche East.

**Dr. Moonilal:** No, Ma'am. I will wait.

**Madam Chairman:** Okay. E, Settlements. Member for Oropouche East.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Thank you. Minister, there is a new project here, the Development of Residential Lots - Petrotrin. Could you indicate what is the nature of this project, what it entails, and what will be the \$20 million used for?

**Hon. Beckles:** Yeah. Okay. That \$20 million is going to be used for the Petrotrin workers who have been retrenched.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Could I ask where these lands for the Petrotrin workers, which areas are being looked at to develop residential lots?

**Hon. Beckles:** Yeah. Okay. So we will be looking at Glenroy. Okay. So we are looking at La Romaine, Ponderosa and Felicity to Chaguanas.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Could I ask if the areas are already developed by the LSA for Land for the Landless Programme?

**Hon. Beckles:** Not as yet.

**Dr. Moonilal:** And how many residential lots are expected to be developed?

**Hon. Beckles:** 2,500 residential lots.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Thank you.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.

**Mr. Lee:** Thank you, Chair. Just to follow up in the same line Item, Minister, as 241, you identified three locations—

**Hon. Beckles:** Yes.

**Mr. Lee:**—for those 2,500 lots. All three locations are presently part of the Petrotrin lands bank?

**Madam Chairman:** Currently.

**Mr. Lee:** Currently. Sorry.

**Hon. Beckles:** If all three are part of the contract?

**Mr. Lee:** They are all owned by part of the Petrotrin?

**Hon. Beckles:** Yes, they are.

**Mr. Lee:** Okay.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Barataria/San Juan.

**Mr. Hosein:** Thank you. I am at 233, Surveys of Squatter Sites. Minister, can you give us an indication of which sites have been surveyed in 2020? And which sites are expected to be surveyed in 2021?

**Hon. Beckles:** 240 sites.

**Mr. Hosein:** 2020 or 2021?

**Hon. Beckles:** 2020. These are sites what are going to be or sites that have been—

**Mr. Hosein:** The question I asked is, the sites that have been surveyed in 2020 because I saw that—

**Hon. Beckles:** 240.

**Mr. Hosein:** 240?

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**Hon. Beckles:** 240 sites completed.

**Mr. Hosein:** Where are the locations of these sites?

**Mrs. Robinson-Regis:** Do you want the Minister to call out all 240 now?

**Mr. Hosein:** If the Minister can commit it to writing, I would be very comfortable with that.

**Hon. Beckles:** Okay. So we can do that.

**Mrs. Robinson-Regis:** Thanks.

**Hon. Beckles:** Okay. Act 25 of 1998 actually listed the sites.

**Mr. Hosein:** Act 25?

**Hon. Beckles:** Of 1998. It is listed in the Schedule.

**Mr. Hosein:** And line Item 235 Housing and Village Improvement Programme, I saw \$13 million was spent for fiscal 2020 and an additional \$25 million is allocated for 2021. Minister, can you give us an indication of the persons who would have benefited from this programme? How many persons benefited and where?

**Hon. Beckles:** Okay. In '18 to '19, 61 persons; '19 to '20, 203; and fiscal 2020 to 2021, 250.

**Mr. Hosein:** How many?

**Hon. Beckles:** 2018/2019, 61; 2019 to 2020, 123; and then fiscal 2020 to 2021 with 250.

**7.00 p.m.**

**Mr. Hosein:** And where are the locations, can you commit that in writing also?

**Hon. Beckles:** Yes.

**Mr. Hosein:** Yes, and line Item 237, Regularization of Squatter Communities. Will these sites be the same sites listed in the schedule of Act 25 of 1998?

**Hon. Beckles:** Yes, they are.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Couva South.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Minister, just to take you back quickly to 241, Development of Residential Lots, Petrotrin. I heard you indicate that part of the area that will be looked at was Felicity 2, if I could discern that from you?

**Hon. Beckles:** Yes, so that you would have—actually there is two for Guyaguayare, and then there is La Romaine; Ponderosa, Golconda and Felicity 2, Chaguanas.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Felicity 2?

**Hon. Beckles:** Yes.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** I would ask you to probably check—being recently appointed into the Ministry and so on—to clarify whether Golconda and Felicity 2 were sites that were developed as it relates to the former Caroni (1975) Limited workers, and their VSEP arrangement as it relates to their residential entitlement from a lot point of view.

**Hon. Beckles:** There is no harm in checking, but those are ongoing works.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** What?

**Hon. Beckles:** I said no harm in checking, but those are ongoing works. Those are the areas that I have been advised on.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** But as I said, I know that a number of sites were developed and not handed over in relation to the continued distribution of housing lots for the ex-Caroni workers, and I hope that the Government is not in any way trying to stall the distribution, and using sites that were developed for the ex-Caroni workers and going ahead and handing it over to ex-employees of Petrotrin.

**Hon. Beckles:** No, no, no, that is absolutely incorrect.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Okay.

**Hon. Beckles:** It is actually not the same site.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Okay, thank you very much for that guidance.

**Madam Chairman:** Oropouche West.

**Mr. Tancoo:** Asked and answered, Ma'am.

**Madam Chairman:** Member for Cumuto/Manzanilla.

**Dr. Ragbir:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. Minister, can you clarify the 3 million increase for line Item 232, Housing Grants from 5.19 million, the revised Estimate for 2020 to 2021, 8 million? Thank you.

**Hon. Beckles:** You are asking for the increase in—?

**Dr. Ragbir:** 232, it was 5.19, Revised Estimate 2020, and 2021 is 8 million.

**Madam Chairman:** Settlements, 232. The question is with respect to the difference between the Revised and the 2020 Estimates.

**Dr. Ragbir:** What is expected?

**Hon. Beckles:** You would see that the original allocation was 14 million, in the 2020 we received 5.19, so that there is some outstanding, and then what we have to do for—it would not really be an increase then.

**Madam Chairman:** B. Other Services; A. Community Development. 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services. Infrastructure Development Fund, page 224. Item 004, Social Infrastructure; Item 005, Multi-Sectoral and Other Services.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Head 61 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.*

**Madam Chairman:** Thank you, Mr. Minister, thank you—this is the new Minister in the Ministry?—the Minister in the Ministry, PS, representatives of the various



agencies, you all are excused.

[MR. FORDE *in the Chair*]

**Mr. Chairman:** Welcome, Minister of Labour, welcome to the Permanent Secretary for the Ministry of Labour and her senior technocrats in your Ministry. Welcome.

*Head 30:* Ministry of Labour, \$427,624,132.

**Mr. Chairman:** I will now invite the Minister of Labour to make a brief opening statement not exceeding five minutes. Mr. Minister.

**Hon. Mc Clashie:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Let me first say I am grateful for the opportunity to meet with this distinguished group at the Standing Finance Committee for the first time in my political career, to present this budgetary allocations of the Ministry of Labour for the financial year 2020/21.

The Ministry that I have been privileged to serve is now known as the Ministry of Labour; three divisions and one company which were once part of the Ministry of Labour and Small Enterprise Development, have been transferred to the Ministry of Youth Development and National Service. These are the Cooperative Development Division, the Friendly Societies Division, the Enterprise Development Division, and the National Entrepreneurship Development Company.

As a consequence, Mr. Chairman, the Draft Estimates of Expenditure reflects reduction particularly under Personnel Expenditure and Current Transfers and Subsidies. That takes into account this realignment of the portfolio within the Ministry. Mr. Chairman, the Ministry of Labour plays a critical role in promoting decent work, maintaining industrial peace, and promoting rights and responsibilities in the workplace. I am grateful for the opportunity to focus on enhancing the labour administration system in Trinidad and Tobago, and

improving service delivery and efficiency in the Ministry of Labour.

I am fully aware that there is much more to be done at the Ministry at Labour, especially in the current environment where we battle the crisis of COVID-19, as well as declining revenues. The new normal demands a change in how we operate as well as a change in our mind sets, where we must seek value for money and do more with less. Together with the support of our social partners, that is workers and employers, organizations and other stakeholders, I look forward to advancing—I look forward to outstanding achievement that will redound to the benefit of the labour force and the population at large. In closing, we look forward to a fruitful and productive session and avail ourselves to provide the necessary information and clarification required at this gathering. I thank you.

*Question proposed:* That Head 30 stand part of the Schedule.

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Members, the sum of \$427,624,132 for Head 30: Ministry of Labour is comprised of moneys proposed for expenditure under the following Sub-Heads and Items to be found in the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure*, the *Draft Estimates of the Revenue and Expenditure of the Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies and of the Tobago House of Assembly*, and the *Draft Estimates of Development Programme*. We now proceed to consider the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure*. We are on page 203; Sub-Head 01: Personnel Expenditure; Item 001: General Administration. Member for Couva South, I recognize.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Thank you very much, Chairman. Very quickly Minister, in relation to the overall operations of the Ministry of Labour, and I have heard your opening statement as a result, indicating how much Division has been transferred to the Ministry of Youth and Enterprise Development. Given what is left in terms of Divisions, could you indicate how many vacant positions you have in your

Ministry, and especially in the Conciliation Division of the Ministry?

**7.15 p.m.**

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Member, identify specifically.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** 01: Salaries and—

**Mr. Chairman:** 01, page 203, Mr. Minister.

**Hon. Mc Clashie:** 01, page 203. We have 144 vacant positions and you are asking specifically for the conciliation—

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Division.

**Hon. Mc Clashie:** We have 33 vacant positions.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Thirty-three vacant positions. And how has that impacted upon in terms of dealing with the matters reported to the Ministry of Labour at the moment, before the Conciliation Division.

**Hon. Mc Clashie:** Okay, we are working with what we have and we have not had any major issues of delays or anything like that. So we can do with more staff as everyone here would agree, but we are working with what we have.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Okay. And do you have a substantive person in the position of head of the Conciliation Division?

**Hon. Mc Clashie:** We have a Chief Labour Relations Officer, yes.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Okay, thank you.

**Mr. Chairman:** Item 002: Co-operatives; Item 003: Friendly Societies, page 204; Item 004: Occupational Safety and Health Authority. I recognize the Member for Couva South.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Minister, very quickly again, under remuneration, 06: Remuneration to Board Members, do you have a full complement as it relates to the members of the board of the authority?

**Hon. Mc Clashie:** Yes, we do.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Okay.

**Mr. Chairman:** Item 005: On The Job Training Programme. Sub-Head 02: Goods and Services, page 205. Item 001: General Administration, pages 205 to 206; Item 004: Occupational Safety and Health Authority, pages 207 to 208; Item 00—I recognize the Member for Couva South.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Yes, Chairman. Minister, with respect to 004: Occupational Safety and Health Authority, I am not seeing any allocation in relation to salaries and so on, but I see under 16: Contract Employment, \$16,150,000. Does this mean that all of your health and safety inspectors are on contract employment?

**Hon. Mc Clashie:** All, Sir.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** All. And could you indicate what is the duration? All are under what, three-year contracts, one year or there is a mix or—of the duration of these contracts?

**Hon. Mc Clashie:** One sec. [*Crosstalk*]

**Mr. Chairman:** Mr. Minister.

**Hon. Mc Clashie:** They are on three-year contracts and we have some on short-term contract, but most them are on three-year contracts.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Three-year contracts. Minister, is there any move on the part of the Ministry to create what you would call an organizational structure and a permanent establishment to move these—how many officers you said on contract?

**Hon. Mc Clashie:** One hundred and fifty-two.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** One hundred and fifty-two, that is health and safety inspectors?

**Hon. Mc Clashie:** No. That is the entire structure. There is an approved structure for OSH.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Yeah. So is there—to move these contract officers into the, what you would call the permanent establishment of the authority.

**Hon. Mc Clashie:** Yes, there is.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** And could you give us a time frame when this exercise may be completed?

**Hon. Mc Clashie:** It is a work in progress so I would not hasten to give an end date.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Okay.

**Hon. Mc Clashie:** But it is a work in progress.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** In relation to the head of the authority, do you have a substantive person in what is called the, whatever is the terminology, whether it is chief executive officer, executive director?

**Hon. Mc Clashie:** The Executive Director which is the head of the agency is on—

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Is that person acting or confirmed?

**Hon. Mc Clashie:** No, not confirmed, on contract. On contract. The individual is on contract.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Is on contract, but not confirmed. If I heard you, I am trying to get you clear on what you are saying.

**Hon. Mc Clashie:** Now, well, if you are on contract you cannot be confirmed in the permanent position.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Position.

**Hon. Mc Clashie:** So it is on contract and the contract has a renewal time span on it which I believe is, it is a three-year contract.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** It is a three-year contract. I do not know if you would be so kind enough to probably put in writing, what is the qualification for the substantive head

of this entity and what are the qualifications for the person who is currently acting or in the contract position? What qualifications does that person, the office holder have, the current office holder?

**Hon. Mc Clashie:** Okay, we will.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Okay, thank you.

**Mr. Chairman:** I recognize the Member for Chaguanas West.

**Mr. Rambally:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Hon. Minister, in light of that last question and your response, how does that relate to line Item 16: Contract Employment? Is there any overlap? I know you said earlier you spoke about 152 persons. Is there any overlap with line Item 16?

**Hon. Mc Clashie:** The entire OSH agency is on contract. There is no overlap anywhere. They are all on contract.

**Mr. Rambally:** So just by way of follow-up, Mr. Chairman, line Item 16: Contract Employment, does that relate to persons outside the number of 142 positions you cited earlier?

**Hon. Mc Clashie:** The 16,150,000 you are referring to?

**Mr. Rambally:** Yes.

**Hon. Mc Clashie:** That is to pay all the people on contract.

**Mr. Rambally:** Okay, so for clarity, this line Item 16 relates to the said 152 persons that you referred to earlier.

**Hon. Mc Clashie:** Yes.

**Mr. Rambally:** Okay, thank you, Minister.

**Mr. Chairman:** Item 005: On The Job Training Programme. I recognize the Member for Pointe-a-Pierre.

**Mr. Lee:** Thank you, Chair. Minister, line Item 17: Training, that figure of 311

million, I assume that would be the stipend for the trainees, correct?

**Hon. Mc Clashie:** Yes, it is for the trainees.

**Mr. Lee:** In 2020, the Estimate is 274 million and the Revised Estimate in 2020 is 311 million so approximately over 25 million additional. Was there any reason for that \$25 million increase? Was it due to more trainees coming on board or was it due to, I cannot remember there was supposed to be a stipend increase, I do not know which one of the two.

**Hon. Mc Clashie:** The \$311 million represents an average loading of about 5,000 OJTs. We expect to continue around that level in 2020/2021 and therefore, the 311 reflects on average what we think we will spend.

**Mr. Lee:** So if I get you correctly, about 5,000 trainees, correct?

**Hon. Mc Clashie:** Yes.

**Mr. Lee:** Okay, thank you.

**Mr. Chairman:** Member for Couva South.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Minister, with respect to this said line Item 17: On The Job Training Programme, I remember in your budget contribution you said you were honouring the legacy of your predecessor. I want to tell you that is not a good role model to follow. But more importantly—

**Mr. Chairman:** Member.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** More importantly—

**Mrs. Robinson-Regis:** Mr. Chairman, Standing Order.

**Mr. Chairman:** Just retract the last part of your statement. Member, just extract the statement please.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Thank you, Chairman.

**Mr. Chairman:** No, Member, just extract—

**Mr. Indarsingh:** I said I retract.

**Mr. Chairman:** Retract.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Yes, I said so. I wanted to ask the Minister. Minister, with respect to trainees, I could remember your predecessor indicating to this House that there were ghosts in the On-the-Job Training Programme and she was saving the Treasury of Trinidad and Tobago. In your assumption to office are you aware of any matters which have been pursued by your Ministry and so on, from a legal point of view, as it relates to any ghost trainees and so on, in the OJT Programme?

**Hon. Mc Clashie:** At this point I am not aware of any issues surrounding any investigation or any, but I can check.

**Mrs. Robinson-Regis:** Mr. Chairman.

**Mr. Chairman:** Minister of Planning and Development.

**Mrs. Robinson-Regis:** All the ghosts were there between 2010 and 2015, [*Desk thumping*] and, Mr. Chairman, I think—

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Mr. Chairman—

**Mr. Chairman:** I have given way to the Minister.

**Mrs. Robinson-Regis:** How do you get rid of ghosts, Mr. Chairman, you have to smoke them out. So I think that was done by the last Minister. [*Desk thumping*]

**Mr. Indarsingh:** I do not know if you are good at exorcism—

**Mrs. Robinson-Regis:** And it was done effectively. [*Crosstalk*] Yeah, I was one of the exorcists.

**Mr. Chairman:** We will move on. Member for Couva North. Member, I recognize you.

**Mr. Ratiram:** Thank you, Chair. With respect to this same line Item, line Item 17: Training, can the hon. Minister advise us how the programme works when a person



coming out of school applies to become an OJT trainee, what is the turnaround period for they to be placed in an agency?

**Mr. Chairman:** Member, just speak a little louder in the mike, please. Position your mike, yeah.

**Mr. Ratiram:** With respect to the line Item 17: Training, how long is the turnaround period for a person applying to enter the training programme to actually be accepted into the programme?

**Hon. Mc Clashie:** Okay, in terms of the administration part of getting students enrolled in the programme, it takes three to six months, but thereafter OJTs are placed based on needs and demand. So someone could possibly have gone through the system and they are still awaiting placement several months after.

**Mr. Ratiram:** Is there a monitoring system that the Ministry has in place for persons applying to become an OJT trainee to ensure that they do not just get lost in the system after submitting that application?

**Hon. Mc Clashie:** There is a monitoring officer specifically charged with that responsibility.

**Mr. Chairman:** Sub-Head 02: Goods and Services, page 205. Item 001: General Administration—my apologies. Sub-Head 03: Minor Equipment Purchases, page 209. Item 001: General Administration, page 209. Sub-Head 04: Current Transfers and Subsidies, page 211. Item 004: International Bodies; Item 005: Non-Profit Institutions; Item 007: Households.

Item 009: Other Transfers, page 212. Item: 010: Other Transfers Abroad, page 212. Sub-Head 06: Current Transfers to Statutory Boards and Similar Bodies, page 212, and we are going to the other booklet. Item 004: Statutory Boards, page 212.

**7.30 p.m.**

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*. 17 – Cipriani College of Labour and Co-operative Studies. Sub-Head 01: Personnel Expenditure, page 187. Sub-Head 01: Personnel Expenditure. Item 001: General Administration. Sub-Head 02: Goods and Services. Item 001: General Administration, pages 187 and 188. Sub-Head 03: Minor Equipment Purchases. Item 001: General Administration. Sub-Head 04: Current Transfers and Subsidies. Item 007: Households, page 188.

Hon. Members, we will now move on to the *Draft Estimates of Development Programme*, and we are going to page 74 of the Development Programme booklet. Consolidated Fund, page 74. Item 003: Economic Infrastructure; Item 005: Multi-Sectoral and Other Services, pages 75 to 77. Hon. Members, Item 005 spans three pages, therefore I will also announce the project groups starting with M. Cipriani College of Labour and Co-Op Studies, page 75. Member for Couva South.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Minister, under line Item Cipriani College of Labour and Co-operative Studies - Upgrade of ICT. Now, in 2020, you had an Estimate of \$3 million, only \$865,531 was spent. Now, I do not know what you plan to do or continue to do with \$2 million in relation to this particular project. Could you elaborate for us?

**Hon. Mc Clashie:** Okay. The college was able to complete the installation of the network infrastructure, but what is required now is the next phase of the project to actually upgrade the computer systems and software in the college, and some peripheral work around that. So really it is a continuation. One was the laying of the cables and the construction part. This part is more the software and some of the hardware like the computers and so on.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** All right. So a contract has been awarded to an entity?

**Hon. Mc Clashie:** No, not as yet.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Not as yet? Okay. Thank you.

**Hon. Mc Clashie:** We have the scope and a request for quotations is going out.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Okay. RFP is going out?

**Hon. Mc Clashie:** Yes.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Okay.

**Mr. Chairman:** A. Administration Services, page 76. I recognize the Member for Chaguanas West.

**Mr. Rambally:** Thank you. Hon. Minister, 059: Labour Legislation Reform. Can you tell us what is actually carded, or are you able tell us what is actually carded for 2021 for this new fiscal year?

**Hon. Mc Clashie:** I have the whole listing here.

**Mr. Chairman:** Mr. Minister?

**Hon. Mc Clashie:** Just one sec. Excuse me.

**Mr. Chairman:** Proceed please.

**Hon. Mc Clashie:** Yeah. In 2020/2021, we will be looking at legislation for the prevention and elimination of the worst forms of child labour, Trade Disputes and Protection of Property Act, legislation related to employment standards, and the Truck Act.

**Mr. Chairman:** Follow-up, Member for Chaguanas West?

**Mr. Rambally:** Yes. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Hon. Minister, of these pieces or proposed legislation are you able to tell us which ones would be in essence starting from scratch?

**Mr. Chairman:** Minister.

**Hon. Mc Clashie:** All would be starting from scratch except the employment standards.

**Mr. Rambally:** Thank you.

**Mr. Chairman:** I now recognize the Member for Couva South.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Minister, I have heard you in your response to my colleague from Chaguanas West. 059: Labour Legislation Reform, that does not include or will it include continued work on the Retrenchment and Severance Benefits Act and the Industrial Relations Act?

**Hon. Mc Clashie:** Yes. The Acts that will be carrying over would be the Industrial Relations Act, the Retrenchment and Severance Benefits, Workmen's Compensation, Cipriani College of Labour and Co-operative Studies, we will be in fact going over with what I have just called as the—

**Mr. Indarsingh:** You want to amend the Cipriani College of Labour and Co-operative Studies Act to?

**Hon. Mc Clashie:** Yes.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Okay. With respect to the 071: Development of a Labour Migration Policy in Trinidad and Tobago, in 2020, you had an allocation of \$600,000. Nothing was done in 2020, where you intend to go with this 500,000 in your relation to your work schedule?

**Hon. Mc Clashie:** 071, you say?

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Yes.

**Hon. Mc Clashie:** Where do we intend to go with it?

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Yeah, I want to hear because you did not spend anything in 2020.

**Hon. Mc Clashie:** Okay. And reason for that is, of course, as everybody would know COVID came and we were not able to hold the consultations and do some of

the work that we needed to do. But we know that this is an important piece of legislation and that we intend to put it on the front burner because we think there are issues that need to be addressed, and therefore, we need to create a revised policy which has been actually developed, and we are just trying to get the consultations and the other pieces of data aligned so we could move it forward.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Okay. Thank you. I am moving on to another line Item if you would allow me or if you want to recognize—

**Mr. Chairman:** Go ahead.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Okay. 093: Operationalization of the National Tripartite Advisory Council. Could you tell us how this \$700,000 will be spent as it relates to the work of the National Tripartite Advisory Council?

**Hon. Mc Clashie:** Sure. As you know, in 2016, the hon. Prime Minister created the whole tripartite establishment. What we need to do now is to create a space for the operations, the full-time operations, a full-time Secretariat to help move it on to another level. What we have is we have identified a number of—we have identified the structure. We are in the process of identifying the actual office location, putting in the necessary infrastructure so that instead of people working out of several offices, we will now have one point of contact, one place, and able to manage the operationalization of that particular—

**Mr. Indarsingh:** I do not know if you could be so kind in due course to furnish me in writing with a copy of your organizational structure, and so on, as it relates to this particular entity—

**Hon. Mc Clashie:** Not a problem. We will.

**Mr. Indarsingh:**—and it is going forward. And I hope that, for example, the restructuring of WASA and so on, and the privatization of the port may find itself

before the National Tripartite Advisory Council. And in relation to line 101: Implementation of National Workplace Policy on Sexual Harassment, Project No. 101, a new project Minister. We all want to—I think on both sides of this House will want this to gain some momentum in relation to dealing with this particular issue. Could you give us an insight on what your Ministry intends to do though I think \$200,000 really does not send a very strong signal that you are willing or your Government is willing to tackle this issue in a very decisive manner?

**Mr. Chairman:** Proceed.

**Hon. Mc Clashie:** One of the first things that we would like to do is to implement a 24/7 hotline. Also, we need to further progress the sensitization in the general public and in workplaces about the whole issue of sexual harassment and how it can be dealt with. So that 200,000 will help facilitate the hotline and also promotional material to sensitize the nation in general.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** I know the draft policy is in this very House. What is the next stage from your Ministry's point of view?

**Mr. Al-Rawi:** Mr. Chairman, if I may assist at this point. The Attorney General's Office has drafted the legislation already. Based upon the policy, we were in stakeholder consultation across a number of sectors. We expect to approach the Cabinet very shortly and to be moving to the Parliament to treat with this issue.

**Mr. Indarsingh:** Thank you very much, Attorney General.

**Mr. Chairman:** Member for Chaguanas West.

**Mr. Rambally:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Hon. Minister, we have heard for some time moves to amending the Industrial Relations Act and the Retrenchment and Severance Benefits Act since 2015/2016. Can you tell us whether you have or you anticipate some kind of deadline for these two Acts that we had dealt with under

line Item 059; Industrial Relations Act and Retrenchment and Severance Benefits Act?

**Mr. Chairman:** I recognize the Attorney General.

**Mr. Al-Rawi:** If I could assist my colleague? The policy precisions behind that particular product are now receiving attention at the Attorney General's Office. As soon as we have a clearer line of sight onto that, we intend to have a position but I am not yet in a position to say that. Suffice it to say, we are about to publish our legislative agenda and we will have it lined up in that way. So the entire nation will be told as the legislative agenda comes forward.

**Mr. Chairman:** A follow-up discourse there, Minister of Planning and Development?

**Mrs. Robinson-Regis:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Just to indicate that in my capacity as Chairman of the National Tripartite Advisory Council, the Council has in fact dealt with those pieces of legislation, the amendments, and that is informing what the Attorney General is doing. All of them have been dealt with by NTAC at the request of the Cabinet. So they are there.

**7.45 p.m.**

**Mr. Chairman:** A follow up, Member for Chaguanas West.

**Mr. Rambally:** Mr. Chairman, I am grateful for the intervention of both Leader of Government Business and hon. Attorney General and of course, the Minister. I wanted to move on, just as a piggyback to my learned colleague, Member for Couva South, on line Item 101.

**Mr. Chairman:** Sure.

**Mr. Rambally:** Am I understanding, Minister, that this implementation of the workplace policy and sexual harassment is limited in light of what we have heard

that there is legislation due to be carded, that it is really limited to implementing a hotline that you referred to earlier and some promotional material?

**Hon. Mc Clashie:** Yes, it is.

**Mr. Chairman:** F. Public Buildings, pages 76 and 77. Infrastructure Development Fund, page 203; Item 005: Multi-Sectoral and Other Services, page 203.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Head 30 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.*

**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you, Minister of Labour; thank you, Madam Permanent Secretary and to your senior technocrats from the Ministry of Labour. Do reach home safely.

The Registration, Recognition and Certification Board. Again, I would like would welcome the Minister of Labour again and also, to the Registrar of the Registration, Recognition and Certification Board and your other senior technocrats from the board.

*Head 11: Registration, Recognition and Certification Board, \$3,974,100.*

I will now invite the Minister of Labour to make a brief statement not exceeding five minutes. Mr. Minister.

**Hon. Mc Clashie:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The Registration, Recognition and Certification Board is a tripartite body created via the Industrial Relations Act, Chap. 88:01. The board consists of a Chairman and eight other members who are appointed by the Minister of Labour. The Chairman is selected by the President of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago after consultation with such organizations, as is, in his opinion, most representative of workers and employers.

With respect to other members of the board, three members are persons nominated by such organizations, as in the opinion of the Minister, are most



representative of workers. Three members, being persons nominated by such organizations, as in the opinion of the Minister, are most representative of employers and two members being persons jointly nominated by the organizations' most representative of workers and employers. The Minister appoints the Chairman and eight members of the board and shall, in like manner, appoint an alternative member.

The present board was appointed in May 31, 2019. The board has a secretariat which is headed by a secretary who is the accounting officer. The secretariat is comprised of 26 public officers who carry out the day-to-day functions of the board. The role of the secretariat is to provide consistently accurate, timely and useful information of the board. The secretariat must support the board in carrying out its mandate. The duties of the board are outlined in section 23(1) of the Industrial Relations Act, Chap. 88:01, which reads as follows:

- “(a) the determination of all applications, petitions and matters concerning the certification of recognition under Part III, including the taking of preferential ballots under section 34(2);
- (b) the certification of recognised majority unions;
- (c) the recording of the certification of recognised majority unions in a book to be kept by it for the purpose;
- (d) the making of agency shop orders under Part VI and the conduct of ballots and proceedings in connection therewith;
- (e) the cancellation of certification of recognition of trade unions; and
- (f) such other matters as are referred or assigned to it by the Minister under this or any written law.”

The board generally meets once per month. There may be committee

Standing Finance Committee

Head 11: Registration, Recognition and Certification Board

meetings held in the intervals between board meetings. The board committees are appointed in an ad hoc basis to treat with specific issues so that the matters can be brought to finality.

Mr. Chairman, we stand ready and willing to respond to any questions that this honourable House may wish clarification on.

**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you, Mr. Minister.

*Question proposed:* That Head 11 stand part of the Schedule.

**Mr. Chairman:** Hon. Members, the sum of \$3,974,100 for Head 11, Registration, Recognition and Certification Board is comprised of moneys proposed for expenditure under the following Sub-Heads and Items to be found in the *Draft Estimates of the Recurrent Expenditure*. We now go to page 48, Sub-Head 01: Personnel Expenditure; Item 001: General Administration. Sub-Head 02: Goods and Services, page 48; Item 001: General Administration, pages 48 and 49.

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

Sub-Head 04: Current Transfers and Subsidies, page 50; Item 007: Households.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Head 11 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.*

**Mr. Chairman:** Thank you, Minister of Labour and thank you to your Registrar and the other senior executive of your board. Do reach home safely. You are all excused.

[MRS. ANNISSETTE GEORGE *in the Chair*]

*Head 02:* Auditor General, \$32,371,520.

**Madam Chairman:** I will now invite the Minister in the Ministry of Finance to

make a brief opening statement for a maximum of five minutes.

**Hon. Manning:** Good evening, Madam Chairman. I would like to begin by thanking the hard-working people at the Ministry of Finance, also at the Auditor General's Office for yeoman service during the year and especially during this budgeting exercise. Thank you.

The role and function of the Auditor General is enshrined in the Constitution of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago and the Exchequer and Audit Act, Chap. 69:01. The Auditor General's Office plays a primary role in auditing the public accounts, financial statements of regional health authorities, regional corporations, and statutory boards and international lending agencies and in so doing, promote sound financial management and accountability to the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago.

The portfolio also includes the audit of all pensions, gratuities and other separation benefits paid by the State in accordance with the Pensions Act and the grant of the credit on the Exchequer Account in accordance with the requirements of section 18 of the Exchequer and Audit Act, Chap. 69:01.

**8.00 p.m.**

*Question proposed:* That Head 02 stand part of the Schedule.

**Madam Chairman:** Hon. Members, the sum of \$32,371,570 for Head 02 Auditor General is comprised of moneys proposed for expenditure under the following Sub-Heads and Items to be found in the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure*. We are at page 5. Sub-Head 01: Personnel Expenditure; Item 001: General Administration; Item 002: Tobago Services. Member for Barataria/San Juan.

**Mr. Hosein:** Thank you. Madam, can the Minister indicate what is the complement of staff at the Tobago Services? I am on line Item 01?

**Hon. Manning:** One second please. Member, I have been informed that it is five, yes.

**Mr. Hosein:** Minister, can you indicate to us when was the last time that there were audited financial statements for the THA?

**Madam Chairman:** Member, under which Head are you?

**Mr. Hosein:** 01, whether the five members of staff at the Tobago Services, whether they did in fact complete any of the audited statements?

**Madam Chairman:** I would not allow that question. I would not allow that question. You may ask another type of question, but I would not allow that question under this exercise.

**Mr. Hosein:** I cannot ask about the audited statements for the THA?

**Madam Chairman:** Can you ask about—?

**Mr. Hosein:** I cannot ask about the audited statements for the THA?

**Madam Chairman:** But—

**Mr. Hosein:** I am just seeking your guidance.

**Madam Chairman:** Yeah, but Member, one, that is a matter of public record and I will not allow that under Salaries and Cost of Living Allowances for the Auditor General Department—

**Mr. Hosein:** All right, thank you.

**Madam Chairman:**—Tobago Services. Sub-Head 02: Goods and Services; Item 001: General Administration; Item 002: Tobago Services. Sub-Head 03: Minor Equipment Purchases; Item 001: General Administration. Sub-Head 04: Current Transfers and Subsidies; Item 001: Regional Bodies; Item 002: Commonwealth Bodies; Item 004: International Bodies; Item 007: Households.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Head 02 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.*

**Madam Chairman:** Thank you, Auditor General; thank you Minister; thank you other officers, you all are relieved.

*Head 81: Ministry of Youth Development and National Services, \$232,346,729.*

**Madam Chairman:** Members, we are at page 417 of the recurrent books. Head 81, Ministry of Youth Development and National Services, \$232,346,729. I will now invite the Minister of Youth Development and National Service to make a brief opening statement for a maximum of five minutes. Minister.

**Hon. Hinds:** Thank you, Madam Chair. It is with more than usual pleasure that I address this Standing Finance Committee on the examination of the Heads of expenditure for fiscal 2021 in respect of the Ministry of Youth Development and National Service, a spanking new Ministry, though some of the elements of the Ministry have been practised and well known to the national community in other spheres of the governmental activity over the years.

This Ministry, obviously, will touch the life of every single young person in Trinidad and Tobago every day. And it is therefore important that we very urgently embrace the positivity, the strength, and the talent that is resident in our youth, support and encourage them that they would develop themselves as individuals, contribute to their families, their communities, Trinidad and Tobago, and the world.

We propose to foster increased youth engagement, involvement and participation in the very planning stages of what we propose to do. We will of necessity forge partnerships and collaborations with other Ministries and agencies in particular, to address the rehabilitation and reintegration of young offenders where applicable, and more generally interact and to articulate with all other

Ministries since we consider the youth of the nation to be everywhere.

This Government believes in our young people. We do not see them as a problem to be fixed but rather a national treasure, a national asset, to be trained, to be empowered, to be made aware, to be imbued with our concepts of national service including civic-mindedness. We propose to implement an ICT system of junior cooperatives in Trinidad and Tobago as an expression of our intent on focusing on the youth, and as you would have heard in this Committee earlier, the NEDCO and in particular the business accelerator programme is designed specifically with the youth in mind.

These initiatives will encompass areas such as leadership, entrepreneurship, innovation, concern itself with climate change and other sustainable livelihoods. We have embarked on this very exciting journey and it is through the right support and encouragement of all of our young people who we expect to become the key drivers of the growth and sustainable development of Trinidad and Tobago. After all, they are our future. It is our pleasure. I am here in company with my Permanent Secretary, the Deputy PSs in the Ministry and other officials to respond to any questions that may come at this Standing Finance Committee in respect of the Ministry of Youth Development and National Service. Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

*Question proposed:* That Head 81 stand part of the Schedule.

**Madam Chairman:** Hon. Members, the sum of \$232,346,729 for Head 81: Ministry of Youth Development and National Service is comprised of moneys proposed for expenditure under the following Sub Heads and Items to be found in the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure* and the *Draft Estimates of Development Programme*.

We shall now proceed to consider the *Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure*. Sub-Head 01: Personnel Expenditure; Item 001: General Administration; Item 002: Co-operatives; Item 002: Friendly Societies; Item 005: Youth Affairs; Item 006: National Youth Development and Apprenticeship Centres. Sub-Head 02: Goods and Services; Item 001: General Administration; Item 002: Co-operatives; Item 003: Friendly Societies; Item 004: Youth Centres; Item 005: Youth Affairs; Item 006: National Youth Development and Apprenticeship. Sub-Head 03: Minor Equipment Purchases; Item 001: General Administration; Item 002: Co-operatives; Item 003: Friendly Societies; Item 004: Youth Centres; Item 005: Youth Affairs; Item 006: National Youth Development and Apprenticeship Centres. Sub-Head 04: Current Transfers and Subsidies; Item 002: Commonwealth Bodies; Item 005: Non-Profit Institutions; Item 007: Households; Item 009: Other Transfers.

Hon. Members, we will now move to the *Draft Estimates of Development Programme*, new book. Sub-Head 09: Development Programme, Consolidated Fund, page 174. Item 002: Economic Infrastructure; Item 004: Social Infrastructure; Item 005: Multi-Sectoral and Other Services. Hon. Members, is there a question?

*Question put and agreed to. [Continuous desk thumping]*

*Head 81 ordered to stand part of the Schedule.*

**Madam Chairman:** Thank you, Minister; thank you, PS. [*Desk thumping*]

This Standing Finance Committee is suspended to tomorrow Wednesday the 21<sup>st</sup> day of October, 2020 at 10.00 a.m. Reach home safely everyone.

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