

FRIDAY 1ST AUGUST 2008

The Deputy Speaker, Hon. Kengava took the Chair at 10.00 a.m.

Prayers.

ATTENDANCE

At prayers, all were present with the exception of the Ministers for Culture & Tourism, Foreign Affairs & External Trade, Energy, Mines & Rural Electrification, Forestry, Environment, Conservation and Meteorology, Provincial Gov & Institutional Strengthening, Infrastructure Development, Women, Youth & Children Affairs, and the Members for Central Guadalcanal, West New Georgia/Vona Vona, West Guadalcanal, Central Makira, Ngella, Temotu Nende, Temotu Vatud, North Guadalcanal, West Honiara, North West Guadalcanal, and Malaita Outer Islands.

PRESENTATION OF PAPERS AND OF REPORTS

'Solomon Islands Small Project Fund 2006 Report'
(National Parliament Paper No. 10 of 2008).

STATEMENT OF GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Mr Deputy Speaker: Honourable Members, before we proceed, I wish to advise the House about some changes to today's business. I have been informed by the Honourable Chairman of the House Committee that there is no private members' business for today and on that basis, the House Committee has, in consultation with the Honourable Prime Minister, resolved to allot today, being a private members' day for business normally only brought on a government day. This, of course, means that motions, bills, and questions that would normally be considered between Monday and Thursday may be brought on today.

I also understand that it is the Government's and the House Committee's wish to allow questions for Ministers to be asked this morning. As you are aware, Standing Order 20(1) does not allow asking of questions on the first sitting of a meeting or on Fridays. However, since the House Committee has effectively resolved to allot today as a government day, we will treat it as such, and on that basis I will allow questions and any government motions or bills.

On a related matter, none of the questions on the Notice Paper meets the four clear days notice requirement under Standing Order 23(1). However, for three of these questions, I am satisfied that the Ministers who will be responding to these questions

have been given sufficient private notice in order to prepare their answers. On that basis, I will allow these three questions to be asked without sufficient notice.

Finally, honorable Members, since we treat today as a government business day, I have given my permission for some changes, including the first reading of a bill, and the Bills and Legislation Committee is yet to endorse the report on the Secured Transaction Bill 2008, and so the House will now proceed on to asking and answering of questions.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Legal Services Fee – Attorney General

1. **Hon SOGAVARE** to the Prime Minister: Was the Government requested to pay a substantial legal service fee to the present Attorney General for legal services rendered to the group when he was still a private practitioner during the periods leading to the vote of no confidence in December 2007; if so?

- (a) What was the amount of legal services fee paid to the Acting Attorney General; and
- (b) What is the breakdown of payments?

Hon SIKUA: Mr Speaker, I would like to thank the honorable Leader of the Opposition and Member for East Choiseul for his question. Mr Speaker, the question will be answered in three parts. I will address the stem of the question first before I come to 1(a) and 1(b).

Mr Speaker, the invoices rendered by the Law Firm referred to were in respect of three cases, and that is Prime Minister versus Speaker and Haomae, Prime Minister versus Speaker and Huniehu, HCC/CC No. 300/2007, Prime Minister versus Governor General, Leader of Opposition and Leader of the Independent group that is HCC/CC 443/2007

Mr Speaker, as any private law firm would do, the firm billed for all services rendered and these includes all incidental costs. The invoices were sent to the government pursuant to Court Orders. As an example, the order on PM versus Leader of Opposition and Leader of Independent Members, says and I quote: “The order of this Court is that the originating summons is dismissed as appearing to be frivolous and vexatious, costs of these proceedings after submission today on invitation by the Court are ordered to be paid by the plaintiff with the first, second and third defendant to be agreed or taxed” end of quote.

Mr Speaker, clearly the order was made against the government. Since the GCCG had fallen, the new CNURA government assumed the liability. The Court Order made it clear that the costs were to be agreed, and if there is no agreement, the costs would be taxed, i.e. assessed by the Court.

Mr Speaker, when our government received the invoice, it opted to negotiate the invoice as directed by the Court, hence the invoice was sent to the Solicitor General for negotiation. The Solicitor General in consultation with the Secretary to Cabinet and Permanent Secretary for Justice negotiated with another lawyer who represented the acting Attorney General. The Solicitor General who together with the former Attorney General represented the former Prime Minister in that case, who knew quite well the orders of the court and the acting Attorney General was excluded from the negotiation of fees. That answers the stem of the question in which the government was requested but rather it was ordered by the courts.

In answer to 1(a), Mr Speaker, the task of the negotiating team was twofold:

- (i) to determine what was reasonably incurred; and
- (ii) to reduce the invoice by 30 or 35%.

After deducting 35%, Mr Speaker, the net balance owing and due is \$278,954.05. That is the answer to part 1(a). However, this amount has not been paid to date, although the negotiations were completed in March of 2008.

In response to 1(b), Mr Speaker, since the final figure was negotiated under a discounted amount, it is difficult to produce a breakdown as requested by the questioner.

Mr Speaker, a copy of the judgment in the case of Prime Minister versus Governor General, Leader of Opposition and Leader of Independent Members is now being made available in the pigeonholes for Members' readings. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

Mr ZAMA: Mr Speaker, what is the amount in the original invoice and its breakdown?

Hon Sikua: The amount in the original submission, Mr Speaker, is 35% less of the total that I have just conveyed. I am sure the Member for Rendova/Tetepare is very good at mathematics, and so he can work that out for himself. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

Mr Zama: Mr Speaker, I do not accept that answer. I think the Prime Minister should just tell Parliament what the amount is in dollars and cents, instead of trying to confuse Parliament. Thank you.

Hon Sogavare: Mr Chairman, could I just get confirmation again that the amount is yet to be paid?

Hon Sikua: Mr Speaker, as I have mentioned the amount has not been paid to date although negotiations were completed in March of 2008.

Hon Sogavare: Mr Speaker, when will the government be paying this service fee and from which budgetary allocations?

Hon Sikua: Mr Speaker, as you are well aware this amount is now due and we would like to settle the payment as soon as we can, and the payment will be made under the relevant heads.

Hon Sogavare: Mr Speaker, I think the question is well answered and so I thank the Prime Minister for his answers.

Personal Viability Program

52. Mr SOGAVARE to the Minister for Rural Development & Indigenous Business Affairs: Can the Minister inform Parliament whether the CNURA Government under his Ministry will continue the GCCG's policy to implement the personal viability training program?

Hon FONO: Mr Speaker, I would like to thank the Leader of Opposition for asking that question. Mr Speaker, the answer is as follows. The Personal Viability Training program although a good initiative taken by the former GCCG Government is not budgeted for under our Ministry due to budget constraints. This means the Ministry is not actively pursuing Personal Viability Training program, although we jointly hosted one last week as a road show to alternative approach to rural development where representatives from ministries, private organizations, NGO's and other stakeholders on rural development attended. However, the Government is supporting other trainings:

- (i) the entrepreneurial training such as the training of trainers who will actually go out to train rural people.
- (ii) the actual training of business owners in rural areas.
- (iii) the training of cooperatives, managers, workers, boards and communities on cooperative concepts, establishment, liquidating and dysfunctional coops, etc.

The Small Business Management Courses and Cooperatives training are to ensure small businesses are properly managed and that people own successful businesses in the rural areas.

Secondly, is the project appraisal training, which training on designing strategies to produce good project profiles, training of CDOs to determine the relevancy of data to be collected that can be used as information to make decisions. That is as far as projects viability is concern.

The third aspect of training is the IT training or Information Technology training, which is training on IT on basic email usage. One of the expected outcomes of this Ministry is to improve communication amongst rural people using the PF Net. This is to link rural communities to urban centres and the outside world. When this is achieved, training on the usage of the e-mail must be conducted for the rural people and this is done and administered by the PF Net staff but catered for under our training budget

partially outsourcing since PFNet is operating independently, but binding to this Ministry through an MOU.

Hon Sogavare: Mr Speaker, I thank the Deputy Prime Minister for responding. Sir; before I put the supplementary question, the rationale behind the adoption of the PV training is that we have been through the current system for the last 30 years, and it looks as though it is not working. The PV training is a new initiative altogether to set a new mindset for the people, to make their participation in development effective.

I appreciate the training courses outlined by the Deputy Prime Minister, and Sir, we have also been through those kinds of trainings but they do not seem to work. How confident is the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Rural Development that those trainings based on what has been going on for the last 30 years will still work this round?

Hon Fono: Mr Speaker, is the Leader asking a question or making a statement? It is unclear to me.

Hon Sogavare: Mr. Speaker, I am actually asking a question at the end of that statement. What I said was that those trainings listed by the Deputy Prime Minister have been done for the last 30 years and they do not seem to be working because they do not target people concerned and maybe the extent of the training or the reach of the training maybe, I do not know. They do not work and that is why the Grand Coalition adopted the PV training as part of its Bottom-Up-Approach to prepare people cope with the demands of development. That is the rationale behind the adoption of this program.

My question, Mr Speaker, is how confident is the Deputy Prime Minister that those trainings he is mentioning now which have been going on for the last 30 years will work this round.

Hon Fono: Mr. Speaker, the trainings I referred to, although may have been done over the last 30 years, the areas now covered are also modernized to keep up with the standard of knowledge that is required by our people. If the Leader thinks the PV training is appropriate, there are other Members who have used their own constituency funds to conduct such training.

I would like to encourage Members of Parliament that if you have confidence on PV training, use some of your constituency funds to train your people so that they do well in business or change their mindset according to what is advocated by the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr Waipora: Mr. Speaker, when the Honorable Deputy Prime Minister read the list of trainings, he mentioned cooperative society training. My question is; do we still have any cooperative societies surviving in this country?

Hon Fono: Yes, Mr Speaker, there are some active cooperatives, and one is in my constituency which continues to supply pork and beef to Honiara and there are other farmers and producers cooperative, I understand as well. Mr Deputy Speaker, you also have one in your constituency. There are some cooperatives that still continue to operate, and that is why training is focused on that.

Mr ZAMA: Those trainings that the Deputy Prime Minister talked about are only for the same public servants who usually arrive at their offices at 10 o'clock and clock out at 2 o'clock or 3 o'clock, and most of them are unproductive.

What I want to find out from the DPM is, what kind of training will those people be receiving, especially last year under the GCC Government 50 CDOs went through a very lengthy training. With this new training of officials, what other kinds of trainings will they be doing? What is wrong with the training that other people have already received last year? When will this training target people especially under the churches or people in the rural areas?

Hon Fono: Mr Speaker, if the MP for Rendova/Tetepare had listened properly, the first training that they will be doing is entrepreneurial training and not CDO training. It is training of business owners so that they improve in the businesses that they own. That sort of training is very important as it is in line with government policy of encouraging private sector development and not only emphasis on public sector through IPAM. We also need to train the private sector and that is why the training is there.

As I have said because of globalization and change, there are new skills and knowledge in terms of entrepreneurial training that needs to be imparted to our private sector people. For the information of the House, there have already been trainings done in other urban centres. For instance visits were done to Lata, and recently to Kirakira.

Hon Sogavare: Mr Speaker, just a follow up question from the Deputy Prime Minister's response earlier on. I can confirm that we have run training programs in my constituency using our constituency fund, and the program still continues in the constituency.

One rational behind the adoption of the training in preparing people to be responsible is the long term plan to eventually move away the direct involvement of Members of Parliament in the management of the Rural Development Fund directed through MP because of too much complaint from the public.

The question now is because of that issue what is the long term plan of the CNURA Government to standardize and improve the management of the Rural Development Fund that is channeled through Members of Parliament, which right now is not there.

Hon Fono: Mr Speaker, that is a totally new question dealing with a policy issue. I would like to ask the Leader to put that question in writing so that I can be prepared well to answer it.

Hon Sogavare: Mr Speaker, I respect what you said but this is a simple policy question, and I am asking the Deputy Prime Minister, the deputy head of Government whereby all government policies should be at the tip of his fingers. But I respect his intention for me to notice a new question. With that I thank the Deputy Prime Minister for trying to answer this question.

Question No. 63 withdrawn

STATEMENT OF GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

BILLS

Bills – First Reading

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission Bill 2008

MOTIONS

Special Adjournment motion by the Honorable Prime Minister

Hon Sikua: Mr Speaker, I move that at its adjournment today, the Parliament adjourns until 1:30pm on Tuesday 5th August 2008.

The House adjourned at 11:30am