

## THURSDAY 21 AUGUST 2008

The Deputy Speaker, Hon. C. Kengava took chair at 9:40 am.

Prayers.

### ATENDANCE

At prayers all were present with the exception of the Ministers for Development Planning & Aid Coordination, Foreign Affairs & External Trade, Energy, Mines & Rural Electrification, National Unity, Reconciliation & Peace, Forestry, Environment, Conservation & Meteorology, Communication & Aviation, Agriculture & Livestock Development, Prime Minister, Women, Youth & Children Affairs and Public Service and the Members for West New Georgia/ Vona Vona, West Guadalcanal, Central Makira, Ngella, Central Honiara, South Vella La Vella, Temotu Vat, North Guadalcanal, North West Guadalcanal and South New Georgia/ Rendova/ Tetepare.

### **PRESENTATION OF PAPERS AND REPORTS**

### **QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS**

#### **Technical Assistants in Ministries**

18. **Mr SOGAVARE** to the Minister for Public Service: In respect of Technical Assistants (TAs) engaged under Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI) in government ministries, could the Minister inform Parliament as follows:-

- (a) How many are holding line posts and in which Ministries?
- (b) How many are on advisory role and in which Ministries?
- (c) Has government plans to localize these line posts with Solomon Islanders and could Parliament be informed of the strategies to be employed to achieve the localization?

**Hon. TOZAKA:** Mr Speaker sir, I would like to thank the honorable Leader of Opposition and the MP for East Choiseul for his question. The answers are as follows:

- a) RAMSI personnel holding line positions as of July 2008 are sixteen (16). Their current deployments are as follows: - Ministry of Finance & Treasury – 4, Auditor General's Office – 1, Ministry of Police – 2, Ministry of Justice – 9, which

- comes to the total of 16. The terms and conditions of service are met by donors, and in this case RAMSI with no costs to SIG. Respective Permanent Secretaries are involved in their recruitment and their employment is governed by the Public Service rules and regulations.
- b) Currently there are 72 RAMSI advisors performing advisory roles in various ministries and departments. As of July 2008, the deployment are as follows:- Ministry of Finance & Treasury – 6, Ministry of Lands – 1, Ministry of Public Service – 2, Ministry of Police & Prison – 35, Ministry of Justice – 36, the total is 72. Most engagements are less than six months and their terms and conditions are financed by donors through RAMSI and respective ministries through their Permanent Secretaries are consulted or involved in their recruitment.
- c) The answer is yes. As soon as local counterparts attained the necessary skills, the expatriates will relinquish the position and Solomon Islanders will take up the positions. We also have mechanisms to monitor the localization of these posts. The localization program is well intact. Our localization policy is not only under the CNURA Government but it has been the localization program in the Public Service. Basically Permanent Secretaries are guided by the civil list which shows the records of all our public officers. We also have a reporting system where permanent secretaries are obliged to make reports to the Public Service Commission on the performance of Solomon Islanders as counterparts to these various positions.

Mr Speaker, I am happy to recommend that our system of localization is working. You are aware recently that we have already localized the post of Civil Aviation. The head of Civil Aviation now is a Solomon Islander. Because we want to make sure that these technical ministries are working, we have to have an expatriate to work alongside him until he slowly moves out and the Solomon Islander is left alone as head of Civil Aviation.

Similarly, the Director of Public Prosecution post has also been localized. Judges of the High Court, the Puisne Judge of the High Court has also been localized and also have earmarked Solomon Islanders to take over positions of the Commissioner of Prison and the Public Solicitor's post in the Public Service. Thank you.

**Mr OTI:** Mr. Speaker, can the Minister further clarify the distinction between the focus of this question in relation to the Regional Assistance Mission and other direct bilateral ODA personnel in government, particularly the case of the Director of Civil Aviation which initially was made under direct New Zealand Bilateral Aid arrangement to Solomon Islands. The fact that the Minister referred to this as an example, is that arrangement ultimately under the auspices of RAMSI.

**Hon Tozaka:** Mr Speaker, I thank the Honorable Member for Temotu Nende for the question. The answer to the question is that it is not under Australia but it is under New Zealand bilateral.

**Mr Oti:** Mr Speaker, my supplementary question was that the fact that the Minister made reference to it as an example of the transition of line positions taken under RAMSI and the ultimate process of localization, he used Aviation as an example. What I am saying is, what time did that become a part of the Regional Assistance Mission package because our understanding is that, that is direct New Zealand assistance without the auspices of RAMSI.

**Hon Tozaka:** Mr Speaker, thank you once again for the question from the Honorable colleague for Temotu Nende. The localization of the Civil Aviation post is a model we are adopting. In fact there is a framework now in place where we are working in partnership arrangement with RAMSI, the same with the other posts. Negotiation is an ongoing process with the rest of the advisers.

The important point here is that it is not just the sake of localizing the posts. It must be on the basis that we have our Solomon Islanders having the ability, the experience, the skills and the qualifications to take up the positions. This is because of the positions, I mentioned are technical positions in the Ministry of Justice in relation to the judges and the magistrates. That is the process we are undertaking. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

**Mr Sogavare:** Mr Speaker, the Minister made reference to when answering questions on localization that as soon as locals obtained the necessary skills, I just want to find out what specific trainings are these personnel undergoing: 4 in the Ministry of Finance, 1 in the Audit Office, 4 in the Ministry of Police and 9 in the Ministry of Justice. What specific trainings are they undertaking and where are they undertaking the trainings? Is the training in here or in Australia?

**Hon Tozaka:** Thank you for that question by the Leader of Opposition. I mentioned that that is the criteria. It is basically if they meet the qualification and the other criteria is gaining experience in the post.

Sir, basically our localization program has been going on very well, but it was disturbed during the tension period when most of our Solomon Islanders who have attained qualifications to take up the positions have to go for greener pastures, because as part of our connection to globalization. So it is not only overseas but also commercial sectors in the country. We are not losing them but slowly they are coming back. To answer the question directly it is under those criteria that we are looking at the localization process.

**Mr Oti:** Mr Speaker, the Minister in answer to part (a) of the question specified the number of those in line positions, which are the Ministry of Finance 4, Auditor General's Office 1, Police 2 and Justice 9.

Can the Minister explain how long have those occupying the line positions been in those posts to ensure particularly, on-the-job training and continuity? I ask this supplementary question in relation to an experience that we know, especially in the Ministry of Finance where the Accountant Generals that have held that post have held it, some for six months, one year?

Can the Minister inform what is the time duration of those on line positions to assist on-the-job training and to ensure there is consistency in the presence of those officers in line positions to be able to pass on whatever skills they have to pass on to those who are in the waiting to takeover those posts?

**Hon Tozaka:** Mr Speaker, the timing is in fact in our hands. As soon as we, and when I say 'we' I am referring to the respective ministries, and in this case you referred to the Accountant General's position, when the Ministry of Finance finds a suitable Solomon Islander counterpart to take over, looking at the criteria I mentioned, and that is considering the officer's qualification, ability, experience as well as other things that I mentioned according to annual reports of the Public Service Commission, as long as those things are met and we are satisfied, as is the case of the Director of Civil Aviation, the posts can be localized.

I would like to advise the house that all posts held by TAs and advisors are all vacant posts, and in theory are localized posts for Solomon Islanders. As soon as we get our own people then that is a priority. Thank you Sir.

**Mr Agovaka:** Mr Speaker, one of the important posts in the country is the Auditor General. Since the passing of the holder a few months ago, what is the government's position and steps in recruiting a new Auditor General and how long are we going to wait for that position to be filled?

**Hon Tozaka:** Mr Speaker, I thank the Honorable colleague MP for Central Guadalcanal for the question.

Sir, the procedures are there where we are going to go through the procedure of recruitment again. We are going to put up the post and first of all we have to look for our own people in the local market long here but if there are suitable locals then again it is going to go through the same process where we have to look for an alternative to fill the position in the meantime.

**Mr Oti:** Mr Speaker, in reference to my last question, which I think the Minister partly answered, and the other part which I did not get the appropriate response that I want so that Parliament is informed. I am asking about those 16 line positions in Finance 4, Auditor General 1, Police 2 and Justice 9. Can the Minister inform Parliament that of

those 16 posts and respective to those Ministries concerned, how long would be the term of those currently at post? How long is the term of each of those officers at post now?

**Hon Tozaka:** Mr Speaker, I thank the MP for Temotu Nende for that question. As I have said in my answer already the duration of their contract is only for 6 months and renewable after six months.

Until such time we can identify our own people to take up these posts, they will still be held by foreigners. Six months and less is the time they are supposed to be holding these posts, which is subject to renewal. Again the renewal of their contracts also goes through the same procedure as recruitment like the rest of the public officers.

**Mr Waipora:** Mr Speaker, last time I went to the Ministry of Finance, and I want to know whether the Commissioner of Inland Revenue is a local man, a national or one of those RAMSI officials.

**Hon Rini:** The Inland Revenue Division is yet to have a commissioner. It is still under process in the Public Service. At present the post is occupied by an expatriate on acting basis.

**Mr Sitai:** Mr Speaker, supplementary question. Of the number provided by the Minister regarding the officers taking up those line positions in the various ministries as well as advisors, can the Minister indicate that apart from Australia and New Zealand, I presume, how many are from other RAMSI participating countries in the region. If so, where are they posted?

**Hon Tozaka:** Mr Speaker, I do not have the information to that question right in front of me now, but the TA advisors also include the Participating Countries. Just in front of me, there are two officers here working in the Ministry of Justice. There is one senior legal officer and a judge who are from the Participating Countries.

**Mr Sogavare:** The Minister made reference to the training and said that until we have people suitable to take over before the posts can be localized, and that seems to be the issue. Can the Minister inform the house whether those 16 people have counterparts working under them ready to take over? If not, what are we doing to identify a suitable transfer to take over those important posts?

**Hon Tozaka:** The answer to that is definitely a yes. They have counterparts. But there are other areas that we have difficulty identifying locals to take over. But the answer is yes.

**Mr Sogavare:** Mr Speaker, I rise to thank the Minister for answering my questions.

## Federalism - Provincial Public Service

19. **Mr SOGAVARE** to the Minister for Public Service: In light of the popular demand by the people of Solomon Islands to adopt a state government system modeled on federalism, and the need to develop a provincial public service, what specific strategy will the Coalition for National Unity & Rural Advancement (CNURA) Government implement to address this issue?

**Hon TOZAKA:** Mr Speaker, I thank the Leader of Opposition for the question. The answer to that question is as follows. As the honorable Leader stated, I had on the 31<sup>st</sup> July made a statement to the house on the commencement of the Public Service Improvement Program (PSIP), which Components 4 & 5 of the Program addresses the questions asked by the Leader of Opposition. I could go through them again.

Sir, Component 4 is to strengthen the human resources management functions in the provinces. **Mr. Speaker** with Component 4, support will be rendered for improved service delivery at the provincial level through documenting the roles and responsibilities of different levels of government for human resources management functions, recommending amendments to legislation and policy reviews where appropriate and developing and implementing tailored Human Resources Management improvement activities for provincial administrations.

**COMPONENT 5** of the program deals with emerging priorities of the SIG. This refers to state government or the SIG. Through this program we will be able to establish options on how the Public Services of the federations will be administered. Two options are worth exploring here. One is centralized public service where all public officers are appointed and seconded to federations or decentralized public service where each federation has its own public service commission.

In other words, what I am saying here is that my Ministry is going to come up with a technical report that will give our positions, our requirements and trainings in the public service and the provinces that can give this committee decision as to how we would be able to deal with public service functions devolved to provinces in the light of other issues, not only on devolved functions but also how we are going to sustain public officers in the provinces in the light of their welfare requirement, for example housing, schools for the children and so forth. Thank you.

**Mr Sogavare:** Mr Speaker, how are the trainings going to be structure. The way we are going with the federal system, because as for now the provincial governments are basically agents of the Central Government that deliver services on behalf of the Central Government. When they do not have resources, the Central Government seconded its officers to the provinces. In the light of what is evolved in the state government system where there will be more autonomy, there would be the urge of people wanting to do things for themselves. How does the Ministry see their training needs in terms of more devolved functions?

I think the way things are going we will arrive at a stage where provincial governments or states to be, will negotiate for more powers. Is the government looking at that kind of development and training in that way?

**Hon Tozaka:** Mr Speaker, I share the sentiments expressed by the Leader of Opposition. I do not want to mislead Parliament at this point of time. I would need more information, and that is basically why we have this gentleman who is now assisting us in respect of the public service that we have and the needs we have now and also in the near future to be able to share together information as to how we are going to consider our public officers and public services of our requirements.

The present system, as is rightly pointed out by the Leader of Opposition, needs review and we would definitely want it to revisit it again and to come up with contributions to assist the committee that is looking into the federal system of government.

**Mr Speaker:** Honorable Members, I think the Minister does have a point in terms of misleading Parliament. This is because some of the questions can be considered hypothetical and we might be seeking his opinion to express to us. Please ask for facts rather than hypothetical situations that he might find difficult to express his personal opinions on.

**Mr Sogavare:** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the statement you made, and of course the response by the Minister. Before I thank the Minister, we are suffering now because of that kind of way. The current provincial government system suffers because it is only agent of the National Government and because of that we do not allow it to work the way it should be working. It lacks the financial resources and also the human resources to make it work. And now we are talking about jumping into something more serious. All we are asking here is for us to put our thinking and planning cap on and just think about what we are getting ourselves into. We must start to make preparations now otherwise when we come to adopt this system it backfires on us, worse than the Provincial Government system.

With that I thank the government for trying to answer this question.

### **Free Education - 2009**

81. **Mr WAIPORA** to the Minister for Education & Human Resources Development:
- (a) When will free education for all children up to Form 3 start in 2009?
  - (b) Is the Government confident that the schools' operations will not be adversely affected by this policy?
  - (c) What is the feedback or reaction from provincial governments on this policy on the fear that they might not have money to run their schools?

**Hon TAUSINGA:** Mr. Speaker, I thank the MP for West Makira for the question. I noted with great satisfaction that the Member for West Makira is very keen in the education of our children.

The question is in three parts. The first one is on when free education for all children up to Form 3 will start in 2009. Mr. Speaker, the questioner himself had answered that question. I can only confirm that the government is working towards achieving that objective of providing free basic education up to Form 3 in 2009.

On part (b) of the question whether the government is confident that the schools' operations will not be adversely affected by this policy, that question requires me to answer either in the negative or positive. I can assure the Member that yes, the government is confident that it will not adversely affect the policy arrangement.

On part (c) of the question on what the feedback or reaction from provincial governments on this policy on the fear that they might not have money to run their schools, Mr Speaker, awareness of this policy is done through meetings and consultations, and everyone is aware of the challenges in terms of the costs. However, the desire here is to have all our children go through that system up to Form 3. It is on this basis that provincial governments are very supportive and willing to work with the government to achieve this goal. Thank you Mr. Speaker

**Mr Waipora:** The answer given by the honorable Minister is that the government is confident to run the schools even without the payment of school fees. But why was ROC saying that enough is enough with the CNURA Government's shopping list of \$23.38 million.

I just want assurance if you are really confident otherwise you are just defending yourselves by saying that you are confident but your request has already bounced back.

**Mr Kwanairara:** Point of order. What is meant by the shopping list?

**Mr Waipora:** In here it says \$83.4 million was asked by the government for projects, and one of those projects is the \$23.38 million for which ROC had said that enough is enough. I saw this and I was concerned because otherwise our schools in Makira will not operate. That is why I am asking this question.

**Hon Tausinga:** Mr Speaker, I think the Member for West Makira has every right to have his question answered. However, I do not really understand his supplementary question that he had just asked.

**Mr Waipora:** Mr Speaker, I want to clarify my supplementary question. It is about the government's confidence policy of free education it will not affect schools throughout the whole country because they would have money to run the schools without school fees. But the first attempt has not been successful. That is what I found out. Mr. Speaker. That is according to my research.

**Hon FONO:** Mr. Speaker, the content of the question by the MP for West Makira is out of order in accordance with Standing Orders 22(c) because he used a newspaper cutting to try and justify his submission.

Mr Speaker, to inform the House, this free education policy is also a policy advocated by the former government through a request seeking assistance from one of our development partners – the Republic of China to assist us implement that policy. I think it is the Leader of Opposition who made that request under the previous GCC Government and the CNURA just took it up by providing the actual project document, which may be the last government did not have time to do it. We are therefore quite confident that with that support, the support of our other development partners and of course our own contribution, the Government will try and implement that free education policy to subsidize the cost of education right up to Form 3 level. Thank you.

**Mr Sogavare:** Mr Speaker, can the Minister just confirm to the House that the Republic of China is still committed to funding this project.

**Hon Tausinga:** Mr Speaker, discussion and negotiation is still continuing with possible donor partners to help us fund this arrangement. Until such time discussions are concluded should we be able to inform the House of the source of funding. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

**Mr AGOVAKA:** Education is important for this country. We are concerned about the education of our children, and not only our children but also our relatives and friends. Free education is one thing, and the other thing is the opportunity for children to be educated right up to Form 3 level. Yesterday was the standard 6 exams. What is the Ministry's plan to do away with education exams for standard 6 and allowing the children to go up to form 3 education giving opportunity to our children to be educated right up to Form 3 level?

**Hon Tausinga:** Mr Speaker, it would be difficult for me to assure the House of this policy arrangement to be quickly extended to Form 6. The government at the moment, Mr Speaker, only extends from primary to Form 3 basic education. Until such time that we can confidentially support any other extensions, the government in the meantime is only working up to Form 3.

**Mr Waipora:** Mr Speaker, I would like to thank the honorable Minister for Education and the acting Prime Minister for answering my questions. But before I sit down I want to make this point.

Mr Speaker, I quoted the newspaper clipping because that is the only way that we from the Opposition have access to, and there is nothing else.

The other point is that the GCCG only made enquiries but it did not actually come up with what you came up with. I think it is not right for you to just follow what

the last government has done. This is to avoid you jumping into the cliff because we could be wrong. I advise you because this thing is going to backfire on us. Thank you.

### **Investors - RIPEL**

**82. Mr WAIPORA** to the Minister for Agriculture and Livestock: Has Government identified investors to revive Russell Islands Plantations Estates Limited (RIPEL)?

**Hon RIMANA:** Mr Speaker, I wish to thank the hardworking Member for West Makira for his question and for his concern for the nation.

To be honest with his question, I mean to give an honest answer, the answer is no. The government has not identified any new investors, simply because the current situation has been so difficult for the government to find an investor. The current management has been a stumbling block, so to speak. There is also the case between the government and the management yet to be cleared. Given all these circumstances it is difficult to find an investor. Thank you.

**Hon FONONO:** Mr Speaker, to further add on to that, for the information of the House, as chairman of the Cabinet Committee dealing with RIPEL, meetings have already been held with all stakeholders including the current management to thrust out issues that experienced over the years, which made it ending up in the High Court. The issues have been identified and we are working on trying to address them before any decision is reached by Cabinet to reopen RIPEL.

Already there have been indications and expression of interest by both foreign investors and some local investors in taking over the RIPEL, but I cannot preempt the outcome of any decision because it is currently being considered by the task force that I am currently chairing. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

**Mr Waipora:** Mr Speaker, I thank the Minister for Agriculture and the honorable Acting Prime Minister for answering my question. That is the answer I expected because at the moment I know there are many problems with RIPEL. Because I saw it mentioned in the policy statement of the CINURA Government and that is why I am asking this question. Thank you.

**Mr Speaker:** That concludes the question session and we shall proceed to our next item of business.

**STATEMENT OF GOVERNMENT BUSINESS (further statement)**

### **BILLS**

Bills – Committee of Supply

## The 2008 Supplementary Appropriation Bill 2008

**Mr Chairman:** Hon. Members the consideration of the Committee of Supply of the 2008 Supplementary Appropriation Bill 2008 commences. Normally, this Committee only has a maximum of four days to deal with these proceedings and to report back to the House. However, since the Bill was read a second time after only two days the remaining two days that was allotted for second reading debate be added to the committee stage's number of allotted days bringing it to a total maximum of six days. This committee may well dispose of the bill before the sixth day but I want to inform the Committee so that Members are clear at the commencement of the Committee proceedings.

Before we proceed I wish to inform the House that I have had advice from the Minister that there are number of typographical errors in the explanatory notes attached to the bill that we will need to deal with. Since these errors do not appear in either the clauses or the schedule of the bill, we cannot make corrections by way of amendment as we normally do. However, although these explanatory notes may not be voted on, these by practice remain pivotal to the understanding of the Bill. As such when the House resumes I propose to allow corrections of errors and oversights in the explanatory notes at third reading pursuant to Standing Order 58(2).

At the appropriate time I will call the Minister to formally notify the House of such corrections and as Hon Members are aware, copies of these corrections will be circulated to Members or they have been circulated to Members.

### The Schedule

#### Head 275 - Office of the Governor General

**Mr Oti:** Mr Chairman, in consideration of the schedule on page 5, perhaps we should refer to the details of those schedules that are on page 8. Is that proper Mr Chairman? I think we should start on page 8.

**Mr Chairman:** Yes, page 8 has explanatory notes to the schedule but it is the schedule that we need to vote on. You can use the explanatory notes, but it is the schedule that we vote on.

**Mr Oti:** Mr Chairman, the explanatory notes item 2090 under Head 275 – overseas visits of the Governor General and his Office, the additional \$500,000 or half million sought has been made under the contingency warrant under the Appropriation Act 2008. Is this to regularize what has been spent already because it was brought under the contingency warrant? What is the provision that this provision is enough for the Governor General's further visit in the coming months if this is dead money already but was just brought here to regularize under the contingency warrant?

**Hon Rini:** Mr Chairman, this is paid out of the contingency warrant that was approved in our 2008 Appropriation Bill 2008 and so it has been spent already. However, if there are any needs arising in the future for the Governor General to make another overseas trip, then it can be catered for under the current contingency warrant. Thank you.

*Head 275 - \$500,000 agreed to.*

Head 279 – National Parliament

**Mr Oti:** Once again, Mr Chairman, on the explanatory notes in reference to this head on page 8, item 4041 – Organizational Administration with a provision of \$1,117,590. This is once again committed under the contingency warrant under the Appropriation Act 2008 in anticipation of the Presiding Officer's meeting that has had to be postponed.

Mr Chairman, can the Minister of Finance clarify as to whether this money still remains in Parliament or the provision is there but is not available to Parliament to use or until such time as the Office of the Speaker decides when to re-host the conference?

**Mr Rini:** Mr Chairman, this fund has been disbursed to Parliament and it has been used already up and so there is no fund available in Parliament at the moment. This fund has been used for its purpose, and that is for hosting of the Presiding Officers and Clerk's Conference in April and it also catered for the National Parliament Open Day.

**Mr Sogavare:** Can the Minister confirm a bit more if that \$1.1million has already been disbursed to Parliament Office?

**Hon Rini:** Mr Chairman, it has been allocated and it is not expended but it will be expended through the current contingency warrant because this is finished and we cannot use the last contingency warrant for us to bring it forward. If a need arises and they still need this fund, it will be paid out of the current contingency warrant.

**Mr Oti:** Mr Chairman, just for the Minister to clarify. Of the 13 heads which are supplemented through the contingency warrants on Schedule 1, one of which is Head 279 of Parliament under the contingency warrant that has already been signed and the contingency warrant of 2008 Appropriation Act. That is the understanding, and so it is really to regularize expenditures which have been committed by the government.

I think the question by the Leader of Opposition is like this. Has this money been paid to Parliament or not yet under the contingency warrant of 2008 Appropriation?

**Hon Rini:** The contingency warrant was approved but funds are yet to be paid to Parliament because the conference is not held and so this fund is not yet paid to Parliament. But as I have stated if the need arises in future this amount will be paid to Parliament under the new contingency warrant.

**Mr Oti:** Mr Chairman, can the Minister confirm that this allocation belongs to Parliament at what time it wants to use it, it is a provision then of course the funds can be available to Parliament.

**Hon Rini:** Yes, that is correct.

*Head 279 — \$2,894,394 agreed to*

Head 280 – Ministry of Forestry

**Mr Sogavare:** Mr Chairman, I just want to get confirmation from the Minister and may be the government on overseas travel. This item has been affected throughout the ministries. May be you could answer this question now so that we do not deal with it anymore.

Parliament has been assured of some control mechanisms the government has put in place to try and control overseas trips, and that commitment was made on the floor of this Parliament in the last sitting of Parliament. The question is, how effective has this mechanism been working whether that mechanism was really put in place or not. How effective has that mechanism worked?

**Hon Rini:** Mr Chairman, the government has mechanisms put in place on overseas travels. The government policy is that travels that bring tangible benefits to the country will be allowed. Secondly, travels that are partly financed by organizations coordinating the conferences will be allowed, but the government is still very strict on overseas travel.

You would see that there is an increase in overseas travel recently because the cost of airfares has increased due to the increase in the cost of fuel.

**Mr Oti:** Mr Chairman, once again on the Explanatory Notes on page 8, item 6073 – Timber Management. Under this year's appropriation proper it is \$364,902 and an additional is required for \$100,000. Can the Minister explain what is very expensive in managing the timber? What does this involve so that we know that the allocation is true, it is short under the allocation appropriated for at first hence, the addition \$100,000 committed under the Contingency Warrant in 2008 Appropriation.

**Hon Lilo:** Mr Mr Chairman, I am the supervising Minister for Forestry. I thank the Member for Nende for asking that very important question. In the usual way the substantive Minister always expresses himself, this head is for timber management and currently we have employed about 30 field officers who are contracted and working with the rural forestry community throughout Solomon Islands. The field officers are currently assessing works that each community is doing in reforestation and other forest related activities throughout the country.

When the initial budget was made it was found that the amount that is required to enable them effectively carry out their work requires a little bit more. Part of it is basically because of the increase in fuel prices. As you know that field officers are posted out on the provinces and they are required to travel and so require fuel, which is one major component of their operational activity that they need to spend money on. Because of that there is need for this additional amount to supplement the original amount and to enable the workers to effectively carry out their work.

**Mr Zama:** Mr Chairman, a supplementary question to the supervising Minister. In the development estimate of appropriation proper \$8million was allocated and part of that is for out growers' reforestation. I want the Minister to confirm whether that additional \$100,000 is to supplement that main allocation.

**Hon Lilo:** The development budget, as we all know is different from recurrent operations. Recurrent operation is for recurrent purposes like fuel or transport, safety equipments for workers out there in the fields. The development allocation is for projects in the communities that do forestry projects. Do not confuse what is recurrent and what is supposed to be in the development.

**Mr Zama:** I think the Minister is trying to deviate from the main question. I have the PAC report with me on the 2008 Appropriation Bill, and it was clearly stated by the accounting officer that that allocation is part of timber management. I want the Minister to confirm whether this \$100,000 is part of that.

**Hon Lilo:** Mr Chairman, that statement can be misleading too. It can be used to complement the development project. But it cannot be included as part of it because what is recurrent must be treated as recurrent and what is development must be treated development. Development allocation must go to project beneficiaries; on communities that engage themselves in very important forestry program.

This particular recurrent allocation is for government officers, contracted officers that are engaged to monitor the activities of the project beneficiaries and also other forestry related activities like logging activities and so forth throughout the country. That is how we should understand the distinction between these two.

*Head 280 - \$860,000 agreed to*

#### Head 281 – Office of the Prime Minister and Cabinet

**Mr Oti:** Mr Chairman, on the Explanatory Notes on page 9 is in relation to the scope of these expenditures and who it goes for. The four items in there are 2091, 2092, 2024, and 2191. Item 2091 is for overseas travel MPs and 2092 is for overseas travel public servants. Where would you commit airfares for SDA Youth under those allocations? Those

provisions under 2091 and 2092, is it available to any other groups outside of the Public Service? Can the Minister confirm this so that others can come for it too?

**Hon Fono:** Mr Chairman, a biggest component of that relates to Ministers who did not have overseas travel entitlements under their budgets and so they come under the Prime Minister's office.

In as far as airfares for the SDA Youth group, my explanatory notes here did not say that. However, I think it is at the discretion of the Prime Minister who gave approval for that one. There were other assistances given to other youth groups, and which comes under Home Affairs because churches come under the Ministry of Home Affairs. That is the normal practice taken, not only by this government but successive governments as well, and it is to subsidize shortfalls.

**Mr Oti:** Mr Chairman, the difficulty in terms of accounting of expenditures is what I am bringing up. The point made by the Acting Prime Minister is correct time when we come later on to head 297 whereby Catholic Youths were assisted in the same token to go to the Sydney Catholic Youth Convention. But the difference is that it is committed under grants. The case here is that if it is done under grants then it is transparent in so far as that particular one is concerned and under Home Affairs head. But when it comes to the head of the Prime Minister for this to be committed then it is really committed against those two possibilities that existed there. But thank you Acting Prime Minister for the explanation. Perhaps this should be properly looked into so that reference is made to the appropriate ministry and not committing things under wrong expenditure items. Thank you Mr Chairman.

**Mr Sogavare:** Mr Chairman, when public funds are incurred on such expenses like this, they go as ambassadors of Solomon Islands and so it would be good if reports are also made to the government or to the appropriate authority giving the money on what really takes place. This applies to this and also the assistance given to the Catholic Youth. The question is, is the government going to get reports from those youth groups?

**Hon Fono:** Mr Chairman, can the Leader repeat the question because the statement he made confused me? Can he repeat the question?

**Mr Sogavare:** I am asking for reports from those people the government funded to go overseas because they go as ambassadors of Solomon Islands. It would be good for purposes of accountability and may be value for money that reports are submitted or produced to the government saying this is what they went to do on behalf of the country. Is that the intention of the government?

**Hon Fono:** Mr Chairman, the Leader of Opposition has made a very good point and the government takes note of it. It is supposed to be a normal practice that any groups

traveling overseas with government assistance must give a report as to how they use the money. But any government at all is there to assist our people when requested. Quite a lot of groups have asked the government to assist in terms of attending conferences overseas. The policy now is that it must come through the relevant ministry, which in the case of churches it would have to be the Ministry of Home Affairs and therefore Home Affairs must create support for them under its budget. But I take note of the comments made by the Leader of Opposition.

*Head 281 - \$3,497,708 agreed to*

Head 286 – Ministry of Development Planning and Aid Coordination

**Mr Oti:** Mr Chairman, apparently overseas travel under 2091 and 2092 are common expenditure items on every head. For public servants and for the Minister of Planning, particularly this head, obviously there was total omission in the 2008 Appropriation and hence this new provision. Can the Minister explain the adequacy of this amount because of the heavy engagement and involvement of this particular ministry on aid and aid negotiations?

**Hon Rini:** Mr Chairman, this additional cost for overseas travel for this Ministry is to finance trips undertaken to Brussels in discussing our assistance from the European Union and also the Regional Economic Ministers' Meeting usually held in the regions. As I have said earlier, the increase to this item is caused by the increase cost of airfares.

*Head 286 - \$650,000 agreed to*

Head 287 – Ministry of Culture and Tourism

**Mr Sogavare:** Mr Chairman, the detail of this particular expenditure is not featured in the schedule - the details of it. Can the Minister explain why that contingency warrant was issued?

**Hon Gukuna:** That \$1.7million was used entirely to meet our travel to American Samoa for the Festival of Pacific Arts. And so there is no need to explain it in here.

**Mr Oti:** Mr Chairman, there is need to make reference to it somewhere. If this is the way to accept it then I will reserve my acceptance.

**Mr Chairman:** We vote on heads and allocations to heads and not necessarily voting explanatory notes.

*Head 287– \$1,700,000 agreed to*

## Head 288 – Ministry of Commerce, Industry Labour and Immigration

**Mr Sogavare:** I understand that the government recouped some costs by selling stalls to people that display their products. How does the government accounts for revenue collected in terms of the cost recoveries?

**Hon Hilly:** The revenue from that went straight into the consolidated fund. The Treasury collected the revenue and not the Ministry.

**Mr Oti:** Mr Chairman, I understand that the original provision is \$2.3million and this new additional \$2million is additional to the original estimates. Can the Minister explain, the details are not here, what aspects of this National Trade Fair warrants the committal of another \$2million on top of it.

Secondly, is there any provision under the Ministry or under this head as it is also related to assist Temotu Province host its mini trade fair next month?

**Hon Hilly:** Mr Chairman, it would appear that the total cost of the Annual Trade Show this year is quite expensive. It has been revealed that there is need for additional funds than what is approved in the contingency warrants for this.

The good part of it is that the actual cost has been reduced by the amount of revenue the government collected from the sale of the stalls. Also at the end of the Show the materials and the houses were sold. Therefore, the net expense of the government is actually lower than what we see in this allocation.

On the second question of the Member of Temotu Nende, that can be seen in the recurrent estimates.

*Head 288- \$2,000,000 agreed to*

## Head 290 – Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources

**Mr Oti:** Mr Chairman, obviously this top up provision is specifically for the IWC 60<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting this year because the original provision is not enough.

Mr Chairman, I would like to acknowledge this provision and I think it is time that we ourselves should meet our attendance to the IWC, not this double dealing where they pay and we pay too. This time it must be ourselves that pay and so I congratulate the government for this provision.

*Head 290 – \$357,188 agreed to*

## Head 293 – Ministry of Home Affairs

**Mr Wale:** Mr Chairman, subhead item 4061 on grants and in the explanatory note it says that this is for grants to SICA. I wonder whether the Minister can clarify the basis of

these grants and whether it is a policy to help churches with these grants. Is it a standing facility?

**Hon Tora:** Mr Chairman, yes it is the policy of the government that grants are paid to SICA for the work of the churches.

**Mr Maelanga:** Mr Chairman, still on the same item 4061 concerning grants. Can the Minister confirm whether this is for the tithes?

**Hon Tora:** Mr Chairman, can the honorable Member for East Malaita repeat his question?

**Hon Fono:** Mr Chairman, to assist the Minister, this item is not for the tithes. Currently we are waiting on Finance to produce the report on the surpluses for last year before the government can make its position on the payment of tithes. But that is yet to come through Government Caucus and Cabinet for any decision.

**Mr Sogavare:** Mr Chairman, still on grants. Can the Minister confirm if this money is divided to churches or what specific purpose is this grant given to SICA?

**Hon Tora:** Mr Chairman, this grant is specifically given to SICA to carry out its work and all churches come under the umbrella of SICA.

**Mr Oti:** Mr Chairman, further to that question, perhaps the Minister can clarify himself that the original provision for this year is \$270,200 and we now committing another \$463,000. Is this allocation solely for SICA or is it a grant to other organizations and church organizations, and the fact that this provision is short and that is why SICA is asked to be assisted hence the top up. Because if item 4061 on grants is solely for SICA then obviously the total allocation this year would be \$733,667.

What I am asking for clarification is whether this grant is not for SICA alone? Can the Minister confirm that? If it is not for SICA alone then who are the other related recipients of grants by the Ministry through the provision of grants under this 4061 expenditure item.

**Hon Tora:** As all of us are aware, SICA has its own programs. These grants go to SICA and SICA can see the programs of other churches that form the SICA and use these grants to assist them too.

**Hon Fono:** Mr Chairman, to put the minds of Members who are questioning this grant at rest, this year is the 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Independence and the Government sponsored the 'Year of the Bible' where if you had listened every morning to the radio verses from the Bible were usually read in pidgin. This support goes towards the launching of the pidgin Bible and this year as declared by SICA to coincide with the 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of

Independence is the Year of the Bible. If you are not aware of it then I encourage you to read the Bible every morning.

**Mr Soaloi:** Mr Chairman, still on the same question. Can the Minister inform Parliament what are giving to SIFGA Churches? We have the SICA and also SIFGA. Is there any support given to SIFGA? There are two associations in the country where small Churches that do not come under SICA called themselves SIFGA.

I just want the Minister to inform us what the Ministry is giving to the other association?

**Hon Fono:** Mr Chairman, government policy is very clear that it can help based on requests submitted through the Ministry of Home Affairs that is responsible for ecclesiastical affairs, and this is the Churches. Any request that come through the Ministry of Home Affairs and is in line with the budget, the government is committed to support.

**Mr Zama:** Mr Chairman, thank you Acting Prime Minister for that clarification. But before this assistance goes to SICA those Bible verses have been read for a long time before. It is not because of this assistance you have given SICA that enable them to read those Bible verses. Those Bible verses have been read for a very long time now. I think you must be the one who has not been listening to the radio. The question is, there is one FM station that is dedicated to spreading of the Gospel through music. I want to ask the Minister whether the government has any plans to assist this Christian FM radio station, may be through SICA or direct assistance?

**Hon Tora:** We claim ourselves to be a Christian country. Of course, I can assure you that if there is any request coming from this Station, the government is committed to them.

**Hon Fono:** Mr Chairman, further to that answer, I think MP for Rendova/Tetepare did not know that we launched the Year of the Bible this year and the launching of the pidgin Bible and it is the government that paid for that launch, and that is why we see this allocation under this Budget. Thank you.

**Mr Wale:** Mr Chairman, I thank the Deputy Prime Minister and the Minister that it is clear. The second part of my original question has not been answered because I am aware that most, and not all of that has actually gone to the printing cost of the pidgin Bib government. The second part of my question is whether this is a standing facility or grant to help SICA? This is just specific on SICA.

**Hon Tora:** Mr Chairman, this is standing grant to SICA on behalf of the churches every year.

**Mr Zama:** Mr Chairman, following on to what the Acting Prime Minister said earlier on regarding producing of reports, would SICA be also required to produce report to be in line with what the Acting Prime Minister said about government assistances?

**Hon Tora:** Mr Chairman, it is an obligation by SICA and non-government organizations that every year they must submit to the government their annual reports.

*Head 293 –\$5,568,967 agreed to.*

Head 295 – Ministry of Mines, Energy and Rural Electrification

**Mr Sogavare:** Just a policy question. This housing rental expenditure is becoming a very big expenditure every year to the government. This is either to rent houses for public officers or to rent offices. But I guess this expenditure is for renting of houses for public officers.

What is the long term plan the government has to look at analyzing the costs whether it is cheaper for the government to directly invest in building houses for public servants? Has the government any plans to look at that option?

**Hon Huniehu:** Can I ask the Leader of Opposition to speak a little bit louder?

**Mr Sogavare:** Mr Chairman, this question is directed to the Acting Prime Minister as it is a policy question. The concern and observation here is that year by year the government is spending big money on renting of houses for either the public servants or renting offices to accommodate government offices. I take it that this one is for renting of houses for public officers. The question here is whether the government has any plans or is currently looking at the feasibility of investing directly in building houses; go back to the policy of building houses for public officers and may be offices too. That is the question. This is to look at this year by year renting of houses so that the government invests directly into them.

**Hon Fono:** Mr Chairman, I thank the Leader of Opposition for raising that question. It is in fact very true that a substantial cost of government budget goes towards house rentals as well as office rentals. At the moment the government is carrying out a review on this in order to look at whether or not it is feasible for the government to build houses for our public servants or use the same system that previously the NPF and Home Finance allow public officers to loan funds to build their own houses. That review would encompass the feasibility of those two different options.

At the moment in terms of office space, quite a number of rented government offices is very expensive and we are now in the process of building offices. If you look at the original Appropriation Bill, the Ministry of Public Service is now venturing into building its own office complex as well as other Ministries in order to do away with huge rentals that constitute a substantial amount on government budget.

I can confirm that the government is reviewing the option of whether to help build houses for our public servants or look at institutions like the NPF and Home Finance in view of the NPF taking over Home Finance to encourage ownership of houses by public officers. Thank you, Mr Chairman.

**Mr Waipora:** Mr Chairman, this is the Ministry of Mines. The amount Parliament is being asked to approve is \$776,150. My question is, how many houses we are talking about in here as it was already underestimated for as \$22,320 and that is why this additional amount is required. How many houses are we talking about here?

**Hon Huniehu:** Mr Chairman, first of all I would like to explain the background of this increase. As the MP knows in the past three ministries were heaped under one name – the Ministry of Natural Resources and that is the Ministry of Mines, Energy, Forestry and may be Environment or I am not too sure. With the present reorganization of accounting practices those Ministries become separate and are now different. It so happens that my Ministry was under budgeted for \$776,000 for housing.

Sorry, I cannot give the Member for West Makira the precise answer that he wants to know the number of houses that require the additional funds. But I think \$776,000 also comes in because of inflationary.

**Mr Waipora:** Mr Chairman, I asked that question because I am a bit confused because I thought this is for either rental of houses that staff are occupying or rental for office space and that is I why I asked that question. But the honorable Minister has told us that this rental is for office space and not for staff houses. Is that correct? Is it for office or staff houses?

**Hon Huniehu:** As I have said it is for staff houses.

**Mr Zama:** Can the Minister confirm whether this \$776,000 is to be spent in the next four months or part of that has been spent already?

**Hon Huniehu:** This is provision for staff housing. We are just giving adequate estimates to cover us until the end of the year.

**Mr Wale:** The explanation by the Minister earlier on is confusing me when he said that when his ministry used to be under the Ministry of Natural Resources – Environment, Conservation, Forestry and Mines and Energy. But Mines and Energy was out from the other two for a number of years now, and so I am not really clear what the connection was on this item because Mines and Energy has been a separate ministry for the last six or seven years. What impact is this supplementary under Mines and Energy on housing have to do with that? I just fail to see the connection.

**Hon Huniehu:** I do not think that I have confused the MP for West Makira when I answered the question. The Natural Resources Ministry used to have one accounting code for housing and others, but now the accounting codes have been split and this estimate is for the Ministry of Mines and Energy on housing. Thank you

**Mr Agovaka:** The Minister earlier said that this \$776,150 is for house rentals but this is expenditure by CW, which has already been committed. Is the Minister saying that there will be no more rental from now until the end of the year, or how do you cater for rental until the end of the year after having spent this over the last six or seven months?

**Hon Huniehu:** Chairman, the Leader of the Independent is quite correct. It is contingency warrant and has been spent already.

**Mr Sogavare:** Mr. Chairman, which months rentals is it been spent on? Is it on arrears? We understand that they have already been paid so rents for which months is that paid for. The question of the Member for Rendova/Tetepare still stands that if you have paid the arrears then what about the remaining months until December?

**Hon Lilo:** Mr Chairman, it is simple. The expenditures were facilitated under the contingency warrant and that contingency warrant allows the provision for the whole year. What we are doing now is blessing it formally so that it is part of the budget. That is all we are doing now.

The contingency warrant signed by the Ministry of Finance based on the contingency provision in the 2008 Appropriation Bill is for this particular requirement of the Ministry of Mines for the whole year. This time we are just bringing it back because all contingency warrants must be brought back to be formalized in this House, which is just what we are doing right now. Part of it has been spent at the beginning of the year and some will go until the end of the year. It is simple as that.

**Mr Sogavare:** Mr Chairman, the most appropriate place for any additional expenditures incurred should come under Supplementary Appropriation. Contingency warrants are expenditures already incurred, and we come here just to regularize or bless them. Are we saying that we are paying rents in advance to people who are renting houses to the government? Is this the scenario here, Mr Chairman, because CW means it has already been incurred? It is not talking about future expenditures. Future expenditures appropriately should come under Supplementary Appropriation where it is blessed first before the government can incur it.

**Hon Lilo:** Mr. Chairman, the actual effect of the payment of the contingency warrant provision provided here falls within every month. That is the effect of it. So at the time when the Minister of Mines requested the Minister of Finance for the Contingency Warrant, he is saying "look, I have required a contingency warrant for this particular provision for this amount". That is what the Minister requested and is what we are

blessing now. However, the Minister for Mines and Minister of Finance make the arrangement on how it falls, the money or the provision is already there for the Ministry of Mines to expend. It is up to them to plan how they are going to spend it until the end of the year. Nothing is wrong with that.

**Mr Zama:** Mr Chairman, the academic argument that the Minister for Conservation is trying to advance on the floor of Parliament is wrong because there are two things here. There is the contingency warrant which is clearly stated in the Constitution and there is the supplementary appropriation Bill. The Minister is going to be caught flat later when we go to the Supplementary Appropriation proper.

*Head 295 - \$776,150 agreed to*

Head 297 – Ministry of Women, Youth & Children Affairs

**Mr Wale:** Mr Chairman, I just want to know how many youths were in the delegation to the conference that was held in Sydney

**Hon Tom:** Mr Chairman, there are more than 1,000 youths that went to that conference.

**Mr Agovaka:** I would like to ask the Minister to provide a report on this assistance to some of these youths. Can the Minister provide some kind of report to us?

**Hon Tom:** Mr Chairman, yes we are expecting a report to be given to us.

**Mr Zama:** Can the Minister confirm to Parliament the procedures, processes or criteria used in disbursing that \$800,000? How was that money spent? Which youth groups, which churches, which provincial youth groups or Honiara, or what constituencies? I want the breakdown of this \$840,000.

**Hon Fono:** Mr Chairman, Standing Order 64(3) is very clear that debate should be confined to policy. Any detailed thing should not be raised in here but for the information of the questioner, I think there was a request made by the Catholic Church in Solomon Islands for government support to help a number of its youths to attend the conference. And I understand that quite a number of them, not only from one constituency but throughout the whole country that went to participate in the Youth Conference in Sydney.

As I have said earlier to the same question that was raised in terms of assistance to church groups, each individual case is considered on its merit given the support or budget the government has, the government will assist, not to fund the full trip but to subsidize the costs.

The Government's policy in terms of sports like dollar to dollar support, that is what we should be looking at so that the onus is on the applicants to at least raise half of the cost. It is a government policy we are currently implementing.

**Mr Waipora:** Mr Chairman, just a very short comment. The purpose of having this Women and Youth Ministry is very important during our time. I just want to ask the Minister so that next time there should be provision in this Ministry to be adequate for the women and the youth so that everyone knows that there is money or grant there that can be provided to them, so that when youths come to us Members, we can direct them to go and seek assistance there. In my view, this Ministry is very important and provisions in the next Appropriation Bill must make sure it is increased.

I just want to sound this out for the honorable Minister to take note.

**Hon Fono:** If the MP for West Makira dares to look at the 2008 Appropriation Bill we are implementing now, there is allocation there to assist women, and there is also a Women's Division in the Ministry, a Youth Division including children. Provisions are there in the budget that we have already passed. This is just a supplementary budget for items not catered for in the original budget or the Appropriation Act and so we have to cater for them under CW.

**Mr Zama:** I want to really thank the Acting Prime Minister and the Minister for the answer. But I would like to say this, and may be an advice to the Acting Prime Minister and the Attorney General that it is the Parliament's role, – the Legislature to scrutinize the actions of the Executive because it is only through this process that the Executive is accountable to the Legislature.

I do not want the Acting Prime Minister and the Attorney General to use the provisions of the Standing Orders to deprive the Legislature of its privilege to examine or scrutinize the actions of the Executive Government.

**Mr Sogavare:** Mr Chair, I think the concern raised by this side of the House, which the Member for West Makira raised is that this Ministry is very important as it caters for the women, youth - a big population of this country. But if you look at the 2008 Budget proper, there are not enough provisions in there as well to suggest that we are serious about it, not only the Parliament but all of us should be serious about the development of youth, children and women in the country. That is the only concern raised by this side and may be next year, more resources must be put into that Ministry to address the concerns of the women, youths and children in the country. That is all.

**Hon Fono:** Mr Chairman, for the information of the Leader, under this current government, \$1 million is allocated for youth compared to the previous government where there was no allocation for youth. So what is he talking about?

**Mr Tosika:** Mr Chairman, I am happy that the Acting Prime Minister said that \$1 million is allocated for youth. I just want to ask whether this \$1 million that is there will take care of the children that we see in the Solomon Star looking for scrap metals to sell for living. Is this \$1 million able to take care of those kinds of children?

**Hon Fono:** Mr Chairman, even if it does not take care of the children, at least the government has made a commitment. If you see the advertisements on One News, it is the government that helped to sponsor the Solo Idol. The government is committed, at least it is. The children are the responsibility of the parents too.

**Mr Sogavare:** Mr. Chairman, that 'Idol Show' thing is for the advantaged children. Those are well-off children. We are talking about the disadvantaged. This side of the House will not oppose if you put \$10 million in the Budget next year for this, we will support it.

**Mr Waipora:** I am the one who aroused this hot debate. What I only want the Minister and his Permanent Secretary to do is very simple. I want them to increase the provision the next budget and announce or publicize it that this program is for the youth so that youths are aware and can fully occupy themselves with the programs. They may come through Members of Parliament and we will direct them to the right Ministry. This \$1 million is not enough and that is why I am raising this concern.

**Hon Fono:** I think we have to make it very clear that we should only raise questions which should not be pretext for debate. If the Member is so concerned, how much from the \$1 million under the RCDF has he allocated for youths in his own constituency, may I ask.

**Mr Oti:** Mr Chairman, the Acting Prime Minister is even joining the debate. The question is just like this; \$164,000 was allocated under that expenditure item this year and this \$840,000 additional because of the expenditure required to meet the cost of the Catholic Youths who went to Sydney. Full stop.

The relevant question that was asked today is, how many youths went on this trip, and everything else that we talked about are irrelevant to this question. Thank you Mr. Chairman

*Head 297 - \$840,000 agreed to.*

#### Head 298 – Ministry of Rural Development

**Mr Wale:** Mr Chairman, I run through a number of those items. But what about the CDOs, their office space, equipment and their travel to be to move around, whether those have been picked up in some of those sub items?

**Hon Fono:** Mr Chairman, as you know the current government retains the CDOs under the establishment in line with the Public Service structure on their terms and conditions. Part of these heads was already used by them in terms of costs that were incurred since last year. Thank you Mr Chairman.

**Mr Oti:** I think more specifically for the Minister for Rural Development and Acting Prime Minister, item 2081, and this is to confirm his statement earlier on in this House at this meeting that provision is inside in the supplementary perhaps both in the contingency warrant that we are now formalizing and also when you come to the estimates for the strengthening and facilitation of the work of the officers.

Mr Chairman, can the Acting Prime Minister confirm that this item 2081 with an allocation of \$255,000 will be accessed by the constituency development officers in facilitating their work, both in traveling and monitoring of programs in the constituencies? Can the Acting Prime Minister confirm this statement and confirm to the House again of this provision and its use as he had already informed the House.

**Hon Fono:** Yes, Mr Chairman the MP for Temotu Nende is correct.

**Mr Sogavare:** Mr Chairman, I just want the Minister to inform Parliament that earlier on when the Minister answered a question by this side of the House on why rural livelihood was not moving, to which said that staffing is the problem. May be the level of staff needed to do the work is not there. That item is missing in here, the provision to increase salaries to recruit more people and even in the supplementary appropriation we are going to look at later on has no provision for recruitment of additional staff.

Can the Acting Prime Minister and the Minister for Rural Development confirm to the House that he have enough staff and how was the statement he issued earlier consistent with what we are seeing before us now?

**Hon Fono:** In terms of staff remunerations, that is provided for under the appropriation bill or Act that we have already passed.

**Mr Sogavare:** Mr Chairman, I following up on the statement made by the Minister earlier on when he answered a question in here that he has staffing problem. He said there is not enough staff and that is why they were unable to do the work quickly. Can the Minister confirm to us that he has enough staff to do the work, is all we are asking?

**Hon Fono:** Mr Chairman, there is ongoing process of recruitment for vacant posts, which certainly the Public Service is dealing with at the moment.

**Mr Zama:** On office rental, I just want to know if that is the cost for the office rental for the whole year. In making comparison, Mr Chairman, the office that the Public Service Department is renting opposite the SSEC Church is \$300,000 a month, and this amount

here for office rental whether that amount has been already spent or that amount is for the whole year.

**Hon Fono:** Mr Chairman, as you see there it is under CW, which means it has been already spent. The office space my Ministry is currently occupying is quite small compared to the Public Service Office which is occupying a much larger space.

*Head 298- - \$1,357,733- agreed to*

Head 299 – Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Meteorology

**Mr Oti:** Can the Minister explain to Parliament why the sudden increase of provision under item 6414? Are you stepping up monitoring your environmental issues, especially on logging?

**Hon Lilo:** Well not only logging, logging is not only an aspect that is affecting environment. But we are stepping up our monitoring on all development activities affecting the environment or have environmental consequence.

There is also the task of the Environment Advisory Committee, which the MP for Temotu Nende is the chairman. As you know under the Act, the Environment Advisory Committee (EAC) has a very important responsibility to do monitoring as well as evaluation of the work of the Ministry. That is one aspect that is also being budgeted for here.

It is the total activity of the environment in regards to monitoring and evaluation that is being reflected in here.

**Mr Zama:** Further question, Mr Chairman. How many sites or evaluation reports has the Department carried out covered by that contingency warrant?

**Hon Lilo:** Mr Chairman, I do not have the figure here. But I will put it in the pigeonholes, and the MP for Rendova I will put two for him for his information so that he knows the number of projects that have been monitored. So far we have monitored four projects. One is the conservation in the Western Province. Two weeks ago the conservation of marine protected areas in there was declared. We will be declaring Savo Megapode very shortly as conservation area as well. So far there are only four, but if there are any new activity coming up we will put that in the pigeonholes and for Rendova will be two.

**Mr Sogavare:** Mr Chairman, early this year the Minister gave a circular to everybody. The circular said something to the effect that the government is stepping its foot down to make sure all developments happening on land and sea, before they happen there must be an environmental impact assessment study done on them.

I want the Minister to inform the House whether that assessment also extends to logging companies. That is one question, and how many have we done so far.

**Hon Lilo:** Mr Chairman, under the Environment Act before any development happens, it must obtain development consent under the Environment Act. This is a must; it is a mandatory requirement under that Act. But we are implementing it in a very measured way, because if we have to do it, if we have to impose it in a very stringent way then some developments will not happen. We are implementing that particular provision in a way that is reasonable and fair to everyone.

Logging, as what the Leader of Opposition is always interested in, is no exception, it is also required. In fact all companies are required to submit the public environment report before consent can be issued.

We are still waiting for an official request from the Leader of Opposition, who has been complaining about a particular activity in his constituency. We have yet to receive his complaint. The only complaint we received from him is what we heard from the media and the newspapers. But there was no official complaint given to us by the Leader of Opposition asking the Ministry to intervene. But I have directed the Division to intervene and find out as to why that particular complaint has not been attended to, and in fact they are attending to it.

The only disappointment I have is that the Leader of Opposition has not officially written to us but he just went to the media. But these are requirements we have to impose and we are imposing it on the mining sector, the real estate development, the housing development and other developments happening in the urban areas. There is no exception to where that requirement is applied.

We have actually put out the information to all interested people who will be affected by that so that they can come up with their public environment report so that the necessary approval required under the Act can be considered.

**Mr Sogavare:** Mr Chairman, the explanation by Minister is not right. His Ministry is responsible of administering that law. If anyone applies wanting to work, the logging companies or anyone, it is a requirement by law, is what your circular said that before the development happens, the environmental impact assistance study must happen first and there is no need for me to apply for it.

If a logging company applies to do logging in a certain place, you know that the logging company will go there, and so the requirement under the law as the Ministry rightly put out in the circular is for them to go and carry out the environmental impact assessment. There is no need for the Leader of the Opposition to apply for it. That is the issue, Mr Chairman.

*Head 299 — \$1,500,000- agreed to*

*The sum of \$22,502,139 as the total recurrent expenditure under contingencies warrants agreed to*

*Committee of Supply suspended for lunch break until 2pm*

*Committee of Supply resumed*

Development Expenditure

Head 473 – Ministry of Finance and Treasury

**Mr Sogavare:** I just want to find out from the Minister how this amount has been disbursed. Is it disbursed through MPs or how is this amount disbursed?

**Hon Rini:** This amount was a request from the Choiseul Province and the Western Province last year during the last government which led to them signing a MOU in which these two provinces came up with a project. The Choiseul Province came up with a project totaling \$4.7million and the Western Province came up with \$4.2million. That is why that \$8.9million.

These two provinces came during the last government asking for extra assistance besides the \$15million given for tsunami. However, the last government did not pay that amount, and so when the CNURA Government came into power this year these two provinces came and approached us again in regards to the MOU signed with the previous government. This government agreed with their request and said it will honor the MOU and therefore the Ministry of Finance paid out \$4.9million out of contingencies warrant for those two provinces for the projects they submitted to the government.

**Mr Sogavare:** My question is whether this money is paid direct to the provinces and not through MPs?

**Hon Rini:** Mr Chairman, this is paid directly to the provinces. Their development accounts were given to us and we injected funds into the development accounts of the provinces.

**Mr Sogavare:** Mr Chairman, in respect to the implementation of the \$15million, has there been any report back to government because we are receiving complaints from people on the disbursement or implementation of this \$15million through Members of Parliament. Has there been any report to the government by the Members of Parliament who have received the money on how the funds were disbursed?

**Hon Rini:** Mr Chairman, we have not officially received any complaints from the various constituencies. We are still waiting for the various Members of Parliament to give us their reports as soon as the funds allocated through them have been completely utilized.

*Head 473 - \$8,950,000 agreed to*

## Head 477 – Ministry of Infrastructure Development

**Mr Oti:** Mr Chairman, in the explanatory note to this allocation, the item 5779 on Isabel Shipping Grant is specific in the explanatory note. I therefore assume that the other provision there, which is 2120 - hire of shipping and refitting costs for the Western Province ship, Tomoko, would mean the same thing.

Secondly, I want the Minister to clarify under the estimates 2008 appropriation the code 0247-2120 is under recurrent - hire of shipping is under recurrent. I am looking at the estimates for 2008 and there is a provision in that recurrent for \$2,286,834 - hire of shipping, the same code, one has provision under the recurrent and another one with same code has not allocation for this year. Now it shows a zero according to the supplementary here. In the recurrent it shows there is a figure. I am just wondering whether the same allocation is what we are talking about in this instance. And then of course the first question is that this is not for hire of shipping but it is for the refit of the Tomoko, as it were. This is for the Minister to confirm so that we are clear on the purpose of these two allocations.

**Hon Sofu:** The provision in the 2008 recurrent estimate is for normal shipping subsidy, and the one under the supplementary contingencies warrant is the amount given to the Western Province for repair and refitting works of the MV Tomoko. That one is catered for in the 2008 supplementary.

Subhead 5799 is for the Isabel Shipping Company.

**Mr Oti:** Also for consistency purposes, with the government taking care of the maintenance or refitting costs of provincially owned vessels, can the Minister confirm or otherwise that ships also bought from public funds like the M.V. Haurosi, the M.V. Bikoi, and M.V. Renbell are also qualified to get assistance under this provision Mr Chairman?

**Hon Sofu:** This request is put to the Government by the Western Provincial Government for repairs and fitting work of the M.V. Tomoko? So far we have not received any requests from private shipping companies like the Haurosi, Renbell and so forth. Thank you.

**Mr Agovaka:** When you look at the 2008 draft development estimates this subhead 3172-5799 says it is for Guadalcanal Shipping grant. However, that description has now been changed to Isabel Shipping grant. Has the Minister now changed that description from Guadalcanal Shipping grant to Isabel Shipping grant under this subhead item?

**Hon Sofu:** This is a special request made by the Isabel Provincial Government to the National Government to assist Isabel Province in its shipping service.

**Mr Waipora:** Mr Chairman, I think my question here is to do with policy matter. I can see only two provinces obtaining ships through their devolution orders and therefore, are holding the government responsible for the maintenance of their ships. For those of us who bought private ships what would be the policy? For example, ships like the M.V. Bulawa, Kangava and Wango used to be the properties of the Central Government but were taken over by the provinces through their devolution orders and therefore those two provinces are holding the government responsible for maintenance. But I think this new is an ad hoc arrangement and that is why only Tomoko continues to receive grant for repairs and maintenance.

**Hon Fono:** Mr Chairman, it is a policy issue the Government is currently trying to review. We are trying to review this policy in view of constituency owned shipping. Sometimes we see constituency owned shipping, when the Member lost his seat the constituency no longer benefits because the Member owns the ship himself.

I think it must be made clear that Provincial Government owned shipping can request the government for assistance because they are agents of the national government and the government can consider it case by case based on their request. Therefore, you can see the commitment of this Government in helping the Western Provincial Government because it owns the M.V. Tomoko.

**Mr Oti:** Mr Chairman, with that explanation by the Acting Prime Minister, therefore the assistance rendered to provincial governments would in a way if anything goes wrong they can always come back to the government for assistance. That being the case item 3172-5799 belongs to the Isabel Development Shipping Company and this is not the same legal entity as the Tomoko which is owned by the Western Provincial Government. The Isabel Shipping Company (IDC) is a private company. Therefore, is the assistance that appears in here for (IDC) or the Isabel Provincial Government, which are two different entities altogether?

**Hon Fono:** Mr Chairman, for the information of the House, although the IDC is seen as a private company this request was submitted by the Isabel Provincial Government and that is why Government made that commitment.

**Mr Oti:** Mr Chairman, I therefore take it that the Western Province can also submit a request for the services of the M.V. Bikoi, the Makira Province can act on behalf of Haurosi who are also private companies as it were. But as long as the Province makes a submission they would also qualify. By logical argument from what the Prime Minister has said that would be the case. Can you confirm that Acting Prime Minister?

**Hon Fono:** Mr Chairman, as I have said this shipping policy here is currently under review because we have to draw the line, and that is why it is important that the current practice, not only by this government but successive governments have to be reviewed.

Some years back the Malaita Shipping was owned by the Province but it obtained a loan and it could not afford to repay the loan. In 1998 under SIAC it started giving out shipping grants hence, the ship Luru was bought under the Choiseul Provincial Government under government grant. Now we have diverted from provincial owned shipping to constituency owned shipping.

As I have said, we are reviewing the shipping policy so that good guidelines are drawn so that it is clear and support to shipping services whether constituency owned or provincial owned or the private sector can benefit and services are rendered on behalf of the government to our people. Because this is an island nation and we cannot go without shipping. Thank you, Mr Chairman.

**Mr Oti:** Mr Chairman, finally from me but not the least for the Minister for Infrastructure. With that specific provision under 2120 on hire of shipping of \$1.78million for the refitting of Tomoko under the development supplementary estimates, can the Minister confirm whether normal hire of shipping will still fall under the recurrent estimates for this year, and also although is not a subject of this, but perhaps for the Minister to inform Parliament that this provision is currently still available particularly for the uneconomical routes like the Malaita Outer Islands, Renbell, the Temotu Outer Islands and so forth whether money for this is still there to subsidize the private operators to cover these routes under the recurrent estimates and not the provision that is specific for Tomoko under the Supplementary Appropriation before us. Can the Minister confirm that?

**Hon Sofu:** I totally agree with the MP for Temotu Nende.

**Mr Waipora:** Mr Chairman, the honorable Member for Temotu Nende may have asked this question but is it orderly or alright for hire of shipping under Isabel Shipping Grant that is there but the explanation says repair and refit. Why did they not put it to say repair and refitting so that we know the actual amount of Tomoko? Is it correct as it is or is it a question mark?

**Hon Sofu:** Whatever way it is done, its purpose and intention is there.

**Mr Sogavare:** Mr Chairman, I think for proper accounting purposes, what you are doing here is that you are supplementing the existing heads and items of the 2008 Appropriation Act and therefore those narrations must be consistent.

The way I see it, both items should only appear as Shipping Grants and only the narrations should explain it as repair of Tomoko and another one to buy a ship. This is not a separate act. You are just supplementing the existing provisions of 2008 and so the narrations should be consistent so that it is clear. I think that is what is confusing.

**Hon Sofu:** Mr Chairman, the point raised by the Opposition Leader is well taken.

*Head 477 - \$5,280,000 - agreed to.*

Head 490 – Ministry of Rural Development

**Mr Oti:** Mr Chairman, I thank the government for the additional RCDF provision. I just want to know if this is reflecting a policy because it is supplementation of an existing head. This is reflecting an increase over and above this year's appropriation is reflecting a government policy that from now and onwards, from next year it will be \$25million and not \$20million as was reflected in the last two years. Now it is government policy that from now and onwards RCDF will be \$25million allocation in the Budget.

**Hon Fono:** That is correct Mr Chairman. That is the government's contribution towards the Rural Constituency Development Fund. Currently the ROC is giving \$400,000 towards the RCDF and so the government is giving this contribution.

*Head 498 – \$5,000,000 agreed to.*

*Total Development Expenditure of \$19,230,000 – agreed to.*

*The Total Recurrent and Development Expenditure by Contingencies Warrants for the sum of \$41,732,139 agreed to.*

Recurrent Supplementary Expenditures

Head 270 – Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock Development

**Mr Oti:** Mr Chairman; this is a question on the cost of living adjustment (COLA) allocation which runs through all the heads, which is common to all of them. First of all, can the Ministers responsible, the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Public Service inform Parliament what is the percentage of the award, and secondly, unfortunately in real terms, in terms of actual costs to separate these items does not exist and also amongst all the heads, and so it is very difficult for this committee to scrutinize and to ask individual items under this Head. I find it very difficult to do that. We can only question the total amount but we do not know the details as they are not given to us like in the previous pages, the explanatory notes to those committees under the contingencies warrants. I find it difficult for us to scrutinize the actual figures. We will only be hovering around the total. The least I can therefore ask for is the COLA because there is something common among the heads. What is the percentage of the award and in real terms the cost, how much of these individual allocations under all the ministries' heads.

**Hon Rini:** The adjustment on the levels, when the new minimum wage is put across and is implemented for the lower levels, from Level 1 to 7 it will cost \$13million, and that is included in here. The COLA will be \$15million and new minimum wage is \$13million.

**Mr Sogavare:** Mr Chairman, still on the COLA. How much would each person be receiving on this \$15million? How is this going to be allocated? How are you going to pay those people?

**Hon Tozaka:** I think the COLA question has been nicely responded to on page 17 of the PAC report. The COLA is not decided unilaterally. It is based on negotiations between the SIPEU and the Government. I am happy to inform the House that this figure, the government is responsible to do so, so that on completion of our process of negotiation, a collective decision is going to be made between the SIPEU and the government, and that is the Ministry of Finance and my Ministry and then a paper to Cabinet would be submitted on a decision based on the resolution provided. However, in the instance this provision is inadequate, the mechanism, of course, is Supplementary Appropriation or CW. Why not?

**Mr Oti:** Mr Chairman, with the explanation by the Minister of Finance that \$13million is for restructuring?

**Hon Rini:** Yes, restructuring from Level 1 – to 7 is \$13million.

**Mr Oti:** Mr Chairman, \$13million and so \$18million would be for wages, salaries, allowances and so on. If you look on page 6, once again I am raising this in the absence of their details. If you minus \$18million from \$132million, the balance we would say is for other charges like utilities and everything else. Unfortunately, Mr Chairman, we have not been provided with the details and so that is as far as we can go. But I would like to confirm that it is quite a substantial amount of public funds for Parliament to appropriate for and so perhaps it could have been to our proper scrutiny that we know what the other charges are because \$132million minus \$18million gives you about \$118million or \$117million would be for other charges like utilities as explained on page 13 of the explanatory notes.

**Mr Chairman:** For the information of honorable Members, the Constitution only allows us to vote figures to the heads of various expenditures but that does not stop you from asking specific questions that might draw the Minister to explain what the figures mean. So, please, do not be put off by lack of explanatory notes.

**Mr Sogavare:** Mr Chairman, just a policy question on COLA. This has been raised several times and is still not yet clear. What is the policy behind this? Since this is cost of living adjustment and therefore if the cost of living goes down, will it also go down or is it a fixed thing now? I want the government to explain this.

**Hon Rini:** Mr Chairman, that is how it should work but as we all know the cost of living now is not coming down, but it is going up all the time and so it is going to be adjusted upwards every time.

**Mr Zama:** I want to draw back our attention to Section 102 of the Constitution which relates to contingency warrant and the supplementary appropriation bill.

If we look at the explanatory notes under the Supplementary Recurrent Expenditures, we will see that in the payroll the description there says, 'overspent on payroll'. What I want to raise here is that part of overspent on payroll, what has actually been spent rightly must appear on contingency warrant and what is not yet spent, its rightful place is the supplementary appropriation bill. How I see this Bill is that it has been lazily prepared and the way it is presented to the legislature is wrong. Something that was spent already and is supposed to appear on the contingency warrant appears, and this applies equally throughout the other heads. Payrolls and other expenditures already spent are still brought forward and put in the supplementary appropriation bill.

I just want to ask the Minister what percentage, especially like under payroll has been spent, which should be rightly on the contingency warrant and what percentages is supposed to go in the Supplementary Appropriation Bill?

**Hon Rini:** Can the Member repeat his question?

**Mr Zama:** Mr Chairman, I am just raising a constitutional point relating to the contingency warrant and the supplementary appropriation bill proper. Some of the expenditures we see under the Supplementary Appropriation Bill, for instance, salaries has been spent already and the right place for this to appear should be the CW, which are expenditures already spent and brought here for regularizing. In the case of this Supplementary Appropriation Bill, Mr Chairman, some of these expenditures have already been spent. We will see the big one when we come to the Ministry of Health. It costs the Ministry, and I hope the Minister is taking note at the back, more than \$18million for salaries. I would not be raising this issue if it appears in the contingency warrant.

Why I am raising this is that the Executive is trying to bulldoze its way through Parliament to get approval when it should get the approval of Parliament first before it spent this money. Or if it has already spent it then it should appear in the CW. What I want to know, Mr Chairman, is how much in percentage of the payroll has been spent already.

**Hon Rini:** None of that over expenditure in payroll is covered under the previous contingencies warrants.

**Mr Sogavare:** In fact 13 ministries, the explanation says that they have overspent in their payrolls. I think the term 'overspent' the way we take it is that they have already overspent and so we come here to regularize them. I think the point raised by the

Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee is if they have been already spent then their appropriate place to be raised under is the CW. Can the Minister confirm that of all the ministries that use the terms 'over spent in payroll', have this been spent already or yet to spend so that they are properly described? We should use the right terms to describe the additional requests.

**Hon Rini:** Mr Chairman, the only overspent is the Ministry of Health and not the other Ministries. This overspent, if you look carefully at them is really an overspent on the pro-rata but the total budget is not overspent because we yet to complete this year. It is just an overspent on the pro-rata of the year.

**Mr Oti:** So can the Minister confirm that in effect the word used there is inappropriate for that purpose? May be the right word should be to cover 'shortfall' in the original estimates?

**Hon Rini:** That is right, Mr Chairman.

**Mr Chairman:** I hope that when it is published the right language will appear in the Act. Thank you.

*Head 270 — \$3,670,648 agreed to.*

*Head 271 -Auditor General - \$64,484, - agreed to.*

Head 272: Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development

**Mr Oti:** Mr Chairman, again generally throughout without the details it is difficult to ask specific questions but perhaps the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Education I think they have through whatever notes provided to them. This allocation for the Ministry of Education of \$34,080,715, on the explanatory notes it says it is to meet many things, including USP contributions and student allowances. Can the Minister inform how much of this \$34million allowances go towards those two particular items - USP contributions and student allowances? Can the Minister also confirm and inform Parliament because Parliament has not appropriated for it yet that the students are not receiving their allowances yet. Are they going to be paid their allowances after the passage of this Supplementary Appropriation, Mr Chairman?

**Hon Tausinga:** This provision provides for USP contribution and also student allowances. To date the USP contribution including 2007, the total balance stands at the moment at SBD\$6.8million. Tuition fees stands at SBD\$5.5million and student allowances stands at SBD\$6.9million.

**Mr Oti:** Mr Chairman, once again because the details are not available, are these for arrears because if it is presented in the normal way that we know then the allocation for this year is so and so, there is a shortfall and therefore additional is needed. For those items, contribution and allowances, was it zero allocation in the 2008 Estimates?

**Hon Tausinga:** Mr. Chairman, this is a supplementation for 2008. In fact the amounts I quoted are less than what it is supposed to be provided for the USP. But we are thinking of trying to look around for any unspent virement because some have not taken what was requested but this is the amount to date that we have to pay.

**Mr Zama:** Mr. Chairman, the USP contribution and student allowances is one of the biggest cost factor in the Ministry of Education's Budget and it depends on fluctuation. This figure will fluctuate but on average, Mr. Chairman, can the Minister confirm on average the level of expenditure for the USP contribution and student allowances for one year.

**Hon Tausinga:** Mr. Chairman, I have mentioned already the level of expenditure we are going to spend. Just add everything up and you will come to the amount we are obliged to pay.

**Mr Zama:** Mr Chairman, the reason why I am asking that question is because the Solomon Islands Government continues to incur arrears on its contribution. That is one reason why they want to send out Solomon Islands students from the Campus because the government failed to pay, not this government alone but previous governments as well, and one of the biggest thing is that we continue to incur arrears in the USP contributions. How much is in arrears?

**Hon Tausinga:** Mr. Chairman, I will repeat what includes arrears and what we should be paying. The balance of 2007 carried forward is roughly about FJD\$70,000. I am not quite sure with the exchange rate but it would be some pluses, which will be above \$70,000. That is the arrears for 2007. The balance to date as what is available in invoice given to the government stands at \$6.8 million currently, Mr. Chairman.

**Mr Soalaoi:** On contribution to the USP, I questioned why it came up in the Supplementary, because this is something that we already know about, it is not something that we should try and estimate. The USP contribution is normally told to us by the USP before next year. Or is it that we do not know how much we should pay to the USP and that is why it comes up again in the Supplementary?

I want the Minister to inform us whether or not the USP contribution has increased and that is why we have to supplement? Or what has affected it? Is the fuel cost of the USP operation gone up? My interest is I want to know whether our contribution to the USP has increased. Can the Minister inform Parliament?

**Hon Tausinga:** Mr Chairman, our contribution to the USP is calculated on the number of students that we send to the USP. There is a general increase on the number of students that attend USP at this time and therefore there is also an increase in our contribution

*Head 272 - \$34,080,715 agreed to*

*Head 273 – Ministry of Finance and Treasury - \$2,869,878 agreed to.*

Head 274 – Ministry of Foreign Affairs and External Trade

**Mr Oti:** Can the Minister of Finance or the Acting Minister for Foreign Affairs and External Trade explain that in the explanatory notes, the top up provision under this Supplementary Appropriation includes the cost of hosting a meeting/summit. Can the respective Minister and Ministers inform Parliament what sort of meeting are we hosting this year and how much is for the hosting of that meeting?

**Hon Gukuna:** About \$150,000 as been allocated to host a meeting with Papua New Guinea, the border consultative meeting.

**Mr. Agovaka:** Head 274 on contribution to overseas bodies. Can the Minister responsible inform the House whether our contribution to ILO – the International Labour Organization is included in this Supplementary Appropriation?

**Hon. Gukuna:** The details of the accounts we have for this particular amount does not include payment to ILO. I presume it has been taken care of already.

*Head 274 - \$4,235,948 agreed to*

*Head 275 – Office of the Governor General - \$274,167 agreed to.*

*Head 276 – Ministry of Health and Medical Services - \$31,736,387 agreed to.*

*Head 277 – Ministry of Infrastructure Development - \$1,976,094 agreed to.*

*Head 279 – National Parliament - \$1,843,301 agreed to.*

Head 280 – Ministry of Forestry

**Mr. Oti:** Mr Chairman, can the Acting Minister inform the Committee that of the \$1,591,330 allocation under his Ministry, how much of that is for timber management as one of the items to be financed under the recurrent? Timber management is in the explanatory notes, and so how much of that \$1.5 million is for timber management?

**Hon Lilo:** Mr. Chairman, the original amount for this year was about \$586,000 and we are asking for \$200,000. \$200, 000 is the total amount required for timber management out of that total of \$1.5 million.

**Mr. Oti:** Mr. Chairman, today when we went through those covered under contingency warrants, as the Minister had said \$364,000 is the original for timber management and \$100,000 is sought for under this Supplementary to supplement through the Contingency Warrant, which is money paid already. Now the estimates are here, and I did not quite hear how much of these will top up the original provision plus the \$100,000 under the Contingency Warrant and how much more will be added on to that now, and what would be the new total?

**Hon. Lilo:** Mr. Chairman, the additional provision that is now being added to this particular item is \$100,000 from the Contingency Warrant, which is also included in this Supplementary and \$200,000 as a new supplementary amount. That gives a total of \$300,000 to be added to the original amount. The original amount is about half a million and that gives you a total of about \$800,000 for timber management.

*Head 280 - \$1,591,330 agreed to.*

#### Head 281 – Office of the Prime Minister and Cabinet

**Mr Agovaka:** Mr Chairman, I noticed that all the foregone heads, the item utilities seem to appear in all the heads. To me ‘utilities’ means water, electricity, telephone, faxes etc. I think it is important whilst we are trying to run the country it is important also not to abuse and misuse utilities like electricity, water, telephones and faxes.

I would like to call on the Deputy Prime Minister to ensure that this expenditure ‘utilities’ be minimized and let us pull our socks and tighten our belts on the over abuse of utilities. Let us utilize it especially on the government’s work.

**Hon Fono:** Mr Chairman, that is a very important point raised by the Leader of the Independent. I think it is important that government tighten up its belt in terms of costs relating to utilities. You would tend to find that with the general increase now on the cost of communication, water and electricity, the government is going to incur a much high cost on utilities. The government is therefore duty bound to come up with measures so that we cut down the cost. But I take note of the point raised by the Leader of the Independent.

**Mr Oti:** Mr Chairman, also on the explanatory notes on staff travel under Head 281 of the Office of the Prime Minister and Cabinet. Can the Minister explain whether this is for local travel or overseas travel? That is the first question.

The second question, and again I draw your attention to what we have just passed under the contingencies warrants supplementation on the provision for overseas travel for MPs and overseas travel for public servants. About \$1.8million is for MPs and \$662,000 for public officers.

Assuming and it should be the case that we are regularizing what has been expedited over and above the original allocation in the 2008 appropriation. Is this staff travel going to accommodate additional allocation because it does not mean that now there will be no further travel by Ministers or by the Prime Minister himself under that provision but there is no reference to MPs travel to accommodate that.

In fact looking at this in a logical sense means that we are balancing it, everything that is short is covered through contingency and there is nothing now left for the upcoming or trips by MPs, particularly the Prime Minister and Ministers. Perhaps the Acting Prime Minister could help the committee to explain to Parliament through this committee that there is still enough provision somewhere for further travel.

**Hon Fono:** Mr Chairman, on staff travel and transport, this additional allocation of \$300,000 will cater for Permanent Secretaries' holiday travel, and entitlements. It is also official provincial tours of the Honorable Prime Minister, the Secretary to Cabinet, the Secretary to the Prime Minister. But I suppose the CW that we have passed caters for overseas travel of the Prime Minister, the Ministers, Public Servants and Permanent Secretaries.

*Head 281 – \$3,901,032 agreed to*

Head 283 – Ministry of Police and National Security

**Mr Oti:** Can the Minister inform Parliament through this Committee how much of this provision will be allocated to firearms compensation as stated in the explanatory notes?

**Hon Manetoali:** In relation to firearms, the amount allocated is \$3,742,380.

**Mr Sogavare:** Can the Minister reconfirm to this House whether the Government is going to pay replacement costs to the gun owners?

**Hon Manetoali:** Yes, Mr Chairman.

**Mr Sogavare:** Mr Chairman, the Minister has actually answered this question in Parliament when the question was put to him and he said that one shotgun will be paid for \$1,700 or something like that. And that according to the government is replacement cost, and this was based on some figures they got from Australia that a shotgun costs about AUD\$500.00.

Mr Chairman, if you use the factor of 8 to that figure the replacement cost at the current market price will be about \$4,000. Does the government take that into consideration?

**Hon Manetoali:** Mr Chairman, I just come back to my answer. It is replacement based on the current market value that will be paid to the gun owners.

**Mr Tosika:** Mr Chairman, I would like to ask the Minister how much is the border payment??

**Hon Manetoali:** Mr Chairman, thank you for that question. The amount that was allocated for this is \$466,000 however, there is a shortfall in the border payment in the sum of \$465,534.

The Minister of Finance has agreed that the shortfall would be catered for under contingencies warrant.

**Mr Tosika:** Mr Chairman, is this payment for officers who served during the Bougainville Crisis or is it for new officers sent to the border?

**Hon Manetoali:** Mr Chairman, it is for the current ones.

**Mr Sogavare:** I am still following up on the government's policy of paying first what is called the market price for replacement costs of the guns that were confiscated.

I would like the Minister to inform Parliament whether the figure they are going to pay really reflects the market price of the guns. How much does a shotgun costs if you buy it at the shop this time?

**Hon Manetoali:** Mr Chairman, I am not sure in Honiara because I am not sure whether there are any guns in the shops now or not, but in Australia, the price is what I told you last week.

**Mr Sogavare:** That is what I am telling you, Mr Chairman. If you apply the factor of 8 to the AUD\$500 that you stated, it is equal to \$4,000 for one shotgun and on top of that the markup of those selling the gun here in the store will be more. I am telling you that you are paying below the market price.

**Hon Manetoali:** Mr Chairman, the Cabinet has already made the decision, and so it is hard for me to change it. I have already said it here last week. It is up to whoever owning the gun to take up the case. But the decision of the Cabinet is its decision and it cannot be changed.

**Mr Sogavare:** Mr Chairman, the Cabinet is not God making decision so that we cannot change it. We can just change it. What we are telling you is that you said that your policy is to first of all pay the replacement cost to those people and then may be later on look at something else. Now the concern we are raising here is that what the government said is really belong the market price. That is what we are telling you. The

Cabinet can make the decision but we are telling you that you are paying below the market price. Although the decision of the Cabinet says that you are paying the market price but you are not paying the market price.

**Hon Manetoali:** In fact the current market value is for new guns. The government has also taken into consideration the fact that those guns were not new and were inoperable. Those are some of the factors the government has considered to arrive at the amount laid before it now.

**Hon Fono:** Mr Chairman, further to that I think this gun issue has been outstanding for some time. If the Leader of Opposition is very concerned about it, why did he not pay it the last two years when he was in office?

This government is at least committed and that is why the Cabinet decided to approve funds and now it is catered for it in this supplementary and after this budget is passed we will be paying out the list of gun owners who legally surrendered their guns. If anyone does not agree with the payment then they have all the right to challenge it in court for the court to make a decision.

This should not be politicized as in regards to the claim of \$150,000 made by the Leader of Opposition to some gun owners, who came and told me. He said that if he was in government he would be paying \$150,000 to each gun owner. That was the same claim made to those boys involved in the ethnic tension.

I think enough is enough. The government has made a commitment and it can only be changed if they win their case in the High Court.

**Mr Sogavare:** Mr Chairman, for the Acting Minister to just stand up and make sweeping statements in this Parliament without any proof whatsoever is irresponsible of a person of that status.

Not at any time has the Opposition encouraged those people to ask \$150,000 for guns. I need to tell you that. And for him to continue pointing finger at the last government, we did make a decision to compensate gun owners if you are not hungry for power by moving votes of no confidence every time until you down the GCCG. I am telling you that.

Mr Chairman, this is a straightforward logical question, and for the Acting Prime Minister to stand up and start pointing finger and talking nonsense like that is not addressing the issue, but you just wanted to point fingers. That kind of debate and talk in this House, Mr Chairman, must be discouraged because it is not addressing issues.

**Mr Chairman:** I think the Leader has a point. Let us raise questions on the figures and not debate.

**Mr Waipora:** Just a simple question to my Honorable Minister for Police. I am sorry for some ex-policemen who have finished from work and are still waiting for payments.

They said that they are waiting to get something. When you come up with this budget do you also include the payment of these ex-policemen or is their case not right.

**Hon Manetoali:** Mr Chairman, is that question related to the retired policemen.

**Mr. Waipora:** Mr. Chairman, yes the question is on the retired policemen who are expecting long service benefits and something like that. Some of them I saw telling stories under the trees and they told me that they are waiting for their long term benefits. My question is when we come up with this budget did you also take into account these people as well? I just have the chance now to ask this question to the honorable Minister.

**Hon Manetoali:** My Ministry has formed a committee to look into this issue.

*Head 283 - \$10,777,297 agreed to*

#### Head 284 – Ministry of Provincial Government and Institutional Strengthening

**Mr Oti:** Mr Chairman, a small question to the Minister because I did not see it here in the explanatory notes neither a provision under the original estimates or even the contingency warrants in the current appropriation. Which provision will you cater for the cost of assistance towards Temotu Province for hosting the Premiers conference?

**Hon Pacha:** It will be catered for under headquarters.

**Mr. Oti:** Mr Chairman, can the Minister point out which what budget item or code under headquarters? I have it in front of me here but I do not see it in here so may be the Minister can point it out to me because may be my book does not have it but his book has it.

**Hon Pacha:** Chairman, the allocation for Premiers Conference is \$1million.

**Mr Oti:** Mr Chairman, at least we have the amount, but you will fix where you are going to charge it.

*Head 284 - \$4,651,352 agreed to*

#### Head 285 – Ministry of Lands, Housing and Survey

**Mr. Oti:** Mr. Chairman, can the Minister explain the allocation of \$816,000 under this Head that there will be provision for surveying. Can the Minister inform the committee how much of that amount is allocated to survey and what kind of survey? I know it is land surveys but it is to do with a number of projects, such as projects that are coming up in Malaita, the oil palm projects on Choiseul and Malaita and others. Can the

Minister inform Parliament whether it is a general allocation or allocation for specific purposes towards these projects?

**Hon Magga:** The amount allocated here is for national projects, some of which you have mentioned. There is also government quarters in Honiara that needs to be surveyed and given parcel numbers because allocation of lands is very messy. If you go up to Lengakiki you will find some houses built between Ministers' houses because they have not been surveyed regularly and registered. Part of this allocation will go towards surveying and registration of lands in which government houses are situated.

**Mr Waipora:** Mr. Chairman, I want to question the cost of radio communications. What radio communications is this? Do you live in one station and talk to another station?

**Hon. Magga:** Mr Chairman, this radio communication is for the headquarters. We need further increase to cater for outstanding bills in 2007 on one of the Ministry's radio programs and it is also to cater for the third and fourth quarter of 2008 for two radio programs.

These radio programs form a crucial part of the Ministry's outreach work to enhance better public compliance to legal requirements and conditions of offers and leases relating to crown land. Therefore, radio communication is very important to the headquarters to better inform the public and also to inform them that they need to come and pay their land arrears and things like that.

**Mr. Agovaka:** I did not hear it earlier but the Minister was alluding to survey expenses in here to carry out survey on Ministers' residences and government houses. As you know all government offices are sitting on crown land and have not been demarcated. Is that survey cost also includes surveying of government offices?

**Hon. Magga:** Mr Chairman, after we completed surveying of government quarters we will definitely survey government offices.

**Mr Sogavare:** Mr. Chairman, going back to this radio communication, there is an allocation of \$26,780 in the 2008 Appropriation Bill, but you only spent \$299 of that and so you have \$24,557 still available to be used. How much additional are you asking for on this radio communication?

**Hon Magga:** It is \$60,000.

*Head 285 - \$816,918 agreed to.*

*Head 286 – Ministry of Development Planning and Aid Coordination - \$62,000 agreed to*

*Head 287 – Ministry of Culture and Tourism - \$1,367,530 agreed to.*

Head 288 – Ministry of Commerce, Industry, Labour and Immigration

**Mr Oti:** Mr Chairman, there are two different questions but I might as well ask both of them while I am standing up. First, how much of the \$3.5 million sought here will be committed for the provincial tradeshow in Temotu Province next month? Secondly, what is the allocation for the purchase of new passports? New passports are a bit expensive than the current ones. Can the Minister tell us the cost of paying for these new passports?

**Hon Hilly:** Mr Chairman, the answer to the first question is \$150,000; and the answer to the second question is \$1.5 million

**Mr. Wale:** Mr Chairman, in the explanatory notes it also says 'repair of official buildings' and the same item appeared later on under the Supplementary Development Expenditures. I just want clarification which buildings are going to be repaired.

**Hon. Hilly:** Repairs of the buildings includes repair of the main headquarter office and also offices of the Ministry in the provinces. We are starting to post people out to the provinces and some of our houses in provinces have been taken over and some are in a very bad state and so we have to repair them.

*Head 288 - \$3,545,833 agreed to.*

Head 289 – Ministry of Communication and Aviation

**Mr Waipora:** I just want to ask a very simple question. Does the budget for the Ministry of Communication and Aviation include airports, like the main airport that is currently being repaired? Does this amount cater for the upgrading of the terminal or is it for a special project?

**Hon. Lonamei:** Mr Chairman, this allocation is for salaries, COLA, wages, telephones, water and electricity.

*Head 289 - \$743,490 agreed to.*

*Head 290 – Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources - \$1,032,782 agreed to*

*Head 291 – Ministry of Public Service - \$8,781,808 agreed to*

*Head 292:Ministry of Justice and Legal Affairs - \$3,286,623 agreed to.*

Head 293 – Ministry of Home Affairs

**Mr. Sogavare:** Mr Chairman, just for the Minister to confirm the costs relating to the bye-elections of Mbaelelea and East Honiara. Does that cost include updating of voters register? The second question is whether the voters register in East Honiara are updated for the purpose of this election?

**Hon Tora:** Mr Chairman, yes this is for review of voters list.

**Mr Sogavare:** Mr Chairman, I am just going back to the confirmation of the Minister. May be the voters registers in East Honiara have not been updated. I cannot remember this work taking place.

**Hon. Fono:** The Electoral Commission has advised the government that it is not updating the voters listing in East Honiara.

**Mr. Sogavare:** Mr Chairman, we are raising this concern because we have known of incidences where people living in locations outside of the Honiara Constituency boundary also voted in Honiara. It is just because of that concern.

**Mr Waipora:** I just want the Honorable Minister to confirm that the bye-elections in the two constituencies will still use the same voters list in the 2006 elections. That is all I want to know.

**Hon. Tora:** Experiences in the past as required by law is that it should be reviewed before a bye-election or any national general election.

*Head 293 – \$1,550,807 agreed to*

Head 294 – Ministry of National Unity, Reconciliation and Peace

**Mr Waipora:** Mr Chairman, just a simple question. I was expecting this Ministry to incur high allocation because they will be doing a lot of work in preparation for reconciliation but it is only \$50,482. Why is the amount very low?

**Hon Fono:** Mr Chairman, this supplementary is only to cater for utilities and increase to wages. The budget proper allocation has not been fully utilized so that it should be asking for supplement. This is just common sense. Thank you.

*Head 294 - \$50,482 agreed to*

Head 295 - Ministry of Mines, Energy and Rural Electrification

**Mr Agovaka:** Without the explanatory notes, and this is general, can the Minister inform the House how much of this \$1,743,617 will be used for the mines running cost and how much for energy running costs.

**Hon Huniehu:** Mr Chairman, thank you for the question. I think the standard answer given in the narration is similar to all the other ministries. If the Leader of the Independent wants specific figures we can provide it to him. But this allocation is to cover costs that are well explained in the narration.

**Mr Agovaka:** Are you saying that information can be provided to me?

**Hon Huniehu:** Yes, we can certainly do that.

*Head 295 — \$1,743,617 agreed to*

Head 296: National Judiciary - \$1,014,905

**Mr Agovaka:** Mr Chairman, can the Minister briefly explain to the House this cost of hotel accommodation. What is this hotel accommodation?

**Hon Kaua:** Mr Chairman, this hotel cost is to meet the accommodation of the puisne judges. Thank you.

*Head 296 - \$1,014,905 agreed to*

*Head 297 – Ministry of Women, Youth and Children Affairs - \$315,980 agreed to.*

*Head 298 – Ministry of Rural Development - \$4,851,363 agreed to.*

Head 299 – Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Meteorology

**Mr. Agovaka:** Just a question on monitoring and evaluation. One of the key targets of the Ministry is to protect the environment and to ensure the ecosystem is protected. I noticed that the staff establishment has only five environmentalists and four conservationist officers. Can the Minister confirm to us whether this is sufficient staff to do the work, not only here in Honiara but also in the provinces?

**Hon Lilo:** Mr. Chairman, yes I am confident that they are well trained officers and know how to work in the various environments we are faced with. I am confident that they can deliver.

*Head 299 - \$1,192,981 agreed to.*

*The sum of \$132,029,826 being the total of the Supplementary Recurrent Expenditures agreed to.*

### **Development Expenditures**

#### **Head 470 – Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock Development**

**Mr. Agovaka:** I would like to thank the Minister for asking this additional \$25,000,000 in the Development Estimates. My question is, how is this money going to be distributed for this national rice project? Is it by application through projects? Is it going to be distributed throughout the nine provinces?

**Hon. Riumana:** Mr. Chairman, I thank the Member of Central Guadalcanal and the Leader of Independent for his very good question. We are addressing in this concept commercial rice farming, and it is a minimum of 10 hectares throughout the provinces is allowed to this fund and it is a commercial farm and it is going to be provided with simple machines like tractors, power tillers, tools and equipments.

**Mr. Sogavare:** In fact we really welcome this particular allocation as it addresses the real needs of the country. Can the Minister assure the House that the Ministry can implement the entire amount this year because there are only four months left and this \$25 million is quite a big allocation, but it is for a worthy cause? I want to get assurance from the Minister that the Ministry will be in full swing and can implement the entire amount allocated to this project.

**Hon. Riumana:** Mr Chairman, the answer is yes. We can implement this fund within this year. We have already outsourced the activity to someone responsible in ordering the machines and we have already placed the orders. Thank you Chairman

*Head 470 - \$25,000,000 agreed to*

#### **Head 488 – Ministry of Commerce, Industry, Labour and Immigration**

**Mr. Sogavare:** Mr Chairman, which buildings are these? Are these in Honiara or out stations?

**Hon. Hilly:** Mr. Chairman, if you drive past our Ministry, there is a nice looking building under construction at its side, and this amount is for completion of that building so that we can accommodate some of our divisions, which at the moment are still with the Ministry of Rural Development.

*Head 488 - \$1,000,000 agreed to.*

#### **Head 495 – Ministry of Mines, Energy and Rural Electrification**

**Mr. Waipora:** I understand the sentence under this Head but I just want the Minister to explain what the rural boarding school project is. This is the first time I know that there is a rural boarding school project under rural electrification. I am therefore very interested to hear from the honorable Minister to explain and elaborate on this.

**Hon. Huniehu:** I can provide the following information but I am not prepared to inform this House at this stage of the beneficiaries of this Budget. Mr. Chairman, this is the first phase of the Italian funding for Community High Schools throughout the Solomon Islands. The implementation of this program will start very soon. Some donor partners have also expressed interest in funding schools and clinics throughout the country. That is all I can say at this point in time. I will at the appropriate time provide the list of schools that will benefit. There are 17 schools but I wish to inform this House that the list was prepared by the previous government. Thank you.

**Hon. Fono:** Point of Order, Mr, Chairman. *Standing Order 10(2)* states that at 4:30pm the proceedings on any business under consideration be interrupted. Mr. Chairman, it is necessary to complete the Committee of Supply proceedings because tomorrow is a Private Members motion day, and so I therefore with your consent and indulgence move that *Standing Order 10(2)* be suspended to enable the Committee of Supply complete its examination of the 2008 Supplementary Appropriation Bill.

**Mr Chairman:** The motion before the House is that *Standing Order 10(2)* be suspended under *Standing Order 81* so that the current proceedings of the Committee of Supply may continue so that Parliament dispensed with its business for today.

*Standing Order 10 (2) suspended at 4:30pm in accordance with Standing Order 81 to complete the business of the day*

Head 495 (continues)

**Mr. Agovaka:** It would be very useful in relation to Members of Parliament, especially constituencies that are right in the middle of the bush or islands to have information on which schools would be beneficiaries of Phase 1 of the Rural Electrification Project. I am saying this because it is important for all of us to know this and to maximize the benefits coming out of this \$1,343,277.

**Hon Huniehu:** Mr Chairman, at the moment Parliament is merely auditing the figures in this Supplementary Appropriation Bill. I will release the names of the schools that will be benefiting from this Italian Funding at the appropriate time and not this time. Thank you.

*Head 495 - \$1,343,227 agreed to*

*The sum of \$27,343,227 being the total of the Supplementary Development Expenditures agreed to*

*The sum of \$159,373,053 being the total Recurrent and Development Expenditure agreed to*

*The sum of \$201,105,192 being the grand total of both the Warrants and Supplementary Expenditures agreed to*

*The Schedule agreed to.*

*Clauses 1 to 4 agreed to.*

*(Parliament resumes)*

**Hon RINI:** Mr. Speaker, I beg to report that the 2008 Supplementary Appropriation Bill 2008 has passed through the Committee of Supply without amendments.

**Mr Speaker:** Honorable Members, Parliament is deemed to have ordered that the 2008 Supplementary Appropriation Bill 2008 be set down for third reading. On the request of the Government and on the basis that the third reading does not appear on today's paper, the third reading will be set down and moved on the next government business day. That brings us to the end of our business for today.

**Hon. Fono:** Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that Parliament do now adjourn.

*The House adjourned at 4:47pm*