

PRIVATE NOTICE QUESTIONS (PNQ)

YEAR 2021

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS PRIVATE SECONDARY EDUCATION AUTHORITY (PSEA) – GRANT AIDED PRIVATE SECONDARY SCHOOLS - CORRESPONDENCE (07.12.2021)

The Leader of the Opposition (Mr X. L. Duval) (*by Private Notice*) asked the Vice Prime Minister, Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology whether, in regard to the correspondence dated 15 October 2021 addressed by the Director of the Private Secondary Education Authority (PSEA) to managers of grant aided private secondary schools, she will state if she has been made aware thereof and if she has taken note of the press communiqué dated 29 October 2021 from the *Service Diocésain de l'Éducation Catholique* and of the press conference of the Federation of Unions of Managers of Private Secondary Schools held on 08 November 2021 in relation thereto and, if so, indicate the actions she has taken to date regarding same, if any.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology (Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun): Mr Speaker, Sir, on 15 October 2021, the Director of the PSEA sent a Circular Letter entitled “Estimates of Income and Expenditure for Financial Year 2022” to managers of private secondary schools.

This Circular drew the attention of the managers to the PSEA Regulations, Sections 4, 15 (3) and 15 (4) of the PSEA Act 2016, namely –

(i) Section 4 reads as follows –

“Every manager shall, not later than three months before the beginning of each financial year of the school, submit to the Authority in such manner as it may determine, an estimate of the income and expenditure expected to be received or incurred by the school, as the case may be, in the next financial year.” (ii) Section 15 (3) –

“A grant or a provisional grant payable under subsections (1) and (2) shall be paid at such time and in such instalments as the Authority may determine.”

(iii) Section 15 (4) –

“Before any grant or provisional grant is made, the Authority may require the grantee to furnish such information as the Authority may require.”

And managers were accordingly requested to submit an Estimated Income and Expenditure statement for the period January 2022 to December 2022.

They were informed that disbursement would be made on a quarterly basis in advance and they will have to submit the actual expenses incurred, supported by relevant documents at the end of every quarter. PSEA will then disburse grants for the next quarter.

Furthermore, managers were asked to seek prior endorsement of the Authority before embarking on any major project, in particular for non-recurrent expenses.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the circular also stressed that the estimated expenditure should not exceed the amount representing the block grant, less managerial grant, less compensation for use of school premises, and managers should avoid procuring equipment and services from suppliers or companies having a close parental or business relationship in which they hold shares, as this would lead to situations of conflict of interest.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I have also taken note of the communiqué *de presse* dated 29 October regarding *la décision de la PSEA*. The communiqué mentions that there is *l'ingérence de la PSEA dans la gestion financière des écoles* and that there is allegedly curtailment of grants.

Moreover, the communiqué points out that there are conditions imposed regarding recruitment of personnel, allocation of teaching periods, as well as pedagogy. It also states that State Secondary Schools offer seats to Grades 10 and 12 students and this has had an impact on the post of Deputy Rectors and Educators.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as I have highlighted earlier, any new project to be undertaken and implemented by either a State Secondary School or private grant aided secondary school, using public funds should have prior endorsement of the authority responsible for the disbursement of such funds.

The PSEA, by law, has been entrusted the responsibility to ensure that grants disbursed to the Private Secondary Schools are used for the intended purpose and funds disbursed have to be accounted for, in line with the principles of good governance and accountability.

I wish to highlight that in the context of the preparation of the comprehensive grant formula for the period 2022-2023, the National Audit Office asked for the strengthening of the system of checks and verification as well as monitoring and control on the disbursement of grants to the PSS in view of the substantial amount of funds involved.

In the Corruption Prevention Reviews conducted by the ICAC for the PSEA, it was pointed out that an effective control mechanism based on the principles of checks and balances should be put in place to ensure the proper and ethical use of public funds.

With regard to the recruitment of personnel by the Private Secondary Schools (PSS) who are also remunerated by the State, they have to satisfy conditions regarding teacher entitlement, and this has always been the case.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the press communiqué from the *SeDEC* alleges that there has been a reduction in the grant payable. However, this is not true, Mr Speaker, Sir. An advance of three months is paid to each Private Secondary School, based on the allocation given to them on the previous comprehensive grant formula. However, if they are not in a position to spend the allocated amount, the remaining amount is carried forward to the next quarter, at their request. The problem noted is that the Private Secondary Schools are not able to spend the funds allocated to them. Contrary to the past, where all funds disbursed, even if unspent, were cashed by the school, the new grant formula provides for a mechanism to carry the remaining balance to the next quarter.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in respect of the food projects for the needy students, this is not part of the mandate of the PSEA. The comprehensive grant formula has specific components and this element of food projects is not covered. While the PSEA is sympathetic to such projects, it is not part of its mandate, as a regulator, to fund such projects.

The new comprehensive grant formula provides for a list of expenses broken down into direct expenses, administrative expenses, and non-recurrent expenses. Unfortunately, Private Secondary Schools were not able to submit justifications for the expenses claimed.

In addition, while scrutinising the claims, it was found that many unreasonable and unjustified claims had been made. It is due to this reason that the PSEA was not able to effect payments of grants for the next quarter for those PSS which were not compliant. However, in order not to penalise them, the PSEA decided to effect payment in advance for the next quarter. During the second quarter, the PSEA decided to pay them forecasted expenditure for two months.

Mr Speaker, Sir, each Private Secondary School has an entitlement in terms of teaching and non-teaching staff. Circulars have regularly been issued to Private Secondary Schools since

2016, requesting them to seek and obtain prior endorsement of the PSEA before finalising any recruitment. It is in no way an interference in the recruitment process.

It has been noted that, on many occasions, if the endorsement of the PSEA is not sought, Private Secondary Schools exceed the teacher entitlement, resulting in difficult situations where the persons recruited may be penalised.

As far as allocation of timetable and subjects offered are concerned, it is not true to say that there is any sort of interference from the PSEA. On the contrary, the PSEA provides for guidelines and includes, in the timetable, the subjects which are offered by the Private Secondary Schools. And this can have a series of subjects, namely Religious Studies, Bible Knowledge, Intercultural Education, Islamiat, and a number of others.

Mr Speaker, Sir, there is a National Curriculum Framework to which all State and Private Secondary Schools in the country must adhere to, as they form part of the national education system. No educational authority or of whatever denomination can operate as an island on its own in this country. As for the timetabling issue, the PSEA provides guidelines to ensure programme coverage. However, schools have the autonomy to retain their specificity.

As regards the point made on the school population at Grades 10 and 12 impacting on entitlement of Deputy Rectors and Educators, PSEA and even the Ministry has informed them that the current entitlement of schools in respect of Educators and Deputy Rectors will not be affected until the retirement of the incumbents.

The House will also appreciate, Mr Speaker, Sir, that with the present demographic trends, schools are bound to experience a reduction in the school intake in the years to come. However, this is true even for State Secondary Schools.

Je voudrais, M. le président, donner l'assurance qu'il n'y a jamais eu, et qu'il n'y aura jamais, aucune atteinte de la part de la PSEA ou du ministère, à porter atteinte aux droits constitutionnels des associations confessionnelles, d'établir des écoles ou aux parents de placer leur enfant dans des collèges de leur choix. Et cela a toujours été le cas. Le partenariat entre l'Etat et les collèges privés est bien vivant.

We have also taken cognizance of the request made by the Federation of Managers regarding dialogues and partnerships, but, Mr Speaker, Sir, they have always been welcomed in my office; we have always been having meetings and we have always been discussing. So, the *partenariat est très vivant*.

Mr Speaker, Sir, my Ministry has always adopted a policy of open dialogue with the Federation of Managers and, as I have just said, we have been having regular meetings, and this will always be the case.

Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, I thank the Minister for her answer. My question, Mr Speaker, Sir, is motivated by the fact that there are 56,000 young students studying in these private schools. I have been shocked, Mr Speaker, Sir, to see the tone of the Press Conference by the Federation of Managers. This is what they say: '*nous avons besoin de subir l'humiliation de mendier des sous qu'on nous donne à contre cœur.*' And this is what *l'Éducation Catholique* had to say, Mr Speaker, Sir - and, of course, we are talking about children of all communities who are studying in these schools - '*une menace certaine pour la survie des collèges privés et des collèges catholiques.*'

Having obviously read these, and also received a copy of a letter to the Prime Minister... **Mr Speaker:** Put your question!

Mr X. L. Duval: ... dated 08 November.

Mr Speaker: Put the question!

Mr X. L. Duval: But I have to motivate the fact that she got a letter on 08 November...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: You are stretching too far. I am helping you!

Mr X. L. Duval: ... addressed to the Prime Minister, copied to her...

Mr Speaker: I am helping you!

Mr X. L. Duval: Did you take any action to meet these people since that time? It is already a month nearly.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Speaker, Sir, my doors are always open for the Federation of Managers and for the *SeDEC*. I was myself surprised to look at the tone of the communiqué. Mr Speaker, Sir, I am going to table this communiqué so that people see what has been written in there, and I will also table the amount of funds being given to schools. I will give you the list and the amounts disbursed to schools from 2011 to 2019, and you will be able to judge because the amount that we are giving to schools today is thrice the amount because we are giving them on a quarterly basis in advance; so there is no curtailment of funds.

Secondly, Mr Speaker, Sir, talking about this communiqué, I was extremely surprised because I have had a meeting with them after the comprehensive grant formula had been given and they were telling me that they agreed. However, they had certain problems regarding maintenance of schools, which we are trying to see how to help. But then, when I read the communiqué, Mr Speaker, Sir, where I see that '*depuis un certain temps, nous subissons la tentative de mainmise totale de la PSEA sur la gestion de nos collèges. Par le billet des circulaires, la PSEA nous informe les conditions imposées concernant le recrutement du personnel.*' Mr Speaker, Sir, we just want them to know what is the entitlement of the school; what is the number of teachers they can recruit. And this is our role! We are not saying that we are not giving the funds; we are providing the funds in advance! We are just saying, come and support your...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Wait! Wait!

An hon. Member: *Pankor fini la!*

(Interruptions)

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Let me finish! Let me finish!

An hon. Member: *Atan! Atan! Pankor fini!*

(Interruptions)

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: We are just asking them...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Wait!

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have not finished...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Wait! You cannot interfere! This is a reply. Let us listen to the reply. Please, go ahead Minister!

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Je n'ai pas terminé. Je voulais...

(Interruptions)

No! I am answering the question!

An hon. Member: *Inn poz li en kestion, li pe...*

An hon. Member: *Ekout minis! Ekout minis!*

Mr Speaker: Wait!

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Speaker, Sir, what I am saying is that we are providing funds, we have not curtailed funds. We are saying that if your school population is dwindling, your teachers who are already recruited remain in the school. But then, at the time of their retirement, you are not supposed to get another teacher for that position because your school population is smaller now. We are being flexible; we are saying that in spite of the fact that the school population has gone down and your teacher entitlement does not allow you to have an additional teacher, we are allowing you to keep the teacher or the Deputy Rector until the retirement of that person, which is only too fair, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr X. L. Duval: I want to operate a PNQ; when I ask a question about whether she has met them, I get an answer completely different! There is a problem, Mr Speaker, Sir! **Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun:** I have...

Mr X. L. Duval: Let me finish now with my question!

Mr Speaker, Sir, she mentioned the need for strengthening of controls over some unethical expenditure, unjustified claims, and there are two types of schools, as you know. There are the profit-making schools, about 60, and then 25 schools are confessional schools: Catholic schools, Muslim schools, Hindu schools, etc. Now, which of these confessional schools you are saying are, in fact, lying and submitting...

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: I never said that!

Mr Speaker: Please!

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: I never said that! I never said so!

Mr Speaker: Withdraw that word! Please!

Mr X. L. Duval: Why?

Mr Speaker: Apologise, then withdraw that word!

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, let me explain!

Mr Speaker: Apologise!

Mr X. L. Duval: Let me explain what I said!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: You do not have the floor!

An hon. Member: Withdraw!

Mr X. L. Duval: She said the reduction was not true! What does that mean?

Mr Speaker: You said ‘lying’!

Mr X. L. Duval: When you say something is not true, what does that mean?

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: You withdraw that word!

(Interruptions)

Mr X. L. Duval: I am withdrawing, Mr Speaker, Sir, no problem. You said that what they said were untrue. That is what you said. And now, out of these 25 confessional schools, which you have put in the same *panier* as everyone else, which one – please be honest and tell us the truth – justifies the sort of measures you have taken? Which one?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: I will be honest. Mr Speaker, Sir...

Mr X. L. Duval: Name me one: St. Joseph? Is it Muslim?

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Please! There is an end to a question!

(Interruptions)

Mr X. L. Duval: Is it Islamic? Which one is it?

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Please, there is an end to a question! The question is not literature! Go ahead Minister!

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am a Minister of Education for all the students in this country and I deal with all the schools; I put them at par. Now, one thing, when I say that there has been unethical, I am saying that ICAC... *(Interruptions)*

...has mentioned that we have to ensure that funds are being used in an ethical manner. Now, when a school having 285 boys, has already a football pitch, comes and says ‘I want to invest on a second football pitch’, do I agree? Mr Speaker, Sir, we are talking about public funds; taxpayers’ money. And that is why I am saying, Mr Speaker, Sir, that I have to deal with all of

them alike. Now, I am not going to talk about confessional schools or private secondary schools; none of these. Look, any profit making school investing in its school can manage its school on its own, but when public funds are concerned, it is my duty to ensure that it is being used properly. If I do not do that, the hon. Leader of the Opposition can come and ask me a question: ‘why am I allowing schools to use public funds unethically?’

Now, I am not here to pinpoint on any one school, but I would like to say that certain schools ask funds to put a list in the school; others ask funds to get road markers so that they can mark their school yards; some others came and said that they need to replace all the computers in the school; which are in running conditions. Now, my question is: are you asking me to take public funds, to dish out public funds without having any control?

I am going to table, Mr Speaker, Sir, not only the *communiqué de presse* of SeDEC, but I will also table the Circular Letter of the PSEA, because to me there’s nothing wrong in that Circular Letter. We are just asking them to come forward, we have already given you the funds, come forward and show me your receipts and I can give you funds for the next quarter. Now, if the funds are not used, you are given the opportunity to use it again in the next quarter. So, what is wrong in that? And what action am I supposed to take in such a situation? The officers are just trying to ensure that public funds are being used properly.

Mr Speaker, Sir, certain schools send a paper, saying that they are having excavation works done in the school yard, without saying for which purpose. Do we send the funds and say: okay, use it? I am myself a product of private secondary schools. I have myself worked as an educator...

(Interruptions)

Mr X. L. Duval: I am going to get an answer or ...

(Interruptions)

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: ...in private secondary schools...

(Interruptions)

An hon. Member: *Dir li! Dir li!*

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: So, I do not have to learn anything from anyone, to come and tell me what is the difference between a confessional school or a private secondary school.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: I have been...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: ... to a confessional school from the age of five till I completed my schooling. I have been working in a confessional school for over 25 years. So, I have got nothing to learn from anyone about how a confessional school is run.

(Interruptions)

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, she has been unable to tell us why 25 confessional schools are being put in the same basket for unethical use and unjustified claims.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: I have never said so!

Mr X. L. Duval: Now, Mr Speaker, Sir...

Mr Speaker: Minister!

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: I have never said so! Mr Speaker, Sir, I have never said so!

Mr Speaker: Minister! Minister, please!

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: I have never said so!

Mr X. L. Duval: She does not understand the file! That is the problem, Mr Speaker, Sir.

(Interruptions)

I am going to read from the PSEA...

(Interruptions)

She does not understand; this is why this mess. This is a horrible mess, Mr Speaker, Sir. Hon. Minister, this is what is said in the PSEA -

“Any unutilised amount will be offset against the disbursement of the following quarter.”

Meaning what? That if you do not spend today, you get a reduction next time. Otherwise, they do not know how to write English.

Mr Speaker, Sir, that is a small point; I will not go too much into that point. I will now come to some issues relating to profit-making. We understand that you have profit-making schools. There are about 60 of them there.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: They are not profit-making schools!

Mr Speaker: Hon. Minister, you cannot intervene, interfere!

Mr X. L. Duval: Which you said yourself!

Mr Speaker: Let the hon. Leader of the Opposition put his question!

Mr X. L. Duval: You said yourself they are profit-making!

Mr Speaker: Do not take too much time. Put your question!

Mr X. L. Duval: You said yourself they are profit-making schools. Read the Hansard! You said yourself!

Mr Speaker, Sir, I want to ask for these schools; you are paying them a small amount of rent which was last valued in 2014. Now, I will take two schools. I will give the names if she wants. Both were valued independently at Rs1.2 m. Your Ministry is giving Rs217,000. That was last valued in 2014. Now, it was supposed to be revalued again. They have not done so; at least four years late.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: It has already been done, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker: No, then, you are engaging in a conversation. You know the result. Please, put your question and no conversation!

Mr X. L. Duval: Did you understand my question? I said: why are you underpaying?

Mr Speaker: You finished with your question.

Mr X. L. Duval: Well, I asked the question!

Mr Speaker: Hon. Minister, the question is over. Please, reply!

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Speaker, Sir, I want to inform the House that the valuation exercise has been completed on 30 November. The valuation exercise for all the schools has been completed.

Mr X. L. Duval: Now, Mr Speaker, Sir, if you understand how this works, how you reimburse the schools. They are given a small amount of rent, much less than they ought to receive and then you reimburse them for expenses. Now, anybody, with half a mind, would understand that if I am just reimbursing you for expenses, there is no way that you can make a return on investment. Do you understand? There is way because you are only reimbursing.

Mr Speaker: And the question?

Mr X. L. Duval: And the question is: how are these schools going to make a return on their investment? Because in this formula – you can ask the Minister of Finance if you are getting stuck – there is no way other than reimbursement of expenses.

Mr Speaker: The question is done, please!

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Speaker, Sir, what I was trying to say is that the schools are run by the managers. The State provides funds for the running of the schools and for ensuring that the students get quality education. What we pay to the managers in terms of rent is known as an Annual Rental Value (ARV) and because it was decided so as far back as in

1976 when we decided to go on free education, they get an amount over a long period of time. So, there is a value that is given and there is a ceiling of Rs217,000 per month that is provided to the managers of the schools, but all the running of the schools or the expenditure resources required to run the schools is provided by the State, and it is in billions, Mr Speaker, Sir.

The teachers, the non-teaching staff are all paid by the State. So, what investment are we talking about? Even if they buy a computer, the State pays for that. So, which return on investment are we talking about? We can just ask the teachers, the teaching and non-teaching staff of all schools, all private secondary schools, they will come and tell you what is happening in the schools. So, there is no return on investment that we are expecting. We have been paying these schools as far back as from 1976. All successive Governments have been doing so. Now, when we have a report from the Audit Office, when we have a report from the ICAC, do you want me to sit back and say: okay, let things go as it has been going on for years? No, we have got to redress, Mr Speaker, Sir. And I am again insisting on one point: that we have not curtailed funds; we have been providing more funds. We are just asking managers to collaborate, to cooperate and to provide us with documents supporting their expenditure.

Mr Speaker, Sir, it is important for me to table both the communiqué from *SeDEC* as well as the Circular Letter from the PSEA so that people can understand what is going on. Using a letter to come and say that everything is going wrong, when in this letter - I have just mentioned - we have just asked them to provide us with receipts, provide us with supporting documents. And I am really shocked to see such a Press communiqué talking about – I have to read it because I was shocked to read that myself.

(Interruptions)

No, I will read it!

(Interruptions)

Your question is based on this Press communiqué; I am going to read it!

(Interruptions)

An hon. Member: *To mem inn lev sa papie la!*

(Interruptions)

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: *Not at all!*

« Nous estimons que ces agissements sont une atteinte aux droits constitutionnels des associations confessionnelles d'établir des écoles ainsi qu'à la liberté des parents de placer leurs enfants dans des collèges de leur choix. »

On vient plus loin dire que les élèves passent en Grade 10 et en Grade 12 dans les collèges confessionnels. Mais c'est le droit constitutionnel des parents de faire admettre les

élèves dans les collèges de leur choix, et en plus nous avons pris des mesures pour empêcher à ce qu'il y ait des *lateral transfers* dans les écoles pour que les collèges privés puissent garder leurs élèves. Mais quand il y a une place dans une académie et qu'un élève a bien travaillé et a fait un choix d'aller dans une académie, je ne suis pas là à les empêcher.

Maintenant, on parle de la démographie, le déclin. C'est vrai pour nos écoles aussi ! Dans nos écoles primaires, nous n'avons qu'une poignée d'élèves. Il y avait une question la semaine dernière d'un membre de l'Opposition. C'est vrai qu'il y a un déclin, mais je n'y peux rien. Là, je dois faire ressortir que ce serait vraiment dommage qu'on puisse venir remettre en question le *Comprehensive Grant Formula* quand j'ai eu des rencontres avec les managers. Ils étaient d'accord initialement, avec la *SeDEC* aussi. Alors, je trouve un peu bizarre que maintenant, se basant sur une lettre circulaire demandant simplement qu'on revienne vers les autorités avec les documents requis, on vient nous dire que nous sommes en train de tout basculer. Non, mais franchement!

Mr Speaker: Leader of the Opposition!

Mr X. L. Duval: Do you want a question? Because she is not answering at all when I ask her questions!

(Interruptions)

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: *Ah bon?*

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Do you have a question?

(Interruptions)

Mr X. L. Duval: What is the point?

Mr Speaker: If you have a question.

Mr X. L. Duval: Now, I want to ask a question to the Minister.

Mr Speaker: Leader of the Opposition, please!

Mr X. L. Duval: Yes.

Mr Speaker: Leader of the Opposition, please, if you have no question, I will allow one question to hon. Dr. Gungapersad.

Mr X. L. Duval: When we have got the time, you can do what you like, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker: But put your question!

(Interruptions)

Mr X. L. Duval: Can I the hon. Vice-Prime Minister this? I have on record here a meeting that there was at her Ministry with her SCE in October 2020, and they were very

unsatisfied because they said no details were provided on the Comprehensive Grant Formula. Which meetings have you had with all these people now that the technical working group has been abolished - I saw that in the paper this morning that it is not true - the Federation of Managers, etc., and when did you have that?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Speaker, Sir, when the Comprehensive Grant Formula was given to them, they came to me.

Mr X. L. Duval: Two years ago!

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Not two years ago; last year!

Mr Speaker: No conversation!

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Speaker, Sir...

(Interruptions)

Either I answer the question or I listen to another question.

Mr Speaker: No conversation! Please address the Speaker, hon. Minister!

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have been having meetings regularly with the Private Secondary Schools, especially with *SeDEC*. After the Comprehensive Grant Formula was given to them, they came to my office, they were saying that they were agreeable, they wanted certain changes. Oh yes, they came up with another document saying that we could change a little bit here and there and they told me that they were very happy with the idea that they had to come and submit their receipts. And that is why I am telling you that I was surprised to see this Press communiqué, because when they left my office they were happy. I had even told them that I am trying to discuss with the Ministry of Finance, whether we can see what can be done for the ARV, and I have been discussing with the Minister of Finance. But then, they have to wait. I have also been telling them that the evaluation process was on and once it is done, things might improve also in terms of their ARV. But we have to be *honnêtes!* They had come to me; we had discussed on all that.

Mr X. L. Duval: Now, they are dishonest. Thank you!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker, Sir, the last letter I have...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Mr X. L. Duval: ... of 02 December 2020, a year ago, where they met apparently your SCE. And they said in that letter - I can table it - 'no details were discussed.' Now, do I take it, firstly, that the Prime Minister has not deemed fit to reply to the letter of 08 November from

your supposed partners in education - you were copied with that letter; you did not do anything either and the last meetings you had with them was last year in 2020?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Speaker, Sir, we have been having meeting with them even after that. So, it is untrue to say so. I had a meeting with SEDEC, and they were accompanied by the Cardinal as well. So...

(Interruptions)
ns) I am not! You will allow me to answer?

Mr Speaker: Please, hon. Minister, address the Chair. Forget whatever the Leader of the Opposition is saying.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: We had the meeting; we had discussed and ...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: I will take action, don't you worry!

(Interruptions)

An hon. Member: *Ekoute! To pose kestion, to pas ekoute?*

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Leader of the Opposition ...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Leader of the Opposition!

(Interruptions)

Don't disrupt the proceeding, please!

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Leader of the Opposition is saying that no details were discussed. They have given me a document with their proposals after reading the comprehensive grant formula. So, how come they did not have the details? Mr Speaker, Sir, I have here the list of meetings, which I am going to provide to you.

(Interruptions)
ns) I will give you the list of meetings.

(Interruptions)

) Pe rod enn tipe tro!

Mr Speaker: No conversation, please! Both sides!

(Interruptions)

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: *Voilà!*

Mr X. L. Duval: And who attended ...

Mr Speaker: Please! Leader of the Opposition! Behave yourself!

(Interruptions)

Behave yourself!

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: The technical working group met on 24 September, 23 October, 25 February 2020, 28 February 2020, 04 March 2020, 11 March 2020, 18 March 2020, 23 September 2020.

Mr X. L. Duval: I rest my case, Mr Speaker.

Mr Speaker: Yes, please! Time is over by five minutes.

Mr X. L. Duval: 2020!

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: *Et alors ?*

Mr Speaker: Yes, time is over already! Prime Minister's Question Time!

(Interruptions)

The Table has been advised ...

(Interruptions)

Order! Order!

The Table has been advised that PQ B/1320 will be replied by the hon. Minister of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change, and PQ B/1324 has been withdrawn.