



GUYANA NEWS

APNU+AFC shut out of state boards for dubbing gov't illegal – Teixeira



Gail Teixeira

By [Thandeka Percival](#) September 5, 2020

According to Minister of Parliamentary Affairs and Government, Gail Teixeira, the APNU+AFC Coalition has not been included in any of the state boards announced because they continue to refer to the government as “illegitimate.”

“They say we are an illegitimate government. If we are an illegitimate government why would you want to sit on any board we are appointing? They have got themselves into what you call a problematic position. You can’t say you want to be on boards but you don’t recognize the government that is appointing those boards,” Teixeira told Stabroek News yesterday in an invited comment. She stated that as far as she is aware no request had been made of the Leader of the Opposition to name any person to sit on state boards.

“We have put members of the parliamentary opposition and non-governmental organizations on the boards. In the interest of inclusivity NGOs including opposition parties and civil society have

been named. We are putting people on the boards we think can serve the board well," Teixeira explained.

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Lenox Shuman

As of yesterday, the PPP/C government has published in the official gazette the names of those who for the next year will sit on the governing boards of the Guyana Power and Light (GPL), Guyana Water Incorporated (GWI), the Guyana Oil Company (GuyOil), the National Communications Network (NCN) and the Gaming Authority.

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Notably while several of the nine smaller parties which contested the May 2, 2020 elections have been included on these boards the main opposition has been shut out.

Joshua Kanhai of The New Movement (TNM) told Stabroek News that his party had been contacted by the government and asked to name five members who could sit on state boards.

"We were asked to submit names which would be eligible for board positions. They said to submit names of five persons and their CV (Curriculum Vitae) so they can be appointed to boards which they are capable of sitting on," he explained.

Asked if the party had been told which aspect of the society they would be expected to represent, Kanhai said no.

So far one member of the TNM, party leader Asha Kissoon has been appointed a member of the GWI board. Kissoon is a medical doctor.

A similar response came from Lenox Shuman, Leader of the LJP who explained that while his party was not told whether they were Civil Society representatives or representatives of the parliamentary opposition they are "part of the parliamentary opposition".

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Shuman maintained that he could not comment on the exclusion of the APNU+AFC coalition or government's motivation.

"We were contacted and we have made submissions. That is all that is required of us. We intend to serve to the best of our ability in any capacity that we can," he stressed.

Timothy Jonas of A New and United Guyana (ANUG) said that his party would prefer to see state boards with representation from both of the larger parties and the newer parties but the issue is outside of his control.

Continuity

"It has always been ANUG's argument that if we are to have continuity in terms of the country's policy, the country's plans and transparency...these boards need to be populated not just by government people but by opposition people. Government has reached out to all small parties and asked to name representatives who are willing to sit on boards... I would like to see the largest opposition party have two seats [but] I can't dictate to the PPP/C. If they say these people try to rig an elections and we not playing with them I can't do anything about that [and] we have seen no softening from the coalition," he explained.

ANUG is so far represented on the GuyOil board by Akanni Blair. Also on this board is leader of the United Republican Party Vishnu Bandhu.

Leader of The Citizenship Initiative (TCI) Rondha Lam-Singh who has been named as a member of the GWI board said she was happy that government was being inclusive.

"We welcome the Government's efforts to fulfill their campaign promise of reaching across the aisle to foster inclusive participation in governance. We look forward to taking the initiative to forge a strong working relationship with the government and all other stakeholders in areas we are engaged in," she said.

For Leader of the Alliance for Change Khemraj Ramjattan this inclusiveness is still control.

During a virtual press conference he welcomed the inclusion of the smaller parties but said that by excluding the main opposition the PPP/C is once again trying to exert complete control by choosing who can represent the opposition.

AFC General Secretary, David Patterson went on to note that it was not for the government to select opposition representatives.

"The Opposition must choose its representatives," he stressed adding that while in government the APNU+AFC allowed the Leader of the Opposition to choose who would represent the party on these boards.

Earmarked

He shared an image of the gazetted board of the Civil Aviation Authority showing that membership was earmarked for a representative of the parliamentary opposition.

"There were several boards like that where we let the Opposition choose who they felt had the skillset to sit on the board. Naming the smaller parties who were supportive of them is just control freakism again," Ramjattan stressed.

According to Teixeira it is not true that the PPP/C failed to participate in all state boards during the tenure of the APNU+AFC nor did they avoid participation because they felt the government was illegitimate.

"The two situations are not analogous. In 2015 we conceded defeat, handed over government and took opposition. We never claimed that the APNU+AFC was illegitimate, fraudulent etc. We used our right to

go to an election petition which has not been heard over five years later," she stated.

According to Teixeira her party indicated clearly that they would participate in boards within the social sector such as those concerned with family, adoption and guardianship.

"On the finance front we asked for certain information so we would be able to participate effectively and did not receive it. In some boards we named people and not one of our people were ever gazetted as members [the gazettes listed representative of the parliamentary opposition]. In some cases they were called and participated and in some cases they could not participate because the people said they had no gazette with their names. It is true that in some of the gazettes they put representatives of the parliamentary opposition. In some cases the law required that but in a number of cases they just put that without asking us to participate," she explained.

Asked to respond to concerns that sidelining the coalition is refusing representation to the more than 200,000 persons who voted for that party, Teixeira said there are still more than a hundred boards to be appointed.

"Depends on how they behave. If they continue to call us illegitimate we'll have to continue," she said of further participation.



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