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"Supporters of the APNU were actually bribed" – Norton on dismal GRE performance

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– thought voting for the other party would help APNU

Chairman of A Partnership for National Unity (APNU), Aubrey Norton, has chosen to blame voter bribery and the fact that some of the party's supporters somehow believed that not voting for the APNU in the September 1 elections would have somehow helped APNU. Norton made these confounding remarks on Friday during APNU's weekly press conference, as the party continues to face questions of how it is

dealing with the fallout from its dismal performance at the September 1 General and Regional Elections (GRE).

Norton, who was the APNU's Presidential Candidate, said that despite having a strong campaign team, a solid manifesto, and doing the necessary groundwork, the party's efforts were undermined by voter bribery and a lack of awareness among its supporters.

"I can give you examples of cases where persons who are supporters of the APNU were actually bribed, and now they say to you, 'They're sorry,' 'They made a mistake,' and 'They thought voting in that particular direction would help the opposition.' It's a reality that we

have to live with, analyse, and move forward," the former Opposition Leader said.

Coming from 31 seats in the National Assembly during the 13th Parliament, the APNU, an umbrella coalition led by the People's National Congress Reform (PNCR), managed to only earn 12 seats in the 13th Parliament. The party suffered major losses in most of its stronghold regions. With many of its support base seemingly turning to the newly formed We Invest in Nationhood (WIN) party, led by United States (US)-sanctioned businessman Azruddin Mohamed.

WIN will be walking into the National Assembly with 16 seats at its first go. Mohamed is expected to take over as the Leader of the Opposition (LOO), a position that was previously held by Norton. Norton has since bowed out and chosen not to return to Parliament. PNCR's long-time rival, the People's Progressive Party Civic (PPP/C), won the Government with 36 seats, an increase above the 33 seats the party held in the 12th Parliament. WIN took regional wins of Regions Seven and 10, districts previously dominated by the PNCR. In Region Four, APNU also took a massive hit, with the PPP/C taking a landslide win of that district. APNU has also lost power at the regional level, where it previously controlled Regions Four, Seven and 10.

In the lead-up to the elections, PPP/C General Secretary (GS) Dr Bharrat Jagdeo repeatedly warned that WIN's campaigning would hurt the opposition more than the governing party. According to Norton's logic, PNCR supporters somehow thought voting for WIN instead of APNU was supposed to help APNU.

"Some people in our base had this view that supporting another political party outside



*APNU Chairman and PNCR leader
Aubrey Norton*

of the PPP would have helped. So there are a lot of factors there. I believe that the average person on the ground knows full well the kind of money that was spent to achieve what they achieved. We have analysed it, and moving forward, we'll look over that situation. But no one can remove from this fact that this last election – the 2025 election – was a different election in terms of the levels of bribery that occurred in it," Norton claimed. Nonetheless, Norton said the party has been analysing the circumstances surrounding its defeat, and it has decided that its public relations strategy needed to be improved. However, notwithstanding the party's woeful performance, Norton affirmed that the party is pleased with its campaign.

"We are satisfied that in the last election, we put together an extremely good team. We had a very good manifesto. We were out in the field doing a lot of work. But it was the first election in which millions of dollars were spent on bribing. For instance, in Linden, we are aware of the kind of money that was spent. So we recognise moving forward that one of the critical things in future elections in our economy will be money," Norton said.

Choosing instead to blame bribery and an alleged bloated voter list, Norton outright dismissed questions about the low voter turnout at the last elections.

"The claim about low voter turnout is questionable... I don't know what you mean by a low turnout. I attribute it to the rigging machinery," Norton said.

According to statistics from the Guyana Elections Commission (GECOM), the September 1 elections saw a total of 442,550 electors turning out, of which 438,467 were valid votes. This is against a total of 757,690 registered voters, marking a turnout of 58.4 per cent.

The turnout is a sharp decrease from the 72.5 per cent recorded for the March 2, 2020, GRE and the 71.3 per cent turnout recorded for the 2015 elections.

Meanwhile, according to Norton, going forward, the issue of bribery could be addressed through strong election campaign financing laws.

Norton pledged to remain active in politics and assist with the party's rebuilding efforts, noting that he will not make the same mistakes as former President David Granger, who reportedly abandoned the party after losing the 2020 elections.

On the party's choice for the new Members of Parliament (MP), Norton said he does not owe the public any justification for its selection, particularly the exclusion of members such as the party's former Chief Whip Christopher Jones and PNCR

Chairman Shurwayne Holder. Holder recently resigned from the PNCR after the elections, allegedly over Holder's exclusion from the MP list.

The new parliamentarians are Terrence Campbell, Juretha Fernandes, Ganesh Mahipaul, David Hinds, Sharma Solomon, Vinceroy Jordan, Nima Flue-Bess, Saiku Andrews, Coretta McDonald, Riaz Rupnarain, Dexter Todd, and Sherod Duncan.

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