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**Report of the Canadian Parliamentary Delegation  
respecting its participation at the Election Observation  
Mission of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly**

**Canadian Delegation to the Organization for Security  
and Co-operation in Europe Parliamentary Assembly  
(OSCE PA)**

**Azerbaijan**

**November 5 - 8, 2010**

# Report

On November 7, 2010, Senator Consiglio Di Nino led a Canadian delegation composed of Mr. Peter Goldring, M.P. and Ms. Monique Guay, M.P. to take part in the International Election Observation Mission (IEOM) of Azerbaijan's parliamentary elections. The following report is mainly based on the "Statement of Preliminary Findings and Conclusions", as published by the IEOM on November 8, 2010. Composing the IEOM were OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (OSCE/ODIHR), the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly (OSCE PA), the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE), and the European Parliament (EP).

About 400 short-term observers were deployed as part of the IEOM, including a 56-member delegation from the OSCE PA. In total, there were observers from 41 OSCE participating States. The IEOM observed voting in some 1,100 polling stations out of a total of 5,175, counting in 150 polling stations. The Mission was deployed at the invitation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan, pursuant to commitments made by all OSCE participating states.

While the November 7, 2010 parliamentary elections in the Republic of Azerbaijan were characterized by a peaceful atmosphere and all opposition parties participated in the political process, the conduct of these elections overall was not sufficient to constitute meaningful progress in the democratic development of the country.

Overall, the Central Election Commission (CEC) administered the technical aspects of the electoral process well. However, limitations of media freedom and the freedom of assembly and a deficient candidate registration process further weakened the opposition and made a vibrant political discourse almost impossible. This and a restricted competitive environment created an uneven playing field for candidates making it difficult for voters to make an informed choice. On the positive side, voters had the opportunity to check the centralized voter register and request corrections or inclusion, and the CEC conducted a voter education campaign, including in the media.

Voting on election day was assessed positively in almost 90 per cent of the polling stations visited by observers, whereas serious problems were noted in some 10 per cent. Counting deteriorated with almost a third of the polling stations observed rated bad or very bad, with worrying problems like ballot-stuffing noted in a number of places.

Negative aspects of the process included:

- Domination of public and political life by one party;
- The deficient candidate registration process at the constituency level led to the registration of almost all nominated candidates of the majority party and less than half of the opposition candidates;
- Lack of balanced and absence of unbiased reporting in the electronic media, resulting in an absence of alternative views, scarcity of critical print media;
- Unresolved cases of imprisoned journalists;

- Unequal access of political parties to resources necessary for effective campaigning;
- Allocation of unsuitable campaign venues and prevention of political gatherings by opposition candidates outside of these areas;
- Credible allegations of intimidation of voters and candidates, and a misuse of administrative resources;
- Last-minute changes in legislation to shorten the campaign period;
- Recommendations on legislation identified in previous OSCE/ODIHR and Council of Europe Venice Commission reports remain unaddressed;
- Continuation of the dominance of progovernment forces in the election administration because of the formula for the composition of election commissions;
- Legal remedies against decisions on election-related complaints are often untimely and ineffective and lack legal reasoning.

Positive aspects of the process included:

- In a welcome departure from the past, the run up to the elections and the voting day was peaceful and not marred with violent incidents;
- All political parties participated in the elections, in contrast to previous elections;
- All opposition members took their seats at the CEC;
- The CEC held frequent open meetings, completed all requirements within legal deadlines and elaborated regulations well in advance;
- The CEC decided to allocate four minutes of airtime in roundtable discussions on public TV to all candidates;
- Forty three of the 172 candidates who had been denied registration and appealed, were reinstated;
- A very high number of international and domestic observers were registered;
- International observers enjoyed good cooperation with the CEC;
- Members of national minorities were represented among candidates of all main political parties;
- The share of female candidates increased from 10 to 13 per cent compared to the last parliamentary elections.

The Canadian delegation attended a briefing session in Baku on November 6 and delegates were then deployed around Baku to observe the November 7 election. All delegates were also able to attend the debriefing on November 8.

The full preliminary report prepared by the IEOM is available in English at [www.oscepa.org](http://www.oscepa.org).

Respectfully submitted,

The Honourable Peter Goldring, M.P.  
Director  
Canadian Delegation to the Organization for Security and Co-operation  
in Europe Parliamentary Assembly (OSCE PA)

## Travel Costs

<b>ASSOCIATION</b>	Canadian Delegation to the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe Parliamentary Assembly (OSCE PA)
<b>ACTIVITY</b>	Election Observation Mission of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly
<b>DESTINATION</b>	Azerbaijan
<b>DATES</b>	November 5 – 8, 2010
<b>DELEGATION</b>	
SENATE	Senator Consiglio Di Nino
HOUSE OF COMMONS	Mr. Peter Goldring, M.P. Ms. Monique Guay, M.P.
STAFF	
<b>TRANSPORTATION</b>	<b>\$21,041.98</b>
<b>ACCOMMODATION</b>	<b>\$3,087.70</b>
<b>HOSPITALITY</b>	<b>\$0.00</b>
<b>PER DIEMS</b>	<b>\$858.76</b>
<b>OFFICIAL GIFTS</b>	<b>\$0.00</b>
<b>MISCELLANEOUS</b>	<b>\$369.60</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$25,358.04</b>