



**Report of the Canadian Parliamentary delegation
to the 39th Regular Session of the General Assembly of the
Organization of American States (OAS)**

**Canadian Section of the Inter-Parliamentary Forum
of the Americas (FIPA)**

**San Pedro Sula, Honduras
June 2 and 3, 2009**

Report

A delegation from the Canadian Section of the Inter-Parliamentary Forum of the Americas (FIPA) attended the 39th Regular Session of the General Assembly of the Organization of American States (OAS) in San Pedro Sula, Honduras on June 2 and 3, 2009. The delegation was led by the Honourable Lorna Milne, Senator, and included the Honourable Hedy Fry, P.C., M.P. The delegation was accompanied by Mr. Leif-Erik Aune, Association Secretary.

The members of the delegation from the Canadian Section of FIPA had a particular interest in the main theme of the Assembly, *Toward a Culture of Non-Violence*, and felt that this mission could increase their level of understanding of issues of hemispheric interest. They also felt that it could improve their capacity by bringing the recommendations back to Canada for further discussion and consideration.

The delegation observed the Plenary Sessions, which included regular business items such as elections, activity reports and adoption of resolutions and program-budget. These sessions were of great interest as heads of each delegation presented their countries' views on the theme of the General Assembly and on hemispheric priorities such as sustainable development and security. However, the proceedings were completely dominated by negotiations on the draft resolution to rescind the 1962 exclusion of the Government of Cuba from its participation in the Inter-American system. The resolution to rescind was adopted by the General Assembly on June 3, 2009, ending 47 years of Cuban exclusion from the OAS. The Plenary Sessions also provided a forum for the presentation of views and to report progress on standing questions such as on the Malvinas Islands. The Declaration of San Pedro Sula: "Toward a Culture of Non-Violence" was approved at the final Session (see Appendix 1).

The mission was not only an opportunity to observe the meetings as part of the General Assembly agenda but also to promote FIPA and to gain support for furthering the linkages between FIPA and the OAS. As a special guest of the OAS General Assembly, FIPA promotes the role of parliaments in the General Assembly and Summits of the Americas processes, and annual representation at these events is critical to maintaining the presence of the legislative branch in high-level inter-American activities. Unfortunately, the Canadian delegation was the only representation of FIPA in attendance, and encourages the parliaments of all FIPA countries to support this collective effort by also sending representative delegations to OAS General Assemblies.

The Canadian delegation conducted other FIPA activities with a particular focus on initiatives for women and youth, as well as visiting CIDA-funded projects in the region. Dating back to 1969, Canada has contributed \$413 million in Official Development Assistance to Honduras, which is one of Canada's countries of focus for international assistance and is CIDA's largest bilateral program in Central America. In San Pedro Sula, the delegation met with Mr. Marlon Antonio Breve Reyes, the Honduran Minister of Education, at a CIDA-funded school where hot lunches are served to increase

student enrolment and retention at the primary school level. This school feeding program is part of the Honduran government's *Education for All* Plan and is funded through a \$4 million grant between CIDA and the United Nations World Food Program. This is also the only bilingual school in Honduras. Minister Breve Reyes reported that this expanding food program reaches 1.3 million children, has increased enrolment by over 400,000 students nation-wide and has created an increased demand for elementary school teachers in Honduras. The Canadian delegation also noted that CIDA is contributing \$20 million over five years to the Government of Honduras to increase access and quality of primary education. Honduras' *Education for All* Plan aims to achieve the following by the year 2015: 100 percent of students graduating from Grade 6; at least 85 percent of students graduating from Grade 6 doing so by age twelve; scores of at least 70 percent in standardized testing in mathematics and Spanish in Grade 6; and 100 percent of all five-year-olds attending one year of pre-school education.

The Canadian delegation visited the "Comunicación Para la Vida – Communication for Life" (COMVIDA) Youth Awareness Centre in San Pedro Sula. Funded by a five-year, \$10 million project to strengthen the capacity of Honduras to provide youth-friendly activities, the COMVIDA program is being jointly implemented by CIDA, UNICEF and the United Nations Population Fund, in close partnership with the Honduran Association of Municipalities and the Honduran Ministry of Health. San Pedro Sula is reported to have a high rate of adolescent pregnancy and is an area of growing concern for HIV/AIDS. The COMVIDA program supports prevention activities pertaining to HIV/AIDS, sexually transmitted infections and teen pregnancy through a range of peer-led outreach activities in municipalities throughout Honduras.

As with other recent association activities, the Canadian delegation met with Canadian businesses operating in Honduras. At a luncheon hosted by Ambassador Neil Reeder, the delegation met with representatives of Breakwater Resources, the Central American Polytechnic Institute (IPC), SNC Lavalin, Yamana Gold, Canadian Bank Note, CECOSA, Gildan Activewear and Goldcorp. Following the luncheon, the Canadian delegation toured a textiles plant of Gildan Activewear, which employs nearly 12,000 employees in Honduras. The delegation also visited the Central American Polytechnic Institute and toured the campus, meeting with students and observing classes. The delegation noted the strong relationship between the Central American Polytechnic Institute and Gildan Activewear, which hires many of the Institute's graduates, and donates much of the equipment used.

The Canadian delegation would like to thank the department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, Ambassador Neil Reeder and the Foreign Service Officers who were on site in San Pedro Sula. The delegation was strongly supported by the staff of the Canadian Embassy in Costa Rica, which is also responsible for Honduras. Ambassador Neil Reeder provided briefings to the delegation, while Mr. Mark Strasser, Senior Trade Commissioner, and Mr. Daniel Arsenault, Counsellor and Head of Development, provided a comprehensive program of activity.

Respectfully submitted,

The Honourable Lorna Milne, Senator
Head of Delegation

for

Mr. James Bezan, M.P.
Chair

Canadian Section
of the Inter-Parliamentary Forum
of the Americas (FIPA)

Travel Costs

ASSOCIATION	Canadian Section of the Inter-Parliamentary Forum of the Americas (FIPA)
ACTIVITY	Mission to the 39 th Regular Session of the General Assembly of the Organization of American States (OAS)
DESTINATION	San Pedro Sula, Honduras
DATES	June 2 and 3, 2009
DELEGATION	
SENATE	The Honourable Lorna Milne, Senator
HOUSE OF COMMONS	The Honourable Hedy Fry, P.C., M.P.
STAFF	Mr. Leif-Erik Aune Association Secretary
TRANSPORTATION	\$ 7,886.58
ACCOMMODATION	\$ 1,098.35
HOSPITALITY	\$ 0
PER DIEMS	\$ 501.69
OFFICIAL GIFTS	\$ 262.08
MISCELLANEOUS / Medical Evaluations	\$ 36.98
TOTAL	\$ 9,785.68