



## **NEWS RELEASE**

### **PARLAMERICAS DELEGATION VISITS GUATEMALA AND EL SALVADOR**

From January 19<sup>th</sup> to the 26<sup>th</sup>, 2013, a Canadian delegation composed of senators and MPs from both government and opposition parties took part in a bilateral visit to Guatemala City, Guatemala, and San Salvador, El Salvador.

The goals of this bilateral visit included strengthening the parliamentary ties between Canada, and Guatemala and El Salvador; promoting ParlAmericas as a liaison between the Parliaments of the Americas; and furthering hemispheric dialogue concerning issues of mutual importance, such as trade and investment opportunities, human rights, and social and economic conditions.

During its visit to Guatemala City, the Canadian Parliament's delegation (Mr. Earl Dreeshen, member from Red Deer and head of the delegation; Senator Jim Munson (Ontario); Mr. François Pilon, member from Laval--Les Îles; Mr. Scott Simms, member from Bonavista--Gander--Grand Falls--Windsor; and Mr. Bernard Trottier, member from Etobicoke--Lakeshore) concluded successful meetings with Guatemalan parliamentarians, the Canadian-Guatemalan Chamber of Commerce, representatives of the U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency, and a broad spectrum of non-governmental organizations. These meetings touched on investment opportunities in Guatemala; the state of domestic democratic institutions; measures being taken to increase citizen security and combat narcotic trafficking; and projects being undertaken to improve the social conditions of citizens, including education, malnutrition and food safety.

These important topics were again front and centre during the delegation's visit to San Salvador, where meetings were concluded with the Speaker of El Salvador's legislature, members of the legislature, academics and experts, and the Canadian-El Salvadorian Chamber of Commerce. The delegation was invited to witness sittings of both the Guatemalan and El Salvadorian legislatures, and was recognized in the gallery in both countries by the Speaker of each legislature.

The delegation also had the opportunity to witness local commitment and community engagement during a visit to a centre for at risk youth and women in Soyapango, a project supported through Canada's Fund for Local Initiatives.

A highlight of the visit to San Salvador was a site visit led by El Salvador's First Lady and Secretary of Social Inclusion and Citizenship, Dr. Vanda Pignato, of a project called

*Ciudad Mujer*, a centre which promotes the prevention of violence against women and is a recipient of Canadian funding.

The bilateral visit served as an excellent opportunity for the Canadian delegation to learn and share best practices with front-line workers, industry leaders and experts in these countries, about issues which affect the entire hemisphere, such as challenges and opportunities in the mining industry, violence against women and children, and narcotic trafficking and armed violence.



From left to right: Mr. Scott Simms-M.P.; His Excellency Mr. Pierre Giroux; Canadian Ambassador in San Salvador; Mr. Roberto Samayoa, Director of CECI; Dr. Vanda Pignato, First Lady and Secretary of Social Inclusion and Citizenship of El Salvador; Mr. François Pilon-M.P.; Mr. Bernard Trottier-M.P.; Mr. Earl Dreeshen-M.P.; The Honourable Jim Munson, Senator and a participant of the *Ciudad Mujer* Project.