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**Report of the Canadian Parliamentary Delegation  
to the Election Observation Mission in Georgia of the OSCE  
Parliamentary Assembly**

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

**Georgia  
January 1-7, 2008**

# Report

On January 6, 2008, Mr. Peter Goldring, M.P. and Mr. David Christopherson, M.P., took part in the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) Parliamentary Assembly's International Election Observation Mission of the presidential election in Georgia.

The January 6 presidential election in Georgia was conducted, for the most part, according to international standards for democratic elections. There were, however, significant challenges revealed which need to be addressed urgently.

According to a statement released by the OSCE-led International Election Observation Mission, "This was the first genuinely competitive presidential election in the country, enabling the Georgian people to express their political choice. The election campaign was conducted in a highly polarized environment, marked by a lack of trust and pervasive allegations of violations. The distinction between state activities and the former President's campaign was sometimes blurred, contributing to an inequitable campaign environment. Nonetheless, all candidates were generally able to campaign freely around the country."

Some 85 parliamentarians and 340 short-term observers monitored the election for the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly (OSCE PA), the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly (PACE) and the European Parliament (EP).

These elections followed a period of unrest, beginning on 7 November 2007, when a newly formed bloc of opposition parties called demonstrations which lasted 6 days and culminated in the violent dispersal of protesters by police. The protesters demanded the rescheduling of parliamentary elections from autumn to spring 2008, the transformation of Georgia into a parliamentary republic and the resignation of then-President Mikheil Saakashvili. On the same day, a state of emergency was imposed by the President, who asserted that the protests were part of an attempt to overthrow the Government. The state of emergency was lifted on 16 November.

On 8 November, the then-President proposed to shorten his mandate and subsequently stepped down on 25 November, enabling Parliament to call an extraordinary presidential election for 5 January 2008. The Speaker of Parliament, Nino Burjanadze, became Acting President. A political dialogue led to amendments of the electoral legal framework and to the calling of a plebiscite on the timing of the next parliamentary elections.

The President of Georgia is elected for a five-year term. If no candidate receives an absolute majority of valid votes in the first round, a second round is held two weeks later between the two candidates who received the highest number of votes.

Despite the short timeframe, the Central Election commission prepared the election in an overall professional manner, operating transparently and carrying out an extensive voter education campaign. However, on contentious issues, its members acted in a

partisan manner; not always observing the neutrality required of an election administration.

The campaign was overshadowed by widespread allegations of intimidation and pressure, a number of which were substantiated. The implementation of social welfare programmes was frequently combined with campaigning for the former President.

In most polling stations visited, Election Day was organized and relatively peaceful but with significant regional variations and isolated cases of serious violations. In some precincts, the process was chaotic and with procedural problems, in particular related to inking, a safeguard measure against multiple voting. Some 5 per cent of voters were added to the voter list on Election Day. Observers evaluated the counting less positively, noting a slow process and procedural shortcomings.

OSCE PA President Emeritus, Alcee L. Hastings, the Special Co-ordinator of the OSCE short-term election observers said, "Because of the demonstrative competitiveness of this campaign, I perceive this election as a viable expression of the free choice of the Georgian people, but the future holds immense challenges."

Marie Anne Isler-Beguin, who headed the European Parliament delegation said, "This election is another step forward in strengthening Georgia's young and still fragile democracy. For the upcoming legislative elections, as decided by the plebiscite, the necessary lessons have to be taken immediately..."

Matyas Eörsi, the Head of the PACE delegation said: "This election, although clearly not perfect, enabled the Georgian people to give a democratic response to the recent political crisis. Georgians should be congratulated for the commitment they showed on Election Day to democratic principles. Now it is up to the authorities to hear our criticisms and urgently respond to the significant shortcomings noted. For the sake of the stability of the country I call upon all actors to conclude this election process in a manner that ensures the legitimacy in the eyes of Georgian people."

Respectfully submitted,

Mr. David Tilson, M.P.  
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>	OSCE Parliamentary Assembly's Election Observation Mission in Georgia
<b>DESTINATION</b>	Georgia
<b>DATES</b>	January 1-7, 2008
<b>DELEGATION</b>	
SENATE	
HOUSE OF COMMONS	Mr. Peter Goldring, M.P. Mr. David Christopherson, M.P.
STAFF	
<b>TRANSPORTATION</b>	<b>\$8,780.91</b>
<b>ACCOMMODATION</b>	<b>\$3,289.44</b>
<b>HOSPITALITY</b>	<b>\$0</b>
<b>PER DIEMS</b>	<b>\$704.90</b>
<b>OFFICIAL GIFTS</b>	<b>\$0</b>
<b>MISCELLANEOUS / REGISTRATION FEES</b>	<b>\$0</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$12,775.25</b>