

CANADIAN OBSERVERS REPORT

In response to the invitation of the Foreign Minister of Guatemala, the Secretary of State for External Affairs designated three observers to the combined presidential, congressional and municipal elections on November 3. Our mandate was to observe the electoral process as thoroughly as possible, to make an independent judgement on the quality of this process in the context of generally recognized democratic suffrage and to report back to the Secretary of State for External Affairs on our observations.

We were provided with support facilities to permit full verification of the electoral process and were able to observe the elections in the locations of our choosing. We were accompanied to Guatemala by Mr. Aharon Mayne, Deputy Director, Caribbean and Central America Relations Division, Department of External Affairs, and in Guatemala were also assisted by the Canadian Ambassador to Guatemala, M. André Potvin, and members of his staff, including Fred Spoke (Counsellor), Pierre Giroux (First Secretary) and Neil Brockenshire (First Secretary). Our group divided into several sections and visited polling station in the capital and various parts of the country including: Panajachel, Solola, San Cristobal de Totonicapan, Totonicapan, Chichicastenango (Quiché), Chimaltenango, Escuintla, Palin, Amatitlan, Villacanales, Antigua, Mixco, San Pedro Sacatepequez, San Juan Sacatepequez and Raimundo.

At the time this report was issued, the full count of ballots cast was not complete, and we therefore cannot comment at this stage about the outcome of the election. However, there can be no doubt about the fairness and openness of the actual process. It is our unanimous view, shared by other observers and by representatives of political parties, that the preparations by the Supreme Electoral Tribunal for the vote were efficient and well understood by all participants. The few problems observed at polling stations were of a minor technical nature. Patience, orderly conduct and good humour prevailed on election day.

We noted with satisfaction that the members and staff of the Supreme Election Tribunal enjoyed the confidence and trust of the political parties and individual voters. Detailed, complex questions posed to members of the Election Tribunal were answered in a frank and knowledgable manner.