



included Kyiv, Poltava, Kharkiv, Donetsk, Odessa, Lviv, and Chernivsti.

The activities of the official delegation varied from city to city. In the city of Poltava, for instance, the Canadian observers MP André Caron and Andrij Hluchowecky were provided access to all levels of government, from the Mayor of Poltava and the President's official representative for the Poltava region, to the various electoral district directors and officials in and around the city. They were able to visit scores of electoral polling stations, meet with factory managers and workers, collective farm directors and the media.

In the Donetsk region, a 14-hour train ride south-east of Kyiv, the voter turn-out was exceptionally high, contrary to the predictions by many advance polls. Strikes last year by miners in the region's 10,000 coal mines demanding economic and political reforms, were in a large part responsible for the calling of this election in the first place. Here, virtually all television programming is still transmitted from Moscow or produced locally, with only one Ukrainian television station reaching out from Kyiv. Donetsk voters were not only choosing deputies to the Ukrainian Parliament, but voting on a controversial and officially illegal regional referendum dealing with the status of the Russian language. The results were not unexpected: parties on the left carried the day, and the Russian language question was overwhelmingly approved. The voting pattern also shows the regional differences between Eastern and Western Ukraine. In Lviv, reform candidates defeated most socialists and communists. In Kyiv itself, low turnout failed to elect a number of key deputies.

In addition to international observers, independent observers from candidates were permitted, and numerous observers were visible in almost every polling station. Ukrainians were still used to voting the old communist way: for their family. One person would bring along all passports -- husband, wife, and eligible children, - and expect to get multiple ballots and vote for the lot. While the poll scrutineers still occasionally allowed this to take place, in most instances voters were reminded that this was not proper under the new law, and that they should get the individual family members to vote independently. Unlike the past, observers

witnessed many cases where members of a family would vigorously discuss candidates, and then split their passports (and ballots) to vote separately. People also tended to congregate near polling booths and discuss voting options. Since procedures in Ukraine required voters not to check off the candidate they wanted, but to cross out every one of those for whom they did not wish to vote (in some cases up to 20 different candidates!), teamwork and clarifications from scrutineers were often part of the story.

CONSENSUS: UKRAINE'S VOTING SYSTEM FAIR BUT NEEDED SIMPLIFICATION

Upon their return to Kyiv following the March 27 elections, the consensus reached among the Canadian observers was that the parliamentary elections in Ukraine were generally successful despite some discrepancies and errors. Irregularities were observed in several polling stations and there were reports that voters appeared confused by the choice and the complex electoral rules. However, the Canadian observers concluded that none of the irregularities could be considered serious enough to invalidate either the individual polls or, more specifically, the elections.

Canada's commitment to Ukraine's transition to a democratic society was further enhanced with the decision by Foreign Affairs Minister André Ouellet to send Canadian observers to the run-off elections in Ukraine. This time a smaller delegation comprised of Liberal Member of Parliament Walter Lastewka, Senator Marcel Prud'homme, Andrij Hluchowecky and Victor Nakonechny were asked to evaluate the political process during the April 10 elections in the Kyiv region. After the second round of voting on April 10, about two-thirds of the 450 seats in the Ukrainian Parliament were filled; only 112 remain to be filled, probably at a further round in July.

Upon his return, MP Walter Lastewka made a statement in the House of Commons on April 15 commenting on the results of the Ukrainian elections. He stated:

"Mr Speaker, the country of Ukraine has just completed the first and second round of the first democratic elections in Ukraine.

It has been more than seventy years since Ukraine has had democratic elections, but Ukraine's people are rich in patience and tolerance. They have waited very long for this day, and they have worked hard to ensure the success of their democracy. They are proud to have achieved a Parliament without bloodshed and extremism during their election process.

I would like to extend congratulations to Elections Canada, especially André Bouchard and Ambassador François Mathys for their excellent work in assisting the Ukraine Election Committee during the past several months.

The Canadian Government and the Canadian people have played a very significant role in Ukraine's search for democracy, in her search for peace and a better way of life.

I congratulate Ukraine for having earned the respect of people throughout the world. May Canada and Ukraine continue to work together to make both countries prosperous."

CONGRATULATIONS TO OLEKSANDER SHANDRUK

Monitor staff congratulate Oleksander Shandruk, former First Secretary for Trade, Science and Technology at the Ukrainian Embassy in Ottawa, for his election as a member of the Republican Party of Ukraine, in District 266 of Lviv Oblast in Western Ukraine.

FORMER AMBASSADOR TO CANADA IN JULY RUN-OFF ELECTIONS

Former Ambassador to Canada, Levko Lukianenko, who returned to Ukraine last November to lead the Ukrainian Republican Party into the recent elections, has announced that he will seek a seat in Ukraine's parliament during the July run-off elections.