

Overseeing the Whitewash of an Election Fraud

By Richard Sanders

On June 16 and 17, 2005, “at the request of CIDA [the Canadian International Development Agency] and Foreign Affairs Canada,”¹ Elections Canada held an international forum in Montréal to establish the International Mission for Monitoring Haitian Elections (IMMHE). At Canada’s invitation, seven other governments sent representatives (Brazil, Chile, the Dominican Republic, Jamaica, Mexico, Panama and the U.S.) and the IMMHE Steering Committee was born. It was chaired by Jean-Pierre Kingsley, who was then Chief Electoral Officer of Elections Canada.²

According to Guillermo Rishchynski, vice president of the Americas Branch at CIDA: “Elections Canada agreed to take a quarterbacking role in putting together a global consortium of independent electoral authorities.”³ Unfortunately, most of the IMMHE’s members have blatant conflicts of interest with the important responsibility of supervising Haiti’s electoral process.

To begin with, Canada, the U.S. and Chile gave troops to the “Multinational Interim Force” which helped overthrow Haitian democracy in 2004. These three countries, plus Brazil, then joined the UN Force (MINUSTAH) to protect the unconstitutional regime that had supplanted Haiti’s democracy. Adding insult to injury, was the Dominican Republic’s presence within the IMMHE. Besides helping to house, train and arm the rebel forces that sparked the 2004 coup—it provided the staging ground for the rebel’s invasion.

Conveniently ignoring these jarring truths, the IMMHE proclaimed that it would be “drawing on expert assessments,” to “evaluate the Haitian elections” using an impressive array of “internationally accepted criteria.”⁴

After many injustices plagued the presidential election campaign, there was a tornado of controversy after election day on February 7, 2006. Tens of thousands of Haitians protested the vote count when it seemed that the clear winner, René Preval—with four times the votes of his closest rival—would be unfairly deprived of his vic-

After helping overthrow Haiti’s elected government in 2004, and propping up the illegal regime and its two-year reign of terror against political opponents, Canada portrayed itself as a great friend of Haitian democracy. Canada became a major funder of a blatantly unfair electoral process designed to disenfranchise Haiti’s poor majority. Canada’s key role was to create and lead the International Mission for Monitoring Haitian Elections (IMMHE). Chaired by Canada’s Chief Electoral Officer, the IMMHE deceptively depicted massive, electoral fraud as if it was a fair process.

tory. Preval declared, “We are convinced that either massive fraud or gross errors stain the process.”⁵

Not surprisingly, the IMMHE gave a generally-favourable review of saying the “overall picture was positive.”⁶ Although it did admit that certain specific “organizational problems need to be addressed,” the IMMHE portrayed these as relatively minor glitches in what it stressed was a “laudable democratic exercise that proceeded in a calm and orderly fashion.”⁷

IMMHE’s List of “Organization Problems”

Here is the very worst that the IMMHE had to say about the elections:

“Delayed opening of many polling stations

Of the 997 polling stations observed, 746 (75%) opened at least 45 minutes late. Some stations opened...four hours [late]. These delays were due to the late or incomplete delivery of election materials to many polling centres, to poorly-trained election staff and to cumbersome opening procedures....

Not enough room at certain polling centres

A number of polling centres, some of which should have served up to 16,000 potential electors, had only one way in or out and were too small to allow people to circulate freely. Other[s]... had undersized courtyards or were too cramped.... This...resulted in long queues and crowded polling centres....

Guiding and informing electors

[There was] insufficient signage to help guide electors. Certain polling stations did not post the electoral lists and some names were missing from the lists, de-

priving those electors of their right to vote.... No mechanisms were in place to assist illiterate or disabled electors....

Communications chain

The [Provisional Electoral Council] CEP extend[ed] voting hours and... allow[ed] electors to cast their ballots at a poll other than the one to which they had been assigned.... However, the CEP’s instructions were not applied consistently across polling centres....

Election materials

First,...at several polling stations, the type and location of the voting screens did not guarantee voter privacy.... Second, the seals designed to safeguard against ballot box tampering were not delivered.... Election workers were therefore not able to seal the boxes.... Third, the lack of adequate lighting affected the ballot count, which took place during the evening and at night....

Compiling the votes

....The minutes were difficult to complete.... No measures were put in place to monitor those entering and exiting the CTV [Vote Tabulation Centre].... The storage of election materials... could be improved.”⁸

Major Scandals Ignored

Hiding behind the IMMHE’s list of electoral imperfections is an embarrassing litany of scandals that plagued Haiti’s elections. The following compilation of edited quotations reveals some of the larger, systemic problems hidden and ignored by the IMMHE’s extremely limited critique:

Election Delays

The most obvious impropriety was that Haiti’s Constitution “gives provisional governments 90 days to organize elec-

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tions, and that period expired on June 1, 2004, without any attempt to hold elections." During 2005, the Interim Government of Haiti installed by the U.S., Canada and France, postponed elections four times, missing the deadline of February 7, 2006, for transferring power "that it had promised to meet for 21 months." (Brian Concannon, Director of the Institute for Justice and Democracy in Haiti).⁹

Electoral authority was illegal

The election was organized and administered by the "Provisional Electoral

Council" (CEP), an extra-constitutional (and therefore illegal) authority that was established by the post-coup regime. Funding and many staff were provided by foreign, occupation powers. Canada was a key contributor.¹⁰

Suppression of popular parties

Political terror [was used] as a campaign strategy. Over and over again... Haitian National Police (HNP), and troops from MINUSTAH... have gone into neighborhoods known as strongholds of government opponents, killing, maiming and arresting people....

Keeping poor neighborhoods under siege and imprisoning activists keeps government opponents from organizing and campaigning.¹¹

Violence: Latortue's post-coup regime killed many Lavalas supporters, members and leaders.¹² Peaceful, pro-Lavalas demonstrations were repeatedly fired upon by the HNP while UN forces stood by and watched. Campaign events organized by Préval's Espwa party were similarly targeted, to the extent that government-instigated violence made campaigning impossible.¹³

Detention: Many were unable to



"No one in Haiti contested the legitimacy of the polling process. The electoral process was transparent and open to all political parties...."

I was put in charge of organizing elections, but I'm not really an election expert. Believe it or not, I'm primarily an international banker and an economist."

Jacques Bernard, Exec. Dir., CEP*

Source: Canada's Standing Cttee. on Foreign Affairs & International Development, May 30, 2006.

ing an investigation into Bernard.¹⁰

Not everyone agreed. One of Bernard's loudest cheerleaders, Canada's Jean-Pierre Kingsley—who called himself a "good friend"¹¹ of Bernard—made this declaration for the IMMHE:

"Our Mission would like to recognize the professional conduct of election workers on election day, in particular during the vote and the ballot count... We would especially like to congratulate the Executive Director of the Provisional Electoral Council, Mr. Jacques Bernard. Since his appointment last October, Mr. Bernard has provided the momentum needed to prepare the elections and has coordinated the contributions of all stakeholders."¹²

When asked about those who questioned the fairness of the elections, Bernard quipped, "I must say that in Haiti we have a lot of sore losers."¹³

* CEP - Provisional Electoral Council

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Many Haitians believed that the CEP was "so plagued by partisanship and incompetence" that it would "not be capable of holding free and fair elections." One of its members, Patrick Féquière, said, "We could be in for a fiasco on Feb. 7."¹ Fequiere and another CEP member, Pierre-Richard Duchemin, "accused [Jacques] Bernard of mishandling election preparations."²

In the words of Brian Concannon, Jr., "an American lawyer who spent several years in Haiti helping the governments of Aristide and Preval... prosecute some of the most gross human rights abusers of the... dictatorships of Duvalier and Cedras":³

"The Electoral Council is supposed to be running the counting, but it is not. Jacques Bernard was appointed 'executive director'...—a position not previously recognized in Haitian law—by the [post-coup] Prime Minister.... He is running the show and has kept regular council members

out of the counting room.... The UN Peacekeeping mission was forced to remove the doors to the tabulation center to prevent Mr. Bernard and his advisors from acting secretly."⁴

Although Duchemin was supposedly in charge of the vote tabulation center, he was not even allowed to view the data. Saying there was "unwholesome manipulation" and "nothing is transparent,"⁵ he compared Bernard to a "magician" singlehandedly controlling the electoral process.⁶

Fequiere concurred, saying Bernard was a "megalomaniac" with "a political agenda"⁷ who was "releasing results without notifying other council members."⁸ "No one can trust him for he is a thief, a certified cheater and he is responsible for the election aftermath chaos,"⁹ said Fequiere.

When Bernard's trickery failed and was exposed, he "discreetly left the country...without advising" the CEP. "We are witnessing an escape.... He was an agent of division," said CEP member Gerson Richemé, when announc-

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"The vote was carried out with no violence or intimidation, and no accusations of fraud."

Jean-Pierre Kingsley

(Media release, IMMHE, Feb. 17, 2006.)

Jean-Pierre Kingsley was:

- ☒ **Canada's Chief Electoral Officer**
- ☒ **Chair, International Mission for Monitoring Haitian Elections**
- ☒ **Chair, International Mission for Iraqi Elections** (monitored from Jordan)
- ☒ **On the Board of Directors, IFES***



* IFES - International Foundation for Election Systems

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IFES is busy in 35 countries,¹ getting the best democracy money can buy for the U.S. government. Although IFES receives "80 percent of its funding" from the U.S. government, namely USAID and the State Department,² it is also financed by such "renowned democracy-lovers as Exxon-Mobil, Citibank and Motorola."³

Here's how Tom Griffin, author of *Haiti: Human Rights Investigation* (2005) summarised the "multi-million dollar" IFES project in Haiti:

"IFES workers...completely take credit for ousting Aristide.... IFES...formulated groups that never existed, united pre-existing groups, gave them sensitization seminars, paid for people to attend, paid for entertainment and catering, and basically built group after group.... They reached out to student groups, business... [and] human rights groups—which they actually paid off to report human rights atrocities to make Aristide look bad.... They

participate in the election, as candidates or activists, because they were illegally imprisoned following the 2004 coup:

"Political prisoners included Haiti's last constitutional Prime Minister, a former member of the House of Deputies, the former Minister of the Interior, and dozens of local officials and grassroots activists." (Concannon, Feb. 17, 2006)

Prime Minister Yvon Neptune began a liquids-only hunger strike to protest his incarceration eight months before the election, and refused solid foods throughout the election campaign.¹⁴

In August 2005, Lavalas repre-

bought journalists, and the IFES associations grew into the Group of 184 that became a solidified opposition against Aristide.... Gerard Lartortue, the [coup] prime minister, was an IFES member for a couple of years before the ouster of Aristide.... Bernard Gousse, the justice minister...in charge of prisons and police, was in [IFES] for many years."⁴

Chair of the IFES Board, William Hybl, a former Reagan advisor who also sits on the International Republican Institute's board, which helped fund and organize Haiti's virulently anti-Aristide opposition. Hybl's "good friend" George W. Bush made him Ambassador to the UN in August 2001.⁵

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sentative, Gerald Gilles, said "the masses that we represent...claim Father Jean-Juste as their presidential candidate" and "we'll boycott the elections if Jean-Juste, and many other political prisoners that are potential candidates for our party, are not released."¹⁵ Lavalas later said it would like to participate in the elections but could not do so because authorities would not allow them to hold meetings or rallies.¹⁶ Jean-Juste was temporarily released on January 29, 2006, for treatment of pneumonia and leukemia.¹⁷ On February 6, the day before the election, he endorsed Rene Préval.¹⁸

Exile/hiding: Many Fanmi Lavalas (FL) were forced into hiding or exile.¹⁹

Destruction/theft: Many FL had properties ransacked or confiscated.²⁰

Rebel leaders run in elections

There was open campaigning by individuals known to be part of the illegal, paramilitary group responsible for killings and other crimes in the lead-up to the 2004 coup, including Louis-Jodel Chamblain.²¹ Guy Philippe, the death squad leader who led the coup, won only 1.69 percent.²²

Funding parties and campaigns

U.S. Department of State spokesman, Sean McCormack, said the U.S. spent \$30 million in the pre-election period teaching Haitians "how to build political parties [and] how to campaign."²³

Media manipulation

During the election, an intense propaganda campaign was waged on Haiti's airwaves by domestic and foreign elites. Hundreds of Haitian journalists were taken under the tutelage of Canadian and U.S. media NGOs, that indoctrinated them in Western standards of journalism.²⁴ [Editor's note: Considering the abysmal failure of Canadian and U.S. media to fairly cover the Haitian coup and the reign of terror that followed, we are justified in being skeptical of media "tutelage" funded by government sources that sponsored the demise of Haiti's democracy.]

Voter Registration System

A complex electronic voter registration system disenfranchised many.²⁵

Voter Instructions

An ill-conceived strategy whereby voters were expected to receive instructions via radio or television, collides with the hard reality that the rural and urban poor systematically lack access to such relative luxuries.²⁶

Registration and polling centres

Serious reductions in the number and geographic distribution of voter registration offices and polling stations²⁷ in poor urban and rural areas.²⁸ During the previous election in 2000, Haiti's democratic government organized over 10,000 registration centers and over 12,000 polling stations. In 2006, there were fewer than 500 registration centers [a 95% reduction] and just over 800

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polling centers [a 93% reduction].²⁹

Placement [of voter registration centres] was heavily weighted in favor of areas likely to support the interim government and its allies. Halfway through the registration period, there were three offices in the upscale suburb of Petionville, and the same number in the large, and largely roadless, Central Plateau Department. The International Foundation for Election Systems report (Dec. 27, 2005) said some will have to walk five hours to vote.³⁰

“In cities, the poor neighborhoods were the last to get registration centres. Cité Soleil, the largest, poor neighborhood of all, never got one.’ The two polling centres for its [several hundred thousand] residents were ‘located well outside the neighborhood.... One of the two... was transferred at the last minute to a single building where 32,000 voters had to find the right line to wait in without posted instructions, lists of names or an information center.’”³¹

Many balloting centres required protest action before doors were opened.³²

Canadian Financing

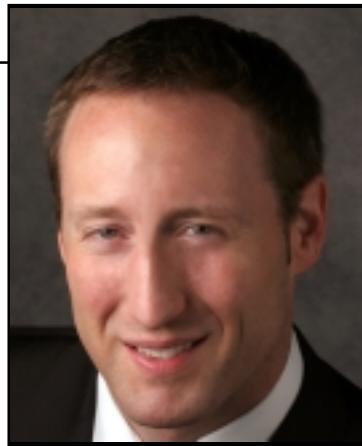
Since helping to overthrow the democratically-elected government of Haiti in 2004, the Canadian government has been a major financial contributor to the Haitian electoral process, contributing almost \$40 million through the Canadian International Development Agency. Of that, \$7.5 million went through the IMMHE. Canada’s money also went towards the

“enhancement of security during the elections included the provision of electoral security agents as well as radio repeaters and other communications equipment in addition to the deployment, since October 2005, of 25 retired Canadian police experts.”¹

In January 2005, it was estimated that the Haitian electoral process would cost \$56 million. At that time, the U.S. and the European Union had pledged about \$14.6 million each.²

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Tories follow Liberal lead on Haiti's flawed elections

“While any incidents are regrettable, Canada notes that the few that occurred were largely the result of logistical challenges posed by the unprecedented voter turnout.”

Foreign Affairs Minister
Peter MacKay

Source: Media release, “Canada Congratulates Haiti on Elections,” Feb. 8, 2006.

Undersupply of voting centers

A further suppression of the votes of poor people was achieved through delaying and undersupplying polling stations with necessary materials.³³

Burned ballots

Tens of thousands of ballots—some smouldering—were found at a dump outside Cité Soleil, not far from the CEP tabulation centre. Many were marked for Préval.³⁴

Tally sheets destroyed

A significant number of voter tally sheets were destroyed, and many lacked codes necessary to enter them officially. Most of these sheets were from poor neighbourhoods supportive of Préval.³⁵

Voters lists

Many waited in line for hours only to be told they could not vote because their names were not on the list.³⁶

Votes discarded

Officials discarded 147,765 votes (over 7% of the total) as “null,” declaring that their intention was unclear.³⁷

Blank votes

Another 85,290 (4.6% of the total) were classified as blank votes which, under Haiti’s election law, are included in the total number of valid votes. Their inclusion raised the number of votes required by Préval to reach the 50% threshold. As Brian Concannon stated: “It is absurd to think that 85,000 people, many without enough to eat, would leave their babies, their fields and other work, and spend hours walking or waiting in the tropical heat just to say they did not like any of the 33 candidates.”³⁸

Vote tabulations

Charges of manipulation and secrecy were levied by several members of the CEP itself who referred to tampering with tally sheets and ballot boxes. This

led the UN occupation mission to remove the doors of the tabulation center in order to prevent Jacques Bernard, director general of the CEP, and his advisers from acting secretly.³⁹

A “Limited Hangout”

In light of this compendium of electoral problems, the IMMHE’s report reads like a coverup masked as an exposé. It is a textbook case of a “limited hangout.” Here’s how Wikipedia defines such “psychological operations”:

“A ‘limited hangout’ is a form of deception, misdirection or coverup, often associated with intelligence agencies, involving a release or *mea culpa*-type of confession of only part of a set of previously-hidden, sensitive information, that establishes credibility for the one releasing the information, who by the very act of confession appears to be...acting with integrity; but in actuality by withholding key facts is protecting a deeper crime and those who could be exposed if the whole truth came out. A limited hangout is typically a response to lower the pressure felt from inquisitive investigators...that threaten to expose everything.”⁴⁰

At first blush, the IMMHE’s list seems revealing, but it pales when compared to reports by those who are not in the pocket of governments that supported the 2004 coup and the reign of terror that followed. For example, the Council on Hemispheric Affairs predicted that Haiti’s election would “inevitably...occur in a climate of fear and violence.”⁴¹

Downplaying the Fraud

The IMMHE’s report minimised blatant problems that couldn’t go unmentioned. Its reference to “cramped,” “crowded polling centres...result[ing]

Ignoring the Scandals

Besides playing down the election's many assaults on Haitian democracy, the IMMHE simply ignored its worst excesses. By saying there was a "general absence of intimidation and violence on election day," the IMMHE removed the election from a contextual sea of violence. The IMMHE closed its eyes to thousands of poor Haitians who were killed or arrested by police and death-squads operating under UN supervision. And, it closed its ears to gun shots heard on election day itself "just north of the capital, where Jordanian UN troops... opened fire on demonstrators, killing one or perhaps two and wounding several others."⁴⁸

Also ignored is the fact that this much-delayed election was only needed because Haiti's democracy was overthrown in 2004. No hint emerges that for two years, the party empowered by three previous, landslide elections was systematically repressed by an illegal regime owing its power to military occupation forces that funded the faulty election and its IMMHE whitewash. The IMMHE is also silent about how so many electoral problems disproportionately affected rural and poor urban districts where the coup regime's opponents live. Disenfranchisement was so systematic that we would be naive to think the patterns were coincidental.

Couldn't the IMMHE's highly trained, well-funded election experts see these patterns? Don't they know that domestic and foreign elites have long used terror, coups, invasions and rigged elections to put their people into power? Couldn't they see that these elites tried to rig the 2006 election?

To ask such questions is to assume that the IMMHE's purpose really was to objectively monitor the elections. We must not forget that it was created, funded and controlled by the very governments that overthrew Haiti's democracy. The IMMHE's "democracy experts" are therefore the *least likely* to report deliberate patterns of deceit, abuse and manipulation in Haiti's elections. As the Ottawa Haiti Solidarity Committee said, it is "beyond doubt" that: "Kingsley and his monitoring mission had no intention of fairly assessing the election process and the overall context in which it unfolded."⁴⁹



Despite their failure to protect Haiti's electoral process, including tens of thousands of votes that went missing while under their care, MINUSTAH still portrays its role using quaint photos like this one.

Long lines were due, not to "unprecedented voter turnout" but to a 95% reduction in polling centres, especially in areas where Haitians opposed the coup-installed regime.

in long queues," is a gross understatement. As Concannon notes: "At some centers, tens of thousands crammed into a single building, creating confusion and, in one case, a deadly stampede."⁴²

The IMMHE also downplayed a major international scandal in a passing reference to thousands of smouldering ballots (largely marked for Preval). The entire IMMHE website contains two sentences on this grave matter:

"The election authorities have yet to publish a comprehensive report on the discovery of some ballots in dump sites. However, the IMMHE notes the March 2, 2006, declaration of the UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) that the ballots recovered by MINUSTAH numbered in the hundreds (not in the thousands) and that they had already been compiled."⁴³

While many sources, including COHA, said "tens of thousands of votes" burning in the dump,⁴⁴ and CEP President Max Mathurin referred to thousands, the IMMHE assured us they only "numbered in the hundreds." For this verdict, they relied solely on the word of MINUSTAH, which IMMHE neglects to mention, was responsible for protecting the ballot's security. IMMHE concluded its fleeting assessment with the claim that these votes had been already counted anyway.

On this "absolutely unacceptable" debacle, Rosemond Pradel, secretary-general of Haiti's Provisional

Electoral Council (CEP), said "securing the ballots after they had been cast was the responsibility of the 9,000-strong UN force."⁴⁵ Surely then, MINUSTAH is a clearly biased source. Its website, which presents the election as a great success, is replete with photos of UN troops protecting ballot boxes and, quite literally, gently escorting little old ladies to their polling booths. (See photo above.)⁴⁶

MINUSTAH is defensive about charges that it allowed ballots to burn unceremoniously in dumps near the heavily-guarded, vote-counting centre. Similarly, the Canadian-initiated and organized IMMHE may have also felt defensive since a Canadian colonel, Barry MacLeod, was the one in charge of ballot security. But facts like this do not get in the way of the Canadian government's bragging rights on securing the ballots. A puff piece in the Department of Foreign Affairs' promo magazine, *Canada World View*, proclaimed: "Col. MacLeod's experience with elections...had been limited to casting a ballot. But as general manager of the Elections Assistance Task Force at...MINUSTAH, his job was to plan, organize and direct all UN logistical and security support for the elections, including the distribution and recovery of all electoral materials. His team saw to it that the vote so critical to Haiti's nation-building was successfully concluded despite the many challenges."⁴⁷

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U.S., Canada and France Reluctant to Concede Préval's Victory

By Richard Dufour and Keith Jones

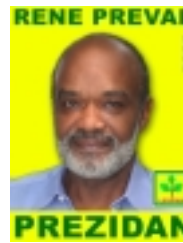
On February 16, under conditions of profound political crisis—a popular upheaval against the attempt to rob René Préval of his election victory, the exposure of massive electoral fraud, and the

worried intervention of the U.S., other powers, and the UN and its military force—Haiti's election council voted 8 to 1, to declare Préval elected. Council member Patrick Féquiere said: "We could have just told Préval he got 48.76 percent, but when he contests the results all of this mess is going to come out—the blank votes, the missing votes."

The council's vote was preceded by several days of frantic negotiations involving Préval, Haiti's U.S.-installed interim government, Washington and diplomats from France, Canada, the Organization of American States and the UN.

That the Bush administration was not easily reconciled to a Préval victory is underscored by Robert Noriega's op-ed in the *Miami Herald* (Feb. 16, 2006). As U.S. assistant secretary of state for the Western Hemisphere (2003-2005), Noriega was one of the principal architects of the 2004 coup that deposed Haiti's last elected president Jean-Bertrand Aristide. [Editor's note: Noriega attended the "Ottawa Initiative" meetings in early 2003. See pages 13-14.]

Diplomats from France and Canada continued to insist that Préval should be forced to contest a second, run-off presidential election.



Diplomats from France and Canada, countries that worked hand-in-glove with the U.S. against Aristide, continued to insist—long after UN, Brazilian and Chilean diplomats conceded that the official vote

count was riven with irregularities—that Préval should be forced to contest a second run-off presidential election.

Source: "Washington reluctantly concedes Préval is Haiti's president-elect," Feb. 21, 2006. <www.wsws.org>

Masses move into action

On February 13, Haiti-based, journalist Kevin Pina reported: "If you could see the tens of thousands of people in the streets [and] feel the sentiments of the Haitian people...and their resolve, you would know how happy they are to believe that...finally, the reign of terror of the past two years is over. They are making it very clear that they're not going to let anyone—not the international community or the Haitian elite—stand in...the way of making this transition out of that nightmare."

Source: Brochure, Haiti Solidarity BC and Canada-Haiti Action Network, April 30, 2006. <www.canadahaitiacion.ca>