

Religious Diplomacy:

The Department could assist in organizing speaking tours of prominent Arabic-speaking Canadian religious scholars. This would identify Canada as a country with a substantial Islamic community and build bridges to Islamic scholars and institutions in the Gulf.

The Department, in conjunction with Heritage Canada and Canadian ecumenical bodies, should develop a series of videos on "the faiths of Canada." This video series, through "human interest" stories, would highlight the daily lives led by the Canadian communities that practice the major religions - Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, Sikhism, etc. in the Canadian context. The series would highlight the religious tolerance of Canadians and project Canada as a tolerant multicultural society. The Gulf countries would be most interested in the Canadian Islamic community, and this type of human interest program could easily be broadcast on the national television networks in the region. Such broadcasts would help offset street rumours of mistreatment of Moslems in the West.

Develop Relations with Regional Organizations:

The Department should establish annual consultations with key regional organizations such as the Organization of Islamic Conference, and the Gulf Cooperation Council. Consultations with both these organizations would provide valuable first-hand insights into a range of security, intelligence, and political issues of importance to the Islamic world. Given limited presence of Canadian diplomatic political officers in the region, these consultations would greatly leverage our presence and contacts with key information-sources.

Academic Relations:

Academic links with the region should be enhanced. An excellent starting point would be to support visits to the region by Canadian Islamic studies experts. McGill's Islamic Studies Centre is an Islamic studies institution with global recognition and would be an excellent partner.

The Department should also examine the establishment of scholarships and academic exchanges funded through private sector contributions of companies active in the region.