

North Africa rich in trade and investment opportunities

The rain and cool temperatures did little to dampen the reception that members of a Canadian trade delegation received when their plane touched down in the Maghreb last December. The mission, which saw stopovers in Algeria, Tunisia and Libya, was organized by the Canada Arab Business Council (CABC) in response to requests from some of its members who felt the time was right for such a visit. The CABC has been promoting Canada's commercial interests in the Middle East and North Africa for 20 years.

Canada has seen consistent growth in business opportunities over the last few years in North Africa. Last year, Canada exported about \$560 million to the three countries that were included in the mission.



The Canadian delegation in Tripoli with Jacques Simard, Canadian Ambassador to Libya (standing, first from left).

Hugh O'Donnell, Executive Vice-President, Canadian Commercial Corporation (CCC), Dwain Lingenfelter, CABC Chairman and CEO, and Sandra LeBlanc, CABC Vice-Chair, led the delegation. They were joined by senior executives from some 20 Canadian companies that represented several key sectors, including oil and gas, agriculture and agri-food, information and communication technologies, as well as training and education.

"The Maghreb presents a lot of interesting trade and investment opportunities for Canadian business," said O'Donnell. "There's great respect in the region for what Canadian companies have to offer." The sentiment was echoed by the CABC's Lingenfelter: "There is a desire in the region to do business with Canadians because we are seen to be good at the things that they need. As a result, we came home with many more opportunities for Canadian companies than anticipated."

The opportunities that were identified for Canadian companies were particularly rich as they relate to infrastructure requirements specific

to oil and gas, including pipeline technology and information technology systems, and overall infrastructure improvements in healthcare and transportation.

Both O'Donnell and Lingenfelter credit the advance work that was undertaken by staff at the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade and Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters, but especially the local embassies and chambers of commerce, as a major contributing factor to the success of the mission.

The agenda included opportunities for the Canadian delegation to network with local business leaders and government officials, and participate in round-table discussions and individual appointments with potential business partners. The participants were invited to meetings like the Conference of Arab Investors in Algiers, the Journée de l'Entreprise at Sousse in Tunisia and the Libyan Foreign Investment Board "Marketplace."

With this Maghreb mission a success, the CABC is considering a mission to the Middle East this spring. **For more information**, contact Michel Fairfield, CCC, tel.: **(613) 947-9662.** *

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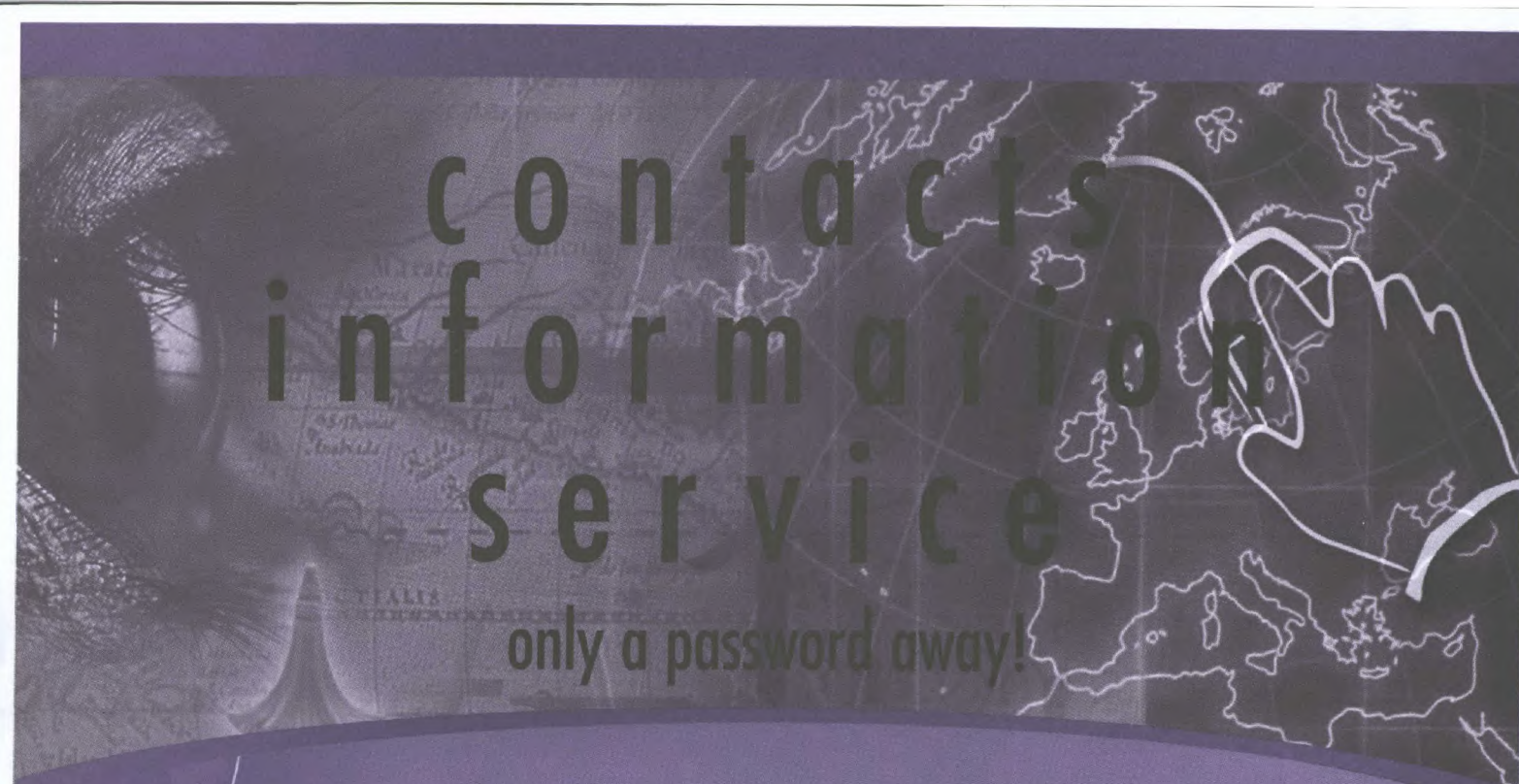
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