

THE GAME HAS CHANGED, BUT THE POTENTIAL IS STILL ENORMOUS.

AS YOU KNOW, OUR AMBASSADORS ARE BACK FOR A THREE-DAY CONFERENCE ON OUR MIDDLE EAST POLICY DIRECTIONS AND PROGRAMS. THEY HAVE DISCUSSED THOROUGHLY BOTH THE POTENTIAL OF THE REGION AND SOME OF THE CHALLENGES WE WILL FACE TO EXPLOIT THESE MARKETS.

ONE OF THESE CHALLENGES IS TO ENCOURAGE A LARGER PERCENTAGE OF THE CANADIAN BUSINESS COMMUNITY TO UNDERTAKE MARKETING EFFORTS IN THAT PART OF THE WORLD. OUR AMBASSADORS KNOW OF EXAMPLES OF CONTRACTS, IN THE MEDICAL FIELD OR IN THE OIL AND GAS SECTOR, WHERE ARABS EAGERLY SOUGHT CANADIAN BIDDERS, BUT COULD FIND NONE; OR OTHER PROSPECTS WHICH HAD BEEN IDENTIFIED BY CANADIAN FIRMS, BUT SUBSEQUENTLY DROPPED.

NOW I KNOW THAT TONIGHT I AM PREACHING TO THE CONVERTED. MANY OF YOU PEOPLE MAKE YOUR LIVING, OR PART OF IT, IN THE ARAB WORLD AND KNOW FAR MORE ABOUT IT THAN DO I, BUT WE NEED YOU TO SPREAD THE MESSAGE THAT THIS IS AN AREA OF THE WORLD FULL OF OPPORTUNITIES. AND WE RELY ON THOSE OF YOU WHO TRAVEL REGULARLY TO THE ARAB LANDS TO CORRECT SOME OF THE PREVAILING CANADIAN MYTHS ABOUT THIS PART OF THE WORLD.

THE CANADA-ARAB BUSINESS COUNCIL AND THE EGYPT-CANADA BUSINESS COUNCIL CAN PLAY, AND ARE PLAYING, AN IMPORTANT ROLE IN THIS REGARD. IT IS CLEARLY THESE TYPES OF BUSINESS ORGANIZATIONS