

\$100 billion earlier estimated, although the amount is still significant. The basic infrastructure was not as badly damaged as had been thought, and electricity, water and roads have generally been brought back into working order. However, according to local authorities, the private sector has been devastated, and Kuwaitis are seeking dependable suppliers who will maintain a presence in the country.

Now that emergency services have largely been restored, decisions as to how the country will proceed with the second phase of the restoration effort probably will be made in several weeks as the new Kuwaiti Cabinet becomes established and financial services are re-established.

Local authorities encouraged the Canadian delegation to make proposals and follow up through agents in the country.

"This mission comes at a pivotal time, as the Kuwaitis begin the job of assessing potential suppliers," Mr. Wilson said, adding that the visit provides valuable reinforcement to the mission in March led by former Secretary of State for External Affairs, the Right Honourable Joe Clark -- the first Ministerial mission by any country into Kuwait following the war.

"The Kuwaiti government and private sector are genuinely appreciative of the role that Canada played in Kuwait's liberation from Iraq; they are aware of our economic strengths and expertise; and they have proof of our commitment to maintaining a sustained business relationship," Mr. Wilson said. "These factors will serve Canada well as contracts are issued for the major part of the reconstruction effort."

Following their meetings in Kuwait City, the Minister and his delegation travelled to a nearby oil field to watch as firefighters from Calgary-based Safety Boss Ltd. worked to bring under control one of the approximately 600 damaged Kuwait oil wells.

"Safety Boss is one of six Canadian firms that are currently participating in the emergency phase of Kuwaiti reconstruction. They are demonstrating the fact that Canadian firms have some of the best technology and skills in the world. The Government of Canada intends to ensure that our strengths are employed to maximum advantage here in Kuwait and throughout the Middle East," said Mr. Wilson.

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