

religions which have their spiritual centres in the Middle East. The several Canadian ethnic communities with links to the Middle East and North Africa are intensely interested in the evolution of events in the region. We should be able to build on these varied ties with the area.

Immigration has been significant from some countries but has not been large in comparison to most other regions of the world. Tourism from Canada is extensive to the holy places and to archaeological sites and is growing to holiday locations in North Africa. An increasing number of Canadians are working and living in the Middle East and North Africa.

Education co-operation seems on the point of takeoff with several countries; we are anxious to do more in this field, working with provincial authorities and academic institutions. Cultural exchanges have traditionally not been extensive except with Israel and the Maghreb, but are now gathering some momentum elsewhere and Canadian scholars are doing useful research on various facets of the area, both here and in the field.

**Visits and
co-operation**

Our interests are supported by a growing array of government tools. We now have ten embassies functioning in the region and are looking at the possibility of a physical presence in the lower Gulf to promote our economic and other interests. We have diplomatic relations with all countries in the Middle East and North Africa. In addition to increasing in number, the embassies have grown in size and now have a wide range of activities. Official visits to and from the region, including several by the Prime Minister, have been an increasingly important development in our relations with this area, where personal contacts are all-important as a basis for enduring links. ...I took the opportunity in 1976 to visit a number of countries in the region; I hope to return this year to signify my own commitment to broadening the base of our relationships.

Our relations in many cases have been buttressed by both specific and general agreements, providing in some cases for formal meetings of joint commissions. The subjects treated in these agreements and commissions range from trade through development to education and cultural matters. The countries of the region have also extended their interest in Canada. Eleven of them now have embassies in Ottawa; the rest cover Canada from New York or Washington. Also, the Arab League has had an information office here for some years. Provincial governments have been active in a variety of economic and other fields. The Canadian government has been happy to assist in these endeavours through our embassies in the area and through consultation and co-operation in Canada.

Although it would be foolish to deny the unstable record of the region — and the potential for further discord — we should not be deterred from pursuing our many interests in the Middle East. Excellent opportunities exist for Canada to establish
