

Where we do not have diplomatic missions, our interests are covered by other Canadian missions in the area and Canadian officials visit these countries regularly.

The broadening Canadian diplomatic network in the area reflects the growing importance of the Arab countries in the world and our acknowledgement of the impact which events in the Middle East can have on our own economic prosperity and security.

We have come a long way since 1953 but we have to make up for lost time. The Middle East is important to Canada. There are ethnic, religious and historical interests in the region which help promote a natural contact between Canada and the Arab countries. The impact of Arab immigration to Canada has been felt not only in the larger cities such as Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver but throughout Canada -- in Ottawa, Quebec City, Sudbury, Calgary, Edmonton, Hamilton, London and here in Windsor as well.

Greater personal interaction between Canada and the Arab World has resulted from the growing number of visitors from the region to Canada -- about 28,000 each year -- and Canadian skilled personnel in the Arab countries. There are, for instance, some 5,000 Canadians now living in Saudi Arabia.

We are moving forward in the field of education co-operation with several countries in the Middle East, e.g.: negotiations are under way with Jordan for a government-to-government arrangement which would give blessing to specific projects and we look forward to a successful conclusion in the not too distant future.

Several Canadian universities are in the process of establishing links with universities in Saudi Arabia which might result in exchanges of teachers and students and co-operation in research projects. The federal government has encouraged the universities in their efforts and our Embassy in Jeddah and officials of the Department of External Affairs have co-operated with them from the time first contacts were established.

Developments of this kind which increase the interchange in the developing North/South dialogue are of particular interest to Canada.