Market for education services tops in Middle East

It's no surprise that opportunities for Canadian providers of education services are huge when the average Egyptian family spends around 40% of its income on education, and the country ranks first in the Middle East when it comes to student enrolment.


Ahram Canadian University

Tarek Meguid, a trade commissioner with the Canadian Embassy in Cairo, says "Now is a good time for Canadian providers of education services to introduce their innovative methods to the Egyptian market. Increasingly, foreign investors are using Egypt as a hub for their commercial activities throughout the region and this strategy also applies to the education sector."

He says opportunities are available in such areas as distance learning, in-country training, franchising of courses and qualifications and partnership programmes. Curriculum and staff development, research collaborations and foreign recruitment for post graduate studies are also potential growth areas.

Meguid points out that Canada has already made its presence felt when it comes to educational services.

"Between 2002 and 2004, the embassy organized three education fairs, which played an important role in strengthening bilateral ties and in creating opportunities for Canadian academic institutions in Egypt," says Meguid.

Canada is now perceived as an excellent partner in developing schools, training centres and universities in Egypt. Over the past three years, nine schools have been set up that offer the equivalent of a Canadian high school diploma. Egypt ranks second in the world (after China) in terms of the availability of K-12 programs offering Canadian provincial curriculum.

Success is being seen in post-secondary education too. Not only was a community college set up in collaboration with Cape Breton University, but a university—Ahram Canadian University—was established in Cairo last year in collaboration with the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada.

Meguid adds that the government's recent reforms and increased expenditures for education and training are transforming Egypt into a huge market for workplace training and skills upgrading, as well as quality education at all levels.

For more information, contact Tarek Abdel Meguid, Trade Commissioner, Canadian Embassy in Cairo, tel.: (011-202) 791-8700, fax: (011-202) 791-8865, email: tarek.meguid@international.gc.ca.

Canada could benefit from impressive technology growth

Egypt's information and communications technology (ICT) market is growing at an astounding rate of 25% per year, a sign that opportunities could be plentiful for Canadian companies.

"Egypt has great potential to become an important partner for Canadian companies in all aspects of the ICT industry. The focus is on wireless technologies and outsourcing," says Joseph Tadros, Trade Commissioner with the Canadian Embassy in Cairo.

"Since the creation of the Egyptian Ministry of Communications and Information Technology in 1999, the Ministry managed to liberate its ICT sector, modernize its infrastructure, build capacity and promote an ICT-oriented community," says the trade commissioner.

Egypt is known to be a good outsourcing destination because it has a skilled and multilingual workforce, advanced infrastructure and e-readiness. In fact, Egypt gained international recognition last year when management consultant firm AT Kearney ranked Egypt 12th on its global outsourcing index.

"The government's policy to liberalize its telecom sector has led to the creation of a dynamic private sector that is now leading the evolution of the industry. Egypt has over 1,600 ICT companies that employ over 45,000 people," says Tadros.

For more information, contact Joseph Tadros, Trade Commissioner, Canadian Embassy in Cairo, tel.: (011-202) 791-8700, fax: (011-202) 791-8865, email: joseph.tadros@international.gc.ca, website: www.infoexport.gc.ca.

Trade agreements boost Egypt's profile - continued from page 3

multinationals have already chosen to establish themselves in Egypt.

Egypt has also signed various trade agreements to reinforce its capacity to market itself as a regional hub. In 2004, it signed the Qualified Industrial Zone Agreement with the U.S. and Israel. Through this agreement, Egyptian textile companies are able to export duty-free to the U.S. as long as 17% of their products have Israeli content. This agreement has resulted in the signing of seven more such agreements.

Egypt is also a member of the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa and has an association agreement with the European Union. This calls for the creation of a Euro-Mediterranean free trade zone by 2010. Egypt also has a free trade agreement with Turkey and is currently negotiating a similar one with Russia.

Canadian businesses have noted the progress made by Egypt and are increasingly looking for opportunities in this market. Egypt is currently Canada's fifth-largest market in North Africa and the Middle East. In 2005, Canadian exports to Egypt increased by 54% and reached a record high of $313 million.

For more information, contact Richard Dubuc, Canadian Embassy in Cairo, email: richard.dubuc@international.gc.ca.

Egypt quick facts

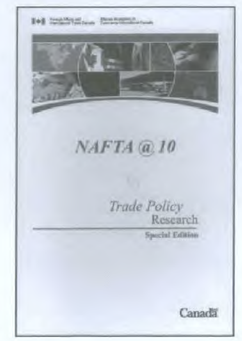
- Population: 78 million, the most populous country of the Middle East
- Population growth rate: one million per year
- Workers entering the job market every year: 600,000
- Egypt's main source of foreign revenue in 2005: oil and gas sales ($5.5 billion), the Suez Canal ($3.5 billion), tourism ($6.6 billion) and remittances from Egyptians living abroad ($1.5 billion)
- Canadian exports to Egypt in 2005: a record $313 million, up 54% from 2004
- Canada's top five exports to Egypt in 2005: coal, newsprint, iron ores, lentils and helicopters.

FACTS & FIGURES

NAFTA@10, part two: The way forward?

A recently released research volume produced by Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada examines the Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement (FTA) and the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA).

In the November 1 issue, *CanadExport* looked at the first half of the volume, which takes a look back at NAFTA and the FTA. This article looks at the second half, which considers the future and explores some potential avenues of integration, such as the adoption of a common currency and regulatory harmonization.



While research indicates that there could be benefits to a common currency if Canada wished to pursue that course, it would require U.S. cooperation in policy-setting, which is unlikely to be obtained.

According to the volume, an example of a more feasible area of cooperation would be in drug approvals. While there may be good arguments for maintaining a separate system, quickening approvals by six months could raise drug output 2.4%, employment 4.1%, and research and development by 2% in that industry alone, as well as increase new drugs available to Canadians.

The research also suggests that differences in Canada's intellectual property regulations and stricter foreign direct investment rules explain a full 55% of the labour productivity gap with the U.S. and one-third of the research and development intensity gap.

Readers should bear in mind that *NAFTA@10* is a research volume undertaken by academic and government researchers. The views expressed do not reflect the intentions or policy directions of the Government of Canada.

For more information, go to www.international.gc.ca/eet/research/trade_reseach-en.asp to read the NAFTA@10 research volume.

Provided by the Office of the Chief Economist, Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada, www.international.gc.ca/eet.