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MINISTER REGAN'S VISIT TO SAUDI ARABIA

The Honourable Gerald Regan, Minister of State (International Trade), made an official visit to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia from January 9 to 13, at the invitation of his counterpart, the Saudi Minister of Commerce, His Excellency Dr. Suleiman Al Solaim. During his visit Minister Regan had talks with a number of Saudi Cabinet Ministers in order to review commercial and industrial relations between the two countries and to explore the possibilities for intensifying trade relations and broadening co-operation.

Saudi Arabia has been one of the fastest growing markets for Canadian products and services; exports of goods in 1981 totalled \$455 million, and the total for services (essentially management and consulting) was roughly equivalent. The totals for 1982 are expected to be even higher, but nevertheless the Canadian share of the Saudi market is still small, as Saudi imports are estimated at over \$40 billion.

In addition to His Excellency Dr. Solaim, Minister Regan met with His Royal Highness Prince Badr Bin Abdul Aziz, Deputy Commander of the Saudi Arabian National Guard; His Excellency Sheikh Ahmed Zaki Yamani, Minister of Petroleum and Mineral Resources; His Excellency Dr. Alawi Darwish Kayyal, Minister of Posts, Telegraphs and Telephones; His Excellency Dr. Ghazi Al-Gosaibi, Minister of Industry and Electricity and Acting Minister of Health; and His Excellency Hussein Al Mansouri, Minister of Communications. The Minister called on the Civil Aviation authorities and was briefed on Saudi development priorities by officials of the Ministry of Planning. Minister Regan also toured the industrial city of Yanbu, one of two large industrial complexes being constructed by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to produce and export petrochemical products from the Kingdom's vast reserves of natural gas. In addition, he met with Canadian businessmen active in Canada's trade relations with Saudi Arabia.

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Minister Regan expressed satisfaction with the results of his visit, which had met his objective of supporting and advancing current Canadian projects in the fields of rural electrification, management services, telecommunications, and high technology and related services, worth approximately \$2 billion. He also explored with Saudi officials possibilities for broadening Canadian exports to the Kingdom in such sectors as urban transport and agricultural products. "I am confident that as a result of my visit some important contracts will be signed in the next few months," observed the Minister at the conclusion of his programme, and he called for increased contact between Saudi Arabian and Canadian officials and businessmen. In this regard, Minister Regan extended invitations to visit Canada to His Excellency Mr. Hussein Mansouri, Minister of Communications and to Mr. Abdul Aziz Al-Zamil, Vice-Chairman and Managing Director of Saudi Arabian Basic Industries Corporation (SABIC), which is responsible for the two industrial complexes at Yanbu and Jubail. "I am hopeful that these visits may take place in the next few months, thereby affording another opportunity to demonstrate Canadian capacity to provide the very sophisticated products and services required by Saudi Arabia," said the Minister. He also expressed strong support for several upcoming Canadian trade missions to Saudi Arabia.

Finally, the Minister thanked His Excellency, Dr. Solaim, for the very kind and generous hospitality extended to him and the accompanying delegation throughout their visit to the Kingdom.