



# Luxor:

## The "Open-Air Museum"

By: Ian Stalker

Tourists can expect to find the very new along with the very old when they vacation in Egypt, promises the Canadian director of the Egyptian Tourist Authority.

Amr Elezabi told a recent Toronto reception that the country's famed Cairo-area pyramids are the "most recognized structures in the world," but are far from being unique in Egypt.

Egypt and bordering Sudan together have more than 100 pyramids, most of them in Egypt.

The interior Egyptian city of Luxor – home to a wealth of Pharaonic structures – amounts to an "open-air museum," he continued. Luxor's claims to fame include such dramatic sites as the Temples of Karnak and Luxor, and the Luxor area is home to the Valleys of the Queens and Kings, with the Valley of the Kings being the final resting place for such famed Pharaohs as Tutankhamen.

Elezabi said his homeland sees virtually

daily archeological discoveries.

Many of the structures dating back to the time of the Pharaohs are in perfect condition, even though a "new temple [from the Pharaonic era] is 2,000 years old," Elezabi said.

He added that the recent and ongoing building of hotels in tourist areas – including along Egypt's long Red Sea Coast – ensures visitors will find hotels of "international standards...Our tourism infrastructure is top-notch."

Elezabi also praised Egypt's transport infrastructure, saying those who don't want to travel within the country by air can use efficient train and bus networks.

Egypt has almost 2,000 kilometres of white-sandy beaches, and the facing ocean has a "very rich marine fauna and flora" that makes

it great for scuba diving. Those vacationing by the Red Sea are assured sunshine as "it doesn't rain -- it's as simple as that," Elezabi declared.

He conceded that Canadians won't travel to Egypt for beach vacations alone, with the country's culture and history being bigger draws here.

However, tourism authorities are encouraging Canadians to consider adding beach stays after touring archeological locations.

September through May is considered the ideal period to vacation in Egypt, with high temperatures making many leery about visiting the country during the summer. But Elezabi said the dry Egyptian climate "means 29 degrees in Montreal is equivalent to 45 in Luxor." ■