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Prime Minister Stephen Harper and his wife Laureen wave upon their arrival for the APEC summit in Sydney, Australia on Thursday, Sept. 6, 2007. (CP / Tom Hanson)

Ottawa near decision on nuclear plan: Bernier

Updated Thu. Sep. 6 2007 11:00 AM ET

CTV.ca News Staff

Canada is close to deciding if it will join a U.S.-led nuclear partnership that could see the country being asked to dispose of spent nuclear waste, Foreign Affairs Minister Maxime Bernier said Thursday from Australia.

Bernier spoke to reporters following the conclusion of the APEC (Asia-Pacific Economic Co-operation) Ministerial Meeting in Sydney. Meanwhile, Prime

Minister Stephen Harper arrived Thursday for this weekend's APEC Leaders Meeting.

The Global Nuclear Energy Partnership (GNEP) would require all nuclear fuel to be repatriated for disposal to the country that exported it.

As one of the world's largest uranium producers, Canada could face serious issues dealing with the waste produced by nuclear energy. Australia is the world's other leading uranium-exporting country.

"Australia and Canada, we are two major producers in the world and we have considerable interests in whatever the United States and the international community have in mind in terms of future uranium development and production and marketing," said Bernier. "So we will have a decision in the near future about our participation."

With climate change and energy policy key items on the weekend agenda -- and most of the GNEP's supporters in attendance, including the U.S., China, Japan and Russia -- Harper is likely to see the issue raised again.

Canada has also been asked to attend a GNEP conference in Vienna on Sept. 16. Adding to the pressure, Australia confirmed Thursday that it will attend the conference.

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CTV Newsnet: Roger Smith from Sydney, Australia 3:14

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Documents obtained under the Access to Information Act by The Canadian Press show that Ottawa has been actively considering the initiative in private since at least March 2006.

Other developments

Minister of International Trade David Emerson accompanied Bernier to the meetings where the pair discussed a wide range of issues with their counterparts.

Issues discussed including Canada's commitment to Afghanistan, the status of the WTO Doha Round and a number of trade and investment issues in the Asia-Pacific region.

On Friday, Harper will give a speech on climate change and energy policy to a gathering of business leaders. U.S. President George Bush is also scheduled to speak at the APEC Business Summit.

CTV's Roger Smith, travelling with the prime minister, said climate change is expected to be a key theme when the leaders of the 21-member APEC organization meet on the weekend.

China, the United States and Russia are recognized as the world's biggest greenhouse gas emitters.

Harper has previously stated that Canada is ready to join the Asia-Pacific Partnership for Clean Development and Climate, also known as AP-6. The climate change group is seen by some as a rival to Kyoto.

That partnership is mainly focused on pressuring big business to reduce their emissions while developing cleaner technologies.

However, critics say the initiative does not set proper limits or targets for countries and business.

Smith said officials expect a lot of discussions on climate change but no real developments to come out of the summit.

Following the weekend summit, Harper will travel to Canberra and address the Australian parliament. The speech will be given on the sixth anniversary of the Sept. 11 attacks in the U.S.

With files from The Canadian Press

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Mike

Good to see Mr. Harper will address climate change and hopefully will address the insanity of the Kyoto accord. The only thing Kyoto is good for is naming your dog after it, just ask Dion.

L Bennett

Oh please don't let Harper embarrass us on the world stage again, just please defend Canada's interest instead of being Bush's little lap dog...if he can just accomplish that then these meetings may just be beneficial.

Kristin Beaumont

The Prime Minister has never embarrassed Canada on the international stage in my opinion. He continues to keep up an incredible public pace with speeches, visits to other countries, and always governing. No holidays for this Prime Minister. Canada is too important to him. The doubting thomas's of this country will soon come onside. They will have no choice and with their heads out of the sand for once, they might just see the tremendous job he is doing. I am very well pleased.

Nick

I'm curious L Bennett, what were Harper's embarrassments on the world stage before?? I think he's been doing a great job since picking up the pieces the last government left.

Don

First a secretive SPP meeting that claims to be innocent yet has cops disguised as protesters, and now quietly joining discussions of a U.S.-led nuclear partnership that would see Canada disposing of the worlds nuclear waste (this meeting doesn't allow protesters at all) ?! Does anyone else see a problem with our prime minister making decisions that have an effect on all Canadians without parliament's approval?

Bob Wilson

Has everybody failed to see the major development here?

Harper better not sign anything that makes us a nuclear waste dump. I do not dump the spent tires from my American built truck in the US, nor should the US be dumping nuclear waste here.

This better not be allowed to happen. USA can dispose of their own waste, thank you.

Mike Webster

Don, clearly the big problem is the misinformation in your post. 1) The Prime Minister had nothing to do with the actions of the Quebec Police - actions that were legal and legitimate anyway. 2) Canada has not joined the nuclear partnership and it is NOT US led. 3) Canada has not agreed to dispose of anything. One of the proposals is to have uranium returned to the COUNTRY THAT PROVIDED IT for disposal.

Mr Harper has performed extremely well on the world stage and despite the paranoid fantasies of the lib-left, he has not, by any stretch of the imagination been Bush's lapdog. For the first time in a very long time, we finally have a Prime Minister that we can be

proud of.

Bruce

The federal government had NOTHING to do with the SQ having a "uc" at the protests...The SQ acted alone and admits that this is a normal practice for them, so please direct your ill-advised comments to Jean Charest..

In regards to the US wanting Canada to "dispose of the world's waste", it is suggested that Canada only dispose of what they had exported, and believe me, Harper is very much against that, therefore why spend time to confirm if parliament wants it or not? If any leader of the opposition parties thinks this is a good idea, god help them.

Eric

Maybe we should then negotiate the Americans take back all the trashed goods we consume and throw away for disposal. C'mon, you buy something, it's yours. You deal with it!!! Clean up your own mess!!!

Shawn

All the spent uranium will get sent back to the country where it originated from. Canada will become the #1 nuclear waste dump.

Craig

This involves Canada pretty much overseeing the SAFE disposal of waste produced in Canadian made reactors.

That is, spent uranium from reactors in developing countries like China, India, Pakistan. Wouldn't you feel safer knowing that we are disposing that waste rather than leaving it up to them?

Thomas Chan

Let's hope Canada won't be a dumping zone for nuclear waste as that will spoil our name " THE BEST PLACE TO LIVE IN"!!

Bryce

Mike in the first paragraph of the story you just read and commented on it says that the partnership is in fact US led. It also states that we are the world largest uranium producer, so the COUNTRY THAT PROVIDES it, is usually us. Nice to see you are reading what you are commenting on. This partnership can only be bad for Canadians and I hope that we can for once do what's right

for us instead of just mindlessly pleasing the elephant next door.

Joe

Good post @Mike Webster. The problem is, most people don't actually read the news, let alone make an effort to understand it. They simply remember the "buzz" words and then formulate some ill-informed opinion from what they "think" those words must mean. Hence, speeches from gov't officials for the lowest common denominator, because they make up the vast majority of the voting population.

Dave

I can honestly say that for the first time in decades I'm truly grateful that we have a leader demonstrating leadership in a tangible way on global stage. While not everyone may agree with the every decision thats been made (myself included), it's just to encouraging to see progress and follow through.

Dave

The only reason Canada should accept this proposal would be to prevent instances where non-friendly countries could build bombs with the radioactive waste. Otherwise, the US should volunteer to accept the waste themselves, instead of making other countries (such as Canada) hold the bag.

Andy D

The problem with this approach is we are talking about dangerous radioactive waste here. Do YOU trust second and third world countries to safely and accurately (ie no excess used uranium going "Missing") dispose of potentially enrichable materials?

Dan

Much of what comes out of nuclear reactors contains a mixture of waste and usable elements (e.g. uranium and plutonium). The usable material can be extracted and re-used as what is called mixed oxide fuel, thus reducing the total volume of waste. This has been done in France for some time. The US is now lately getting into this as well. This is probably one of the issues being debated right now by the world leaders.

Cory

Fine, the US shouldn't be asking Canada to dump our nuclear waste. On the same note Canada should immediately halt all garbage shipments to Michigan.

Dan Beauchamps

Why on earth would Canada or Australia willingly export uranium to another nation, let them get the electricity from it and then use us as the dumping ground for the waste? If you buy the uranium, you keep it!

Dave C

Canada produces uranium. The U.S. consumes it. I don't see the connection between Canada supplying it and the requirement for Canada to dispose of spent uranium. It is their waste. Let Americans manage the risk! Canada is not a dumping ground!

james

If Canada doesn't want to abide by international agreements that require the country of origin to dispose of the nuclear waste from exports, then perhaps Canada should not export nuclear material in the first place.

Don

1) I never accused the Prime Minister of having anything to do with the Quebec Police and their attempts to discredit the peaceful protesters at the SPP summit. 2) If time was spent to understand and read my previous comment or THE STORY YOU ARE COMMENTING ON it is clear that we are talking about discussions of a U.S.-led nuclear partnership that would see Canada disposing of the world's nuclear waste (Australia and Canada are two major producers in the world). 3) It has never been stated by myself or the story that we have agreed to dispose of anything yet.

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