

Canada faces gas emissions dilemma

The Canadian government has a perplexing problem: how to deal with environmentally polluting emissions from its highly profitable Alberta oil fields.

During a meeting this week with auto industry officials, Canada's conservative government backed away from reports it would impose higher emission standards on the auto industry in eastern Canada. The proposal had been strongly opposed by automakers, who say the oil fields should be responsible for addressing air pollution and resulting climate change, The Washington Post reported Thursday.

Critics say that retreat shows Ottawa is waffling in its attempt to provide an alternative to the Kyoto Protocol, which the government claims is unworkable.

"They are trying to convince Canadians they are doing something on the environment when they are not," John Bennett, a senior policy adviser with the Sierra Club of Canada, told The Post. "It's just spin."

But Canadian Auto Workers Union President Buzz Hargrove most strongly opposes more restrictions on the ailing auto industry. "We are faced with an industry losing billions and workers losing their jobs. The oil and gas industry is making billions of dollars. If someone's going to contribute something, surely there should be some balance," he said.

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