

Prentice wraps up 'productive' talks with U.S. on climate change

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Canada's environment minister is wrapping up two days of talks with environmental officials in Washington confident the two countries can work together to fight climate change.

Jim Prentice says his meetings were "positive" and "productive" and that Canada and the U.S. will continue to talk about ways to produce clean energy.

One of Prentice's thickest policy files pertains to Alberta's oilsands, a controversial Canadian source of fossil fuel that critics consider a blight on the environmental landscape.

But he says the oilsands came up "only tangentially" in his discussions.

With the U.S. exploring ways to cut back on carbon emissions, the pressure is on Canada — the single largest supplier of American energy — to do something about the impact of the oilsands on greenhouse gas levels.

A new poll, meanwhile, suggests a majority of Canadians outside Quebec believe the benefits of the oilsands outweigh the drawbacks, while about one-third of respondents say the opposite.

Fifty-seven per cent of respondents in the Canadian Press-Harris-Decima survey said the advantages outweigh the risks, while 35 per cent disagreed.

In Quebec, nearly half of respondents said there were more drawbacks compared with 39 per cent who said there were more benefits.

The poll, which surveyed 1,000 Canadians by phone last week, carries a margin of error of 3.1 percentage points, 19 times out of 20.

Prentice is among a wave of cabinet ministers who have been descending upon the U.S. capital in the two weeks since U.S. President Barack Obama visited Prime Minister Stephen Harper in Ottawa.

Harper's foot soldiers are attempting to capitalize on the goodwill between the U.S. and Canada in the wake of that visit.

Prentice met Tuesday with Energy Secretary Steven Chu; Todd Stern, the president's special envoy on climate change; and Lisa Jackson, the new head of the Environmental Protection Agency.

His task has been made tougher by a damning portrayal of Alberta's tarsands in this month's National Geographic magazine, and a high-profile campaign against the controversial energy project by international environmental groups.