

**Edited transcript of remarks by
The Honourable Lisa Raitt, Minister of Natural Resources
at the Nuclear Industry Conference Welcome Reception
Wednesday, February 25, 2009
Ottawa Westin**

Thank you. It's a great honour and pleasure to be here.

As we all know, the global economy has experienced a tremendous upheaval over the last year. It's the worst economic crisis that the world has experienced in generations. And many of Canada's key industry sectors including the energy sector have been hard hit by this worldwide recession.

In the face of this extraordinary global economic uncertainty, I'm very proud that our government, our prime minister, our minister of finance, presented our economic action plan on January 27 — designed to stimulate our economy, protect Canadians during the recession and encourage investment in long-term growth.

And I think you will agree that no economy, Canada's or anyone else's - the United States, whichever, - can grow without a safe, reliable supply of energy — and that we need as much of that energy as possible to be clean energy.

Our government's commitment to this priority was underscored by the historic visit of the president of the United States, President Obama, as he visited with Prime Minister Harper last week and they announced the Canada–U.S. Clean Energy Dialogue.

I think it's equally clear that nuclear energy will play an increasingly important role in striking a balance between our need for energy and our need to protect our environment. That is certainly true in Canada, where we have made an aggressive commitment to having 90 percent of our electricity generated by non-emitting sources by 2020.

We've already seen Canadian jurisdictions moving to or very seriously considering a move to take advantage of clean nuclear power in Ontario, Quebec and New Brunswick — and for the first time in western Canada as well.

Not to mention the potential for growth in other countries that are just as hungry for clean energy.

There are an unprecedented number of new reactors planned or under construction in the world, and the Canadian industry is well-positioned to capture some of those opportunities.

As a Canadian, a scientist and as the Minister of Natural Resources, I have to say that I'm incredibly proud of this country's nuclear industry.

We've been a pioneering innovator in the developments of nuclear technology, and we've distinguished ourselves by harnessing this technology and ensuring that it's operated safely and reliably at home and in other parts of the world.

We're a world leader in applying nuclear technology in areas such as medicine, food safety, in agriculture and in manufacturing processes.

And keep in mind, our nuclear agenda includes uranium, and as everyone in this room will know, Canada's the largest uranium producer in the world. And that's a pretty remarkable achievement in a country of our population and size.

I can assure you that our government is committed to seeing that the Canadian nuclear industry continues to be a dominant player. We need the billions of dollars in economic activity this industry generates, and we need those tens of thousands of high-quality jobs, many of which are in my riding of Halton, right next to Sheridan Park at AECL.

And we certainly need the energy — the clean energy. And that's why our government has taken such decisive action on the nuclear file in the past three years — to make it very clear that we want to ensure that this industry has an opportunity to thrive. And as we strive for this goal, I must emphasize that the health and safety of Canadians will always be our first priority.

As you are aware, there have been several small heavy water leaks at the NRU recently that were well below the CNSC's threshold for a public announcement.

However, it is vital that the industry fully recognizes the value of transparent public communication. I'm very pleased that AECL and the CNSC are reviewing their public communications protocols, and I thought they did spectacularly well in front of the House of Commons committee yesterday with respect to these matters.

Our government has also taken decisive action to address health, safety and environmental issues at Chalk River — nuclear legacy issues that simply have been neglected for too long.

And the funding commitments we've made since 2006, as laid out in Budget 2009, speak for themselves. And we're looking to accelerate our progress on the historic waste contamination in the Port Hope area — one of the very first places that I visited when I became the Minister of Natural Resources, seeking a licence this year to enable us to move forward on at least one of the new facilities.

As many of you know, our government accepted the recommendations of the Nuclear Waste Management Organization to pursue an adaptive, phased management approach to managing nuclear waste, and we look forward to the next step on this critical file, the release of the NWMO's draft siting process, later this year.

And of course health and safety means regulation. And as Canada's nuclear regulator, the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission makes its decision at arm's length from the government, and its independence is paramount.

The commission plays a vital role in protecting the health, safety and security of Canadians at nuclear sites across the country.

But our government must also recognize that our regulatory system can be effective and efficient at the same time. Whether it's a natural gas pipeline in the north or a new reactor build in Ontario, our economy cannot afford unnecessary administrative delays.

That's why we created the Major Projects Management Office, which is already working with the CNSC to bring transparency, predictability, certainty and coordination to the regulatory system for new builds in Canada.

And of course, I can't talk about health and safety in the nuclear industry without mentioning the other part of my favourite file, medical isotopes.

AECL took a difficult but a responsible decision last year in ending the Maple project. During the past 12 years, these reactors never produced a single isotope. We are now moving forward in the pursuit of an extension of the NRU licence beyond 2011. It is important to recognize, however, that despite the current role of the NRU in medical

isotope production, securing a long-term supply of medical isotopes is a global issue and requires a global response.

Last month, at Canada's request, a nuclear energy agency meeting on the security of isotope supply was convened in Paris. The meeting brought together representatives of government, industry and the nuclear medicine community to discuss global solutions concerning the ongoing supply of medical isotopes. 80 participants from 16 countries participated in the global dialogue, and there's strong support for the creation of a new working group of the Nuclear Energy Agency to carry this international agenda forward. Indeed, it is understood that governments must help establish conditions that will allow the best solutions to emerge.

And when it comes to business, we have to recognize the part that AECL has played and continues to play. AECL is very much at the centre of Canada's nuclear industry. It's operating in a very competitive environment against some very big and very well-financed spenders, which has presented AECL with a number of challenges.

And for that reason, a strategic review of AECL is underway. Our objective in this process is to position the Canadian industry to grow and compete for its fair share of the opportunities in Canada and around the world.

After this review was launched last year, the government of Ontario issued a request for proposals for the procurement of new reactors. AECL is participating in this process.

Our government is respectful of this competitive bid process and of the conditions that Infrastructure Ontario has put in place respecting public communications. Both the review and the Ontario bid competition will carry on for some time, as they need to go through appropriate decision-making and approval processes.

And I'm sure we can all agree that their respective outcomes will have a considerable influence on the future shape of the nuclear industry in this country. And no, I'm not going to tell you what the decision is. You'll have to wait; it's like at the end of the book — you don't flip to the back of the book to get to know.

In conclusion, I believe that the entire Canadian nuclear industry has a great deal to look forward to. That's not to say that there are not some significant challenges, from strong competition to a global economic

recession. And at the same time, I'm very proud of the role that our government is playing in strengthening the industry to meet the current challenges and in raising its profile internationally. Because all Canadians will benefit from the success of this industry.

Thank you very much. Please accept my best wishes for a successful and productive annual meeting.

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