

Alberta could challenge PM on bitumen ban

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CALGARY -- Alberta's energy minister says the province hasn't ruled out challenging the constitutionality of Prime Minister Stephen Harper's election campaign promise to ban bitumen shipments to countries that have weak environmental regulations.

Mel Knight, speaking to reporters yesterday during the Energy Roundtable at Calgary Ranchman's Club, said he was caught unaware by Harper's announcement made Friday during a whistle-stop in Calgary.

He stated that if re-elected, his government will prohibit the exportation of the heavy black oil outside of Canada for refining into gasoline and other products in order to take advantage of lower pollution or greenhouse gas emissions standards elsewhere.

"It looks like a little bit of an intrusion to us," Knight said, noting that the Alberta government might examine whether such a ban could be constitutional.

An export ban or restriction of shipping a resource abroad falls under the jurisdiction of the federal government.