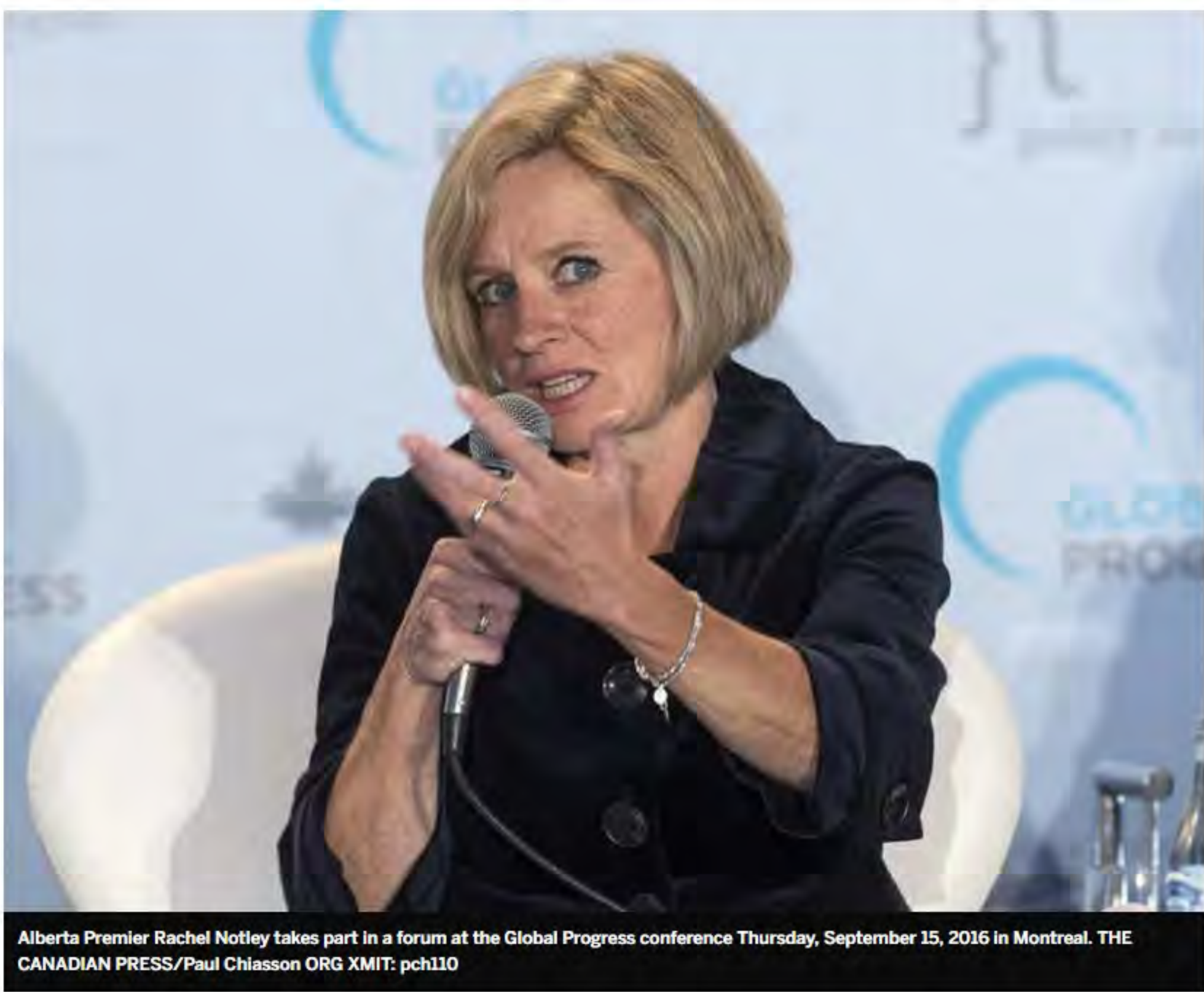




Premier Notley touts Alberta's environmental record at New York climate summit

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Alberta Premier Rachel Notley takes part in a forum at the Global Progress conference Thursday, September 15, 2016 in Montreal. THE CANADIAN PRESS/Paul Chiasson ORG XMIT: pch110



Premier Rachel Notley — in New York Monday to sell the merits of her NDP government's climate change strategy — is downplaying the hefty price tag attached to the plan by an Alberta utility.



Notley also said Alberta is well-positioned as the federal Liberal government looks to impose carbon pricing Canada-wide, while also retaining the greenhouse gas emission reduction targets set by the former Conservative administration.



In a speech at Climate Week NYC, Notley touted her NDP government's sweeping climate change strategy, which includes a broad-based carbon tax, a cap on oilsands emissions, an accelerated phase-out of coal-fired power and a commitment to reduce methane emissions.



Last week, Edmonton-based Capital Power Corp. suggested the cost of compensation for companies left with stranded assets from the government's move to phase out by 2030 could reach \$2 billion while the corresponding move to 30 per cent renewables could cost taxpayers \$10 billion over three decades.

But speaking to reporters on a conference call, Notley said the numbers were "speculative."

"When it comes to the issue of compensating coal companies as we move away from coal, that's a matter where parties are negotiating. As we've heard on these kind of files ... the estimates can range considerably," she said.

"I believe there's going to be a great deal of numbers floating around."

Notley's visit for Climate Week — an annual event that features politicians, businesspeople and policy makers discussing environmental issues — comes as the Trudeau government signals that it is prepared to keep the greenhouse gas targets set by former prime minister Stephen Harper, which call for Canada to reduce emissions by 30 per cent below 2005 levels by 2030.

Ottawa has also confirmed it is prepared to impose a minimum carbon price mechanism on provinces that don't have one.

Notley said Alberta "will not be at risk" of the federal government intervening because of its own carbon tax, which comes into effect on Jan. 1.

"I'm fairly confident we'll be well-placed," she said.

Notley also has no problem with Trudeau retaining the old targets, saying that what's important is having real policies that actually impact emissions.

"We've had stringent targets in the past and nobody's gotten anywhere close to them," said the premier.

Notley's speech saw her highlight Alberta as an "energy powerhouse" — a jurisdiction that has nearly 11 per cent of the world's oil reserves — that is also doing its part on environmental issues.

In front of a crowd of about 300 people at the New York Times building, Notley also took part in a panel discussion that featured Jonathan Pershing, the United States' climate envoy.

The panel's moderator, Yale University's Dan Esty, praised Alberta and said Notley had highlighted "a number of best practices that I think U.S. states will want to look at."

"It really does represent a changed dynamic where the leadership is coming from — city-scale, state-scale, province-scale, corporate-scale."

Notley's itinerary for New York also includes meeting with investment firm The Carlyle Group and taking part in an investment roundtable.

The Alberta government said last week that it's shift to 30 per cent renewables by 2030 will require \$10.5 billion in investment.

The Opposition Wildrose, which has raised the alarm over the carbon tax and the coal phase-out, questioned the value of Notley's New York trip.

Wildrose energy critic Leela Aheer said that while Notley may be trying to woo new capital to Alberta, "as far as we can see, investors are fleeing."

She suggested Notley should be in Alberta dealing with the province's economic issues.

"We are suffering here in the province right now," said Aheer.

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