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# POLITICS

## Investment agreement may ease trade concerns with China: Baird

2:44 pm, August 28th, 2012



FOREIGN AFFAIRS MINISTER JOHN BAIRD Credits: KELLY ROCHE/QMI AGENCY

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OTTAWA - A fledgling investment protection agreement Canada has worked out with China may ease reciprocity concerns in dealing with the economic juggernaut, says Foreign Affairs Minister John Baird.

It's believed the issue is one of the key stumbling blocks in a state-owned Chinese company's proposed takeover of an Alberta oilpatch giant.

Last week, Prime Minister Stephen Harper acknowledged having comparable rights for Canadian firms to buy Chinese assets was one of the "important questions" the government was wrestling with in deciding whether to green light the takeover of Nexen by CNOOC.

As it currently stands, it's all but impossible for a Canadian firm to buy and own similar energy infrastructure in China.

When asked about the concerns Tuesday, Baird pointed to the recent negotiations for the Foreign Investment Promotion and Protection Agreement (FIPA) between China and Canada.

It has yet to be signed, but its main goal is to offer foreign investors a range of protections, including against discriminatory practices.

"We want to see fair and equitable treatment," Baird said.

Earlier this month, the federal government released a joint study with China looking into the potential of increased bilateral trade between the two countries.

The study found potential in boosting trade in sectors such as agriculture, clean technology, textiles, natural resources and aerospace.



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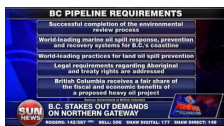
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