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Inglis tries to sell ExxonMobil on lab

*Congressman, oil experts discuss hydrogen business during tour of state's Savannah River National Lab*

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U.S. Rep. Bob Inglis says he told two technical experts and a government liaison from ExxonMobil it would be advantageous for the oil company to move into the hydrogen business, but no deal was struck as they toured Savannah River National Lab.

"If I were in the oil commodity business and my commodity were to run out, I would be looking for another commodity to sell," said Inglis, a Travelers Rest Republican.

ExxonMobil spokesman Dave Gardner said hydrogen holds promise, especially for creating fuel-efficient, emissions-free vehicles, but formidable challenges remain before it's widely used, including safe handling and the high cost of production and distribution.

"In order for us as a society, as a world, to deal with our energy needs, there has got to be step-out technological advances," he said. "We're a technological company."

**Advertisement**      Water must be superheated to split molecules to create hydrogen.

Savannah River National Lab has experience with nuclear reactors, which can be used to heat the water. The lab near Aiken also has years of experience handling tritium, a radioactive form of hydrogen.

Inglis and the ExxonMobil team toured the lab last week.

One of the company's experts specialized in extracting oil from the fields and another in alternative energy sources, he said.

Gardner said the visit went "fine" and that no deal was struck. He said he couldn't comment further.

Inglis said the visit was a chance to show the lab to the ExxonMobil.

"They're a worldwide company, and they've got opportunities around the globe to see what's available," Inglis said. "The good news is they got exposed to one of those centers of excellence."

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