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Right here. Right now. Canada's propane industry can immediately help reduce GHGs

by Andrea Labelle

The upcoming Energy and Mines Ministers' Conference being held in Winnipeg August 21- 23 will be the first since the election of the Trudeau government. It can be expected that discussions around the relationship between energy and the environment will be top of mind for many of the participants.

The Canadian Propane Association (CPA) believes propane can play a vital role in Canada's bid to protect the environment while growing its economy. We are fortunate we can check all the boxes: Low-emission propane provides billions of dollars and tens of thousands of jobs annually to the Canadian economy. It is a readily available energy source with infrastructure already in place. From an environmental perspective, the expanded use of propane can reap immediate results in Canada's efforts to reduce GHG emissions.

In the past, propane has often been pushed aside by policymakers in favour of other 'clean' energy technologies that can take considerable time and money to fully implement. To rectify this omission and ensure that propane is part of the energy mix, we continue to meet with government officials at all levels as they develop strategies to fight climate change. In fact, in recent months we have seen propane included in climate change strategies in Ontario and Quebec, with other provinces hopefully following suit. The federal government, particularly Natural Resources Canada, has also been receptive to propane and the contribution it can make in the fight against climate change.

One distinct advantage of expanding the use of propane to lower Canada's GHG footprint is that the industry does not require expensive investments by government. This important fact is critical at a time when many governments are committed to fighting climate change, but are challenged by the size of public investments needed to support other alternative forms of energy.

We think there is an openness by governments at all levels because our message is clear: Propane is a smart choice not just because it is cost-effective, efficient, abundant and Canadian. It is also a smart choice because it is a low-emission, non-toxic energy that is providing environmental benefits for a number of sectors including, residential, commercial, agriculture, petrochemical and transportation.

Take transportation as an example – one of the largest sources of pollution and GHG emissions in Canada. Propane's clean-burning properties, wide availability and a range superior to other alternative fuels make it the smart choice to reduce emissions today; no other transportation fuel is as ready and able to meet the challenge of addressing climate change and air quality concerns.

In Canada, propane is the most common alternative vehicle fuel – there are approximately 60,000 vehicles on the road and over 2,000 fuel outlets across the country. Propane has a lower carbon footprint than gasoline. It emits up to 26% less GHGs, 20% less carbon dioxide and 12% less nitrogen oxide. Airways Transit, the largest provider of shared ride ground transportation in Canada, is 100% fuelled by propane. UPS and Canada Post both use propane in their fleets, and London Police has used propane in its cruisers for over 30 years. Southland Transportation, which provides school bus service to school boards in Calgary and Medicine Hat, recently added over 100 propane-fuelled buses to its fleet, and the Regina Catholic School Division just announced the purchase of 89 propane-powered buses.

These fleets have found significant reductions in GHGs, impressive return on investment and huge savings in fuel costs and maintenance. Imagine the environmental and economic benefits if government fleets ran on propane as well.

As governments shape their plans for reducing GHGs they will find Canada's propane industry a willing and helpful partner. Propane is an economical energy source that has applications across the energy spectrum and can immediately help to reduce GHGs for all Canadians.

Andrea Labelle is the Executive Director of the Canadian Propane Association.