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News Release

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Energy Vision Honors the City of Toronto, The Kroger Co., and Public Health and Alternative Fuels Advocates With Awards for Helping Speed Adoption of Renewable Natural Gas

[New York, NY -- October 12, 2018] At its annual awards reception in Manhattan this week, **Energy Vision**, a national 501[c]3 non-profit which researches and promotes sustainable low-carbon energy and transportation strategies, honored business and government leaders and health and alternative energy advocates whose work is helping speed adoption of renewable natural gas (RNG) made from organic waste. The 2018 Energy Vision awardees include:

- **The City of Toronto**, which collects residential food waste and will soon process it into RNG to power its refuse trucks, which collect more food waste -- a virtuous cycle or “[closed loop](#)” system.
- **The Kroger Co.**, the largest grocery chain in the U.S., which processes its organic waste at its anaerobic digesters at locations in California and Indiana and uses the fuel to heat its warehouses and power trucks in Oregon.
- **Dr. Philip J. Landrigan**, Director of the Global Public Health Program at the Schiller Institute for Integrated Science and Society at Boston College, noted child health expert, and author of *Children and Environmental Toxins: What Everyone Should Know*, who advocates ending reliance on diesel trucks and buses and adopting clean alternatives to improve public health.
- **James S. Cannon**, president of Energy Futures, Inc. who received Energy Vision’s Lifetime Achievement Award for his work conducting seminal research in the fields of alternative energy and alternative transportation fuels over four decades.

Renewable natural gas is made by capturing and refining methane biogases emitted as organic wastes (from communities, food processing and

agricultural operations) decompose. Methane is a powerful greenhouse gas. Producing RNG prevents it from escaping into the atmosphere and exacerbating climate change. Instead, biogases are processed into pipeline-grade natural gas, chemically similar to conventional natural gas, but 100% renewable, and the lowest-carbon fuel available today.

Argonne National Labs and the California Air Resources Board have independently verified that over its lifecycle, RNG made from manure or food scraps processed in an anaerobic digester is a “net carbon-negative” transportation fuel. That’s because the GHGs captured in producing RNG are greater than the GHGs emitted by the vehicles burning it. At the same time, using RNG instead of diesel eliminates carbon-intensive emissions from heavy-duty vehicles. The bio-solids left in digester tanks after the gases are extracted can be used as high-quality compost and soil amendments, eliminating the need for chemical fertilizers. The result is a big net gain for the climate.

This week’s new Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report [emphasizes](#) the need for carbon-negative strategies that can “remove CO2 from the air” to limit warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius. Critics [argue](#) carbon-negative technologies such as carbon capture and storage remain speculative and cost-prohibitive. But RNG is a carbon-negative strategy that’s reliable and cost-competitive today.

“The new IPCC report finds we may have dire consequences by 2040 unless we make drastic changes quickly,” Energy Vision founder and board member **Joanna Underwood** said as she introduced the awardees. “But the good news is, RNG is a carbon negative strategy ready to go now, and we are working to grow the waste-to-fuel industry. Over 30,000 US buses and trucks are already running on RNG. Unfortunately, none of them are in New York City. One of our top priorities is our campaign to get New York City to stop running all its thousands of trucks and buses on diesel or biodiesel, and adopt RNG.”

“Diesel exhaust is nasty stuff,” said **Dr. Philip Landrigan**, who was honored for his public health advocacy and his outspoken commitment to replacing diesel with safer, non-polluting alternatives. “It’s a complex mix of gases and particulates, potent respiratory irritants, and metabolic toxins. These include proven human carcinogens such as formaldehyde and soot. Exposure to diesel exhaust leads to more asthma, more respiratory tract infections, and more missed school for children, and more heart attacks and lung disease for adults. Recent studies have linked it to chronic kidney disease, diabetes and pre-term births for pregnant women. One new study posits an increased risk for Alzheimer’s disease. These chemicals waft through the urban air and make us all sick. The alternative New York City proposes is “cleaner diesel” but that’s

like proposing “safe asbestos” – there’s no such thing. There is no place in our environment with children and other living things for diesel. Getting rid of it in New York City is the right thing to do.”

When RNG is burned in vehicles equipped with ultra-low emission “near-zero” engines, health-damaging nitrogen oxide and particulate emissions are 90% below EPA standards. Though many US cities have adopted RNG to fuel municipal bus and truck fleets, New York City has not. But there are growing calls to change that, [reports](#) *Crain’s New York Business*. This summer, 12 New York City Councilmembers [wrote](#) to Mayor de Blasio urging him to take steps toward adopting RNG to help meet the City’s climate and clean air goals. In a recent joint [oped](#) in *The New York Daily News*, Senator Brad Hoylman and actors Blythe Danner and Alec Baldwin argued that MTA should deploy RNG buses rather than diesels to make up for the upcoming L subway line outage, and MTA should switch its 800 compressed natural gas buses to RNG.

Toronto, the fourth largest city in North America, could serve as a model. “The City of Toronto is setting the pace for a sustainable future on many fronts,” said Energy Vision president **Matt Tomich**. “In 2002 it began diverting residential organic waste from landfill through its Green Bin program and processing it through innovative pre-processing and anaerobic digestion technology. Next year, in partnership with Enbridge Gas Distribution, Toronto will begin producing renewable natural gas from Green Bin waste, which can be used to fuel the majority of its collection fleet.”

“Since 2002, we have been quietly working north of the border to try to find a way to harness the green energy potential of the biogas produced from processing Toronto’s source separated organic waste (SSO),” said **Carlyle Khan**, Director of Infrastructure Development and Asset Management for the Solid Waste Management Services Division of the City of Toronto, who accepted the Energy Vision award. “We had a vision to create renewable natural gas from organic waste and we’re working with our partners to make it happen. Our ultimate vision is to reduce our impact on the planet by creating a renewable resource and reducing our greenhouse gas emissions.”

The Kroger Co., the largest grocery chain, the second-largest retailer and third largest employer in the country, is another model of sustainability including RNG adoption. Starting in 2016 RNG has fueled 40 tractor-trailers in Kroger’s Fred Meyer grocery chain, displacing half a million gallons of diesel annually -- the first commercial truck fleet to adopt RNG in the Pacific Northwest.

“Zero Hunger | Zero Waste is our bold social impact plan to end hunger in our communities and eliminate waste in our company by 2025,” said **Nick**

Cortolillo, senior director of manufacturing for Kroger, who accepted the Energy Vision award. “It’s only the first anniversary of Zero Hunger | Zero Waste, and our goal is to eliminate all waste across our more than 2,700 stores, 42 distribution sites and 36 manufacturing facilities, distribute edible food and find productive uses for the rest. In 2017, we donated 325 million meals and have established a goal to accelerate our donations to provide 3 billion meals by 2025.”

“For 30 years, we had a wastewater treatment plant at our manufacturing facility in Greensburg, Indiana, but now we’ve replaced that system with an anaerobic digester which converts waste into electricity, covering 30% of our electrical need for the plant,” said Cortolillo. “We’re also getting our suppliers more involved, including the major supplier of our raw milk in Indiana. Their on-site digester produces renewable natural gas to fuel their fleet of 46 milk delivery trucks. We’re proud of the work we are doing, both internally and with our suppliers, and we know it is important to our customers.”

Jim Cannon was given a lifetime achievement award for conducting groundbreaking research into alternative fuels since the 1970s, including the seminal 1989 report *Drive for Clean Air*, the first independent report comprehensively analyzing alternatives to petroleum-based road fuel. It pointed to natural gas as the cleanest non-petroleum alternative since it was composed predominantly of hydrogen (four hydrogen atoms and one carbon atom). Over the past four decades Cannon has consulted for clients in 30 US states and 20 countries. He noted a parallel between the start of his career in the early 1970s and today. “1971 was not a very good year, but it was a good opportunity,” Cannon said as he accepted the award. “Out of the pits of the Vietnam War came the largest body of environmental legislation ever hatched by any country at any time. It was a revolution in the environmental field, which we were a small part of. Maybe today is similar. Maybe there are young people out there who are idealistic and out of this difficult time can help ignite the next revolution and the next exciting step.”

NOTE TO EDITORS AND PRODUCERS: Sources quoted in the release are available for interviews on request. So are photos and video of the event. For more information, please contact Stephen Kent, skent@kentcom.com, 914-589-5988

Energy Vision is a non-profit organization whose mission is to research, analyze and promote technologies and strategies that are viable today and required to transition to a sustainable, low-carbon energy and transportation future.