Diesel buses purchase not the better way for TTC

By **MATT TOMICH** Opinion
Mon., June 11, 2018

Toronto is currently eyeing a major investment in diesel buses, which would derail progress toward its emission reduction goals and pull a major punch in the fight against climate change.

The Toronto Transit Commission (TTC), the city agency with the highest vehicle fuel consumption and greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, plans to spend $934 million to buy more than 1,000 new buses and revitalize about 700 others — 729 are slated be diesels, and 254 to be second-generation diesel hybrids.

"Replacing half of TTC's fleet with near zero buses powered by RNG would lower fleet-wide GHG emissions 40 percent or more, cut health-damaging pollution, and make Toronto a model of a closed-loop, waste-to-fuel system for urban sustainability," writes Matt Tomich. "That's an opportunity the city should seize." (RICHARD LAUTENS/ TORONTO STAR)

The trouble is, diesel exhaust is a major emitter of greenhouse gases, nitrogen oxides, particulates, black carbon and other pollutants which damage the climate and public health. Buying new diesel buses locks in their emissions for over a decade.

Much better options exist. Instead of diesels, the TTC could buy natural gas buses equipped with "near zero" engines and fuel them with renewable natural gas (RNG), also known as biomethane. Compared to

the most advanced diesels, these buses emit a tenth of the smog-forming, asthma-triggering and health-damaging pollutants, while running them on RNG deeply slashes GHG emissions.

RNG is the lowest-carbon fuel available. It's chemically nearly identical to conventional natural gas, but it's not a fossil fuel. Made from the biogases emitted by decomposing organic waste, it can be carbon-free or even net-carbon-negative over its life cycle, especially when made from food or agricultural wastes and used to fuel natural gas vehicles.

Today, about 1,000 natural gas transit buses and heavy-duty trucks operate successfully in southern Ontario. They could all run on RNG.