

U.S.-Canada methane deal: Small investment, big payoff **Fred Krupp & Ed Whittingham**

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Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and President Barack Obama's climate announcement on Thursday came at a perilous time. Sea-ice extent in the Arctic continues to shatter monthly record-breaking lows, with the region experiencing one of the warmest winters ever recorded. Powerful evidence that we are moving faster toward a rate of warming that scientists warn could lead to catastrophic climate change.

If we're going to prevent this catastrophe, we need to accelerate the solutions. One such solution is controlling methane emissions from the oil and gas industry. Natural gas is mostly methane, an extremely potent contributor to climate change that accounts for one-quarter of the world's current warming. Globally, the oil-and-gas sector is our largest industrial source of methane emissions.

So it was very good news indeed when leaders of the United States and Canada agreed to co-operate to cut methane emissions from their respective oil and gas industries. Mr. Trudeau announced that Canada will reduce oil and gas methane emissions from 40 to 45 per cent below 2012 levels by 2025, matching an earlier U.S. pledge. Mr. Obama also committed for the first time to rapidly addressing methane emissions from existing oil and gas facilities. It was a watershed moment for North American climate action: international recognition that getting serious about global climate change requires rapid deployment on carbon dioxide *and* methane.

U.S. and Canadian leadership on this issue charts a path forward for other oil-and-gas producing countries to set similar goals. For example, Mexico highlighted oil and gas methane reductions as a tool to meet its international climate commitments but has not yet set a reduction goal. If Mexico were to join Canada and the U.S. in setting a North American methane target, then the world's second-, fourth- and fifth-largest oil and gas methane emitters would be united in reducing this powerful pollutant. The three countries generate nearly 20 per cent of global oil and gas methane pollution. And, if all three cut emissions by 45 per cent, it would reduce worldwide oil and gas methane pollution by close to 10 per cent. Globally, a 45 per cent reduction of methane emissions would have the same climate benefit over the next 20 years as closing one-third of the world's coal-fired power plants.

Tackling methane is also one of the world's best bargains for reducing greenhouse gases quickly. Recent studies in the U.S., Canada and Mexico show methane leaks can be cut by at least 45 per cent for an average penny per thousand cubic feet of gas produced.

States and provinces in the United States and Canada have already demonstrated what is possible. Alberta, British Columbia, California, Colorado, Ohio, Pennsylvania and Wyoming have all announced regulations or a process to develop them over the coming months. Canada's challenge will be to develop

these regulations in a timely and effective way. And in the United States, industry continues to claim that voluntary measures can get the job done, even though the data clearly shows voluntary methane reductions are not successful in reducing emissions.

By embracing rapid deployment of smart regulations that apply to the oil and gas industry on both sides of the 49th parallel, Mr. Trudeau and Mr. Obama have made a major stride for the global climate. The investment is small and the payoff for the world will be enormous.