



# Celebrating 10 Years Idle Free

By Susan Lindsay, Climate Change Connection

**FOR THE LAST TEN YEARS** Manitobans have seen colourful “Healthy Communities Don’t Idle” signs pop up across their province. They are at our public buildings, our schools, and at our local businesses. They have been placed in communities across our province from Churchill to Cartwright, Virden to Pinawa. There are over 3500 signs across Manitoba!

These “Healthy Communities Don’t Idle” signs are an initiative of Climate Change Connection, a Manitoba based organization that strives to educate Manitobans about climate change and assists them in taking action. The signs were created as a reminder to Manitobans to eliminate unnecessary vehicle idling and simply turn your key. This act of turning your key not only reduces each Manitobans carbon footprint but it also reduces harmful tailpipe emissions that carry a real health risk.

The exhaust emitted from cars and trucks releases more than 40 hazardous pollutants into the air, and traffic areas around Manitoba communities where idling often occurs have shown significantly higher pollution levels. The emissions are especially dangerous to children who are more sensitive to air pollution than adults are partly because they inhale more air per kilogram.

Manitoba’s largest hospital, the Health Sciences Centre, has supported the initiative and posted signs around all of their buildings. A staff member at the hospital said, “I think it is working. People are seeing the signs, getting the message, and turning off their cars.”

Carbon dioxide is one of the main air pollutants emitted from car engines, and is the main contributor to greenhouse gases in the atmosphere, responsible for climate change. Ten seconds of idling uses more fuel than turning off a car and restarting it, so the savings can be enormous. If every driver of a light-duty vehicle in Canada avoided idling for just five minutes, it would prevent more than 4500 tonnes of CO2 from entering the atmosphere.

As Canadians, we idle our vehicles an average of five to ten minutes a day. It wastes approximately 100 litres of gas a year. A litre of gas cost around \$1.25 which means you can save approx. \$125 a year by simply turning off your vehicle when you are going nowhere.

Many Manitoba communities have used these signs as a start of a movement in their communities. In Stonewall, four grade six girls made it their mission to make Stonewall “idle free.” They cre-

ated a presentation, talked to their town council, school division trustees, and anyone who will listen. Now as you drive down the streets of Stonewall you can see these signs on every corner. The girls said, “Every bit counts and getting people to stop idling will help our planet.”

Both the St.James-Assiniboine and Seven Oaks School Divisions have placed signs at each and every school in their division declaring their divisions “idle free.” Jackie Avent, Active and Safe

Routes to School Program Coordinator at the Green Action Centre, says “These signs have had great success. At schools with these signs the air quality is better, there are less safety issues, and it encourages parents and students to think more sustainably.” The Portage La Prairie School Division took it a step further and has created an anti-idling policy for all buses serving the division. The policy makes every effort to eliminate all unnecessary idling in the division.

After receiving their “Healthy Communities Don’t Idle” signs, the City of Brandon initiated an anti-idling campaign. This campaign included staff education and training, sign installation across the city, and fleet vehicle monitoring. The City of Brandon has also installed signs at railway crossings, asking citizens to shut off their vehicles while waiting for trains.

This anti-idling initiative has had numerous successes and we want the momentum to continue. Eliminating idling is an easy step everyone can take to improve air quality, increase safety, protect the environment, and save money. 🌱

*If your community, business, school still needs a “Healthy Communities Don’t Idle” sign simply contact Climate Change Connection at [climate.connection@mymts.net](mailto:climate.connection@mymts.net).*



## Here are three simple steps to help reduce idling:

- 1** Reduce warm-up idling. In cold weather, you need no more than 30 seconds of idling before driving away. Most car parts don’t begin to warm up until you drive the vehicle.
- 2** Unless you’re in traffic, turn off your engine if you are going to be stopped for more than 10 seconds. After ten seconds of idling, you burn more fuel than it would take to restart your engine.
- 3** Talk to your family, friends, and neighbours about idling. Turn your key- be idle free!

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