



Idle-Free Toolkit

for municipalities



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RATIONALE /

We love our cars. Nova Scotians drive more kilometres per capita than most provinces. This excessive dependence on driving contributes to climate change, air pollution, and other social costs (e.g. traffic congestion, vehicular accidents, and obesity). With over 600,000 vehicles on Nova Scotia's roads, eliminating unnecessary idling is an easy way to reduce environmental, social and economic costs. Municipalities are well positioned to demonstrate leadership and effectively implement coordinated, community-based, idle-free campaigns.

WHY DO WE IDLE?

Most Canadians idle their vehicle on average for eight minutes per day¹ with most frequent idling occurring during the summer and winter months to keep a comfortable temperature in the vehicle. Other reasons include waiting to park, sitting in drive-thru lanes, sitting at traffic lights/train crossings, running errands, traffic jams and preparing to leave the house.



IMPACTS OF IDLING

1. ECONOMIC IMPACTS

Why waste gas when you're not even moving? Excessive idling not only increases the amount of costly fuel that is burned, but also increases the likelihood of vehicle maintenance down the road. Decreased idling can reduce wear on spark plugs, the exhaust system, and the engine itself on any vehicle.² Just 10 seconds of idling wastes more gas than shutting off the engine and re-starting it.

If every Canadian driver reduced idling by three minutes each day, in a year we would save \$630 million in fuel costs and 1.4 million tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions.³ For an average 3.0 litre sized engine, every 10 minutes of idling wastes roughly one cup of fuel (300 ml). High (and rising) gasoline costs are a good reason to reduce unnecessary vehicle idling.⁴

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2. AIR QUALITY IMPACTS

Excessive idling increases the chemicals and particulates that come from the exhaust; this adversely affects air quality. Particulate matter can exacerbate numerous health problems including lung disease, heart disease, asthma, and emphysema.

Children are especially at risk. They breathe in more air per pound of body weight than adults, and their lungs are still developing. Small children are also closer to the height of the tailpipe.

Idling contributes to smog, which can make it unhealthy to exercise outdoors and may lead to premature deaths. In Ontario, for example, smog caused over 9,500 deaths in 2005. Decreasing unnecessary idling can ease health care costs and help Nova Scotians live longer.

3. CLIMATE CHANGE IMPACTS

Greenhouse gases like carbon dioxide trap the sun's rays and keep the earth's surface and our lower atmosphere warm. This creates what is known as the greenhouse effect which is important for a temperate climate. As humans increase the amount of greenhouse gases in our atmosphere, more heat gets trapped inside, causing changes in normal weather patterns and affecting ecosystems and our everyday life. Carbon dioxide emissions are an unavoidable result of fossil fuel combustion.⁵

You can reduce idling to save money, improve air quality and help stop climate change



MUNICIPAL IDLE-FREE INITIATIVES /

Municipalities in Nova Scotia and in the rest of Canada are working to eliminate idling. When deciding to eliminate idling in your municipality, you may choose first to lead by example, and focus on your own internal idle-free campaign and policy, before extending it to the wider community. The examples below demonstrate some best practices to help you plan your own idle-free initiative.



Town of Antigonish

In 2007, the Town of Antigonish formally adopted an environmental idling reduction policy for all municipal vehicles. The town provided a model to encourage the public to reduce vehicle idling. See [Antigonish's Environmental Policy on Idling of Vehicles](#) to help your municipality write idle-free policy. [Click here for details.](#)

Eco-Kings Action Team

The Eco Kings Action Team is a collaborative of municipal and economic stakeholders, including the Municipality of the County of Kings, the Towns of Berwick, Kentville, and Wolfville with the Kings Community Economic Development Agency, Valley Waste Resource Management, Eastern Kings Chamber of Commerce, and Eastern Habitat Joint Ventures . In 2007, the Team launched a county-wide idle-free campaign and designated April 5, 2008 as Anti-Idling Awareness Day. Municipal councillors and students helped distribute educational materials and conduct a short survey to raise awareness about idling. The campaign was very successful, reaching municipalities, businesses, schools and transportation providers. Permanent signage has been installed in participating municipalities and schools serving in Kings County. [Click here for details.](#)

Town of Kentville

In 2008, Kentville became the first municipality in Atlantic Canada to adopt an idle-free by-law. Their by-law states that people can idle their vehicle engines for a maximum of three minutes. The Town Council created an Environmental Action Committee to support local community leaders and citizens to improve air quality and combat climate change by implementing strategies to deal with it.

However, before the Town of Kentville enacted its idle-free by-law, a two-year public relations campaign was undertaken to encourage behaviours to reduce unnecessary vehicle idling. The Eco Kings Action Team worked with the Town to inform the public about the benefits of eliminating unnecessary idling before a by-law was ever mentioned. The awareness campaign involved posting signage in locations where kids are most vulnerable and where cars and buses tend to idle: schools and sports facilities. It also involved lobbying schools, school transportation companies, public facilities, and local businesses.

The increasing discussions surrounding the impacts of climate change and the importance of reducing carbon emissions has influenced other communities to consider enacting similar idling by-laws and policies.

Cape Breton Regional Municipality

In June of 2007, Atlantic Coastal Action Program (ACAP) Cape Breton launched the Cape Breton Regional Municipality's (CBRM) Idle-free Zone Campaign to educate the public about the risks of idling with the support of the Uptown Saint John Environment Committee, Environment Canada's Environmental Damages Fund and Environmental Trust Fund. The campaign targeted idling hotspots such as schools, ferry docks, hospitals, and other public venues to inform drivers of the environmental and human health impacts of excessive idling. The goal of the program is to encourage motorists to turn off their vehicle when parked for more than 60 seconds.

[Click here for details](#)

Halifax Regional Municipality

In 2005, the Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) embarked on an 18-month idling reduction and community awareness campaign called "Ladies and Gentlemen, Stop Your Engines". The campaign used a community-based social marketing approach in an effort to change driver behaviour and reduce vehicle idling. Signage, handouts, decals, key tags, presentations, and newsletters to residents, were all part of the approach used to promote going idle-free. Information was provided directly to employees to encourage idling reduction for municipal vehicles.

HRM's Transit and Fleet Managers endorsed the initiative and adopted an idling restriction policy. Fleet managers and drivers are now educated on the negative impacts of vehicle idling, and the best practices and solutions for tackling idling have been implemented. Metro Transit operators are encouraged to turn off engines after three minutes. [Click here for details](#)

The City of Mississauga, Ontario

In June 2009, the City of Mississauga implemented a progressive idling control by-law, prohibiting vehicles from idling for longer than three minutes. Mississauga is Canada's sixth largest city, home to over 700,000 residents and 5,500 businesses, making the potential impact of this by-law substantial. The campaign began with a week-long education blitz to remind residents not to leave their vehicles idling. This by-law was supported by EcoDriver Workshops, hosted by the City and the Community Environmental Alliance. The penalty for breaking the idling control by-law is a fine. [Click on the links to learn more about the City of Mississauga's Idle-Free Program, Ten Tips for a Successful Anti-Idling Campaign and Mississauga's by-law.](#)



In 2008, **Kentville** became the first municipality in Atlantic Canada to adopt an **idle-free by-law**. Their by-law states that people can idle their vehicle engines for a **maximum of 3 minutes**. The Kentville Town Council created an **Environmental Action Committee** to support local community leaders and citizens in **improving air quality and combating climate change**.



A FRAMEWORK FOR DEVELOPING MUNICIPAL IDLE-FREE INITIATIVES /

This is your step-by-step framework for developing idle-free initiatives in your municipality. You can choose the initiatives most appropriate for your situation, depending on the size of your staff and fleet, your community, idling hot-spots, traffic patterns, partnerships and resources available to dedicate to the campaign (e.g. economic, people power).

Many municipalities are adopting in-house energy conservation strategies; Idle-free campaigns are a way to extend municipal energy conservation strategies and encourage fuel conservation. Reducing emissions generated by idling vehicles will position your municipality as an environmental leader and improve air quality for your residents, while helping the province meet emission reduction targets set in the [Environmental Goals and Sustainable Prosperity Act](#).

Before your municipality engages in an idling reduction campaign, it should familiarize itself with the status of the practices and policies of its fleet. This may involve measuring where and how idling is presently occurring through monitoring programs (e.g. observe average idle times, survey driver/operators, track engine data via Engine Control Module (ECM) or GPS). This baseline information will prove very helpful to monitor progress and evaluate your success.

1 Council & Staff Buy-In

It will be important to present the concept and rationale to municipal council and staff and garner their support. It is advisable to find a champion who can lead the idle reduction team.

2 Create a Team

Create a mission and/or vision statement to define the purpose and primary objectives. This will help define the measures of success and the prime audience and stakeholders. Before undertaking any project, the capacity and resources of the team must be carefully evaluated. Resource limitations must be accounted for to determine which idling reduction options are feasible.

3 Set Goals

After you have established a team mission and vision the next step is to set goals and determine a strategy for implementing your project. Start by targeting the specific audiences or locations where excessive idling takes place.

It is important to start early if you need to generate support for a future idling by-law. The Town of Kentville was able to enact an idling restriction by-law by initially generating support through community awareness and education initiatives. A two-year public relations campaign was undertaken to inform the citizens of Kentville as to why idling is an issue of concern, laying the foundation for [by-law](#) support.

4 Tools for your Awareness Campaign

Many of the tools suggested below are based on community-based social marketing (CBSM) – an approach that improves engagement and participation.

COMMUNITY BASED SOCIAL MARKETING

CBSM has been proven to successfully engage audiences, and to affect pro-environmental behaviour change. Some of the CBSM tools suggested here include:

- **Prompts** – remind the target audience about the campaign message and intended behaviour change. For example, items viewed frequently by drivers, such as key-chains and ice-scrappers branded “idle-free” can be effective prompts.
- **Community Leaders** – respected community leaders can influence the public by demonstrating target behaviours and support for the campaign.
- **Commitments** – simply asking people to commit to behaviour change can be effective when combined with other tools. Public and written pledges are very effective (e.g. pledges on their car or license plate).⁶



Idle-Free Tools

Signage

Post idle-free signage throughout various municipal buildings. Research indicates positive messaging is more effective; instead of posting signs that say “No Idling,” positive messaging is another option: “Turn off your engine and improve air quality around you,” “Turn it off and save money,” or “Please Turn Off Your Engine.”

Reminders

Distribute decals for inside vehicles to remind drivers to turn off their engine when possible. If feasible, consider distributing small, useful prompts, such as key-chains, tire gauges or ice-scrappers to remind the target audience to turn off their engines.

Idling Handouts

Provide handouts on idling facts and myths. Place posters in public/common areas and send emails to staff to educate on the concerns about idling. See Resources for a list of idling facts and myths.

Pledge

Ask audience members (employees, fleet drivers, etc.) to sign a pledge to reduce or eliminate idling. Bumper stickers indicating the commitment can be an effective way to create accountability.⁷

Idling Technologies

Idle reduction technologies can assist in a variety of ways:

- Block heaters warm the engine coolant, block and lubricants prior to job departure
- Cab heaters maintain comfort in trucks, available for sizes from pick-ups to transport trucks
- Auxiliary power units and green energy replace idling to run safety lights and equipment on site
- Hybrid vehicles (light and heavy duty) improve fuel efficiency and reduce idling even in traffic⁸

5 Suggested Policy

Adopting a policy that clearly states unnecessary idling is unacceptable to a municipality sends a strong message to municipal staff.

The benefits of an internal idling control policy:

- Reduces fuel expenses
- Demonstrates the actual cost savings of turning off the engine
- Positively reinforces driver behaviour through public acknowledgement of their efforts
- Provides opportunities for government/business to promote their environmental initiatives
- Prepares public for an idle control by-law through leading by example
- Improves air quality

Promoting these benefits will help build a case for introducing an idle-free policy in your municipality.⁹

6 Letters of Engagement

It is important to get the support of senior management, council and staff as well as fleet managers if your campaign is to be successful. See the Resources section for sample templates to help with letters of engagement.

YOU HOLD THE POWER IN YOUR HANDS...

Municipal Government Act, 1998, S.N.S., C. 18 Section 172 (1) (a) of the Municipal Government Act, 1998, allows municipalities to make by-laws, for municipal purposes, respecting the health, well-being, safety and protection of persons. This authority can be leveraged to implement by-laws to regulate vehicle idling.



FACT: Adopting an Internal Idling Control Policy will reduce fuel expenses & improve air quality.

BY-LAW CREATION AND ENFORCEMENT /

An effective way to reduce idling and create public awareness is to create an idle-free by-law for your municipality.

Once you have created a strong internal policy and reduced idling from the municipal fleet, you are well positioned to appeal to the wider public. Doing so demonstrates commitment to the health of your community and the environment.

Currently in Nova Scotia, the Town of Kentville is the only municipality in the province to have an idle-free by-law in effect.¹⁰

Step-by-Step Enforcement

1 Lead by example. Residents of your municipality are more likely to embrace the idle-free message if municipal staff and leaders “walk the talk”.

2 Include sufficient details. Define limits on idling times (e.g. after one minute of idling, an engine must be turned off). Each municipality is different, therefore the circumstances under which idling is permitted can be different. Other items to consider include drive-thrus, necessary idling for diesel engines and vehicle operation (e.g. idling for rear window defrost to clear snow in winter months). Some diesel engines need to idle for a minimum of 3 minutes prior to being driven to reduce gelling

The Town of Wolfville is in the initial stages of implementation. Once a by-law or policy is in place, enforcement is important to its success.

An Idle-free by-law may fit into an existing by-law to help expedite the process. For example, if your municipality already has a traffic/road noise by-law in place, an option could be to amend the by-law to also include idle-free initiatives.

of the diesel fuel. However, as diesel technology progresses, this requirement is seen less. For instance refiners have created winter blends which are able to withstand colder temperatures.¹¹

3 Who is responsible for enforcement? Police officers are responsible for enforcement of other laws, however their time and resources may be limited. Other figures such as parking enforcement officers, security officers, peace officers or by-law enforcement officers may be an option if the police department is unable to commit to full-time enforcement. Designating a specific month to focus on unnecessary idling may be beneficial.



4 What are the consequences? Many municipalities around the world that have incorporated idle-free by-laws have minimum and maximum fines in place. Deciding a minimum and maximum fine that is appropriate for your municipality should be clearly communicated. Fines under the Town of Kentville's by-law range from \$150 to \$10,000. People who receive tickets have 14 days to pay them to avoid being prosecuted for the offence. [Click here for more details](#)

5 Be sure to include a grace period. Allowing time for your citizens to become accustomed to the new law is necessary for tolerance and successful adoption of the law. Grace periods can range from several months to a year. However, while fines may not be given out during the grace period, it is important for citizens to be made aware that fines/penalties will be given out at a later date.

6 Approach with diplomacy. Confronting an individual who is idling their vehicle can be awkward and tense. Enforcement officers need to be clearly identified and should be polite, patient, and approachable. They will need to rely on their judgement to respond appropriately to each driver and situation. For example, if an idling driver has children in the vehicle, the officer could focus on the harmful effects of idling on people's health. With adults, enforcement officers may choose to speak to the economic implications of wasted gas and increased maintenance from idling. Positive, non-confrontational language and demeanour are important in these situations.

7 Consult the community. Seeking input from the general public fosters inclusion and ownership, and will directly result in wider acceptance of your idle-free by-law.



DID YOU KNOW?

For an average 3.0 litre sized engine, every 10 minutes of idling wastes roughly one cup of fuel (300 ml). Current high (and rising) gasoline prices are a good reason to reduce unnecessary idling.

PUBLIC AWARENESS CAMPAIGN /

By-laws are much more effective when accompanied by public outreach and education.

You can choose the initiatives most appropriate for your situation, depending on the size of your staff and fleet, your community, idling hot-spots, traffic patterns, partnerships and resources available to dedicate to the campaign (e.g. economic, people power).

Citizens need to understand why idling reduction is important to them and their community and why your municipality has decided to take action. This can be effectively achieved through public awareness campaigns which can be conducted at minimal cost using the many free tools and resources available.¹² There are particular resources available if you are interested in working with schools and businesses. The information below is applicable to the general public.

Other organizations in your community that have the expertise required can be sourced to administer or assist with the campaign.

A successful public awareness campaign can utilize a number of tools. To maximize effectiveness, community-based social marketing should be integrated into the campaign design and the tools used should be appropriate for the intended target audience.



Public Awareness Campaign Tools

Printed Materials...

such as guides, brochures and fact cards should be concise and contain accurate information. These materials can be placed in public areas such as libraries, grocery stores, coffee shops and schools to disseminate information about idling and your new by-law. A mass mail out to the community is also an effective way to reach a broad audience.

Mock Tickets...

can serve as an ice breaker while providing necessary information about idling. They can be handed out by trained volunteers or enforcement officers.

Provide Free Presentations...

about idling to the public at schools, town halls, libraries, etc. Encouraging businesses to participate in the form of lunch and learns is a good way for businesses to demonstrate their commitment to the by-law and their involvement in bettering the community. Free lunch or snacks can go a long way.

Media...

Local, provincial and sometimes national media are likely to cover your new by-law as it positions your municipality as a leader in environmental initiatives. This provides an excellent avenue to continue your awareness campaign, highlight the rules of the by-law and reach a large spectrum of people. Write and distribute press releases to media outlets to ensure maximum coverage.

Editorials...

Many media outlets also provide an avenue for government officials and members of the public to speak out in the form of editorials and special feature stories. Having a public official write an editorial explaining the benefits of going idle-free is an effective technique for spreading the message.

Marketing...

is important to ensuring the success of an idle-free campaign. When possible, it can make sense to purchase television, radio, print or online advertising, informing the public of the new by-law, grace period and when the by-law officially takes effect.



Speak out in the form of editorials and special feature stories in newspapers

Provide free presentations about idling to your public community

Purchase print, TV or online advertising to inform the public of the new by-law

Ideas for Making Idle-Free Fun!

- 1 Entertain + Engage.** Studies show that people respond more positively to change and are more likely to adopt new rules when the information is entertaining or engaging. During the grace period, ask enforcement officers to give the driver an option to fill out a commitment form in place of a ticket. If they commit to reducing idling, their names can be entered into a draw for a prize.
- 2 Create a Contest.** Ask members of the public to create the most effective poster, advertisement or literature for a chance to win a prize. Ask them to share stories about the most ridiculous places they have seen vehicles idling.
- 3 Hold a Competition.** Who gets the best mileage in town? This helps encourage eco-driving awareness, but also makes more of an impact to those who

participate as they will see results for themselves. The winner could be crowned “the most efficient driver in (your municipality)”.

- 4 Hold a Week-long Campaign.** Enforcement officers could reward people for turning off their engines. If a citizen is seen turning off their engine while waiting in the car, they can be rewarded with a coupon or prize. There is an opportunity for businesses to participate by giving away coupons for products or services to customers or clients who

turn their engines off while in front of their business.

- 5 Get Schools Involved.** Suggest a class project in the form of artwork, poetry, music, etc. This helps to educate children, and also brings the message home to families, resulting in more community involvement. Ask the students to be the ones handing out the literature in their idling hot spots.

- 6 Set up Information Booths.** At public events, small perks in the form of prompts can be given to members of the public who visit the booth.¹³

Something to Consider...

Wording such as “anti-idling” or “no idling allowed” can set a negative tone. Some campaigns have tried positive language such as “idle-free zone” or “idle-less zone” and have found it to be more engaging with the community.

Idle-Free Resources

Footnotes:

- ¹ [Natural Resources Canada](#), 2009
- ² [Nova Scotia Department of Environment](#), 2011
- ³ [Natural Resources Canada](#)
- ⁴ [GasBuddy](#)
- ⁵ See [Climate Change Nova Scotia](#) for more information
- ⁶ For more information on CBSM see <http://www.cbsm.com/public/world.lasso> and <http://www.toolsofchange.com/en/home/>
- ⁷ See Resources for pledge framework and sample pledge
- ⁸ For more information on available technologies to assist with idling reduction, see next section Resources
- ⁹ See the [Town of Antigonish Idling Policy](#) see next section Resources
- ¹⁰ [Town of Kentville Idling Control By-law](#)
- ¹¹ [Diesel Idling Myths and Facts](#)
- ¹² See next section Resources
- ¹³ See Public Awareness Campaign section

Resources:

1. [AirwatchNW](#) - letter templates, idling facts, pledge forms, graphic materials and more
2. [Idle-Free Zone by Natural Resources Canada](#) - facts, graphic materials and resources
3. [What Other Communities are Doing](#) - NRCan search engine for idle-free campaigns to date
4. [Municipalities Idleless: Idling Reduction Options](#) - by the Ecology Action Centre
5. [DriveWiser](#)
6. [DADA: Dads Against Dirty Air](#)
7. [Clean Air Champions](#)
8. [Eco-Air](#)
9. [Top 3 Myths about Idling](#) - by Eco-Kings Action Team


10. [Anti Idling Fact Sheet](#) - by Nova Scotia Environment
11. [Idle Free BC](#)
12. [Green Venture Air](#)
13. [ACAP Cape Breton](#)
14. [Antigonish's Environmental Policy on Idling of Vehicles](#) - can be used to help create a policy for your municipality
15. [Annapolis Valley Regional School Board Idling Policy](#) - can be used to help create a policy for a school
16. [Town of Kentville's Idling Control Bylaw](#) - can be used as a guide for writing your own bylaw
17. [The Children's Clean Air Network](#)

Campaigns:

1. [The Anti-Idling Project of the Ecology Action Centre Final Report](#)
2. [Ladies and Gentlemen Stop your Engines Final Report](#) (HRM)
3. [Kings County Anti-Idling Final Report](#)
4. [Anti-Idling Final Report Prepared for Earthcare Sudbury](#) (example of a municipal led idle-free initiative for schools)

Funding Sources:

See Natural Resource Canada's [Idle-Free Zone: Possible Funding Sources](#)



In our every deliberation, we must consider the impact of our decisions on the next seven generations."

- The Great Law of The Iroquois Confederacy