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Can your lungs differentiate between air pollution from a school bus and
air pollution from an SUV?

Idling is not only a waste of energy and money – after all, we're
burning fuel but going nowhere – it is also a needless source of
greenhouse gas emissions. While reducing vehicle idling alone
won't solve the climate change problem, it's a step in the right
direction and it's easy to do!¹

-Natural Resources Canada

The Ecology Action Centre applauds the Nova Scotian Government for introducing Bill 114,
“The Anti-idling Act”, on Friday, November 26, 2010. If the Bill passes, Nova Scotia will be the
first province in Canada to have a provincial idling restriction policy. This would be a more
significant move if the Bill included aspects of idling restriction that many municipalities have
already adopted.

Rationale

Adopting a strong idling restriction Bill is consistent with the goals of the Nova Scotian
Government:

- Environmental Goals and Sustainable Prosperity Act (Bill No. 146, adopted in 2007)
In 2007, the Environmental Goals and Sustainable Prosperity Act was adopted with the
support of all three political parties. Section 3.2 of the Act states²:
This Act is based on the following principles:
(a) the health of the economy, the health of the environment and the
health of the people of the Province are interconnected;
(b) environmentally sustainable economic development that
recognizes the economic value of the Province's environmental assets
is essential to the long-term prosperity of the Province;
(c) the environment and the economy of the Province are a shared
responsibility of all levels of government, the private sector and all
people of the Province;
(d) the environment and economy must be managed for the benefit of
present and future generations;

¹ Natural Resources Canada. (2009). “Links between fuel consumption, climate change, our environment
and health”. Retrieved from <http://oee.nrcan-rncan.gc.ca/transportation/idling/health.cfm?attr=8> on
August 1, 2009.

² Government of Nova Scotia. (2007). Environmental Goals and Sustainable Prosperity Act. Retrieved
from http://nslegislature.ca/legc/bills/60th_1st/3rd_read/b146.htm on December 2, 2010.



- (e) innovative solutions are necessary to mutually reinforce the environment and the economy;
- (f) a long-term approach to planning and decision-making is necessary to harmonize the Province's goals of economic prosperity and environmental sustainability;
- (g) the management of goals for sustainable prosperity, such as emission reduction, energy efficiency programs and increasing the amount of legally protected land will preserve and improve the Province's environment and economy for future generations.

The Act specifically mentions emission reduction as a target. The adoption of a strong idling restriction Bill helps realize this objective.

- Health of Nova Scotians

Vehicle emissions contain high levels of toxins that contribute to asthma and other lung conditions. In Ontario, population 12,932,000³, the Ontario Medical Association attributed 9,500 deaths in 2008 to air pollution⁴. Pro-rated for Nova Scotia, population 938,183⁵, 689 deaths could be attributed to air pollution. Not all air pollution can be attributed to vehicle idling, but a significant portion can be directly linked to it. If 689 persons were killed on a stretch of highway every year, would the Government of Nova Scotia not declare the section dangerous and take steps to reduce the fatalities? Stopping needless idling should be seen as a way to reduce deaths caused by air contaminants.

- Health of the environment

The transportation sector in Nova Scotia is responsible for 28.1 per cent of greenhouse gas emissions⁶. Greenhouse gases are linked to climate change. The current level of emissions is putting the Earth at risk by changing weather patterns and causing sea levels to rise. It would be better for the environment to eliminate the use of the automobile altogether, however, this is impractical. Much progress could be made simply by using vehicles more efficiently – eliminating needless idling is one of these ways. If this can be reduced without significantly impacting society, why are we not pursuing it further?

³ Ontario Ministry of Finance. (2010). Demographic Quarterly: Highlights of Second Quarter 2010. Retrieved from <http://www.fin.gov.on.ca/en/economy/demographics/quarterly/dhiq2.html> on November 30, 2010.

⁴ CBC News. (2008). "Ontario's smog causes 9,500 deaths per year, medical association says" Retrieved from <http://www.cbc.ca/health/story/2008/06/06/smog-deaths.html> on November 30, 2010.

⁵ Nova Scotia Department of Finance (2009). Frequently Viewed Statistics. Retrieved from <http://www.gov.ns.ca/finance/statistics/agency/default.asp> on November 30, 2010.

⁶ Nova Scotia Department of Energy. (2009) Toward a Greener Future: Nova Scotia's Climate Change Action Plan. Retrieved from <http://www.gov.ns.ca/energy/resources/spps/energy-strategy/Climate-Change-Action-Plan-2009.pdf> on April 21, 2010.



According to Fleet Challenge Ontario, certain vehicles spend up to 85 per cent of operation time idling⁷.

- **Fiscal responsibility**

Nova Scotians are facing tough economic times. The same is true for the Government. Eliminating needless idling has financial benefits that do not require painful program cuts. Simply by turning off vehicle engines, the Government saves fuel and thus directly saves money. Additional savings are realized through reductions in vehicle wear.

According to Fleet Challenge Ontario, engine idling contributes to⁸:

- An impact on engine operating life, as one hour of engine idle is equivalent to two hours of driving and results in the more frequent servicing and replacement of spark plugs, fuel injectors, valve seats, and piston crowns;
- Higher cost, through incurring an additional \$1.25 in vehicle maintenance for every \$1.00 of fuel consumed; and,
- Reducing engine oil life by 75%, from 600 engine hours to 150 engine hours.

Scope

Bill 114 would be “an act to require an anti-idling policy for the Government of Nova Scotia and public passenger vehicles”. The Bill does not apply broadly enough to result in significant greenhouse gas emissions reductions or to impact positively on human health.

Repercussions

The Bill only calls for policy to be put in place - not for enforcement, nor does it outline the penalties. This is insufficient. Both the “carrot” and “stick” approach are needed to effectively change human behaviour. Municipalities experiencing success with their anti-idling programs use both prongs. As introduced, the Bill includes neither an education/incentive component nor repercussions for inaction.

What is “needless idling”? The idling referred to by this Bill should not include idling while the vehicle is operating in traffic.

⁷ Fleet Challenge Ontario. (2008). Best Practices Manual 2008: Reducing the Use of Gasoline and Diesel: Idling Reduction. p. 46. Retrieved from <http://www.fleetbusiness.com/pdf/FCOntario.pdf> on April 5, 2010.

⁸ Ibid, p. 46.



Bill 114 should be redrafted to:

- 1. Apply to a broader scope.** As it stands, Bill 114 applies only to “Government of Nova Scotia and public passenger vehicles”. The Bill should be expanded to apply to all passenger vehicles seating seven passengers or more. The definition of “public passenger vehicle” should be expanded to include all vehicles that are licensed by the Utility and Review Board.
- 2. Connect idling with negative health effects.** In the opening clause, idling should be explicitly connected to detrimental health effects.
- 3. Re-define needless idling.** In the definition of idling, the provision that allows vehicles to idle for powering “auxiliary equipment that is essential to the basic function of the vehicle” should be modified. The statement should be changed to reflect that auxiliary power units, which can eliminate the need for engines to be operating while the function of the vehicle is maintained, are available. This type of equipment should be mandatory on new vehicles purchased by the provincial government and its agencies. School bus heaters that do not require engine operation are one such example. The cost of the auxiliary power units would be paid for through fuel savings.
- 4. Specify a zero tolerance limit.** All vehicles specified in the Bill must comply with a policy of zero idling by the spring of 2011. Bill 114, as introduced, did not specify a time limit for idling, just that some sort of policy must be in place. This should be strengthened to a zero idling policy. No unnecessary idling will be tolerated. This provision eases the burden of enforcement because there are no “acceptable” situations. The community of Jasper, AB has found great success with a by-law specifying zero idling. Idling that is necessary for clearing the windshield of snow or ice is acceptable under the Motor Vehicle Act. This Act states that operating a vehicle with obstructions to the windshield is illegal.
- 5. Identify repercussions and enforcement for non-compliance.** Any party who contravenes this Legislation is guilty of an offence and is liable on summary conviction to a fine. These fines should be set aside for the Environmental Trust Fund.

During the spring 2011 Session, another Bill should be introduced that includes:

- 6. An extension to all vehicles.** The Bill will not have any allowable idling time. The lack of acceptable idling time has been questioned by certain parties wondering what happens in the case of inclement weather. The EAC recommends that any amount of idling is unacceptable. In discussions with the municipality of Jasper, AB it was stated that having a by-law with no time limit is much easier to enforce than one with some permissible



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idling. Many municipalities have adopted by-laws with long lists of exceptions to the idling restriction. Enforcement in these communities is problematic. On the other hand, Jasper finds applying the by-law quite simple and uses common sense in cases of necessary temperature regulation. If extreme weather events occur, officers enforcing the by-law consider the health of vehicle occupants and vehicle condition.

Research finds that more fuel is used when idling for any period longer than ten seconds than would be consumed by turning off your engine and re-starting it. Research did not find that multiple re-starts of the vehicle damaged the starter or other engine components.

It is recommended that the Bill, when enacted, will take effect in September 2011.

7. An education component to be added to the Nova Scotia Driver's Handbook.
8. An incentive program to help Nova Scotians change their habits.

For additional information, the Ecology Action Centre through funding provided by the Government of Nova Scotia, compiled Nova Scotia Idle-less: A Compendium of Idling Reduction Options. It is available online at http://www.ecologyaction.ca/files/images/file/Transportation/EAC_Trax_Provincial_Idleless_May82010-double%20sided%20version.pdf. The fact that this work was compiled a year ago proves that government departments are already exploring reducing idling to save money, the environment and the health of the public.

Submitted by: Jen Powley, Transportation Coordinator
Telephone: 429-0924 (work), 802-1270 (cell)
Email: jentrax@ecologyaction.ca