

Dear teachers,

This is a letter from the Manitoba Youth for Climate Action. We are a student group concerned about our future - mainly whether or not we will have one if our leaders don't start treating climate change like an emergency.



This winter, we joined the 1.5 million students globally who marched out of the classroom once a month to raise our voices together and ask our governments: why aren't you protecting us?

Now we are asking you: will you support us as we strike for our future?

On September 27th, Winnipeg will join Greta Thunberg's call for a Global General Strike for Climate Action. At **The Manitoba Legislature from 12-5pm**, hundreds to thousands of people will gather in the name of climate action! This will be a peaceful demonstration with speakers, performances and workshops.

A UN climate report (The IPCC report from October 2018) says we have roughly eleven years left to change our whole way of life in order to prevent the worst impacts of climate change. This has caused us, as young people, a lot of stress. We have spent the summer watching the Amazon Rainforest burn and the Antarctic ice melt. We feel our future has been sacrificed to a small number of companies who pollute and destroy our home for profit, while sticking us with the consequences of their actions. We know those consequences include droughts, floods, deadly heat, wildfires, worsened air quality, drinking water shortages, diseases released from permafrost, rising sea levels which could swallow coastal cities, and millions of people being displaced, with Indigenous communities and countries in the Global South and Arctic Canada being hit first and worst. We know we need to keep global temperature rise below 1.5°C to stay alive and that the time for small, slow changes has passed. We are frustrated that our government isn't treating this like the emergency it is.

Most of us can't vote. So to make our voices heard, we organized strikes the first Friday of every month. Hundreds of students have attended each event and our numbers have grown continuously. We are following in the footsteps of Greta Thunberg, a 16 year old girl from Sweden, who started striking for the climate and was just nominated for a Nobel Peace Prize. As a part of the Fridays for Future movement, MB Youth for Climate Action just received the Ambassador of Conscience Award by Amnesty International.

We are writing this letter to ask you to support your students as they plan to participate in our largest event yet: the Global General Strike for Climate Action on September 27th. As educators, we know you care deeply about preparing the next generation to achieve their dreams - our dream is for a safe planet to live on.

Students must be the ones to lead their schools in the strike, but you can support them in any of the following ways:

STEPS TO FOLLOW:

1. START THE CONVERSATION:

- Read this email to your class to start a discussion on the climate crisis and the history of student activism (The Greensboro lunch counter sit-ins, the March for Our Lives movement, etc.)
- Consider talking to students about how to discuss the importance of climate change with their families and get support at home. Reference quotes from Greta Thunberg, Autumn Peltier and other inspiring young activists.
- Share the climate strike with your social justice and environmental groups.
- Art teachers could lead a class on protest art and allow students to make cardboard signs for the event.
- Have a *Spirit Week* style week of action from September 23-27 focusing on ecological and social justice questions. Alternatively, host an assembly or a special event on the topic of the climate emergency.
- Ask MB Youth for Climate Action to come speak at your event!

2. SUPPORT THE STUDENT STRIKES:

- Wear a green circle pin in solidarity. The green circle is the symbol of the student climate strikes and indicates that you support climate justice.
- Have a supply of green circles on your desk for students to help themselves. Green circles can be made easily at home by cutting a circle out of green felt fabric and fixed with a safety pin.
- Allow your students to put up posters for the action on September 27th.

3. PERSONALLY PROMOTE THE STRIKE:

- From your personal email, send an invitation to your loved ones, your co-workers, everyone you know, explaining why you support the strike and ask if they will join you in attending the event. By inviting your network, you utilize one of the most powerful ways to connect people; friendship.

4. SUPPORT PARTICIPATION IN THE STRIKE:

- If enough students in your school are interested in attending Sept 27th, consider organizing school busses or a field trip - schools have done this in the past to attend our First Friday strikes.
- Avoid putting important tests or lessons on September 27th.
- Consider an encouraging policy that students could send a selfie of themselves at the strike to avoid penalization for missing class.
- Attend as a school! Consider an opt-out policy for September 27th; attend the event collectively (other schools have committed to do this) with the option for students to opt-out.
- Advocate that the school administration do everything they can to support the students and be their ally as they fight for their future.

Our message to adults is clear: We cannot go about business as usual - our future is at stake and we need massive collective action now.

We value education and don't want to skip school, but we need a habitable planet in order to do all the things we are studying for. It feels ludicrous to be stuck in class while our planet is burning. In Manitoba, a person 17 years and under can skip school without penalty if "the child is unable to attend school by reason of sickness or other unavoidable cause." We believe our absence falls within these guidelines; we are experiencing the mental and physical health consequences of climate change and the need to protect our planet is an unavoidable cause.

We appreciate your support and would love to hear from you to discuss the various ways teachers and administrators can foster their student's passion for climate justice.

Thank you for reading this letter, considering our words, and taking this issue to heart.

Yours,
Manitoba Youth for Climate Action

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Intent to Participate in the Student Climate Strike

Description of Activity: Attendance of the Global General Strike for Climate Action on September 27th, 2019. Students are to meet at the Manitoba Legislative Building at 12:00 PM for an opening prayer, speeches and instructions. At 1pm, there will be a march down Broadway Ave. to a large-scale art installation, circling back to The Legislature for musical performances, speeches and poems, workshops and teach-ins from 2-5pm. There will be a presence of workshops and interactive exhibits at The Legislature for the duration of the event for anyone who does not want to or cannot march. There will be port-o-potties on The Legislature grounds. There will be a quiet, sensory-sensitive tent for anyone who needs it. This march and event has a permit and insurance. Students are encouraged to keep an eye out for what the weather will look like the day of the march and dress accordingly.

Date of Activity: Friday, September 27th, 2019

Description of Transportation: Students are expected to find their own means of transportation to the Legislative Building and their own way home, unless the school has made special accommodations.

Elements of Risk: Students are advised to take extra precautions during the event to dress appropriately for the weather, listen to instructions and obey marshalls while marching, and act in a socially responsible and mindful way. For added safety assurance, we recommend administration consider the possibility of accompanying students to the strike as chaperones; this has happened before and worked excellently. There is a risk factor with every field trip that a student chooses to attend during school, including the climate strike. By choosing to take part in this activity, the individual accepts this potential risk and all responsibility. To optimize the safety of our strikers, the Bear Clan Patrol has graciously agreed to escort us as we march along with 30 trained community marshalls.

Acknowledgement:

We, (Guardian's name) _____ and (Student's name) _____ understand and accept the above and hereby give permission for _____ to participate in the activity described above.

Name of Student: _____ Signature: _____ Date: _____

Name of Guardian: _____ Signature: _____ Date: _____