

Dear parents and guardians,

This is a letter from Manitoba Youth for Climate Action. We are a group of students and young people who have been organizing monthly student strikes to protest government inaction on the climate crisis. Hundreds of Manitoba students attended, joining a movement of 1.5 million young people around the world who are fighting for our future.

We have always been told to be the change we wish to see in the world. We listened. By striking, we are demonstrating the change we need; we need everyone to stop going about business as usual, pretending like this crisis will solve itself. We need everyone to work together against the injustice of watching our world burn when it could be saved. We need to keep applying pressure until our government acts in our defense.

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 catastrophe. This has caused us, as young people, a lot of stress. We feel our future has been sacrificed so a small number of companies can pollute and destroy our planet for profit, 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 displaced. Climate change will impact Indigenous communities, people with low incomes, and people living in the Global South and Arctic Canada first and worst. Whole species are disappearing and will continue to die out. 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 have been organizing strikes the first Friday of every month. There have been hundreds of people at 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. MB Youth for Climate Action, as a part of the Fridays for Future movement, have also just received the Ambassador of Conscience Award from Amnesty International.

We are writing you this letter to ask for your understanding and support. We know you have done everything you can to give us the best life possible. We are fighting for the future you envisioned for us. Many of us can't even imagine having kids or pursuing the careers we dreamt about while the future of our planet is so uncertain. We have to take care of everyone before we can think about ourselves.

There are lots of ways you can help. You can read up on climate change and discuss it with us at the dinner table. You can come to our strikes. You can invite your friends, coworkers and neighbours to join. You can wear a green circle to show your solidarity with the students. You can visit our website mbyouthforclimateaction.org and write a testimonial in support of our work to show other parents that whole families support the student strikes. You can help us write letters to our MPs and MLAs. Most importantly, you can take our fears seriously and try to understand that we strike because we care and are trying to be responsible global citizens.

On September 27th 2019, Greta Thunberg has called a Global General Strike for Climate Action. In Winnipeg, we are asking our adult allies to come out in full support. Get your workplace, your union, your friends and your neighbours on board. We are asking for binding, emergency measures from our federal government to keep global temperature rise below 1.5°C and we need everyone out in the streets to raise our voices together. Nothing is more important than providing protection for your children and that includes protecting the earth we live on.

We understand the importance of education and we don't want to skip school, but we need to have a habitable planet in order to do all the things we are studying for.

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 already experiencing the mental and physical health consequences of climate change and the need to protect our planet is an unavoidable cause.

You can help by giving us permission to use our constitutionally protected right to peacefully protest for something we care deeply about - protecting our home.

Thank you for reading this letter, considering our words, and taking this issue to heart. Please consider joining us on September 27th.

Yours,
Manitoba Youth for Climate Action

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