

## Healthy Schools Day proposes 'do-able' actions to reduce children's exposure to diesel emissions from school buses

Lung cancer, aggravated asthma, heart and respiratory problems among health effects of exposure; children can be more vulnerable to harm

April 2, 2019, Ottawa – Thousands of Canadian school children are exposed to cancer-causing emissions from diesel school buses every day and, according to this year's Healthy Schools Day campaign, it is time to make sure that all schools are taking every possible action to reduce those exposures and risks.

This year, Healthy Schools Day is on April 4<sup>th</sup>. In materials made available on the [campaign website](#), the Healthy Schools Day campaign asks 'Does your school get an 'A' for action on diesel emissions and children's health?'

"There are real, do-able and no-cost actions that every school board can take to reduce our children's exposure to diesel emissions," says Erica Phipps, Executive Director of the Canadian Partnership for Children's Health and Environment (CPCHE).

"Things as simple as turning off the engines of buses while they are loading or unloading outside the school. Or, make sure buses are not traveling or idling so close to each other that the exhaust from one flows into the passenger cabin of the other," she says. "Changing the timing of the school's ventilation system to avoid drawing in pollutants during busy traffic times is another option, and one that many schools have not yet heard about. "

While the campaign seeks to catalyze immediate and interim actions, it also urges investment in cleaner transportation technologies, such as electric buses powered by renewable energy sources, as the best way to protect children's health and combat climate change.

The Healthy Schools Day campaign proposes [four ways](#) to reduce exposure to diesel emissions:

1. **STOP IDLING** – Turn the engines off while school buses are waiting in loading zones or near school grounds.
2. **AVOID BUS 'CARAVANNING'** – Ensure there is a gap between buses during travel and in loading zones to keep the exhaust of one bus from polluting the cabin air of another.
3. **CHANGE THE TIMING OF SCHOOL VENTILATION** – Help reduce the infiltration of diesel bus and other vehicle emissions into schools by ensuring that high ventilation periods do not occur during busy loading/unloading times or rush hour.

- 4. UPGRADE AND REPLACE OLD BUSES** – Emissions from older buses can be improved with pollution control upgrades, and new technology diesel engines offer vastly improved emissions performance. Best of all, replace old diesel vehicles with new buses powered by cleaner energy such as electricity.

A 2016 Health Canada assessment summarizes the multiple health problems associated with exposure to diesel emissions, including increased risk of lung cancer, heart disease, and worsening of asthma and allergy suffering, as well as some evidence of potential links to certain reproductive and developmental effects. Phipps also cites growing concern among scientists about the ability of ultra-fine diesel exhaust particles to reach and potentially harm the brain.

Scientists agree that children can be more vulnerable to respiratory effects from diesel emissions. Because children have more rapid breathing rates than adults, children can be more highly exposed to diesel particulates and other airborne pollutants.

Healthy Schools Day is an annual nation-wide campaign led by the Canadian Partnership for Children's Environmental Health (CPCHE).

[healthyschoolsday.ca](http://healthyschoolsday.ca) / [lajourneedesecolesensante.ca](http://lajourneedesecolesensante.ca)

The following organizations are collaborating in the 2019 Healthy Schools Day diesel campaign:

CPCHE organizations: Canadian Child Care Federation, Canadian Environmental Law Association, Centre for Environmental Health Equity, Environmental Health Clinic -Women's College Hospital, Environmental Health Institute of Canada, Learning Disabilities Association of Canada, Ontario Public Health Association, Pollution Probe, Region of Peel Public Health, Toronto Public Health

Additional campaign partners: Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment, DADA – Dads Against Dirty Air, Équiterre, Friends of the Earth-Canada, Green Teacher, Health Canada, NB Lung Association, Ontario Environmental Network, Prevent Cancer Now, Scout Environmental, Simon Fraser University, University of Toronto

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The Canadian Partnership for Children's Health and Environment (CPCHE) is a national collaboration of 16 organizations with expertise in public health, medicine, environmental protection, disability advocacy, law and policy, research, and early childhood education. Since 2001, CPCHE has been working to advance the protection of children's health and development from the risks posed by toxic chemicals and pollutants.

[healthyenvironmentforkids.ca](http://healthyenvironmentforkids.ca) / [environnementssainpourenfants.ca](http://environnementssainpourenfants.ca)