

## When I was your age...

Many of us can recall hearing something like this when we were kids: “When I was your age, I used to walk 15 kilometres to get to school in five feet of snow....” This lesson from our elders speaks to our society’s change to a faster pace of life. It also reflects our reliance on automobiles to move us around our community instead of using more active modes of transportation such as walking, biking and even taking public transit.

Walking to school improves kid’s physical activity levels, social interactions, and alertness at school and also improves the environment and mental wellbeing of parents. Yet, in Canada, 58 per cent of parents say they always walked to school when they were kids but only 28 per cent of their kids do.

So curiosity led me to ask parents about why the shift away from walking to school. My findings were similar to those identified by the Active Healthy Kids Canada (2014). When it comes to walking to school as well as other physical activity for kids, parents often choose what they believe will save time, is more convenient and is safer.

My morning commute often involves navigating my bike through traffic flowing to and from the nearby schools. While wading through the traffic and idling vehicles, I often wonder how this can be more efficient, convenient and safe. Not only am I and the children who are walking or biking to school at greater risk of being hit by a car, there are also a lot of carbon emissions being dispelled into the neighbourhood as cars idle near the drop off zone.

With asthma and obesity on the rise in children and youth maybe it’s time to reflect on the words of our elders and re-consider how we get around. Walking and biking to school can be efficient, convenient and safe. Schools, city planners, parents and neighbourhoods have pulled together in various communities within the Interior region to plan active and safe routes to school. One initiative gaining popularity is the walking school bus which can be as simple as a group of children walking to school with one or more adults. Now that is something I can get behind!

For more ideas and toolkits visit <http://www.hastebc.org/>

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