

SEPTEMBER 2006

Indoor Air Quality and Mould

REAL was pleased to co-sponsor a workshop on June 15 featuring Jim White, an international expert on mould, indoor air quality and housing.

Importance of Indoor Air Quality. Health Canada estimates that Canadians spend more than 80% of their time indoors. The US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) now places poor indoor air quality fourth on a list of the 31 greatest environmental threats in the US. It is estimated that nearly 25% of US residents are affected by poor indoor air quality, either at the workplace or the home.

White is retired from Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation where he was responsible for introducing the House as a System and Healthy Housing concepts, Canadian successes acknowledged around the world.

To a packed audience of housing experts from Lanark County, White addressed the causes of mould and indoor air quality problems, and the solutions. Here are a few highlights:

Some housing makes people sick; some may even help make occupants sick to death. Usually the cause is mould or chemicals affecting people with immune problems. Mouldy houses have sicker occupants than non-mouldy houses.

In order to have a Healthy Home, ALL of the following must be done: control sources of pollution, provide adequate ventilation, provide adequate envelope performance, advise occupants on responsibilities, ensure proper maintenance.

Pollutants in the Home. There are many sources of pollutants in the home including outdoor air, things we use outdoors and track indoors, building materials, combustion appliances, moist materials growing mould, pesticides, cleaning products, scented products of all kinds and consumer products including furniture. For example, “wrinkle-free” clothing is made with formaldehyde, a carcinogen recognized by the World Health Organization.

Cleaning products are the second most problematic thing in houses after mould. Commenting on them, and in particular on pesticides, White said “Anything that kills, kills us.”

How these pollutants get into our homes and into us is primarily through air movement. Therefore, ensuring good ventilation is critical to a healthy house. This includes air exchanges in the house, air distribution between spaces and air circulation within rooms.

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Importance of Ventilation. Having a leaky house is no assurance of having good air quality. Most houses, old and new, require mechanical ventilation to provide adequate amounts of fresh air. While a house can be leaky, it may also have pockets of dead air behind furniture, for example, where mould can grow.

Ongoing ventilation in a house is the main defense against pollutants. Heat Recovery Ventilators do a good job of air exchange, always pay for themselves in heating and cooling costs and every Canadian house should have one.

Further he explained that furnace filters only protect furnaces, they do not clean the air we breathe. It is better is to use premium pleated filters, and 3M Filtretes are even better.

Moisture. Moisture in the home must be controlled. Mould grows when materials are wet enough for long enough.

Sources of moisture are people, occupants' activities, humidifiers, outdoor air, soil surfaces and soil. A family of four produces about 5 liters a day from their bodies alone. Humidifiers can be real problem. When installed on furnaces, they are often not cleaned properly and quickly become fouled with minerals and a grungy mess of biologicals and reduce air flow that can make people sick.

When using a humidifier in a sick room, use demineralized water as the normal mineral particles in regular water can carry mould and bacteria. Room humidifiers should be cleaned daily.

The soil surface close to a house should slope away from the house, so that rain/snowmelt don't saturate the soil and basement wall. Leave 3" high grass around immediate area of house so rain can run off. Grass that is too short allows rain water to go directly through the soil, and into the foundation.

Ventilation can remove many liters of water a day. Natural ventilation is not enough. A healthy level of moisture in a house is less than 45%. Because of weather conditions in the broader Ottawa Valley, and because new energy efficient air conditioners don't remove humidity the same way the old ones did, every house should have a dehumidifier and they should be drained outdoors or into the sump pump. You should pay more than \$200 for a good dehumidifier.



If you have a mould problem, you have a moisture problem. To deal with the mould, you must deal with the moisture problem and the ventilation.

Cleaning Mould. To clean up mould, you don't have to kill it, just clean it off completely. Do the same with dead mould as it can be just as toxic as live mould. Use a solution of unscented dishwashing detergent mixed with water (25 ml/liter). Put it on the mould, and leave it for 30 seconds. Then rinse it off thoroughly. Dry well and quickly with paper towels after rinsing. Use three buckets, one for the fresh cleaning solution, the second to wring your cloth into and the third for the clean water to rinse the area. Bleach or powerful cleaners are not needed – this is outdated information -- and careless use of these products kills lung tissues.

If you get a company to do it, chose one that says it will NOT use bleach and never allow an after-spray (they contain carcinogens and mutagens) that is supposed to keep mould away as it can make some occupants sick. You should get a company when the amount of mould is larger than a sheet of drywall, as the probability of getting ill during cleanup is too large to discount.

Preventing Mould. To prevent the return of mould, you must deal with the moisture source. Stopping leaks and using a dehumidifier usually stops mould growth.

Poor insulation can be a problem. If the 'R' or insulative value is not high enough, indoor surfaces get so cold that local relative humidity goes up way too high and mould can grow. This is a common problem with poorly installed windows. Air leaks through insulation makes is virtually ineffective. (To get your house assessed for air leakage and insulation levels, have an EnerGuide for Houses.)

Contact Canada Mortgage and Housing Canada for more information on dealing with mould. LL Green has some information on dealing with mould at The REAL DEAL Store and Environment Centre. As well, we provide the EnerGuide for Houses in Lanark, Leeds and Grenville.

REAL DEAL Connects with Community

The REAL DEAL Store has had a great summer. Donations have been excellent and we have a wide selection of good quality items. Sales are increasing, but we would like them to be better. We want all members of society to think about buying previously owned first, since this provides good materials, often unique, at excellent prices and keeps good materials in circulation instead of going to waste.

(It also means you can get materials that have already off-gassed, so you're not polluting yourself and your home with new materials. See article on indoor air quality.)

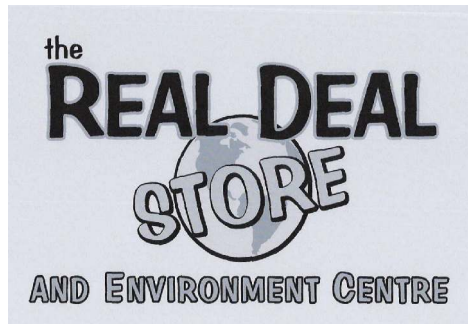
We had a whopping 904 customers in August, with about 2/3 of them from Smiths Falls itself. We received 14,761 kg. of goods and moved 9,916 kg, both through the Store and the Free Store (formerly the Reuse Centre).

Both Keely Maddock and Liz Brown finished their placements with us August 31. Joe Greer started July 17, and you may see him in the store occasionally, but he will be busy with other environmental projects. Most of our work crew will be continuing for another six-month stint. Even so, we need some additional volunteers. We need someone to work on arranging more donations of renovation materials, perhaps a handy person or a retired construction worker. And with the greater volume of material coming in and going out, we need more hands to help in the store with unpacking and organizing goods coming in. This would be a good job for people with a couple of hours to spare on a regular basis or even for families for a couple of hours on a Saturday morning.

We had a large shipment of over 50 working computers and parts from a company in Ashton. Dan Davidson and a new volunteer, Clint Stanzel, are assessing all the components, and so far have put together ten packages for sale in the store. The packages sell for \$100, more with a printer.

As the store becomes better known, we are making good linkages with other businesses and agencies in the area – we are becoming an important community asset. We have made connections with the Salvation Army, The Link, Access Centre, the Railway Museum, ecoPerth, Brown Shoe in Perth, LAWS and the OPP which have resulted in large donations. We have also seen an increase in seniors donating to the store to downsize their belongings.

And people are buying interesting things that just take a little work to make beautiful additions to their homes. One woman bought an old electric fireplace and about \$15 worth of paint and plaster, and created a charming decoration. A picture is up at the store.



Halina, our Store Manager, has spoken to the Easton's Corners Diner's Club and the Montague Ratepayers and is using Rideau.Reuses.com to make linkages. Ken Graham, our town liaison, kindly mentions the REAL DEAL at Town Council meetings. The article about the store that ran in the EMC has made the Ottawa version of the paper and we have had a few calls from that exposure.

We have also finally settled on a design for the sign, so watch for its installation this fall. Please continue to spread the word about the REAL DEAL - satisfied customers are really our best advertisement.

Keely Says Goodbye

A note from Keely Maddock, REAL's summer student, as she leaves for university.

The past summer working for REAL has been an incredible learning experience for me. This position has helped me to improve both my knowledge and work skills. I have been given great advice from my fellow employees, which will help me in preparation for my future years away from home.

Also, I have discovered a personal, deeper interest and concern for the environment. I will continue to actively look for ways to help myself and others to make a positive impact on the environment. My knowledge and awareness of environmental issues has thoroughly deepened, although there is still so much more to learn.

This summer, I had the opportunity to delve into many different environmental



topics, including climate change, rain barrels, idling, tire pressure, and composting. In doing so, not only did I learn much about each of the topics, but I became far less naïve to the issues and challenges that the environment is facing.

My work skills have strengthened considerably through dealing with different personalities, meeting deadlines, and team work. I have improved my leadership skills, communication skills, and my time management skills, all of which will be very helpful in the near future.

As I pursue archaeology in the coming years I will look for links from the past to the future. This will include examining how past civilizations dealt with their environmental issues, such as waste disposal. Thank you REAL for giving me this great opportunity - helping me to learn to make a REAL difference in our community for the environment!

Administrivia

It takes a lot of work behind the scenes to keep our organization going. Here are just a few of the activities that have occupied the REAL Board in recent months:

Policy Development. We have developed an Expense Policy, and are about to approve a Personnel Policy and Code of Conduct. A Policies and Procedures document for REAL Deal Volunteers and Work Crew is now in place. Next on the list is a Privacy Policy.

Finance and Fundraising. Funding proposals have been submitted to ensure the continued growth of the REAL Deal. A major donor fundraising drive is being considered. We are also seeking legal advice on our options for obtaining charitable status for The REAL Deal.

Business and Work Plan. The Board re-examined our five-year business plan in an effort to prioritize projects. An all day work session is planned for November to translate that into a work plan or schedule of tasks.

Canadians Environmental Concerns

Climate change has jumped dramatically on the scale of Canadians' worries over the last year.

Global warming is second place as a top-of-mind environmental issue, next only to air quality, says McAllister Opinion Research. It found that 77 per cent believe Canada should meet or exceed its Kyoto targets for cutting emissions, and more than 90 per cent of Canadians said climate change will be a serious problem if not addressed.

In the poll, the most frequently named environmental issues were air quality (35 per cent), global warming (20 per cent), water quality (12 per cent) and nature conservation (six per cent). In July 2005, only seven per cent of those interviewed named global warming as the top environmental issue.

Introducing Staff Member Joe Greer

Hi there, my name is Joe Greer.

I have become the new Environmental Program Coordinator for the Rideau Environmental Action League. My duties are to implement the Idle-Free and Tire Pressure Project and to develop and implement the Take-It-Back/Recycling project. As well, I am here to help everyone and anyone with questions we are faced with in our everyday struggle to make better choices for our health and the health of our environment and to occasionally assist in the REAL DEAL store.



I have recently graduated from Brock University with a Bachelor of Science, where my main areas of study were ecosystem biology and environmental sciences. My main concern is for greater conservation planning practices for our urban environments and the ability to integrate wildlife conservation while meeting human demands for development.

I look forward to promoting these ideas, and helping the community and the environment.

People Getting the “Idle Free” Message

One of Joes's duties as an Environment Projects Coordinator is to conduct an Idle Free and Tire Pressure campaign, following up on last year's pilot project.

The idle free campaign was initiated in 2005 during the summer months to encourage people to turn off vehicles while stuck at the lock crossings around Smiths Falls. The project was the first of its kind in Lanark, Leeds & Grenville, and an eye opening experience for the public who may not have been aware of the impact of idling on climate change and air quality.

This summer, Joe, Keely and others took to the community to promote an idle free zone at the Abbott Street lock crossing in Smiths Falls. The Idle-Free team was out talking to motorists four Fridays: July 21 and 28, August 25 and September 1.

In 2005, 323 vehicles were approached. Thirty-four percent were not idling, and 44% turned off their vehicles when asked, for a total of 78%. But 22% did not take the suggestion to turn off their vehicle. In 2006, in our sampling of 404 vehicles, 49% weren't idling and 15% shut off their vehicles, for a total of 64%, but 36 % did not take the hint.

It appears that slightly more people are getting the message that needless idling does indeed get you nowhere, as more had turned off the vehicles at their own initiative. It may be that fewer

people in total this year turned their vehicles off because of the hot temperatures and the perceived need to keep the air conditioning going, or because we did not provide a “gift” this year for turning off.

Next steps involve taking the message about not idling to schools, where parents picking up and dropping off their children need to get the message

that this is costly and unhealthy. All it takes is the turn of a key! At the same time,



REAL will be promoting the benefits of maintaining proper tire pressure to save fuel dollars, minimize greenhouse gases, improve tire wear and improve safety. REAL continues to pursue the possibility of “Idle Free Zone” signage at the lock crossings and other locations where people leave their cars running unnecessarily.

Saturday Info Features at ERC

A number of Saturday information features were organized by Keely Maddock, our summer student, at the Environmental Resource Centre (ERC) this summer.

First off was a tire pressure clinic assisted by Drummond’s Gas and Katimavik on July 8. About a dozen cars were tested, and a few with serious problems were found, including one tire that was 17 lbs and should have been 32. Rain barrels were demonstrated July 22. An informative in-house brochure was distributed, and a number of sales of the Arbour Environmental Shoppe rain barrels made. On

August 5 about 20 people dropped in to get Well Aware information kits and information.

The theme on August 12 was energy; the Lighten Up program, Kill a Watt meter, EnerGuide for houses and compact fluorescent light bulbs were highlighted. Katimavik participants offered a BBQ and car wash that day, and donated the proceeds to The REAL Deal and the SFDCY.

The grand finale to this busy summer was the August 26 EcoRRRama, when all the above information was available, in addition to tips on eco-friendly cleaners and composting, and some healthy doggie treats.

Summer Events

Many other REAL activities took place this summer across Lanark, Leeds and Grenville.

REAL was at the **Smiths Falls Chocolate and Railway Festival** on Saturday, July 15 below the water tower presenting some free children’s crafts. The collection of recyclables at the festival did not go as smoothly as hoped, but we feel there is a definite need for it.

REAL was represented at the **Art of Being Green** festival in Lanark Village July 15 and 16 by Sue Brandum, who made a presentation on Wells and Septics.

There was an excellent turnout for the film screening of “**An Inconvenient Truth**” at the Port Elmsley Drive-in Wednesday, July 26. The documentary attracted 107 cars, or 321 people, and millions of mosquitoes! Two busloads of young people from Camp Shomria also attended for the rock bottom maximum price of \$14 per vehicle. It has been suggested that ecoPerth, Film Night International and REAL co-sponsor other environmental film screenings in the future.

Our sister organization, Rideau Roundtable, presented “**Treasures on the Rideau**”, a package of a voyageur canoe tour and meal in

Merrickville or Smiths Falls. On July 29 the tour was of the Smiths Falls swale, followed by a delicious Angelo's dinner at the Rideau Canal Museum and discussion. The Rideau Environment Trust, the charitable arm of REAL, sponsored three young people to attend the Smiths Falls tour: staff members Keely Maddock and Joe Greer, and student, Monica Taylor. A complimentary voyageur canoe tour of the swale was organized for staff and volunteers of the REAL Deal July 20.



Well Aware Visits

The last thing any rural resident wants to be doing is digging up a well in frozen ground in the middle of winter. REAL/LL Green's Well Aware program will provide free, confidential, voluntary, non-regulatory visits through to about the end of October. Now is the time to determine what your well condition is like, your options for keeping your water safe and clean, and whether you have access to funding to help with your well – and to decommission an old well that may be contaminating your new one. For more information, and to arrange a free visit, call REAL/LL Green at 283-7999.

Well Aware encourages Ontario's residential well owners to protect their wells and our common groundwater supplies. Well Aware is a project of Green Communities Canada. This project has received funding support from the Ontario Ministry of the Environment. Well Aware is endorsed by the Canadian Institute of

Public Health Inspectors - Ontario Branch, Conservation Ontario, and the Ontario Federation of Agriculture. The Association of Professional Geoscientists of Ontario provides technical support. For more information visit www.wellaware.ca

EnerGuide for Houses

It's fall, energy prices continue to rise and you're facing a heating season. You might be looking at switching fuels, but it really doesn't make too much difference. Even wood has gone up. The best thing you can do, whatever fuel you use, is to use less of it. But how do you figure out where your most cost-effective actions are? Insulate the attic first? replace windows (costly)?, insulate the basement?

The EnerGuide for Houses energy audit will tell you what to do first. Despite what you may have heard, the audit is not completely dead, just not supported by the new federal government, despite its many benefits to Canadians. It's still the best way to figure out exactly what you need to do in your own house. Call REAL/LL Green at 283-7999 to arrange an audit.

In REAL Life

Thanks to ecoPerth for their cool donation of a **mini fridge** to the REAL DEAL. It fits perfectly and the staff and volunteers really appreciate it.

An Evergreen Avenue donor and volunteer **appreciation BBQ** was held September 12 at the Walton Shelter in Victoria Park.

We accept **cell phones and printer ink cartridges** at the REAL DEAL for recycling. The phones earn money for REAL, and the print cartridges earn money for the Canadian Diabetes Association.

Rain barrels from Arbour Environmental Shoppe are available at the REAL DEAL. The 45 gallon deluxe model is double screened (to discourage mosquito breeding), childproof, and has an overflow at the top and a tap at the bottom. You can even connect them.

Kill-a-watt Meters are still available to rent from the Smiths Falls Public Library for \$5. Find out which of your appliances are the energy guzzlers. You do not need to hold a library card.

Next time you are cursing your accumulation of plastic shopping bags, consider one of REAL's "**Make a REAL Difference**" **hemp bags**. The cost is \$18, or \$15 if you buy two or more. Buy them at Modern Thymes, e-mail the REAL website or call Elva at 283-0309.

Announcements

Saturday, September 9, **Household Hazardous Waste Day in Elizabethtown-Kitley**, 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. at Fire Station No. 1, 44 Main Street East, Lyn.

Saturday, September 23, 8 a.m. until 12 noon, **Last Household Hazardous Waste Depot** of the season for residents of Smiths Falls and **Lanark County** at Town of Carleton Place Waste Compost Facility, Patterson Cres. off of McNeeley Ave.

Saturday, September 30, **Hazardous Waste Day for Leeds and Grenville residents**. Two times and places. 1) 8:30 am - 11:30 am at South Grenville Patrol Garage, #2320 County Road 21, Spencerville 2) 1:00 pm - 4:00 pm North Grenville Patrol Garage, #720 County Road 44, Kemptville.

Our annual fundraising concert with the **Central Band of the Canadian Forces** has been set for Wednesday, November 9 at 7 p.m. at SFDCI. We nearly reached "standing room only" status last year, so buy your tickets early. Contact Peter at 284-8338 or aaapeterau@cogeco.ca.

Sunday, September 24, 1 - 3 p.m.
Great Canadian Shoreline Cleanup
behind Chambers St. Plaza, Smiths Falls
Diver and shoreline volunteers needed
Reach Dan at 283-9819
or c davidson9@cogeco.ca.

Membership and Rates

REAL membership fees are: Individuals - \$15, Family - \$20, Students - \$5 and Corporate - \$50. Please join us! Contact Frank Roy at 264-8856 or froy@perth.igs.net.

Next Issue

Submissions for the November issue can be sent to dhicks11@cogeco.ca by November 1, 2006 or call Barb at 283-9966.

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To Book Well-Aware or EnerGuide Visits

Phone: (613) 283-9500

