

REAL *update*

REAL people taking REAL action to protect our environment

Rideau Environmental Action League (REAL)

FEBRUARY 2018

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China's Ban on Imported Waste Causes Worldwide Repercussions

China's Jan. 1, 2018 ban on the import of 24 kinds of solid waste should be a wake up call to Canadians. China will no longer accept waste plastic, unsorted scrap paper or waste textiles. For the trash China still accepts, it has declared that contamination levels cannot exceed 0.5%. (Contamination occurs when non-recyclable materials get mixed in.)



Plastics at a Halifax materials recovery facility. *Globe and Mail*

Up until now China was happy to accept most waste materials because low labour costs made them cheap to process, and these materials were inputs to their manufacturing economy. Now they cite concerns for the environment and public health as a reason for the ban.

The rest of the world was happy to ship these materials to China, as it saved the cost of processing, the cost of what to do with them, and it provided an income for the waste management programs. China was taking about half of the world's plastics and half of the world's waste paper. The ban will be most severely felt in the US, which was sending half of its plastics to China. Britain shipped about two thirds of its plastics there. Canada, on the other hand, only shipped about 20 percent of their plastic to China.

So what is going to happen now?

Some of these materials may end up going to other countries, like Indonesia, India, Vietnam and Malaysia, but that will not make up the difference. And with that, some of the health and environmental problems will just land in another place.

In China, where there are no formal domestic recycling programs, some factories are going to have to rely on buying virgin materials, e.g. virgin pulp instead of recycled pulp, thus raising their costs and harming the environment. Some small businesses that exist to process these materials or that use those materials in products will be forced to close.



China's Imported Waste Ban (cont'd)

In Canada, the effect is uneven across the country. But municipalities are scrambling, and prices for the materials are declining. In the short term, there is some stockpiling going on. Some areas may reconsider incineration. Halifax has already had to request special permission to landfill plastics, because earlier legislation, in an attempt to encourage recycling, had banned those materials from landfills. B.C. has been ahead of the game with its extended producer responsibility system. Producers must pay for and ensure the recycling of their products. The province is more involved in waste management, reducing the pressure on the municipalities. In Quebec, 40% of the recycling materials collected are already being processed into new products in the province. According to one source, Canada's recycling companies are almost exclusively for the high-grade plastics like milk jugs and juice bottles. It is the lower grade and mixed plastics that are harder to use.

In the short term, some materials will end up in the landfill. But in the longer term, we are going to have to adjust. To ensure less contamination, some municipalities may switch from one stream (throw all you recyclables in one bin) to multiple stream collection. (Smiths Falls for example, uses two.) Ontario is the only province without a deposit return system for plastic bottles, and as a result only 40% are recovered in recycling programs. Perhaps that system could be reconsidered. And we are going to need to close the loop and find more ways to use the waste materials we produce. China's ban has already triggered a phase out of single use plastics in the EU, and the UK says it will eliminate all unnecessary plastic waste within 25 years.

But more change is due at the consumer level. Adam Minter, author of *Junkyard Planet*, has some strong words about recycling. "If you want to do something good for the environment, the best thing you can do is consume less... At an individual level, if you are really concerned about what this ban is going to do, the best thing you can do is stop taking pride in how much stuff you put in your recycling bin. You should start taking pride in how little is in that bin *and* in your waste bin."

Reducing Your Plastic Waste

- Know what is accepted in your recycling bin or bag, and only put in what is accepted.
- Don't put out unaccepted plastic even if it gets picked up! This contributes to contamination.
- Be a more selective shopper and avoid unnecessary plastics altogether.
- Avoid single use plastics like water bottles, plastic cutlery, drinking straws, razors and coffee pods.
- Carry a reusable water bottle and lug your mug.
- Use reusable shopping bags.
- Skip the plastic bags in the produce aisle.
- Support plastic bag bans.
- Pack lunch and leftovers in reusable containers.
- Use your consumer dollars to support companies that incorporate used plastics in their products or who are avoiding plastic in their store operations.



REAL Action Grants 2018

REAL is now accepting applications for the 2018 REAL Action Grants. Eligible groups have until March 19, 2018 to email their applications in. REAL wants to encourage local environmental action by kickstarting some small, hands-on projects with a \$250 grant. REAL knows it can be hard to find cash to get projects off the ground, and so is hoping to make the application process a simple one. Winners will be announced by Earth Day, April 22. Successful applications will have until the end of the summer to make their project a reality.



Projects should address an environmental issue like waste, energy, water or climate change, but there is a lot of room for creativity within that. In the two previous sets of grants, many gardening projects were supported with funds to purchase items such as garden supplies, a composter, a refrigerator for storing produce, and materials to construct a greenhouse. REAL has contributed to two secondary school environmental field trips, a water bottle filling station and a Green Volunteer Program. A tree has been planted as part of a memorial, and one group home invested in new recycling bins.

The 2017 and 2018 grants have been made possible thanks to a donation from the Pilkington Henniger Charitable Trust Foundation.

For more information, on who is eligible and how to apply, [see our website](#).

The Great Pacific Garbage Patch

The Great Pacific Garbage Patch is truly amazing, but not in a good way. A garbage patch is floating trash concentrated in a particular part of the ocean by ocean currents. The Great Pacific Patch is actually two patches: the Western Garbage Patch, located near Japan, and the Eastern Garbage Patch, located between the U.S. states of Hawaii and California. The Great Pacific Patch is twice the size of Texas, so is the biggest in the world. But there are other garbage patches in the Atlantic and Indian Oceans.

It is estimated that 80% of the debris in the garbage patch comes from land-based activities and the other 20% from marine sources, such as boaters, offshore oil rigs, and large cargo ships. Because it floats, and is not biodegradable, plastic debris makes up most of the patch. The patch is not a solid island, but is described as a soup or a cloudy mass of tiny bits of plastic with bigger pieces of waste mixed in. Some sources say it is 9 feet deep. The “soup” is comprised of the tiny pieces that result when plastic breaks down, as well as the microplastics that come from cosmetics or from synthetic clothes.



Garbage patch closeup, taken from Blue Ocean website.

And the patch is getting bigger. Charles Moore, who first discovered the patch while crossing the Pacific in 1997, predicts it will likely double in size in the next ten years. Much of the material is already enroute, as trash from the coast of North America is taking about six years to reach the Patch, and trash from Japan and other Asian countries is taking about a year. It is alarming to think that the conglomerations of plastic waste have probably been accumulating since the industrial world began producing plastics about 60 years ago.

Farewell to Susan Brandum

REAL Board, staff, volunteers and members are saying farewell to Susan Brandum as she continues her career path in the environmental sector. For almost a decade she has served as REAL's Environmental Projects Manager and the Executive Director of the REAL Deal Reuse Store.

Sue moved to Port Elmsley from Toronto in 1996 looking for a lifestyle change, and quickly became part of the environmental communities in Perth and Smiths Falls. She instigated the LLGreen project (Lanark Leeds Green Community) for REAL, which encompassed Lanark, Leeds and Grenville Counties and included many hands-on programs for individuals, starting with Pesticide Free Naturally and the Green Home Visit.

She initiated REAL's association with Green Communities Canada (GCC), an umbrella organization for about 40 green communities, and participated in a variety of GCC committees. Sue was a major player in the development of the Well Aware and ecoENERGY home visit programs, researching and piloting programs which were later adopted in other green communities. More recently, she got REAL involved in baseline well water testing for properties near solar farms, as a way of putting of our in-house well water and community experience to good use.

But perhaps her most visible REAL achievement has been the development of the REAL Deal Store and Environment Centre, a process which began about 2005, and took an inordinate amount of volunteer time. Today our reuse Store is celebrating its tenth year at its current location, and has become an integral part of the community. Along with the REAL Deal, Sue has invested countless hours into advancing the Environment Centre on the same site, a hub for "green" information and activity in this region.

And these are just some of the many environmental projects she has been involved with on REAL's behalf, both on a volunteer and non-compensated basis. Sue does this primarily because, as she says, she is proud to be called an environmentalist, and believes people want to do the right thing and there is a way to make



it happen. She is incredibly well-read on past and emerging environmental issues, enjoys interacting with the public, and recognizes opportunities to improve the environment. These skills have benefited other area groups as well, including the Friends of the Tay Watershed, the Greening of Perth Committee, and the Tay Canal celebrations.

Sue's resignation was effective December 31, 2017. We will miss her and wish her all the best in her future endeavours. Thousands of people have learned how to reduce energy use in their homes, to look after their wells, reduce their waste, and take many big and small eco-friendly actions through her efforts. Her environmental leadership has been a key element in creating the strong, well-respected environmental non-profit that REAL is today.

The REAL Board of Directors will take some time to re-evaluate the organization's direction and how to best organize our human resources to continue to encourage environmental action in our community. Please contact any of our seven board members for information about REAL's operations.

REAL Board of Directors

Barb Hicks	dhicks11@cogeco.ca
Peter Au	peter00au@gmail.com
Karen Schecter	kschecter@vianet.ca
Donna McKenna	anidsondj@gmail.com
Lorraine Allen	lallen@smithsfalls.ca
Keely Maddock	keelymaddock@gmail.com
Jason Takerer	takerer@mail.com

REAL Deal News

We are creeping up on a major milestone: ten years in operation at 85 William Street W. It hardly seems possible, but we began accepting donations in May 2008.

Store staff and volunteers enjoyed a nice Christmas break from December 24th to January 3rd inclusive. We turned over an impressive quantity of Christmas items, and they just kept coming in. Some have been packed up for next year, and we continue to accept seasonal donations year round.

This is traditionally a slower time of year for donations, which has given us some time to clean, declutter and reorganize a little. We have brought several treasures down from our attic, most of which sold quickly. A few tweaks have been made to the hardware area to make it less cluttered, and our smalls sorting area was modified as well. Furniture items have been turning over quickly, so that area looks a little different each store visit.

Your Donations Mean a Lot to Us. This means your donations are even more appreciated this time of year. If you are decluttering, downsizing, or have just plain changed your mind, please consider directing your gently-used items to us. We will do our best to make sure they get into the hands of someone who can use them. Unlike other charities, discarding materials really is just a last resort to us. We will give items away if we have to. And your support contributes to the environmental activities of REAL in our community.

Facebook Marketplace. The store is experimenting with using the Facebook Marketplace group to feature some of the more expensive or unusual items we have on hand. This feature of Facebook is available to anyone with an account to post their interest to buy or sell goods, and



A deacon's bench that sold after being seen on Facebook Marketplace.

allows users to set their geographic location and radius so they will be seeing things that are easier to get to see or pick up. While you need a Facebook account to post, anyone can see what is featured there. This will allow the REAL Deal to showcase store inventory to a broader audience. It appears to have spread the word of our existence a little further afield as well. It is great to see new customers in the store, in addition to our very loyal regulars.

Second Chance Art Sale. Watch for our upcoming annual Second Chance Art Sale March 8-17. This is when we make room to display the many art pieces that have been donated to the store. Volunteers Donna and Brenda are often able to frame or reframe pieces so they are ready for customers to hang, but there are usually some unframed prints for sale, too. If you are seriously interested in art, plan to drop by more than once, because we usually can't put all the pieces out at once, and so replenish them throughout the sale period.

Human Resources. The REAL Deal store functions with a crew of great people who are a mix of volunteers, work placements and minimally paid staff. Out back we have Mike Brown, Denver Bradshaw, Ed Crawford, Chris Kuhl and Rob Daigle, as well as regulars Don Harvey, Tim Dupras, and Mike Tryon. On cash we have Heather Warren and Judy Mundy, and in smalls Brenda King, Barb Hicks, Donna McKenna and Una Pugh.

More Volunteers Needed. We would welcome new recruits to our team! See the volunteer story on p. 6 for some ideas on where you could help us out.

The store is being very capably managed by Shelley Wills, In-Store Manager, and Don Mathewson, Renovations Manager. If you have any store concerns beyond their responsibilities, please contact board members Donna McKenna or Barb Hicks, who are also regular volunteers in the store.

Winter Hours. Please note that we are not open Sundays in winter months, January through March. We anticipate the return of Sunday hours, noon to 4 p.m., sometime in April.

REAL Needs You!

Looking for a way to give back to your community and protect our local environment? REAL could really use your help.

It takes a lot of time and energy to maintain a small, non-profit organization and provide meaningful programs to the community. Besides our projects in the public eye, there are many behind the scenes activities that set the stage. REAL, like so many volunteer organizations, could benefit from more hands to spread the load.

Contributing to a successful organization can be a rewarding experience. You feel useful and part of a team. Whether you are newly retired and looking for ways to use your skills, young and trying to get some work experience, or anywhere in between, there is a place for you.

Come for a few hours, a month, an event, or on a regular basis – all are welcome. Everyone has skills to contribute, even if it is just your interest and enthusiasm.

Here are a few areas where you could help:

In the Store: smalls sorting, appliance testing, hardware sorting, cleaning, evaluating specialty items (do you know antiques, art, or collectibles for example), truck pickups or deliveries, car errands etc. Contact Shelley Wills by email or phone 283-7999, or drop in to the store.

Other REAL Activities: fundraising, event planning (our local foods dinner, Pitch-In etc.), membership coordination, grant applications, writing, research etc. Contact Donna by email or phone.

It would be helpful for you to complete a Volunteer Application Form in advance, so we know a little bit about you and are better able to suggest something that might appeal to you. Pick a form up at the store or [print one from the website](#).



Improved Home Energy Program

Great news! There is a *new and improved* Home Energy Conservation Program. Now you can get \$5000 and more in incentive grants for doing energy efficiency up-grades in your home.

Renovations and up-grades such as insulation, air sealing, heating equipment and more all qualify for incentives. You must do at least two recommended upgrades to your home to get the incentive grants.



All electrically heated homes can receive substantial additional incentives for installing air source heat pumps. All homes can get further amounts for installing Energy Star appliances and electrically efficient heating and cooling equipment.

In order to qualify for incentives you must have a pre-renovation energy assessment and a shorter post-renovation audit to confirm your upgrades. This cost of the audits will be rebated when you complete your upgrades and get the incentive grant.

An energy audit is a comprehensive assessment of the energy performance of your home including a detailed report that recommends the upgrades that will save the most energy and qualify for incentive grants. Our NRCan Registered Energy Advisor will discuss his energy efficiency recommendations as well issues that affect comfort and a healthy home.

This program is brought to you by Enbridge, Save ON Energy, the Government of Ontario and REAL. You don't need to be an Enbridge customer and can heat your house with oil, propane, wood, electricity or natural gas.

Please contact our Registered Energy Advisor, Alan Leonard, to see if you can benefit from this program. Call (613) 864-3099 or email alanleonard9@gmail.com.

Read all about in on the [Enbridge Smart Savings site](#), or [see this summary](#).

Pitch-In Smiths Falls April 21 to May 6

Pitch-In Smiths Falls, our annual community-wide litter cleanup, is just a couple of months away. The organizing team is still keen to see this happen, but after 17 years, could use some younger blood to help keep things interesting and progressing. If you have any time to help, or some ideas to streamline or encourage additional participation, we would love to hear from you.

Pitch-In bags will be available at the REAL Deal during store hours for anyone who would like to collect litter during the two week campaign period, April 21 to May 6. This could be a great team-building event for your business or club, but participating on your own can be oddly satisfying as well. Town staff ensure the filled pitch In bags are picked up, so there is no cost to participants for disposal. Please contact Cathryn Davidson at 283-9819 if you would like to help out on the organizing end of things, and watch our website for how Pitch-In will unfold this year.



In REAL Life



Membership Renewal. It's that time of year again. Members will be receiving a membership renewal request along with an annual report sometime in February. You can pay by cheque or PayPal, or if you want to come to the store, in cash. Your \$15 individual or \$20 membership fee is an important source of income for us. We also welcome donations, and can provide a charitable receipt thanks to our charitable status.

Books. REAL Deal accepts used books with a few exceptions. To avoid being inundated with books that don't sell, we do not accept encyclopedias or textbooks, and can only accept limited quantities of dictionaries, atlases, self-help or spiritual books. If you have run out of other options, most municipal recycling programs will accept books, even with hard covers. You should remove any plastic spiral bindings, however. We will also accept magazines from the last few years.



On the Web



- Eleven terms that shaped environmental discussion in 2017, and may end up in the dictionary someday. Expressions like “meatmare”, a *nightmare in which a vegetarian or vegan dreams about accidentally eating meat, then wakes up feeling guilty about it*. To “climate tourism”, *hurried travel to landscapes that are expected to melt or disappear*. This [MotherJones story](#) will interest you if you like words.
- This 4 minute mockumentary [The Majestic Plastic Bag](#) follows the journey of a plastic bag to the Great Pacific Garbage Patch. The group Heal the Bay produced it to encourage support of a plastic bag ban bill in California.
- CBC's Day 6 radio program has been doing a series “Wasted”. You can listen to the Brent Bambury segments (usually about 11 minutes) online. [China's plastic ban](#), [e-waste](#), [thrift stores](#) and [plastic toys](#) are the topics so far.
- Environmental Defence Canada's [Predictions for the Biggest Environmental Stories of 2018](#) and or [listen to the discussion](#) between Executive Director Tim Gray and Ecoholic author Adria Vasil. More plastic bag bans, better protection for Canadians against toxic chemicals are possibilities, and more wacky weather is certain.



Box 1061
Smiths Falls ON
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613-283-9500
info@REALaction.ca

We're on the Web
www.REALaction.ca

REAL Deal Store & Environment Centre

85 William St. W.,
Smiths Falls ON
613-283-7999

Store open Thursdays
through Saturdays 10 – 4
Closed Sundays
January to March

Community Garden,
Energy Audits, Volunteer
or other programs

Phone: 613-283-9500

Facebook Groups:
REAL Deal Store
REAL
Community Garden

Send contributions to the
April issue by March 15 to
dhicks11@cogeco.ca
or call Barb at (613) 283-9966

REAL people taking REAL action to protect our environment



Make a REAL Difference

Tell us how you would make an impact on the local environment
by applying for a **2018 REAL Action Grant**.
3 grants of **\$250** to be awarded!

For application details or to see past winners please visit:
<http://www.realaction.ca>

Deadline: **March 19th, 2018**



RIDEAU
ENVIRONMENTAL
ACTION LEAGUE

Make a REAL Difference

Please return this form to:
REAL
Box 1061
Smiths Falls, ON
K7A 5A5

Or bring to
The REAL Deal

Make a Donation

☐ I would like to make
a donation of

\$ _____

A charitable receipt for
income tax purposes will
be issued. To donate by
credit card, go to
www.Canadahelps.org.

Volunteer

☐ I want to help

Become a Member

I would like to become a member

- ☐ Individual membership \$15
☐ Family membership \$20
☐ Student membership \$5
☐ Corporate membership \$50

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