



Merry Christmas & Happy New Year



REAL *update*

REAL people taking REAL action to protect our environment

Rideau Environmental Action League

DECEMBER 2011

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Why Have an ecoEnergy Audit?

We ask that question when people call REAL to book an audit. Certainly most people are interested in the grants – it’s a no-brainer to get back about 1/6th of your investment under the current program, and up to 1/3 under the past program.

But, many people are genuinely seeking solid advice on what energy efficiency improvements they should invest in, and what they shouldn’t bother investing in.

For example, generally, we all know we could do with more insulation in our homes. But do you know how much in the attic, in the basement, in the walls? Do you know what the estimated cost will be? Do you know how much energy you’ll save by doing x amount of insulation? Do you know whether a particular investment will pay you back in energy savings in six months, two years, or

20 years? The real value of the audit comes in knowing where your most cost-effective investment is for your particular house.



Another example is windows. The window companies have done a fabulous job of convincing us that new windows are a huge energy saver. And, they certainly are - if you’re changing 70-year-old single-pane windows for good quality, double-glazed energy efficient units, properly installed. But if you’re simply changing good, double-glazed 15-year-old units for similar new ones, your payback may be as long as 20 years. You may well have been better off investing a

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REAL Deal on TV



REAL was thrilled to be chosen as the subject for a Regional Contact story which aired on November 6th. Kathie Donovan and her crew made three trips to the REAL Deal to get their footage. The segments

included conversations with Susan Brandum, our Environmental Projects Manager, and David Hoffman, community garden participant, as well as Steve Dobson delivering a heritage fence building workshop. The Smiths Falls Railway Museum was featured in the same program. Thanks to Nancy Berthiaume and David Hoffman for approaching Regional Contact. We received many favourable comments from loyal Regional Contact viewers. If you missed it, you can [view it online](#).



Why Have an ecoENERGY Audit? (cont'd)

few thousand in insulation first, reducing your energy use by 22%, and banking the savings towards new windows rather than replacing them right away.



The home energy audit gives you exactly this type of detailed information. The initial audit takes from 2 to 4 hours to complete. The auditor will take measurements throughout the house, investigate insulation levels and conduct blower door tests. The blower door is a large fan set up in the main doorway that depressurizes, or draws air out of the house. It tells you exactly where the air leakage is occurring in your house, and how many air changes your house is getting. One full house air change every three hours is healthy.

REAL's auditor Alan Leonard has 25 years of construction and renovation experience, seven years experience in home energy audits, and is constantly upgrading his professional knowledge and skills in indoor air quality, thermography, air systems design, mechanical ventilation, multi-unit buildings, etc.

Alan is also very thorough, conscientious and understanding. He's seen the best and worst home energy situations, is non-judgemental and, like REAL, is only there to help you, and to reduce our collective impact on the environment.

More than 300,000 Canadians have now taken advantage of the ecoEnergy – Retrofit Homes program. On average, they have reduced their energy consumption by 22%. And, depending on what they have done, they have received grants that were worth up to roughly one-third of their investment – a much better return than the stock markets or bank accounts.

Frankly, it's a wonder that more Canadians have not gotten in on this fabulous program.

But you still have a chance. The current program goes to March 31, 2012. That means you still have the time to get the first audit, do the work and have the second audit by the end of March and qualify for the grants.

And, homeowners who may have had a first audit years ago, but either weren't able to follow through or have done more work since their first grant are eligible to reenter the program and receive some grants too.

If you would like solid advice, and to take advantage of grants, call REAL at 613-283-9500 and leave a message. You will need to register with the federal program before actually booking your audit. See <http://www.ecoaction.gc.ca/ecoenergy-ecoenergie/retrofithomes-renovationmaisons-eng.cfm>

“BPA-free” Label No Guarantee Against Leaching

According to a study in Environmental Health Perspectives, a “BPA-free” label offers no assurance that a product won't leach chemicals with estrogenic activity (EA).

BPA or Bisphenol A, a chemical constituent of polycarbonate resin plastics, is an estrogen mimicker linked by hundreds of studies to

potentially adverse health effects in mammals ranging from cancers and infertility to diabetes and obesity. Of greatest concern is BPA-containing plastics that infants and toddlers might encounter. It is generally assumed that plastics derived from common resins other than polycarbonate do not release chemicals exhibiting EA. This

study thoroughly debunks this supposition, reporting that most of a sample of 455 commercially available products, made with resins other than polycarbonate, tested positive for EA.



For more details see: www.emagazine.com/blog/bpa-free

Three Quarters of Canadians Use Toilet as Garbage Can

A survey of Canadians in January 2011 reveals that 72% admit to flushing items down the toilet they could dispose of in another manner. Left-over food, hair, bugs and cigarette butts lead the list of items discarded, thus wasting an average of six to 20 litres of fresh, clean water with each flush. Young Canadians, 18 to 34, are the worst



offenders. The survey highlights, once again, that Canadians are not making the connection between their personal water use and the true value of water. One expert commented: “Canadians (who use an average of 329 litres a day) need to understand that water is a finite resource and there are significant social and economic implications related to wasting it.”

The Christmas Tree Debate - Artificial or Natural?

The artificial vs. real Christmas tree debate continues. It appears artificial trees are winning in terms of consumer preference, but environmentally, they might not be the best choice. A Canadian Living poll of its readers showed that last year 58% chose artificial trees, 29% chose fresh cut, and 13% did not have a tree. However, one Life Cycle study determined you would have to use an artificial tree at least 20 years to leave an environmental footprint as small as the real trees.

Artificial

Personal: Artificial trees look pretty good, may come pre-lit or decorated, are convenient, can be left up as long as you like, and can be used year after year. They aren't messy and don't need watering. They must be stored, but at least you don't have to tie it to your car roof every year. They don't smell nice, but they may be the better bet for allergy and asthma sufferers, who could react to a natural tree or the pollen on it.

Cost: Prices range from \$100 to \$300. Assuming you use your tree for 10 years, that's \$10 - \$30/year. Or pick up a used tree at the REAL Deal for \$10 - \$20.

Production: Most artificial trees are made of metal and polyvinyl chloride (PVC) plastic that is petroleum derived and emits carcinogens during production. Older trees may include lead, which, apart from production dangers, may shed lead tainted dust. Most are made in China, where environmental standards aren't as stringent, and the trees must be transported here.

End of Life: PVC trees are not recyclable, and will stay in landfills for years. If your artificial tree still has some life in it, consider reuse: donating it to a charitable operation, like the REAL Deal.

Natural

Personal: A cut tree is a Christmas tradition: they look and smell good! But they don't last for long. The needles and sap can be messy, and cut trees must be watered. Natural trees may not be permitted in some buildings. You will need to choose, pay for and transport a natural tree every year. If you don't live near where trees are grown, there is the additional transportation impact.

Cost: Can vary from free to \$60 or more. So comparable to or more expensive than an artificial tree.

Production: Trees are often grown on marginal land, and are a soil stabilizer and wildlife habitat. A farmed tree absorbs one tonne of carbon dioxide over its lifetime, produces oxygen and filters airborne pollutants. Farmed trees are replaced by one to three more, so don't deplete the forests. However, if not farmed organically, pesticides, herbicides and fertilizers may be used, and they might be watered over the 8 - 12 years they are grown. Producing and harvesting the trees provides jobs for Canadians.

End of Life: Natural trees can be “treecycled”: chipped into mulch, used for erosion control, and used for fish and wildlife habitat. Even in a landfill, the tree will eventually biodegrade. While many municipalities pick them up, you may need to transport the tree to a depot yourself.

Fun fact: The prototype artificial Christmas tree was created by a U.S.-based toilet bowl brush manufacturer in the 1930's.

Naughty or Nice: Avoiding Waste this Season



Studies suggest that we create 25% more household waste during the Christmas season. Yikes! So it's not a good time to give up your good recycling habits. Here is a rough guideline as to what is recyclable, what is not. Unfortunately, each municipality in Lanark, Leeds and Grenville runs its own recycling program and the rules vary. So best check with your municipality to be sure, particularly regarding wrapping paper and trees. They may have it posted on their website closer to the big day, include it in their newsletter, or provide a notice in the EMC.



Here are some items that land on the nice list, that is, they can be recycled: cardboard gift boxes, uncoated paper gift bags, Christmas cards and envelopes, paper or cardboard tags, tissue paper. Check with your municipality regarding Christmas wrap. It may not be accepted for several reasons. It may be dyed, laminated or contain additives (glitter, plastics) that cannot be recycled. It may also be "contaminated" with tape, labels, ribbon etc. If your municipality accepts paper, be sure to remove all trims like ribbon and bows.

You should probably take a pass on burning Christmas wrapping paper, too. Putting it into your fireplace is dangerous for your chimney, roof, and air, as the inks release toxic fumes. See more at <http://www.straightdope.com/columns/read/2684/deck-the-halls-with-balls-of-fire>.

And here is the naughty list – things that cannot be recycled: foil or metallic paper, bubble wrap, adhesive tags, Styrofoam packing peanuts, ribbons and bows and tinsel, artificial trees and wreaths. Glass ball ornaments or Christmas light bulbs do not go in the glass recycling. Wrap them in paper so no one gets cut and put them in the regular garbage.



Make plans to avoid items on the naughty list altogether, find alternatives, or reuse them yourself. For example, you can save gift wrap, ribbons, bows and trims to use next year, and coated gift bags, while not recyclable, can be used repeatedly before they must be discarded. Newspaper, comics, posters and maps make interesting gift wrap. Make fabric bags or make the gift wrap part of the gift, e.g. a tea towel, t-shirt or tablecloth. For packing materials use shredded paper, crumpled newspaper, or even popcorn. Christmas cards can be cut into gift tags, or simply write on the package itself. Consider a cut tree, decorate a large indoor plant, or choose a living tree that can be planted outdoors in spring. To recycle a natural wreath, remove all trims, remove the greenery from the metal frame and put the greenery in the compost. A grapevine wreath can be used over and over.

If your Christmas light strings have given up the ghost, it's time to consider LEDs, which use less energy and last longer. The REAL Deal is collecting light strings (i.e. we don't really want the bulbs). They will be taken to an enterprise in Ottawa and we will earn a bit of money for the copper wire contained within. The store does not resell the strings of large outdoor lights because they are not energy efficient. We do continue to resell mini-light strings.

Check with your municipality about natural tree disposal arrangements, as theoretically they are recyclable. You may have an option of curbside pickup or taking it to a depot or landfill site. For example, the town of Smiths Falls will be collecting trees the week after New Year's at curbside. Rideau Lakes suggests you compost the tree on your property, or take it to the Portland landfill free of charge. In Montague, there is no pickup or depot. But keep in mind that while trees picked up might be composted or mulched, they may still end up in landfill.

As always, please consider buying reused Christmas materials so they don't become waste. The REAL Deal has a good supply of ornaments, mugs, stockings, artificial trees, tree stands, gift bags, and package or wreath trims. And did we mention artificial trees, tree stands and mugs? Stock up on inexpensive glassware, cutlery and plates, too, so you don't resort to disposables!

Christmas Gifts to Developing Nations



What to buy for the person who has everything? A donation to a worthwhile cause. Many charities are getting into the act by creating gift catalogues of donations that represent a particular gift to a family or community in a developing nation. The catalogues offer an amazing array of possibilities, such as farm animals, school supplies, mosquito nets, library books, medical clinic supplies, business loans, a new well or a new school. There will be something in everyone's price range, from as little as \$12 for a mango tree (Plan Canada) up to gifts a community group might support. You give a meaningful gift, the recipient receives a card for you to present (or it can be mailed directly to them), you get a charitable receipt, and there is no waste involved. The recipient will appreciate the thoughtfulness of your unique gift idea, and will be thankful they don't have more stuff to deal with.

Here are a few you might want to look into: [World Vision](#), [Samaritan's Purse](#), [Plan Canada](#), [Save the Children](#), [Kiva Microfinance Loans](#), [MSF Warehouse](#).

And not quite the same but a hit with kids, a donation to the [World Wildlife Fund](#) to symbolically adopt a species at risk comes with a stuffed toy version of the animal.

Name that Junk Contest

Winners of the "Name that Junk" contest were: 1) Barbara Fergus, 2) Nick Clammaichella and Tina Bedford and 3) Zoe Ashby. Honourable mention goes to Margaret Edwards and David Hoffman. Contestants attempted to identify all the materials and objects included in the five junk art panels created by artist Val Hudson, and now installed on the REAL Deal exterior. On November 19, winners were presented with gift bags that included \$10 gift certificates for the Deal. Thanks to everyone who participated.



REAL Deal In Christmas Mode

The REAL Deal has been THE place to be for Christmas things! Since staff and volunteers have been putting out the ornaments, trees, mugs, wall decorations, lights and wreaths, everything has been selling briskly. This is truly what we want happening, as the gently used Christmas items had been taking up about a third of our loft storage space. Watch for further discounts as we approach December 25th. But note that, if you are downsizing or decluttering, the REAL Deal will continue to accept donations of all things Christmas during this season and year round.

REAL has created another part-time paid position thanks to New Directions. Say "Hi" to Sue McCarten, our new cashier, when you come to the store. Don Harvey continues to be in charge of the yard, receiving and assisting customers. Having two other consistent staff members will be a great help to Store Manager, Tracy Thomson, as it will free her up to attend to other store concerns.

Just a gentle reminder to everyone to please not leave your donations outside of store hours. It looks untidy, it may get taken before we see it, and it could be ruined by the elements. It doesn't help us if what is left becomes garbage and we must pay to dispose of it! We have had several couches ruined in this way. If your donation is very large (such as bazaar table leftovers) or includes large items (like dressers), advance notice would be appreciated. Just call 283-7999.

Many thanks to our faithful volunteers for their hard work in this busy season. We welcome Eric Sirvante, Heather Warren, Bonnie Smith and Eddie Lockett to the crew. Apologies to Dale Steele for missing him last newsletter. And thanks to our regulars Ed Crawford, Rob Watts, Karen Durocher, Una Pugh, Brenda King and Barb Hicks. We couldn't do it without these amazing people. But there is always room for more! If you would like to be a part of the REAL Deal team, Tracy would love to hear from you. Drop in, call the store 283-7999 or e-mail her: tracy@realdealstore.ca. All volunteers are asked to complete a volunteer application form.

Sue McCarten Joins the REAL Crew

The REAL Deal is pleased to welcome Sue McCarten, our new store cashier, to the team. Asked what she thinks of our reuse store so far Sue enthuses "I love it!". She enjoys the "quaintness" of the store, and being able to spend time meeting and talking to the people who volunteer and shop there. She likes how it is well-organized with lots of selection. "The things you find here are never out of date. It's great to find pieces of things that were available and popular years ago but aren't readily available today."

Sue moved to Smiths Falls from Ottawa about 18 years ago, and commuted for a good part of that. She has worked at Algonquin College, TSC and the Smiths Falls Zellers, where she still works part time, so has an abundance of cash experience behind her. Sue is married with two grown children. In her spare time she likes the great outdoors, including walking, kayaking and gardening. Indoors she enjoys knitting and reading.

Sue's first six months with REAL is thanks to support from the New Directions Program for the mature worker.



December Holiday Hours

December 22 and 23: 10 - 4
 December 24: 10 - 12 noon

December 29 and 30: 10 - 4
 December 31: 10 - 12 noon

Watch for Christmas bargains as we approach December 25th

Regular hours resume Thursday, January 5th

In REAL Life

No you didn't miss it! The local foods dinner scheduled for Sat. Oct. 29th did not come to pass, due to challenges in booking a caterer as well as pricing issues. We are still working on another idea for a local food cooking instruction event, so stay tuned.



Provincial legislation requires that all staff, board and volunteers take accessibility training to ensure that any Ontarians living with a disability have equal access to services. Some REAL people attended a training session on November 2nd in Smiths Falls, and others will be taking an online course. This will impact how we deal with store customers, as well as people we interact with in providing other environmental programs.



Susan Brandum and Barb Hicks attended the 10th annual Lake Links conference in Perth October 29th. Sue provided a display and answered questions on REAL's activities. This year's theme was the carrying capacity of lakes, which has major planning implications in our part of the world. These sessions are always a great networking opportunity.



Did you know you can take your used compact fluorescent lightbulbs (CFLs) back to Canadian Tire? Returned bulbs are taken to a recycling centre in Ayr so that the small amount of mercury contained in the bulbs can be removed and doesn't escape into the environment. Also accepted through Canadian Tire's "Take Back the Light" program are the long tube fluorescent bulbs. A box should be near the customer service desk, but if your long lights do not fit in the box, hand them over to staff. Home Depot stores and IKEA will also accept CFLs.



The Brockville Climate Action Group has reorganized to become Transition Brockville. Its mission is to educate residents on climate change and peak oil and empower them to take adaptive action, and to encourage government, organizations and businesses to reduce their carbon emissions and fossil fuel dependency and take action. If you are interested in energy issues, Hugh Campbell produces an e-newsletter with links to a wide variety of interesting stories in the news. <http://bcag.mybrockville.com>.



Thanks for bringing your plastic milk bags to the REAL Deal. Several garbage bags full have been passed on to groups crocheting sleeping mats for Haiti and smaller mats for African infants. The collection box is now just outside the book nook. For more info see: http://www.realaction.ca/plastic_milk_bags.

<http://www>

- Interesting 39 minute presentation by Nicole Foss, from the Ottawa area, on how she prepared her home for peak oil. Thanks to Brockville group for this: <http://bcag.mybrockville.com/node/2209>. Ed note: REAL suggests better home air sealing and insulation, and that activated carbon filters not be used on well water.
- Quick read on the growth of the "hypoxic" dead zone in the Gulf of Mexico, which lacks sufficient oxygen for marine life: <http://www.emagazine.com/magazine/dead-in-the-gulf/>
- Internet surfing and cloud computing impact on the environment: <http://www.emagazine.com/earth-talk/social-media-impact-on-environment>.

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We're on the Web
www.REALaction.ca

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**REAL Deal Store &
Environment Centre**

85 William St. W.,
Smiths Falls ON
K7A 5A5
613-283-7999

Store open Thurs, Fri, Sat
10am—4pm

Well Aware, Home Energy
Audits or other programs
Phone: 613-283-9500

REAL people taking REAL action to protect our environment



Prelude to Christmas
13th Annual Benefit Concert
by the
Central Band of the Canadian Forces
Wednesday, December 7, 2011 at 7 p.m.
SFDCI, Percy Street, Smiths Falls
Adults \$10 - Students \$5
Group Discounts Available
Enjoy seasonal and military favourites from
a world-renowned concert band
Tickets available at:
The Kiosk, County Fair Mall
Modern Thymes, 11 Russell St. E.
The REAL Deal, 85 William St. W.
Perth Legion, 26 Beckwith St. E., Perth

For more information call (613) 283-9819 www.realaction.ca
Presented by the Rideau Environmental Action League (REAL)

**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

Contact Information

Name

Street/RR Address

.....

Town, Province

Postal Code

Home Phone

Work Phone

Best time to reach me

Email address