

REAL *update*

for members and friends of the Rideau Environmental Action League

Celebrating 20 Years of Environmental Achievement

FEBRUARY 2009



REAL Deal Needs your Excess Weight

We know they're out there. Lots of usable items stashed in people's attics, basements, garages and closets, now useless to the owner. But the owner hasn't managed to get them into the hands of someone who can use them. Enter the REAL Deal!

Winter has brought a slowdown in donations to the store, but the customer demand to browse and purchase good quality used items is still strong. We know that in a few months spring cleaning and garage sale leftovers will be rolling in, but we would appreciate some of that volume now. If you were waiting for spring to unload some household or renovation items, please consider donating them to the REAL Deal today. We'll make sure those goods get another chance before becoming waste, and all proceeds go back into the community in the form of REAL's environmental projects.

Please tell a friend - word of mouth is the best (and cheapest!) form of advertising.

All donated items must be clean, in good repair and in sellable condition. To see what the REAL Deal store does and doesn't accept, see http://www.realaction.ca/rd_donations.htm or call the store at (613) 283-7999.

Items in Demand at the REAL Deal

Here are some of the things our customers have been looking for:

- bathroom vanities and dressers
- small wall shelves and book shelves
- small decorative items
- demitasse cups and saucer sets

There is also a Wish Book near the cash for customers to record their unique requests

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Celebrating 20 Years of Environmental Achievement

That's the tagline you will be hearing a lot of this year as REAL approaches its 20th birthday in the fall of 2009. Our 20th Anniversary Committee is zeroing in on special events to celebrate this special year in REAL's history. It will start with a wine and cheese media event in the spring, a birthday cake and musical celebration in the park during the summer Chocolate and Railway Festival, and a celebration dinner in the fall. We would appreciate your help organizing these events. If you would like to be involved, get in touch with Peter Au at 284-8338 or peter00au@gmail.com.

The board is also considering a commemorative tree or park bench on Evergreen Avenue as a lasting reminder of this achievement. Our 10th anniversary was marked with a special historical issue of the REAL update, and our 15th anniversary inspired the planting of a oak tree on Evergreen Avenue.

Volunteers are the REAL Deal

Volunteers at the store put in over 200 hours over the month of January. Many thanks to: Rick Burnett, Todd Douglas, Simon Dufresne, Dan Hawkins, Brenda King, Ryan Leblanc, John Locket, William Maloney, Una Pugh and Deborah Samler and Tammy. We couldn't do it without you!



More New Faces at REAL

We have some new faces at REAL and at the Store and Environment Centre.

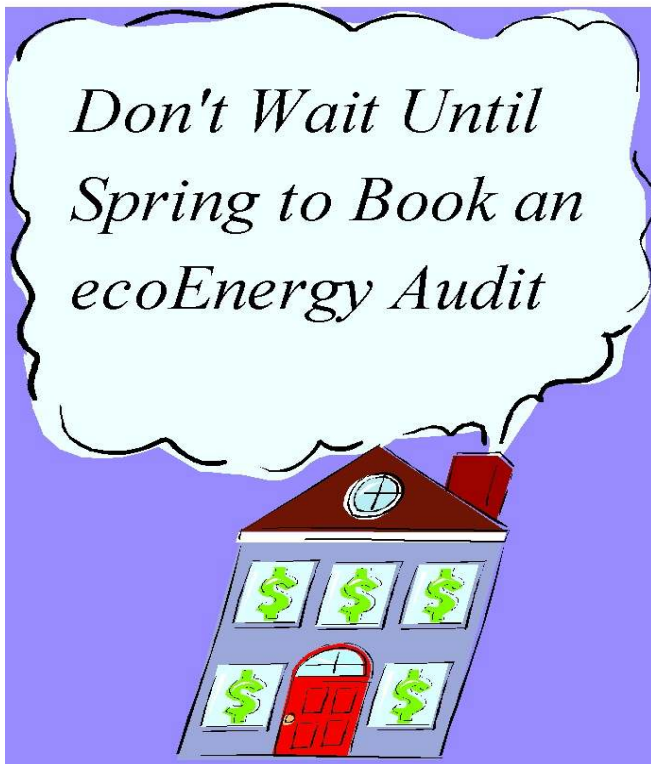


Larissa, Wendy and Todd

Todd Douglas is our latest Katimavik participant. Todd comes from Calgary, and Smiths Falls is the second of his Katimavik rotations. He will be with us five days a week until the end of March, working in the store and on other REAL projects. He will be on the cash in the store most Thursday and Friday mornings.

On Mondays and Tuesdays you may run into our two Algonquin students, Larissa Stratton and Wendy Quarrington, students in the Social Work program. They are working on some sustainability events at the college and a tire pressure project, and will lend a hand with the Take it Back Recyclopedica and Pitch-In, to name a few, before they leave in late April.

REAL welcomes Eileen Crosbie to the REAL Board. Eileen has also been active in the Rotary Club, the Smiths Falls Railway Museum Board and the Chamber of Commerce. She also runs a mortgage brokerage business, so we are very pleased she has chosen to spend some of her rare free time with us. Eileen is new to REAL so is going to take some time to find out what we're all about.



If you're planning a renovation when the weather turns nice - and planning to take advantage of the ecoENERGY rebates and the new renovation tax credit - don't wait 'till spring to book your ecoENERGY audit. We are now scheduling audits well into March and expect bookings to increase greatly as renovation season begins. So, call Wayne now at REAL's Environment Centre, 283-9500, to book your date.

The ecoENERGY provides up to \$10,000 in rebates on insulation, furnace replacement, solar, instantaneous and condensing hot water heating, EPA woodstoves, air conditioners, heat recovery ventilators, drain water heat recovery systems, ground source heat pumps, low-flow toilets, windows, doors and other items that improve energy efficiency. Average rebates come in about 1/4 to 1/3 of installed cost. Go to Home Energy Ontario to get the full and most current list of rebates possible. As Energy Star and federal energy efficiency standards continue to increase, the items listed for rebate change. Go to www.REALaction.ca for more information on the ecoEnergy.

Montreal Seeks to Ban Woodstoves by Ingrid Peritz, *Globe and Mail* Feb. 5, 2009

Faced with record wintertime smog and dire warnings over health hazards, the City of Montreal is moving to ban the installation of wood-burning stoves and fireplaces.

Montreal, home to more than 50,000 wood-burning stoves already, would prohibit their installation in new or existing homes. Stoves that burn wood pellets would still be allowed.

Environment Canada estimates 47 per cent of the fine particulate matter in Quebec's air comes from fireplaces and wood stoves, outstripping industrial and transport emissions. Environment Canada has issued 25 smog alerts for Montreal since the start of winter, 18 last month alone.

Wood smoke contains several pollutants that can be damaging to health and easily penetrate the lungs, causing breathing difficulties and even permanent lung damage. The Lung Association, says atmospheric pollution is responsible for 1,540 premature deaths in the region annually.

More than a third of homes in Quebec are heated with wood, a trend driven partly by the 1998 ice storm. The city wants to encourage Montrealers to replace their wood stoves with less toxic alternatives like natural gas, electricity or propane.

The city's executive committee approved the wood-burning bylaw Feb. 4 and will present it to city council on Feb. 23. The city is also seeking financial help from the Quebec Health Department to offer homeowners financial incentives to replace existing wood-burning stoves.



Adapting to Climate Change Workshop

An informative workshop “Adapting to Climate Change” was co-hosted by OCCIAR and REAL on January 31 at the Comfort Inn. The OCCIAR graciously agreed to offer a scaled down version of the full day workshop held the day before in Ottawa before heading back to Sudbury where they are based.

The Ontario Centre for Climate Impacts and Adaptation Resources (OCCIAR) is based at Laurentian University in Sudbury, and communicates the latest research, networks with Canadian partners, and develops tools to assist with municipal adaptation.

Dr. David Pearson addressed The Science of Climate Change. The research shows irrefutably that the climate is changing and that is happening much faster than originally anticipated.. Effects are already being felt in Ontario and around the world. The Ontario target is to reduce emissions by 20% by 2020 to stabilize the human induced change.

Al Douglas, Coordinator for OCCIAR, discussed “Implications for Forestry, Agriculture, Water Resources, Human Health, Tourism and Communities.” Ontario has a strong capacity to adapt to these changes, but that ability is uneven. And these adaptations don’t have to be high cost.

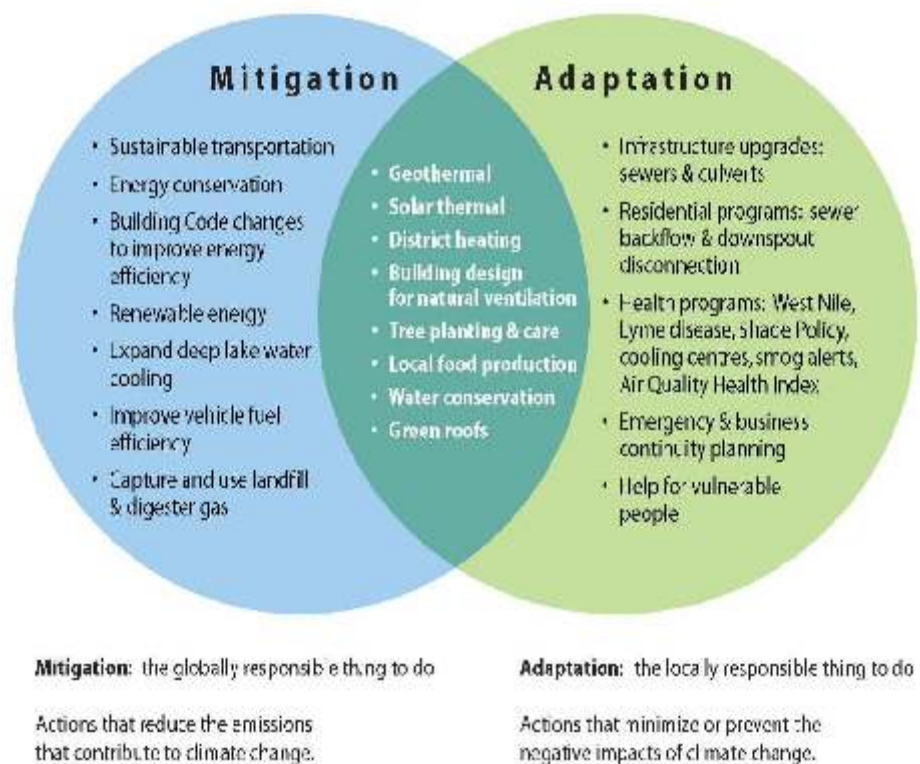
The attendees were encouraged to be ambassadors on a community scale, promote the changes that our communities need to make to adapt to climate change, and not to underestimate the influence

we can have. Much of the change necessary will occur at the municipal level, Why couldn’t Smiths Falls be a model for other communities on what is possible?

Both presentations are available in PDF form; if you would like to see them, please contact Peter at peter00au@gmail.com.

Participants included representatives from lake associations, the insurance industry, the Health Unit, Rideau Roundtable, and REAL’s own Climate Change Action Team. Sadly, of the many municipal staff invited, none were able to attend.

Some of the group have agreed to meet again in February for a discussion, facilitated by Jeff Kohl, of the information presented and to consider what could be done in our community.



From Ahead of the Storm: Preparing Toronto for Climate Change . City of Toronto, 2008.

Confusion Over Plastics Recycling

True or False. The hollow arrowed triangle with a number inside it indicates that a plastic item is recyclable.



It's false. But don't feel bad if you thought it was true. A quick poll determined that 67% of the public thinks that the triangular loop symbol guarantees recyclability. The use of that loop is not regulated. The plastics industry began identifying the type of plastic by number in 1988. That number indicates the type of plastic, but that is still an incomplete guide to what is recyclable.

Every municipality collects something different. You may see "recyclable" or "recyclable where facilities exist" on an item, but manufacturers cannot ensure that they wind up in a location where they can be recycled. And just because your municipality accepts all plastics in their recycling program does not necessarily mean they get recycled. Due to fluctuating markets and separation difficulties, some of it does end up in landfills, or even shipped overseas. Plastic that is recycled is rarely made into the same product, but is made into secondary products. For example, PET is used to make fibrefill for sleeping bags and jackets, after which that plastic is no longer recyclable.

But the numbers can be confusing too. Number 1's (PET), and number 2, HDPE, are accepted in most recycling programs. The large quantity collected from packaging means a guaranteed quantity of material to be made into new products. However, not all plastics coded 1, for example, are the same. Blister packs are frequently labeled number 1 but are made with a different process and are not recycled along with the PET bottles. Nor are the PET clamshell containers. With the possible exception of plastic bags, if a plastic is not stamped with a number it is definitely not recyclable. Plastic

bags are only accepted in some programs. Number 6 foam takeout containers are only accepted in a few collection programs. They are difficult to recycle because they break into little pieces. Biodegradable or compostable plastics appeal to consumers, but contaminate loads of other plastics if they cannot be sorted out.

If you are still confused, you are not alone. One quick read on the subject is at ecologycenter.org/ptf/misconceptions. If you have more time, watch the CBC documentary *Forever Plastic* at cbc.ca/documentaries/doczone/2009/foreverplastic. While you're there, take the quiz, the "Plastic Recycling Challenge".

But Which Plastics are Safe?

Not So Safe or Questionable

- 1 PET or Polyethylene Terephthalate. Often used for single-use beverage bottles. Can't be properly cleaned, may leach antimony.
- 3 PVC or Polyvinyl Chloride. Used in some clear plastic food wraps. Phthalates softeners might leach out. Best saved for non-food uses.
- 6 PS or Polystyrene. Used in making styrofoam and takeout containers. May leach styrene compounds, a carcinogen and hormone disrupter.
- 7 OTHER. Includes polycarbonate, used in office-style water-cooler jugs. Made with bisphenol A, which mimics estrogen and is linked to hormone imbalances.

Safer and Preferred

- 2 HDPE or High-Density Polyethylene. Used in opaque detergent bottles, juice bottles and milk jugs. Low leaching risk, highly recyclable.
- 4 LDPE or Low Density Polyethylene. Used for see-through dry cleaning bags and produce bags. Transmits no known chemicals.
- 5 PP POLYPROPYLENE: Used in yogurt containers and medicine containers. Toxin free but not as recyclable as PET and HDPE.

“Do What You Can” for HHW

Ontario has introduced a new plan to help people dispose of the left-over or unwanted hazardous materials. “Do What you Can” involves companies such as Home Depot, RONA and automotive service centres who will take back a variety of products. The concept is that it is more convenient for the consumer to go back to the same establishments where they purchased the products, than to a hazardous waste depot.

The program was launched in late January. Phase 1 will allow the return of paints and their containers, solvents, used oil filters, some oil containers, single use batteries, pesticides, insecticides, herbicides, fertilizers, propane tanks, antifreeze and single-use batteries.



Phase 2 will get underway this summer, and will allow returns of barometers, thermometers, thermostats, fluorescent light bulbs and aerosol containers. Phase 3 will take in contact cement and corrosive cleaners.

Stewardship Ontario, who also oversees the Blue Box Program, is responsible for this Municipal Hazardous or Special Waste” (MHSW) Program. Existing depots currently capture about 16,000 tonnes annually. This new program aims to more than double this diversion over the next five years. Stewardship Ontario will also be responsible for managing the materials after they are collected and prepared for shipment by the municipal and commercial collection sites.

Ontario residents will be able to access a website, www.dowhatyoucan.ca and search by community, postal code, distance or materials the places they can return these toxic materials. Unfortunately, the search function there is far from perfect. You will find that the Middleville depot comes up repeatedly, when it is only accessible to Lanark Highlands and Tay Valley residents. Using the postal code for RR 4 Smiths Falls brings up but two possibilities within 25 km. However, the website includes further information on handling these substances, and the detailed lists of the products accepted at each participating site.

Clearly the hazardous waste depot concept doesn’t work for everybody. Some municipalities can only offer the service once a year and in an out of the way location, and some depots, such as the one in Carleton Place for Smiths Falls and Lanark residents, is open seasonally and only on Saturday mornings. Anything that gives people more access and opportunities to keep these hazardous materials out of landfills and is handled properly is a step in the right direction.

Do What You Can does not negate the need for programs such as REAL’s Take it Back Recyclopedia. The Recyclopedia will include more than just hazardous substances, and will include smaller independent businesses and organizations. Access this work in progress through www.REALaction.ca or through Rideau.Reuses.com.

Pitch In Smiths Falls April 20 - May 3, 2009

Join with other residents to clean up litter in your neighbourhood and public places.

Groups who participated last year will be called. Others please contact Brenda King at 283-4416 or bking16@sympatico.ca.

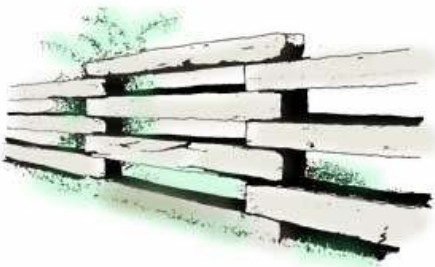
Railway Tie Warning

If winter gets your dreaming about landscaping your property with inexpensive castoff railway ties, stop right there. Creosote, the black oily substance used on ties to prevent rot, is toxic. The main ingredient in creosote, coal tar, is a known carcinogen. In March 2000 the Canadian Environmental Protection Act (CEPA) added creosote treated wood to the toxic substances list.

EcoSuperior, a colleague Green Community for Thunder Bay and the Lake Superior Basin, has posted their research on this topic on their website at www.ecosuperior.com/mercury_creosotefacts.shtml. But here's a summary.

People with long-term contact with creosote (those working in creosote plants or wood treatment facilities) have developed skin and lung cancer. Ingestion of creosote directly or in contaminated food and water has resulted in cancer of the lungs, liver and stomach. Less toxic contact has resulted in kidney and liver problems.

Most commonly, people contact creosote by directly handling creosote treated wood, and absorbing it through their skin. If you use railway ties for fenceposts or retaining walls in your yard, children may come into contact with it as well. Lining your vegetable garden can end up transferring the water soluble portion of creosote into your home grown food. If you already have railway ties on your property, consider replacing them with a non-toxic alternative such as cedar, concrete, stone or wood alternatives. Avoid traditional preserved wood as it too has negative environmental effects



In REAL Life

The REAL Action Team participated in the annual **Friends of the Library Trivia Challenge**, held Sunday, Feb. 8 at the Legion. Larry Manson led a team of Carol Manson, Claudia Mosher, Rick Collins, Ron and Linda Stronski, Carolyn Fraser, Brenda King, Donna Morrow and Barb Ellis.

Membership renewal notices have gone out to our individual and family members. Please renew promptly so we can move on to other tasks. Carolyn Fraser is our Membership Chair. Contact her if you have questions about your membership or you think you've been missed: 283-6858 or fraser@superaje.com.

Saturday, December 20, customers, staff, board and volunteers enjoyed hot chocolate and treats at the REAL Deal Reuse Store, the last store day of the year. Sales far exceeded those of a typical Saturday and we moved lots of Christmas decorative items. The giant stuffed tiger and her cub were won by Karen Donovan, a teacher at Chimo School.

Show your support for action on climate change by participating in **Earth Hour 2009**. Turn out your lights for one hour on **Saturday, March 28 from 8:30 - 9:30 p.m.** At the March 16th Council meeting Mayor Staples will be urging all citizens of the Town of Smiths Falls to participate. Visit www.earthhour.org.

REAL's Environment Centre now has **two additional Kill a Watt Meters available for borrowing**. These handy devices can be used to measure the electrical consumption of appliances that plug into a standard 120 VAC, three-prong electrical outlet. Determine which of your appliances use the most power, and measure the phantom loads of appliances that remain in standby mode. Drop by 85 William St. W. Monday through Friday during business hours and ask for Wayne. REAL also makes the devices available at the Almonte, Perth and Smiths Falls Public Libraries.

Brockville was a stop on the 15 city speaking tour “**Kick the Bottle, Tap into Public Drinking Water**” on **January 26**. Maude Barlow, Senior Advisor on Water to the UN General Assembly and National Chairperson of the Council of Canadians and Sid Ryan, CUPE Ontario President, encouraged people to pass on single serving bottled water and choose safe, clean, inexpensive tap water. Angela Northfield was there with the Well Aware display providing valuable advice on how to ensure clean well water.

Did you know you can buy **bags of rags at the Salvation Army for just \$5.00**? Clothes that are too stained, worn or otherwise suitable for resale are cut into rags by volunteers. You can ask for cotton or have a whole bag of terrycloth rags. And the money raised stays in our community!

An **EcoAwareness Scavenger Hunt** was offered to children and families on Saturday, Feb. 7 at the REAL Deal as part of the Smiths Falls Winter Carnival activities. Kids followed the clues through the store, collecting letters to unscramble into a hidden word, and each received a prize. Thanks to Andre for putting the fun event together!

Helpful Websites

This issue: websites addressing water issues:

- Vast quantities of water are used to produce the products we consume, for example, 3900 litres of water for 1 kg. of chicken meat and 10 L for a sheet of paper. Wow! Explore www.waterfootprint.org .
- Bottled water use is often unnecessary and counter-productive. See how you can take action on the Council of Canadians site, www.canadians.org/water/issues/Unbottle_It
- Find out how to conserve and preserve water quality by reducing runoff in this video: <http://www.epa.gov/owow/nps/lid/video.html>

Next Issue

Submissions for the next issue can be sent to dhicks11@cogeco.ca by April 15, 2009 or call Barb at (613) 283-9966.

Contact Us

REAL

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Web: www.REALaction.ca

Environmental Projects Manager

Phone: (613) 267-2257

E-mail: sbrandum@cogeco.ca

REAL Deal Store & Environment Centre

85 William St. W., Smiths Falls

(across from Railway Museum)

Store open Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays
10a.m. - 4 p.m.

Phone: (613) 283-7999

For Well Aware Visits, ecoENERGY audits,
or other programs,

Phone: (613) 283-9500

