

REAL *update*

For members and friends of the Rideau Environmental Action League

FEBRUARY 2010

Get FIT, Go Green and Make Money

Are you curious about rooftop solar electricity generation? Have you heard that Ontario's microFIT program will allow you to develop a renewable energy generation project, feed electricity back into the grid and be paid for it? Exciting stuff! And REAL is bringing two presentations to Smiths Falls to help people learn more about the program and how to proceed.

The Green Energy Act launched October 1, 2009 is intended to position Ontario as a global leader in the field of renewable energy, clean distributed energy and conservation. In doing so it will be creating economic prosperity, increased energy security, and green jobs. It will allow the eventual closure of coal power plants, creating environmental benefits, including reducing our impact on climate change.

The act paves the way for businesses, farm and home owners, or communities of participants to enter the renewable energy market by obligating utilities to purchase power from green energy projects. Two programs, FIT and microFIT, managed by the Ontario Power Authority, make it easier for small producers to become involved in generating electricity, and introduce stable and generous purchase prices to encourage producers to enter the market.

FIT is directed at producers of over 10 kilowatts, and microFIT is directed at producers of less than 10 kilowatts. While the FIT program applies to all renewable energy technologies - biogas, biomass, landfill gas, solar PV, water power and wind - it is expected that rooftop solar

photovoltaic (PV) systems will be the most common microFIT project. With rates set at 80.2 (c/kWh) for solar produced electricity, it is certainly the most attractive purchase price.

The first presentation on Wednesday March 10 will be by SWITCH, a non-profit, sustainable energy association serving southeastern Ontario. Switch has received federal funding to provide information and support to small and medium enterprises wanting to get into the renewable energy market, as well as to support citizens by educating and enabling them to take advantage of programs such as microFIT. They will cover the Green Energy Act, the Feed in Tariff (FIT) program, and the advantages to Eastern Ontario businesses and homeowners.

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Then on Tuesday, March 23, Bob Argue and Alfred Von Mirbach, from ecoPerth, will start with a quick overview of Ontario's microFIT program for small scale photovoltaic systems. They will cover a whole range of process and technical details so you can decide if microFIT is right for you. ecoPerth has been granted distributorship status for Canadian Solar products, and is working with a local electrical contracting company to take on installations, so can provide some basic technical and pricing information for these ground-mount or rooftop systems..

Both presentations will start at 7 p.m. in the auditorium of the Rideau Canal Museum, 34 Beckwith St. S., Smiths Falls. Both are free, but donations are always appreciated. Please remember that the parking immediately adjacent to the museum is limited, and the water tower parking lot is currently inaccessible. So allow a few extra minutes to park on Main, Chambers or Beckwith Streets, or in the small lot by the lock. For more information, or to pre-register, please contact Barb at (613) 283-9966 or dhicks11@cogeco.ca.

Get Fit, Go Green & Make Money

Wed., March 10, 2010

SWITCH - An Overview of the FIT and microFIT Programs - Making Money from your Rooftop

Tues., March 23, 2010

ecoPerth - Is Microfit for you? Basic technical and pricing information with Canadian Solar

Both 7 p.m. at Rideau Canal Museum,
12 Beckwith St. N, Smiths Falls

Admission Free, Donations Welcome
RSVP to info@REALaction.ca

Business Brisk at the REAL Deal

The REAL Deal Store has successfully avoided the new year's slump experienced by many businesses, and has had excellent sales in January. Sport and fitness equipment and craft supplies were featured the whole month, which concluded with the popular "Make a Deal Day" on Friday, January 29. We continue to see many customers who have never been to the store before, which bodes well for the future.

Susan Brandum, the Executive Director of the store, is the acting manager while we continue to search for a new Store Manager. For a full description of the three day a week position, check our website www.REALaction.ca.

Many thanks to some super volunteers: Deb Thompson, Dave Fergus and Don Harvey who are regulars at the store. They really like their jobs and it shows! Barb Hicks, Dan Hawkins, Brenda King, Bonita Lucas, Debbie Hawse, Una Pugh, Devin Van Slooten round out the volunteer team at the store, usually one day a week each.

Nathaniel, our latest Katimavik participant, left for Burnaby January 15. He was helping in the store Thursdays and Fridays. Both Tammy MacKenzie, a volunteer, and Julie Ingram, staff, moved on to other pursuits in December. We appreciated their help, enjoyed working with them and were sorry to see them go. We welcome back WayneTetreault, who worked for us six months ending last May, for some part-time bookkeeping.



Physical Challenges at REAL Deal - We Need a Property Manager

We are forging ahead with the physical upgrades made possible by a Trillium Foundation grant. It is wonderful to have a functioning kitchen sink and a utility sink to use. They will go a long way to keeping the store and sale items cleaner. A bright yellow awning for the customer entrance has been ordered, and we will be moving on the loft flooring and office area windows within the next couple months.

Unfortunately, keeping these projects moving and ongoing maintenance at the building were a REAL challenge in December. Nothing goes as smoothly as it should! The installation of the propane furnace, removal of the old furnace, and getting established with a propane supplier did create some difficulties. We had problems with our locks, a problem with our baseboard heaters, an electrical safety issue, a computer modem failure, a shelf that fell over causing much breakage, and a mouse problem. And then the winter thaw caused flooding in the store January 25, which of course required immediate attention. None of these was super serious, but the problems were certainly aggravating and time consuming, and they drain human resources away from what REAL needs to be doing.

REAL would really like to find a property manager to help us deal with problems relating to the physical operations of the REAL Deal building. The volunteer position would be ideal for someone who is somewhat handy, likes to putter, is mobile, lives nearby and is reasonably free during the daytime. This person wouldn't have to physically do all the fixing, but would advise on the appropriate course of action, and meet with and select contractors when necessary. If you or someone you know would like to discuss this further, please contact our Volunteer Coordinator, Lynn Preston, at 283-9500. Lynn is generally in Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Fridays.

Membership Renewal - Don't Delay!

By now members should have received a letter via Canada Post asking them to renew their membership. It takes just \$15 a year for an individual, or \$20 for a family to show their support for the Rideau Environmental Action League, and be part of its success. Members receive the newsletter five times a year, e-mail notices of REAL activities and area environmental events, and are entitled to vote at the Annual General Meeting in June. We welcome new members, and are making a special attempt this year to recruit additional members.

Corporate memberships are \$50 and include a number of businesses, service clubs and organizations supportive of environmental change in our community.

To become one of the "REAL people taking REAL action to protect the environment", access the form on our website www.REALaction.ca or call Carolyn Fraser, Membership Chair, at (613) 283-6858 or fraser@superaje.com.

*"Alone we can do so little,
together we can do so much"*

- Helen Keller.



Non-profit Reuse Stores in the Region

As an environmental group, REAL is happy to see residents embracing the concept of reuse - it is good for all of the area reuse stores listed here. Supporting reuse stores by your donations or shopping dollars is a great way to give back to the community, reduce your environmental impact, get unique items, and find some bargains!

Non-profit reuse operations gratefully accept donations, but most appreciate a chance to approve your donation, as disposing of unwanted items is costly. If an item is not something someone else would want, please don't donate it to these organizations. Reuse stores tend to be set up for a specific charitable purpose, and all appreciate volunteers.

Each store is unique. The range of materials accepted varies, so please check with the organization first before donating.

The COATS (Community Outreach and Thrift Store), 22 Main St. E., Smiths Falls. Clothing, household items, electronics. Fridays fill a bag of clothes for \$5. Tues - Fri 10-4; Sat 11-3, (613) 283-9135, www.sfcommunityoutreach.com.

Jewel's Gently Used Clothing, 18 William St. E., Smiths Falls. Supports Big Brothers and Big Sisters of Lanark County. Only clothing and accessories. Weekly sales features. Last Friday of the month fill a bag for \$5. Customer Wish Book. Mon - Fri 9-5, Sat 10-3, (613) 283-9723, www.bigbrothersbigsisterslanark.ca.

Reuse Centre, McDonald's Corners Waste Site, 800 Con. 10, Dalhousie Road and County Road 12. Volunteer operation in partnership with Township of Lanark Highlands. All free. Accepts most reusable goods, but only from township residents. Winter: Thurs 2-5, Sat 8-12, Sun 12-5, www.lanarkhighlands.ca.

As Good As New Store, 33 Bridge St., Carleton Place. In support of Lanark County Interval House. Clothing and small household items. Mon 1-4, Tues-Fri. 10 - 4, Sat 9 :30 -3. (613) 257-7074. www.lcih.org.

Seventh Day Adventist Church Clothing Depot, Franktown Rd., 10 km east of Perth. Toys, books, linens, other small household items. All free. Drop box on Hwy. 7, Perth for donations. Tues 8-12. Call Jean Lewis, (613) 268-2452.

The Salvation Army Thrift Store, Carleton Place, Perth & 5 William St. W., Smiths Falls. Clothing, furniture, small household items. Silent auction, limited delivery service, processes rags for sale to public. Mon - Fri 9-5, Sat 10-4, (613) 283-8311.

The Hub and Rebound Re-use it Centre, sister stores in Almonte direct proceeds to various community charities. The Hub: clothing, small household items, 118 Mill St., Mon 1-4, Tues - Sat 9-4, Thurs evg 5:30 - 9, (613) 256-5525. Rebound: household goods, furniture, renovation materials, 2470 Ramsay Concession 8, Tues - Sat 10-4, (613) 256-1700. www.missippimills.ca

The **REAL Deal Reuse Store**, 85 William St. W., Smiths Falls supports REAL's environmental projects. Household goods, toys, sports, small appliances, renovation materials. Make a Deal Friday last Friday of month, Wish Book, silent auction, "Free Store," access to environmental information and programs. Thurs - Sat, 10-4, (613) 283-7999, www.REALaction.ca

Many municipalities are providing free reuse centres at their landfills. If you know of another non-profit reuse store in our region, please let us know. You may want to consider the many consignment stores if you would prefer to get payment for items you no longer need.



The Least Bittern - Photo by Simon Lunn

"I'll be returning to the swale in April or May, so watch for the April Update to find out the "REAL Deal" on me, including why protecting me is such a "Big Deal"!

Rideau.Reuses.com

Have you got something you would like to give away or sell for less than \$99? The website **Rideau.Reuses.com** will let you post your items, or browse for great stuff from other users. This is a great resource that we are underutilizing! Please take a moment to see what is there and post something - the more people use it the more useful it will be for everyone. We hope to post some of the great finds from the REAL Deal store there, too. While you're there, take a look at the Recyclopedia of area businesses and organizations that take back products for reuse or recycling. Brockville.Reuses uses the same system provided by iWasteNot , and is administered by the Brockville Climate Action Group.

Keeping the Money Rolling In

We are very grateful to the donors who responded to our request for donations towards the band concert that wasn't. When we learned the Central Band of the Canadian Forces would be unable to perform a Christmas concert, we approached some of our regular concert supporters, who together contributed \$800. It made a big difference to the organization.

We are hoping we can count on community support for several upcoming fundraisers:

- Donate a loonie or toonie campaign at Andress Independent Grocer in April to coincide with Earth Day.
- A bottle drive at The Beer Store. We have requested Friday and Saturday July 23 and 24 weekend. The date still needs final confirmation, but we want to give everyone the heads up so they can start accumulating materials to return. The Beer Store accepts beer bottles and cans as well as wine and liquor containers (glass, plastic and tetrapaks). REAL will be available outside the stores for patrons who choose to give their containers to REAL so that REAL can collect the .10 or .20 deposit amount.
- A golf tournament. Thanks to Larry and Carol Manson for agreeing to look after this first ever golf tournament for REAL. Date to be determined.



For information on the first two events, contact Peter Au (613) 284-8338 or Cathryn Davidson (613) 283-9819. The Mansons can be reached at (613) 283-7743 if you are interested in helping with the golf tournament.

Home Air Quality Rates More Attention

Air pollution is a serious issue, but for your personal health, pay more attention to your indoor air quality! Urban dwellers spend about 90% of their time inside: in the home, at work, and other places.

Broadly speaking, there are biological pollutants and chemical pollutants. Biological pollutants are living organisms like mould, bacteria and dust mites. Chemical pollutants are gases and particles that come from combustion appliances, tobacco smoke, household and personal care products.

Some things you can do to avoid the biological pollutants are to control the humidity in your home by using ventilation, venting your drier to the outside, and using a dehumidifier if necessary. To keep dust mites in check, avoid carpet and draperies, wash bedding in hot water, and encase mattresses and pillows and plastic.

The chemical pollutants can be harder to avoid because they come from so many sources. One of the major classes of indoor pollutants are volatile organic compounds (VOC's) that offgas from petroleum based products. And there are thousands of them, including furniture, carpeting, varnishes, synthetic building materials, air fresheners, cleaning solutions, personal care products, tobacco smoke, pesticides, solvents in inks and adhesives.

VOCs are emitted as gases from certain solids or liquids, and can have short- and long-term adverse health effects. Some cause asthma, impaired lung function, and damage to liver and kidneys. Mixtures of VOCs are thought to be the cause of Sick Building Syndrome; its symptoms include headaches, nausea, and ear, eye, nose and throat irritation. Still others are carcinogens, such as the benzene in tobacco smoke, perc in dry cleaning fluid and formaldehyde in pressed wood products.

About a dozen common VOC's are consistently

found at two to five times higher levels inside homes than out. And some of the safer ones react with each other to make unsafe compounds.



So here are some things you can do to minimize your exposure and protect your indoor air quality.

- Don't smoke or allow anyone to smoke indoors.
- Vacuum and dust regularly with a damp cloth.
- Use latex paints and VOC free paints.
- Select natural fibre carpets, and avoid adhesives.
- Use homemade cleaners (vinegar, baking soda, lemon juice) instead of purchased ones.
- Carefully maintain any combustion appliances, including fireplaces and chimneys, to avoid carbon monoxide.
- Do not idle your vehicle in an attached garage.
- If you must use a pesticide indoors, ventilate and limit your exposure.
- Minimize your exposure to perc (perchloroethylene) emissions from newly dry-cleaned materials.
- Try to purchase low or no VOC products.
- Consider purchasing reused materials whose VOC's have already off-gassed.
- Use plenty of ventilation when painting, remodelling or using products that may release VOCs, as the elevated concentrations may persist in the air long afterward.
- Properly store chemicals as gases can leak even from closed containers
- Buy chemicals in small quantities only as needed
- Discard unneeded chemicals safely with your other hazardous waste

End of Home Reno Tax Credit not the End of Reno Financial Help

The end of the Home Renovation Tax Credit (HRTC) doesn't mean there still isn't financial help for a range of home renovation projects. The ecoEnergy program, which actually pays back between 25-33%, instead of just the maximum 13% of the HRTC, will help you install a new furnace, do insulation and air sealing, install a solar domestic hot water heater and many, many more energy efficiency improvements.

This program is scheduled to end in March, 2011, so now is the perfect time to be scheduling the pre audit, getting the work done, so as to be able to do the post-audit before the end of the program, and get grants back.

For more information, go to ecoEnergy Retrofit for Homes, to www.REALaction.ca or call REAL at (613) 283-9500.

REAL Continues to Pitch Pitch-In

Hundreds, maybe even a thousand, area residents will be rolling up their sleeves to participate in Pitch-in Smiths Falls this April. The 44th Annual Pitch-In Canada campaign runs from April 19 - 25. Here in Smiths Falls we usually tack on another week to give the volunteers a little breathing room and allow for the possibility of bad weather. REAL matches groups and individuals to public locations across Smiths Falls that need to be cleared of litter.



Last year's totals impressed even us: 1099 people participated, including 20 community groups and six schools, collecting 282 bags of

garbage, 37 bags of recyclables and lots of other junk from 50 sites across Smiths Falls.

REAL could use your help prior to the event to make phone calls, pack and deliver supplies, deliver supplies, put up posters etc. If you would like to be part of Operation Clean Sweep, leave a message at (613) 283-9500.

In REAL Life

The REAL Action team will be putting their heads together at the annual **Trivia Challenge** fundraiser for the Friends of the Library Sunday February 14 at the Smiths Falls Legion. Most years REAL does very well at this, but wish them luck anyways!

Contents of the donation box at the REAL Deal cash register during the month of January totalled over \$50, and will be forwarded to the **Canadian Red Cross for Haitian Relief**. Thanks to everyone who contributed!

Welcome to Robin Hawe and **Sunlife Insurance**, who are REAL's latest corporate member. We appreciate your support!

Staples has joined the list of area depots that will accept **electronics for disposal**. The store will accept computers, computer parts, or televisions. Hours are Mon - Wed 9 to 7; Thurs and Fri 9 - 9; Sat 9 - 6; Sun 12-5. Please check with them for restrictions. Beginning April 2010, Staples, and two other local depots, Twenty Twelve Electronics Recycling and Apollo Computers, will accept additional electronic items as part of the Ontario Electronics Stewardship program. For more locations consult dowhatyoucan.ca.

Do you regularly pass through any of the **smaller communities in the area**? We would like to be able to distribute printed newsletters in locations beyond Smiths Falls and Perth. If you would be able to deposit some of the Update in a public location (e.g. a library, municipal office) five times year, please get in touch.

Our thanks to the Smiths Falls Public Library for the **steel book shelving unit** which is now installed in the REAL Deal book and audio visual area. It is allowing us to display more books neatly. We have an “endless” supply of books in our storage area, so come take advantage of our bargain prices of .25 a book or 6 for \$1.00.

The charities directorate is now processing REAL’s application to have the organization granted **charitable status**. Since 1990 we have had charitable status for the Rideau Environment Trust, which can issue charitable receipts for donations directed towards tree planting and public education projects only.

The REAL Deal is still in need of **floor mats for the store**. Slush and snow on concrete floors are a bad combination. We can use mats in almost any condition - they may be too worn and dirty for you house, but not for ours. Call the store if you can help. We are also the lookout for **kitchen brooms** (i.e. not push brooms), and a good lawnmower for REAL’s own use. Don’t forget that we will accept hardware and tools in the store.

Helpful Websites

- **explorethearch.ca** is a new website about the Frontenac Arch Biosphere community. Interesting things to see and do locally, and nice photos.
- **ecojustice.ca** . Canada’s largest environmental law organization (formerly Sierra Legal Defence Fund) goes to court to defend the right of Canadians to a healthy environment. We have environmental laws - let’s smake sure they are enforced.
- **junkrevolution.com**. Site has loads of reader contributed ideas to “Rescue Reuse Reimagine Inspire” ordinary things into interesting crafts. Check out the garden junk section if winter has got you down.

Next Issue

Submissions for the next issue can be sent to dhicks11@cogeco.ca by March 15, 2010 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
10 a.m. - 4 p.m.

Phone: (613) 283-7999

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

Phone: (613) 283-9500

