

REAL *update*

for members and friends of the Rideau Environmental Action League

Celebrating 20 Years of Environmental Achievement

MAY 2009

REAL and RCM Collaborate on Engaging More Volunteers

REAL is proud to report that we, together with the Rideau Canal Museum (RCM), are the recipients of an Ontario Trillium Foundation (OTF) grant to fully implement our volunteer programs. The two organizations, REAL and RCM, made a collaborative submission to Trillium in November, and the official announcement came April 2, 2009.

The project "Rideau Volunteers" will receive \$82,300 to be disbursed over two years, and will build the capacity of both REAL and RCM to effectively engage more community volunteers in environmental and cultural education, and protection and preservation in the Rideau River watershed. A part-time volunteer co-ordinator will be hired to work with both organizations. The REAL's Volunteer Program developed through earlier Trillium funding will be modified to meet the needs of the museum, and implemented for both organizations. Working together will allow us to share recruitment costs, do joint training and information sessions, and potentially share volunteers at peak times.

In this announcement, 494 not-for-profit and charitable organizations in Ontario will receive funding totalling \$33,671,600 from the OTF. A formal presentation by Trillium took place April 22 to coincide with Earth Day and Volunteer Week.

"You vote in elections once a year...but when you volunteer, you vote every day about the kind of community you want to live in."

- Sue Premo

ecoENERGY Grants Increased

An across-the-board increase of 25% in the federal ecoENERGY grants is giving Canadians extra incentive to improve the energy efficiency of their homes. And it is expected that the Ontario government will match the federal increases announced March 30.

continued inside...

In this Issue

Solar Hot Water - The Price is Right	2
Home Energy Labelling	3
Environment Centre Plans	3
Active Transportation Gears Up	4
Walk and Roll May 11 - 15	4
20 th Anniversary Launch	4
REAL DEAL News	5
Ontario Wide Pesticide Ban	5
Gardening Trends	6
Mercury in CFLs Caution	6
Pitch-In Smiths Falls	7
In REAL Life	7

Items eligible for grants are furnaces, ground and air source heat pumps, EPA woodstoves, outdoor wood boilers, central and room air conditioners, heat recovery ventilators, insulation and air sealing, instantaneous hot water heaters, drain water heat recovery systems, doors, windows and low-flow toilets. All replacements must improve energy efficiency and much of the technology must meet specific requirements. For a full list, do an internet search on “ecoENERGY Retrofit grants.”

The additional grant increase for solar hot water heating systems will bring this technology into the mainstream. The federal portion of the grant has increased from \$500 to \$1,250 -- a 150% increase. Since the solar component will cut your electricity or gas charges for water heating in half, the payback on these systems is less than 10 years - truly a no brainer. (See related story: Solar Hot Water - the Price is Right)

Of note, an ecoENERGY client can apply the expenses they have incurred under ecoEnergy to the Home Renovation Tax Credit program, effectively double dipping, as long as the work is done before February, 2010. For more information on the criteria for the tax credit, search for Home Renovation Tax Credit under the Canada Revenue Agency.

Solar Hot Water - The Price is Right

If money has been holding you back from installing a solar hot water heater, there is no better time than now to take the plunge.

A series of seminars was recently held in Perth, Merrickville and Smiths Falls in late March to explain how solar hot water heaters work and the incentives available. For a basic system that serves two people, the incentives contribute almost 50% of the cost, making the net price very attractive. Assuming Ontario does bring in the same grant and with other incentives available, the net installed cost of a one-panel solar hot water system will drop to \$2,250 - \$3,000, while a two-panel system will fall to

\$3,500 - \$4,000. Going solar for your hot water needs will significantly reduce your carbon emissions, as hot water use accounts for about a quarter of residential energy consumption.



Chris Weissflog, of Kemptville’s EcoGen Energy was the presenter for these sessions supported by Seventh Generation Community Projects and Go Solar Ontario. In Smiths Falls the session was co-hosted by the Rideau Canal Museum and REAL.

Here is a quick rundown of the incentives available for residential solar hot water heaters:

- ecoENERGY Home Retrofit (Federal) – just increased to \$1,250. See the new federal ecoENERGY Grant Table at oee.nrcan.gc.ca/residential/personal/retrofit-homes/pdf/homes-grant-e.pdf
- Ontario’s ecoENERGY Home Retrofit grant – until recently it matched the Federal grant. The current provincial rate is \$500. The chart is at homeenergyontario.ca/pdfs/retrofit_consolidated_list_english.pdf
- Sustainable Ottawa Solar H2Ottawa – \$1,200 more to members who sign up for the program (Membership is open to the public and costs \$40. Registration for Solar H2Ottawa program is free to members. Geographic limitations apply. See website: sustainableottawa.ca/page.php?51
- EcoGen Energy Discount - \$150 to members of Sustainable Ottawa (not available in conjunction with Bulk Deal mentioned below)
- Federal Home Renovation Tax Credit – 15% tax credit on home renovation expenses this year between \$1,000 and \$10,000. See budget.gc.ca/2009/pamphlet-depliant/pamphlet-depliant3-eng.asp.

- Bulk Deal – for buyers who choose to act in unison with other buyers, they can get about 10% further off the regular purchase price – up to \$800.

Besides these incentives to residential installations, there are large subsidies to business and institutional installations.

See a fact sheet of the steps you should follow at seventhgeneration.ca/documents/How_to_Go_Solar...Hot_Water.pdf or see www.sustainableottawa.ca.

REAL's Climate Change Action Team (CCAT) and Chris Weissflog are planning a session on solar hot water heating and space heating, possibly in early June. If we do not have your name from the March 31 solar hot water sessions, please let Peter Au know you are interested: (613) 284-8338 or peter00au@gmail.com. Chris can be reached at (613) 288-8751 or chrisw@ecogenenergy.ca.

Home Energy Labelling to Become Mandatory

There are many excellent initiatives under Ontario's proposed Green Energy Act, but one that has caught particular attention is the mandatory Labelling of homes for their energy consumption. This is a natural progression of the efforts to reduce the energy consumed, and the greenhouse gases produced, by our residential buildings.

Having a mandatory energy label at the point of sales helps buyers determine not just the purchase price of the home, but also its operating costs. The label also helps sellers know exactly where they can make low-cost investments that they can turn into profit.

Broadly, this initiative will help create jobs in Ontario, reduce the money we waste on energy and cut our greenhouse gases.

"There exists today a global race to establish the policies, attract the investment and build the foundation for the green economy that is sure to sustain future prosperity and progress," said George Smitherman, Deputy Premier and Minister of Energy and Infrastructure. "It is a race Ontario is determined to win. This proposed legislation would help Ontario become the preferred destination for green jobs, green investment and green energy."

For a full description of the Green Energy Act, go to the Ontario Liberal party site: www.ontariogreenenergyact.ca/index.html.

Environment Centre Plans

A team led by Peter Au has been working behind the scenes for the "outdoor" portion of the Environment Centre. The three acre site next to the swale will be ideal for a number of projects. Chris Canning, a landscape architect, has developed a site plan that incorporates a variety of eco features. With this plan in hand we will be able to seek support and seek funding for individual elements as time, energy and funds allow. The north corner would be the community garden and an orchard of dwarf trees. A habitat pool in front of the store would be linked by a trail to an outdoor seating area in the south corner, next to the boardwalk and



wetland access point. Other features include bike racks and parking for cyclists; temporary storage for reuse store materials; and a place to demonstrate composting

methods, water conservation, solar and wind energy generation, and composting and dry toilets. An agreement of the major stakeholders is being developed and will need to be finalized before any major components are put in place.

Active Transportation Gears Up

Representatives from the Health Unit joined REAL's Climate Change Action Team (CCAT) last fall. Lois Dewey and Melanie Ramsay, both public health nurses, saw the linkages between healthy lifestyle and CCAT encouraging people to drive less to reduce their energy consumption and contribution to climate change. "Active Transportation" is about encouraging and making it more feasible for residents to walk, bike or use other non-mechanized forms of transportation to get around, or just for fun and exercise. REAL would like Smiths Falls to become part of this national and international shift towards making our communities more friendly to pedestrians and cyclists. We have two related projects to report.

Walk and Roll Week - May 11-15

The Health Unit, Chamber of Commerce, Sport X and REAL are organizing a Walk and Roll Week for May 11 - 15 to encourage residents to walk or bike to or from work or school at least once during that week. There will be a prize draw for participants, as well as prizes for those who take the additional step of completing a quick walkability or bikability survey. A launch will be held at Monday, May 11 at Kinsmen Park (next to the Town Hall) at noon.

So start making your plans! Even if you live far from your workplace, you could park further away one day and walk or bike the rest of the way. We will be letting people know which parking lots can be used for that. Participants will be able to sign up online through the

Chamber of Commerce website, or pick up a printed form at the Chamber of Commerce, 77 Beckwith St. N.; the Health Unit, 52 Abbott St. N.; Sport X, 11 Chambers St.; or the REAL Deal, 85 William St., W.



Biking Routes around Smiths Falls

We continue to assemble our map of potential biking routes surrounding Smiths Falls, and biking/walking routes in town. This will be our first kick at this; we fully realize once we distribute it we will get lots of additional suggestions. If you have input, please contact us before we go to print!

20th Anniversary Media Launch

A 20th Anniversary Launch organized for media and municipal representatives March 24 had the intended effect. It resulted in coverage of REAL's anniversary by The Record News/EMC, Smiths Falls This Week, Ottawa Sun and Lake 88, JACK FM, and the Westport Review Mirror. REAL also had a chance to reassert our presence with several area municipal representatives. Mayor Dennis Staples was on hand to present REAL with a Certificate of Congratulations from the Town of Smiths Falls.

Some representative REAL members were on hand at the wine and cheese. Founding members Peter Au and Ron Stewart shared some thoughts on REAL's beginnings, and Barb Hicks made a presentation on the action, innovation and collaboration demonstrated by REAL.

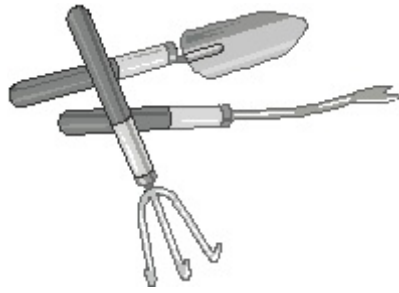
Many thanks to Colio Wineries and Balderson Cheese for their contributions, to Bill Dobson for his beef kielbasa, to Barry Joynt for the musical accompaniment, and the Rideau Canal Museum for the use of their facility. Todd Douglas, of Katimavik, lent his technical expertise to the photo and power point presentations.

Thanks to our 20th Anniversary Committee for this successful event: Beth Graham, Stacey Roy, Joyce Brennan, John Joynt, Peter Au, Ken Graham and Barb Hicks. The Committee is planning a fall celebration dinner for people who have been involved with REAL over the years, and a more public celebration on July 18 during the Canal, Chocolate and Railway Festival.

REAL DEAL News

Deals at the REAL Deal

The REAL Deal is currently well-stocked with mattresses as well as kitchen and bathroom sinks. Think of us if you are looking for or unloading gardening tools and supplies. There is a good demand for small decorative items or “knick knacks”, kitchen or dining table and chair sets, couches and loveseats. Couches frequently are donated and sold the same day.



No Dumping Allowed!

Please help us by spreading the right messages about the REAL Deal, namely that we are a gently used goods diversion operation NOT a waste disposal service. We encourage and welcome donations, but all items are subject to staff approval. We do not encourage people to leave items outside of store hours. The green cardboard dumpster is for the use of Downtown Business Association Members only, and there are no dumpsters for public use. We may be forced to lock the gates to the REAL Deal at the road when the store is not open to discourage abuse.

Mow Down Pollution

Take your old gas belching mowers, and smog spewing trimmers, blowers and chainsaws to Home Depot locations across Canada between April 23 and May 3, and you will receive an instant rebate of up to \$100 on the purchase of a more environmentally friendly lawn care option. A gasoline-powered lawnmower run for an hour puts out approximately the same amount of smog-forming emissions as running 40 new automobiles for an hour!

Ontario Wide Pesticide Ban

A province-ban on pesticides came into effect on Earth Day, April 22. It prohibits the sale and use of pesticides for cosmetic purposes on lawns, gardens, parks and school yards. Over 250 products will be banned for sale and more than 80 pesticide ingredients will be banned for cosmetic uses.

The ban takes the place of local by-laws in the 35 municipalities that already have bylaws restricting pesticide use in place. The Ministry of the Environment estimates that only 25% of Ontario homeowners actually use cosmetic pesticides currently.

Unhealthy lawns will need time to adjust to no chemicals, because the pesticides used kill off some of the organisms needed to keep lawn healthy.

If you wish to dispose of banned products, save them for your municipal hazardous collections day or depot. See the list of banned products at www.ene.gov.on.ca/en/land/pesticides/class7,

From 1999 to 2003 REAL ran a Pesticide Free Naturally campaign which featured “Get Your Lawn off Drugs”

forums and an action kit that described how to manage without pesticides. Thankfully the Ministry of the Environment plans to focus on public education rather than on enforcing penalties.



Gardening Trends

Many of the 2009 garden trends and predictions seem to indicate a greater environmental awareness. As well, the uncertain economy and food scares are contributing to an increased interest in growing our own food. Some of the indicators are:

- more people planting vegetable gardens: 1/3 of Americans are adding vegetable gardens, and 10% are adding herb gardens
- more vegetable gardens are emphasizing heirloom and hard to find varieties
- more sturdy perennials being selected to match the local climate
- more organic gardening
- more recyclable pots
- fewer vast tracts of grass, more emphasis on trees and structural foliage
- more chemical free gardening as more municipalities ban pesticides
- wildlife gardens assuming more importance
- more naturalizing spring bulbs instead of ones that require replanting
- more purchases being made online



Adapted from the Sunflower, The Newsletter of the Smiths Falls Horticultural Society, January 2009 issue.

Mercury in the CFLs Caution

Compact Fluorescent Lightbulbs (CFLs), while a great way to save energy, do contain a small amount of mercury, which is considered a toxin. While a broken CFL is not likely to be dangerous to your family, it is wise to treat them with caution, and dispose of them properly.

Current CFLs contain about 4 mg of mercury, but newer versions can contain as little as 1.4 mg. This amount is very small compared to some other common sources: a watch battery, 25 mg; dental amalgams, 500 mg; and thermometers, 500 - 2,000 mg.

Over the lifetime of a CFL you will still use less mercury than a regular incandescent lightbulb. That is because an incandescent bulb takes four times the electricity to provide the same amount of light. And what is the greatest source of mercury emissions in the environment? Power generation. In the U.S., 40% of mercury emissions come from coal fired power plants.

According to Tree Hugger, “Over 5 years (the life of a CFL) it may be responsible for 2.4 mg of smokestack mercury emissions, so a total of 6.4 mg of mercury over the life of the bulb. By comparison the incandescent bulb is responsible for almost 10 mg of mercury emissions over 5 years.” Actual figures would depend on the type of power generation.

The mercury is in a sealed glass tubing and is not released while the bulb is in use or is not broken. Most of the mercury gets bound to the inside of the light bulb when in use, about 14% of the mercury could get released into the air or water if it goes to a regular landfill.

So don't dispose of CFLs in the regular garbage. Save them in a spot where they won't get broken until you can take them to a recycling collection spot. The mercury contained in the bulbs will be recovered in the processing. At the moment your options are the Home Depot in Carleton Place or Brockville, IKEA in Nepean or your municipality's Hazardous Waste Depot. (If you know of other options, please let us know.)



If you do break a CFL, do not touch it with your bare hands because the mercury can be absorbed through your skin. But the main concern is inhaling the vapour. So follow these steps.

How to Dispose of a Broken CFL

1. Open a window and close doors to the area. Let it air out for 15 minutes.
2. Put on gloves to protect your hands from broken glass.
3. If on a hard surface, use two pieces of cardboard to scoop up the glass and powder.
4. Use sticky tape to clean up the small leftover bits.
5. Use a damp paper towel to wipe up the area.
6. Plug the gloves, cardboard, tape and paper towels in a sealable plastic bag.
7. Take that to your hazardous waste depot. Resist the urge to vacuum right away.

Pitch In Smiths Falls

April 20 - May 3

Be part of this popular community wide litter cleanup.

Participate as an individual, family or community group. All it takes is a couple of hours, but it makes a big difference to our town.

Contact us so we can match you to a location and provide supplies. You will be asked to report back how much you collected and numbers of participants.

Contact Brenda King at 283-4416, drop by REAL's Environment Centre, 85 William St. W., Smiths Falls or call the Centre at 283-9500.

In REAL Life

A few of our members will be receiving **renewal reminders** with this issue. Please send in your fees soon, along with a current e-mail address. Contact Carolyn Fraser if you have questions about your membership: 283-6858 or fraser@superaje.com.

If you are not a member of REAL, why not become one? Annual fees are just \$15 for individuals and \$20 for families. Corporate memberships are \$50 and include a number of businesses, service clubs and organizations supportive of environmental change in our community. Forms are available at the REAL Deal or on our website.

We were saddened to hear of the passing of **Jan Schokking** on February 28th, 2009. While Jan is well-known for his longtime involvement in the Rotary Club of Smiths Falls, many do not realize Jan also served as a REAL Board member for many years as Treasurer. His business experience with Lanark Leeds Distributors was a welcome asset to REAL.

Welcome to Ryan Williamson, our latest Katimavik participant. Ryan will be working at the REAL Deal Wednesday through Friday, and with Big Brothers and Sisters Mondays and Tuesdays. The latest Katimavik group will be with us until late June. Todd Douglas and the rest of the second contingent have moved on to Victoriaville, PQ.

We are sorry that **Andre Courville, our Store Promotions Coordinator**, who has been with REAL since December, will be leaving us. But we are pleased that he has found a more permanent position, as that is what the Job Creation Partnership (JCP) is meant to do. Thanks for your contributions, Andre!

The REAL Board took part in a **team building exercise** March 30 at the Valley Heartland boardroom. The session was lead by Jeff Kohl courtesy of the Ontario Healthy Communities

Coalition. The group also took some time to discuss upcoming environmental issues and strategic challenges for REAL to continue to develop as an organization.

REAL has tentative approval from **Summer Jobs Canada** to hire a student for 8 weeks this summer, 30 hours a week. The candidate would work in the REAL Deal store most of their hours, and assist with other REAL projects the remaining time. Interested applicants should submit a cover letter and resume, preferably by e-mail, to info@realaction.ca.

We are still seeking **another person to join the REAL Board**. Our directors tend to be “hands on” people. They meet once a month and average about another meeting a month on other committees or projects. If you are keen to volunteer in this way or know of someone who might be, contact Barb at 283-9966 or dhicks11@cogeco.ca.

A new shipment of **rain barrels** will be arriving at the REAL Deal the third week of May from the Arbor Environmental Shop. Cost is \$89 plus tax, your choice of grey or terra cotta. If you would like to reserve one, contact Wayne in the Environment Centre, 283-9500.

Drop by REAL’s Environment Centre to **borrow a Kill a Watt Meter**. These handy devices can be used to measure the electrical consumption of appliances that plug into a standard 120 VAC, three-prong electrical outlet, including the phantom loads of appliances that remain in standby mode. REAL also makes the devices available at the Almonte, Perth and Smiths Falls Public Libraries.

Helpful Websites

- See inventive ways of recycling at [/www.superuse.org/](http://www.superuse.org/), and be inspired!
- A neat little video on how an ecoENERGY audit can help you news.ontario.ca/newsroom/en/2009/03/home-energy-savings.html.

- A green film festival on the site Green Unplugged [/www.cultureunplugged.com/index2.php](http://www.cultureunplugged.com/index2.php)
- a collection of tips for fuel efficient driving: http://www.ecodriver.org/drive_efficient.asp

Next Issue

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

Contact Us

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Environmental Projects Manager

Phone: (613) 267-2257

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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

