

# REAL *update*

For members and friends of the Rideau Environmental Action League

NOVEMBER 2005

## ***The Bottles of Bottled Water***

Is bottled water really cleaner and better for us? Two years ago the bottled water industry was the fastest growing beverage industry, and was expected to overtake both coffee and milk to be the second most popular beverage. But with that popularity comes a lot of additional waste in the form of plastic bottles - fifteen billion in the U.S. alone in 2002.



About 1.5 million tons of plastic are used to produce water bottles each year (World Wildlife Federation). Most water bottles are made of polyethylene terephthalate or PET, which is derived from petroleum. The Container Recycling

Institute (CRI) estimates that in the U.S. the 1.5 million barrels of oil used to make water bottles each year is enough to fuel 100,000 cars for a year. And PET generates toxic emissions in the form of nickel, ethylbenzene, ethylene oxide and benzene.

The distribution of bottled water requires the burning of fossil fuels and the resultant emissions. And additional energy is required for refrigeration and the filtration of the water.

What comes next is litter, landfill or recycling. Unfortunately, in the U.S., 90 per cent of water bottles, or 30 million per day, end up as garbage or litter (Container Recycling Institute). Litter on roadsides and coastlines are an eyesore and a problem for wildlife.

Once in a landfill, plastic water bottles can take 1,000 years to biodegrade, and there is the potential for phthalates to leak into the groundwater. In some municipalities garbage is burned, releasing chlorine and dioxins from plastics into the air.

Not enough plastic water bottles are recycled, partly because so much of bottled water is consumed away from home where people do not have access to recycling receptacles. Clearly more recycling bins are needed in public places!

But recycling programs aren't a perfect solution either. In the U.S., only 5% of plastic waste is actually recycled. The number of different types of plastics make them difficult to sort, and their volume (before shredding) to weight ratio makes transportation expensive. Usually what happens is that a large amount of virgin plastic needs to be added to the recycled portion to make quality product. And shipping the plastics to Asia for sorting means fuel and emissions are created in transport, and the process is subject to less rigorous environmental laws.

*(continued inside)*

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However, the Canadian Bottled Water Association reports that over 97% of the population in Canada has access to recycling PET beverage bottles. But do we use it?

Oddly enough, the demand for recycled PET exceeds the supply, which is not the case for all plastics. In Canada PET plastic is in high demand for fibre in carpets, blankets, upholstery and stuffing for sleeping bags, ski jackets (think fleece), cushions and mattresses. It is also used in new PET bottles, billboard materials and some automotive parts. The bottles used for home or office water coolers are typically polycarbonate, and can be used 40 - 50 times. They can also be recycled into automobile parts, playground equipment and toys, material for clothing, and other consumer products.

Organizations including the World Wide Fund for Nature, Friends of the Earth, and Coop America agree that bottled water is environmentally unfriendly and we should be drinking water from the tap.

So what can you do? Ask yourself if you really need bottled water. Refill the bottles from the tap, but ensure you wash the bottles carefully. Contrary to urban legend, freezing water in the bottles does not release dioxins; there are no dioxins in the plastic. (They can form when burned, however, and reheating plastics can release phthalates, a hormone disrupting chemical). You should be more concerned about what is in the water itself, not what is in the plastic. Make sure your empties get to a recycling container - take them home if you have to. And watch for further developments in the introduction of a biodegradable bottle made from cornstarch, currently available in the southwestern U.S.

It is indeed ironic that while bottled water is marketed as a clean, healthy alternative, it may not be the greatest alternative for us all in the long run. A very comprehensive article on all the ins and outs of bottled water can be found at [www.emagazine.com/view/?1125&src](http://www.emagazine.com/view/?1125&src).

## *Doors Closed Ontario Saves 7 Megawatts of Power*

In their online newsletter, *Green On*, the Conservation Council of Ontario reported on the success of the summer 2005's Doors Closed Ontario! campaign. The campaign encouraged store and restaurant owners in fifteen communities (including Perth) to keep their doors closed in order to not waste energy when running their air conditioning.

Local canvassers estimated that when visited, 12% of businesses visited had their doors open, and 64% of businesses with their doors open closed their doors when asked. The true success of the campaign was in raising public awareness and commitment to conservation. The campaign did, however, result in savings up to 7 megawatts of peak power. If all similar business refrained from cooling the great outdoors in summer it would save Ontario up to 200 megawatts of peak demand (40% of the power from a nuclear reactor).

The campaign was most successful in urban centers like Toronto and Ottawa and in surrounding suburban centers like Oakville and Burlington with thriving downtowns. The larger stores located in urban shopping districts were the worst perpetrators. In contrast, some towns reported that none of their stores kept their doors open. Large chains posed a problem. Staff were all too willing to comply, but their hands were tied by corporate policy made in some far off city. The Conservation Council of Ontario



was encouraged by the interest shown in the campaign, and expects that the 2006 Doors Closed campaign will make a significant contribution to creating a culture of conservation in Ontario.

### ***Green Christmas Giving***

Sometimes Christmas seems like a season of overconsumption: we eat too much, drink too much, have too many things to do, buy too much, create too much garbage....

In previous years REAL has offered you tips on having a more environmentally friendly Christmas, ways to enjoy the great winter outdoors, and charitable gift suggestions for the environmentally inclined. This year's offering is suggestions of gifts that aren't things.

"a gift coupon for services provided by yourself such as babysitting, gardening, haircuts, fixit jobs, painting, errands, art, video taping, transportation etc. Make up your own coupon or gift certificate and present it in a card or wrapped in a box. If you are feeling less creative, there may be templates in your greeting card software, or samples on the web, e.g. at [www.buynothingchristmas.org](http://www.buynothingchristmas.org) and [www.kidsturncentral.com](http://www.kidsturncentral.com).

"gift certificates for similar services provided by a business: maid service, manicures, home decorating, phone cards

"think food: gift certificates to a restaurant, either their favourite or one they would like to try, or a gourmet meal prepared by yourself

"think sports: tickets or seasons passes to a sporting event; lessons (golf, scuba diving, dance); membership to a golf club, fitness centre, pool, curling club etc.

"think the arts: concert or theatre tickets

"think family attractions: passes to a museum, zoo, theme park, library, bowling alley, climbing wall etc.

"think unusual experiences: limousine service, hot air balloon ride, a weekend getaway, white water rafting - what is something they've always wanted to try?

"you may have access to discounts on many sports, arts and family attractions through coupon books, or rewards programs like HBC or Air Miles

"membership in an environmental or other organization (hmmm, know of any?)

"remember you can also save the time, pollution and fuel waste from driving about to do your shopping, by letting your fingers do the walking and phoning the business, ordering from catalogues, or ordering online

"save another step by having the business mail the certificate directly to the recipient

The recipient will appreciate your thoughtfulness of your unique gift idea, and will be thankful they don't have to find somewhere to stash your gift or the item it replaces.

### Prelude to Christmas

by the  
Central Band  
of the Canadian Forces

Monday, November 28, at 7:00 p.m.

at Smiths Falls District Collegiate  
299 Percy Street, Smiths Falls  
(behind County Fair Mall)

Tickets: \$10, \$25 for families,  
and \$2 for students

Available in Smiths Falls at:  
2 Care 4 Medical Ltd.,  
Modern Thymes Natural Foods,  
Rowats Floral & Gift Boutique  
and Rusty's Korner Store

For more information call 283-8116.

## **REAL Roundup**

**Free Yard Sale.** Our second free yard sale of the year, held at the Smiths Falls Reuse Centre, attracted 110 visitors who took away 230 kgs. of used but useable household items. Organizers were pleased at the turnout, and once again amazed at the number of people who said they had never heard of the Reuse Centre. Please help us spread the word!

**Hemp Bags.** Christmas is coming! If you are looking for a gift idea, or are just plain annoyed with all those plastic bags that accumulate with your Christmas shopping, consider one of REAL's Make a REAL Difference hemp bags. More environmentally friendly than cotton,



printed with vegetable ink, and produced in Ontario, these bags promote REAL and bring in a bit of cash. What could be better? The cost is \$18, or \$15 if you buy two or more. Buy them at Modern Thymes, e-mail the REAL website or call Elva at 283-0309.

**Used Cell Phones and Print Cartridges.** Just a reminder that we are still collecting used cell phones and used printer cartridges at the Reuse Centre. Phones and cartridges are remanufactured into useable products, parts reused, and the rest disposed of properly - a far better option than landfill. The phones raise a small amount of money for REAL, and the printer cartridges raise funds for the Canadian Diabetes Association.

**Diver Cleanup.** The diver cleanup of the Rideau near Comfort Inn, Smiths Falls on September 10 was our contribution to the Great Canadian Shoreline Cleanup. The weather was great, and the seven divers and 17 other volunteers managed to retrieve a whopping 28 shopping carts, along with the usual assortment of bicycle parts, tires, clothing, metal and a GT

racer. Thanks to Glenview Iron and Metal for providing the dumpster.

**Evergreen Barbeque.** A volunteer appreciation barbeque was held at Walton's Shelter on Evergreen Avenue, Victoria Park on Sunday, October 2. Attendees were given a brief update of the status of the Smiths Falls Parks Central Parkland Best Use Study, and were shown plans for the first phase, the parkland in and around the Rideau Canal and in the centre of town. The food was stupendous, and the October weather was enjoyed by all.



**Belated Thanks.** The editor apologizes profusely for inadvertently providing an incomplete list of thank you's for supporting this summer's Idle Free Campaign. We appreciate the contribution of REAL members, Doug and Ann Kilpatrick, and Parks Canada.

### **REAL Still Needs You!**

We caught a live one! Bill Woods has agreed to look after REAL's insurance file. But we still have lots of jobs left for you. If you would be willing to take on the Volunteer Coordinator role, contact Bunny Haughton, 283-1843, haughms@falls.igs.net. Or if Membership Chair would be more to your liking, contact Barb Hicks, 283-9966, dhicks11@cogeco.ca. There will also be many tasks associated with our Expanded Reuse Centre; contact Sue Brandum, 267-2257 at sbrandum@cogeco.ca..

## ***Local Hotel Wins International Award***

The Monterey Inn Resort & Conference Centre on Prince of Wales Drive in Ottawa has won the International Hotel & Restaurant Association's Environment Award for 2005 at a ceremony in Beijing. Mr Jason Kelly, General Manager, and his team have been working hard for several years to make the hotel more environmentally-friendly. In 2004, the Monterey won the Rideau Valley Conservation Foundation's Annual Conservation Award and the Hotel Association of Canada's Energy and Environment Award. The company was also Canada's First Carbon Neutral Company. They calculate their carbon dioxide emissions and then plant enough trees to absorb that quantity of carbon over their lifetime.

Mr. Kelly realized that energy reduction measures were actually saving the company money. His team has kept at the improvements until they are now considered to be a leader in energy conservation in the hospitality industry around the world. Their actions have included a three-year energy reduction strategy; replacement of all 1,000 incandescent bulbs with compact fluorescents; a better management system for controlling guest room, pool and sauna heating and cooling costs; environmentally-friendly snow removal; slope stabilization along the Rideau River waterfront; shoreline naturalization with native Canadian plants; kitchen composting and strategic material recycling.

## ***Kill a Watt Meters Available to Borrow***

Thanks to the generosity of a corporate member, Renewable Energy of Plum Hollow, REAL is making three Kill a Watt devices available for residents to borrow from the Smiths Falls Public Library. This watt-hour meter allows people to measure the electricity consumed by various household appliances, and determine which of their appliances are energy guzzlers and should be replaced or used more sparingly.

This meter is very simple to use. You plug the three prong device into 120 VAC, three-prong (grounded) electrical outlet, and then plug your appliance into the meter. An LCD shows the AC volts, AC amps, watts, volt-amps, frequency, power factor, kilowatt-hours (up to 9,999 KWH) and elapsed time (up to 9,999 hours.)

For appliances that cycle on and off, like fridges, freezers, pumps and water coolers, you will need to keep the Kill a Watt plugged in for up to 24 hours to get an accurate reading. And you will not be able to measure the electrical consumption of appliances that are directly wired, such as stoves, dishwashers, driers, water pumps, furnaces, electric hot water heaters or some lighting fixtures.

The devices are available now from the Smiths Falls Public Library, regardless of whether you are a library card holder. A Kill a Watt meter can be borrowed for 10 days for \$5. Borrowers will be asked to leave their name, address and phone number and a post-dated cheque for \$70, which will be returned when the device is returned to the library.

## ***More Energy News***

**Incentive Finder.** The Incentive Finder is a one-stop-shopping feature of the One-Tonne Challenge site that outlines the various grants, rebates and discounts available to help you use less energy, switch to renewable energy and produce less waste. You can search by province and 14 categories of home energy and vehicles. While there are not necessarily incentives in each category, it is a useful tool. Programs are being added to the list, so it is recommended you check back periodically. To start searching, go to [incentivesandrebates.ca/gc\\_fi\\_search.asp](http://incentivesandrebates.ca/gc_fi_search.asp).

**Code Green Canada.** A six-part reality television series to be broadcast by CBC TV in spring 2006 called Code Green Canada will show Canadian homeowners how to reduce energy consumption in their homes. Green Communities Energy Advisors will perform EnerGuide for Houses evaluations and provide energy savings recommendations to the competing homeowners. The top energy reducing home will win a hybrid car.

### ***Green Living Handbook***

A new book, Green Living: The E Magazine Handbook for Living Lightly on the Earth, has been purchased by the Smiths Falls Public Library at the suggestion of REAL. It is full of practical tips to achieving a more sustainable lifestyle. Fourteen chapters cover topics from food, to personal care products, energy use, and socially responsible investing.

Its contents are the collaboration of contributors to E/The Environmental Magazine, a publication founded in 1990 to deliver user-friendly information about complex environmental subjects. Green Living grew from that, so it is very consumer friendly and current. The resource listings at the end of each chapter are extensive, and are a great springboard to obtaining more detailed information or exploring eco-friendly products.

It is not as colourful and upbeat as Pollution Probe's Canadian Green Consumer Guide from 1991, and is somewhat American biased, but Green Living is up-to-date, accurate information on how to make more eco-friendly choices, all in one place.

### ***Toxic Canadians***

In their report *Toxic Nation: A Report on Pollution In Canadians*, the environmental watchdog group, Environmental Defence, says Canadians have a mix of toxic chemicals in their bodies. These chemicals can cause cancer,

disrupt hormones, affect reproduction, cause respiratory problems or impair neurological development.

Similar studies have been conducted in the United States and Europe, but this is the first of its kind in Canada. They studied the blood and urine of 11 diverse volunteers from across the country for the presence of 88 chemicals. Sixty chemicals were found, with an average of 44 in each volunteer. The volunteer who had the highest concentrations of chemicals in his blood was from a Cree community in northern Quebec.

In the last 50 years, more than 80,000 new chemicals have been created. But many of the chemicals that people are exposed to every day have never been assessed for their impact on human health.

Banning some certain chemicals may make a difference. PCBs were banned in Canada in the early 1970's, and this study found fewer PCBs in the younger volunteers. Environmental Defence would like to see a legislated phase-out of PBDEs, perfluorinated chemicals and their precursors (PFOS), and phthalates (chemicals that make plastics soft.)

Average Canadians can reduce their personal exposure to chemicals by buying organic foods, not using pesticides and using non-toxic cleaning products.

*(From a CTV News report, Nov. 9, 2005)*

#### ***New Online Donation Option***

If you would like to contribute to the Rideau Environment Trust using a credit card, access [www.CanadaHelps.org](http://www.CanadaHelps.org) directly or through [www.REALaction.ca](http://www.REALaction.ca). Canada Helps forwards the charitable receipt directly to you. Cheques or cash are still an option, as all donations to REAL are gratefully accepted.

## ***The REAL DEAL Gains Momentum***

The momentum for our expanded Reuse Centre is REALLY building, with the involvement of many individuals with a wonderful and wide variety of skills and backgrounds on both our Advisory and Steering Committees. Following the Feasibility and Business Plan completed by Andrea Swain earlier this year, funding was sought and secured from three different sources to start the project. One of these has allowed us to hire Sue Brandum as Executive Director of the project for three days a week until the end of January to get this off the ground. A major coup was securing our most preferred location possible. This site meets almost all of our best case scenario expectations. It will be announced shortly. Besides allowing ample space for the larger household items such as furniture and used construction materials, there is room for staff, REAL headquarters, meeting space, and space for our long dreamed of environmental resource centre. The various pieces are all falling into place, and those involved are very excited at the prospect of opening a sustainable green business that will provide employment and work experience and contribute to the local economy.

Look for an announcement in the local media about the opening of The REAL DEAL, our Store and Environment Centre, in mid-January. The contents of our existing Reuse Centre will continue as a free store in the new location as early as December 10.

### ***Snowmobile Trivia***

"A snowmobile's two-stroke engine produces more smog-forming pollution in seven hours than a modern car emits over 160,000 kilometres.

"A snowmobile emits the same volume of hydrocarbons and nitrous oxides as 1,000 cars, and as much carbon monoxide as

## **Wanted**

We are looking for a FREE, working, household vacuum cleaner for our new REAL Deal store. The new space is carpeted in places. Call Sue at 267-2257 if you can help.

### ***Reuse Store Advisory Committee***

- "Isabelle Belot-Graveline, President, Kilmarnock Enterprises
- "Mike Clifflen, Ross & Clifflen Barristers
- "Don Ross, Ross and Cooke Chartered Accountants
- "Norm Ruttan, President, *iwastenot* waste management computer consultants, environmental non-profit expert, community sustainability expert
- "Chris Saumure, Guy Saumure & Sons Construction Ltd.
- "Dennis Staples, Mayor, Smiths Falls
- "Andrea Swain, Reuse Centre Business Planner

### ***Reuse Store Steering Committee***

- "Peter Au, Chair
- "Susan Brandum
- "Elva Corless, REAL Director
- "Paul Cormier, VP, RANA International Change Management Consultants
- "Ken Graham, Councillor, Town of Smiths Falls
- "Brenda King, REAL Member
- "Janice Ling, Artmakers
- "Diane Pearen, Community Placement Worker, Lanark County Ontario Works
- "Dawn Quinn, Councillor, Town of Smiths Falls, head of an association of retailers offering previously used materials, business owner Dawn's Closet

## Our Corporate Members

Canadian Tire, Smiths Falls  
Civitan Club

Cogeco Cable Inc.  
Township of Elizabethtown-Kitley  
The Garden Market

Healey Transportation Ltd.  
Hershey Canada Inc.  
Dr. David Hicks  
Kinsmen Club  
Krown Rust Control Centre

Lam s Garden Restaurant  
Man Ling Restaurant  
The Performance Group of Companies  
Renewable Energy of Plum Hollow  
Rideau Regional Centre

Rideau Valley Conservation Authority  
Rotary Club of Smiths Falls  
Royal Canadian Legion, Branch 95  
Royal LePage Pauline Aunger Real Estate  
Scotiabank

Smiths Falls Lions Club  
Stanley Mechanics Tools  
Dr. Wayne Steggle  
Tim Hortons of Smiths Falls  
Top Drawer Temporary Services  
and Denny K s Car Care

Town of Smiths Falls  
Warring s Independent Grocer

Thank you  
for your ongoing support!

## *Announcements*

Monday, November 28, 7 p.m., **Prelude to Christmas concert** by the Central Band of the Canadian Forces in SFDCI cafetorium. A REAL fundraiser. Tickets \$10, \$25 for families, \$2 for students. Call 284-8338.

Wednesdays, 1:30 - 4:00 and Saturdays, 9:30 - 12, **Reuse Centre**, end of Johnston St., Smiths Falls, but reopening at our new location approx. Dec. 10. Free exchange of household goods too good to throw away. Call Elva at 283-0309.

1st and 3rd Saturdays of the month, 9 - 12. **Plastics (#2 through #7) Recycling Depot** open to Drummond-North Elmsley and Perth residents, at Town Yard, Perth.

## *Membership Rates*

Annual rates are: Individuals - \$15, Family - \$20, Students - \$5, Corporate - \$50. Members will be asked to renew early in 2006.

## *Next Issue*

Submissions for the January issue can be sent to [dhicks11@cogeco.ca](mailto:dhicks11@cogeco.ca) by January 15, 2006 or call Barb at 283-9966.

## *Contact Us*

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