

# REAL *update*

REAL people taking REAL action to protect our environment

Rideau Environmental Action League (REAL)

DECEMBER 2017

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## Home Energy Assessments—What's in it for You?

A home energy assessment is a valuable tool available to homeowners to make their homes more energy efficient. Almost any home, new or old, can benefit from some adjustments to reduce its energy use. A Registered Energy Advisor can determine the sources of energy wasting deficiencies in your home, suggest ways to counter them, and indicate which upgrades will give you the most bang for your buck. What's in it for you?

**Lower Energy Bills.** Many of the improvements you make pay for themselves in a very short time.

**Improved Comfort.** An assessment can find the source of cold drafts and inconsistent temperatures, which once addressed will make your home more comfortable.

**Health and Safety.** An inspection could detect ventilation problems and identify the potential for backdrafting of your heating equipment that could lead to smoke or carbon monoxide entering your home.

**A Healthier Environment.** Reducing your home's energy use reduces your environmental impact – less waste, less pollution, less contribution to climate change.



Having an experienced person who understands energy and construction take a walk through your home will tell you things you probably never realized. Here are a few examples from Alan Leonard, who offers audits locally through REAL:

*An older couple, who had lived in their 1940's era home since 1964, didn't at first believe me when I told them their walls had no insulation. After they had the walls filled with blown insulation they told me it was the first time they could sit comfortably in winter without a sweater on. They were very pleased with the large energy cost savings as well.*

*A homeowner complained their addition was very cold. In the crawlspace below I discovered that the heating duct was completely detached and dumping warm air into the crawlspace instead of supplying the room above. There was also the equivalent of a one square foot hole in the foundation. They were essentially heating the outside. With a few simple fixes they were finally able to enjoy using the room.*

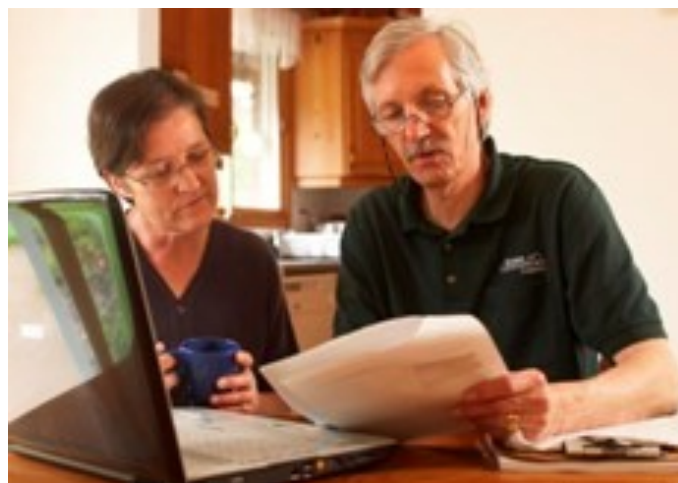


## Home Energy Assessments (continued)

*The homeowners were never comfortable in their house, complaining about the noisy furnace roaring on and quickly shutting off, many times a day and night. As I suspected, the simulation model of the energy performance of their house showed that the older furnace was very oversized and was 'short cycling', never reaching peak efficiency and wasting fuel. When they replaced the furnace with a properly sized, high efficiency unit it ran quietly for longer periods at much higher efficiency, providing steady, comfortable heat. Despite the furnace being 'on' more their fuel bills went down dramatically and they saved electricity as well with the DC high efficiency blower motor.*

These are just a few examples of how an energy audit could help you. Many people find it reassuring to have their assessment done by a local, non-profit organization that is not trying to sell you any further energy products or services.

But here's one more reason why now is the time for a home energy assessment. Enbridge Gas is now offering the Home Conservation Program, in which homes heated with natural gas, electricity, oil, propane or wood can be eligible for up to \$1600 in incentives. You must arrange a home energy audit with a Registered Energy Advisor, do at least two of the upgrades



suggested, achieve a minimum of 15% annual fuel savings, and have a post energy audit to confirm the improvement. REAL, through Green Communities Canada, is an Enbridge approved service organization that can do the audits and help you with the paper work required. See the poster on the back of this newsletter, [our website](#), or the [Enbridge website](#) for details. Contact Alan Leonard at 864-3099 or [alanleonard9@gmail.com](mailto:alanleonard9@gmail.com) to find out how it works or book an appointment.

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## Clothes Drying Racks for Energy Savings

Some free wooden clothes drying racks are still available to households that could be struggling with the energy costs of running clothes driers. REAL is partnering with the Salvation Army in Smiths Falls and Lanark County Social Services to identify families who could use a rack, and can provide a limited number of vouchers. The recipient then brings the voucher to the REAL Deal Store to pick up the rack. Two sizes are available, and the foldable, Canadian-made racks could also be used outside in fairer weather. If you think you qualify, or know someone who does, please contact Diane Pearen at Lanark County Social Services, or Debbie Lafleur at the Salvation Army Thrift Store.





## REAL Action Grants 2017

The results are in for our second set of REAL Action Grants. The \$250 grants were offered to deserving community groups who needed a little help to move their environmental projects along. Applicants had until March 1, 2017 to apply, and the projects were to be completed by end of the summer.

**Food for Thought Program, SFDCI.** One group of secondary school students used the grant to build a hinged-lid composter and purchase other garden supplies for their program. The garden provided some healthy breakfast, lunch and snack options for the students involved.



**Youth Connections Program.** A youth day program of RNJ Youth Services built a greenhouse on the site of the Bethel Christian Reformed Church in Brockville where they meet. In it they grew green and yellow beans, spinach, lettuce, peas and cucumbers.



**Outdoor Education and Mock Climate Change Summit.** The money was pooled with other UCDSB funding to make an overnight field trip to Forester's Falls possible for some Grade 10 applied science students. Besides participating in outdoor activities to connect with the natural world, the students watched the film "Before the Flood" and participated in a mock Climate Change Summit to understand some of the complexities of the Paris Climate Agreement.



REAL first offered REAL Action Grants in 2015 in honour of its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary year. Thanks to a donation from the Pilkington Henniger Charitable Trust Foundation, REAL will be offering another set of the grants in 2018. Watch for an announcement early in the year in this newsletter, on our website and on Facebook.

## REAL Deal Free Table is not a Drop Zone

**No Dumping!** Many customers have mistaken our free table, to the right of the customer doors and along the building, as a drop off zone. Not so! The very large “No Dumping” sign should be a clue. If you have donations to make to the store, please bring them to our attention, first of all by coming during store hours. Smaller items can be brought inside and brought to the cashier’s attention, and larger items can be taken to the back gate where staff will help you. This allows staff to advise if your donations are acceptable, note your municipality, and weigh your donation. Donations dropped when we are not there may not be acceptable for various reasons: they are hazardous, they are clothing, we can’t sell them, or we have a serious surplus.

**Free Table.** But the free table, which is the true function, does play an important role in our operation. Our goal is to give whatever materials we are donated another chance before becoming landfill. If we are unlikely to sell these, but think that someone else could still make use of them, we are happy to give them away for free. These could be seasonal items, goods requiring a small repair, stuff most people don’t use anymore because it is outdated, toys and things we get far too many of (like coffee mugs!) Some things we receive go directly to the free pile. But if something has been on our shelves for too long, and just isn’t moving, we free it to make room for newer stuff. We do cull the free collection periodically also— some items have been ruined or haven’t found a good home, and only then will we put them in the garbage. The free materials are kept locked in the little garden shed next to the building (what a great donation that was!) The free materials will not be put out on bad weather days, which unfortunately, seems to happen more in winter months. We weigh materials going out to the free table, so feel free to take goods directly back to your car if you see something you like.

At some times there are larger items left outside for sale to the left of the customer doors. They should have visible prices. Ask if you are unsure. But rest assured, the stuff on the right is free to anyone who can make use of it. If you feel guilty about it, we have a donation jar on the counter.

**Don’t Drop and Run.** So please do not just drop materials on the free table. We would like the opportunity to make a little money from them, and don’t want them taken before we have a chance to assess them. We know you are bringing us your good quality reusable items because you want to support REAL and REAL’s environmental activities, and want us to be able to continue this valuable service.





## Not Your Usual Eco-Friendly Christmas List

There are all kinds of eco-friendly Christmas lists out there, including in REAL's past newsletters. Here are a few things you might not have heard before in the context of the holiday season.



**Gift Cards.** Gift cards aren't a bad idea if you want to make sure the recipient gets something they want. You don't have to spend time shopping, and many local stores have lots to choose from, which reduces your travel time. But if the waste of those little plastic cards bothers you, there are ways around it. Some plastic cards can be recharged (e.g. a Tim Horton's card.) Most small businesses, such as a local restaurant or even the REAL Deal Store, can give you a paper version of a gift card. You can also go with egift cards – you can email someone a code for a purchase amount – think iTunes, Chapters, Toys “R” Us and so on. Some companies have been experimenting with wooden, biodegradable cards. They cost the business slightly more. But maybe someday this or other materials will be an option for us.

**Recycling Alcohol Packaging.** Many of us will be consuming more of this stuff than usual over the holidays. You can recycle almost any of the packaging that you purchased at the LCBO or The Beer Store: beer bottle caps, wine corks, mesh sleeves, beer cartons/cases, wine boxes, cans, bottles and paper bags. The 97% recovery rate for refillable beer bottles is impressive, but the other materials accepted in the Ontario Deposit Return System aren't always turned in. Only 53% of PET alcohol bottles are recovered, which is too bad for consumers, because they are worth 10 or 20 cents, depending on size. So designate a spot, collect your alcohol pack-



aging over the season and return it to The Beer Store. Let the producers take responsibility for the costs of this packaging, and collect the deposit you paid on bottles and cans at purchase. Throwing the containers in your municipal program is not the best option in this case. Here are some [tips on making returns](#) at The Beer Store.

**Regifting.** This is one way to avoid unnecessary waste and put stuff to better use. Some regifts are pretty safe, such as boxes of chocolates, and bottles of wine, but with anything uncommon, be careful. The gift must be appropriate for that person, you should avoid regifting within the same circle of people, and you should never regift meaningful gifts. Here is a [good list of rules](#) if you are unsure.



**Can I Give Reused Gifts?** Even more tricky! A preowned gift is less expensive for you and good for the environment. But whether it is acceptable will depend on the people in your circle. In a family that frequently shops reused, a reused gift is probably not a stretch. A preowned item may be considered more personal if it was used by someone close to them, or took a lot of hunting to find it. But for others, used gifts might be completely unacceptable. The gift always has to be useful and about the person – not a chance for you to unload things. Certain gifts of course have to be used – vintage or antique items that aren't available anymore. If you aren't sure someone will be OK with a used gift, don't do give it to them. At the REAL Deal we have little gift tags that you can add to a gift if you want to make it clear it has a history. Here is an [interesting discussion on Life Hacker](#) on used gift giving. Maybe this is something you could talk over with your family at Christmas time in preparation for next year!



## Thanks to our Local Foods Dinner Sponsors

The generosity of these sponsors made a big difference to our fundraising total, and we are truly grateful.

### Platinum Sponsors

Andress' Your Independent Grocer

Tim Hortons, Beckwith and Lombard St.

### Gold Sponsors

Lawrence E. Allen

Dr. Ambrose Au

Peter and Daisy Au

Civitan Club of Smiths Falls

Dr. Goldie Dixit Dentistry

Judy and Greg Fournier

Healey's Glass Ltd.

Pat Hogan

Rideau Lumber (Smiths Falls) Ltd.

Rotary Club of Smiths Falls

Smiths Falls Optometrists

### Silver Sponsors

Friends of the Library

Beth Graham

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Jack and Karen Schecter

Cooperators Paul Spinelli Insurance Inc.,  
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### Bronze Sponsors

Denny K's Car Care

Denoco Energy Systems

Lynn and Robin Fraser

Healey Transportation Ltd.

Joynt Auction Company

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Top Drawer Temporary Service

## Radon: How much is in Your Home?

You can't smell it, taste it, or see it, but radon gas should not be overlooked. Radon gas is the second leading cause of lung cancer in Canada after smoking. With many homes built on bedrock, the chance for radon to be present in a home is probable. The good news is that there are easy ways to measure the radon gas levels in your home. If you have a radon gas problem, there are certified experts that can help you through radon mitigation.

Radon gas is a radioactive, colourless, and odourless gas that is emitted when uranium breaks down in soil, rock, or water. Accumulation of this gas is likely to occur in the lower levels of the home, especially in homes where basements are unfinished. In high levels, radon poses a serious health risk. If an area is poorly ventilated, radon gas is more likely to accumulate and thus pose a greater health risk.

Fortunately, tests are available that enable homeowners to test their homes to see if radon is present, and if it is, then at what level. If you find a problem, you can reach out to a mitigator who has been certified through the Canadian National Radon Proficiency Program (C-NRPP). Mitigation is not complex and often involves sealing or improving the ventilation of an area.



While radon gas is a serious health concern, detection is an easy procedure that could improve the quality of air and health in your home.

REAL is staying up to date on the radon issue and is looking into purchasing radon meters to be available on loan to the public in the future. This will make everyone able to accurately assess the radon gas levels in their home at minimal to no cost.

For additional information on radon gas, please visit [Health Canada's radon webpage](#).

## Think Twice about Christmas Glitter

Some environmentalists are calling for a ban on glitter, just as there has been on microbeads. Most modern, commercial glitter is part of the large family of microplastics – tiny little bits of plastic less than five millimeters in size. Cosmetic glitter, for example, is made by bonding aluminum with polyethylene terephthalate (PET). The tiny fragments get washed into our water systems, and end up in the Great Lakes or oceans, where they are eaten by marine life and passed up the food chain. Read this [EcoWatch](#) story for more.



But there are biodegradable alternatives on the market that are environmentally safe. One such product is made of cellulose film. Another is made with synthetic mica. You can also find recipes online for homemade glitter made from gelatin, sugar or salt, some of which are edible as well, and will be fine for some purposes.

### In REAL Life



Lanark County  
VitalSigns<sup>2017</sup>



Taking the Pulse of our Community



**Customer Ask.** We are thrilled to report an amazing fundraising total of \$1192.84 from the Address' Your Independent Grocer Customer Ask held September 10 to 23. Thanks to Dan Address and his staff for suggesting to customers they donate a buck or two to their local environmental organization.

**Truck Transportation.** We are still looking for someone who would be willing to do occasional truck pickups for the store, rate to be discussed. We are often offered larger pieces, such as furniture, that the donor is unable to deliver. Please speak to Shelley or Don M. at (613) 283-7999 if you are interested or have a lead.

**REAL Success Story.** REAL earned a mention in the recent publication "Lanark County Vital Signs 2017" produced by the Perth and District Community Foundation. The report gives an overview of the Lanark County community in ten theme areas, and we are noted on the "Environment and Nature" page. You can read it [here](#) or see the reports from 14 other Canadian communities, including [Kingston](#).

- "When people think their stuff is being recycled, it clears their conscience, no matter what is actually happening beyond the blue box," says Hird. "Our research shows that when their conscience is clear they tend to consume more than ever." Read "[Canada's Dirty Secret](#)" in Canadian Geographic, which describes the state of waste management in Canada.
- Green Venture, a Green Community in Hamilton, created a green parking lot next to a community centre and thrift store. Asphalt was removed and replaced with clover and fescue planted in eco-raster tiles that can be driven and parked on. Much of the work was done by volunteers, says this [Hamilton Spectator story](#).
- "Currently, some two million big rigs make up just five percent of the vehicles on American roads while accounting for upwards of 20 percent of the transportation sector's overall greenhouse gas emissions." What is being done to improve the efficiency of 18 wheelers? Read this short summary in [Earth Talk Q and A](#).



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Smiths Falls ON  
K7A 5A5  
613-283-9500  
info@REALaction.ca

We're on the Web  
[www.REALaction.ca](http://www.REALaction.ca)

### REAL Deal Store & Environment Centre

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

Store open Thursdays  
through Saturdays 10 – 4  
Closed Sundays  
January to March

Community Garden,  
Energy Audits, Volunteer  
or other programs

Phone: 613-283-9500

Facebook Groups:  
REAL Deal Store  
REAL  
Community Garden

Send contributions to the  
February issue by January 15 to  
dhicks11@cogeco.ca  
or call Barb at (613) 283-9966

**REAL people taking REAL action to protect our environment**

# Home Energy Conservation Program

## Receive up to \$1600 in incentives!

This Enbridge Gas Distribution program is available to homes heated with **natural gas, propane, oil wood or electricity** in Lanark, Leeds and Grenville, and parts of Frontenac Counties.



Alan Leonard, REAL's Registered Energy Advisor (REA), has over 30 years of experience in construction and home energy auditing.



## Lower your energy bills and reduce your greenhouse gas emissions!

You will need to have a home energy audit, do at least two of the suggested upgrades, and have a post energy audit by the same REA to prove you have achieved at least minimum 15% annual fuel savings.

REAL is an approved service organization for this program.

**Contact Alan Leonard at  
(613) 864-3099 or  
[alanleonard9@gmail.com](mailto:alanleonard9@gmail.com)  
or see [www.REALaction.ca](http://www.REALaction.ca)**

## 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](http://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

### Join our Email List

Use the green signup button on the  
bottom of our homepage.

### Contact Information

Name .....

Street/RR Address .....

Town, Province .....

Postal Code .....

Home Phone .....

Work Phone .....

Best time to reach me .....

Email address .....