

# REAL *update*

REAL people taking REAL action to protect our environment

Rideau Environmental Action League (REAL)

DECEMBER 2025

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## Sustainable Gift Giving

With the economic uncertainty out there, many Canadians will be scaling back their gift giving this Christmas. It's a good time to consider sustainability and supporting our local businesses. Here are a few things to you could consider,

### Think Quality not Quantity.

Buy something that the recipient wants and that will last and reduce the possibility of it becoming waste. Discuss setting price and quantity limits within your family.

**Think Local.** Support local businesses and producers and keep your money circulating in our community. Craft fairs, year round gift stores and museum gift shops are a good place to find gifts that support local artisans.

**Check the Gift's Source.** Ensure the item is made from sustainably and produced materials. For example, any wood, card, bamboo or paper gifts should be from 100% recycled or Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certified materials. Avoid single-use plastic items that can't be recycled. Some people may prefer to avoid products made in the U.S.

**Shop Second Hand.** This reduces the need for new materials, keeping items in use for longer. There are lots of local stores to choose from, including our own REAL Deal store. This can make your money go further, too.

**Entertainment Experience.** This reduces the need for physical resources altogether, and is a great alternative for someone who doesn't need more stuff. Possibilities include tickets to a community theatre production, a sporting event, or a Film Night International pass from the Smith Falls Public Library, or an RVCA parking pass. This also makes your gift last longer and gives them something to look forward to.



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(continued inside)

### Sustainable Gift Giving (continued)

**Time Together.** Do something together to enjoy the Christmas season as your gift, like taking a tour to see the Christmas Lights, going skiing, or doing a craft workshop together.

**Cash or Cash Gift Certificates.** You may not be keen on putting a dollar amount on your gift, but it has its place for people who are far away or very particular, or if you are short of time.

#### Specific Gift Certificates.

- **Personal care.** Manicures, spa treatments, hair salon etc for someone who would like a treat and wouldn't spend the money themselves.
- **Restaurants.** A voucher for their favourite local restaurant, or even gift certificate for fast food, or a loaded up Tim's or Subway card.
- **A Local Business.** Many stores will sell you these even if you do not see them advertised.

**Give A Gift that Gives to Others.** Support the work of a charitable organization that aligns with the recipients interests and beliefs. Great for someone who has everything they need, or perhaps is older.

- **Charitable gift catalogues.** Many larger charities have catalogues from which you can choose to fund needs of developing communities, from chickens, to bed nets, to trees to wells, in every price bracket. Check World Vision, Plan International and Canadian Feed the Children websites.
- **Any charitable gift.** You can give a gift in someone's name to any charitable cause (but you will be named on the charitable receipt.) Some local ideas might be LAWS, Lanark County Interval House, Big Brothers Big Sisters, or REAL. ([See website for more.](#))
- **A charitable gift card.** CanadaHelps.org offers [Charity Gift Cards](#). You make a donation and get the charitable receipt, but the recipient gets to choose the charity from Canada Helps participants.

See also [Top Tips for a Sustainable Christmas](#) by the World Wildlife Federation UK, and our own "[Shopping Locally for Christmas](#)" story in our December 2016 newsletter.



**REAL Deal Store  
Pre-Christmas  
SALE** ❄️

**50% off**

**ALL CHRISTMAS ITEMS**

**Wed Dec 3rd  
to Sat Dec 20th**

Regular Store Hours:  
Wed through Sat  
10 am - 5 pm

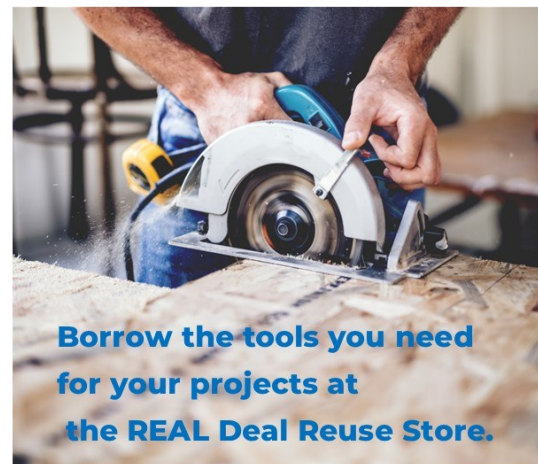
**CLOSED Dec 21 - Jan 1**

**REOPENING Fri Jan 2**

85 William St. W., Smiths Falls, Ontario  
(613) 283-7999  
[www.REALaction.ca](http://www.REALaction.ca)

### Tool Library Memberships

A Tool Library membership might be just the thing for someone on your list, or even yourself. Just \$25 (six months) or \$45 (12 months) allows you to borrow anything from our tool collection for a week at a time. You are more likely to encounter Phil, our Tool Guy, if you come between 10 am. And 1 pm. Wednesday through Saturday.



**Borrow the tools you need  
for your projects at  
the REAL Deal Reuse Store.**



## Sixth Online Auction Gets a Record \$4457 in Bids

Thanks everyone for your terrific support of REAL's sixth online auction. In an exciting finish, the 200 items attracted \$4421 which was 138% of our goal. Last years bid total was \$3557. In addition to the bids, several generous members contributed a total of \$1205 to our fundraiser.



Most of the items were gently used things that had been donated to the store over the past year, but many additional items were donated once we alerted our mailing list that we were looking for things to include. Gifts from community organizations rounded out the collection.

We were off to a great start when bidding opened Wed. Nov. 12 at 9:00 a.m. and were up to about \$1200 by the same time the next day. The number of bidders rose sharply as well. We were at just 45 the week before the auction started but were up to 168 by the end of the auction Saturday Nov. 22.



The last half hour is always very interesting as there is intense bidding for certain items, and a few things that had no bids up to that point suddenly have a few people bidding on them. In the end just seven items had no bids, and we will be selling them in the store or on Facebook Marketplace. If you did not have a winning bids, thanks for trying, you helped bid things up and make our fundraiser more successful!

As of November 30, all but about a dozen people had made their way to the REAL Deal store to pick up their auction items. People seemed genuinely excited to have had the winning bid on their items. Many people were new to the store and took some time to look around. Hopefully they will see we have great deals all the time, not just during the auction, and come back again.

Some summaries of donors, sponsors, top bids and items attracting the most bids are on the back page of this newsletter. You can still view all the items at [32auctions.com/REAL2025](http://32auctions.com/REAL2025).



### **Scott Reid, MP and John Jordan, MPP Visits**

In late October we were pleased to have both our local MP, Scott Reid and our MPP, John Jordan pay us a visit. The REAL Board invited the two of them back in August and were fortunate they could both fit us in. While the visits were at the REAL Deal, we took time to show them around the property, and spend some time talking about the many other things that REAL does in addition to the reuse store, such as shoreline cleanups, the community garden, Evergreen Avenue, the Mini Forest and all the rest. Also during the visits we talked a bit about other legislation that impacted non-profits such as ours.

The original idea for the meeting came from a discussion at our June AGM, and was to bring our applications to the Canada Summer Jobs program into focus. REAL has benefited from the grant most years, allowing us to hire one or two (and in one year three) young people for part of the summer. Several years ago the requirements changed, and while many of the young people are returning to school in September, they do not have to be, but they do have to be under 30.

In 2023 and 2024 our application was turned down, while other local organizations were granted funds for one or more students. REAL was also turned down in 2025 until an extra pocket of money was allocated to the program REAL was accepted in that second round of funding, so we had to scramble a bit to get two people hired in time to take advantage of the full eight weeks allocated.

So in August we felt we should change our focus to thank our MP, highlight some of the student activities and explain why REAL needs support.

*Photo above: Board Members Karen Schecter, Barb Hicks and Peter Au showing Scott Reid, MP REAL's Community Garden. October 15. Below: Karen Schecter providing an overview of REAL's other projects to John Jordan, MPP on October 31.*





## Time Running out for Home Assessments

Alan Leonard is retiring! After 19 years in the home energy assessment business it is time to turn his attention to other projects.

If you have had a pre-retrofit assessment done by Alan but have not had your post retrofit assessment done yet, it must be done by the end of April. Alan will be emailing folks on his list in that situation, particularly people hoping to take advantage of the Canada Greener Homes Loan. The intake for that interest free loan program closed October 1, 2025. REAL is not participating in any incentive grant programs at the moment, so Alan's final date should not be an issue.

If you have had a previous pre-retrofit assessment, and want an updated EnerGuide rating showing that the house is more efficient, book now. If, as a homeowner, you are simply interested in making your own home more energy efficient or solving a particular problem with your house, you could still book an audit. Just bear in mind that Alan will not be available to do a post audit after the end of April. If you have been putting off taking advantage of this service by an experienced, local, environmentally-motivated Registered Energy Assessor, now is the time to book! Alan's email is on the back of every newsletter: [alanleonard9@gmail.com](mailto:alanleonard9@gmail.com).



## Least Bittern Recovering



Least bittern. Photo by Simon Lunn..

Some of you may recall that when REAL first moved to our 85 William St. W. location there was concern over local populations of the least bittern, the smallest bird in the heron family. It was found to nest on small grassy islands out in the swale behind the property.

At that time the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC) classed the bird as "Threatened". However, it and five other bird species have been reevaluated, and the least bittern's status is now improved to "one of special concern". Factors have included wetland protection, removal of invasive species like phragmites, and a rise in Greck Lakes water levels, which leads to more of the birds showing up in inner wetlands. Source: ON Nature, Summer 2025 issue.

## Show Your Support with our Canvas Bags!

Looking for a unique, inexpensive, environmentally friendly local gift for someone on your Christmas list? This canvas tote has sturdy cotton webbing handle, a magnetic snap closure, is a generous size (18"W x 5"D x 14"H) and promotes your favourite environmental organization! The \$7 price includes taxes. Find them at the REAL Deal cash.

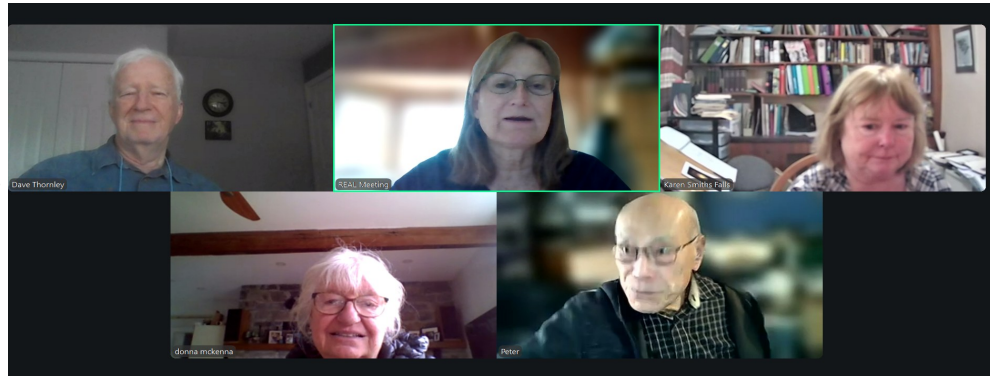
### Take Action—Join our Board

If the local environment concerns you, here's an opportunity to put your conviction into action. REAL is always looking for enthusiastic people to join our working board. Board members are recruited to serve a minimum of a two-year term.

REAL needs you! There is so much more that could be done to improve the environment, educate the public, and provide opportunities for environmental action in our community. It takes committed people and it does take time, but the progress we make can be very rewarding. The board is currently just five members, and needs more members to operate effectively into the future.

If you are new to REAL or to the community, we would love to have you join us. Take a look at [our website](#), and our [past Annual Reports](#). Your new perspective would be a valuable addition to our discussions. Working with REAL is a great way to meet new people and further understand our region.

If you are ready to be involved, please send us a letter expressing your interest to Karen Schecter at [schecter karen@gmail.com](mailto:schecter karen@gmail.com). Include a resume or short bio if you can. If you would like more information or to discuss the possibilities, please provide a phone number and the best time to reach you. We often start by having you attend one of our board meetings, which are currently the third Tuesday afternoon of the month



### More Recycling Options Coming Soon

Changes are coming to recycling in Ontario! Extended producer responsibility, or EPR, is an approach in which producers of packaging are responsible for the end-of-life management of their materials. As a result, Miller Waste Services (TOPPS) is taking over collection of recyclables from the Town of Smiths Falls. While there are no route changes, the timing may change, so make sure you get your boxes out early.

More importantly, the items people can recycle across Ontario are being standardized so that everyone in the province will be able to recycle the same things. Says Allen Langdon, CEO of Circular Materials, "this will make it easier for residents to recycle, improving recovery rates and benefitting both people and the environment". Being added to the list starting January 1, 2026 are coffee and beverage cups, deodorant, toothpaste tubes, ice cream tubs and black plastic containers, and frozen juice containers. Garbage collection is still being managed by the Town of Smiths Falls. Watch for more details as January 1 approaches and please don't include any new items until then. [Read more.](#)



*In REAL Life*

**Christmas Lights Recycling.** If you are discarding Christmas lights, do not put them in your household recycling bin. Says Tay Valley Township: “The wires can jam sorting machines, endanger workers, and contaminate entire recycling batches.” REAL accepts them in our ewaste bin. Just set them against the wall by the big black bin. The store also accepts working lights by for resale. Just take them to the back gate with your other donations. Note, however, we do resell any larger incandescent light strings.



**Pocket Forests.** REAL has been working with the folks at the Railway Museum of Eastern Ontario to plan one or two pocket forests and a pollinator garden on the grounds of the museum. RMEO is planning a new train play structure, and the pocket forests will be nearby to create shade. We are still discussing exact locations, so will be getting started in the spring. Some small areas will need to be excavated and filled with soil and organic matter prior to planting. Our portion of the funding will be coming from a generous contribution from local sports legend Brooke Henderson.



**Municipal Community Grant Applications.** An important task on REAL's to do list in the fall is to submit applications to several municipalities requesting funding for the coming year. Our Treasurer, Dave Thornley, has been looking after making our case to the Town of Smiths Falls, the Township of Rideau Lakes and Montague Township. Each municipality only has so many dollars to allocate to various projects and community projects, so it is important to make it clear how we are helping the community. Some years we also make a presentation to council.



**EcoLiteracy Program.** See a [five minute video](#) summarizing this past summer's Rideau Roundtable EcoLiteracy program. This program offered engaging workshops for 6-12 year old at six local libraries. Attendance was excellent, with 720 children participating. REAL made a \$1000 contribution toward staff wages earlier in the season.



**Ecolce Grip.** We have a limited quantity of Ecolce grip, the eco-friendly wood chip traction aid, still for sale. The company is no longer producing the product, and you probably won't be able to find it anywhere else. This is what we have left from last year's stock. The price is \$7.99 for a 20 L bag, plus tax. We also use it at the REAL Deal.



**Canadian Tire Money and New Tent.** Thanks to Alan Leonard for contributing his collection of about \$200 in Canadian Tire money. We used it to cover half of the purchase price for a new tent for our yard. There are always lots of store needs available from Canadian Tire from cleaning supplies to hardware, so if you have any to contribute we would gladly take it.



**Hold those donations!** Please note that the store will be closed Dec. 21 to Jan. 1 inclusive. Please do not leave any materials at the gate, at our doors or by our bins during this period. We will be happy to see your donations beginning January 2, 2026. Remember, if the flags aren't flying by the entrance, we aren't open!



**RIDEAU ENVIRONMENTAL  
ACTION LEAGUE**

Box 1061  
Smiths Falls ON  
K7A 5A5  
info@REALaction.ca

**www.REALaction.ca**

**REAL Deal Store &  
Environment Centre**

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

Open Wednesday  
through Saturdays  
10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

**Ask about our  
Tool Library**

For Home Energy Audits,  
contact Alan Leonard at:  
alanleonard9@gmail.com

**Find us on  
Facebook and  
Instagram**

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**

**Online Auction 2025**  
**Final Bidding Total: \$4457**  
**Thanks everyone!**

*2025 Auction Sponsors*

*Ruth Ain  
Smiths Falls Optometrists  
Gibbons Family  
Daisy and Peter Au  
The Fourniers  
Jack and Karen Schecter  
Anonymous*

**Items with Most Bids**

28 bids	Scales of Justice lamp
21 bids	LED decorative tree
19 bids	snow blower
17 bids	RVCA passes
17 bids	bee smoker
16 bids	dart board
16 bids	aero in home garden
15 bids	electric snow shovel
14 bids	wood mosaic picture
14 bids	rooster bell
14 bids	Marvin Meekis pictures
14 bids	musical snow globes

**2025 Auction Donors**

Betty Couch	Linda Post
Cait Maloney	Margot Allen
Connie Cousins	Marina Quattrocchi
Daisy Au	Marje Fletcher
Donna Copp	Michael Clifffen
Hua Franks	Patricia Harris
Jill Spear	Phil Kennedy
Joan Potter	Roger Cousins
Katie Hoffman	Susan Leslie

Rideau Valley Conservation Authority  
Smith Falls Community Theatre  
Smiths Falls Friends of the Library  
Smiths Falls Pickleball Club  
The Hub, Smiths Falls

**Top 10 Winning Bids**

\$160 Aerobin composter  
\$150 handmade quilt  
\$140 snowblower  
\$115 red and blue crystal glasses  
\$75 Scales of Justice lamp  
\$75 electric snow shovel  
\$71 LED decorative Christmas tree  
\$66 art deco vase  
\$65 Instapot

**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 .....