

REAL *update*

REAL people taking REAL action to protect our environment

Making a REAL Difference for 30 Years

Rideau Environmental Action League (REAL)

FEB 2019

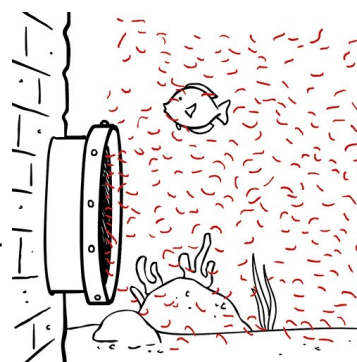
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Your Synthetic Clothing is Shedding Microfibres

Microplastic pollution from clothing is an environmental problem that did not even come to light until 2011. Basically put, synthetic fabrics shed microfibres when they are washed that are not filtered out by washers or sewage treatment plants, but make their way into rivers, lakes and oceans. In water bodies they act like sponges for other toxins, and are consumed by marine life and accumulate in the food chain.

Synthetic fibres like polyester, nylon, and acrylic are all forms of plastic, and account for about 60% of the material used to make clothes worldwide. Microfibres are invisible to the naked eye, less than 5 mm long, have diameters of just thousandths of a millimeter, and break off when clothes are washed, even when we are just walking around. Clothing sheds more fibres when it is new. In one study of three fabric types, it was found that acrylic sheds the most when washed, followed by polyester, followed by a poly-cotton blend. One 2011 study discovered 1,900 fibers could be released from a single synthetic garment in a one wash, so just think what happens with repeated washings.



The video "The Story of Microfibres" is a quick primer on the problem.

Microplastics are being found everywhere it seems: in fish and wildlife, in Arctic ice, in shoreline sediments, in mangrove groves, and in our food and drink. Greenpeace claims 30% of ocean plastic pollution comes from microplastics, which include microbeads and microfibres. As much as 35% of this microplastic pollution may come from washing synthetic textiles. In what seemed like a ideal recycling initiative, PET plastic, such as is used for large pop bottles, is ground up and recycled into polar fleece, which turns out to be one of the fabrics that sheds the most microfibres.

While it seems that synthetic fabrics might be better than a fabric like cotton that requires so much water and pesticides to produce, due to the fossil fuels used in their production, the CO₂ emissions are three times higher for synthetics over cotton. And while the proportion of synthetic fibres in clothing textiles is around 60%, for all textiles – drapes, upholstery and carpet, the proportion of synthetics is more like 98%. Fortunately these things are not being washed in water as frequently.

It's a complicated problem that will need to be approached on many fronts, but will not be solved quickly.

(continued inside...)



Making a REAL Difference for 30 Years

The clothing and fashion industry is a major contributing factor. Our consumption of clothing has been increasing. The average person buys 60% more clothing and keeps their clothing for half as long as 15 years ago. And the percentage of those textiles comprised of synthetics is increasing partly because synthetic fibres tend to be the cheapest. Some labs are looking at coatings that could protect the fibres from wearing down. Could completely new textiles be designed that shed fewer fibres?

It is possible that washing machines could be redesigned to filter out more of the microfibrils, although the size of the particles makes this a real challenge. And will it be cost effective? Even so it would take decades for all current washing machines to be replaced or retrofitted. Consumer products are being developed to trap and discard more of the microplastic particles at home.

Filters at waste water treatment plants currently cannot trap these microfibrils – is there another solution that would be effective given the vast quantities of water that need to be processed? What if you are on a septic system? The fibres being shed by clothing are not biodegradable and will eventually lead to blockages and backups—the inspiration behind Lint Luv-R (see below).

What is an individual consumer to do in the meantime?
Here are some possibilities:

1. Buy only the clothes you need.
2. Buy more natural fibres, avoiding synthetics. Look for organic and fair trade products while you're at it.
3. Look for durable, well constructed clothes that last.
4. Shop second-hand and consignment stores.
5. Wash only when necessary.
6. Treat your clothes well to make them last.
7. Watch for new products that address the problem,

such as German-made [Guppyfriend](#) laundry washing bags which are claimed to capture 99% of the fibres, a [Cora Ball](#) (a plastic ball made in Vermont) you put in your washing machine that traps one third of the microfibrils released, or [Lint Luv-R](#) (developed in Nova Scotia) a filter for washing machine effluent developed to protect septic systems from buildup.



The [Cora Ball](#) is used to attract microfibrils shed by synthetic clothing in the washing machine. Fibres are then discarded.

Here are some tips for making sure your clothes last from the blog “My Eco Legacy”.

1. Wash whites separately and line dry them, so they stay white longer. Then you do not have to resort to bleach, which is toxic and weakens fibres.
2. Line dry clothing; it is less damaging to the fibres, and shrinkage is less likely.
3. Treat stains immediately.
4. Wear an apron when cooking (fewer washes likely!)
5. Learn to repair clothing, or find someone who can. Small rips, hems, and replacing buttons and closures are simple fixes.

There is lots of interesting reading out there. [This Greenpeace story](#) and this [CBC radio transcript](#) are both worthwhile overviews. If you want a quick primer, look at the 3 minutes [Story of Stuff video](#),

Changes at the Board Table

The composition of our board is changing once again. Both Lorraine Allen and Keely Maddock will be leaving the board, and Niki Dwyer will become our new Smiths Falls Town Council Liaison person.

Niki is a newcomer to the Smiths Falls Town Council, having won her seat in the fall election. Nikki was Senior Planner at the Town of Smith Falls for eight years. In addition to REAL she will be involved with the Smiths Falls Community Food Bank, the Child Development Centre Advisory Board and is the Hospital Board alternate town representative. Niki's first board meeting with REAL was January 14th. We look forward to working with Niki and getting to know her.

Lorraine Allen has been a REAL member since its inception, and joined the Board as Liaison for the Town of Smiths Falls in January 2015. Lorraine had been on council since 2010, when Ken Graham was our council representative. Lorraine is still on Town Council but through a reorganization of responsibilities for various Councils and Boards is now responsible for a different set of organizations. Thanks to Lorraine, the other council members were always kept abreast of REAL activities, and REAL benefitted from knowing what was happening at the municipal level. Lorraine

Speaking Out Against Bill 66

Bill 66: Restoring Ontario's Competitiveness Act is an [omnibus bill](#) which seeks to amend many previous pieces of Ontario legislation. Critics of the bill argue that it will permit suburban development on the protected and environmentally-sensitive [Ontario Green-belt](#), repeal clean water rules implemented after the [Walkerton E. coli outbreak](#), and "compromise the health and safety of Ontarians."

It also removes legislation dealing with long term care homes, pawnbrokers, career colleges, childcare and overtime pay.

The intention is to reduce red tape, but in the process it allows industry to by-pass legal requirements made to ensure careful planning, and rolls back decades of environmental progress. This [Wikipedia](#) page

had recently been elected to the REAL Board as well, and was active on the local foods dinner committee. We are sure we will be seeing her again as she is one busy lady!

Keely officially joined the board in December 2016. A Smiths Falls native, Keely has the distinction of being the only former summer student to have joined the board! Keely worked for us the summer of 2006 when we operated the store on Lombard St. as well as the following summer. While on the board, Keely was involved in the radon meter project, REAL Action Grants and strategic planning to name a few. She now lives and works in Kingston, and understandably finds it challenging to continue serving on the board. But she will be available to help on specific projects as required. We are happy to have had her energetic and enthusiastic contributions for two years and wish her all the best.

We have a few people exploring the possibility of joining the REAL Board, so hope to be back to seven members soon. We are also working on revising our REAL bylaw to accommodate up to 12 board members to provide more diversity and lighten the load for our working board. This will necessitate a member vote to approve the bylaw, so members should watch for an invitation to a special meeting, tentatively Monday, March 11, to review and take a vote.

provides an explanation of the act.

Environmental groups are appalled, and across social media you will see organizations urging Ontarians to speak out against this misguided piece of legislation.



Conservation Ontario has provided a sample email to invite Ontarians to express their concerns to Schedule 10: <https://ontarionature.good.do/schedule10/sign/>.

We at REAL would like to alert you of the situation, and urge you to voice your concerns and take appropriate actions to maintain the environmental progress that we have collectively made.

REAL Deal News

Another Christmas is behind us. Our assortment of Christmas items occupied one whole aisle of the store, and sold very well from the time it was put out in late October. We always start with an impressive-sized collection, and the donations continue to come in the weeks leading up to Christmas as well as afterwards. Some lower valued and hard to sell things were offered to customers for free early in the new year, and the remainder was packed up and stashed upstairs. We do accept Christmas things all year round, but can only handle so many large items such as artificial trees and large outdoor decorations. So please hang on to these large items if you can, and bring them in next fall.



About 20 staff and volunteers were treated to a Christmas turkey dinner at the Community Health Centre on December 21

REAL Deal volunteers, staff and board members enjoyed a Christmas turkey dinner at the Smiths Falls Community Health Centre on Fri. Dec. 21. This is the third year this festive meal has been organized. Thanks to Donna McKenna for coordinating, Brenda cooking the turkey, and everyone who contributed food and helped out – you know who you are! And thanks to the SFCHC for the use of their wonderful facility.

We were very impressed that residents resisted the temptation to leave donations over the Christmas shutdown Dec. 23 – Jan. 2. We really appreciate the cooperation, as most years there has been quite the mound of stuff waiting for us in January. We hope that this is also due in part to yet another sign indicating it is not OK to leave materials when the store is not open, nor to help yourself to what has been left behind by others.



We are enforcing a new policy regarding scrap metal. No rummaging in our scrap metal bin is permitted! This applies whether you are looking for freebies or are willing to make a monetary donation for what you take. We are particularly concerned that no one get hurt poking through that bin. Also, REAL earns cash from that scrap metal, and it has become an important part of our revenue stream. We understand that some materials in there might be useful to you, but suggest you look elsewhere, such as at local scrap dealer.

New signage to discourage unauthorized drops of materials seems to be helping. In one month we had freezers and large paint cans left on our property.

Making a REAL Difference for 30 Years

That's the catchphrase we will be using throughout 2019 as we celebrate REALS's 30th anniversary.

Eighteen REAL people met January 10 at the Smiths Falls Community Health Centre to brainstorm possible projects to draw attention to this accomplishment. Organizers were really pleased at the number of people who wanted to be involved. After coming up with about 15 possibilities, it was put to a vote and we ended up with five projects to investigate further. These are:

1. Demonstration Rain Garden at the Smiths Falls Public Library.
2. Tree Planting
3. Encouraging Reduction of Plastics in Grocery Stores.
4. Projects and Contests in Schools and Classrooms.
5. Monarch butterfly habitat enhancement.



Teams established that evening are going to try to flesh out and consider more carefully whether each idea is feasible and is a good fit for an anniversary project. The REAL Board can then make a final decision at their February 11 board meeting.

There is still time for you to get involved in the planning, even if you were unable to attend our first meeting. Please contact [Peter Au](#) at 284-8338, who can direct you to the team leader for one of these projects. We want to be sure to make a splash on the occasion of our 30th anniversary, but leave enough human resources to accomplish all of our regular activities, so more hands would truly be appreciated!

Lanark Monarch Populations Get a Boost

Lanark County is partnering on a project that will test different ways to increase the local Monarch butterfly population. The Ontario Trillium Foundation (OTF) is funding the Canadian Wildlife Federation (CWF) project with its partners Lanark County, the National Capital Commission (NCC) and Hydro One. Lanark is providing two 50 metre long test sites on Christie Lake Road and Fallbrook Road. The NCC site is along Greens Creek along the bike path, and Hydro One is providing a site on McCarthy Road along a hydro power line. Work to prepare the sites by mowing, spraying or plowing took place this fall, and they will be seeded with native wildflowers and milkweed in the spring. Volunteers with field naturalists' clubs have already collected 36 species of wildflowers, several grasses and milkweed seeds to be planted.

The Monarch population has declined 90% over the past 20 years, and was declared endangered in 2016. The annual migration of Monarchs from their winter homes in California and Mexico to Canada and the US is in danger of disappearing. Threats to the

Monarch butterfly include habitat loss and pesticide use. The project will create native meadows along roadside and rights-of-way, replacing non-native grasses with a much broader set of species. CWF is testing whether the creation of these native meadows could successfully control invasive species like Wild Parsnip while restoring Monarch butterfly habitat and reducing maintenance costs. An increase in the Monarch population would not be expected until the following year. For more information listen to this [CBC Radio All in a Day segment](#).



A CWF study will be creating some native meadows, including two at Lanark County sites, favourable to endangered Monarch butterflies.



Make a REAL Difference

Tell us how you would make an impact on the local environment by applying for a **2019 REAL Action Grant**.
Grants up to \$500 to be awarded!

For application details or to see past winners please visit:
<http://www.realaction.ca>

Deadline: **March 18th, 2019**



REAL Action Grant Deadline March 18, 2019

There is still time to apply for a REAL Action Grant of up to \$500 for an environmental project that will benefit the local community.

This is the fourth time REAL has offered the grants, but the first time there is the chance applicants could be awarded as much as \$500.

Previous winners have included youth groups, schools and other community groups for projects involving gardens, environmental education field trips and tree planting, but a wide range of projects can be considered.

[See our website](#) under the Green-space tab for further details, and a link to an online application.

Sorry, due to an oversight, an outdated version of the poster was printed in our last issue. It is reprinted at the left. For questions regarding the program contact [Donna McKenna](#) or [Peter Au](#).

Get Up to
\$5,000*
back from
Enbridge

Enbridge Home Energy Conservation Program

The Enbridge Home Energy Conservation Program will continue throughout 2019, but only for Enbridge natural gas consumers. Up to \$5,000 in rebates are available provided the upgrades to your home achieve a minimum of 10% Natural Gas Savings. REAL's Registered Energy Advisor, Alan Leonard, is available to perform the initial and final home energy assessments required, and help you with the paperwork. Contact Alan at 864-3099 or email him at alanleonard9@gmail.com. Note that there is a glitch on the Enbridge site that returns a message saying the program is unavailable when a more rural postal code is entered. Rest assured that if you are an Enbridge customer, you are eligible for the program. To see sample results from a home energy assessment see our Home Energy Assessment page or [click here](#).

In REAL Life

Membership Renewal Season. Members will be receiving a membership renewal request and annual report via Canada Post in February. You can pay your individual (\$15) or family (\$20) membership by cheque, PayPal, or interac e-transfer. If you are in the store, we will also accept cash. Your membership is an important source of income to REAL. We also welcome donations, and can provide a charitable receipt thanks to our charitable status. If you would like to become a member, use the form on the back of the printed newsletter, or check the "Join" tab on our website.



Radon Information Session. Save the date Monday, April 1 for a Radon Information Session being organized by the Otty Lake Association at the Perth Community Pool meeting room. Two speakers, one from Health Canada and one from a radon mitigation company, will be on hand. Note that REAL has a short term radon meter available to borrow. [See website](#) or contact Katie at 983-3360.



Recycling in Elizabethtown Kitley (E-K). E-K is another municipality whose recycling program is changing as a result of China's new restrictions announced in 2017. Residents are being asked to clean and sort their recyclables and take extra care to avoid contaminating materials. [Their instructions](#) provide good advice to anyone: "If you are not recycling right you could be preventing tons of materials from ever seeing a second life".



Plastic Grocery Bags. We never thought we'd say it, but yes, please bring us your clean, usable plastic grocery bags. We have avoided asking in the past thinking we would be deluged. But with stores charging for bags, and people saying no to plastic bags in favour of their own bags, plastic bags are harder to come by. The REAL Deal uses them for customer purchases at the store. We know of two other non-profits in town who frequently run out as well, so we will share the wealth if we get too many. Just give them to the person at the cash.



Milk Bags. We continue to collect plastic outer milk bags (the printed ones that enclose the three litre bags). They are turned over to a church group to crochet into plastic mats used in developing countries.

On the Web

- It can be difficult to avoid plastic at the grocery store! See this CBC News story: [Canada's Major Grocery Chains Slow to Tackle the Mounting Problem of Reducing Plastic Waste](#) and this Marketplace program: [Plastic Waste: The Supermarket Challenge](#) (22 minutes) that follows two families' experiences.
- Video of 15-year-old [Greta Thunberg's full speech](#) at UN Climate Change COP24 Conference in Poland, December 2018 (3:29). She was invited to speak after she staged a school protest outside of Swedish parliament in September.
- Keeping Asian Carp out of the Great Lakes is going to be costly, but this invasive species could seriously damage the \$7 billion a year Great Lake fishing industry. They consume up to 40% of their body weight per day, and compete with native species, [says this CBC story](#).



**RIDEAU ENVIRONMENTAL
ACTION LEAGUE**

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

We're on the Web
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

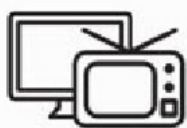
For Home Energy Audits,
contact Alan Leonard
alanleonard9@gmail.com
or (613) 864-3099

Facebook Groups:
REAL Deal Store
REAL
Community Garden

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

REAL people taking REAL action to protect our environment

**Materials Accepted at REAL's
Waste Electronics Recycling Depot**



Display Devices



Non-Cellular
Telephones



Desktop
Computers



Portable
Computers



Computer
Peripherals



Desktop
Printers



Personal/Portable
AV Systems



Home Audio/Video
Systems



Home Theatre
In a Box (HTB)
Systems



Freestanding
Photocopiers



Vehicle A/V
Systems



Cellular
Devices

**Drop materials at the REAL Deal Store, 85 William St. W, Smiths Falls
during store hours Thursdays—Saturdays 10 a.m. – 4 p.m.
Staff will put the materials in the locked black bin.**

**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.

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

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

Contact Information

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Street/RR Address

Town, Province

Postal Code

Home Phone

Work Phone

Best time to reach me

Email address