

## ***Rebates Doubled for Home Energy Upgrades***

The Ontario government has announced matching dollar for dollar rebates on home energy upgrades, doubling the rebates available through the federal government's EcoENERGY Retrofit program.

"There isn't a better time than now to take action," says Susan Brandum of REAL, which delivers two programs to help people reduce their household energy use throughout the

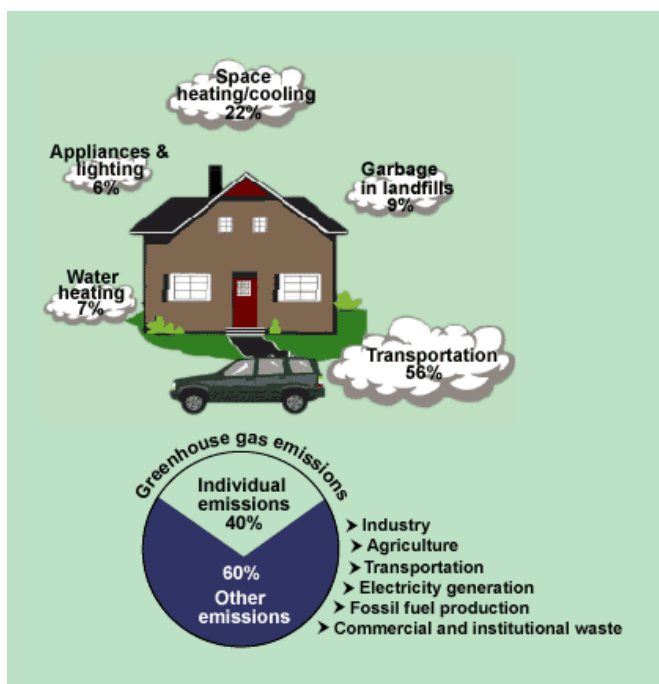
Our individual practices are responsible for about 45% of Ontario's greenhouse gas emissions. More than 20% of that comes from heating and cooling our homes.

If you replace an old furnace, you could get a total rebate of between \$600 and \$1,200. Replace an old wood stove with an EPA, and get \$600 back. Install a heat recovery ventilator and get \$600. Adding insulation could get you thousands of dollars back. Installing a solar hot-water preheater rebates \$1,000.

"This is a win-win-win plan. Not only do you get money back, you'll save money into the future as energy costs rise. And, you show our governments how important energy and climate change are to you by taking advantage of these programs," she added.

Under the old EnerGuide for Houses program, which focused mainly on insulation and air sealing, the average homeowner who completed the recommendations reduced their heating bills

*(continued inside)*



counties of Lanark, Leeds, and Grenville.

## **Ontario's Greenhouse Gas Emissions**

Source: Natural Resources Canada

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by 27% per year, or \$750 per year, every year. With the new rebate additions, average annual savings are expected to be closer to \$1,000 per year.

To get the rebates, you must have an initial EcoENERGY audit, implement the recommendations of the auditor within 18 months and have a second audit to verify completion of the work.

REAL's Licensed Energy Advisor, a professional with 20 years experience and training in household energy efficiency, will spend about 2 hours with you conducting the audit and advising on actions, then send you a detailed report with specific, cost-effective recommendations for your house.

For more detail, go to the federal government's EcoENERGY Retrofit site and the Ontario government's Ministry of Energy website. Office of Energy Efficiency:  
[www.oeo.nrcan.gc.ca/residential/personal/retrofit-homes/retrofit-qualify-grant.cfm?attr=4](http://www.oeo.nrcan.gc.ca/residential/personal/retrofit-homes/retrofit-qualify-grant.cfm?attr=4)  
Ministry of Energy:  
[www.energy.gov.on.ca/index.cfm?fuseaction=conservation.homeretrofit](http://www.energy.gov.on.ca/index.cfm?fuseaction=conservation.homeretrofit)

For more information, to schedule an ecoENERGY audit or to apply for the EEAPH special electricity program, contact REAL at 613-283-9500 or go to [www.REALaction.ca](http://www.REALaction.ca).

### ***Limited-Income Electricity Program***

For people who live in privately owned, electrically heated houses or apartments, and who are on limited incomes, REAL has a special program. If you pay your own electricity bills, use electricity to heat, do not live in social housing, are a recipient of a social support or earn less than \$32,500/year for one person, \$34,000 for two people, then REAL can likely help. Their energy assessor will conduct a free audit to determine exactly where electricity savings can be found, then hire and pay qualified contractors to do the insulation, air sealing,

repairs and other work such as replacing refrigerators that save substantial amounts of electricity. They can invest up to \$5,000 in a home.

### **The cheapest energy you can buy is the energy you don't use.**

The Energy Efficiency Assistance Program for Houses (EEAPH) is specially designed to reduce electricity use, and demand on Ontario's electricity grid, by retrofitting the homes of limited-income people. "The Ontario Power Authority is investing in conservation because it is cheaper than investing in new power production. And, they're doing this in the homes of the people who need help the most," said Brandum.

### ***Pitch-In 2007***



The community REALy cleaned up during the 6<sup>th</sup> Annual Pitch-In Smiths Falls. The great spring weather attracted 657 participants, who collected 189 bags of trash and 18 bags of recyclables. Groups participating for the first time this year were Big Brothers and Big Sisters, and a team from the Tim Hortons Beckwith Street store. More families than usual came forward, which is great, because it meant more neighbourhoods, in additions to parks and public places, were covered than ever before.

Thanks to Scotiabank for their financial contribution, and to Giant Tiger and Canadian Tire for donating bags, and to the Legion for the use of their facility on wrap-up day. Special thanks to Tim Hortons for contributing in so many ways: advertising, gloves, T-shirts, and coffee and Timbits for wrap-up day, May 5.

## *Getting ready for climate change*

We all need to dramatically reduce our energy use and our greenhouse gas emissions if we are to keep the planet's temperature from rising into fever territory.

But even if we do succeed in such reductions, climate change is still happening, and we have to prepare to deal with the consequences.

REAL brought Al Douglas to speak at our Annual General Meeting in June. Douglas is the Ontario Co-ordinator for the Canadian Climate Impacts and Adaptation Research Network. Valley Heartland generously co-sponsored the evening.

"We're not moving very quickly on mitigation," commented Douglas. "The longer that takes, the more we will have to adapt."

Douglas began by explaining climate change, and how the rate of global warming in the past 50 years has been twice that of the past 100 years, with Arctic warming being twice the rate of the rest of the world.

As a consequence, "we are moving into a period of extreme events," he said, recalling the Ice Storm of '98 and the Peterborough Flood of 2004, in which 250 mm (10 in.) of rain fell in just over 24 hours.

Peterborough experienced three main problems: 1) its infrastructure was only designed for a 1 in 3-year storm; 2) the city was designed so that it didn't have any overland places for water to drain and 3) its sewage treatment plant was not designed to handle that volume of water.

"The insurance industry is telling us we have huge losses, around the world, increasing every year," he said, noting the Ice Storm was the most costly storm in Canada. "Historic climate data is no longer valid," on which to base future plans. "Instead of having one in 100-year storms, we

will have one in 50-year storms or one in 10-year storms. We need to account for that in our planning."

They are considering making the NorthWest Ontario Flood of 2002 the new "design storm" for that area. In that flood, 400 mm (16 in.) of rain fell in 48 hours, 2-3 times more than the historic, great "Timmins Storm."

Douglas noted that municipalities need to start planning for, for eg., the demise of the snow-mobiling industry in Ontario which is worth \$1 billion/year to the economy; for diseases such as ticks and lime disease that have already moved into our area; for e. coli closures at beaches because the water is too warm; for mental health issues; for cooling shelters; for emergency planning measures; for movement of species and loss of habitat; for changes in water levels and temperature; and for drought, pests and fire.

Municipalities are where all these issues come together, he noted. As priorities, municipalities need to address water quality, quantity, and storm water management; the generation, distribution and demand for energy; public health; and infrastructure.

"The coping range," of what a municipality is able to do, "increases if you are able to adapt early on," Douglas stressed.

He noted that Natural Resources Canada has funded 190 climate change research projects, research that municipalities can draw upon to help in their planning. As well, a new science assessment underway now will be available in October and will break information down into regions.

Finally, he stressed that climate change should never be viewed as an issue to be dealt with on its own, it must be integrated into sustainability.

"It's insufficient to say today that you don't have enough information. You take what information

you have and move on it now,” he said, suggesting that as you get more information, you then move on it.

“Being proactive now could save a considerable amount of money in the future,” he concluded.

REAL has some copies of the Research Network’s posters showing the effects of climate change in Ontario and the needed adaptations. Contact Keely at 283-7999 if you are interested. For more information go to Natural Resources Canada Climate Change and Adaptation at [http://adaptation.nrcan.gc.ca/index\\_e.php](http://adaptation.nrcan.gc.ca/index_e.php)

### ***Environmental Awards***

A number of people were recognized at our Annual General Meeting held June 20.

REAL proudly presented its 2007 Environmental Award to the **Lanark County Slow Food Convivium** in recognition of their efforts to promote quality food, produced locally on a small, sustainable scale. Local food production and consumption is good for the environment - food is transported shorter distances, hence fewer greenhouse gas emissions; local food production tends to be less intensive and chemical dependent, hence more sustainable and healthier for the soil and water supply; local food is more nutritious and tastes better, hence better for our health; and buying locally helps sustain and preserve farmers and the rural and small-town lifestyle we all enjoy.



Susie Osler, Cheryl Nash, Janet Duncan, Sue Van-Slooten and Phylis James are the leaders of the local presence of the Slow Food Movement. Some of their activities include local food potlucks, guest speakers, local wine and cheese tastings, local beer and sausage tastings, working

with area Youth Centres to establish kitchen gardens, promoting local farmers’ markets and weekly food box programs, and Lanark Local Flavour events such as 'meet and greets' to connect area farmers with area restaurants and food retailers, and local food recipes in the Perth Courier. For more information, see [ecoperth.on.ca](http://ecoperth.on.ca) for a list of contact e-mail addresses.

**Ron Stewart** is the latest Honorary Member of REAL. He and Peter Au, both former educators, were the founding members of REAL. They were inspired by David Suzuki's key note presentation at the provincial science teachers' conference in 1989. Deciding that they needed to be part of the solution, within a month they had formed REAL in Smiths Falls. Ron was our very ambitious membership chair, personally signing up over 200 members in REAL's first year. He actively promoted environmental stewardship in the education sector, leading his school to Silver status in a Canada-wide program. Ron has now retired after a remarkable 45 years as an educator. In accepting the award, Ron remarked how pleased he was to see what REAL has become.

**Certificates of Appreciation** were awarded to Tom Foulkes and Bunny Haughton, both of whom recently left the Board of Directors after having served since October 2001. Tom has been an active promoter and spokesperson for REAL, and has played a major role in Pitch-In, developing our Business Plan, and land use and political issues. A former Citizen of the Year, Tom is also active in many Trinity United Church Committees and the Friends of the Library.

Bunny has been instrumental in developing REAL’s volunteer strategy and attended several workshops on our behalf. This was a good fit as she has a long history of community volunteer involvement, in the Merrickville Agricultural Society, Buenavista on the Rideau and Trinity United Church, to name a few. We wish Bunny a happy retirement on Big Rideau Lake.

## ***Biodigester Workshop***

*by Cameron Smith*

On April 10, REAL, together with A2A (the Algonquin to Adirondacks Conservation Association) and ten other sponsors, hosted a full-day workshop on farm biodigesters at Toledo. Eighty people attended, almost all of them farmers from the counties of Lanark and Leeds & Grenville.

The basic message from Nils Semmler, president of RENTEC, Renewable Energy Technologies Inc., was that biodigesters are not like tractors that can be bought off the shelf. They operate on a biological process, and for satisfactory operation, they should be designed to accommodate whatever it is that a farmer wants to do.

The object is not to alter farming operations to accommodate a biodigester, Semmler said, but to design the biodigester so that it fits seamlessly with the farmer's day-to-day practices. RENTEC is completing a large biodigester and electricity generator for a 5,500-head feedlot at Lucan, Ontario. Revenues from generating electricity and from selling the high-grade compost produced by the biodigester will outstrip revenues from selling the cattle.

There is a wide variety of applications for biodigesters, he said, ranging from the very simple, such as capturing methane by simply covering farm nutrient lagoons, to building a biodigesters designed for a specific crop, using the methane to power an electricity generator, and capturing heat from the generator to warm a fermentation vat producing ethanol. Special crops could also be grown for ethanol, he added.

He also pointed out that domestic septic tanks are themselves biodigesters. He surprised most in the audience by saying that septic tanks could be converted to capture methane for domestic use. If they were redesigned at minimal cost to handle both kitchen wastes and sewage, they would produce enough methane to generate electricity that would supply all domestic needs.

No matter what the size of a biodigester operation, the payback period would be less than seven years, he said.

Professor Tom Hutchinson, professor of ecology at Trent University, explained that in choosing a crop for a biodigester, farmers should look at the energy content of the crop. He recommended Jerusalem artichoke as a prime example of a high-energy crop that would cost little to grow and harvest. It's a perennial, he said, and can be harvested with existing farm equipment. Like hay, it would need little in the way of inputs, such as fertilizer, and would require no herbicides or pesticides. It would also grow on marginal land, he said.

Russ Christianson, a strategic planning consultant to co-operatives, described the advantages of forming a co-operative, which could either provide biodigester services to farmer members, or could operate independently and buy crops from farmers. And Steve Clarke, an energy and crop engineering specialist with the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food, and Rural Affairs provided the audience with an update on the technicalities of selling electricity into the grid. He said that in conjunction with the federal government, OMAFRA had developed a much more inexpensive "black box" that ensures that electricity entering the grid is compatible.

The audience responded to the proceedings by filling out evaluation forms that unanimously approved the presentations. Holding additional workshops is a possibility, if there is sufficient demand in a community. To discuss a workshop, please contact Emily Conger, president of Algonquin to Adirondacks Conservation Association, 19 Reynolds Road, RR 1, Lansdowne, ON K0E 1L0, telephone (613)659-4824, or send an email to [emconger@kingston.net](mailto:emconger@kingston.net).

## ***Idle Free Signs at Old Sly's***

Have you noticed some new signs at the two approaches to Old Sly's Bridge?

The signs are a pilot project of Parks Canada to remind drivers to not idle their vehicles while they are waiting for the bridge to turn. This was an offshoot of REAL's Idle Free Campaign. Over the past two summers, an "Idle-Free Team" spoke to 727 motorists stopped at the Abbott Street, Old Sly's and Merrickville lock crossings about reducing their emissions. REAL would like to see anti-idling signs in more locations where drivers are likely to idle: schools, convenience stores, recreational facilities and so on, and have been looking for a low-cost way to make it possible.

"By avoiding idling for 3 minutes a day, motorists of Smiths Falls, Ontario, could, each day, collectively avoid wasting 688 litres of fuel worth \$688. On an annual basis, this translates into savings of 251,084 litres worth \$251,084." (Office of Energy Efficiency)

## ***Climate Change Action Team***

The Climate Change Action Team (CCAT) held their first meeting, facilitated by Paul Cormier of RANA International, on April 10.

Thanks to Paul they now have a Concept Paper which has been endorsed by the group. The CCAT will operate as a sub-committee of REAL. It has taken some time to whittle down the list of many excellent suggestions to a more manageable few, but on June 7 small teams were formed around three projects.

One group will be creating an inventory of other successful municipal and community climate



change actions that we can draw on. Another will be looking into getting climate change myths and tips into the media for residents of Lanark, Leeds and Grenville. The third group has a range of ideas for encouraging bike use and making our area more bike friendly. Ideas include designated bike lanes, a cycling map, more bike racks, safe biking courses, a bike parade for the environment and participation in the national Bike to Work or School day.

New members to each of those project groups or to the CCAT as a whole are welcome. The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, July 12 at 7 p.m. in the Smiths Falls Council Lounge. Contact Peter Au at [aaapeterau@cogeco.ca](mailto:aaapeterau@cogeco.ca) or (613) 284-8338 for more information.

## ***Well Aware Back for Three Years***

Our ground-breaking Well Aware program is back again – this time for three years. The Ministry of Environment is so impressed with the program that they decided to fund it consistently for three years. This really changes the dynamics of what we can do. For one, it has opened the door to a more formal partnership with the District Health Unit of Leeds, Grenville and Lanark. As well as cooperating on the distribution of our Well Aware kits and information, the Health Unit will refer all clients who have well problems to us for a free Guided Self Assessment.

This assessment – or home visit - helps the homeowner to understand what is going on with their well, potential contaminants and their sources (including septic systems), and what they can do to remedy the problems. It is free, voluntary and confidential, meaning that as a non-profit environmental organization we do not report any personal information to any government agency. The visit is wholly intended to educate the well owner in their own well and septic system and ultimately, to help us all protect our groundwater.

Interestingly, while much is beginning to happen under Source Water Protection and through

various programs for farms, commercial operations and municipalities, the only program that exists to directly educate the private, rural well-owner is Well Aware.

You will be able to pick up Well Aware information kits from the REAL office, all Health Unit offices and municipal offices within a few weeks. To book a Well Aware Guided Self Assessment, or to arrange a speaker for a gathering, call Keely at 283-9500.



### ***REAL DEAL Planning Ongoing***

REAL is continuing to methodically plan for reopening The REAL DEAL. We are evaluating a proposal from the Town of Smiths Falls to use space at the Clarke Building on William Street as a centre for local environmental activities. The Steering Committee has reviewed both a structural report and a report from the Fire Department indicating what improvements need to be made. Sue Brandum has successfully applied to Valley Heartland which has agreed to support some building material costs. Another application has also been submitted for funding to cover other physical changes. We will likely undertake a fundraising drive to cover some of the material costs.

We continue to get many calls from people wanting to donate goods, and asking when The REAL DEAL will be open again. We fully intend to reopen, but there are many hurdles to clear first, many of them financial, and it may be spring of 2008 before we can open. However, we will have a longer term arrangement on this building, and once we are settled should not have

to move for a very long time. So we feel it will be well worth the wait.

In the meantime, if you can hang on to any of your donations, please do so. We do not have the wherewithall to store inventory at the moment, and we will be glad of it when we do have the space.

### ***Summer Events***

Drop by, or offer some of your time to staffing these summer events:

**Rideau 175 Heritage Festival** in Smiths Falls, July 6, 7 and 8 - REAL will have a display "Then and Now" on the Saturday and Sunday, which will highlight some of the ways in which life 175 years ago was more eco-friendly. From that Centennial Park location we will be selling tickets for the Rideau Roundtable's Rideau Experience voyageur canoe tours, which take approximately 1 ½ hours beginning at 10:30 a.m., 1 p.m. and 3:00 p.m. on Saturday and Sunday. The Idle Free team will be at the Abbott Street locks on Friday, July 6 from 9 a.m. to noon.

**The Art of Being Green Festival** in Lanark Village, July 14 and 15 - details to be determined, but rest assured there are scads of workshops, film screenings and displays to see in addition to REAL's booth. REAL Director Maureen Bostock will be presenting on organic farming, and Jeff Kohl on Energy Hogs.

**Smiths Falls Chocolate and Railway Festival**, July 20, 21 and 22 - The Idle Free Team, assisted by Katimavik participants, will be at the Abbott Street locks on Saturday, July 21 from 10 a.m. until 4 p.m. The Rideau Roundtable's voyageur canoe tours are also being offered Saturday and Sunday. Tickets will be sold by the Festival Committee. Tours will take approximately 1 ½ hours beginning at 10:30 a.m., 1 p.m. and 3:00 p.m.

## *In REAL Life*

The weather gurus are predicting another hot dry summer in this region. **Have you got a rain barrel yet?** Forty-five gallon (200 L) barrels from the Arbor Environmental Shoppe in Ottawa are available at the REAL Office for \$79. Get 'em while it's hot!

Halina Shannan and Susan Brandum undertook a daring plant rescue recently, salvaging most of the **native plants planted last summer** in front of The REAL Deal by Angela Northfield and Barb Hicks. A few days later everything was bulldozed, so it was just in the nick of time! REAL has a "Guide to Buying Native Plants in Lanark, Leeds and Grenville Counties" available at the REAL office, or see the website for a list of suppliers.

**Thanks to everyone who purchased mushroom compost on the Victoria Day Weekend.** About 800 bags were sold from the corner of Cornelia and Abbott Streets in this joint venture of the Rotary Club and REAL. Thanks go out to our organizers, baggers and sellers: Angela Northfield, Alfred, Chris Jungkunz, Larry Manson, Tom Foulkes, Beth Graham, Brenda King, Sue Brandum, Carolyn Fraser, Barb and Dave Hicks, and Peter and Daisy Au.



As of June 27, **the Smiths Falls-Lanark-Sharbot Lake region had already had two smog advisory days, May 24 and 25.** A little behind the 19 days already racked up by Toronto since May 8, and the 26 days in Windsor-Essex-Chatham-Kent, but alarming just the same. See [www.airqualityontario.com](http://www.airqualityontario.com) for advice on what to do on smog days or REAL's own fact sheet, at [www.realaction.ca/smog](http://www.realaction.ca/smog).

## *Next Issue*

Submissions for the September issue can be sent to [dhicks11@cogeco.ca](mailto:dhicks11@cogeco.ca) by August 15, 2007 or call Barb at (613) 283-9966.

### *Contact Us*

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Hours: Monday - Friday, 9:00 - 4:00

#### **The REAL DEAL Environment Centre**

To book Well Aware Visits, or to find out more about our energy programs,

Phone: (613) 283-9500

