

REAL *update*

For members and friends of the Rideau Environmental Action League

SEPTEMBER 2007

Energy Star Retail Tax Exemption

The Ontario government is providing a point-of-sale RST exemption for certain ENERGY STAR qualified household products. This initiative is aimed at supporting energy conservation by reducing the demand for electricity.



That means now is a good time to buy an ENERGY STAR appliance and avoid paying the 8% provincial sales tax. The exemption applies to ENERGYSTAR rated refrigerators, dishwashers, clothes washers, freezers, dehumidifiers, room air conditioners, and qualifying ENERGY STAR light bulbs and decorative light strings.

To qualify:

- The product must be listed, at the time of purchase, as ENERGY STAR qualified by the Office of Energy Efficiency, Natural Resources Canada.
- The purchase must be a first-time sale, rental or lease for at least one year, of a new qualifying appliance.
- A purchase order or sales contract must be entered into after July 19, 2007 and before July 20, 2008 and the qualifying appliance must be delivered on or before September 1, 2008.

Installation costs for qualifying built-in appliances and delivery charges for ENERGY STAR products are also eligible for the RST exemption.

The program has not been well-publicized, so be sure to watch that the retailer does not charge you the extra sales tax. The exemption may already be included in the coding system. For example, Sue recently purchased a dehumidifier at Rideau Home Hardware, and the sales tax exemption happened “automatically” at the cash.

REAL would like to do some more education with the retailers first, and then the public, that this program is available. If you can lend a hand, contact us!

You can read a little more on the program on the Ministry of Energy and Ministry of Finance websites, and find out more about ENERGY STAR products from Natural Resources Canada.

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Energy Programs Attract High Interest

REAL's pilot limited-income electricity program has been getting a great response. Forty-five qualified applicants will get a free energy audit to determine potential energy savings in their homes. And twenty-nine of those will have up to \$5,000 of free energy upgrades done to their home by qualified contractors. We have now completed 5 Basic Audits and begun retrofits. We have another 17 approved to have an audit. An additional 8 applicants are being processed.

Initially, we and other Green Communities in the pilot were struggling to find enough limited income people who live in 100% electrically heated homes. As a consequence, REAL has sought and received approval to do homes which have some electric heat as part of their heating mix.

One article in the EMC brought a steady flow of applicants, and our summer student completed some more outreach work at the end of the summer.

Business is also booming for the ecoENERGY program. Since its restart this spring, we have handled more than 500 initial requests for information. Of these, about 100 have been from our region of Lanark, Leeds and Grenville, and the rest for the Ottawa area.

This has been an extraordinary situation and we were very fortunate to have Keely Maddock, our summer student, in the office to handle the requests for both energy programs, as well as the



Well Aware program. Beginning in September, such requests will be handled by either Julie Ingram, our coop student placement, or a yet to be hired part-time staff member.

From the local requests we have about 45 confirmed bookings (done or scheduled) and another outstanding 55 that have yet to be scheduled.

Historically, the summer has been a slow season for home energy audits. But the environment has changed, and the demand is only likely to increase at this time of year. Environmental Projects Manager, Sue Brandum, estimates we will receive requests for 150 - 200 energy audits over a calendar year. Our energy assessor, Alan Leonard, can comfortably do about four per week.

To find out more about either of these programs, please contact the office at (613) 283-9500 or consult the website, www.REALaction.ca.

REAL Has a New President

REAL agreed on a new a new slate of officers at its July meeting.

Taking over from Peter Au as President is Barb Hicks. Larry Manson has become the new Vice-President, Karen Schechter continues as Secretary and Carolyn Fraser remains as Treasurer.

Barb Hicks is a founding director of REAL, with a degree in Environmental Studies. She has extensive experience and hands-on involvement with all phases of REAL's work, and is an active school council volunteer. Larry Manson serves in the music ministry at St. Anne's in Merrickville, serves on the board of Skills and Initiatives, and is past chair of the Lanark County Board of Education. He joined the board in January 2006.

Peter Au is the founding president of REAL, a retired science teacher, and has been involved

with a number of local, regional and provincial organizations, including founding the Rideau Round Table. He will continue to lend his ideas and enthusiasm to the REAL Board, and use his many community connections to develop REAL's projects.

Peter has been the President of REAL since 1989, apart from a period in the late 90's when Elva Corless took on the challenge. Elva also continues to serve on the Board.

Maureen Bostock joined the Board this past April. Susan Brandum, our Environmental Projects Manager, and Ken Graham, Town Liaison to REAL, also participate in our monthly board meetings.

Feel free to contact anyone in the group with your concerns.

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REAL's First 18 Years *by Barb Hicks*

After having been involved in REAL since it's beginnings in 1989 - almost 18 years now - it's my turn to be president. Peter has done a great job of keeping us moving forward with his enthusiasm, optimism and ability to see linkages. His excellent leadership is responsible for REAL's very existence - he deserves a break!

REAL has changed a fair bit in the past two decades. We were decidedly more grassroots and a little more hands-on for our members when we started. In our first years we were piling up discarded Christmas trees, staffing recycling

depots, picking up litter, planting seedlings in Lower Reach Park, and having displays around town wherever they would have us. We were also a little bit more sociable with fundraising dinners, family nights, backyard BBQ's and Christmas parties at the Aus.

But recognition of the depth and seriousness of environmental programs has grown. No longer is "I recycle" enough. So REAL has grown too. We know and the community knows we are here to stay. Very few environmental problems have gone away, and we are still dealing with a wide range water, waste and energy issues. At times it appears that governments are taking charge and something is going to be done, but there is often poor follow through or a change in government before the solutions really get rolling. So there will always be a place for groups like ours - to give people information and the assistance and opportunities to green their lifestyles, while we wait for real changes in the way we do things to become mainstream or legislated.

We have changed the way we do business. In the beginning we did not have e-mail, few of us had home computers, and it took a lot longer to do some things. Now we approach funders with more confidence. The projects we tackle are bigger in scope and geographic area and longer in duration. We have policies to govern our actions. And in the past two years we have had an office to call "home", even if temporarily, to house staff, stash our stuff and hold our meetings.

REAL is unusual in that it was founded on a very broad environmental platform rather than one issue. Our challenge in the coming years, as it has always been, is to remain focussed. We have more ideas than energy, and realistically we can't do everything. We have fewer active members, but those we do have are very dedicated. We can always use more volunteers to make things happen. If you have ideas, expertise and time, come hang out with some dedicated people. Maybe someday you'll even get a turn to be president!

More help is on the way.....

Julie Ingram, an Algonquin College Social Work student, will be doing her coop placement with REAL starting September 10. She will be working in our office 21 hours a week, promoting and processing the ecoENERGY, Energy Assistance Program for limited income households, and Well Aware Program inquiries. Julie specifically requested a placement with us as she sees the connections between taking care of people and taking care of the environment. Julie is a wife and mother to two young children, and does some tutoring on the side, so likes to be busy! After a Christmas break, she will be with us until late April.

REAL's finances have also allowed us to hire a part-time staff person for 15 hours a week until the end of December. Between Julie and the new hire, we hope to be able to staff the office at 2 Gould Street most of normal business hours, so someone will always be able to answer the phone and take walk-in requests.

Trillium Funding Announced

REAL is happy to announce that the Trillium Foundation has awarded us \$20,000 over the next year. The money will be used to help us meet the increased community demand for environmental programming in the Smiths Falls, Lanark, Leeds and Grenville region. It will allow us to fund the human resources required in the areas of accounting, applying for charitable status for the whole of REAL, networking with area municipalities and volunteer coordination. A first step will be to hire a volunteer coordinator on a part-time or contractual basis to establish volunteer policies, job descriptions, a volunteer base and procedures.

The money will provide a much-needed cushion by giving us resources to look after these time consuming but necessary tasks that make a non-profit organization sustainable.

This is the fourth time that REAL has received funding from the Ontario Trillium Foundation.

Well Aware Media Event

Susan Brandum, REAL's Environmental Projects Manager, hosted an event organized by the Ministry of the Environment August 20 to bring attention to the Well Aware program.



Les and Margaret Mortimer volunteered their Vankleek Hill home as a site for a demonstration Well Aware Visit as their contribution to furthering the protection of our common groundwater.

At the event, Environment Minister Laurel Broten re-announced a \$1 million package, \$800,000 for Well Aware and \$200,000 for Well Wise. Sue commented that the continuity of funding has already allowed us, as an example, to firm up a partnership with the Health Unit and hire experienced, qualified people, and how it will allow us all to expand the program into other areas of Ontario.

Others attending the event included representatives of the South Nation Conservation Authority, various farm associations, and the water resource task force that the counties of the far east of Ontario have been operating for some time. Those in attendance seemed genuinely impressed with the program, and the host couple were very interested in having their well concerns addressed.

A trio of consumer cautions

Tooth Whiteners. Do you know what's in that tooth whitener? Fourteen of 20 do-it-yourself kits sampled by the British Standards Institute contained above allowable limits of hydrogen peroxide (the same chemical used on hair). The European Union limit is 0.1 % hydrogen peroxide, while Health Canada allows 3%. The common tooth-whitening ingredient Triclosan causes

thyroid disruption in frogs, and has been found in US waterways.

And whitening toothpaste, mouthwash and home kits often contain sodium hydroxide, considered a poison by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration. How badly do you want whiter teeth?



Organic Dry Cleaning. A number of North American dry cleaners have been claiming they are "organic", when there is really no such standard. The so-called "organic" dry cleaners use a petroleum-based solvent which is biodegradable, easier on clothing and doesn't give off harsh smells.

Traditional dry cleaners use perchloroethylene, which was introduced in the 1930s. It is regarded as the best cleaning agent on the market, but it does give off a unpleasant smell and has been linked to cancer. Many jurisdictions have begun regulating its use. The Black's Corners area, south of Carleton Place, is home to the largest plume of perchloroethylene-contaminated groundwater in Canada and there are smaller pockets of perc-contaminated groundwater throughout the region.

The term organic is being used because petroleum is an organic compound, but the cleaning fluid is a synthetic solvent, and can be dangerous if not handled carefully. It is much less combustible than the petroleum used before

perc came along. A major manufacturer of the solvent is Exxon Mobil.

Still another technique is GreenEarth cleaning, which uses a silicone-based solvent considered more environmentally friendly than perc, although Environment Canada is considering regulating it as well.

Dishwasher Detergents. Take care when selecting a dishwasher detergent to choose one that is phosphate free and not harmful to your septic system.

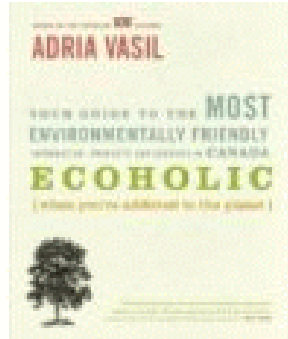
The Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement, signed by Canada and the United States in 1972, limited the phosphate content of laundry and dishwashing soaps to 2.2 % by weight, and made a big difference to phosphorus levels in the Great Lakes. But dishwasher detergents were exempted., and today some contain up to 18 % phosphates by weight.

This is significant because dishwashers can be found in 55 % of Canadian households. Phosphorus-loading in lakes and rivers leads to increased plant and algal growth and oxygen depletion. One study determined that between 9% and 34% of the phosphorus load going to wastewater treatment plants from domestic sewage comes from automatic dishwashing detergents.

If you can't find a non-phosphate dishwasher detergent such as Seventh Generation, NatureClean or Ecover, choose a lower phosphate level detergent, look for one without chlorine while you're at it, and experiment with using less. Gels are generally the better choice over powders or tablets. And if you are on a septic system, note that the clay-type dust used to keep the particles of powdered detergents in suspension in the box are bad news. The clay goes into the septic tank, then through the pipes and tiles in the bed and clogs up the holes in the tiles.

Ecoholic Thorough and Canadian

A new book available at the SF Public Library, “Ecoholic: Your Guide to the Most Environmentally Friendly Information, Products and Services in Canada” by Adria Vasil, certainly is as “cheeky” as the back cover suggests. But it is very thorough. It covers all the topics you would expect and many more you probably haven’t thought of. I did find it a little discouraging that so many of the things I buy, use and do has negative consequences to the planet and my personal health. But it is a great resource and I learned some new things that I will definitely consider in the future. Some examples:



- the average adult uses nine personal care products a day, containing a total of 126 chemical ingredients. That stuff is ingested or absorbed through your skin - time to reconsider brands used or if they are necessary at all!
- cotton clothing sounds nice and natural, but it takes half a pound of insecticides and pesticides to make just one t-shirt, not to mention the human rights abuses associated with the industry
- all new clothing should be washed before wearing to remove the wrinkle resistant formaldehyde
- 95% of us have PFOA, the chemical used to manufacture non-stick coatings, in our bloodstream
- if you must use plastic wrap, look for brands that use LDPE rather than PVDC or PVC, which are very toxic plastic. They usually have phthalates added to make it more pliable.
- dishwashers use less water, soap and energy to wash the same amount of dishes than handwashing
- single-use cameras aren’t that bad, as they

- actually have the highest recycling rate of any consumer product, as most of the body weight of the camera is reused
- and one you’ve probably heard before, but it does make sense to turn your computer off when not in use. They only use two seconds worth of power to start up.

In each case the author suggests alternatives to these situations, by mentioning ways to avoid the situation or product altogether, or giving suppliers, usually Canadian, more environmentally friendly alternatives. The book is definitely worth a read. I have already purchased a copy to have at home as a reference.

REAL Speaks out on Uranium Mining

The following letter, dated August 1, was sent to area newspapers on behalf of the REAL Board of Directors with copies to Scott Reid, MP and Norm Sterling, MPP.

The Board of Directors of Rideau Environmental Action League(REAL) would like to add our voice of support to the efforts of the Ardoch Algonquin people and the concerned citizens of Lanark County who are protesting the development of a uranium mine near Robertsville, north of Sharbot Lake. The land which is included in the proposed mine belongs to the Ardoch Algonquin people, who continue to wait for the Canadian government to negotiate a land claims settlement.

The impact of uranium mining can not be overstated. People living adjacent to uranium mines have developed serious, long term and life threatening health problems. The watershed downstream (in this case, the Mississippi River) can experience devastating consequences. Finally, the Canadian and Ontario governments have yet to decide how and where to store the considerable radioactive waste from the use of uranium in the production of energy.

While the governments of Ontario and Canada praise the efficiency of nuclear energy, they are

leaving the solving of these serious problems to the next generations of Canadians. As we saw this week in the earthquake which hit Japan, nuclear waste stored in 45gallon drums can spell disaster.

And while Canada has a policy of selling uranium for nuclear reactors only, it cannot prevent another nation from using uranium or the byproduct plutonium for nuclear weapons.

We urge the government of Ontario to declare a moratorium on uranium mining, following in the footsteps of other provincial legislatures which have refused to expose their people and natural environments to the pollution resulting from uranium mining.

Signed,

*The Board of Directors
Rideau Environmental Action League*

If you are interested in regular updates on the uranium mine protest, please contact Lynn Daniluk directly at geenlynndaniluk@yahoo.ca.

Granite Slabs Replacing Paver Lights

The Evergreen Avenue Committee is installing 43 new granite slabs to replace some of the paver lights that have been vandalized or deteriorated.



These granite slabs measure 8"x12"x3". They are made locally and will be sold at \$150. Donors can have up to 20 characters per line for 3 lines of engraving.

The paver lights were originally sold at \$65. They will be replaced by granite slabs at no additional costs to the donors, even though donations are welcome.

Evergreen Avenue is a living memorial, a community beautification project, and a demonstrative native plant and greenhouse sink garden in Victoria Park, Smiths Falls. It honours veterans, peacekeepers, residents and families of the Smiths Falls area.

For more information, please contact Dick Donaldson at (613) 283-3274 or donaldso@ripnet.com.

E-Waste Day
Saturday, October 20, 2007
9 a.m. - noon
Perth Landfill Site, Wildlife Road

Electronic items (anything that plugs in) will be accepted for recycling. Large appliances and hazardous waste not accepted.



Smiths Falls residents are eligible. Other Lanark municipalities have been invited - check with yours to see if you qualify.

For more info call: (613) 267-3311.

Help Ontario Break a Guinness World Record on October 3

Join other residents for a one kilometre walk at 12:30 on Wednesday October 3. People in 400 Ontario locations will be participating in the World Record Walk. The Climate Change Action Team (CCAT) is taking this on to create a “culture of walking”. Meet at 12:15 at Cornelia Court or Centennial Park. Separate walks will be occurring at some schools. More details available soon on www.realaction.ca.



In REAL Life

Look for us at the **International Plowing Match** being hosted by Leeds County near Crosby this **September 18 - 22**. REAL’s booth will have Information on the ecoENERGY and limited income energy programs, and a “Rethinking Reuse” display. We are also partnering with Green Communities and the Health Unit on the Well Aware display.

Our annual fundraising concert by the **Central Band of the Canadian Forces, “Christmas on the Rideau”**, is set for Wednesday, December 5 at SFDCI. We could use some salespeople on our organizing team. Call Larry at (613) 283-7743 if you can help, or call Beth at (613) 283-0824 for tickets.

The **Household Hazardous Waste Depot** in Carleton Place is open Saturdays 8 - 12 only until September 22nd. Open to Smiths Falls and Lanark County residents. Call (613) 284-4124.

The **shoreline cleanup** normally run in late September did not happen this year. We could not find a suitable site for divers and shore volunteers to work together.

The **Smiths Falls Community Compost Site** is available Saturdays 9 until 4 until further notice. Grass clippings, leaves and brush **ONLY** accepted. Please do not leave any materials at the gate! Open to residents of Smiths Falls and Drummond/North Elmsley only.

Weekly Climate Change and You tips will be appearing in the EMC and Smiths Falls This Week thanks to the efforts of REAL’s Climate Change Action Team (CCAT). Two introductory columns kicked off the series.

Next Issue

Submissions for the June issue can be sent to dhicks11@cogeco.ca by Oct., 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

