

REAL *update*

REAL people taking REAL action to protect our environment

Making a REAL Difference for 30 Years

Rideau Environmental Action League (REAL)

APRIL 2019

Inside this issue:

- [Bioplastics \(cont'd\)](#) 2
- [Meet New Director Tony Cote](#) 3
- [New Bylaw Passed March 11](#) 3
- [REAL Deal News](#) 4
- [Looking for New Board Members](#) 5
- [Community Garden Plots Available](#) 5
- [Pitch In Smiths Falls April 20 - May 5](#) 6
- [Return Used Tires to Collection Sites](#) 6
- [In REAL Life](#) 7
- [Support our Rain Barrel Fundraiser](#) 8

Bioplastic Products—Not Quite There Yet

Bioplastics are seen as an eco-friendly alternative to plastics. Using renewable resources to make these products shows great promise, but the products are not as compostable as they are claimed to be.

Bioplastics or bio-based plastics are plastics that are made from plant or other biological material. Potatoes, bamboo, coconut, wood, shrimp shells, seaweed, algae and various microorganisms are all examples of materials that can be used in the manufacture of food packaging, eating utensils, shopping bags, toothbrushes, medical devices like sutures and a range of other products. Besides being made of a renewable resource (as opposed to fossil fuels), these products are claimed to be biodegradable or compostable, and so do not contribute to the world's plastic waste problem.

But bioplastics are not all the same. To be called a bioplastic the product only needs to have 20% renewable materials. The rest of its composition could still be plastic. So they are not necessarily entirely from renewable resources.

Not all bioplastics are biodegradable. Biodegradable means it will break down completely in a natural environment. Most bioplastics need some help for that to happen. In fact, a material that is biodegradable and decomposes easily may not be a good fit for a product requiring durability.

In Europe, biodegradable means that after 90 days in an industrial compost facility, 90% of the material breaks down to particles less than 2 mm size. This will not happen in a backyard composter! Even in municipal composting systems, some bioplastics, such as biodegradable bags, will still have to be picked out.



Some bamboo food containers.

Currently, very few consumers have access to the industrial composting systems that can break down these products. And if these bioplastics are added to regular plastics, they contaminate that load of plastic, and the entire load might have to go to landfill. So without access to industrial composting systems, consumers should really be putting their bioplastics in the garbage, where they could take over a century to break down in a landfill.

(continued inside...)



Bioplastics (continued)

And consider the human factor. No matter what the composition of the product, people have to be responsible for getting it into the proper recycling stream. Already, an underwhelming proportion of plastic water bottles, for example, ever hits the recycling bin. Individuals, hotels, restaurants and so on have to ensure the bioplastics are sent on their way to a composting facility.

You might also wonder if using plant-based substances that could be used to feed people to make bioplastics is a good use of resources. Using food waste or byproducts, like sawdust or orange peels, might be a better tactic. Growing any plant material still requires water, fertilizers, fuel for farm machinery, fuel for transport and so on. Producers are not necessarily using organic farming methods or non GMO seed either. Chemical additives may need to be added to the bioplastics to make the materials durable and flexible, and those additives are may be toxic. So bioplastic does not translate to environmentally benign. However, these alternatives to traditional plastic are still probably more sustainable to produce than plastics from fossil fuels.

There are a number of third party certification programs that can help you choose more eco-friendly bioplastics. One to look for is BPI, Biodegradable Products Institute, the largest certification program for compostable products and packaging in North America. In Canada we have a "Compostable" certification granted to manufacturers who adhere to certain performance attributes for compostability.



COMPOSTABLE

IN INDUSTRIAL FACILITIES

Check locally, as these do not exist in many communities. **Not suitable for backyard composting.** CERT # SAMPLE

There will likely come a time when municipal composting programs, particularly for urban areas, are commonplace. The programs will be able to accept these biodegradable bioplastics products, and under the managed conditions of an industrial composting facility (high temperature and the addition of microbes) the bioplastics will break down, possibly in under two months. The number of bioplastic products has increased by 80 percent in recent years, and we will continue to see more. There is definitely potential in plant-based products, but the municipal infrastructure hasn't caught up.

Here are some things you can do in the meantime:

- Stay away from single use anything, use reusable products.
- If you must use disposables, stick to materials that are easily recyclable like glass.
- Do not attempt to compost bioplastics in home composters.
- Support the establishment of municipal composting systems.
- Do not put bioplastics in your plastic recycling. Use the garbage.
- If you do happen to live in an area using industrial composting (only about 5% of North Americans do), find out what bioplastics products are accepted.
- Try bioplastic products, but concentrate on durable, multi-use ones.
- Read labels and beware of greenwashing.
- Look for products that are BPI certified, or in Canada, have "Compostable" certification
- Remember that the more a product can be reused before it is recycled or discarded the better. So buy second hand, share, and practice all the "Rs: repairing, restoring, rethinking etc. regardless of the material.



BIO bioplastic toy trucks made from sugarcane.

Meet New Director Tony Cote

The best piece of advice a retiree can get is “don’t turn the TV on before 7 p.m. and keep yourself busy.”

And that’s what Tony Cote follows. The retired journalist joined the REAL board earlier this year after a stint on the board of Friends of Foley Mountain.

Tony has wasted no time in getting involved in REAL activities. He has already joined the monarch butterfly garden team, has represented REAL at an inaugural meeting of the Lanark Climate Action Network (LCNA) in February and more recently participated in a workshop on the environmental and social challenges facing the Rideau Canal.

Tony has been active in social causes throughout his life and has managed to fit in more than a few protests, including the initial Women’s March on Washington a few years ago.

He is on the board of a major political party riding association, has represented workers as a board member on two national organizations and was once president of the Canadian District Council of the Newspaper Guild.



One of his most memorable experiences was spending three weeks in Chile building a home with Habitat for Humanity.

He lives, with his partner, between Rideau Ferry and Perth.

New Bylaw Passed March 11

REAL now has a new and improved bylaw.

Our bylaw was last modified in November 2006. This year’s revision was undertaken primarily to increase the number of board members allowable. Now we can have anywhere from a minimum of 7 to a maximum of 12 board members. This will allow more input from the community and spread the work necessary among more people. The board also took the opportunity to make some changes that will soon be required by ONCA (the Ontario Not-for-Profit Corporations Act.) The revised bylaws were reviewed by lawyer Michael Clifflen and then were brought to the Board for discussion and amendments.

As specified in the old and new versions of the bylaw, a Members meeting must be called in order to pass a new bylaw. The board did not feel we should wait until the June AGM. Thanks to Tony Humphrey of the Railway Museum of Eastern Ontario (RMEO) for offering the use of their space for the March 11 meeting.

At that meeting, Donna McKenna, who spearheaded the bylaw update, described each significant change to the bylaw and its rationale. The board term and the term for committee appointments is now two years instead of one. Board members may now participate in board meetings by phone or electronic means and don’t have to be in the room. Members may now vote at members meetings by proxy and the quorum for members meetings has been reduced. ONCA regulations made it mandatory to specify that a members meeting can be requested by a group of members numbering at least one tenth of the membership. A number of small changes clarifying existing practices were made also.

Once members were given the opportunity to ask questions and clarify any of the changes, a motion to accept the revised bylaws was made by Tom Foulkes and the motion passed. Thanks to Donna for persevering through this long but necessary process. The bylaw is available on the [About page of our website.](#)

Now would be a good time to bring your donations over, because it will only get busier as the weather improves. Small items you can bring to the cashier's attention and larger loads should be taken to the back gate.

Looking for New Board Members

If the environment of Lanark, Leeds and Grenville is important to you, here's an opportunity to put your conviction into action. REAL is recruiting new board members to serve a minimum of a two year term.

Chances are if you are reading this you have been following REAL's progress, possibly even for the last 30 years! You are familiar with REAL's mission and what REAL stands for in this community. We need you! There is so much more that could be done to improve the environment, educate the public, and provide opportunities for environmental action. It takes committed people and it does take time, but the progress we make can be very rewarding.

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 recent [Annual Report](#). New perspectives are a valuable addition to our discussions. Working with REAL is a great way to meet new people and further understand our region. All it takes is an interest in the environment and a willingness to do something about it.

Board members will:

- Serve as a member of a collegial body that is committed to the mission of the organization
- Provide input, experience and ideas to further REAL's objectives
- Participate fully in decision-making activities
- Raise the profile of REAL in the community

A full job description is available on our website.

If you are ready to be involved, please send us a letter expressing your interest to hoffman.katie9@gmail.com. Include a resume or short bio if you can. If you would just like more information or to discuss the possibilities, please provide a phone number and the best time to reach you.



Community Garden Plots Available

It is looking like we will have lots of new faces at our community garden this year. As of the end of March, we have five plots available. REAL is accepting applications from anyone interested in growing their own local food at our garden on the site of the REAL Deal Store. A representative from our committee will call applicants to get to know their gardening needs a little better, and successful applicants sign an agreement that guides their participation. REAL charges just \$20 for the use of a raised garden plot measuring approximately 3 feet x 16 feet. Gardeners plan, plant, water, weed and harvest their own plot. Guidance is available for anyone with limited garden experience.

Application forms and agreements are available at the REAL Deal cash or from the [garden page](#). Please make contact as soon as possible if you would like a plot, as ideally the plots will be assigned by the start of

May. However, we do keep a cancellation list as all plans are subject to change! Contact Katie Hoffman at kthoffman@cogeco.ca or call (613) 983-3360.



Plots at the REAL Community Garden are just \$20 for the season. Please apply soon, as we'd like them assigned by May 1st.



April 20 to May 5, 2019

Get your bags starting April 11 at the REAL Deal

Check website for safety tips and suggested sites

Clean up litter at your choice of location

Leave filled bags in a visible location for pick up

www.REALaction.ca

Return Used Tires to Registered Collection Sites

Since 2009 Ontario consumers have been able to return used tires to registered collection sites. The rules are changing for the collectors, but as a consumer you are still entitled to drop off four used tires per day to any registered collection site during their business hours free of charge. This applies to on and off road passenger vehicles, agricultural and industrial vehicles. Tires from toys, bikes, lawnmowers, personal mobility devices or commercial aircraft are not accepted.

There are many registered collection sites in the Smiths Falls area, including Canadian Tire, Walmart, most car dealerships and most automotive repair establishments. Check the list by entering your postal code here: <https://rpra.ca/programs/tires/collectionsites/>. You may wish to call ahead to establish hours. Many municipalities with waste transfer sites accept used tires also, but may charge a fee. [See this video](#) for more on what happens to the collected tires.



Please do not bring your tires to the REAL Deal!

In REAL Life

We are heading into a busy season for REAL. Take note of these “happenings”:

April 11 Pitch In bags available at REAL Deal. Pick yours up any store day.

April 19 Store closed for Good Friday.

April 20 REAL volunteers talking up Pitch In at Andress YIG.

April 20 – May 5 Pitch In Smiths Falls. Annual litter cleanup.

April 28 REAL Deal Sunday Hours begin for season: 11:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

May 1 Deadline to order rain barrels to ensure May 11 availability.

May 2 RD hours extended to 5:00 p.m. every Thurs, Fri and Sat.

May 2 – 12 Annual Second Chance Art Sale at REAL Deal (tentative).

May 11 Rain Barrel Pickup Day 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

June 1 Rideau Paddlefest. REAL has booked a smoothie bike!

June 16 – 22 Customer Ask at Andress YIG. Donate at the cash.

June 19 REAL AGM (tentative). Details coming. Food likely.

October 19 Local Foods Dinner. Joanne Edwards and the Legion are booked!

Check our website and Facebook pages for details on any of the above, email info@realaction.ca, or leave a message at the store: (613) 283-7999.

On the Web

- See an awkward interview with planet Earth, by the Foil Arms and Hog comedic group. <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=10160605920770335>. About 2 minutes.
- This Just Eat Organic rap by CE-Yo Gary Hirshberg and the Stonyfield Moms is kind of entertaining: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SCA6P9IsEfw>. Bet you can't stop singing it!
- “Wings of Life” showing The Beauty of Pollination. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MQiszdkOwuU> shown at a 2011 Ted Talk. Great footage of bees, hummingbirds and bats doing their thing. Just over four minutes.

**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
and Sundays 11-4
starting April 28

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
July issue by June 15 to
dhicks11@cogeco.ca
or call Barb at (613) 283-9966

REAL people taking REAL action to protect our environment

Support REAL's Rain Barrel Fundraiser



Save water and treat your plants!

Order and pay online by May 1
for pickup on
Saturday May 11, 2019
9:00 to 4:00 p.m.
at the REAL Deal, 85 William
St. W., Smiths Falls

**Pre-payment Online by Paypal
or Interac E-Transfer
or cash on day of sale**



*Proceeds to our
Monarch Butterfly
Garden!*

For more details:
info@realaction.ca
or call Barb 283-9966

See products at:

\$55

rainbarrel.ca/realdeal

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

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