

# REAL *update*

REAL people taking REAL action to protect our environment

Rideau Environmental Action League (REAL)

A P R I L 2021

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## PITCH-IN INDIVIDUALLY!

**PITCH-IN to Support a GREENER, CLEANER  
Smiths Falls!**

**WHO:** We invite individuals or members of the same household to join in

**WHEN:** Any day between  
**APRIL 25th-MAY 8th!**

**WHY:** Spread kindness to our planet and to **OUR COMMUNITY** when it's most needed! Prevent harmful plastic waste from getting into our waterways! Get outside for some fresh air, movement and environmental action with your family or bubble!

**WHAT:** This years annual PITCH-IN Community & Shoreline Clean-up Event

**WHERE:** Choose your own cleanup site! We are focusing in on our local **WATER SHORELINES** this year! If you are having trouble finding a site visit our website for a list of suggested areas. Try to find a cleanup site close to your home

**HOW:** Grab your PITCH-IN bags and detailed instructions from the REAL DEAL Store, Wednesday-Saturday, 10 - 5 after April 7th. and PITCH-IN!



PLEASE REFER TO THE ADVICE OF OUR LOCAL PUBLIC HEALTH UNIT REGARDING COVID-19 MEASURES AT THE TIME THAT YOU ARE DOING YOUR CLEANUP. THIS INCLUDES DETAILS ON SOCIAL DISTANCING MEASURES, WEARING MASKS AND GLOVES, PROPER HAND WASHING AND POTENTIAL RESTRICTED AREAS. PLEASE SEE OUR PITCH IN INFORMATION SHEET FOR MORE DETAILS.

 RIDEAU  
ENVIRONMENTAL  
ACTION LEAGUE

## Join Our Board: Make a REAL Difference



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. Our board regroups each year at the time of our June AGM, so this is the best time of year to step up.

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 in our community. 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.

[More information](#) and a [job description](#) are available on our website.

If you are ready to be involved, please send us a letter expressing your interest to [kthoffman@cogeco.ca](mailto:kthoffman@cogeco.ca). 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.

## What Goes Where at the REAL Deal?

**End of Life Electronics.** Place used electronics next to the black bin (not in front of the doors please), or against the wall. We will put it in the bin! But do not leave anything else there please, e.g. miscellaneous electric appliances or other donations. If you need help unloading, please ask.

**All Donations and Scrap Metal.** All donations should go to the rear of the property, to the gate in the fence near the front of the green dome. Staff will help you. Rummaging in scrap metal bin not allowed!

**Hard to Recycle.** There are labelled bins for these items to the right as you enter the store: batteries; print and toner cartridges; used pens, crayons and pill bottles; milk bags. Just leave them in the bins.

**Thermostats or Grocery Bags.** Hand these to the cashier.

**Free.** Please let us be the judge if a donation will be offered for free. Do not leave stuff on those tables! We might miss out on the chance to earn money from it. Note the tables themselves are not free!

**Clothing, Household Linens etc.** Trick question! Do not bring us this stuff. Take it to the Jewels, the Salvation Army Thrift Store, the bin opposite Food Basics, or whatever options exist where you live.

*Penny and Pegi are our newest Smalls volunteers. They usually come in Monday mornings. They are modelling the spiffy green hoodies that were given to all volunteers and staff at Christmas.*





## Climate Network Lanark (CNL) Thriving by Tony Cote

It's a beautiful sound. Calming and at the same time promising. It's the steady drop, drop, drop of the maple sap hitting the bottom of an empty bucket. It is the sign of the forest waking up. But at the same time thoughts turn to the destruction of forests here and around the world and what it means to the life of the planet. Things are changing, or as Canada's best known weatherman David Phillips suggests, we are living through "Atmospheric Terrorism". And that reality led to the formation of Climate Network Lanark (CNL) a few years ago.

Today, CNL has grown, thrives and is filled with dedicated and knowledgeable people



and organizations who not only want to make a difference but actually do. Major help and funding were made available through a generous donor, the Gosling Foundation, the Perth & District Community Foundation, EcoPerth and Lanark County. Perth, Almonte, Carleton Place, Smiths Falls, Tay Valley, Mississippi Mills, Drummond North Elmsley, Montague, Beckwith, Tay Valley and Lanark Highlands all have seats on the Lanark Council.

CNL's stated vision is an engaged community, building a vital low-carbon and resilient place to live, work and play and in which other wildlife and flora thrive. And the mission is "to connect, coordinate, facilitate and support collaborative community efforts and actions to effectively address climate breakdown".

Prior to COVID, CNL's activities included: helping to bring the Alternative Land Use Services program to Lanark; building the capacity of the Network (e.g., with Nature Canada); creating a greenhouse gas emissions inventory for the county and the lower-tier municipalities; and developing a county-wide action plan. This will integrate the work already completed in Perth and Tay Valley Township, setting emission reduction targets for both corporate and community GHGs.

While COVID has closed a lot of things down and continues to wreak havoc, CNL members have been extremely busy creating plans and discussing ideas in preparation for when the situation opens up. The work is almost entirely done through regular Zoom meetings. There are nine working groups, each comprised of up to a dozen volunteers. The groups are: Energy, Farming, Forests, Communication, Composting and Recycling, Local Government, Transportation, Food and Health. The composting group will be focusing on developing broad education, communication and outreach strategies on composting by promoting the *refuse, reuse and reduce* philosophy as the first line of attack and on consumer responsibility through workshops and social media.

CNL is advocating with local municipalities to take more action on climate change and to promote their initiatives. CNL is also monitoring what is being done to ensure it is consistent with reducing greenhouse gases and protecting the environment.

The communications group is working on a strategy to get the word out and better educate the public on steps that need to be done and are easy to do with beneficial results. Also, in the works is the organization of a Speakers Bureau whose members can, on request, attend service club meetings, school programs, and other organizations to promote climate issues.

There is lots more and shortly that 'more' will be on CNL's website, which is under construction and promises to be the place to go for climate and environmental news, information and fixes. You can find CNL on the [Lanark County Stewardship Council site](#). A Facebook page "Climate Network Lanark" is now up and running.



## A Dirty Word (in Smiths Falls?)

by Mike Ratko and Susan Pate

Want to know a dirty word? This one is five letters long and you probably have heard it before and never thought anything of it. How can it be a bad word when you don't even know what it is? Let me fill you in on the secret: radon.

We wanted to share our story with you so that you can be informed about the environment you live in and to help you make informed decisions about your health.

All you want to know about radon can be found at Health Canada (<https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/health-risks-safety/radiation/radon.html>.) In short, radon is a radioactive gas that is tasteless, odourless, colourless, and heavier than air and comes from the natural decay of uranium in the soil and rock. It is found in relatively small amounts outside but can become concentrated in your house. Concentrations differ greatly across the country.

Levels are typically higher in your basement. Newer homes are well sealed with very efficient furnaces. The levels can be just as high on the main floor. If you live in a drafty house, this is the one time it may be beneficial. Don't have a basement? Doesn't matter. Radon can collect in the closed-in crawl space under your house and make its way through the floorboards and into the house.

Big deal right? How bad can it be? The good news is that it won't harm you immediately. It might not even kill you. But it could. Especially if you are a smoker or have other lung ailments. Because it is radioactive, it can bring on lung cancer with prolonged exposure.

Health Canada says that if you have readings over 200 Becquerels per cubic meter ( $\text{Bq/m}^3$ ) (I know – who made up that unit of measure?) you should take action to reduce levels soon.

Fortunately for us, Katie Hoffman from Rideau Environmental Action League (REAL) stopped by our



house and asked, "Have you tested for radon?" Of course the answer was, "No. Should we?". Luckily Katie has a radon meter that REAL makes available for free – with a deposit for damages. We took advantage of the service and found that the levels in our house were  $1118 \text{ Bq/m}^3$  - over 5 times the actionable level. We took readings over several days in different parts of the basement and on the main floor. The readings varied a bit but were always multiples higher than  $200 \text{ Bq/m}^3$ . Time for action. We found [this document from Health Canada](#) to be extremely helpful and comprehensive.

We shared the radon meter among the neighbours and found that they all had elevated levels in the 300 to  $500 \text{ Bq/m}^3$  range. All of our homes were built within 18 months and by the same builder. By the way, Health Canada advises that, "Radon concentration levels will vary from one house to another, even if they are similar designs and next door to each other. The only way to be sure of the radon level in your home is to test."



Image courtesy of USGS Energy Resources Program

### A Dirty Word (continued)

Since the two of us are working from home now, it was important to get this under control as soon as possible. We learned that we needed to seal all cracks and penetrations in our basement floors. The first thing we did was seal the cover of the sewer backflow valve that was open to gravel below the basement floor with a latex sealant from the local hardware store. The numbers that were once over 1000 Bq/m<sup>3</sup> were now just over 400 Bq/m<sup>3</sup>. By no means were we in the clear but it made a big improvement for just a couple dollars.

We spoke to a gentleman in Perth about his radon experience and one thing he did to reduce radon levels was to run his furnace and HRV on ventilate 24 hours a day, seven days a week. So we gave it a try. And it WORKED! Our levels went to about 120 Bq/m<sup>3</sup>. There are day-to-day fluctuations in Radon levels and on occasion they went above 200 Bq/m<sup>3</sup> but usually stayed around the 120 Bq/m<sup>3</sup> level.

We did not like the idea of running the furnace that often (cost of electricity, wear on the motor, and constant noise) so we scheduled a C-NRPP certified company to come in and install the Subfloor Depressurization. They came in and drilled a hole in the basement floor, installed a four-inch plastic pipe in the hole and vented it to the outside. In the pipe they inserted a fan to constantly suck the air and Radon out from under the floor. In just a few hours, the levels were below 100 Bq/m<sup>3</sup> and today the readings are usually below 20 Bq/m<sup>3</sup> and as low as 0 Bq/m<sup>3</sup>. The peace of mind, the quiet in the house, and the extended life of the furnace motor are well worth the investment.

We got three quotes from different specialists and they were all within \$100 of each other. Not all vendors are C-NRPP certified and the one we spoke to that was not certified was every bit as qualified as the ones that were. You need to be diligent in your assessments. There are lots of people who will say they can do the job, but we found very few that were capable of doing the job.

So now you know my secret, dirty word: radon. It is here in Smiths Falls. It is EVERYWHERE. The levels in your home can be very different from ours. A friend that lives off Golf Club Road had readings of approximately 180 Bq/m<sup>3</sup> while his neighbour next door was in the 80 Bq/m<sup>3</sup> range. Another friend that lives one block over from these two had readings of 1500 Bq/m<sup>3</sup> in a brand new ICF house. Radon is not discerning about where it goes. Do yourself a favour, contact REAL to borrow a radon meter. They lend them out for two week intervals – long enough to get a good indication of the radon levels in your house. In fact, we suggested to our neighbours that they take three-day readings so we could pass it around to as many neighbours as possible in our loaner period. Who knows, it could save your life? Or theirs.



**Borrowing a Radon Meter.** To borrow a radon meter from REAL, please contact Katie Hoffman at [khoffman@cogeco.ca](mailto:khoffman@cogeco.ca) or 983-3360. REAL requires a \$300 cheque as a deposit, which will be returned to you when you return the meter in about two weeks. See our [radon webpage](#) for additional information.



## J2S Offers a Full Slate of Zoom Presentations

March was a busy month for the Journey to Sustainability (J2S) Team. Three public presentations were done in collaboration with the Rideau Roundtable (RR) by the Roundtable's Riparian Restoration Specialist Intern, Jake Wilson.

First up was "Plastics in our Waterways" on March 10. Twenty nine people attended by Zoom, to learn about the importance of water in our daily lives, and how plastics have become an urgent issue. Jake described the four-day Rideau River cleanup conducted last fall, some of which was done by canoe, and some on foot. One day involved some community volunteers. The whole four days yielded 392 pounds of garbage. (See story in our December 2020 newsletter.)

Then on March 18 a "Naturalizing our Shorelines" Zoom presentation discussed climate change, the benefits of shoreline naturalization and how to go about it. The followup March 31<sup>st</sup> presentation "Shoreline Naturalization Project: Site Selection and Public Consultation" was geared to residents in the neighbourhood of the potential projects.



Jake's plastic presentation resulted in an invitation to address the Smiths Falls Rotary Club on March 19. The service group wanted to know more about the fall river cleanup, as they are planning a shoreline cleanup of their own. (See the front page for more on Pitch In and some shoreline sites being included this year.)

See "In REAL Life" to learn about a Regenerative Farming presentation taking place April 22 to mark Earth Day.

The "Maximizing Energy Efficiency in Your Home" session has not been abandoned. REAL awaits a formal announcement of the federal government's new Greener Homes program.

Recordings are available for many of the above presentations. See the [J2S section of REAL's website](#) for more.

## REAL Deal by the Numbers for 2020 (Feb. 1, 2020 to Jan. 31, 2021)

Materials Donated	45,149 kg.
Materials Sold	41,007 kg.

### Top Five Donor Municipalities (by weight)

Smiths Falls	38%
Rideau Lakes	19%
DNE	10%
Montague	7%
Eliz/Kitley	4%

### Top Five Buyer Municipalities (by weight)

Smiths Falls	40%
Rideau Lakes	13%
DNE	7%
Montague	6%
Perth	4%

9% of the buyers came from outside LLG.

### Top Six Sales Departments (by revenue)

Décor	19.5%
Furniture	17.0%
Housewares	12.3%
Yard and Garden	7.2%
Sports and Leisure	5.8%
Seasonal	5.5%

Ewaste Collected: 48 tonnes

The store was closed for almost three months in the spring of 2020, and all of January 2021. But sales were strong enough that we might have reached our sales target if we could have been open in January 2021.

Understandably, weights of items accepted and sold were down, although ewaste collected was up by one tonne. We were pleased that the proportion of customers from outside of Lanark, Leeds & Grenville had increased from 7 to 9%.



*In REAL Life*

**Membership.** Thanks to those of you who renewed your membership on the first prompt. These annual fees are important to us and tell us the community supports what we do! We even picked up a few new members who had been on our mailing list. It is never too late to mail a cheque or do an etransfer to [payments@realaction.ca](mailto:payments@realaction.ca). We can also provide receipts for charitable donations.

**Coffee Pods.** A quick reminder that we are no longer accepting coffee pods for recycling. We do have more reusable pods to give away for Keurig coffee machines. Just ask at the cash.

**Pill Bottles, Crayons and Glue Sticks.** These are the latest items that the REAL Deal will accept for recycling. We can only accept clear pill bottles with the labels removed and any residue rinsed out. There is a bin for them by the customer door.

**Pitch-In Smiths Falls.** We are encouraging people to participate in this annual clean-up any day in the April 25—May 8 range. Pick up litter by yourself or with members of your household. We will have some shoreline sites to suggest too! Pick up your bags at the store beginning April 7, and be sure to let us know how you did! See the poster on the front of this newsletter or our [Pitch In page](#).

**Mushroom Compost.** Our friends at Trinity United Church will be selling bags of mushroom compost from the REAL Deal parking lot on Sat. May 15. No need to pre-order, just bring your cold hard cash. The compost is a great soil enhancer. Cost is \$10 for a 30L bag. Sale may continue Sunday.

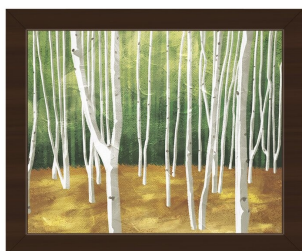
**Rain Barrel Sale.** Our truckload rain barrel sale is happening Sat. May 29. Please order online by May 23 to ensure your order arrives for that day. This year you can pay by Visa, MC or debit card, or cash on the day of pickup. See poster on the back.

**Art Sale.** The store is doing a 25% off sale on art, tentatively the two weeks of April 21 – May 1. The discount will apply to any framed art in the store, or any “oversized” framed art that we have featured on Facebook Marketplace. Some specially marked pieces will be 50% off! It’s time for some of them to go from our walls to yours!

**Regenerative Farming.** Journey to Sustainability (J2S) is planning a Regenerative Farming presentation for April 22 to celebrate Earth Day. Regenerative farming is a farming approach that concentrates on maintaining and improving soil health. Details of the evening to follow.

**Greener Homes.** A formal announcement regarding a new federal program is coming any day now. Homeowners will be eligible for rebate of up to \$5,000 from home energy efficiency improvements. It is expected that any heat source, heat pumps and some renewable energy upgrades will qualify, and the pre and post energy audits necessary to qualify will be subsidized as well. We will explain more next issue!

**Save the Date.** Our AGM is traditionally held the third Wednesday in June, so June 16. But, untraditionally, it will be by Zoom. Members will get an invitation, but anyone is welcome.



RIDEAU ENVIRONMENTAL  
ACTION LEAGUE

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

We're on the Web  
[www.REALaction.ca](http://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. – 5 p.m.

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

Find us on:  
Facebook, Twitter  
and Instagram

Send contributions to the July  
issue by June 15 to  
[dhicks11@cogeco.ca](mailto:dhicks11@cogeco.ca)  
or call Barb at (613) 283-9966

**REAL people taking REAL action to protect our environment**



Proceeds to REAL's  
Monarch Garden

## Rain Barrel Sale

### Sat. May 29, 10—3

at the **REAL Deal Store**  
85 William St. W., Smiths Falls

Preorder online by May 21 to ensure  
your order will be at the store ready to  
pick up

Save water with these  
recycled food-grade rain  
barrels

Basic barrels are \$55.  
Other colours, styles and  
parts available.

Payment Options are:  
prepay by Visa, MC or  
interact online, or cash the  
day of pickup.



Questions about the sale?

Call Barb (613) 283-9966.

Questions about the products?

Contact [rainbarrel.ca](http://rainbarrel.ca).



**RIDEAU  
ENVIRONMENTAL  
ACTION LEAGUE**

### 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 .....