

REAL *update*

REAL people taking REAL action to protect our environment

Rideau Environmental Action League (REAL)

FEBRUARY 2024

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Heat Pumps Explored at Latest J2S Session

by Bill MacLean

Is your SEER high enough? How about the HSPF of your system? What COP isn't about law enforcement? It is all about efficiency of home heating and cooling systems.

On Tuesday, December 5th, Cindy Dopson, of Thake Home Comfort Centre, gave an overview on various heat pump systems during a Zoom presentation for the J2S committee of REAL.

Cindy is a lifelong resident of the Westport area. She and her husband, Chris, took over the family business in 1995 and expanded into the heating and cooling industry, concentrating on promoting the newest technology for heating and cooling.

Cindy's presentation gave an overview of air to air heat pumps working with forced air systems, ductless heat pumps and zone heating and cooling, geothermal systems: the difference between vertical and horizontal, and air to water heat pumps which involve water pumped through the house through radiators that both heat and cool.

Cindy also looked at expectations for and some of the complications of these systems. Some questions to ask: What costs are reduced, what new costs may occur? What needs to be maintained? What questions should be asked?

Contractors, warranties, and maintenance all need to be considered. There is a lot to think about and Cindy provided an excellent overview. As one attendee commented, "A very honest presentation."

Find out more! Find the recorded session on the Journey to Sustainability Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/379499592936481>. It is an excellent and succinct primer for starting your exploration of heat pump possibilities and options. Cindy can be contacted at thakehomecomfort.com



Home Energy Incentive Program Winding Down

The HER+ program is winding down four and a half years ahead of schedule. The Canada Greener Homes Grant was supposed to be available to homeowners across Canada for seven years when launched just two and a half years ago. The program provided incentives to Canadians to make energy efficiency improvements to their homes, and was a collaboration of NRCan Greener Homes and Enbridge Energy. Apparently the program has been successful beyond expectations and has run through its budget.



The program required a home energy assessment (a D audit) and a followup assessment (an E audit) done by a Registered Energy Assessor. Many Green Communities and businesses were involved in providing this service. Alan Leonard, and more recently John Appleby, were doing audits on REAL's behalf. The last date for D file visits that will qualify for HER+ and Greener Homes incentive is February 29th. A final date for E visits has not been announced but it is expected there will be ample time to arrange any necessary renovations. Alan Leonard is already booked through February. John Appleby is busy completing E audits for his clients.

Following Feb. 29th, you may still book a home energy assessment to further your knowledge of your own home energy situation, but the audit cost will not be subsidized, nor will your renovations. Heat pumps have been the most popular renovation undertaken with the program.

The announcement is a very alarming on many levels. There was word that this would be happening, but it was hoped that a replacement program would be developed to maintain momentum. Enbridge is working on a program but it will likely only apply to Enbridge gas customers, not to Canadians who heat by other means.

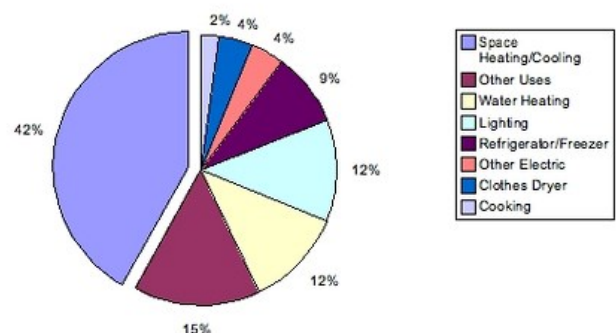
Says Green Communities Canada: "we believe that successful climate-resilience programs that demonstrate clear greenhouse gas reductions should be improved and expanded, not closed. Greener Homes retrofits in 2022 were reducing GHG emissions by 26%." Considerable resources have been put into training the next generation of home energy assessors in anticipation of a seven year program.

GCC has created a [comment letter for homeowners](#) to send. It is directed to Hon. Jonathan Wilkinson, Minister of Energy and Natural Resources Canada, Hon. Steven Guilbeault, Minister of Environment and Climate Change, and Hon. Chrystia Freeland, Minister of Finance, and will go to your MP if you provide your address and postal code. Some links to other accounts of the announcement are included.

For more on the announcement see this CBC reference: <https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/greener-homes-grants-energy-efficiency-1.702940>

Where Does the Energy Go in a Typical Home?

Energy Information Administration, Annual Energy Outlook



REAL Deal News

2024 was off to a good start, with donations to help fill up those shelves that were full of seasonal items. We were also very pleased that there were minimal materials left on the property during our holiday shutdown Dec. 24 – Jan. 2.

The Christmas merchandise moved well this year, and we didn't have to pack too much away for next year! We do accept donations of Christmas materials year round and have become a popular destination for second hand Christmas items in the area.

REAL Deal staff, volunteers and board members enjoyed a Christmas dinner together Fri. Dec. 8 at the Smiths Falls Community Health Centre. A big thank you to the health centre for allowing us to use their space. This was the first time we have done this since the 2019.

If you have been thinking of doing some downsizing and decluttering, please consider donating those items to the REAL Deal store. Virtually all of our donations come from households like yours. The winter is usually a slow time for donations, so we are very appreciative of donations this time of year.

REAL accepts a wide variety of household and renovation materials ([see website for details](#)). Items should be clean and in working, sellable condition, with all their parts, and will be subject to assessment by our staff. Sorry, we can't accept items that we cannot sell, as we will have to pay for their disposal.

As space is limited, there may be times when we have to refuse an otherwise acceptable large item donation. So it is best to call ahead if you want to donate something large, and provide a photo if possible. We also appreciate advance warning of large loads so we can make sure we have sufficient help, can make room for it and make sure it comes well before closing time!

The REAL Deal gratefully accepts material donations. Here are a few suggestions for making sure your donation makes it into someone else's hands instead of being underpriced, put in the free, or (oh no!) ending up in the garbage:

Tips for Preparing Donations

Pack items that belong together in the same box. Sometimes the boxes get separated in processing and may get unpacked at different times.

- Try to **include all the necessary parts**. Incomplete items are much harder to sell.
- **Instruction booklets** are helpful, but not essential i.e. don't worry if you don't have it.
- If the item has **multiple parts**, enclose them all in a bag or box. If it is just small attachments to a large item, try attaching a bag of small items to the large item with tape or string.
- If **one donation spans several boxes**, label them, e.g. 1 of 2, 2 of 3 etc.. E.g. a set of dishes.
- Please make a reasonable attempt to **ensure delicate items are not damaged**. Boxes are preferred. Garbage bags or tote bags are not ideal for breakables!



- If it is a **truly unusual item**, an identifying note would be helpful and increase the likelihood it gets sold.
- **Tape or elasticize** puzzle or game boxes so pieces won't get lost.
- If **you need your box or bin back**, just ask.
- If you are donating **light bulbs, batteries or pens**, it would be nice if you indicate if they are usable or are for recycling. Otherwise we will have to test them all again.
- You can also put pens and batteries directly in the labelled blue bins just inside the customer doors.

REAL to Create a Mini Forest in 2024

By Dave Thornley

Corbett Park in Smiths Falls will be a hub of activity in 2024 with the planting of 300 trees and the creation of a mini forest in Smiths Falls. The mini-forest will also be a great project to mark REAL's 35th anniversary (like the butterfly garden was for our 30th anniversary!)



The little forest will be planted at the north end of Corbett Park

A mini forest — also known as a micro forest or tiny forest — is a community of native trees and shrubs planted tightly together in an urban or sub-urban site based on the Miyawaki method. The method emphasizes the use of dense plantings, diverse locally-native species collections, soil preparation, and multilayered design to mimic the complexity of a native forest. This dense planting technique results in taller plants in a shorter time period.

Mini forests provide a variety of ecosystem services that offer both environmental and social benefits. From reducing air pollution to increasing biodiversity, and providing necessary habitat for wildlife, these small plots can have a big impact on their local environments. They provide much-needed green spaces for people to enjoy, offering mental health benefits and improving air quality. Mini forests also help reduce runoff, prevent flooding and mitigate the urban heat island effect.

The town is providing the land, and REAL the manpower to build our first mini forest. We will be planting 300 trees in a 100 sq meter site at the north end of Corbett Park.

The site will be initially covered with mulch in the spring of 2024, and then the planting of the trees in will happen in the fall.

REAL wants to make this project a Community event. The more help, the merrier, as we plant those 300 trees.

Stay tuned for further information on dates and how you can help!

Here's an interesting CBC article on Mini Forests: <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/prince-edward-island/pei-charlottetown-mini-forest-method-1.6991637>



Volunteers planting one of the many little forests that have been established in Kingston. The colour coded flags are used to guide the dense planting of approximately 40 different species. REAL will be making use of the experience of the Little Forests Kingston group for Smiths Falls' first little forest.

Green Valentine's Day

You don't have to give up on all your environmental principles just because it's Valentine's Day. Sometimes the traditional route isn't the best for eco-friendliness.

Chocolate, Candy and Sweets. The Rainforest Alliance certifies chocolate that is better for the environment, and that ensures cocoa farmers have good living and working conditions. Or buy locally produced. Rideau Candy Shoppe and Perth Chocolate Works in Perth, Hummingbird Chocolate in Almonte, Sweet Scoops in Smiths Falls or any bakery are possibilities. How about some local honey or maple syrup?

Wine. Buy local and support the Ontario economy by choosing one of the many excellent Ontario wines.

Flowers. Unfortunately, cut flowers are often doused with pesticides, are shipped for thousands of miles and involve plastic. [Read more.](#) Ask if your florist has a more eco-friendly option or look for organic florists online. Consider a plant grown in Ontario that will last longer, some heirloom seeds, or a gift certificate to a local garden centre if your sweetie loves flowers.

Gifts. It's tough to hit all the boxes, but look for plastic and hazardous material free, ethically produced, recycled, upcycled and recyclable. Or just or look for a gift that is more sustainable.

Skip Material Gifts. Instead of a thing, give a gift of an experience (tickets to a play, lessons) or a coupon for an outing (hike in the woods, day at the beach) or service (babysitting, cooking a fancy meal). Try making something yourself, like a homemade birdfeeder, a treat, or a poem.



Ecards. Go with an e-card and skip the paper! Several charities offer Valentine's e-cards for a small donation. The World Wildlife Fund, Friends of the Earth Canada, CPAWS (Canadian Parks and

Online Auction Sponsors 2023

Platinum

Smiths Falls Optometrists

Gold

Peter and Daisy Au
Greg and Judy Fournier

Silver

David and Katie Hoffman
Jack and Karen Schecter

Bronze

Anonymous

*Thanks to the above for
contributing \$850 to our
fundraising total*

Wilderness Society), and Sick Kids Foundation are some.

Make a Donation in their Honour. Whether it be an environmental cause or something else important to them, this is a nice way to show you care about their beliefs.

Be Kind. Why limit your affections to one person? Share that Valentine's day love with the world and commit a random act of kindness, like picking up the tab for a stranger's coffee, writing a positive online review, leaving a big tip. [More ideas here.](#)

The above was adapted from a story in our February 2016 newsletter. Yes, we recycle!

Dealing with Ice at Home

Tonnes of salt are used on roadways to every year as a deicer. It is inexpensive, widely available and effective. But we are becoming increasingly aware of the negative impact on fresh water, drinking water, wildlife, plants and soil. Not only is salt entering our waterways, but it is accumulating there, and there is no way of removing it.

Many jurisdictions are experimenting with strategic application methods that require less salt and other substances that have less impact. ([See Feb. 2012 story.](#)) As a homeowner or small business owner, you have a choice, too! If you must use salt, use it sparingly.

Here are some additional ways for dealing with ice:

- Shovel early and shovel often before snow accumulates and it hardens into ice
- Remove any snow before using a treatment
- Plan ahead and have the material on hand as sometimes stores sell out
- Apply material early and only where necessary
- Follow directions but only use as much as you need.
- Do not use within a couple meters of sensitive plants
- Sweep up extra material to use later.
- Note that salt is ineffective below -10 degrees C,
- You may just need traction, not a deicer: sand, sawdust, non-clumping kitty litter and Ecolce Grip are possibilities.

Ecolce Grip is for sale at the REAL Deal, 9.99 (plus tax) for a 20 L bag. This environmentally friendly traction aid looks like wood chips, and is light and easy to handle. It is safe on pet paws and non-corrosive to metal and concrete, too!



Second Hand Shopping in the Falls

We love having people come to the REAL Deal from outside the immediate area. For those of you making the trek, here are few of the other interesting second-hand stores in Smiths Falls to make your trip even more worthwhile!

Arlie's Books, 14 Beckwith St. S. Sells new and used books.

Bernie's Nearly New Shoppe, 381 Hwy 15. Look for the big orange domed building just south of town.

Jewels, 18 William St. E. Features second hand clothing, proceeds to Big Brothers Big Sisters.



The New Old Town, 41 Centre St. Smiths Falls. Very nicely laid out, in the old Canadian Tire Store (if you are old enough to remember.)

Port Elmsley Emporium, 5033 Highway 43 at Port Elmsley, about halfway between Smiths Falls and Perth.

Salvation Army Thrift Store, 203 Brockville St., in the mini mall at Broadview and Brockville Streets.

Settlement House, 240 Lombard St. Lots of interesting stuff!

The Score, 49 Chambers St, at the east end of the Chambers St. Mall.

Thrift on Beckwith aka Thriftys, 55 Beckwith St, at Russell, right downtown.

Most of these stores have Facebook pages rather than websites. Apologies to any establishments we've missed here. Contact us and we'll mention you another time!

In REAL Life

Journey to Sustainability. The J2S team is planning a number of zoom presentations over the winter and spring. One will be a March presentation by former Board Member Jason Takerer on the building envelope. Many of the past presentations are available on the [J2S Facebook page](#). Check [the webpage](#) or contact Peter Au for assistance. You can also get on the J2S mailing list to receive notifications of coming presentations.

Christmas Workshop. Our thanks to Carol Richardson of Heritage Arts at Artisan Village on Maple Street for donating proceeds from her December workshop to the REAL Deal store. Participants made a holiday decoration from an upcycled cup and greens.

Pill Bottles. Thanks for bringing us your used prescription pill bottles; they go in the upper right blue bin just inside the customer doors. Please note we only take clear bottles. They should be empty, clean, unmarked, with labels removed, and lids included. These bottles are going to be used in developing nations for pill distribution, so they must be absolutely clean. If they include writing, or sticky residue, are cracked etc. please do not bring them to us!

Lightbulbs. Please note that the REAL Deal store does not accept CFL or fluorescent bulbs. Dead incandescent bulbs are not hazardous and can just go in the garbage. CFLs and fluorescent bulbs should be saved for your municipality's Household Hazardous Waste Depot.

Book Donations. We appreciate your donations of books, but remember they must be sellable! So if they are very old, dirty or water damaged, have ripped covers etc., time for them to be recycled! Your municipal recycling program accepts books; double check to see if they require that hard covers be removed. Remove any metal or plastic spiral bindings, too. The REAL Deal is unable to sell encyclopedia sets or textbooks, and will probably not be able to sell an entire collection on one topic. A whole collection of past issues of a magazine are not likely to sell either. Don't bring them to us unless you are happy with them landing on the free table. Soft cover fiction sells best. Kids books are free. (Five per person per visit please unless you have a good story!)

Membership Renewal. If you are not already a member of REAL, this is a good time to join. In February we ask our members to renew their commitment to our organization, and we are always happy to add people to our list! Individual memberships are just \$15, family memberships \$20 and student memberships \$5. Members receive our newsletter five times a year, notices of environmental events or volunteer opportunities, and have the right to vote at our Annual General Meeting. Our annual report is made available at this time as well, and provides a snapshot of what we have been up to over the year. We sincerely appreciate everyone's support of environmental action in our community. Together we can do even more! Members and those on our Mail-Chimp list will receive renewal information and an annual report by the end of February. But if you want to get started now, [click here](#).

RIDEAU ENVIRONMENTAL
ACTION LEAGUE

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

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. to 5 p.m.

**Ask about our
new Tool Library**

For Home Energy Audits,
contact Alan Leonard at:
alanleonard9@gmail.com

**Find us on
Facebook and
Instagram**

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

Recyclable Materials Accepted at the REAL Deal

In addition to good quality used materials we can resell in our store, we accept these items for reusing, recycling, and earning a bit of cash.



Electronic Waste:

Computer equipment,
TVs, stereos, cell phones
and associated parts.



**Used Household
Batteries.**



**Print and Toner
Cartridges**



**Scrap
Metal and
Wire**



**Pens, Crayons,
and Glue Sticks**



**Outer Milk
Bags**



Pill Bottles:
clear, clean and
empty.

**Note: Scavenging in our
scrap metal, ewaste or
garbage bins is not
permitted.**

**Materials accepted during store
hours only: Wed-Sat 10-5
No unauthorized dropoffs!
Call if needed: (613) 283-7999**

**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