

# REAL update

*REAL people taking REAL action to protect our environment*

Rideau Environmental Action League (REAL)

FEBRUARY 2026

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## Keep Your Books Out of Your Recycling Box

The new Ontario-wide recycling program does not accept soft cover or hard cover books. The issue is that the covers are not recyclable. So unless you are prepared to remove the covers for disposal, the books should not be put in with your paper/fibre recycling. This also means that the REAL Deal does not have access to book recycling either. So it is time to remind everyone what books the REAL Deal will be able to resell (or possibly “free”) so we will have a minimal amount to dispose of.

**Please do not bring us:**

- Encyclopedias or textbooks.
- Dictionaries. We rarely sell them.
- Books that are soiled, ripped, missing their covers, or water damaged.
- Large quantities of any non-fiction topic. One possible exception is cookbooks. People really like them and once a year we usually free some of them.



**We will accept:**

- Magazines. Bear in mind that if they are old or obscure, they might be put out on our Free Table. If you feel the need to rip off an address label, don't bring them to us, we will not be selling them. A marker or Sharpie might obscure the address sufficiently if you are concerned.
- Non-fiction books in small quantities.
- Fiction books, hard or soft cover. These are what sell the best.
- Children's books. We have a great selection of kids' and parenting books that we make available for free.

Thank you for respecting these guidelines.

Softcover books are .50 cents or 3 for \$1.00, hardcover books are \$1.00 or 3 for \$2.00. We have a special shelf away from the Book Nook of books that are priced a little more, often \$3.00—\$5.00. Books that don't sell are put out for free. We occasionally have sales of books by best-selling authors. Keep an eye on our Facebook page for dates.



## Reducing Your Toxic Burden

It is interesting to consider the many toxic substances out there that have “safe levels” established. If we are lucky they are banned, but if not at least we can try to avoid them. Good to know. But that is only one product and we are exposed to hundreds if not thousands of substances every day from what we eat and drink, use on our skin, breathe in our air, track into our houses and so on. Some of the risk factors have not even been identified. What if the accumulation of all those safe levels is really too much of a burden on our bodies?



Regular house dust is a chemical soup of levels of flame retardants, phthalates, pesticides and metals. Dust weekly to reduce exposure.

In a recent issue of the Living Green newsletter of the David Suzuki Foundation, they drew attention to an interesting resource on their website, [The ABCs of Avoiding Toxic Chemicals](#). It's worth a look if you are concerned and would like to know what you can do. Here are a just a few of the interesting things included.

**Regular Dusting.** According to the website “Household dust is now recognized as one of the most significant sources of childhood exposure to toxic substances. Studies show that [dust is a chemical soup](#) with low levels of flame retardants, phthalates, pesticides and metals like lead, mercury and arsenic. (Higher levels are often found in dryer lint and vacuum cleaner bags.)“ They recommend dusting

with a damp cloth weekly, more often if you have a crawling child, leaving your shoes at the door.

**Hair Dye.** Find out more about what is in your hair colouring. “Some hair dye products contain ammonia, petrochemicals, sulfates, phthalates and [P-phenylenediamine](#), which can cause cancer and may be contaminated with brain-toxic heavy metals.” Choose a safer product or don’t use it.

**Teflon and other Non-stick Chemicals.** “Non-stick coatings contain toxic chemicals like PFOA and PTFE. When some non-stick coatings get scratched or damaged, they can release toxic fumes.” These chemicals are part of a PFAS class. Some have been banned because of their environmental and health risk, there are others within this class that have not been banned



Certain non-stick coatings have been banned in Canada but not all of them.

yet. PFAs accumulate and do not break down in the environment. One study showed that 95% of people have PFOA in their blood, including newborns. Stainless steel, carbon steel and cast iron are popular stove top alternatives.

**Mattresses and Pillows.** You spend a lot of hours in bed, so find out more about off-gassing volatile organic compounds, fire retardants, antibacterial protection and stain-resistant chemicals and finishes. There are some eco-friendly options. If you are buying a new mattress, ask if the store will take your old one back for recycling or to donate.

### Tool Library is a Bargain!

Our Tool Library is looking better than ever thanks to the efforts of Phil the Tool Guy. We have recently updated the online catalogue so you can see exactly what we have to offer. Added to the list this time were 6 T and 12 T bottle jacks, an electric stapler, a hammer drill (for concrete) and another belt sander and paint sprayer. We are surprised that more people haven't been making use of our drill press, band saw and quarter inch planer!

Why not take out a Tool Library membership so you can borrow tools instead of buying them? Just \$25 gets you a 6 month membership and \$45 gets you a full year membership. You can borrow anything from the library for one week at a time. Extensions are permitted if no one else has reserved the tool. And yes, you can borrow more than one tool at once. Tools must be borrowed and returned during REAL Deal Store hours, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Wednesday through Saturday. Phil is usually on site until 1 p.m., if you need tool advice, otherwise another REAL Deal staff member or volunteer can help you.

**New Volunteers Wanted.** Unfortunately, Phil is going to be leaving REAL at the end of February. We would really like to recruit another volunteer or two to look after the library. It would be helpful if you are familiar with the common tools people need for

their DIY projects. You would be looking after our paper records of who has borrowed what when (so no computer skills required), helping people find what they need, and making sure the tools are put back where they belong so they can be found by the next user. We frequently have tools donated and we like to check its suitability for the library before selling it in the store. If you are handy and like to putter, we can also find you little jobs to keep you busy in between. This would be a great job for a handyman who has moved into smaller quarters like a condo or apartment but still likes to keep busy doing fixit tasks. Please email or phone Barb at [dhicks11@cogeco.ca](mailto:dhicks11@cogeco.ca) or (613) 283-9966, or drop by the store and have the Store Manager, Dan, show you around.



Phil with a supersize wrench from our Tool Library. We have regular size ones

### Renewing Your Commitment with Your Membership

We appreciate the support of everyone who plays a role in REAL: people who volunteer, our staff, donors and customers of the store, participants in our programs, and people who connect with us through our email list and social media. But we could not function without our REAL membership, who contribute every year to ensure we have the funds to continue our many environmental projects. In February we ask our members to renew their commitment to our organization. Individual membership are just \$15, family memberships \$20 and student memberships \$5. Many members also choose to make a tax deductible donation at this time. Members receive our newsletter five times a year, notices of environmental events or volunteer opportunities, and can vote at our Annual General Meeting. We produce an annual report at this time of year, to provides a snap shot of what we have done the past year. Members and those on our MailChimp list will receive renewal information and an annual report by the end of February. New members are always welcome, and can join any time of year. Click on the Join tab on our website to find out how. And thanks for helping to keep your local environmental organization humming!



## Ontario Recycling Guidelines

By now everyone should be getting used to the new recycling guidelines. It is great to have so many more materials being included, and that all residents in Ontario will be able to recycle the same things. It will make educating everyone so much simpler than having to navigating the rules of individual municipalities.

Most municipalities have been educating their residents on the two stream system: paper and containers, and advising that the responsibility for collection now lies with Circular Materials and the company contracted locally. On the next page are a few finer points you may be wondering about still.

 **Below are some of the accepted materials for curbside recycling:**

**Paper and fibre**



**Paper**



**Cardboard and boxboard**



**Paper laminate packaging**

**Containers**



**Metal**



**Cartons and cups**



**Flexible plastics**



**Glass containers**

**Plastic containers**



**Foam packaging**

**Not accepted**



**Organics**



**Toys**



**Diapers**



**Ceramics**



**Books**



**Pots and pans**

## **Recycling—Finer Points**

**Lids.** In many cases, you can leave the lid on the container. This includes plastic containers, or aerosol containers (spray cooking oil, air fresheners, or deodorant for example). Paper laminate containers (eg. ice cream or spiral wound frozen juice or coffee containers) should have their lids removed. If it is glass, you should remove the lid also.

**Foam Trays.** Remove any absorbent pads (as for meat or berries) and plastic wrap.

**Disposable Paper Coffee Cups.** These are now recyclable, even though they have a thin plastic inner coating. Separate the cup and the lid, and place the cup and lid in with your containers. In Smiths Falls, this would be your yellow box. Do not put the cups in with your paper. While it is very tempting to save space, do not stack the cups!

**Paper Bags or Gift Bags.** These can go in the with your paper, but remove rope or fabric handles.

**Scrap Metal.** Food and drink containers are OK, but do not include other scrap metal like hangers, pots, or thermoses. The REAL Deal accepts scrap metal that is small enough to be tossed in the bin.

**Aerosol Cans.** These are OK if they are for food or personal care products, but not if they contained toxic, corrosive or flammable products (look for the symbols). For example, no spray paint cans.

**Shredded Paper.** Put it in a tied, clear plastic bag.

**Paper with Plastic.** Separate the plastic from the paper, e.g. take the plastic sleeve off a magazine. The magazine goes with the paper, the plastic to the container box or bag.

**Cardboard.** Maximum size is 60 cm x 60 cm (about 2 feet x 2 feet). Always take the time to flatten it.

**Plastic Plant Pots.** Can go with the containers.

**Alcoholic Beverage Containers.** They seem like a natural fit but don't include them. Take them back for deposit.



**Unacceptable Materials.** They are still lots of things you still should not be putting in recycling. People often comment that it gets picked up anyways. The collection workers do not have time to check every item in your bag or box. The offending items will not get recycled, can contaminate a load, and make the whole system inefficient it has to be picked out during sorting. So do not include:

- Anything dirty – rinse it first
- Paper towels and tissues
- Diapers
- Organics (compost or put in garbage)
- Books - hard or soft cover
- Light bulbs, mirrors, ceramics
- Miscellaneous plastic e.g. toys, CD cases, etc.
- No elastic bands, rope, wires or cords – they can tangle sorting equipment

The new recycling system does not service commercial establishments such as the REAL Deal Store. We will have to make our own arrangements. So please do not bring any of this stuff to us!

For more details, see the [Circular Materials website](#). The Municipality of [North Grenville's page](#) has good detail as well.

## REAL Deal News

**Happy New Year!** The Christmas stuff has finally all been put away. We started putting the Christmas donations out in early October. By a November 24 we had put it all out, but of course by then the Christmas donations were coming in the back door. We appreciate the donations whenever they come! That also keeps the selection fresh, so that people coming in more frequently see something new when they come. Materials went on sale at 50% off at the start of December. Over our Christmas break we packed it up for Christmas 2026, and the rest was put out for free. In the end very little had to be discarded. We continue to receive a lot of Christmas décor even now.

**Christmas Celebration.** We had a great turnout out for our staff and volunteer Christmas party at the Community Health Centre on December 11. Everyone enjoyed a turkey dinner, games, and some Christmas treats. Everyone received a \$25 REAL Deal gift certificate, too.

**The Uncluttered Look.** The store does look a little more bare after Christmas, but we had some things set aside to fill in the gaps. Brenda worked her magic creating floral arrangements from donated random containers and artificial flowers. A few online auction items were either not bid on or not picked up by January 31 and were put out for sale.

**Shelving.** Donna found a great deal on some shelving from a health food store in Gatineau that was closing down. Dan, Phil, Wolf and Marshall used a rented U-Haul January 28 to pick it up. We ended up with sixteen 4 ' x 6 ' units with adjustable shelves. The store was rather chaotic looking for a few days while we rearranged, but the new-to-us shelving looks good and holds lots of stuff. We managed to repurpose some of the old shelving elsewhere in the

store and dome, sold some smaller pieces, and freed some others. So far only one unit has been discarded.

**Lease for the Building.** REAL will soon be signing a new five year lease with the Town of Smiths Falls for the use of the REAL Deal building. This is good news for us as it gives us a chance to plan more effectively. The Town lets us use the building rent free, and REAL pays the utilities. This has been the arrangement since 2008 when we opened at the 85 William St. location.



*Sixteen new 4 foot wide shelves were installed and loaded up while the store was open. We took the opportunity to use some of our older, better shelves in other departments: vintage, the Book Nook and appliances in particular.*

**Yard and Dome.** Depending on the day you come you may see Arnold, Marshall, Wolf or Joel in the yard. Joel rejoined the team in November. The orange and yellow vests make them easy to spot! This is not the greatest time of the year to be out in the yard, as it is cold, even a little dark late in the afternoon, and involves quite a bit of shoveling. We thank them for toughing it out! Ronnie has been getting his high school community service hours with us on Saturdays and has been a big help. With the help of Phil the Tool Guy, the trailer and tent are now better organized, and the dome is getting straightened up as well.

**Phone, Internet and Moneris.** These have not been functioning for two weeks. Our apologies while we try to get this sorted out. Thanks for bringing cash!

**Weather and Donations.** The weather has not been our friend this winter. Poor weather days - snow, ice or extreme cold - can have a big impact on our sales, especially if they fall on a Saturday. We did not open at all on Thursday, January 15<sup>th</sup> due to the heavy snowfall. Donations are always slow at this time of year. If you have been meaning to bring something over, now would be a good time!

**In REAL Life**

**Ecolce Grip.** Are you finding road salt hard to find? We still have a limited quantity of Ecolce grip, the eco-friendly wood chip traction aid, for sale. The company is no longer producing the product, and you probably won't be able to find it anywhere else. This is what we have left from last year's stock. The price is \$7.99 for a 20 L bag, plus tax. We also use it at the REAL Deal.



**Time Running out for Home Energy Audits.** Alan Leonard, our Registered Energy Assessor (REA), plans to retire at the end of April. If you have been thinking of having an assessment done to learn more about your home's energy needs act soon. And if you had a pre-renovation D audit done by Alan, and were planning to have a post-renovation E audit done by him, contact him at: [alandleonard9@gmail.com](mailto:alandleonard9@gmail.com).



**Pens, Pencils and Highlighters.** We get lots of these. We do test them, bundle them up and sell most of in our office supply section, but we also have a few containers on the corner of the cash counter so that customers can help themselves for free.



**Stamps.** Did you get some interesting stamps on your Christmas cards? There is a container on the cash counter for foreign, Canadian and commemorative stamps. They are passed on to Oxfam, who sell them to collectors. Through this they raise about \$30,00 a year to address poverty and injustice, especially for women and girls. Find out more at <https://www.oxfam.ca/take-action/support-oxfam/stamp-out-poverty>.



**Toxic Plastic Ruling Upheld.** On January 30, the Federal Court of Appeal upheld its decision to list plastics as toxic, enabling Ottawa to ban single-use plastic items. The plastics industry, including major industrial players such as Dow Chemical, Imperial Oil and Nova Chemicals, had challenged the federal government's regulations aimed at stopping plastic pollution. In 2021, the Liberal government listed all plastic manufactured items as toxic under the Canadian Environmental Protection Act. The listing was to enable the federal environment minister to proceed with regulations to ban single-use plastic items nationally, such as plastic checkout bags, cutlery, styrofoam containers, stir sticks and plastic straws. Read more in this [CBC story by David Thurton](#).



**Countertop Recycling.** REAL has two Foodcyclers available for local residents to borrow. The machine looks similar to a bread machine. There is a little bucket that you put your kitchen compostable scraps in. When it is full, you place it in the device, set it going, and within 4-8 hours you have finished compost. Depending on household size and cooking habits, you might need to run it every day, or maybe only every few days. The FoodCycler works by drying and grinding the food scraps to a much smaller volume. Read a story in our [July 2022 update](#), page 3. The units are at the REAL Deal. Best to call the store at (613) 283-7999 before you come.

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  
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

**Make a  
REAL  
Difference**

Please return this form to:

REAL  
Box 1061  
Smiths Falls, ON  
K7A 5A5

Or bring to  
The REAL Deal

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

**REAL DEAL Cheat Sheet**

**DONATIONS**

Take all donations to the  
back gate. Yard staff will  
ensure they are suitable.

**E-WASTE**

Electronic waste and  
small appliances go in the  
black bin. Just set them  
on the table or against the  
wall.

**OTHER  
RECYCLABLES**

There are blue bins just  
inside the door for: batteries,  
print cartridges, milk bags,  
used pens, crayons and  
gluesticks. Drop off stamps  
too!

**SCRAP METAL**

We take metal items  
easily tossed in the bin.  
No large appliances..

**WHERE TO LOOK**

Inside- for typical thrift store  
materials

Outside: hardware, doors,  
windows, sports, garden etc.  
Payments must be made  
inside.

Free Table - help yourself to  
the items there.

**GREEN PRODUCTS**

We also sell rain barrels, Ecolce  
and Biochar. These items are  
taxable.

**TOOL LIBRARY**

Purchasing a Tool Library  
membership entitles you to  
borrow tools from our  
collection for one week at a  
time.

**QUESTIONS?**

(613) 283-7999  
info@REALaction.ca  
www.REALaction.ca

Made with PosterMyWall.com

**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

<input type="checkbox"/> Individual membership	\$15
<input type="checkbox"/> Family membership	\$20
<input type="checkbox"/> Student membership	\$5
<input type="checkbox"/> 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 .....