

## History of the Frost Centre

In 1921, a Ranger Station was established on the west shore of St. Nora Lake by the Department of Lands and Forests.

In 1944 the Province of Ontario and the University of Toronto Faculty of Forestry entered into a partnership to educate government personnel and university students.

For many years the site was known as the Ranger School and later, the Ontario Forest Technical Training School. Many courses were taught to government personnel. Students from various faculties at the University came to the school each year on field trips.

In 1969, the school's curriculum of resource management was taken over by Ontario's colleges and universities. That was the first time the future of the property that would become the Frost Centre, was in doubt.

Leslie M. Frost, formerly Premier of the province and formerly our local MPP, was well acquainted with the area and was a member of the Algonquin Park Advisory Committee in 1971. He suggested that the province should use the school as a demonstration centre for resource management in Ontario.

In 1974, Ontario Premier William G. Davis announced that the facility would be developed as a demonstration area in resources management, education and recreation and would be called The Leslie M. Frost Natural Resources Centre,

The Centre became the first outdoor education Centre in the province dedicated to environmental and resource management education. It was also the first Centre to have a large crown land management unit, (24,000 hectares), associated with it for research in and demonstration of resource management, recreation and public education.

It was managed by the MNR until July 2004. In addition, to the public education mandate for youth and adult outdoor enthusiasts, the Frost Centre was the principal training facility for the Ministry of Natural Resources providing special and mandatory training to MNR and the Ontario Public Service, including the OPP and the Ministry of the Environment. There was accommodation for up to 200 people.

On July 6, 2004, MNR announced that the Frost Centre would be closed July 13, a week later.

Local and provincial politicians had meetings with the government to try to persuade it not to close the Centre. The local newspapers wrote editorials and articles and published Letters to the Editor, all decrying the decision to close the Centre.

On July 9, there was a public demonstration in front of Kawartha Dairy in Minden.

A citizens group formed to organize the opposition to the closure. It became known as PermaFrost, and became a project of the Haliburton County Community Co-operative. The public sent money to support the cause. The proceeds from a Folk Society Open Stage night were donated. Environment Haliburton offered its website to assist in communicating with concerned citizens around the province.

On July 13, the Centre closed. There was a candlelight vigil at the Centre that evening.

On July 19, a bus transported protesters to Queen's Park for a rally objecting to the closure of the Frost Centre. The cost of the bus was donated.

The Chamber of Commerce set up an on-line petition on their website.

MPP Laurie Scott created a petition and eventually presented it in the Legislature.

People from far and wide wrote letters opposing the closure. When the Ontario Realty Corporation took down the sign at the front of the property, there was a great hue and cry, and the sign was quickly put back.

PermaFrost created an Open Letter to the Premier.

The letter was released at a news conference at Queen's Park on August 10. It contained signatures of 61 organizations that represent more than one million members, including the Sierra Club of Canada and the World Wildlife Fund.

The Frost Centre had cost about ten cents per Ontarian, and one of those Ontarians started a Dimes for Dalton campaign, suggesting we all send in our dimes and a request to re-open the Centre.

A businessman in Muskoka donated radio airtime that he had bought to advertise his pool and spa business, to object to the closure.

By August 17, the Echo was reporting that the Chair of Management Board, Gerry Philips, had agreed to a Frost Centre Review.

By September 14, the Province had appointed a Working Committee... local politicians, educators and businessmen.

PermaFrost wasn't content to rest. Several members regularly attended the Working Committee meetings, which were public. Sometimes, they were asked to participate in the discussions. Meanwhile, some of the funds that had been donated were used to rent a billboard in downtown Toronto. "The future with, and without, the Frost."

The local actor and comedian, Brigitte Gaul, and her friend, the comedian, Ron James, performed at the Northern Lights Performing Arts Pavilion, and donated the proceeds to Perma-Frost.

In December, the Committee hired a consultant, Huntsville-based David Gibson, to help it come up with recommendations to give to the Province on the future of the Frost Centre.

In February of 2005, David Archibald and Friends held a fund-raising concert and launched his CD – “St. Nora’s Tower”.

In March, the Working Committee sought the public’s opinion in two meetings that were held in Dorset, and by means of an on-line survey.

Almost exactly a year after the Frost Centre had closed, in July of 2005, the Working Committee presented its recommendations to Gerry Phillips. The committee recommended that the facility be kept in public ownership, leased and operated as an environmental and outdoor learning centre.

PermaFrost expressed satisfaction that the Working Committee recommended NOT selling the property, and that its core function be continued.

The government digested the recommendations, and in January of this year, the Ontario Realty Corporation announced that it would not sell the property but would lease it for purposes of “environmental and outdoor education activities.

Soliciting tenders has been a two-fold process. The first stage was called “Expressions of Interest and Request for Qualifications” (RFQ). It was intended to identify suitable candidates who are willing to finance and operate the Frost Centre in manner consistent with its environmental mandate.

Applicants had just two weeks to submit their intentions and qualifications.

Of the groups that submitted information, two were asked to prepare business plans. The Friends of the Frost Centre and the Frost Centre Institute. Their deadline to submit those plans was yesterday, August 28. Representatives of those two groups are here this evening to tell the community what their vision is, and to answer questions you might have.

??

The concern expressed by this community and the citizens of Ontario over the past two years reflects a growing recognition of our dependence on a healthy natural environment.

Your attendance this evening reflects an ongoing concern with the role of the Frost Centre in educating the public....