

# Scouts protest camp closure

By Terri Saunders  
Standard-Freeholder  
APPLE HILL

**"If we lose this camp, we'll lose our identity."**

These words, uttered Friday by Dave Desmarais, the area commissioner for Stormont Glengarry Scouts Canada, were not his own. But they brought home the sentiment held by the hundreds of local scouts and leaders as they face the closure of the Camp Apple Hill Scout Reserve.

"I was talking to a man who was actually a leader here when this camp was built in 1961," said Desmarais. "He said those words, and they really are true."

On Friday afternoon, Desmarais gathered with a handful of leaders and scouts at the camp, located on 300 acres of wilderness just east of Apple Hill, near a new wooden chapel, built last week by a group of young people in the area as part of the World Changers program. Around the same time the rugged structure was being erected, officials with Scouts Canada were drafting a letter telling the group the property on which the camp is located will be put up for sale.

"Over the past decade, membership in Scouts Canada has dropped," said Desmarais, "and they now find themselves with more properties than the membership can support nationally."

The national organization has decided to dispose of 20 leased properties and 10 owned properties across Ontario, and although the local group was told a few months ago they would be spared, they found out last month they're on the list.



(Staff photo/author, 10/24/01/2001)

**TAKING A STAND** Members of the 2nd Alexandria Scouts Kyle MacCrimmon, left, 10, Nathan MacCrimmon, centre, 10, and Matthew Thomas, 17, took part in a demonstration at Camp Apple Hill Scout Reserve Friday. Scouts Canada has listed the camp as one of 30 properties in Ontario to be sold by the national organization.

"Disposal of this property will have a negative effect on the youth of our community," said Desmarais. "Scouting groups will be faced with a two-and-one-half to three-hour drive each way to go camping. The closest Scout camps (are) those located south of Perth or in the Quebec Laurentians."

A 15-day appeal process is now under way and leaders are compiling

information and letters of support to present to Scouts Canada officials in hopes of saving the facility.

"The community support is there," said Wade Bates, camp warden. "All the money to operate this camp over the years has been raised locally in the name of scouting."

Parents and leaders said losing the camp will have a drastic effect on the local scout membership.