

Charges follow illegal dumping

By Sarah Sobanski

Charges are pending against a woman following illegal dumping at the North Baptiste Landfill. Bylaw enforcement officer Mike Priestley said his department is done giving out warnings.

"I was giving warnings and it doesn't seem to be getting any better, so no, there's no more warnings that are going to be given out," said Priestley. "If people are caught doing it, then I will have them charged through the provincial court."

The woman could be fined up to \$5,000 depending on what the authorities decide, he said. Bancroft OPP said she wasn't from Hastings Highlands. The pending charges have been handed to the local authorities to move forward with.

Illegal dumping has been an escalating problem in Hastings Highlands, particularly at North Baptiste. In July, *Bancroft This Week* reported that over the month of June there had been 150 instances of illegal dumping – more than half in North Baptiste. There were 232 instances at the landfill the following month. On Sept. 4, another 63 bags were found.

"There's periodically some [instances] here and there [across the municipality], but North Baptiste is by far the worst," said Priestley. "[It's] leaving it outside the gates or even bringing it in. People think that they're doing something right by dropping it off at the gate, but it's not because the wildlife – the bears, the raccoons – they get into it and then the waste site attendants have to pick it up."

Priestley said having waste site attendants unnecessarily pick up trash is dangerous.

"There's been several needles in the trash. It becomes a health and safety issue for other employees that have to clean this up."

The North Baptiste Landfill is open from noon to 5 p.m. on Thursdays and Saturdays. On Sundays, it's open from 2 p.m. to 7 p.m.

Priestley encouraged people to take their garbage to another landfill if North Baptiste is closed, otherwise they'll be dumping illegally.

"We have nine waste site facilities in Hastings Highlands. Prior to the long weekend, we were averaging about 115 hours a week that our waste site facilities all were open, all combined. Typically, there's always something open for them to go to," he said.

"Anybody that pays taxes, lives in Hastings Highlands, is allowed go to any of the waste facilities in Hastings Highlands."

Dump hours can be found at www.hastingshighlands.ca/waste_management.php. Current hours are scheduled to change to winter hours Oct. 11.