

## Melancthon mayor 'shocked?' by raid at local scrapyard



Written By Joshua Drakes

### LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

Changes are being proposed following the discovery that a local scrapyard was in possession of illegal items and in violation of various community bylaws.

On Wednesday, Nov. 19, the Ontario Provincial Police executed a search warrant at Northern Iron and Metal in Melancthon. What they found was a plethora of illegal items.

Melancthon Mayor Darren White said the town has had prior issues with the scrapyard, but this is the first time that arrests have ever been made.

'We have been having ongoing issues around compliance and property standards with this salvage yard,' White said. 'Most of it has to do with the amount of material stored, the heights they are being stored at, and the cleanliness of the premises. There's been a number of ongoing problems. But to my knowledge, this is the first time that the police have made arrests and laid charges for criminal behaviour on the site.'

The bylaw violations turned out to be the least of the scrapyard's problems, as the OPP recovered stolen vehicles, trailers, power tools and raw materials, including stolen bell copper wire.

Even more seriously, among the seized items were 11 long guns, six pistols, three replica firearms with removed serial numbers, prohibited magazines and large amounts of ammunition. The OPP also seized methamphetamine and cocaine.

Six people, five residing in Melancthon and one in Dundalk, now face a variety of charges related to the seizure of these items.

Mayor White said he was stunned by what the warrant found.

"Absolutely, we were shocked, we're always surprised by any type of criminal activity in any of the businesses that operate in the township," he said. "We expect that businesses within the township will operate within the rules of the law, and we're grateful for the OPP's response."

"It's extremely concerning that these types of things were found in that scrapyard. The neighbours certainly aren't happy about it. I'm not happy about it, neither is the council. We expect better for our residents and we expect better from businesses that operate here," Mayor White added.

He said he was less surprised by the copper found on the premises. He acknowledged that copper theft is an increasingly problematic issue and hopes more focus will be placed on breaking up theft operations in the future. With copper prices getting higher, criminal elements, he said, are taking advantage. This copper is often resold, sometimes to scrapyards like the one raided in Melancthon.

As a result of these issues, Northern Iron and Metal has had its license to operate revoked, the mayor said, effective immediately.

He followed up by saying the town will be looking into changing and strengthening their bylaws to more strictly monitor and uphold standards in salvage and scrap yards going forward.

"While we haven't directly communicated with the OPP, as their side of the situation is remaining internal, we might be making some changes to our bylaws going forward," Mayor White said. "We may look into adding some restrictive clauses to specific items that are known to be stolen at higher rates, such as copper, brass, those kinds of things."

"I'm also going to ask the council to include a registry for scrapyards, something to keep track of people who are selling large quantities of things that might be products of crime, so again, copper, brass, pipes, catalytic converters. We're going to demand that they start keeping a record, including the ID of sellers. If we have to take those steps to make it easier for the police to find and arrest thieves, then we'll do that absolutely."

The executed warrant has sent a shock through the township and is likely to trigger a series of reforms to help prevent an event like this from happening again, keeping the community safe.