

# Three Mile Lake water unsafe

by Jake Good

Algae found in Three Mile Lake has been determined to be so harmful that even boiling the water for drinking does not make it safe.

In fact, residents and cottagers are being told not to boil or use chlorination or ultraviolet light systems, as this will only release harmful toxins.

The Ministry of Environment confirmed that a blue-green algae bloom was discovered in the lake. Although many forms of algae are harmless, this one is confirmed to be toxin producing and can be harmful to people's health if swallowed.

The Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit is warning people not to swim in the lake or shower with water drawn from the lake. Pets should not drink or swim in the water and people should not use herbicides that can break open the algae cells, releasing the toxins, the health unit advises.

Bernie Mayer, manager of safe water programs at the health unit, said toxins are released when the cell wall of the algae is destroyed.

"If the toxins are swallowed symptoms can include headaches, fever, diarrhea, abdominal pain, nausea and vomiting," he said. "The effects can become more serious if water is swallowed in large quantities."

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## Algae bloom contaminates lake

(Continued from front)

Health unit workers have been busy posting notices on Three Mile Lake cottages and delivering them to local residents, warning about the blue-green algae bloom. The effort seems to be working, as there are no reports of anyone getting sick from the bloom. The algae thrives in warm, shallow and slow-moving water. It can also be present under the surface in cooler water.

Township of Muskoka Lakes mayor Susan Pryke said she hopes the message

gets out to those who may be travelling to the cottage for Thanksgiving weekend.

"This is the first time we have had something like this in Muskoka," she said. "It is very serious stuff and people need to be prepared. It is one thing to bring in water to drink, but people have to make sure they are prepared to cook and bathe without using water drawn from the lake.

"We want to make sure that people still come up and enjoy the break, but people need to make sure they are prepared and safe," she said.

The algae bloom is very noticeable in the water, especially the west end of the lake near Dee Bank. It resembles pea soup. When it first blooms, it smells like fresh-cut grass and later takes on an odour of garbage. Once the bloom is no longer visible, it takes another three weeks before the water is safe again.

"It looks and smells terrible," said Pryke. "It is just lucky that it has come at the end of the cottage season when there is less swimming in the lake."