

MEMORANDUM

NOTE DE SERVICE

TO
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Dr. L. M. Black
Director General,
Program Management
Medical Services Branch

FROM
DE

Regional Director
Northwest Territories Region

SUBJECT
OBJET

PHASE II - ARSENIC STUDIES, YELLOWKNIFE NWT

SECURITY - CLASSIFICATION - DE SÉCURITÉ

VIA TELECOPIER

OUR FILE - N/RÉFÉRENCE

151-1-5-N (N1)

YOUR FILE - V/RÉFÉRENCE

DATE

September 12 1975

Please find enclosed:

1. Report by Dr. Schaefer on Phase II of Arsenic Study
2. Summary of Dr. Schaefer's report
3. A letter dated September 10th addressed to me by Dr. Eaton giving suggestions for the alerting of D.I.N.A. to its responsibility.

I believe we should at this time make it clear not only to the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs that it has a responsibility, but also to the public, that this responsibility does not rest with the Department of National Health and Welfare. There are political implications in this and I am anxious to protect our Minister from further opprobrium from the news media.

If convenient to you Dr. Eaton is available to attend at Branch Headquarters on September 17th. Mr. D. Carlson will be in Ottawa on that date to work out the wording of a news release. You will remember that a followup release was promised at the time of the first news release and it would seem advisable to carry out this promise on schedule and without the necessity of prodding by the media.

F. J. Covill

F. J. Covill, M.B., B.S., M.F.C.M., D.P.H.
Regional Director

Att

CONFIRMATION COPY OF TELECOPIER MESSAGE SENT THIS DATE

14/5/9

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Regional Director

file

ARSENIC INVESTIGATIONS YELLOWKNIFE

SUMMARY

60 persons underwent detailed clinical and laboratory examinations during the month of June 1975 in Yellowknife. 50 of these 60 had been identified in the Phase I hair screening of 700 + residents as having a hair arsenic level of greater than 10 p.p.m.

Six were individuals associated with the Giant mine operation who had reason to believe they had an excessive As exposure. Four were children identified by an independent N. I. B. survey, two with raised hair As. and two with raised hair Hg. (this later group is not considered further here).

RESULTS

1. There is no evidence for and much evidence against the allegation of excessive As. exposure to the citizens of Yellowknife.
2. Certain categories of employee working at Giant mill and refinery have been demonstrated to have significantly elevated hair levels and marginally elevated systemic levels of Arsenic.

Clinical evidence of true systemic arsenic toxicity was not found but evidence of local skin reactions of an irritative nature referable to contact with Arsenic laden dust was found in some members of this group.

Five individuals were identified who, it is believed, would be appropriately followed up on a continuing basis because of Arsenic related findings.

3. The degree of systemic arsenic exposure as reflected in urinary excretion rates, even in this group of Mill employees, compares favourably with those reported in the literature. Indeed, our Mean 24 hr. urinary excretion of arsenic in these 56 persons identified by previous hair analysis as the probably most exposed persons in Yellowknife, and consisting mainly of Mill employees, was less than 10% of the Mean excretion reported for a large series of exposed Smelter workers (Pinto, et al.) and in the range of his "unexposed" controls, reaching in no case even nearly to levels regarded as "bio-significant" by authorities (Elkins) in this field of medicine.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The present activity of Medical Services in this investigation should now be considered as complete. Further activity should be undertaken by the Mill owners and the responsible department D. I. N. A.
2. All employees of Giant mine in the group comprising Roasters, Cottrell operators and lab employees should be considered for regular medical surveillance by the Mill's own physicians.