

FILE NO.: 850-5-X751 (M67)

TYPED: JUNE 10, 1975.

/M671



CANADA

Please observe
PLEASE RETURN TO
MEDICAL SERVICES

MINISTER OF NATIONAL HEALTH AND WELFARE
AND

MINISTER RESPONSIBLE FOR THE STATUS OF WOMEN

MINISTRE DE LA
SANTÉ NATIONALE ET DU BIEN-ÊTRE SOCIAL
ET

MINISTRE CHARGÉ DE LA SITUATION DE LA FEMME

OTTAWA, K1A 0K9

Mr. Marsh Hawes,
President,
Steel Workers Area Council,
United Steel Workers of America,
YELLOWKNIFE, Northwest Territories.

Dear Mr. Hawes:

I have your telex referring to the interim report on the Yellowknife Arsenic study and I have noted and considered the contents with care and concern.

Invitations to the press conference were issued to members of local press, radio and television agencies. It was not intended to be a public forum on the problem, although there were absolutely no restrictions placed on who could attend, and you are aware that in addition to the media representation, officials from the Territorial and Federal Governments and from the United Steel Workers Union were present.

Results of the study were made available on an individual basis to each worker who participated. Letters to this effect were dispatched to all participants before the press conference was convened, and this has been followed by personal contact by health officials from my department. This was done to assure understanding by the participating members of the Union while preserving the confidentiality of their health records. It is my opinion that this combination of individual notification and open press conference has assured that residents of Yellowknife have access to all the facts and implications of the report without any loss of a person's right of medical confidentiality.

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MEDICAL SERVICES
HEADQUARTERS

JUN 23 9 11 AM '75

QUARTIERS GENERAUX
SERVICES MEDICAUX

MEDICAL SERVICES
BREVET DE LIEUTENANT

Mr. Marsh Hawes

As explained in the press conference, the measurement of arsenic levels in hair is a useful screening process to determine exposure to arsenic. The significance of elevated levels, however, must be determined by detailed clinical evaluations including a 24-hour urine sample for arsenic levels. This second phase of the investigation commenced in Yellowknife on June 9. The results of this phase will enable my officers to differentiate between ingested and "fall-out" arsenic, and thus assess the health hazard to residents of Yellowknife. The answers to the questions posed in your telex therefore are dependent on the results of the investigations currently being carried out.

I can assure you that I view this continuing investigation as a matter of urgency. I hope you will liaise closely with officers of my department in Yellowknife concerning any aspect of the investigation and its progress. If the current study indicates the need, we are prepared to take immediate measures to monitor and protect the health of the residents in the area.

Yours truly,

Original Signed By
M. LALONDE

Marc Lalonde

cc: Mr. Don Wilson,
President Local 802,
United Steel Workers of America,
Yellowknife, N.W.T.

Mr. Martin Kolenko,
President Local 803,
United Steel Workers of America,
Yellowknife, N.W.T.

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