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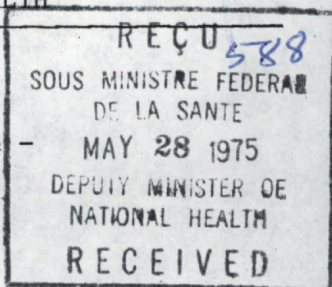
TO
A DEPUTY MINISTER OF HEALTH

For signature of:
Présenté à la signature de:

DEPUTY MINISTER OF HEALTH

Remarks-Remarques

- Arsenic in Yellowknife -



D. B. Dewar - ADM - Medical Services Branch
Originator - Signataire

Checked by - Visé par

Approved by - Autorisé par

DATE May 28, 1975



May 29, 1975

Your file Votre référence

Our file Notre référence

850-5-X750(M20)

MEMORANDUM TO THE MINISTER

Arsenic in Yellowknife;
results of press release of May 27, 1975.

The following information may be useful to you if there are follow-up questions about the announcement of the results of the arsenic survey:

- (1) The managers of both Giant and Con Mines have told our Northwest Territories Regional officers that they will give us full cooperation in inspecting the mills and mines to track down sources of arsenic pollution, and will do what is necessary to correct the problems.

A Medical Services team will be sent from Ottawa to carry out these inspections within about two weeks. IAND mine inspection officials in Yellowknife and the Department of the Environment in Yellowknife (who are measuring stack emissions and dust-fall on plants and soil) will also cooperate in this work.
- (2) All persons tested received letters informing them of their individual results on May 27, the same day as the press release.
- (3) Beginning May 28, a public health nurse is visiting all persons who were told their hair had more than 10 p.p.m. of arsenic, to explain the significance of the finding and the follow-up health examinations we wish them to have.

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- (4) It has been announced that the health examinations (including 24 hour urine samples and occupational histories), for all persons with readings over 10 p.p.m., will start June 9. They will be done at Yellowknife Hospital, and local physicians are invited to participate. It was also announced that if any findings indicating health problems turned up in these examinations, we intended to follow all leads by extending the examinations to other persons with similar backgrounds of occupation, place of residence, etc.

Jean Lupien.

c.c. M14
M67
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Sent to DM's office 28/5/'75
/M201



PRESS CLIPPINGS - COUPURES DE PRESSE

NAME OF PUBLICATION - NOM DE PUBLICATION

GLOBE AND MAIL

DATE

MAY 28th, 75.

Miners, not other Yellowknife residents, face arsenic danger, health report shows *

By W. CHEVELDAYOFF
Globe and Mail Reporter

OTTAWA — A health hazard due to arsenic may exist for certain gold mine and mill workers in Yellowknife but not for other Yellowknife residents, the Health and Welfare Department has found.

Tests of hair samples obtained from 700 Yellowknife residents in February show that 54.8 per cent of the mine and mill workers and 8.7 per cent of all other residents tested had above-normal arsenic levels, Health Minister Marc Lalonde said in a press release yesterday.

However, despite concerns expressed in recent months, the survey found no correlation between arsenic levels and drinking water sources. A test of 20 per cent of the hair samples for mercury contami-

nation "showed levels well within accepted norms."

Clearly, the mine and mill workers as a group have a higher level of arsenic in hair than would be expected in a non-exposed population and follow-up action in respect of this group is necessary," Mr. Lalonde's statement said.

While the press release made no mention of the harmful effects of arsenic exposure, a World Health Organization report says it can produce lung and skin cancer and chronic poisoning leads to loss of appetite and weight, diarrhea alternating with constipation, gastro-intestinal disturbance and other problems.

Arsenic is found in the gold ore in Yellowknife and gets into the atmosphere through the roaster stack at the mill. It settles and is taken into the

water system, particularly during spring runoff.

Even though filters are now used on the stacks, more than 200 pounds of arsenic a day still escapes, according to Government officials in Yellowknife.

After the results of a 1969 federal study were relayed to Government officials, the federal Government helped pay for a water pipeline to bring in fresh water from upstream so that Yellowknife residents would not have to drink contaminated water from Yellowknife Bay. Some low-income people were still drinking bay water earlier this year because they could not afford to pay for fresh drinking water.

Mr. Lalonde said yesterday the people with hair containing more than 10 parts per million of arsenic will un-

dergo further tests.

If results indicate the need, similar investigations of those with arsenic levels of between 5 and 10 parts per million will be undertaken.

Mr. Lalonde said there are differences of opinion among scientists as to what constitutes an elevated arsenic level in hair.

"Levels up to 10 parts per million have been found in populations with no known exposure to arsenic and this level is considered to be acceptable by some authorities. Others regard 5 parts per million as a level that can be accepted as occurring in non-exposed populations."

The Government intends to examine the environment in the mines and mills to identify sources of arsenic pollution and to assess whether further controls are necessary.

The health of people with significant levels of arsenic in their hair is not necessarily affected because arsenic could be deposited on the hair by fallout from the air or it could reach the hair internally through the ingestion of arsenic.

Of the total, 45.2 per cent of the workers and 91.3 per cent of other residents showed arsenic hair levels of less than five parts per million.

The tests for mercury found all samples had levels of less than 10 parts per million with one exception, which was 25 parts per million. The accepted maximum safety level for mercury is 60 parts per million, the Lalonde statement said, and further tests will not be undertaken.

May 28

Copies to M 20

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P.H.
850-5-X751

PRESS CLIPPINGS — COUPURES DE PRESSE

NAME OF PUBLICATION — NOM DE PUBLICATION

MONTREAL GAZETTE

DATE

28-5-75

Arsenic* hazard possible

By DON SELLAR
Southam News Service

OTTAWA — A special inquiry has concluded that arsenic may pose a health hazard to some Yellowknife gold mine workers.

Health Minister Marc Lalonde, prodded into launching the investigation last winter, issued a summary report here yesterday promising further action on the potential problem.

The study also gave a clean bill of health to Yellowknife's water supply, which originally had been suspected as a source of arsenic poisoning.

After running tests on arsenic levels in hair samples from 700 volunteers in Yellowknife, Medical Services Branch officials found the highest readings among mine and mill workers.

Nearly one-third of the gold workers tested were found to have more than 10 parts of arsenic per million in their hair. Among other residents of the town only 3.4 per cent had readings that high.

A statement issued by Lalonde noted, however, that scientists disagree about the significance of arsenic levels in hair.

Over-all, the study found that 91 per cent of the Yellowknife residents other than miners had arsenic levels of less than 5 ppm in their hair.

The minister promised to study conditions at the town's two gold mines to identify sources of arsenic pollution. This action will "recommend corrective measures if indicated," the statement said.

Health officials said recently the Giant Mine smelter at Yellowknife releases between 800 and 1,000 pounds of arsenic into the air each day.

May 28

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