

DEPARTMENT OF NATIONAL HEALTH AND WELFARE

INTRADEPARTMENTAL CORRESPONDENCE

To:

Dr. K. C. Charron,
Chief, Industrial Health Division.

File No. 455-10-1

Date: Sept. 19/49

Subject:

Air Pollution with Arsenic Trioxide Fumes at Yellowknife.

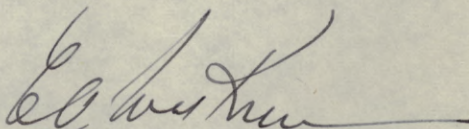
As this is a problem concerned with ^{air} contaminants, I feel that it quite properly comes within the field of study of the Industrial Health Division. On the other hand realizing that the Division is not prepared at this time to undertake this study, it would seem that we are forced to do one of two things:

- (a) Refrain from participating in the investigation at Yellowknife because of our limited staff and equipment, OR
- (b) agree to assume the responsibility of this study of air pollution provided that adequate staff and facilities are made available as quickly as possible.

To enter upon an investigation of the problem at Yellowknife may place us in the position of being asked to advise upon any or every situation of this kind throughout Canada, thus the need for specially trained staff and permanent facilities. To assume the responsibility for advising in the matter at Yellowknife without the essential trained personnel, equipment etc., would, of course, place us in an extremely difficult position since this is a matter of much concern to mining firms possibly involving the spending of thousands of dollars in control measures.

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As already noted the Industrial Health Division might properly assume leadership in the investigation of this and all other problems related to atmospheric pollution. This is the role played by Industrial Hygiene Units in the United States where they have had much wider experience in this field of activity. In regard to the relative positions of the Division of Industrial Health and the Public Health Engineering, the Industrial Health Division might assume the direct responsibility for the investigation at Yellowknife, while at the same time working in close co-operation with the Public Health Engineering Division as there are many problems affecting the general sanitation of the municipality at Yellowknife, such as water supplies, food supplies, the location of homes, etc. A further reason why the Industrial Health Division should take the lead in such an investigation, is that this Division, already working in close harmony with industry, is in a unique position to advise the mining industry upon matters of control of health hazards and it is reasonable to suppose that the mining industry would prefer to consult one Division rather than two or more in regard to methods of control.


E. A. Watkinson, M.D.
Industrial Health Division.