

YKJ  
August 13, 1951.

Dr. O. M. Solandt,  
Chairman,  
Defence Research Board,  
125 Elgin St.,  
Ottawa, Ontario.

Dear Dr. Solandt:

Over a year ago the assistance of this Department was sought by the North West Territories Commission in connection with pollution of Yellowknife by roaster smoke from Giant Yellowknife Mine and the neighbouring mine of Consolidated Mining and Smelting Company. In effect, the area became saturated with air-borne arsenic trioxide to an extent which caused the hospitalization of a number of persons with classical arsenic poisoning. The investigation of this problem was undertaken by the Industrial Health Laboratory of this Department, and corrective measures have been installed in the two major offending smelters. Unfortunately, the heavy contamination of the area has not shown indication of clearing away as rapidly as was anticipated. This spring the death of a child, as well as other cases of poisoning, have focussed attention on the urgency of obtaining additional environmental data on the distribution of the arsenic so as to provide North West Territories Commission with some prediction as to when this area might be expected to be clear of contamination.

In the ordinary course of events this task would continue to be carried on by the Industrial Health Laboratory, but a number of other current demands make it necessary for us to secure the assistance of a specialist for Dr. Kay and he has suggested the name of Dr. Morris Katz because of the important work which he is now carrying out in the study of air pollution in the Windsor-Detroit area.



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Dr. Katz was brought in informally on the arsenic problem at Yellowknife in the early stages when this matter was being considered in cooperation with Mines and Resources officials. We would be most appreciative if further assistance from Dr. Katz could be made available as we feel he is the one person in Canada eminently qualified to deal with such a problem. I am sure you will agree that close cooperation is frequently necessary within Government departments to solve problems of a character which requires pooling of scientific resources.

It will interest you to know that all colonization in the Yellowknife area had to be interrupted because of the above factors, the loss of cattle, and the complete unsuitability of natural fodder. This has been a matter of concern to the Citizenship and Immigration Department and is inevitably holding up development of this rich area at a time when fullest exploitation of metals is being sought by the Government. No doubt from a National Defence point of view there will be interest in determining when this area may be clear of arsenic hazard.

It is anticipated that the work involved would follow in a general way the approach developed by Dr. Katz in the Windsor-Detroit area. As the staff of the Industrial Health Laboratory is now cooperating with Dr. Katz in that study, it may be anticipated that good team work would characterize the proposed Yellowknife investigations. The financial aspects will, of course, be looked after by this Department.

I wonder if you would let me know at your earliest convenience as to whether we might be enabled to have the assistance of Dr. Morris Katz in planning and conducting a survey of Yellowknife within the next few months.

Yours very truly,

G. D. W. Cameron, M.D., D.P.H.,  
Deputy Minister of National Health.