



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

93-042

Human Health Risk Assessment Released

YELLOWKNIFE (July 21) — Results of an assessment of the potential human health risks of emissions of sulphur dioxide (SO₂) and arsenic associated with the Royal Oak Giant Yellowknife Mine have been released. The assessment was completed by the Environmental Health Directorate in Ottawa.

The assessment states, "We do not feel that an imminent health hazard exists from the sulphur dioxide levels recorded in Yellowknife". The report continues to say, "The levels detected which exceed the one hour maximum acceptable levels are in the range at which mild, reversible, respiratory effects would be seen in sensitive individuals, particularly asthmatics".

With regard to arsenic, the assessment notes that "arsenic emissions have decreased dramatically" over the past two decades. However, "Canadian and international regulatory agencies have classified arsenic as a known human carcinogen. For this reason alone, exposure to arsenic should be reduced to the lowest possible level".

On July 13, officials of the Government of the Northwest Territories met with Royal Oak Giant Yellowknife Mine to discuss the results of the environmental investigation conducted by the Department of Renewable Resources. Further meetings will be held to discuss the results of the human health risk assessment. In the meantime, the Government is continuing to monitor sulphur dioxide and arsenic levels in Yellowknife.

Contact: Dr. Richard Nuttall
Medical Health Officer
Department of Health
(403) 920-6576

