

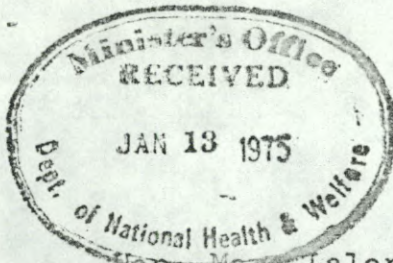
MEDICAL SERVICES BRANCH  
RECORDING & TRANSMITTAL FORM  
MINISTER'S CORRESPONDENCE

SUBJECT: 1969 report on arsenic poisoning in Yellowknife		FILE NO: 850-5-X751					
FROM: A. Gavin Hudson 23 Oriole Road, Apt. 309 Toronto M4V 2E6		DATE: Jan. 9					
TO: Minister		INITIATED IN BRANCH					
RECEIVED IN ADM'S OFFICE: January 27 (Date)		PASSED: Feb. 3 (Date)					
ACTION: Please prepare a reply for Ann Jamieson's signature by February 6							
TO	DATE	REPLY			B.F.	DATE SENT TO MINISTER	SIGNED
		INTERIM	FINAL	DATE			
M17	Feb. 3		✓	Feb. 3		Feb. 4	

REMARKS:



850-3-X787  
50-8-5



23 Oriole Road, Apt. 309,  
Toronto M4V 2E6, Jan. 9, 1975

Hon. Marc Lalonde,  
Minister of Health,  
Parliament Buildings,  
Ottawa, Ont.

Dear Sir:

It was disturbing to learn from a  
CBC radio program that your Department has  
withheld a 1969 report on arsenic poisoning  
in Yellowknife.

This naturally raises a question  
as to what other studies affecting the health  
of Canadians are not reaching the medical  
profession for evaluation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "A. Gavin Hudson".

A. Gavin Hudson



PAUL WOODSTOCK

Principal Executive Officer  
Agent principal de la direction

Deputy Minister's Office (Health)  
Bureau du Sous-ministre de la Santé

TO

A

P. Dewar.

---

Date

27/1/75

☐ Approval  
Approuver

☐ As requested  
A votre demande

☐ Signature  
Signer

☐ Information  
Prendre connaissance

☒ Preparation of reply  
Rédiger réponse vers le

6 - 2 19 75

☐ For signature of  
Pour la signature de

Ann Jamieson.

---

Remarks:

Remarques:



Government  
of Canada

Gouvernement  
du Canada

ACTION  
REQUEST

FICHE DE  
SERVICE

TO — À

M. P. Woodstock  
ADM Health

FILE NO. — DOSSIER N°

DATE

23/1/75

FROM — DE

S. Guindé DC PR

☐ PLEASE CALL  
PRIÈRE D'APPELER

TEL. NO. — N° DE TEL

EXT. — POSTE

☐ WANTS TO SEE YOU  
DÉSIRE VOUS VOIR

☐ WILL CALL AGAIN  
DOIT RAPPELER

CALL RECEIVED BY  
MESSAGE REÇU PAR

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☐ COMMENTS  
COMMENTAIRES

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FAIRE \_\_\_\_\_ COPIES

TEL. NO. — N° DE TEL

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REÇU  
SOUS MINISTRE FÉDÉRAL  
DE LA SANTÉ

JAN 24 1975

DEPUTY MINISTER OF

☐ APPROVAL  
AUTORISATION  
NATIONAL HEALTH

☐ DRAFT REPLY  
PROJET DE RÉPONSE

☐ SIGNATURE

TIME — HEURE

☐ NOTE & RETURN  
NOTER ET RETOURNER

☐ NOTE & FORWARD  
NOTER ET FAIRE SUIVRE

☐ NOTE & FILE  
NOTER ET CLASSER

Croyez-vous que cette  
lettre soit satisfaisante  
ou si vous désirez quel-  
que chose

FOLD HERE

PLIER ICI



Health and Welfare  
Canada

Santé et Bien-être social  
Canada

For Signature by/Information of  
A signer/pour renseigner

*Ann Jamieson*

Prepared by  
Préparé par

*Doris Leeson*

Check (Division Director)  
Vérifié (Directeur)

APPROVED/NOTED

APPROUVÉ/NOTE

\_\_\_\_\_  
Deputy Minister — Sous-ministre

\_\_\_\_\_  
Minister — Ministre

REMARKS:

RÉMARQUES:

File No. — N° de dossier

Date



Mr. A. Gavin Hudson  
23 Oriole Road  
Apt. 309  
Toronto, Ontario  
M4V 2E6

Dear Mr. Hudson:

On behalf of the Minister, the Honourable Marc Lalonde, I wish to acknowledge *thank you* receipt of your letter of January 9, 1975, commenting on the 1969 report on arsenic poisoning in Yellowknife.

I would like to assure you that this report has not been withheld nor are results of other studies withheld.

Any information you wish to receive from this Department may be obtained by contacting our Information Services Director, Mr. Pierre Couture, Brooke Claxton Building, Ottawa.

YT

AJ

DL



P9

STATEMENT BY THE HONOURABLE MARC LALONDE  
ON ARSENIC POLLUTION IN YELLOWKNIFE, N.W.T.

January 9, 1975

The CBC National radio broadcast "As It Happens", January 8, 1975, reported on arsenic in the environment of Yellowknife, N.W.T., and quoted from a study conducted in the late 1960's by staff of the Department concerning the health of people in the Yellowknife area.

This study was carried out as a result of a concern by my Department about the presence of arsenic in the environment around Yellowknife, arising from gold mining operations in the area.

The report itself recognized that causes other than arsenic pollution were probably involved in the health conditions reported, and the report did not establish a relationship between arsenic pollution and the incidence of cancer. Indeed the report stated that deaths from cancer in Yellowknife seemed to be lower than elsewhere in Canada. I have given instructions that this report be made available to anyone interested.

Nevertheless there was and is a proper concern about any significant pollution problem, especially its long-range health implications. As a result of the survey conducted by the Department, a number of steps were taken by the Federal



and Territorial governments to control and monitor the problem and especially to ensure a safe water supply. A new source of water for the town was put in place in 1968-69 and has operated since then. This involves drawing water from the Yellowknife River north of its confluence with Yellowknife Bay. The town water supply has been continually monitored since 1969 and arsenic has never been detected in it during that period.

In addition, I am told that there have been major improvements in the control of pollution in the operations of the mines. Effluent is contained in tailing ponds, and airborne waste is captured and bagged.

The CBC radio broadcast reported on the problem of some residents using the water from Yellowknife Bay rather than the protected town supply, and eating fish from the Bay. This is a matter of concern to the health authorities, especially since significantly higher readings of contamination in the Bay were measured by the Federal Department of the Environment after two accidental spills of mine tailings into the water of the Bay in the Spring of 1974. The local health authorities warned the town of Yellowknife of the problem in July and posted signs to warn residents not to use the water. The health authorities also consulted with the Department of Environment and DOE has taken legal action against the firm



responsible since that Department at present possesses stronger legal powers in this connection. The Environmental Contaminants Act currently before Parliament will provide an effective way to control this type of pollution problem in the future and to take appropriate action against offenders.

In summary, considerable progress has been made in monitoring and controlling the problem of arsenic pollution in Yellowknife. The town water supply has been made safe, and pollution abatement equipment is now in place. Nevertheless, in light of the concern about this matter, I have asked for certain further steps to be taken as well:

1. Local health officials will urge on the town of Yellowknife the need to ensure a supply of safe water from the town supply to all residents, notwithstanding their ability to pay for it. Indeed I have been told that the Territorial Government has already issued instructions this be done.
2. There will be an increased campaign to inform residents of the dangers of the use of water from the Bay, through the activities of public health personnel and by information bulletins to the news media.
3. Territorial authorities have agreed to a survey of arsenic levels in residents of Yellowknife, to be carried out by my Department. Special attention will be paid to long-time residents, the native people and high-risk population groups



such as children, but the service will be available to all residents. Persons found to have significant levels of arsenic in their blood or hair will be encouraged to undergo detailed clinical examination and thereafter will be followed up, on a regular basis, by the health authorities.

4. The health staff in N.W.T. will be augmented to provide these services and to provide also an augmented environmental health inspection service as well as co-ordination and collection of all available data on arsenic levels in humans, fish, water and soil etc. within the Yellowknife area.





Government  
of Canada

Gouvernement  
du Canada

ACTION  
REQUEST

FICHE DE  
SERVICE

TO — À

Michel Fillion,  
Executive Assistant to ADM,  
Medical Services.

FILE NO. — DOSSIER N°

DATE

5-2-75

FROM — DE

Gilles-L. Fortin,  
Deputy Minister's Office, Health.

☐ PLEASE CALL  
PRIÈRE D'APPELER

TEL. NO. — N° DE TEL.

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☐ WANTS TO SEE YOU  
DÉSIRE VOUS VOIR

DATE

TIME — HEURE

☐ WILL CALL AGAIN  
DOIT RAPPELER

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APPROBATION

☐ NOTE & RETURN  
NOTER ET RETOURNER

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COMMENTAIRES

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PROJET DE RÉPONSE

☐ NOTE & FORWARD  
NOTER ET FAIRE SUIVRE

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FAIRE — COPIES

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☐ NOTE & FILE  
NOTER ET CLASSER

2 more letters on arsenic for preperation  
of reply. I have notified the Correspondence  
Clerk in DCPR to refer further letters on  
arsenic to the Medical Services Branch.  
Thanks.



A.B. MORRISON, Ph.D.

Assistant Deputy Minister  
*Sous-ministre adjoint*

Health Protection Branch  
*Direction générale de la  
protection de la santé*

To

A

Date

*Feb. 3, 1975*

REÇU	
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REMARKS:  
REMARQUES:

*Medical Services are responsible for replying. Could you please notify the Correspondence Clerk in Minister's office because they continue to send them to H.P.B.*

*Thanks. [Signature]*