

TO  
ARegional Director,  
N.W.T. Region.FROM  
DEDirector General,  
Program Management.SUBJECT  
OBJETArsenic Program -  
Yellowknife

SECURITY - CLASSIFICATION - DE SECURITE

OUR FILE - N/RÉFERENCE

850-5-X751

(M14)

YOUR FILE - V/RÉFERENCE

DATE

January 10, 1975

No doubt you have seen a copy of the Minister's statement on this topic by now. I indicated to you during our conversations of the 9th of January that consideration would be given to stepping up a program regarding any possible problems with arsenic in the Yellowknife area insofar as they affect the health of residents.

The program which the Minister has announced includes the following:

1. An increased campaign to inform residents of the danger of the use of water from the bay. This entails essentially a stepped up public health education program utilizing the usual formats but in addition ensuring that this matter is discussed in home visits and that information material is provided to the news media. There is obviously a danger of creating unnecessary alarm and that considerable amount of care will have to be devoted to the wording of any such releases.
2. A survey of arsenic levels in residents of Yellowknife with encouragement of persons, if any, found to have unacceptable arsenic levels, to undergo detailed clinic examinations and thereafter to be followed on a regular basis by the health authorities.

This will entail at least cooperation from the local physicians, but I would see the actual obtaining and sending of samples to be responsibility of our own staff. Once the survey results are available, consideration can then be given to either sending persons out to the University of Alberta or the Charles Cammell Hospital for detailed examinations or augmenting the available medical staff in Yellowknife by one or more visiting specialists, depending upon the number of individuals found. Thereafter, persons found with high levels should be placed on the chronic disease register with visits from the public health nurses at least every three months and yearly clinically examinations until such time as the arsenic levels have fallen to acceptable limits.

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3. Augmentation of the health staff in the Yukon. In addition to the resources required to the above, it is intended to ensure that all the available data is collected by our staff from Department of the Environment resources, Health Protection Branch, etc. to make sure there is no fragmentation of information.

Resources will be made available to help you set this program up. I would anticipate you would need the following in Yellowknife:

One additional Public Health Nurse

One Environmental Health Officer

One Part-time Clerk

In addition, there is an urgent need, which I have already pointed out, for a Public Health Engineer. I have asked for urgent classification on this matter and the first engineer recruited will be stationed in Edmonton with primary responsibility for the Northwest Territories but also responsibility for the Yukon. I anticipate that 75% of his time would be available for the Northwest Territories. You may wish to recruit the person to be stationed in Yellowknife on a term basis but I will this to your discretion. In any event, your personnel staff should prepare job descriptions, send in amended organization charts and you should then proceed, after receiving formal approval from this office, with recruitment action.

In view of the need for close liaison with Health Protection Branch and the Department of the Environment, I can, if you wish, make arrangements for one of the Head Office medical staff to act as a liaison for you in this regard.

4. During a discussion with Mr. John Parker, Assistant Commissioner, N.W.T. on the 9th of January, I indicated to him the general outline of the Minister's statement and he was in agreement with our proposed course of action. I indicated also to him that Medical Services would provide the necessary resources and man-years to carry out this augmented program.

I am sending this to you by telecopier in order that you might have a chance to think about it before attending the Territorial Council Session. I shall leave the development of the program to your staff but please accept my assurances that any additional assistance should you require in setting it up will be made available to you. I recognize that it may well appear that we are over-reacting in this matter and that a survey, when carried out, may reveal little, if any, evidence of persons with unacceptable arsenic levels. For this reason, I suggest you might consider recruiting staff, other than the Public Health Engineer, to term positions but in any event the situation can be reassessed once the survey has been carried out.

Please feel free to call if there are any urgent problems associated with this proposal. Once you had a chance to assess it and discuss the matter with the N.W.T. Government and Council, I would appreciate receiving, at your convenience, an outline of the method you intend to use to implement this plan. Thank you for your cooperation.

*L.M. Black*  
(for) L.M. Black.

(Dictated but not verified)