

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ARSENIC POLLUTION

2.00 pm - September 30, 1976. Yellowknife

MINUTES

Present: Dan Billing (Chairman)
C.R. Forrest, Northern Health.
E.L. Fischer, Medical Services, Health & Welfare Canada,
NWT Region.
A.K. Hazra, Environmental Protection Service,
NWT Region.
D. Gemmill, Environmental Protection Service,
Yellowknife.
H. Veldhuizen, Environmental Protection Service,
Edmonton.
R. McDermit, Chief, Health Care Plan, Dept of
Social Development, Govt of N.W.T., Yellowknife.
Kathy Jang, Health Care Plan, Dept of Social
Development.
Fred Henne, Mayor, City of Yellowknife.
Gordon Mowat, Medical Services, Health & Welfare,
Yellowknife.
Mel Brown, Dept of Indian & Northern Affairs,
Yellowknife.
Hal Pawson, N.W.T. Chamber of Mines.

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Minutes of the last meeting were adopted as read.

Chairman said this was to be the last meeting of the Committee and drew the Committee's attention to the matter of the preparation of a final report.

It was agreed that the report produced by Jack Grainge and Dave Gemmill would be the basis of discussion at this meeting.

Dave Gemmill spoke on the report from the point of view of acceptability by the Environmental Protection Service. These comments had been incorporated in a letter to the Chairman, a copy of which was distributed to members of the Committee. Copies of a letter dated January 9, 1976, from Mr J.R. Hickman of Health & Welfare Canada, Ottawa, to the Department of the Environment, Ottawa, concerning the health effects of arsenic were also distributed.

The Chairman thanked Mr. Gemmill and said that the purpose of the draft report was to provide background for the Committee; it will not be a public document.

Mayor Henne said that in view of the many arsenic studies carried out, and the length of time over which these have occurred, he would like to see some conclusions arrived at.

A short discussion followed about certain statements, conclusions, interpretations and assumptions in the draft report.

The Chairman reminded the Committee that, in effect, what was basically wanted was an answer to the question of whether a threat existed to the health of the people in Yellowknife from Giant Mine.

Dr. Fischer said that the draft report states the facts as we know them to-day. We seem to be within already-established limits. Twenty years ago the situation was a lot worse. We are improving rapidly. However, arsenic pollution is a potential danger and should be monitored on an on-going basis. If this situation should change, we would have to re-think.

Since Mayor Henne and Mr. McDermit had to leave the meeting at this point, the Chairman asked if they thought the Committee had enough background to hold a public meeting.

Mayor Henne thought probably the Committee did. The controls in effect to-day are certainly far better than in the past. He mentioned that it appeared that no-one has said if there is any harm to people; E.P.S. should draw up standards and get something on the record.

Dr. Fischer thought the Committee had enough material. A draft could be drawn up to be presented to the public; but that should not stop E.P.S. or Health & Welfare from further monitoring.

Mr. McDermit felt that as long as the report was for Committee use only it was acceptable to him. He did mention that, with respect to Mr. Hickman's letter, certain statements should be substantiated.

The Chairman asked the Committee to consider plans for a public hearing. After a brief discussion it was decided to work up answers to the obvious questions to be circulated to the Committee. The Chairman and Mr. Gemmill were to do this. The Chairman was to get back to members shortly concerning a time for the public meeting. A back-up panel was decided upon with representatives from E.P.S., Public Health and DINA.

The last item on the Agenda was then discussed - Formulation of Standing Committee on Toxic Pollutants (Tripartite Committee - Dr. Fischer agreed to be on the Committee; Mr. Veldhuizen said an E.P.S. representative would be named later (matter to be referred to their Regional Director); Kathy Jang will look after from the Territorial Government's point of view.

Dr. Fischer stressed the high priority placed on this matter by his Department and outlined the objectives of the Committee.

The Chairman mentioned that the Indian Brotherhood and the Inuit Tapirisat of Canada had been invited to name representatives to the Board but no reply had yet been received from either organization.

The meeting adjourned at 4.00 pm.

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