



TO
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MEMORANDUM

850-5-X751
CLASSIFICATION

Director General, Medical Services

YOUR FILE No. 850-5-X751 (M16)
Votre dossier

OUR FILE No. 150-5-X751 (N1)
Notre dossier

Northern Region

DATE Oct 30 1967

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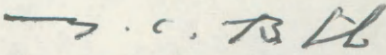
SUBJECT
Sujet

Arsenic Study - Yellowknife NWT

With reference to Para 2 of your letter of September 29 1967, I would point out that Mr. J. Grainge carried out extensive reading on the carcinogenic effects of arsenic and cited three references in support of his statement. This is not a matter that can be disposed of lightly unless reliable references are also produced stating that 0.1 ppm of arsenic is not carcinogenic.

The statement that there is less per capita consumption of water in the north, and in Yellowknife in particular, is not substantiated to my knowledge, by any studies on the subject and on discussing the matter with persons who have lived in the north it is their opinion that there is no truth in the statement. The high consumption of liquor (usually with a water mix), tea and coffee, in the north together with the very dry climate would appear to negate any suggestion that there is less water consumption per capita.

We consider the arsenic problem in Yellowknife to be a very serious one and that it must be corrected as soon as possible.


Regional Director

cc - Mr. J. Grainge

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MEDICAL SERVICES
SUB-REGISTRY

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Dr. E. A. Watkinson,
Director General, Health Services.

850-5-X751 (M16)

Director General, Medical Services.

29 Sept. 1967.

ARSENIC STUDY - YELLOWKNIFE

About a year ago a group under Dr. deVilliers carried out clinical, x-ray and laboratory investigations to determine, if possible, whether there were any demonstrable adverse effects on the local population as a result of the high arsenic concentration in the water supply of Yellowknife. Recently, information has been sought on the findings of this survey in view of pressure from Yellowknife and other developments which appear to have ignored the value of information about the clinical effects. Although Dr. deVilliers indicated that he could make some comments, these have not been forthcoming. Recently recommendations from our Public Health Engineering Division have been presented to the Government of the Northwest Territories urging that the Yellowknife water intake should be moved to a point in the Yellowknife River above the source of pollution. Officials of the Territorial Division of the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development indicate that several miles of pipe will be involved and the cost may run in excess of one million dollars.

Our Northern Health Service has been asked whether the existing level of arsenic in the water supply is harmful and we have delayed a definite reply pending receipt of the survey information. In correspondence the engineers have stated that arsenic is a carcinogenic substance, presumably on the strength of an article published in the United States. However, we are unwilling to assume, without some further evidence, that 0.1 ppm of arsenic in the water would be as toxic in a cold climate as in a warm one since in the former the water consumption per capita would be far less. It appears to us that a final decision as to what action should be taken at Yellowknife should follow consideration not only of the information gathered by Public Health Engineering Division but also that gathered in the survey. This seems necessary to establish a priority for the recommendations.

Your advice and comments on the availability of further information would be appreciated.

M161

cc: Regional Director,
Northern Region, N.S.

H. A. Procter, Ph.D., M.D.