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Gwich'in Council
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Inuvik Native Band

TO: Minister of Environment of GNWT Michael Miltenberger
Minister of Environment of the Govt of Canada Jim Prentice minister@ec.gc.ca

RE: Arsenic Levels in Inuvik

Recently Arctic Environmental Services Ltd., of Yellowknife, NWT, was contracted by the Gwich'in Development Corporation to conduct an Environmental Site Assessment of the former Norcan Yard in Inuvik. The intended purpose of the assessment was to look to see if there was hydrocarbon contamination on the site before the Gwich'in Development Corporation re-developed the property.

ALS Laboratory Group from Edmonton did the analysis of the samples. While there was high hydrocarbon contamination there was also high arsenic levels recorded in all historical imported fill materials on the property. I understand that the Canadian Council of Ministers of Environment (CCME) have set the National Standard for arsenic at 12 mg/kg. The levels recorded on this site exceeded the CCME levels by orders of magnitude.

Arctic Environmental Services Ltd. had no option but to recommend the removal of arsenic impacted soil during remediation, as is done for all contaminants exceeding CCME standards. Interestingly enough, they have since been hired to conduct numerous assessments on other properties in Inuvik, including for the Town, and Government of NWT. We know that private lands have been shown to reflect similar levels of high arsenic in imported fill. We do not know the results of studies on Public Lands. However, recent GNWT Public Works specification documents (for the new Arctic Research Station) list arsenic levels in fill as a concern to be addressed by contractors when bidding. These information discloses a knowledge and recognition of the significance of the problem by GNWT.

We need to immediately discuss this issue and the possibility that there is a general health hazard from imported arsenic to the people of Inuvik. At this time we have also sent out samples from 2 Gravel pits on the Dempster Highway and from a private property to verify if the properties are also contaminated. If arsenic is a cancer-causing or otherwise toxic agent that has been imported into Inuvik, this must be addressed immediately to the people of Inuvik so that everyone knows what is going to happen in finding a solution to this problem.

Mussii Cho 
Chief Herbert Blake
Nihtat Gwichin Council

CC. David Krutko MLA Beaufort Delta
Town of Inuvik