

The Aklavik H. Pylori Screening Project

Hon. Sandy Lee

Friday, February 15, 2008

Statement to the Legislative Assembly

The Department of Health and Social Services, the Beaufort Delta Health and Social Services Authority and Capital Health Authority in Edmonton are working with the leadership and residents of Aklavik to investigate the incidence of H. pylori infection in the community.

A team of 25 health professionals and researchers from Capital Health and University of Alberta worked together with employees of the GNWT spent four days in Aklavik in February. They took tissue samples from 300 persons – every consenting adult in the community.

These tissue samples will be examined for evidence of the H. pylori infection. This bacteria can occur without symptoms and can lead to ulcers, indigestion and stomach cancer.

The samples were sent to a lab in Edmonton where they will be analyzed thoroughly. This extensive project is known as the Aklavik H. Pylori Project and it will be completed by 2010. Residents in Aklavik have long expressed their concerns about the high rates of stomach cancer in their community. One family lost five members to this disease. In the NWT, the rate of stomach cancer is twice that of the rest of Canada.

Mr. Speaker the project has received \$220,000 in grants and contributions from a wide variety of organizations.

I would like to thank the community of Aklavik, especially nurse-in-charge Rachel Munday, all of the staff at the Susan Husky Health and Social Services Centre. I would also like to thank the Inuvialuit Regional Corporation, Canadian North, Public Health Agency of Canada, Inuvik Regional Hospital, Beaufort-Delta Health and Social Services Authority, MLA David Krutko, Chief Charlie Furlong and Mayor Knute Hansen, Dr Tom Guzowski of Stanton Territorial Hospital. I also thank the Edmonton Capital Health doctors, the Olympus scoping technicians, the University of Alberta. Finally, I want to acknowledge the project lead, Medical Director, Dr. Bob Bailey from Northern Health Services Network. He secured the funding and lastly Dr. John Morse who had an idea more than 10 years ago that turned into this important project.

Thank you.