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NORTHERN MEDICAL HEALTH OFFICIALS GATHER IN YUKON

WHITEHORSE – Physicians and other health professionals will gather in Whitehorse later this week at the second *Public Health North of 60* meeting, hosted this year by Yukon’s Medical Health Officer, Dr. Bryce Larke.

The Medical Health Officers (MHOs) from Nunavut, Northwest Territories and Yukon will be joined by colleagues from Alaska, British Columbia and Washington to look at common concerns and issues that impact the North differently than other jurisdictions.

The first meeting was held last year in Iqaluit at the instigation of Dr. Isaac Sobel, Nunavut’s Chief Medical Officer of Health.

“Although the three MHOs from the northern territories sit on the Canadian Council of Chief Medical Officers of Health, we recognized a need to look more closely at how certain issues affect us in the North in ways the South doesn’t always understand,” Larke said. “That’s why we have pulled in Dr. Jay Butler and Dr. Alan Parkinson from Anchorage to meet with us, and others.”

Health and Social Services Minister Brad Cathers said he was pleased to welcome the visiting health professionals to Yukon.

“We recognize there are some unique circumstances relevant to public health in northern Canada that are not applicable in southern Canada,” Cathers said. “The *Public Health North of 60* meeting is a positive step towards ensuring that northern health officers are working collaboratively to address our unique issues.”

The two-day meeting will cover public health initiatives in the Canadian North; a presentation ‘Plain Talk about Bird Flu’ by Dr. Maxine Hayes, the State Health Officer with the State of Washington, along with a report from Alaska on avian and pandemic influenza preparedness.

Other topics of concern to northern health professionals will cover a Pan-Canadian Health Surveillance Project; indoor mould; an update on the International Circumpolar Surveillance Program, and the International Polar Year (2007-2008).

“These meetings give us concentrated time to address the issues that really concern us,” Larke added.

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