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# **Expert report exposes Gov neglect on Grassy Narrows Mercury Poisoning Tragedy**

**Toronto** - A report by scientific experts reveals that the government response to the ongoing mercury tragedy in Grassy Narrows has been inadequate and untruthful. The report was commissioned by the Mercury Disability Board in 2009, but it was never released to the public, and its scathing conclusions have not been acted on. The Board includes representatives of both the provincial and federal governments. The report contradicts the governmental refusal to acknowledge mercury poisoning in Grassy Narrows, and reveals that health care, diagnosis, and support for mercury survivors are substandard.

## **PRESS CONFERENCE**

**WHAT:** Grassy Narrows responds to the report, calls for justice for mercury survivors.

**WHEN:** Monday July 28, 10:00 a.m.

**WHO:** Grassy Narrows Chief Roger Fobister Sr.  
Ontario Regional Chief Stan Beardy  
Grassy Narrows Mother of Five Judy Da Silva  
Stephen Lewis available for comment by phone

**WHERE: Steelworkers Hall, 25 Cecil St. (near Spadina and College)**  
N.B. Full copies of the report will be available at the press conference.

"It is hurtful that the government has never apologized for the basic fact that our people were made sick by mercury, and many are still sick to this day," said Grassy Narrows Chief Roger Fobister Sr. "It is long past time for the government to take responsibility to fix what they have broken, clean up our river, and help us out rather than kicking us while we are down."

Disturbingly, the report emphasizes that mercury survivors in Grassy Narrows are not receiving the necessary medical care and support, and that diagnostic and care standards in Ontario are far below those in Minamata Japan. The report notes that 65% of Grassy Narrows and White Dog people diagnosed with Minamata Disease by Japanese experts were not acknowledged by the Mercury Disability Board, which uses outdated criteria developed in the 1980's. The authors "highlight the urgent need to improve the general health of these two communities as the health status of the participants was clearly poor."

Ontario and Canada have never apologized for even one case of mercury poisoning in Grassy Narrows after 9 tonnes of mercury were dumped into their

river by the Dryden paper mill between 1962 and 1970. The Mercury Disability Board compensates for symptoms consistent with mercury poisoning, but maintains that the symptoms could be from other causes. The expert report concludes "There is no doubt that at these levels of exposure many persons were suffering from mercury-related neurologic disorders."

The report indicates that the mercury problem in Grassy Narrows is ongoing due to the long term impacts of past exposure, current instances of high exposure, and the potential for impacts on fetuses and children even at low mercury levels.

"I cry when I see that every year babies are born sick in our small community," said Judy Da Silva, a mother of five children, and a daycare administrator in Grassy Narrows. "Instead of helping us, Ontario is planning another decade of industrial clearcut logging on our homeland that will further poison our fish and our people with mercury."

Ontario has finalized plans for another decade of clearcut logging in Grassy Narrows territory, against the community's loud objections. Scientific studies indicate that clearcut logging in boreal watersheds raises mercury levels in fish above the World Health Organization's limit for safe human consumption. Recent clearcut logging in Grassy Narrows' territory has likely deepened and prolonged the terrible impacts of mercury poison, and further mercury may be released if Ontario implements its current clearcutting plan.

"For more than half a century, Grassy Narrows First Nation, has battled against predatory logging companies, mercury poisoning of the English-Wabigoon river system, residential schools, judicial decisions that fail to recognize legitimate treaty rights and, most recently, the continued erosion of access to clean water and medical care," said Stephen Lewis, Former Canadian Ambassador to the United Nations. "It's a vicious history of discrimination that must be brought to an end."

### **Grassy Narrows is demanding that government:**

1. **Apologize**, and take responsibility for allowing mercury to poison people in Grassy Narrows.
2. **Compensate** all mercury survivors, and make sure that they have quality **health care**.
3. **Clean up** the river.
4. Do not allow **clearcut** logging that will release more mercury.

**CONTACT:** 647-772-8770

**MORE INFORMATION:** [FreeGrassy.net](http://FreeGrassy.net)

High resolution photos and Broll are available at the press conference, and [riverrun2010@gmail.com](mailto:riverrun2010@gmail.com)

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