

Grassy Narrows wins historic Mercury Home contract

Grassy Narrows continues to seek secure long-term funding for the full services required at the facility for people suffering from mercury poisoning.

Grassy Narrows - Yesterday evening Grassy Narrows First Nation secured a signed contract with Canada to provide the full funding required to build a Mercury Care Home in the community following Grassy Narrows' plan. Canada is also bound to provide long-term funding for operations and maintenance, including federally funded services, although the amount is not yet specified. The agreement is an important step to implement promises made by Canada since 2017 on the facility. However, Grassy Narrows continues to seek secure long-term funding for the full services required at the facility for people suffering from the debilitating impacts of mercury poisoning.

"This is a big step forward for our people and I honour all of our youth, Elders, and community members who worked to make this happen," said Chief Turtle of Grassy Narrows. "Canada, and Minister Miller have made sacred promises to us in this contract and in person, and we will make sure that those promises are honoured. We will see that the Mercury Care Home is built well, built quickly, and meets the care needs of our people."

The Mercury Care Home gained national prominence in the past year as Grassy Narrows people and their supporters took creative action to enforce a 2017 promise by Canada to build and operate a Mercury Care Home in Grassy Narrows. During the federal election Prime Minister Trudeau stated that "money is not the objection to investing in what they need in that Treatment Centre." (English Language Debate, Oct. 7)

On December 4, the new Minister for Indigenous Services Canada, Marc Miller met with Chief Turtle in Ottawa and committed to fully fund the construction of the Mercury Care Home following Grassy Narrows' design for expedited completion. He also committed to satisfy Grassy Narrows' needs for secure 30-year funding and for the level of care required at the facility.

While the current contract goes far beyond previous federal written offers, it does not give Grassy Narrows the certainty it requires on long term funding for the full range of services that

experts say are needed for people living with mercury. Minister Miller has committed that he will seek the authorities needed to finish the job and give Grassy Narrows that comfort.

Grassy Narrows continues to call for compensation for all community members for the impacts of the ongoing mercury crisis and for all support required to restore their health, way of life, livelihood, self-determination, lands and waters.

Grassy Narrows was a vibrant and largely self-sufficient community with 95% employment, mostly in the sport and commercial fisheries, until the mercury hit nearly fifty years ago. Grassy Narrows people have been at the forefront of the movement for Indigenous self-determination and environmental justice for generations and continue to fight in solidarity with their cousins and land defenders across Turtle Island who are asserting sovereignty and title.