

**House of Commons**

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**Charlie Angus**

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Prime Minister Justin Trudeau  
Office of the Prime Minister and Privy Council, 80 Wellington St.  
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A3

**RE: Need for Federal Commitment for Mercury Treatment Centre for People of Wabigoon River System**

Dear Prime Minister,

I have reached out to you and your officials on a number of occasions regarding the need for a credible federal plan to respond to the inter-generational poisoning of the people of Grassy Narrows First Nation. I was impressed to hear your promise made one year ago that the government would respond "once and for all" to aid in the clean-up of the Wabigoon River system. Unfortunately, you have not followed up on this promise. And for this reason I am writing you. Specifically, I am asking you to work with the community to establish a treatment centre for residents affected by long-term exposure to mercury.

As you know, both Grassy Narrows and Wabaseemoong First Nations have suffered from the devastating impacts of mercury contamination since ten tonnes of the potent neurotoxin were dumped into the English-Wabigoon river system from 1962 to 1970. Mercury poisoning has serious, debilitating symptoms resulting in an early and painful death, and, most tragically, can affect fetal development. These factors have led to a generational injustice in north-western Ontario with as much as 90% of the population having suffered mercury poisoning.

That so many people could be poisoned over such a long period time speaks to an unprecedented act of criminal negligence by corporate interests aided and abetted by the indifference of provincial and federal officials. I refer you to new reports that show that the province of Ontario had known for decades about an ongoing source of mercury entering the English-Wabigoon river system from the site of the former chlor-alkali plant in Dryden and yet opted not to do anything.

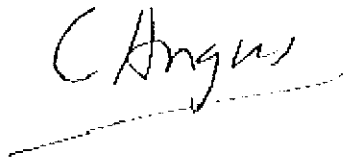
The federal government has a direct role to play in addressing this environmental crime. Not only is the provision of health services to Indigenous peoples a direct responsibility of the federal government, but

Canada recently ratified the Minamata Convention on Mercury, Article 16 of which states that parties should **“promote appropriate health-care services for prevention, treatment and care for populations affected by the exposure to mercury or mercury compounds.”**

Canada cannot be a signatory to this convention without taking appropriate and credible steps to respond to the crisis at Grassy Narrows. For this reason, I am requesting that you meet with the community in order to commit to establishing a treatment centre to address those suffering from the long-term impacts of mercury poisoning.

Mr. Prime Minister, we cannot change the institutional negligence of the past but we are morally bound to find ways to remediate and offer credible steps of reconciliation. The creation of a long-term treatment centre for the people of Grassy Narrows would be a first step on the path to cleaning up this environmental disaster.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "C Angus". The signature is written in a cursive style and is underlined with a single horizontal stroke.

Charlie Angus, MP  
Timmins—James Bay

cc. Chief Simon Fobister, Grassy Narrows First Nation  
Romeo Saganash, MP