

# World Water Day – March 22, 2025

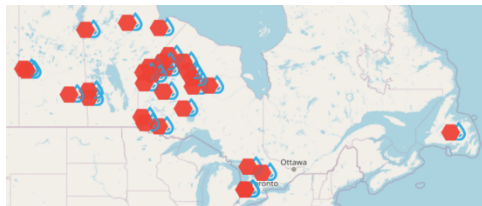
## Key messages for World Water Day 2025

- **Glaciers are melting faster than ever.** As the planet gets hotter due to climate change, our frozen world is shrinking, making the water cycle more unpredictable and extreme.
- **Glacial retreat threatens devastation.** For billions of people, meltwater flows are changing, causing floods, droughts, landslides and sea level rise, and damaging ecosystems.
- **Glacier preservation is a survival strategy.** We must work together to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and manage meltwater more sustainably for people and the planet.



Source: <https://www.un.org/en/observances/water-day>

**How long could you last without water?** It's generally accepted that about three days, maybe as many as five or six in unusual circumstances, is the length of time a human being can survive without water. For most of us, living in Canada with its abundance of fresh water, access to potable water is not something we think about. We take it for granted. That is not the case for many people. In 2019 the World Health Organization announced that 1 in 3 people globally do not have access to clean drinking water and there are no indicators that this number has changed in the last few years. If you think that is an issue that would not affect anyone in Canada, think



again. There are currently 31 long term boil water advisories in Indigenous communities across Canada. Neskantaga First Nation in northwestern Ontario has been under a boil-water advisory for over 30 years — the longest in effect in Canada. There are 31 different reasons why these advisories still exist so it might help to focus in

on one of the most egregious situations, Grassy Narrows First Nation (Asabiinyashkosiwagong Nitam-Anishinaabeg). (Map source:

<https://www.sac-isc.gc.ca/eng/1620925418298/1620925434679>)

Grassy Narrows is located in northern Ontario near the Manitoba border. From 1962 to 1970, the Dryden Pulp and Paper company and its chemical plant dumped up to 11,000 kilograms of mercury into the headwaters of the English-Wabigoon River system, causing the fishery to be closed as mercury concentrations in fish reached almost “50 times the upper limit considered safe for human consumption”. If you wish to read more, here is the link to an article published in *Environmental Health Perspectives* (Volume 131 Issue 7)

<https://ehp.niehs.nih.gov/doi/full/10.1289/EHP11301>.

In summary, over 50 years of eating mercury contaminated fish and drinking contaminated water has resulted in multigenerational mercury poisoning, affecting pregnant women and their children. Aside from the severe neurological impacts of mercury poisoning that affects 90% of the population, there is an unusually high rate of suicide among youth. The rate is three times that of any other First Nations community in Canada or of the Canadian national average. There is a plan to build a healthcare facility to specifically support the affected community but that is three to five years away from completion. Without access to other resources, fish continues to be a necessary food source for the community.

There have been protests, marches, media coverage, but so far action has been slow to happen. Both federal and provincial governments are slow to respond and should be held accountable for the promises they made to clean up the environment and support additional health resources. In the meantime, the community needs ongoing financial support as they continue to hold governments accountable for their promises, often requiring legal action, protests and marches. So how can you help?

The Eastern Synod Circle for Reconciliation and Justice invites you to celebrate **International Water Day on March 22** by making a donation to Grassy Narrows. It could be \$22, \$2.22, or whatever works for you. All proceeds will be collected by the Eastern Synod until the end of April, and then donated directly to Grassy Narrows. Cheques can be mailed to the Eastern Synod Office at 74 Weber St W., Kitchener, N2H 3Z3. For e-transfers, please send those to [esdeposits@elcic.ca](mailto:esdeposits@elcic.ca) . When sending donations, **designate the funds to "World Water Day - Grassy Narrows Relief."** Without the designation we will not be able to properly track funds, allocate them to this campaign, or issue receipts for donations.

Together we can make a real difference for the people of Grassy Narrows. Donate today!