

From: Katrina Marsh <kmarsh@chamber.ca>
Sent: January-18-16 2:01 PM
To: XNCR, Min
Cc: Caroline Grover
Subject: Protecting Western Canada's Fresh Waters from Zebra and Quagga Mussels
Attachments: Protecting_Western_Canadas_Fresh_Waters_from_Zebra_and_Quagga_Mussels (4).pdf;
2016-01-11_Letter_Urgent Need to Prevent Invasive Mussels_OBWB to Federal
Ministers.pdf

Dear Minister Tootoo,

I am writing today to make you aware of the Canadian Chamber of Commerce's position on protecting Western Canada's Fresh Waters from Zebra and Quagga mussels. The Canadian Chamber of Commerce's president Perrin Beatty wrote to your predecessor when this policy resolution was first passed in 2014. Given the importance of this issue to our members in British Columbia, I wanted to ensure that you and your staff had the chance to review its recommendations.

The Canadian Chamber of Commerce's policy resolutions are submitted by our network of 420 local chambers of commerce and boards of trade from across Canada. They are debated and voted on by accredited delegates at our annual AGM. In order to become official policy of the Canadian Chamber, a resolution must pass by two-thirds of the delegates, ensuring that these policy recommendations reflect the views of a large majority of Canadian business community.

Attached is our policy resolution on invasive mussel species. I also look the liberty of attaching a letter from the Okanagan Basin Water Board that you likely have already seen, but which outlines our membership's views on the urgency of these issues.

Please do not hesitate to have your staff contact me should you have any questions regarding this resolution.

Katrina Marsh

Director, Environment and Natural Resources Policy | Directrice principale, Politique des ressources naturelles et de l'environnement

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Hon. Ralph Goodale, P.C., M.P.
Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness

Hon. Marc Garneau, P.C., M.P.
Minister of Transport

Hon. Catherine McKenna, P.C., M.P.
Minister of Environment and Climate Change

Hon. Hunter Tootoo, P.C., M.P.
Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard
House of Commons
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6

January 11, 2016

Re: Urgent need to prevent invasive mussels from entering Pacific Northwest

Dear Ministers,

The Okanagan Basin Water Board (OBWB) was instituted in 1970 as a collaboration of the three Okanagan regional districts to provide leadership on water issues spanning the valley. Since the last electoral boundary adjustment, our basin is represented in four separate federal ridings. The OBWB undertakes strategic activities at the basin scale for long-term sustainable water supplies. We have worked together with senior governments on many projects and programs throughout our 45 year history.

We are extremely concerned about the need for action to prevent invasive zebra and quagga mussels (Dreissenids) from entering the Pacific Northwest, B.C., and the Okanagan in particular which is considered to be at high-risk and is a primary destination for tourism and most in-land watercraft travel in Western Canada. An infestation could irrevocably harm our environment, economy, and way of life. The mussels would impact every water intake, outfall, boat and dock in our lakes, and all other in-lake infrastructure. Of special concern in B.C. is the threat to hydroelectric facilities, agricultural production, tourism and maintaining pacific salmon species. It is estimated that an invasion of zebra and quagga mussels in the Pacific Northwest could cost \$5 billion per year. The Pacific Northwest Economic Region¹ has recently called for an additional \$20 million from all partners annually to adequately protect the region from these mussels, with the ultimate effect being the protection from many other types of invasive species as well.

Over the past several years, federal, provincial, private sector and non-profit partners have taken great strides to improve legislation, increase public awareness and monitor for the invasion of these devastating species. However, the discovery of these mussels in Lake Winnipeg in 2013, including the failed attempt to contain and eradicate them, and the discovery this past fall in Cedar Lake, Manitoba, shows that the current systems in place to prevent the spread of these species are still inadequate.

¹ The Pacific Northwest Economic Region (PNWER) is a statutory body which includes political/legislative representation from B.C., Alberta, Saskatchewan, the Yukon and Northwest Territories, Alaska, Idaho, Oregon, Montana, Washington, <http://www.pnwer.org/>

The Okanagan Basin Water Board recognizes the federal government's announcement in June 2015, regarding legislation to prevent the spread of invasive species. However, more decisive action is needed to help protect Western Canada from the spread of zebra and quagga mussels through the following federal actions:

1. Provide training and appropriate resources to CBSA to ensure agents can inspect and stop mussel infested watercraft from entering Canada.
2. Establish full-time seasonal inspection stations at major provincial crossings in Banff and Jasper National Parks to protect the Columbia and Fraser River systems and their Pacific salmon populations.
3. Fully engage in the Pacific NorthWest Economic Region Invasive Species Working Group to help implement the recommendations in the framework for Advancing a Regional Defense Against Dresseinids in the Pacific Northwest.
4. Work with and provide funding to the Provinces of Ontario and Manitoba for containment of existing infestations at source waters.
5. Work with and provide funding to the Provinces of Saskatchewan, Alberta and British Columbia to assist in the implementation of a coordinated inspection plan for all remaining uninfested areas.

We applaud the Government of Canada's stated commitment to provide much needed infrastructure improvement for Canadian communities. While we support this investment, particularly in the area of water supply and quality improvement infrastructure, the cost of necessary future investments in retrofitting and maintenance can be greatly reduced by preventing the spread of invasive zebra and quagga mussels.

We urge that you give this matter high priority in your ministries.

Yours sincerely,



Doug Findlater, Chair
Okanagan Basin Water Board

CC:

- Okanagan MPs: Stephen Fuhr, Dan Albas, Mel Arnold, Richard Cannings;
- Federal Critics: Hon. Erin O'Toole, Kelly Block, Mark Strahl, Hon Ed Fast;
- Okanagan MLAs: Hon. Christy Clark, Hon. Steve Thomson, Hon. Norm Letnick, Eric Foster, Dan Ashton, Linda Larson, Jackie Tegart, Greg Kylo;
- Regional District Chairs for North Okanagan, Central Okanagan, and Okanagan-Similkameen;
- Okanagan Municipalities;
- Chiefs Executive Council, Okanagan Nation Alliance;
- Matt Morrison, Chief Executive Officer, Pacific NorthWest Economic Region;
- Gail Wallin, Executive Director, Invasive Species Council of B.C.

Protecting Western Canada's Fresh Waters from Zebra and Quagga Mussels

The rapid spread of invasive zebra and quagga mussels through fresh waters east of Saskatchewan has had devastating impacts on hydroelectric power, marine shipping, fishing and tourism industries. These species have recently spread through waterways in the southwest United States, and now pose an imminent threat to fresh waters in Canada's western provinces. The federal government must take decisive action now to avoid irreversible damage to our marine and tourism industries.

Quagga and zebra mussels pose a serious and costly threat to aquatic ecosystems, salmon populations, tourist destinations, hydro power stations and other infrastructure facilities throughout western Canada. Native to Eastern Europe and Western Asia, quagga and zebra mussels have caused millions of dollars in damage to the Laurentian Great Lakes area and have cost the North American economy billions of dollars to control. The damage these species cause is diverse; among other things, quagga and zebra mussels:

- Disrupt native ecosystems by altering food webs, concentrating pollutants in their wastes, and inducing bird and fish kills
- Attack infrastructure by clogging water intakes and distribution systems, and by damaging pumps and hydroelectric power generating facilities
- Injure tourism (and tourists) by fouling beaches with razor sharp shells and decay odour
- Hurt marine industry by impairing the structural integrity of steel and concrete (such as are found in marinas and port facilities), and causing damage to watercraft

Zebra and quagga mussels typically migrate from one body of water to another on or in watercraft, but can also be transported on boat trailers, fishing gear, recreational equipment and float planes. In addition to adults that attach themselves to hard surfaces, larvae, which are invisible to the naked eye, are easily transported to new waters in ballast tanks and bilges. Once introduced to a body of water, there is no known way of eradicating zebra and quagga mussels. Their unwelcome presence is permanent, and the damage they cause perpetual.

Fortunately, the advance of these species has not reached the lakes and waterways of Saskatchewan, Alberta and British Columbia. But the danger to these waters and the economies they support could not be clearer. On March 12, 2014, Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) staff in Osoyoos, British Columbia observed invasive mussel shells on a boat being transported from Lake Pleasant, Arizona. Though federal legislation does not allow mussel-contaminated boats to be stopped at the border, the hauler voluntarily allowed the boat to be detained and decontaminated. This incident represents just one of many potential catastrophes averted.¹

Canada lags far behind the United States in addressing this issue. To give one example, the Canadian Border Services Agency lacks the legal authority to detain watercraft entering Canada so they can be searched for zebra and quagga mussel contamination. In contrast, the United States has empowered its border agents to detain watercraft pending inspection for invasive mollusks since the *Lacey Act* (16 U.S.C. §§ 3371–3378) was amended in 1969, and since 1990 has had legislation directed specifically to the threat of invasive aquatic species being transported in ballast water (Nonindigenous Aquatic Nuisance Prevention and Control Act of 1990). In addition, several US federal agencies (including the US Fish and Wildlife Service, the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, and the Environmental Protection Agency) are already taking action to stop the spread of these mussels in that country.

¹ In 2011 and 2012, authorities in Idaho stopped more than six boats per year bound for western Canada that were infested with mussels.

If swift action is not taken to neutralize the threat of incoming mussels, the cost of zebra and quagga mussels infesting western Canadian waters is likely to be in the hundreds of millions of dollars over the next decade.² Virtually every industry that interfaces with freshwater will be affected, including the Pacific salmon fishery, hydroelectric power generation, tourism, and marine shipping. The federal government must act immediately to stop zebra and quagga mussels from causing severe damage to the Canadian economy.

Recommendations

That the federal government:

1. Enact legislation that empowers the Canada Border Services Agency to detain, inspect and refuse admission to Canada to any vehicle contaminated with zebra or quagga mussels.
2. Facilitate cooperation among the states and provinces whose waters are not already contaminated by zebra and quagga mussels and continue to provide support to affected provinces.
3. Support the establishment of a non-contamination perimeter about the Pacific Northwest Economic Region (PNWER).
4. Provide appropriate support to provinces engaged in combating zebra and quagga mussels in their waters.

² Damages from an infestation of Lake Okanagan has been estimated at \$42 million per year (Self, J., Larratt, H. 2013. Limiting the Spread of Aquatic Invasive Species into the Okanagan. Prepared for the Okanagan Basin Water Board and the Glenmore-Ellison Improvement District., available online http://www.obwb.ca/fileadmin/docs/2013_obwb_ais_report.pdf); damage to BC generally has been estimated more conservatively at \$21 million annually (Robinson, D. et al. 2014. Preliminary Damage Estimates for Selected Invasive Fauna in B.C. Prepared for Ecosystems Branch, B.C. Ministry of Environment.); damage to Alberta has been estimated at more than \$75 million annually (Neupane, A. An Estimate of Annual Economic Cost of Invasive Dreissenid Mussels to Alberta. ESRD. November 2013)