
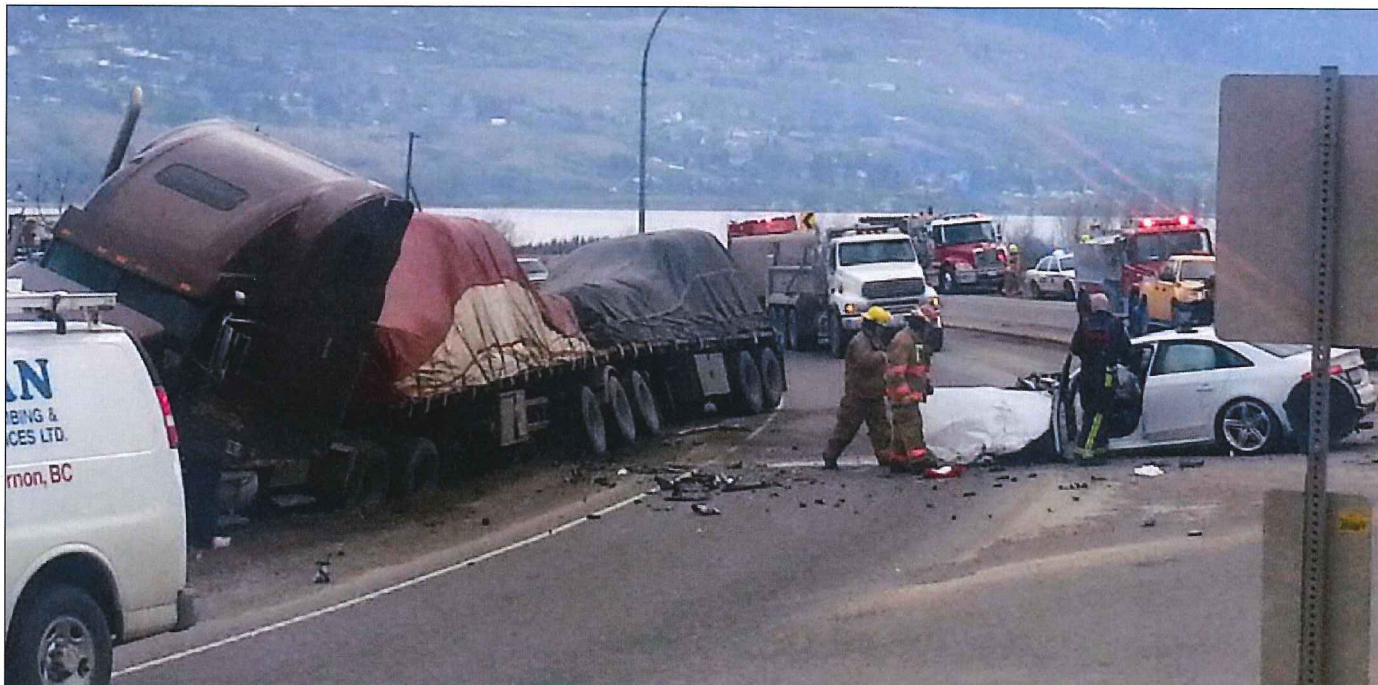


ROTARIANS CELEBRATE | Vernon Rotary marks 90 years of service with birthday bash Friday [A5]

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MARCEL BOUZANE PHOTO

A three-vehicle collision closed Highway 97 at Old Kamloops Road for about three hours Friday afternoon. It's believed the incident began when a Ford Escort failed to stop or yield after stopping before pulling on to the highway. That vehicle was T-boned by a southbound Audi, which was then forced into the path of a northbound semi-truck. The driver of the Audi was airlifted to Kelowna General Hospital, and is expected to recover, while the passenger in the Audi and the driver of the Ford were taken to Vernon Jubilee Hospital. The investigation continues.

Demands escalate to stop mussel invasion

RICHARD ROLKE
 Morning Star Staff

Demand is growing for provincial action to prevent a threat to Okanagan lakes.

Lake Country council is asking the Southern Interior Local Government Association to support a resolution that calls on the provincial government to install inspection stations at B.C.'s borders for boats possibly infested with quagga and zebra mussels.



James Baker

"If we don't put money into trying to

stop them, it will almost be impossible once they are entrenched," said Mayor James Baker.

While the federal government has initiated plans for monitoring stations along the U.S. border, the B.C. government has not taken similar actions along the Alberta and territorial boundaries.

There is a concern a boat containing mussels could ultimately enter an Okanagan lake and spread.

B.C. is being asked to contribute a minimum of \$530,000 annually to monitoring, consistent with Alberta's surveillance program.

Zebra and quagga mussels are native to eastern Europe and they have spread across North America since the 1980s.

They clog water intake pipes, pumps and boat motors. They also deplete food sources for fish and produce toxins that kill fish and birds and contaminate drinking water.

The Okanagan Basin Water Board has estimated that the direct cost and lost revenue if the mussels take hold in the region are \$42 million annually.

Baker says an infestation could seriously impact the Okanagan's economy.

"Tourism is what we do and if we can't put money into checking boats, there will be big problems," he said.

The resolution will go before SILGA delegates at their convention in April. If it is approved, it will then go to the Union of B.C. Municipalities conference in September for consideration.

If UBCM supports the resolution, the provincial government would then be lobbied.

"We need the province to get on board," said Baker.

Okanagan Basin Water Board officials are frustrated that last week's provincial budget didn't include expanded funding for boat monitoring.

"I didn't see a highlight that we're matching Alberta funding," Anna Warwick Sears, OBWB executive director, told the Regional District of North Okanagan board Wednesday.

According to Warwick Sears, B.C. spent \$20,000 on boat inspections in 2014.

"We're way below what other jurisdictions are doing," she said.

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