

January 16, 2016

NEWS RELEASE

**OKANAGAN WATER BOARD URGES NEW FEDERAL GOVERNMENT
TO HELP PROTECT PACIFIC NW FROM INVASIVE MUSSELS**

Kelowna, B.C. – The Okanagan Basin Water Board has sent a letter to the federal government regarding the urgent need for the government to step up efforts to prevent invasive mussels from entering the Pacific Northwest.

The letter has been sent recognizing that there are now new ministers in charge of this file and a recent report from the Pacific NorthWest Economic Region has estimated that zebra and quagga mussels could cost the Pacific Northwest \$500 million per year.

For more information on the mussels, and the risks and expected impacts to the Okanagan, please visit www.DontMoveAMussel.ca.

Please find the letter attached below.

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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 (Dresseinids) 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 \$0.5 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](http://www.pnwer.org/) (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.