

Mel Arnold  
Member of Parliament, North Okanagan – Shuswap  
Constituency Office  
1 – 3105 29<sup>th</sup> Street  
Vernon, BC  
V1T 5A8

30 August 2018

Re: Funding to prevent an Invasive Mussels invasion in British Columbia

Dear Mr. Arnold,

I am writing on behalf of the Shuswap Watershed Council to express our concern about the enduring threat that zebra and quagga mussels pose to the waterways in the Shuswap, and the entirety of British Columbia, and to ask for your support in continuing to press for more action from the Government of Canada on this issue.

The Shuswap Watershed Council (SWC) is a collaborative partnership of three regional districts, two municipalities, the Secwepemc Nation, and two provincial government agencies. Its mandate is to enhance, protect, and advocate for water quality in the Shuswap watershed. Since our formation as a Council in 2014, we have become increasingly informed about the seriousness of the threat of invasive mussels and the risks to our aquatic ecosystems and economy. Our water quality, fish habitat (resident species and anadromous Pacific salmon, for which the Shuswap watershed provides critical migration, spawning and rearing habitat), infrastructure, water utilities, beaches, and property value are at risk. If zebra and quagga mussels establish here, its conservatively estimated that it will cost \$43M to British Columbians, and \$500M to the Pacific NorthWest Economic Region to deal with the impacts. These numbers surely do not represent the social and cultural losses should invasive mussels impact Pacific salmon stocks.

In light of our concern, in 2018 the SWC expanded its water quality program to include education, outreach, and monitoring for zebra and quagga mussels in the Shuswap. We have worked closely with the Columbia Shuswap Invasive Species Society (CSISS) to deliver these programs within the Shuswap watershed. This year we will spend \$42,000 on these activities, derived from local tax revenues. CSISS will spend an additional \$60,000 on education, outreach, and monitoring within parts of the Shuswap and Columbia watersheds, within the boundaries of the Columbia Shuswap Regional District.

The recent announcement on August 6<sup>th</sup> 2018 by Honourable Jonathan Wilkinson, Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, regarding funding for zebra and quagga mussel research, education and outreach is a start but we think it falls short of what is needed. There is little information about the funding at this time, except that "... \$400K over three years will be invested for

education and outreach purposes ... within the Okanagan Basin.”<sup>1</sup> We feel strongly that this needs to be a much bigger investment and should be spent in all regions of British Columbia. A federal investment in BC could go toward several invasive mussel prevention activities:

- Expansion of the watercraft inspection program that’s run by the BC Conservation Officer Service, including the establishment of additional inspection stations and longer hours and seasons of operation. British Columbia’s border ought to be better guarded.
- New measures to ensure aircraft (i.e., floatplanes) aren’t transporting aquatic invasive species
- Expansion of early detection monitoring programs
- Expansion of education and outreach, complimenting the efforts that are already underway

Furthermore, the Government of Canada needs to take more action on containing mussel infestations and fully enact the Aquatic Invasive Species Regulation of the *Federal Fisheries Act*. Our efforts in the west at preventing an invasion need to be met with robust measures for containing mussels where they’ve already established in eastern and central Canada.

The Shuswap Watershed Council would be pleased to work with the Department of Fisheries and Oceans and any other agency to ensure that British Columbia is adequately protected from zebra and quagga mussels. As previously mentioned, the SWC is a partnership; all of our member organizations share in the concern and have much to lose should there be an invasion.

Kind regards,

Paul Demenok  
Chair, Shuswap Watershed Council  
Director, Columbia Shuswap Regional District, Area ‘C’ South Shuswap  
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CC:

- Todd Doherty, MP Cariboo-Prince George, Shadow Minister for Fisheries and Oceans and Canadian Coast Guard
- Hon. George Heyman, Minister of Environment and Climate Change Strategy
- Shuswap and Thompson MLAs: Greg Killo, Todd Stone, Eric Foster, Peter Milobar
- Shuswap and South Thompson Mayors: Nancy Cooper, Terry Rysz, Ken Christian, Rick Berrigan
- Regional District Chairs: Rhona Martin, John Ranta, Bob Fleming
- Secwepemc Chiefs: Cliff Arnouse, Oliver Arnouse, Wayne Christian, Judy Wilson
- Brian Heise, Chair, Invasive Species Council of BC
- Hamish Kassa, Chair, Columbia Shuswap Invasive Species Society
- Tracy Gray, Chair, Okanagan Basin Water Board

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<sup>1</sup> Government of Canada News Release. “The Government of Canada is investing in research and education to prevent Zebra and Quagga mussels invasion in the Okanagan region.” August 6, 2018. Available [online](#).