



Reference: 33171

April 11, 2024

VIA EMAIL: JFreund@csrd.bc.ca

Kevin Flynn, Board Chair
Columbia Shuswap Regional District
555 Harbourfront Drive NE
Salmon Arm, British Columbia
V1E 4P1

Dear Kevin Flynn:

Thank you for your letter of December 4, 2023, to the Honourable Katrine Conroy, Minister of Finance, regarding measures and resources needed to prevent an invasion of zebra and quagga mussels in British Columbia (B.C.). The lead for the delivery of the Invasive Mussel Defence Program (IMDP) falls with the Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship (WLRs); therefore, I am pleased to respond and apologize for the delay.

Keeping B.C. waters free of invasive mussels is an ongoing priority for our government. Both the WLRs and the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy (the Conservation Officer Service in particular) remain committed to the IMDP and its watercraft inspections, enforcement actions, lake monitoring, and education. I am pleased to provide further information on the Calls to Action put forward by the Shuswap Watershed Council.

Call to Action the IMDP be expanded such that all routes into B.C. from Alberta and the United States (U.S.) have a watercraft inspection and decontamination station and that all watercraft coming into B.C. be inspected.

The annual program workplan incorporates ongoing feedback from partners, the public, and jurisdictions across western Canada and the U.S. to ensure funding allocations maximize program effectiveness. Results and lessons learned from previous inspections seasons are available on the [program website](#).

The IMDP budget relies on funding partners, and as a result, it fluctuates annually. The program has been running successfully at \$3.3M per year. In direct response to reductions in financial contributions from some funding partners in recent years, the province temporarily redirected funds from other provincial priorities in order to maintain full IMDP operations. While we are still working with funding partners to finalize the 2024 season budget, IMDP

operations are planned to be the same as last year. In addition, we continue to work and explore new, or increased, financial partnerships to further expand the program.

Immediately following the announcement of the positive detection of quagga mussels in Idaho, the IMDP triggered operational changes to treat all boats coming from Idaho as high risk. This is consistent with the response plan for boats from any other mussel-positive jurisdiction. There have been no additional positive detections in other parts of the Columbia River Basin through B.C. or neighbouring jurisdictions' monitoring programs.

IMDP staff are working with Canadian Border Services Agency (CBSA) regarding the critical importance of coverage at the U.S. - Canada border crossings. IMDP staff are currently supporting the Federal Government's border management by following up with each notification from CBSA and conducting necessary inspections and decontaminations when required.

Call to Action: Introduce 'pull-the-plug' legislation, requiring all watercraft to have their drain plugs removed prior to travelling on B.C. roads.

The Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship is undertaking a review of the *Wildlife Act* and has identified consideration of pull-the-plug legislation. As this process unfolds, we encourage recommendations to be submitted directly through the public review process (WildlifeActReview@gov.bc.ca).

Call to Action: Update the provincial Early Detection, Rapid Response plan (EDRR) (published February 2015).

A review and update of the EDRR Plan is currently underway, which includes evaluating tools for response, containment, and control. In addition, the IMDP is scheduling a rapid response training exercise with our United States counterparts in the Columbia River Basin to further inform upcoming EDRR Plan improvements.

Call to Action: Advocate for new containment measures in Manitoba and Ontario which already have Zebra and Quagga Mussel (ZQM) infestations.

A central principle to the IMDP is perimeter defence. In 2016, B.C. signed the Interprovincial Territorial Agreement for Coordinated Regional Defence Against Invasive Species. Through this agreement, B.C. regularly collaborates with Alberta, Yukon, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba on enhanced coordination for preventing and managing aquatic invasive species. Collectively, western Canada jurisdictions are united that ZQM's are the top Aquatic Invasive Species priority. As a result, we coordinate our actions with each other and key partners including the Federal Government. Collectively, our priorities include supporting containment efforts in Manitoba (and other jurisdictions) who are at the forefront of mitigating the spread and inspecting/decontaminating high risk watercraft. These measures will further strengthen the perimeter defence approach that will help protect B.C.'s freshwater ecosystems.

Again, thank you for raising your concerns, and highlighting the importance of the IMDP to the Columbia Shuswap Regional District. If you would like further discussion, please do not hesitate to contact the IMDP program leads: Martina Beck (Martina.Beck@gov.bc.ca) or Manjit Kerr-Upal (Manjit.Kerr-Upal@gov.bc.ca).

Kevin Flynn, Columbia Shuswap Regional District

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Nathan Cullen". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Nathan Cullen
Minister

pc: Honourable Katrine Conroy, Minister of Finance

Honourable Adrian Dix, Minister of Health

Honourable Lana Popham, Minister of Tourism, Arts, Culture and Sport

Martina Beck, Invasive Fauna Unit Head, Aquatic Ecosystems Branch, Ministry of
Water, Land and Resource Stewardship

Manjit Kerr-Upal, Director, Conservation Science, Aquatic Ecosystems Branch,
Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship