

## opinion

### ▼ INVASIVE SPECIES

# Clark government seems OK with trying to get rid of mussels after they're in our lakes

Open letter to  
Madame Premier:

I'm a B.C.-based filmmaker, born and raised here. I love our province deeply. I love our people, I love our culture, and most of all I love the unparalleled natural beauty that defines our province.

Last summer, I learned of the imminent threat that zebra and quagga mussels pose to our province.

While I sat with my family on an idyllic B.C. beach next to a sparkling lake filled with people swimming, boating, and fishing, I realized that everything in front of me would be destroyed if the mussels got into B.C.

I had to do something, so I decided to make a short film. At the time, I assumed that the government of B.C. must simply be unaware of this threat, or at least unaware of its magnitude. I hoped that my film would help change this.

You can watch the five-minute film at [www.protectourfreshwater.ca](http://www.protectourfreshwater.ca).

I know now that your government is aware.

However, for some reason, you have dedicat-

ed a mere \$1.3 million, spread out over three years, to combat a problem that has cost over \$6 billion in North America so far, and has been a tragedy for every community that has faced it.

Your current action plan is entitled, *Early Detection and Rapid Response*.

This is based on a glaring falsehood. In 25 years, in hundreds of lakes and rivers across North America, it has been proven again and again that eradication does not exist.

Zebra and quagga mussels, once in a lake or river, cannot be stopped. Since this in an established, well-known fact, let me ask you this: What exactly are you planning to rapidly respond with?

Prevention is the only option. Period. The only way to protect our province is to stop and inspect every single boat that crosses our borders. If you miss even one boat, that could be the boat that causes a catastrophe in our province.

You said on CTV News that with your cur-

rent preventative program of three roving inspection teams, you are "watching to see what works."

Let me point out what should be obvious. If any part of your program doesn't "work," the result will be the infestation and subsequent destruction of our lakes and rivers. Putting out a half-hearted "test" program is not a luxury that British Columbians can afford. Failure is simply not an option. The only thing that will work is 100 per cent border protection. Everyday that you resist doing what is necessary and right, you gamble with the future of every community in B.C.

You have said that you are working with other provinces and states to alert you if a contaminated boat is incoming. So you are outsourcing the protection of B.C. to outside jurisdictions which have their own lakes and rivers to worry about. Wouldn't it make sense, considering what is at stake, to work with them and have mandatory, permanent inspection stations at our borders—the same as what Alberta and several other jurisdictions have?

You have said you will continue to review the program and see if more action is needed. Time is not a luxury we have. Anytime this summer or next, a boat could eas-

ily slip past your very weak border defence and launch in our waters. Then, your only option will be to sit back and watch as the mussels inevitably spread to every lake and river in B.C.

The freshwater ecosystems of our province will be turned upside down. The salmon, trout, and kokanee will all but disappear. Our beaches, riverbeds and lake floors will be a carpet of razor-sharp shells.

As the mussels invade our drinking-water systems, agricultural irrigation systems, fire-suppression systems, and hydroelectric dams, every B.C. resident will face steep increases in taxes and bills. Perhaps worst of all, our lakes and rivers, central to our identity and way-of-life, will become unrecognizable. The damage will be permanent.

You have the power and the resources to prevent this. The people of B.C. are calling for action. This is an emergency and should be treated as such. Why do you delay? Why are you not doing the absolute maximum to protect our province?

Is B.C. not worth it to you?

Brynne Morrice,  
Vernon

### ▼ PRECIOUS RESOURCE

# Public flower beds are the biggest water wasters of all

To the editor:

I frequently drive Hwy. 97 from Lake Country to Kelowna, in the early morning hours.

The amount of water that accumulates on the roadway from the irrigation systems in the centre meridian is astonishing to me. At times the intersection at Sexsmith Road has been wet from one side to the other.

That's a lot of pavement.

What's the deal?

Is the intention to propagate more asphalt? Are you supplying free car washes? Offering wiper blade testing? Dust control? Challenging hydroplaning driver skills?

Would the accident report claim road conditions were bare and dry or bare and dry and wet in certain sections?

I have experienced significant hydroplaning while my windshield wipers were clearing the spray from another vehicle. That's a lot of water.

Sidewalks and parking lots are also being watered with precise, timed regularity. There are many areas of walkways made impassable by the overwatering of use-less strips of grass. Not many pedestrians require safe passage in the early hours, but it would appear sidewalks are only open during certain hours.

I am sure this stretch of road is but one example of extremely poor

water management.

There needs to be a hot-line established to report such waste of a "regulated" resource as precious as our water supply.

*"I have experienced significant hydroplaning while my windshield wipers were clearing the spray from another vehicle. That's a lot of water."*

I laugh at the ridiculousness of literature being distributed and websites created by local governments to supposedly educate the public and promote proper water use and conservation when this situation continues season after season.

The Okanagan WaterWise website recommends landscaping with native species, using xeriscape landscaping and not competing with areas which receive more natural precipitation, like Vancouver or Seattle.

It also recommends to check irrigation systems to ensure everything is operating efficiently: "Are the sprinklers watering the sidewalks or parking lot?"

The City of Kelowna Water Regulation By-

law reads: "No property owner shall cause or permit water resulting from an outdoor landscape irrigation system to flow wastefully on to non-irrigated areas, walks, roadways or structures."

Another part states: "No person shall cause or permit water to be discharged from the City Water Utility for no useful purpose."

Is the city exempt from its own bylaw?

Perhaps "smart controllers" should be installed in the roadways to measure the moisture content of the pavement or road shoulders.

Do the landscaping materials and the irrigation systems in the meridians and along the roadsides correspond with the recommendations cited in the bylaw and the WaterSmart program?

Do the estimated calculations for landscape water use include the incredible waste of water in the "landscape water budget" (maximum allowable annual water usage for an outdoor landscape)?

Are these wasteful acts included in the calculations and statistics of the City of Kelowna's Water Sustainability Plan?

There is no water provider specifically assigned to Hwy. 97 as per any maps provided by the Kelowna Joint Water Committee.

I encourage a WaterSmart representative to drive Hwy. 97, southbound, from Edwards Road onward, between 4 and 5 a.m. for an estimated, tiny sampling of very UN-smart, very UN-wise water usage.

C. Muir,  
Lake Country

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