

# News

## Family flees burning home

**RICHARD ROLKE**  
*Morning Star Staff*

Tragedy was prevented early Saturday morning.

A family was able to escape a burning home at about 5:22 a.m. in the 3000 block of 38th Street after an occupant woke up and heard a noise.

"He opened a door and the area was full of flames," said Lawrie Skolrood, Vernon deputy fire chief.

The man notified the rest of the family, including young children, and they ran outside.

"It could have been far worse with people sleeping," said Skolrood of the potential of the blaze.

"Everyone got out safely."

Crews from the Vernon Fire Department were soon on scene after receiving the initial emergency call.

"The firefighters got it fairly early and they were able to knock

it down before the fire progressed further," said Skolrood, adding that crews experienced no major challenges while tackling the blaze.

However, there was significant structural damage sustained to the upper floor of the building while the roof was also compromised.

An insurance adjustor was on scene late Saturday morning and fire-fighters were also eventually back on scene.

"We will be determining the cause this afternoon (Saturday),"

said Skolrood.

The results of the investigation were not known by press time.

*"It could have been far worse with people sleeping."*  
— Skolrood

**The upper level of a home in the 3000 block of Vernon's 38th Street sustained significant damage early Saturday.**

LISA VANDERVELDE/MORNING STAR



## Region mussels up infestation protection

**RICHARD ROLKE**  
*Morning Star Staff*

Pressure is growing to prevent a potentially devastating species from moving to the Okanagan.

The Regional District of North Okanagan board will write the federal government to initiate measures to stop the spread of zebra and quagga mussels.

"They are the only ones who can mandate border inspections. We want a date for action," said director Rob Sawatzky.

Support for tough measures is also being sought from the Union of B.C. Municipalities.

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

These mussels 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.

"Every female can have a million offspring in a year," said Heather Larratt, an aquatic biologist working with the Okanagan Basin Water Board.

Based on the potential impact to drinking water infrastructure, fisheries, tourism and real estate values, Larratt believes the mussels could cost the Okanagan \$43 million annually.

"If we were to compare it to milfoil (weed), it would be like comparing dandelions to mountain pine



PHOTO SUBMITTED

**There is concern that the zebra and quagga mussels will move into Okanagan lakes.**

beetle," she said.

Larratt says there is a need to inspect boats coming across the U.S. border and it's essential for boaters to take the necessary steps to ensure they aren't transporting the mussels in their boats.

She also says there may be a need for local decontamination stations.

"The clock is ticking. We may have a few years (before they arrive) but we need to get going," said Larratt.

Director Juliette Cunningham isn't impressed with the provincial government's response to the potential threat.

"Fining people (money) after the infestation is too late," she said.

"We need to focus on preventative aspects."

RDNO is also looking at what it can do at local boat launches to create public awareness.

"Even a paddleboard or kayak can bring the species in," said director Mike Macnabb.

Director Mary-Jo O'Keefe wants the 2014 budget talks to consider funding for a mussel strategy.

"Eventually we will need a boat cleaner," she said.

Switchboard: 545-3322

### INDEX

Arts.....	A31
Business.....	A17
Classifieds.....	A37
Editorial.....	A8
Letters.....	A9
Lifestyles.....	A28
Sports.....	A13

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