

Hon. Michael de Jong, Minister of Finance
Room 153, Parliament Buildings
Victoria, B.C. V8V 1X4

Hon. Mary Polak, Minister of Environment
Room 112, Parliament Buildings
Victoria, B.C. V8V 1X4

February 12, 2016

Re: Support for Provincial plan to prevent the spread of invasive mussels into British Columbia

Dear Minister de Jong and Minister Polak,

The Okanagan Basin Water Board (OBWB) wishes to express strong support for the Ministry of Environment's proposed plan as presented at the Mussel Prevention Leadership Forum,¹ December 18, 2015, to establish eight full-time, mandatory inspection stations to prevent the spread of invasive mussels into B.C. We are pleased to see that the plan builds on information gathered throughout the 2015 boating season by the B.C. Conservation Officer's service and Ministry of Environment. The establishment of these stations would bring B.C.'s inspection regime on par with the most effective and efficient systems in North America, and would meet obligations to protect our own waters, while supporting the protection of waters in neighboring jurisdictions throughout the Pacific Northwest.

The province has conservatively estimated that an infestation of invasive mussels could cost B.C. \$43 million per year. A recent estimate from the Pacific NorthWest Economic Region (PNWER) suggests it could cost over \$500 million per year to the economy of the Pacific Northwest. The resources required to carry out the 2016 inspection plan are relatively modest when compared to the cost of an infestation.

Since 2012, the OBWB has been a vocal advocate of efforts to prevent invasive mussels, and we acknowledge the significant actions of both the federal and provincial governments: improving legislation; developing prevention and detection plans; educating and providing outreach to the public; and creating partnerships to enhance capacity. Implementing the province's 2016 inspection plan, with an ongoing commitment for resources is a crucial step in protecting provincial water and preventing significant costs in the future. The OBWB will continue to support provincial mussel prevention efforts through public outreach and

¹ The Mussel Prevention Leadership Forum was co-hosted by the Pacific NorthWest Economic Region and the Invasive Species Council of BC in Vancouver.

education, including our [Don't Move A Mussel](#) initiative, and through collaboration with regional groups such as the Invasive Species Council of B.C. and PNWER's Invasive Species Working Group.

We congratulate the Ministry of Environment for developing a strong, strategic and efficient plan, based on deliberate information gathering, and a scientific understanding of the invasive threat. We urge you to fully fund this plan and provide all necessary resources (including financial and staffing) to make it successful this year and into the future. We have also called on the federal government to provide funding and resources to the province to support these efforts, recognizing that their recent commitment to infrastructure improvement faces a significant challenge should invasive mussels be introduced to hydro, agricultural and water supply systems in B.C.

Every year B.C. commits to programs that keep us free of invasive mussels is an investment in the economy and environment of our province.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Doug Findlater".

Doug Findlater, Chair
Okanagan Basin Water Board

CC:

- Okanagan MPs: Stephen Fuhr, Dan Albas, Mel Arnold, Richard Cannings;
- 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 Regional Districts;
- Okanagan Municipalities: Enderby, Armstrong, Spallumcheen, Vernon, Coldstream, Lake Country, Kelowna, West Kelowna, Peachland, Summerland, Penticton, Oliver, Osoyoos;
- 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.