

INVASIVE MUSSELS

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Concern over invasive mussels threat in the Okanagan



By Jules Knox

Reporter/Anchor Global News

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WEST KELOWNA

Mayor Doug Findlater
Okanagan Basin Water Board Former Chair

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Some groups in Kelowna are concerned that not enough is being done to prevent the arrival and spread of invasive zebra and quagga mussels in the Okanagan.

While invasive mussels have infested Canadian lakes as far west as Manitoba, they're not currently in B.C.

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They've had a devastating impact on hydroelectric power, marine shipping, fishing and tourism industries in places that have been affected.

The federal government recently announced \$100,000 over four years for research, plus another \$500,000 over three years for education and outreach.

And while the funding is welcome, Kelowna's Chamber of Commerce said more still needs to be done.

"There should be 24-hour checks on any border crossings," said Carmen Sparg, Kelowna Chamber of Commerce's president.

"It'll be a whole lot less than trying to mitigate \$40 million plus to fix the problem, so you know, a little bit of an initial outlay now to have that 24-hour check is going to be way less costly for our infrastructure," Sparg said.

Zebra and quagga mussels can infest lakes at an astonishing rate. A single female can produce more than one-million eggs a year.

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"We can lose our lake. We can lose it all," said West Kelowna Mayor Doug Findlater, the former chair of the Okanagan Basin Water Board.

"They graft onto any hard infrastructure. They would graft onto water intakes, sewer outfalls, boats, inside the motors of boats," Findlater said "When they die, they wash up on beaches, and beaches are no longer pleasant to walk on. There's no longer sand; it's hard shells."

So far this year, 18 boats with invasive mussels were stopped in B.C. before entering a lake. Most of them were from eastern Canada.

"When B.C. intercepts boats here, they've made it through Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta and into B.C., so there's a federal role," Findlater said.

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The province says it already has a 24-hour checkpoint at Golden, and it's always evaluating if more are needed.

Osoyoos has the only boat inspection station in the Okanagan, Aaron Canuel, inspector for the mussel defence program, said.

"Given our focus on perimeter defence, we're primarily looking at the outskirts of the province and the main travel corridors," he added.

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To stop the spread of invasive mussels, officials are reminding boat owners to clean, drain and dry their watercraft and gear.

The Okanagan Basin Water Board operates the [Don't Move a Mussel](#) outreach and education campaign for those who want to learn more about the issue.

VIDEO LINK: <https://globalnews.ca/news/4395092/concern-over-invasive-mussels-threat-in-the-okanagan/>

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