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## Feds not strong on mussels

Darren Handschuh - Apr 2, 2019 / 7:00 pm



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North Okanagan-Shuswap Conservative MP Mel Arnold says Ottawa is not doing enough to protect fresh-water lakes in Western Canada.

Arnold is calling on the federal government to initiate immediate responses to an audit released

Arnold is calling on the federal government to initiate immediate responses to an audit released today examining aquatic invasive species.

The audit was performed by the Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development and examined the federal government's measures to prevent zebra and quagga mussels (among other species) from becoming established in Canadian waters.

"Although we have known for some time that there are significant gaps in the federal AIS program, especially for British Columbia, the commissioner's report released today has exposed the government's mismanagement and neglect of their duty to protect our waters," said Arnold. "It is clear that the federal government is failing in their responsibility to lead the management of aquatic invasive species nationally and their timelines for closing these gaps stretch to 2022 - this is unacceptable."

Arnold said Commissioner Julie Gelfand concluded the federal government "had not taken the steps required to prevent invasive species, such as the zebra mussel ... from becoming established in Canada's waters despite commitments to do so over the years."

The commissioner's report found the government "had done limited enforcement of the Aquatic Invasive Species Regulations" and had failed to "prevent contaminated boats from entering Canada at the key international border crossing points."

In response, the feds committed to deploy seven new fishery officers to the Central and Arctic region and to the Quebec region, but none to Western Canada or British Columbia.

Arnold said the Okanagan-Shuswap region's popularity with boaters from across the continent carries the risk of the mussels entering our ecosystem.

In 2013, the Okanagan Basin Water Board estimated that an introduction of invasive mussels in the valley would cost the region \$43 million a year to just manage.

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