COLUMBIA SHUSWAP REGIONAL DISTRICT

February 29, 2024

Sent by email: justin.trudeau@parl.gc.ca

The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau, P.C., M.P.
Prime Minister of Canada

Office of the Prime Minister
80 Wellington Street
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A2

Dear Prime Minister:

Re: Call to Immediate Action to Prevent Invasive Mussels in BC

On behalf of the CSRD Board of Directors, I am writing to convey our concern over a matter that our Board has frequently discussed - a potential invasion of zebra or quagga mussels. The Okanagan Basin Water Board (OBWB) brought our attention to a recent federal government announcement indicating a potential reduction or cancellation of long-term funding that supports invasive mussel prevention strategies.

The absence of direct long-term federal funding designated to protect freshwater ecosystems from the threat of invasive mussels in Western Canada is a huge issue for our region. Coupled with the fact that other funding partners, such as BC Hydro and Fortis BC, are reducing their support adds to the devastating impact on the challenges to keep our freshwater bodies healthy and safe. The Province of BC's program requires this funding to fulfill its responsibility to monitor and prevent the threat of invasive mussels.

The CSRD Board strongly supports the OBWB in their call for immediate action which urges the federal government to provide immediate, long-term federal funding assistance for the Province of BC to support efforts to prevent invasive mussels. While some communities and agencies are pushing for an out of province moratorium on boats and watercraft, the CSRD Board feels this measure would have a negative impact on the regional tourism economy.

This request comes on the heels of our December 4, 2023 letter requesting federal and provincial support to have all crossings into BC monitored to proactively prevent the spread of mussels in BC, without unfavourable and significant impact to the tourism industry or local infrastructure. Not only is it important to monitor, but federal funding also allows the opportunity for inspection, education, and lake monitoring.

The Board recognizes the spread of mussels in BC would have a devastating and irreversible impact on BC's economy; prevention is viewed as the best and most cost-effective option. Given the confirmed finding that quagga mussels have been found in Idaho's Snake River, which feeds into the Columbia River in BC, it is important to accelerate the implementation of preventative measures before the consequences become disastrous and costly.

ELECTORAL AREAS
A GOLDEN-COLUMBIA
B REVELSTOKE-COLUMBIA

C EAGLE BAY-WHITE LAKE-TAPPEN
D FALKLAND-SALMON VALLEY

E SICAMOUS-MALAKWA
F NORTH SHUSWAP-SEYMOUR ARM
G BLIND BAY-SORRENTO-NOTCH HILL

MUNICIPALITIES
GOLDEN
REVELSTOKE

SALMON ARM
SICAMOUS

Meaningful federal involvement is necessary to supplement the involvement of provincial staff with decision-making, compliance, and enforcement authorities. Given the urgency of the situation, the CSRD trusts our request for funding is seriously considered; we also want to ensure continuous coordinated action between the federal and provincial governments, regional districts, and municipalities in BC to address the issues which impact the health of Canada's water systems.

We urgently request your Ministry's call-to-action and collaborative leadership in protecting and safeguarding the water resources in our region and invest in funding to support continued provincial work and protect BC's waters from invasive mussels.

Yours truly,
COLUMBIA SHUSWAP REGIONAL DISTRICT
Per:

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Kevin Flynn
Board Chair

cc: Shuswap MLA Greg Kyllo
       North Okanagan Shuswap MP Mel Arnold
       Adams Lake Indian Band
       Skwlāx te Secwepemcúl̓ecw
       Neskonlith Indian Band
       Splatsin
       City of Salmon Arm
       District of Sicamous
       Shuswap Watershed Council
       Okanagan Basin Water Board
       Columbia Basin Trust
       Columbia Shuswap Invasive Species Society
       Thompson-Nicola Regional District
       Regional District North Okanagan
       Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen
       Regional District Central Okanagan
       Thompson Okanagan Tourism Association
       Shuswap Chambers of Commerce: Salmon Arm, Sicamous, South Shuswap, North Shuswap