

July 13, 2020

**Honourable Bernadette Jordan**

Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard  
Mail Stop 15N100, Floor 15  
200 Kent Street  
Ottawa, Ont. K1A 0E6

**Hon. Bill Blair**

Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness  
269 Laurier Avenue West  
Ottawa, Ont. K1A 0P8

Dear Minister Jordan and Minister Blair

The Greater Vernon Chamber of Commerce wishes to support correspondence you received from Okanagan Valley Members of Parliament July 6 regarding aquatic invasive species.

We share the concerns that the spread of aquatic invasive mussels poses a significant threat to the Okanagan's ecosystem, lifestyle and economy, and that the potential for an infestation is very real as Canadians are encouraged to travel and explore this great nation during the pandemic.

To reduce the threat, campaigns promoting domestic travel must emphasize that all visitors need to clean, drain and dry their watercraft and equipment before crossing into B.C. They also need to understand the importance of draining lake or river water from all equipment and keeping drain plugs out during transport. We also support immediate strengthening of the Pleasure Craft Operator Card Course by providing participants with information about AIS inspection stations and the need to drain water from equipment and keep drain plugs out during transport.

We also share the concern of the Members of Parliament that U.S. citizens entering B.C. to reach Alaska could put our lakes at risk, particularly given the recent increase in watercraft arriving in Montana infested with zebra and quagga mussels. We urge your government to provide the Canadian Border Services Agency with the necessary resources to prevent the infestation of Canadian waters by watercraft and equipment crossing our border.

Thousands of Okanagan residents depend on tourism, from hotels and motels to attractions, retail sales and agri-tourism, and it's highly likely many visitors will stop coming to the Okanagan if they can't walk barefoot on the beach without injuring their feet. The Okanagan

Basin Water Board estimates the annual loss to tourism revenue from invasive mussels could range from \$12 to \$22 million.

An infestation would also mean people living along the waterfront would experience a decrease in real estate values (about \$10 million a year) as their beaches would be rendered sterile. And higher taxes may be required as municipalities struggle to maintain water utilities with costly treatments to remove mussels from infrastructure.

The Greater Vernon Chamber urges you to take immediate action to protect our environment, economy and communities.

We look forward to hearing from you on this important matter.

Sincerely,



Krystin Kempton, President  
Greater Vernon Chamber of Commerce

CC: Mélanie Joly, Minister of Economic Development and Official Languages  
Marc Garneau, Minister of Transport  
Mel Arnold, North Okanagan-Shuswap MP  
Tracy Gray, Kelowna-Lake Country MP  
Dan Albas, Central Okanagan-Similkameen-Nicola MP  
Richard Cannings, South Okanagan-West Kootenay MP  
Byron Louis, Okanagan Indian Band Chief  
Kevin Acton, Regional District of North Okanagan Chair  
Victor Cumming, City of Vernon Mayor  
Jim Garlick, District of Coldstream Mayor  
Gail Given, Regional District of Central Okanagan Chair  
James Baker, District of Lake Country Mayor  
Okanagan Basin Water Board  
Thompson Okanagan Tourism Association  
Okanagan Chambers of Commerce  
Okanagan Nation Alliance