

PARCS HAS MIXED REACTIONS TO ENVIRONMENT MINISTER'S RECENT PRESS RELEASE

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While the Provincial Association of Resort Communities of Saskatchewan (PARCS) is encouraged by the Ministry of Environment's increased attention to aquatic invasive species and also their enhanced program for monitoring for the presence of these mussels, the recent press release from Minister's Cox's office, dated May 10, makes no mention of the comprehensive systematic program for border inspections proposed by the AIM to STAB coalition led by PARCS. [AIM to STAB \(Aquatic Invasive Mussels – Stop Them at the Border\)](#) is a coalition of Saskatchewan communities with broad representation across the province.

Although the Minister's press releases speaks about public education and random boat inspections, in fact Saskatchewan is the only western province that has not allocated funds or hired staff for the implementation of a comprehensive systematic border inspection program. During the summer of 2015, 11 infected boats, travelling from Ontario across Saskatchewan to Alberta, were stopped at Alberta's eastern border and decontaminated. "Had only one of those boats been launched into one of our Saskatchewan lakes, that lake could now be irreversibly contaminated," states Garry Dixon, President of PARCS. "Once a single mussel enters a lake, there is no way to stop their spread throughout that lake, and other connected waterways."

"If that lake were Lake Diefenbaker, for example, the contamination would likely spread through the entire North and South Saskatchewan river systems, north into Tobin Lake and south into the connecting systems of Buffalo Pound Lake, Last Mountain Lake and ultimately the entire Qu'Appelle Chain. Once introduced into our province, there is no cure," Dixon warned. "Actually, all of our lakes are currently at risk."

An infestation of these mussels could have a huge economic effect on water-operated infrastructure due to the blockage of intake pipes (irrigation, hydroelectricity, and drinking water), plus the effect on tourism with formerly pristine beaches covered in layers of contaminated mussel shells. In 2013, the Alberta Department of Environment and Renewable Resources estimated that the *annual cost* of an invasive mussel infestation would be at least \$75 million. For this reason Alberta's Ministry of Environment has implemented mandatory boat inspection sites along their east and south borders.

PARCS was a signatory to a recent letter to Minister Cox asking for a meeting to discuss mandatory boat inspections at our east and south border crossings. "We are looking forward to that meeting and are considering suggestions for ways to finance such a program," adds President Dixon. "Meanwhile, PARCS is committed to ongoing public education, the direction set by its membership."

"Mussels don't read press releases," said PARCS Director Joe Jozsa. "They hitchhike on boats and destroy lakes. Only responsible leadership from our government can keep them out of our province."

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For more information about the STAB program, visit the PARCS website at:
http://www.skparcs.com/rsu_docs/aim-to-stab.pdf

Or contact:

Lynne Saas, Coordinator of PARCS Member Services

Phone: 306-630-9698

Email: parcs@sasktel.net