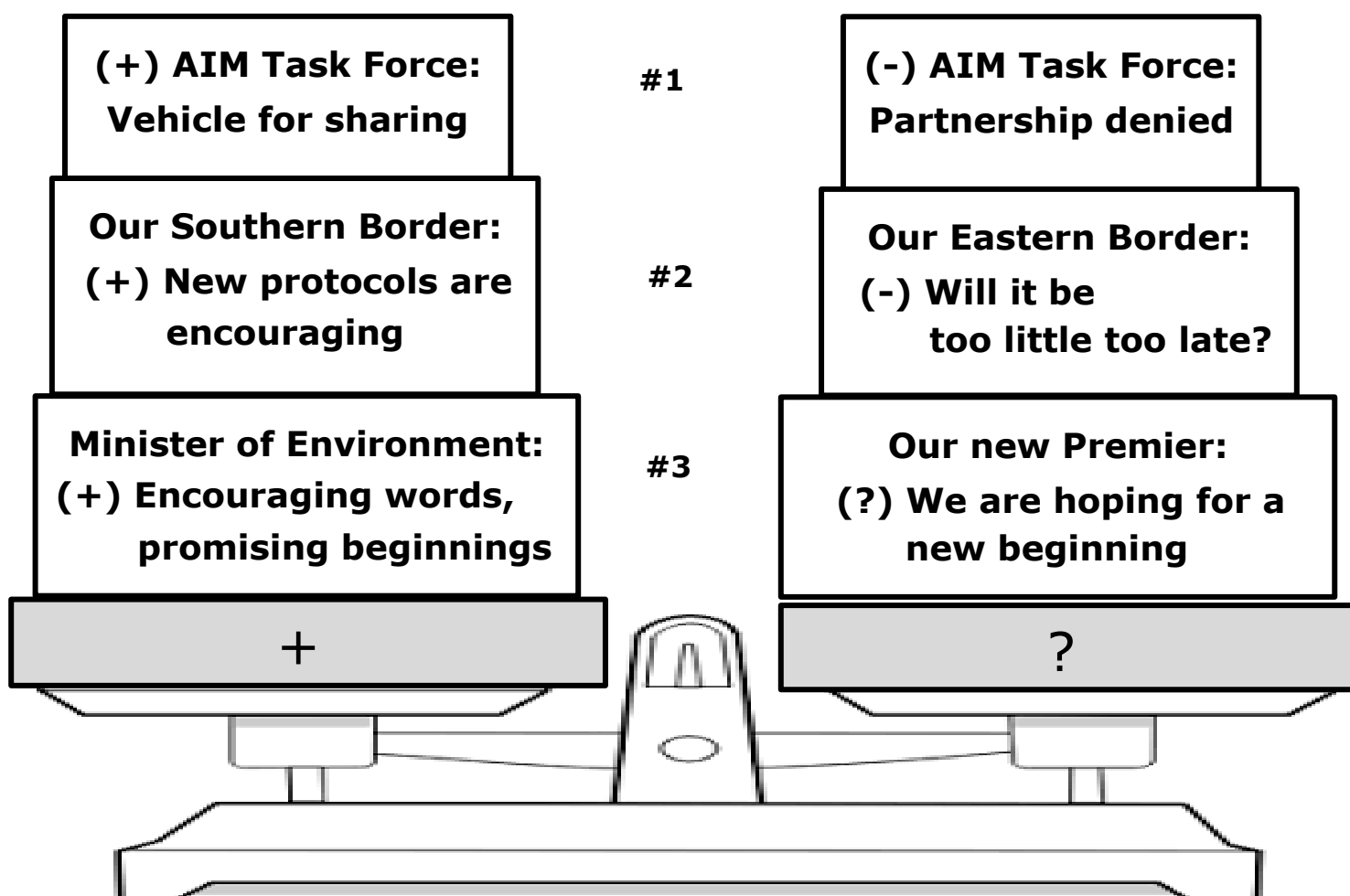


PARCS UPDATE #83 February 1/2018

AQUATIC INVASIVE MUSSELS WILL THE SCALES TIP FAVOURABLY IN 2018?

At our October 2017 convention, PARCS delegates told us that AIM (aquatic invasive mussels) must remain a top priority for our association. Since that convention, PARCS has been present at the AIM Task Force table for both their 2nd meeting on Dec. 8th and their 3rd meeting on January 13th. We have also convened a *Regional PARCS Committee* which has had one conference call meeting and plans for a face-to-face meeting in the spring. We have heard from our new Minister of Environment and followed the election of our new Premier.

This issue analyzes *whether or not the scales are tipping closer to* our PARCS' POLICY: **AIM to STAB** (*Aquatic Invasive Mussels – Stop them at the Border*).



#1 – News from the AIM Task Force

(+) The Task Force table has provided a vehicle for the exchange of **encouraging information**, including the recent announcements that:

- 1) Matt Tyree, new Manager of the Fish and Wildlife Branch, brings previous **experience with an inspection station** at a provincial park.
- 2) In 2018, for the first time, the provincial budget will include a **budget line item for AIM**.
- 3) The Ministry is about to advertise for a **full-time position of AIM Coordinator for the province**.
- 4) The Ministry is committed to **two inspection stations** in 2018¹.
- 5) The Ministry will hire **6 summer positions** to operate these stations in 2018. It is hoped that these hirees can be designated as fisheries officers and hence be authorized, under current law, to detain and inspect boats².

(-) Our Task Force involvement has also been a source of some disappointment for us. PARCS put together a detailed proposal for PARCS to do some fund raising to support at least one inspection site on the Manitoba/Sask Border. We asked that our proposal be circulated to the other members of the Task Force, but we were turned down. It appears that the Ministry may see the Task Force as a venue for dispersing information rather than for cooperative action.³

(?) PARCS has concerns about the 2 proposed inspection stations, each operated by 3 summer employees, because we see this **staffing allocation as inadequate**. The information in the insert (right) is taken from the revised proposal that PARCS sent to the Ministry. We believe that minimum staffing for an inspection station should be 4 employees per day, 7 days per week (allowing the station to be open from 6:00 am to 11:00 pm). We have **re-submitted** a proposal from PARCS, offering to raise funds for one inspection stations as a **pilot project research project**. We will keep you updated.⁴

The AIM Task Force is convened by the **Ministry of Environment** (chaired by Ron Hlasny of the Fish and Wildlife Branch and includes both their Compliance and Enforcement Branch and their Communications Branch).

Parcs sits at the Task Force table along with representatives from **other agencies** (Association of Watersheds, Meewasin Valley Authority, Ducks Unlimited, Wildlife Federation, SARM, SUMA, Sask Power, Sask Water, Sask Chamber of Commerce, Sask Irrigators, and Water Security Agency), plus **other Ministries** (Agriculture, Highways, Parks, Culture and Youth).

PARCS proposed hours for one demonstration inspection site:

- Days of operation – Consider from Monday May 14/18 to Sunday Sept. 30/18 inclusive, (20 weeks x 7 days = 140 days, plus 4 stat holiday, additional 4x1.5=6 days) = **146 days**
- Hours of operation – Consider **2 shifts** (6:00 am to 2:30, 2:30 to 11:00 pm. The 8.5 hour shift is planned to accommodate a 30 minute unpaid meal break during the shift where one employee takes a meal break while the other covers the station. Note that while the station is open for 17 hours per day, each employee works 8 hours.¹ Therefore, 146 days of employment x 8 hours = **1,168 hours per employee** for the season.

- 4 employees per day = **4 x 1,168 hours**

Will summer employees allow for inspections stations to operate after Labour Day?

¹ These stations will likely each be situated in a semi-permanent location and will have a conservation officer associated with each.

² Saskatchewan law currently makes it mandatory for vehicles to stop at an AIM inspection station that is operated by an "officer" – hence the need to designate the summer hirees as fisheries officers.

³ Interestingly though, at the most recent Task Force meeting, the Sask Chamber of Commerce offered to head up some fund raising and no objection was raised. We will see how this unfolds.

⁴ And involved in fund raising – if our revised proposal should see the light of day!

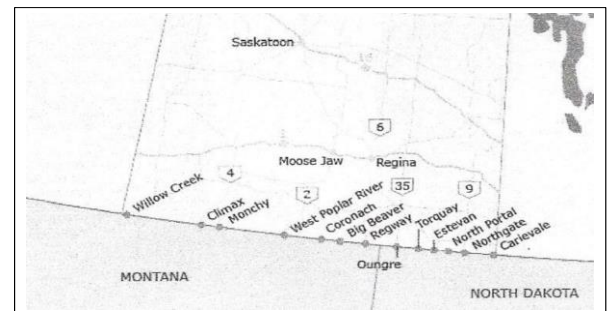
#2 – Encouraging news about our southern border

(+) One of the most encouraging aspects of the Task Force meetings has been the opportunity to hear the reports from the Compliance and Enforcement Branch of the Ministry of Environment. At the second meeting of the Task Force on December 8, 2017, PARCS was much encouraged by the progress that this Branch has made in arriving at a **shared protocol with Canada Border Inspection Services** at the 11 operational inspection stations on the US border. We learned that:

- Border officers were trained by Saskatchewan conservation officers from Estevan, Yorkton, and Moose Jaw, all with the same materials and forms. Their screening questions ask when and where these boats were last in the water and whether the boat has been out of the water for 30 or more days.
- If there is a problem, a seal is affixed to the hitch of the boat trailer and the boat ID is phoned in to the TIPS line for decontamination. The owner is expected to self-report. Two summer students were employed to help with the decontaminations.
- It was reported that in 2017⁵ the Border officers spoke with the drivers of 2,084 vehicles that were pulling or carrying boats. Of these, **307 received detailed inspections and 119 were decontaminated.**
- The Border officers' and their conservation officer partners also provided useful information about the kind of boaters who are most likely to try to bring infested boats into Saskatchewan. **"By and large, it's not the fishing boats. Fishermen know about AIM and are careful. The offenders tend to be recreational boaters, owners of large yachts and pleasure craft."**

"Our Conservation Officers built an amazing relationship with Canada Border Services. The Montana and North Dakota border officers know what is expected of them."

Marc Painchaud, Director of Compliance and Field Services, Ministry of Environment



But continued concerns about our eastern border

(-) While the announcement of two new inspection stations for 2018 (previous page) is a good first step, one glance at our shared border with Manitoba shows that we will still have a long way to go before we begin to address the influx of boats from the east. Last summer, inspectors at the Alberta border found and decontaminated 14 boats fouled with aquatic invasive mussels. **Twelve (12) of those boats had travelled across Saskatchewan from Manitoba and points east!**⁶ Also, in 2017, **"3 contaminated boats were intercepted within the interior of Sask, having come in from the east".**⁷ PARCS is concerned that the 2 inspection stations proposed for 2018 may be too little, too late.

Main highways from Manitoba

- #55 from infested Cedar Lake MB
- #9 from The Pas, MB
- #10 from Roblin, MB
- #16 - Yellow Head Highway
- #1 - Trans Canada Highway
- #18 from southern MB to Estevan

⁵ Ministry of Environment Press Release, January 9, 2018

⁶ Lisa Schaubert, Alberta Environment and Parks, in phone interview with PARCS.

⁷ 1 at Crooked Lake from Minnesota via Manitoba, 1 at Lake Diefenbaker from Manitoba, 1 at Last Mountain Lake from Ontario.

#3 – Our new Minister of Environment

(+) Dustin Duncan is our current Minister of Environment. In December 2017, one of the members of our PARCS Regional AIM Committee wrote to Minister Duncan asking about border inspection stations and funding partnership for these stations. Minister Duncan replied on December 15, 2017, with the following **encouraging statements**:

*"The ministry takes a critical role in the delivery of the AIS program but we receive significant support from partners within the province concerned with the threat that AIS poses. Several of these partners include industry with infrastructure and operations that could be severely compromised by an AIS introductions. We agree that industry could play a significant role in our program going forward, and we plan to build these relationships to identify further **opportunities for collaboration** on the AIS program."*

*"We appreciated your suggestion about the benefit of inspection stations. One of the main objectives for the AIS program in 2018 is to look at **establishing multiple inspection sites at critical locations in the province.**"*

And our new Premier

(?) Tomorrow Scott Moe will be sworn in as our new Premier. When Mr. Moe was our Minister of Environment, PARCS submitted a plan asking for a meeting to discuss joint funding of inspection stations. Our request went unanswered. We can only hope that, as our Premier, Scott Moe will take a proactive approach to keeping our province free from invasive mussels.

A Final Warning about Obfuscation

Obfuscation refers to the practice of confusing an explanation by adding unrelated information.

Programs to combat invasive mussels typically have three components:

- **Education** - such as the Clean-Drain-Dry information.
- **Monitoring** - such as checking lakes for the presence of invasive mussels.
- **Inspection** - such as the inspection sites that PARCS is promoting.

Education is important but mostly reaches only our Saskatchewan residents.

Monitoring and finding invasive mussels in a lake is also important. But remember that **finding them means it is already too late** to save that lake (and other lakes connected to it).

Inspection – STOPPING THEM AT THE BORDER offers the greatest chance of stopping visitors from the east and south from contaminating our lakes.

Don't be distracted by messages that are obfuscating!