



March 13, 2025

The Honourable Randene Neill
B.C. Minister of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship
Victoria, BC

Via email WLRs.Minister@gov.bc.ca

Dear Ms. Neill:

Re: Support for General Order WD2024—001

The Kelowna Chamber of Commerce has been active for a number of years in the ongoing campaign to keep invasive mussels out of the fresh waters of B.C. We are the authors of current policy which has been taken to government at local, provincial and federal levels as well as to tourism bodies and collegial chambers in B.C. and across the country.

We've also worked with and supported the extraordinary efforts put forward on the issue by the Okanagan Basin Water Board.

We are grateful for the accomplishments of the B.C. government in their ongoing work in this area, and are confident that your work will continue to the benefit of all residents of and visitors to the province. We are in communication with the Wildlife Branch and support their positive work in this area in the Wildlife Act Review.

This letter is to reiterate our support for full 'Pull the Plug' regulation tools: most especially inspection stations for all incoming watercraft and watercraft launching into B.C. waterways. We continue to communicate the urgency to as many of our members as possible of getting these tools fully implemented.

Specifically, to reference the General Order noted above:

The General Order was issued under the *Animal Health Act*, which is administered by the Ministry of Agriculture and Food. This was to support an expedited and temporary fix to the issue prior to last summer's boating season and until more permanent measures could be put in place. The General Order does not require watercraft entering B.C. from another jurisdiction to be inspected prior to being launched in B.C.'s waters. Enabling Pull the Plug and inspection requirements as well as making it mandatory to stop at open watercraft inspection stations under the *Wildlife Act* will provide long-term solutions to prevent the spread of Zebra and Quagga Mussels (ZQM), whirling disease and other aquatic invasive species as well as improve operational efficiency and effectiveness by aligning these provisions with the mandate of the Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship. Currently, the requirement



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to stop at watercraft inspection stations is enforced under a broader fail to stop section of the Wildlife Act that was not created for this purpose.

Once enacted, these proposed amendments to the Wildlife Act will immediately enable the Province to create regulations under the Wildlife Act that will:

- Prohibit the transport of any watercraft over land with the drain plug in place.
- Require inspection of all watercraft entering B.C. from another jurisdiction prior to being launched in B.C.'s waters.
- Making an offence provision for failing to stop at an open watercraft inspection station.

The efforts of western provinces, particularly Alberta and Manitoba to enforce similar legislation are much appreciated; the creation of a Mussel-Free Zone in Western Canada, and close work with the federal government will only strengthen the campaign and ensure its success. We encourage you to continue in this collaborative work. Penalties and fines across all provinces need to be aligned.

Regards,



Maryse Harvey
President, Kelowna Chamber of Commerce

cc:

Pam Doerksen, Director of Strategic Initiatives, Wildlife Act Review, Government of British Columbia
James Littley, COO, Okanagan Basin Water Board
The Hon. Lana Popham, Minister of Agriculture and Food, Government of British Columbia
Derek Gratz, Chair-Elect, Kelowna Chamber of Commerce
The Hon. Grant Hunter, Chair, Alberta Aquatic Invasive Species Task Force
Chuck Davidson, President & CEO, Manitoba Chambers of Commerce