



BRIEFING

PRIORITIES FOR THE 2021 FEDERAL ELECTION

Aquatic Invasive Species

Opportunity

Invest in the prevention and mitigation of aquatic invasive species (AIS), including education/outreach, early detection, and rapid response.

Responsibility

Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO)

Achievability

Modest investments in the short-term will prevent significant costs in the long-term. With increased funding, leadership from DFO, and a collaborative approach, Canada can maximize its capacity for education and outreach, early detection, and rapid response efforts to fight AIS.

Background

- Invasive species continue to be one of the greatest threats to biodiversity in Canada. Species like zebra mussels, invasive tunicates, Sea Lamprey, and Asian carps pose a serious threat to our ecosystems and recreational activities, and cost hundreds of millions of dollars to our economy once established.
- The impacts of invasive species are often irreversible and, once established, they are extremely difficult and costly to control and/or eradicate. It costs far less to prevent introductions of invasive species than it does to delay action and manage them after they become established. Investments in prevention are cost-effective, avoiding significant long-term economic, environmental and social costs.
- Canada had committed to the following 2020 Biodiversity international goals and targets, but as of 2021 significant progress still needs to be made:
 - By 2020, introduce measures to prevent the introduction and significantly reduce the impact of invasive alien species on land and water ecosystems, and control or eradicate the priority species;
 - By 2020, invasive alien species and pathways are identified and prioritized, priority species are controlled or eradicated, and measures are in place to manage pathways to prevent their introductions and establishment.
- Prevention (including early detection) programs are critical to mitigating the impacts of AIS in Canada, but require adequate resources and collaboration with stakeholders to be delivered effectively.
- Budget 2017 allocated \$43.8 million dollars to DFO over 5 years to prevent the introduction/spread of AIS, which was significantly less than DFO's identified needs.
- In 2019, the House of Commons Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans conducted a study of DFO's National Aquatic Invasive Species Program where many stakeholders voiced concerns about inequitable distribution of resources to fight AIS across Canada.
- Funding for stakeholders has been available in the past. Between 2005-2012, Environment Canada was the lead for the Invasive Alien Species Partnership Program (IASPP). This was a funding program dedicated to invasive species and supported the Invasive Alien Species Strategy for Canada.
 - The IASPP provided nearly \$5.6 million to 170 projects aimed at engaging Canadians in actions to prevent, detect and manage invasive alien species.

Proposed Solutions

- Establish permanent and sufficient funding for consistent, integrated and prioritized education and outreach, early detection, and rapid response efforts to fight aquatic invasive species.
- Increased funding should be used to build DFO's internal capacity to deliver the Aquatic Invasive Species National Core Program, which is focused on:
 - Preventing the introduction of AIS;
 - Responding rapidly to new species detections;
 - Managing the spread of established species; and
 - Working with other jurisdictions to ensure national consistency and collaboration on issues related to managing AIS.
- Demonstrate national leadership to improve coordination and communication related to AIS at the provincial/territorial levels to enable on-the-ground action and leveraging the existing experience and infrastructure of multiple stakeholders already addressing AIS – similar to what was achieved through the IASPP. For example, provincial/territorial wildlife affiliates and/or fishing/hunting federations - and their audiences of boaters, trail users, anglers and hunters - would be committed partners on a national scale.
- Establish dedicated funding to support this external partnership network.

Benefits

Invasive species negatively impact the health of Canada's natural resources, as well as the social and economic well-being of Canadians. Investing in AIS prevention will benefit Canadians by mitigating the impacts of invasive species on (1) Canada's natural resources/ecosystems and the intangible benefits they provide, and (2) the social and economic benefits gained from activities, including commercial and recreational fishing, hunting, boating, swimming, wildlife viewing, and beach/lakefront use.