



Zebra Mussels

A Concern for Manitoba Association of Cottage Owners

Date April 29, 2021

Honourable Sarah Guillemard,
Minister of Conservation and Climate,
Dear Mme Minister,

The Manitoba Association of Cottage Owners, MACO, has previously written to you about our concerns with the increasing amounts of blue green algae in Lake Winnipeg and the detrimental effect this is having on water quality. With increased algae blooms we have concerns about the effects on wildlife and tourism.

In addition to our concerns about algae, we are seeing the impact of the explosion of the zebra mussel population along the beaches in the southern basin of Lake Winnipeg, particularly on the east side of the lake. In some communities, Hillside Beach in particular, zebra mussels have made usage of the beach almost impossible on many occasions this past summer. Clean up of the mussels has been hampered by the sheer quantity of mussels and restrictions about removing them from the beach. Little information has been supplied by your department about the removal process, permits needed and support by the provincial government to help keep our beaches clean and usable.

Community members from many of the beach communities have been meeting over the winter (via zoom) to discuss their concerns about the zebra mussel problem. The RM's of Alexander and Victoria Beach have been involved in these discussions and have been supportive of community efforts to clean the beaches, but they are also frustrated by the lack of information and support provided by the provincial government. Between the algae and the zebra mussel explosion, our beaches are becoming unusable.

Tourism to these beaches provides millions of dollars to the Manitoba economy and as we have seen during the pandemic, escaping into nature provides invaluable mental health support. Looking at a beach with mounds of smelly zebra mussels and algae blooms making the enjoyment of the beach impossible is certainly depressing for all Manitobans and visitors who enjoy our beaches. We do not want the quality of our beaches to deteriorate to the extent that they become unusable for our current and future generations.

We know that the zebra mussel problem is here to stay, but we hope that with dialogue and support from the provincial government we will be able to find efficient ways for supporting cottagers, residents and visitors to the area in their goal to keep our beaches as clean and useable as possible. The current impediments and lack of communication from the government do not encourage local groups to find workable solutions to these problems.

As an organization representing cottagers from all over the province, we call on you to address the issues presented in this letter and develop a plan to work closely with the RM's and beach communities.

Sincerely,



Gus Wruck, President

Manitoba Association of Cottage Owners

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