



**Canadian Council
on Invasive Species**

National Communications Framework on Invasive Species 2016



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Introduction

Invasive alien species are a growing threat to Canada's environment, economy and society. In response to this, Canada developed *An Invasive Alien Species Strategy for Canada* in 2004.

The Canadian Council on Invasive Species (CCIS) was established in 2012, and brings together invasive species councils, committees, provincial government and coalitions representing the majority of provinces and territories in Canada. The national organization was formed as a result of a joint Canada wide meeting in 2009 along with a key recommendations from the 2012 National Invasive Species Forum to establish a national voice to share and coordinate knowledge across Canadian borders.

To further support invasive alien species efforts, the federal government ministers responsible for conservation, wildlife and biodiversity established the Invasive Alien Species Task Force, a representative federal-provincial-territorial task force to identify priority actions to better position Canadian efforts in the fight against invasive alien species. To ensure a national perspective of priority actions, the Task Force, in partnership with Environment Canada and Climate Change and the Canadian Council on Invasive Species held a workshop on February 25, 2016 to bring together various levels of government, aboriginal organizations, industry representatives, provincial and territorial invasive species councils and other non-governmental organizations to share perspectives on priorities and potential actions to improve invasive alien species prevention and management in Canada.

One key priority identified by both CCIS and the Task Force was the need for a communications strategy that identified communications objectives, target audiences, key messages, and targeted actions that could be undertaken by all partners in invasive species management so that across Canada, unified voices and actions could be used to bring a collaborative, stronger 'brand' to preventing and stopping the spread of invasive species. This communications framework is a result of that priority identification.

The Canadian Council on Invasive Species works collaboratively across jurisdictional boundaries to support actions and information that can help reduce the threat and impacts of invasive species. Through the Council, invasive species groups are working in partnership to build upon the lessons learned in each province or territory to improve public awareness of invasive alien species. Detecting emerging invasives early is integral to prevention, as once established, they spread rapidly, causing damage to the environment, economy, and/or human health. Social marketing campaigns that encourage Canadians to take actions to prevent or stop invasive species have been undertaken in some jurisdictions, but require stronger 'branding' and collaboration to take hold in the national consciousness.

This Framework addresses communications specifically, and is intended as an outline to guide each invasive species organization involved with CCIS in developing their own actions plans for communications that reflect the national programs and the collaboration required to achieve behaviour change in Canadians. While each organization will tailor resources to

implement some or all of the tactics identified, the Framework should serve to identify priorities, options and overall guidance for their communications activities.

This communications framework follows the Canadian Public Relations Society RACE design for communications planning: **Research** (review current materials, media scan to see what others are saying about the issues, review best practices of other similar organizations, etc.), **Analysis** (identification of communications goal and measurable objectives, target audiences, key messages), **Communications** (tactics, roles and responsibilities, timelines, and where applicable, budget) and **Evaluation** (a means to ensure the objectives have been met).

RESEARCH

Building on the work of CCIS and the Invasive Alien Species Task Force to analyze the national situation and identify priorities, some additional communications research was undertaken to review some resources, gain a better understanding of online resources currently in existence, and to benchmark how other jurisdictions and non-affiliated groups are approaching invasive species communications.

MEDIA SCAN

Invasive species have been receiving increasing media attention in Canada over the past five years, notably specific threats like mussels, hogweed, goldfish, lobsters, beetles and other top invaders. As climate change and adaptation get more media attention, so have invasive species. Media seem to be regularly looking for experts to talk about specific species or invasive threats in general. Government spokespeople, non-profit leaders, some invasive species councils, and many non-affiliated experts (such as researchers or land managers) are quoted as sources in recent media coverage. This is true in both English and French scans.

Analysis of media coverage found that while coverage is not uniform across the country, nor is it primary national, for the most part, messages are getting through on many key issues. In addition, where a provincial or territorial council or province has declared a week or month for invasive species or holds a forum or conference, media cover the issues. There also seems to be a lot of coverage both in Canada and other English-language countries of new threats and 'top ten' lists about invasives.

ONLINE PRESENCE FOR INVASIVE SPECIES ORGANIZATIONS

To benchmark what other organizations operating in the same field are doing for communications, their online presence was reviewed.

There is a range of information available from local, provincial and federal governments, community groups, provincial and regional invasive species organizations, and non-profit environmental organizations. There are also some sites from the US and other countries that top search results in English and French. Some have extensive information about threats in their areas and action on controlling invasive species, such as the Asian Gypsy Moth campaign by the Oregon Invasive Species Council (<http://www.oregoninvasivespeciescouncil.org/agm/>). Others have information on their sites that is more difficult to locate such as the Clean Equipment Protocol on the Ontario Invasive Plant Council (http://www.ontarioinvasiveplants.ca/files/CleanEquipmentProtocol_Mar152013_D3_FINAL.pdf). In general, most of the provincial and territorial councils have information and resources that are most important to their regions, but some have more robust websites that serve as information hubs about species of concern, reporting, and prevention/education programs. Some good examples of hubs of information about species include the Invasive Species Council of Manitoba (<http://invasivespeciesmanitoba.com/>) and the Alberta Invasive Species Council (<https://www.abinvasives.ca/fact-sheets#!prettyPhoto>). BC's Invasive Species Council

(<http://bcinvasives.ca/>) has a robust hub of information, although there is a lot to find, which can be overwhelming.

While governments do offer online resources for their invasive species programs, there is not a consistent amount of information from one to another, and without linkages to other provinces' sites or councils' information.

There are some great examples of websites that present concise, visual information about invasive species with some resources, although their links for more resources, where they are included, tend to go outside of Canada or primarily to government sites. Some examples are <http://www.hww.ca/fr/enjeux-et-themes/les-especes-exotiques.html>, <http://www.invasivespeciescentre.ca/>, and <http://monclimatetmoi.ca/a-propos-des-4-elements/terre/une-diversite-biologique-necessaire/>.

Some non-Canadian sites that have strong websites and clear messaging include <http://www.growmeinstead.com.au>, <http://www.nonnativespecies.org/home/index.cfm> (although a bit text-heavy), <http://invasives.org.au/>, and <http://www.wise.wa.gov/>.

While many of these organizations, both inside Canada and elsewhere, have received media attention on specific issues related to invasive species, most don't have an easily accessible media page with directed navigation for journalists, media contacts, easy view of news releases or media resources like photos etc.

ANALYSIS

Previous work by CCIS and the Task Force have shown that across Canada, there is a clear call for improved coordination and awareness of current and upcoming communication initiatives. There is a demand for a 'central clearing house' of information on invasive species that includes both governments and non-government information.

CCIS has created a national Taking Action Plan, which outlines the main education and outreach strategies that CCIS proposes the invasive species management partners could utilize across Canada. This document outlines the value of community based social marketing programs, and concludes that CCIS will take the lead role to create national pathway-focused programs for use across Canada. This Framework will expand on the Taking Action Plan in exploring ways for CCIS to action social marketing programs (such as PlantWise, Clean Drain Dry, etc.) and promote them as national brands that target specific audiences with the required key messages.

CCIS has also created a National Horticulture Framework, which inventories horticultural programs across Canada related to invasive species management, and recommends the creation of a national program under the Be PlantWise brand with educational and industry resources. This Framework incorporates those recommendations.

All the focused work done nationally to date by CCIS, the Task Force and other invasive species groups have concluded that a national communications strategy is needed to ensure there is consistent messaging across key target audiences, particularly about pathways of invasion. This Communication Framework is based on the science of 'community based social marketing' focused on building 'desired behaviours through consistent positive messaging, individual commitments and monitoring. Building success across Canada will help engage key audiences in reducing the spread of invasive species to new areas.

CCIS is well positioned to facilitate and provide national leadership on communications, and continue to work in partnership with federal government and others to manage communications and awareness activities that improve the national conversation about invasive species management.

This Framework makes recommendations for specific communications actions, many of which will require financial and personnel resources to execute. While these resources have not been confirmed, it is assumed that given the priority placed on communications; these are reasonable resource requirements that can be met.

COMMUNICATIONS GOAL

Provide a strong, national voice about invasive species management in Canada that promotes programs and activities and creates a desire for behavioural change to protect Canada's habitats from the impact of invasive species.

COMMUNICATIONS OBJECTIVES

1. Increase awareness of invasive species in Canada, their impacts and solutions.
2. Increase awareness of the need for legislation, regulations and funding for invasive species management across Canada.
3. Facilitate an increase in effective invasive species management in Canada by providing resource materials and programs on invasive species management.
4. Communicate the impacts and cost benefits associated with prevention and early eradication of invasive species to Canada.
5. Promote unified, national behaviour change programs to increase the number of Canadians taking responsible actions to prevent and stop the spread of invasive species.
6. Improve collaboration within and among governments, CCIS, provincial and territorial invasive species councils, industry and other partners.

TARGET AUDIENCES FOR COMMUNICATIONS

This document offers a communications framework for many organizations, and while the list of audiences below attempts to cover most categories, each organization will have their own priorities for target audiences for their activities.

Government:

- Federal government departments, such as Environment and Climate Change, Fisheries and Oceans, Agriculture and Agri-Food, Canadian Food Inspection Agency, Parks, etc.
- Provincial and territorial government ministries, such as Agriculture, Forests, Environment, Transportation, Economy, Science and Innovation, Energy and Mines, Fisheries, etc.
- First Nations governments
- Regional and local governments

Non Profit Organizations:

- Provincial and territorial invasive species councils
- Regional invasive species/plants councils and committees
- Environmental organizations/ENGOS
- Youth service groups, educational groups

Industry:

- Horticulture groups, including those representing retailers, nurseries, landscapers
- Outdoor recreation groups, including those representing boaters, campers, horsemen, hunters, fishers, guides, hikers, etc.
- Associations and companies working in construction and building
- Professional associations, such as agrologists, naturalists, biologists, etc.
- Land managers, developers, property owners, etc.

Individuals:

- Outdoor enthusiasts (notably boaters, ATV users, horse riders, hunters and fishers)
- Gardeners
- Parents
- Children and youth
- New Canadians/immigrants
- Cultural and religious groups practicing nature releases

Media:

- French and English-language media targeting primary audiences above
- Media targeting the general public in French, English and other languages

KEY MESSAGES

While messages specific to provincial, territorial and regional programs will be determined by specific programs and their action plans, some messages relate to overall goals. Note that these are communications key messages – the **core messages** you want your target audiences to hear and remember. They are not marketing slogans.

Invasive species are harmful.

- The establishment and spread of invasive species has become a growing concern nationally, provincially and globally.
- The introduction or spread of invasive species threatens the environment, the economy and society, including human health.

Stopping invasive species is possible if we change our behaviours.

- Increased prevention, detection and improved management of invasive species can provide significant economic benefits to the country, the economy and our society.
- Effective management of invasive species requires all Canadians to work together, take responsibility for their actions and change their behaviours.

We need to work collaboratively to prevent the spread of invasive species in Canada.

- By working collaboratively, we can prevent the introduction and transport of invasive species to new areas.

We need strong legislation, regulation, and funding to stop the spread of invasive species in Canada.

- Municipal, provincial, federal and Aboriginal governments each have a role to play in preventing and stopping the spread of invasive species.

COMMUNICATIONS ACTIVITIES

To ensure the key messages reach intended audiences, a broad communications action plan is required. Key partners and leaders across Canada need to work towards a common outcome and increase consistency of messages and communications. This Framework must involve as many partners as possible that each commit to collaboration. It is recommended that CCIS take a lead role in facilitating and monitoring this communications framework.

SHARE INFORMATION

There is a need to ensure effective distribution of communications resources and messaging across Canada. As a national organization representing the interests of each province and territory, CCIS should play a role in ensuring messaging and program communications are properly disseminated to collaborators, including governments.

CCIS should create and maintain a list of communications people (or those acting in a communications capacity) at all potential collaborating partners, both within and beyond government. A national, Canada-specific listserv (or use a similar online messaging or forum tool) should be created to bring all these people into contact with each other, allowing anyone to reach out to the group as a whole to ask for help, share news, collaborate etc. It should also be used by CCIS to promote new resources, messages, program development, news etc. to the group. CCIS should administer and monitor this listserv.

CCIS should also share media coverage about key invasive news and events with the same group. See below on Media Monitoring for further details.

In addition, CCIS should create a method for sharing adaptable resources related to specific social marketing programs with provincial and regional invasive species groups that are part of the national organization. See below under Website Hub for further details.

GOVERNMENT RELATIONS

With the Task Force and national workshop this year, the federal government has shown a strong willingness to work with CCIS and other key groups to improve management of invasive species in Canada. This partnership should be built upon to create regular communications that lead to influence on regulations and legislation. CCIS should continue to be the focal point for these partnerships and collaborations with the federal government, and should involve provincial, territorial or regional partners where required.

In addition, federal government partners should be brought into CCIS programs and national campaigns, such as Invasive Species Week (see below for further details) and a national forum. Gaining the support, both in potential funding and in promotion, would help boost both of these initiatives.

With respect to provincial, territorial and municipal government relations, CCIS should create a toolkit to help invasive species groups gain attention, influence policies and legislations and work collaboratively with governments on invasive species management initiatives. The

resources in this toolkit could be primarily drawn from resources created for specific national programs (see below under Social Marketing Programs) and Media Relations (see below). These could include:

- Backgrounder on economic impacts of invasive species in Canada
- Backgrounder on environmental impacts of invasive species in Canada
- Backgrounder on social impacts of invasive species in Canada
- Fact sheets on programs such as Be PlantWise, Clean Drain Dry, Don't Let it Loose, Play Clean Go etc.
- Regional fact sheets listing examples of top invasive species threats in each region (ex Maritimes, Ontario & Quebec, Prairies, Western Canada, Northern Canada)

ABORIGINAL RELATIONS

Collaborating with Aboriginal governments and organizations is an important step to gaining their participation on preventing and stopping the spread of invasive species. Formal and informal relationships should be established with Aboriginal governments and organizations, and they should be encouraged to use the resources CCIS develops, especially on social marketing programs, to adapt for their areas.

CCIS should ensure Aboriginal groups are represented at forums, meetings, and within the Council, and should include them in any shared communications and resources. In addition, CCIS should create an education campaign directed specifically at Aboriginal communities, keeping to the goals and objectives of this Framework.

NATIONAL INVASIVE SPECIES WEEK

CCIS should take the lead in creating a national week to raise awareness and action on invasive species, ideally to coincide with the national forum, or in the spring, before the outdoor recreation season begins and when most communities have appropriate weather conditions to organize actions to deal with invasive species.

The federal government should be asked to declare Invasive Species Week, with federal ministers taking part in activities that promote behaviours to prevent the spread of invasive species. This can also be an ideal time to announce new programs, legislation and funding related to invasive species management.

The week can include organized activities, declarations by governments, media activities, awards for leadership in invasive species action, youth activities and other events that draw attention and bring citizens together in moments of action.

CCIS should create a specific communications action plan to promote the week, and should look at media relations, op-eds, social media, contests, calendars of events, and online activities to build awareness and action. For example, this would be an ideal week to list the top five or ten potential threats from new invasive species and make a big splash on media and social media.

WEBSITE HUB

Both the Task Force and CCIS have called for a central source of information linking initiatives on shared national issues. There is a need for an online 'hub' of information on invasive species, national programs and resources. As well, there has been a call for a centralized national invasive species database that provides 'real time' monitoring of species and risks. In addition, both the Task Force and CCIS have called for an online inventory of research related to invasive species, and for an online hub for a National Spotters Network.

CCIS should now expand its current website to develop a robust website that can serve as a central hub of information that meets all the above needs, for both English and French users.

This website needs to serve many needs, and would require resources to keep it updated and maintained. In addition to needing a simple Content Management System (CMS) that makes it easy for a variety of user levels to update sections of the site, and some automated translation (but some human translation would also be needed for key sections and documents), the following site architecture and audiences should be kept in mind.

Public Awareness:

An easy-to-navigate home page should be graphically attractive, simple in layout and design, with language aimed at the general public looking to learn more about invasive species in general, target their own region, and about various social marketing programs related to invasive species. This section would contain many of the same resources and information currently available on provincial and territorial invasive species councils' websites, but targeted at a national audience. Links to local resources would direct users to those councils' sites for more specific information.

Social Marketing Programs:

See below for further details, but information about these programs needs to be directed at two distinct audiences – the general public as above, and partner groups. The partner group section would offer templates, resources and information that can be adapted from the national programs to be used by those partner groups and tailored to their regions or audiences. This section of the website hub should be password protected to allow only those groups the ability to use those adaptable resources.

Invasive Species Threat Mapping:

Accessible to all but of primary interest to those working in invasive species management, this section of the site would report news in Canada about current and emerging threats. Each news report, which CCIS would input via media monitoring (see below), would be tagged to map onto an interactive map of Canada, and could eventually also include news of high risk species at or near our border. This section should also link to reporting of invasive species through the National Spotter's Network.

National Spotter's Network:

A plan is currently under development to create a Canadian Spotter's Network Hub. This should be included as part of the website hub, but as a sub-section with links to and from the rest of the CCIS website. In this way, it can use the same architecture, design and CMS, but in a form that meets the specific needs of the Spotter's Network development.

Research Database:

CCIS has called for priority action in increasing research and ensuring linkages to practices. The CCIS website should house a database of research, compiled and updated regularly by CCIS with help from academic partners and federal government partners. This database is primarily of interest to those researching and working in invasive species management, and not really to the general public. The layout and access for this database should be efficacious, with less emphasis on graphic design and more on functionality.

As much as possible, the entire CCIS website hub should be in both English and French. Automated translation tools can also be used to make the general public sections available in other languages, to reach out to other language groups including immigrants.

To ensure the site also helps build awareness among mainstream and new media, the website hub should have a media page.

Website Media Section:

The CCIS media page would house media contact information (who a reporter would call or email with media questions), any media materials such media advisories or news releases, fact sheets, media backgrounders etc. (see Media Relations section below), as well as photos and videos that reporters could download to illustrate a story.

Developing and maintaining the various parts of this robust website hub will require resources, but once set up and systems put in place for updating and maintenance, will serve as the main place for information about invasive species in Canada, and will provide resources to increase public awareness about and participation in ways to prevent and stop the spread of invasive species. It will also provide linkages between work at the national level and that taking place at the provincial, territorial and local levels.

SOCIAL MARKETING PROGRAMS

There are several social marketing programs in use in various ways in some jurisdictions in Canada, but now the CCIS will create national education and awareness programs that are designed to change behaviours through social marketing. These national behaviour change programs will provide resources and tools that lead to closing the pathways of spread through increased involvement and responsible actions of key target audiences. Each program will strive to ensure common messaging and approaches across the country.

CCIS has begun the work of creating these national programs with the National Taking Action Plan. The plan states:

“There is a clear desire to activate more Canadians to take responsible actions to reduce the spread of invasive species...Over time, the goal is to have a rich range of resources that are used across Canada with the same key messages targeting specific audiences.”

As part of the Taking Action Plan, CCIS has inventoried social marketing programs currently in use across Canada, such as Clean, Drain, Dry, Be PlantWise, and Play Clean Go. Next steps include: creating a central source for behaviour change programs including messaging and resources that can be used across the country; building common messaging for key target audiences; creating templates of resources and branding information to create consistent messages and images across jurisdictions; establishing a partnership system to enable easy access by provincial or territorial organizations; and seeking national partners, including government and business, to develop national Take Action programs.

Without seeking to duplicate the work underway through the Taking Action Plan, this Framework does lay out some overall objectives, target audiences and messaging that are relevant to that work. In addition, the following communications issues should be taken in to account.

National Messaging/Spokespeople:

The social marketing objectives of these programs dovetails with communications messaging about prevention and awareness. While CCIS-approved programs will be adapted regionally, on a national level there should be messaging about each program aimed at media and governments. There should also be a national spokesperson identified and trained (see below under Media Relations) who can speak about both proactive efforts related to each program and its behaviour change objectives, and to reactive situations where a threat related to one of the programs is in the news. For example, if an invasive plant species is identified in a forested area used by mountain bikers, media would need a spokesperson who can talk about Play Clean Go and how the program tries to prevent spreading invasives through those pathways.

National Promotion Campaigns:

While the national programs will be ongoing, at specific times of the year, each program may undertake national advertising, social media or public relations campaigns to promote key messages to target audiences and grow public awareness about roles in

preventing spread of invasive species. For example, a campaign could be undertaken urging gardeners to check Grow Me Instead before picking plants for their gardens in the spring. These campaigns should tie into existing resources CCIS is developing, including the Website Hub (see above) and Media Relations (see below), as well as national key messages.

Consistent Messaging:

While each social marketing program targets different pathways and different audiences, some messaging is consistent across all the programs. CCIS should ensure that overall messaging on each program relates to the key messages identified in this Framework.

Multicultural Resources and Languages:

While resources developed for each social marketing program must be available in both English and French, additional resources would be useful for other languages, such as Chinese languages, Arabic, Tagalog, Aboriginal languages, etc. CCIS should explore resources to create materials targeted at specific multicultural communities to broaden the reach of these national social marketing programs.

ISSUES MANAGEMENT/CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS PLANNING

When issues related to invasive species come up in the media or with other audiences, there needs to be coordinated management of those issues to maximize distribution of messaging and ensure that proper attention is sought for a national viewpoint from those working on invasive species.

The federal and provincial governments have clear legal responsibility for handling and responding to all crisis situations, including the arrival of high-risk species. Governments will have a coordinated crisis response plan, including communications, which will serve as the official authority on the situation.

Beyond government, external agencies such as CCIS, provincial and territorial invasive species councils and others should have a clear process of where and when they will be involved with communications during an invasive species crisis.

A draft communications crisis plan for a major national crisis related to invasive species should be developed by CCIS, recognizing that it would complement the federal and provincial crisis communications plans. The plan should cover potential crises, identify who would be responsible for communications tasks, who would be the spokesperson(s), who would draft media materials, contact lists, media lists, social media channels, website updates, etc.

Crisis communications planning will be useful as the starting point when issues arise that require a national, non-governmental coordinated response. It will also help all involved in fighting invasive species in Canada make issues related to invasive species be seen by the media and the public as big threats that should be taken as seriously as other environmental and economic threats.

MEDIA RELATIONS PLANNING

In addition to crisis planning, there is a need for both reactive and proactive media relations to drive public attention to the problems raised by invasive species and the means to stop them, and to highlight program successes. Before discussing how to manage contacts with media, a few points of preparation are required.

Spokespeople/Media Training:

Federal and provincial governments will, as mandated, speak on behalf of government's messaging and roles. Beyond government, CCIS should serve as the primary spokes-group for invasive species at the national level. Within CCIS, one to three media spokespeople should be identified and given media training. Each of them should be equipped with the same key messages to ensure uniformity of the message.

Media training enables a good speaker to become more media savvy, to better understand how to convey key messages in any media interview, and how to present yourself to best represent your organization. Media training teaches how to speak in quotable answers, how to keep the interview on your terms, and what you need to know before a reporter calls.

Media List:

CCIS should create and maintain a national, targeted media list that covers all general media, trade publications and relevant newsletters and blogs for use in promoting and responding to issues.

This list should include both mainstream and new media (blogs etc.), and should include a focus on writers and reporters who have shown an interest in and understanding of environment-related issues. It should list specific contacts/writers as well as assignment editors or main newsroom contacts. It should cover:

- General news media
- Business media
- Youth-focused media
- Environment-focused media
- Magazines, blogs and trade publications for the horticulture industry
- Magazines, blogs and trade publications for the aquatic recreation sector
- Magazines, blogs and trade publications for the outdoor recreation sector

To compile this list, CCIS should request help from provincial and territorial councils, as well as federal government partners. The national list can then be shared back as needed with all those groups.

Media Materials:

Media materials should be produced throughout the year as required to coincide with events or story ideas. CCIS should take the lead in preparing media materials for national programs and campaigns, but other partners may also localize these materials for specific regional uses. Some types of written materials that may be needed include:

- Media advisories: Used to alert the media to an upcoming event or photo opportunity – something you want media to come out to see.
- News releases: Written like a news article, these are used to discuss issues or points or announcements – something you want media to write about and need to provide them with detailed information.
- Backgrounders: Offer concise background information on a particular topic.
- Fact Sheets: Provide a list of facts or numbers, often in bullet points.

For Social Marketing Programs, templates for each program's media materials will be useful resources that can be adapted by provincial or territorial councils or others for use in their own regions. A media 'toolkit' like this should be part of the resources made available for each program.

MEDIA MONITORING

CCIS should monitor media (mainstream and blogs/online/social media) both nationally and internationally where possible to capture stories related to invasive species.

To monitor media in a cost effective manner, CCIS can take advantage of online tools to search for keywords (such as Google Alert or Mention) as well as doing bi-weekly searches online to capture as much relevant coverage as possible. There may also be opportunities to connect with government media monitoring to share stories captured by their resources. Where budgets permit, CCIS should explore a monitoring service such as Meltwater or InfoMart.

This media coverage should be shared on a section of the website hub, and any news reports about invasive species threats should be tagged and mapped to the interactive map (see above) to offer a graphic image of where threats are being reported. The coverage can also be reported on social media (see below), but should be identified as media reports and distinguished from news that comes from CCIS itself. The coverage can also be shared via a listserve (see above) or some other sharing tool for partners.

REACTIVE MEDIA RELATIONS

When media monitoring efforts come across a news item that offers an opportunity to highlight the dangers of invasive species or efforts being made to stop them, CCIS and others should act quickly and in a coordinated manner to contact media and pitch stories that focus on the key messages identified in this Framework and the National Taking Action Plan. For example, when a story about abandoned goldfish taking over a lake in Ontario and BC is in the news, key media should be contacted to discuss the threat of invasive species from pet and aquarium owners and how national efforts are underway to prevent these and other threats from spreading through the Don't Let it Loose program.

Many opportunities like this one arise each month in the news, so being prepared with spokespeople, media monitoring, media lists and background information and photos/video will allow CCIS to act quickly and capitalize on increased opportunities to get key messages out to target audiences.

In addition, there will be times that governments, CCIS or other spokespeople will be contacted directly by the media and asked to comment on issues. Issues management (see above) will help prepare those people to respond when faced with a media inquiry, and having key messages will help ensure that even in reactive situations, the main messages are still delivered.

PROACTIVE MEDIA RELATIONS

Using the same preparations (see above), CCIS and other organizations will be well placed to be proactive in seeking media coverage for programs and actions.

Background Meetings:

A handful of key national reporters/bloggers should be identified who's writing on environmental or related issues means they have an interest in invasive species or puts them in a position in the future to write about invasive species. These writers should be contacted and pitched to meet with spokespeople to discuss background issues related to invasive species. By having non-story related meetings, the spokespeople can be seen as a source the writer can call for comment on issues related to invasive species in the future. This kind of relationship building will also be useful when reactive situations arise.

Program-related Pitching:

As discussed above, proactive media relations should be a part of planning for social marketing programs. With the intent of generating media and blogger coverage of the program and its aims and actions, photos/videos/interviews with spokespeople should be pitched to reporters, over and above issuing a news release or media advisory. Personal pitches are most effective when the pitch, usually via email, addresses the writer's specific interests and needs, when it shows that the pitcher knows what will make a story interesting to the individual writer. Offering national angles on a local action, individuals they can interview affected by the program, offering a hands-on

demonstration or tour, etc. will help create an effective pitch that makes the journalist or blogger want to pursue the story.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media should be used to extend messaging to online audiences on these and perhaps other social media sites:

Facebook: Use this site to build community online and promote events. Ask questions, do small polls, and other interactive means to bring more people onto the page. Videos and photos get more views in Facebook's algorithm, so consider creating a series of short videos and posting photos regularly. For Invasive Species Week or program campaigns, consider inexpensive (a couple hundred dollars goes a long way) Facebook advertising campaigns to bring new people to the page and boost your posts so more people see them. Be prepared to interact here with the general public, and link with pages of other organizations to build credibility and increase interaction. Be prepared to post regularly, at least once a week, and to respond to comments and feedback.

Twitter: Use this social media tool primarily to rebroadcast messages or links from other sources, like the Facebook page or website pages. Build followers by interacting with others about invasive species programs, building conversations. Create a hashtag (a way of following conversations on a particular topic) for programs or actions and invite others to tweet on that topic using the hashtag. Use twitter hashtags at national forums or gatherings to share what's happening. Be prepared to engage the public when possible, but longer conversations are better moved to Facebook. Be prepared to tweet regularly and keep up on conversations, posting at least weekly and monitoring at least every few days. Twitter use is big among politicians and media, so reach out directly to them on Twitter to engage and pitch stories.

YouTube: Use YouTube to create and maintain a video library, and link those videos to your other social media channels and the website hub. You can also post b-roll (extra footage captured to enrich the story being told that journalists and bloggers can use to put together video stories) about invasive species, such as rough footage shot at an outreach event, weed pull, etc.

Blogging: Being able to tell stories from a first-person account gives blogging the added edge above media relations. Some invasive species groups are already blogging. CCIS and others should consider blogging to discuss work underway related to invasive species, to comment on news items, etc. Search engines rank sites with blog entries above static websites, so blogging will also help increase the public's ability to find your site. Be prepared to blog regularly, at a minimum twice a month.

PUBLICATIONS

To promote programs or actions, use mat stories, which are articles, written much like news stories that can be distributed to potential publishers. These mat stories can be sent to community newspapers, who will often run them as is, to newsletters of interested

associations or groups, and can run as guest blog posts of interested associations and groups. These mat stories can also be used for government relations, media relations, and as part of a toolkit that other groups could adapt to promote provincial, territorial or local programs.

In the same vein, op-ed opinion pieces should be written regularly and submitted to newspapers or influential blogs (many invite guest blog posts like these). Op-ed articles advance your point of view and are a chance to make a broad-based point on a particular topic.

Other publications, such as annual reports, brochures for programs, etc., should be available on the website hub, and promoted regularly through social media.

FUNDING SUPPORT

To ensure that resources are available to carry out the communications and education initiatives discussed in this Framework, funding must be secured by CCIS. CCIS should draw on its communications resources and expertise to aid in attracting funding to support key communication activities. Communications support would include writing cases for support, government relations, and other related tasks.

OTHER COMMUNICATIONS

CCIS should take a leadership role nationally to capitalize on any other communications opportunities that arise, ensuring that the communications objectives are best met through integrated, proactive communications bringing the key messages to the target audiences.

EVALUATION

While each organization will use evaluation methods best suited to their own communications action plans, the following methods of evaluation should be employed to see how far the bar has been moved for their organization. CCIS could employ each of these evaluation methods to measure annually how their communications actions have achieved the communications objectives identified in this Framework.

1. Media and social media analysis:
 - a. A quantitative media analysis should be performed to measure the volume of coverage related to invasive species in Canada to ensure communications activities met the goals. This should include analysis of mentions of key messages or key phrases and theme analysis of coverage.
 - b. A quantitative analysis of social media should be performed to measure the overall volume of online discussion, mentions of key messages or key phrases, and interaction with target audiences.
 - c. A qualitative media analysis should be performed to analyze the tone of coverage, accuracy of coverage, and editorial leanings of coverage.
 - d. A qualitative analysis of social media coverage should be performed to analyze tone of coverage, accuracy of discussions and timeliness of conversations/responses.
2. Website analysis:
 - a. Once the website hub is active, extensive analysis should be performed on the website to review the volume of visitors, referral roots, length of engagement with sections of the website, etc.
3. Review of materials:
 - a. Review communications and resource materials produced for invasive species programs to ensure key messages are reflected in the language and look of materials, both online and print.