

Background: Key Federal & Provincial Legislation on Invasive Species in British Columbia

In British Columbia, invasive plant regulation is shaped by a combination of federal and provincial legislation. These frameworks collectively regulate importation, possession, movement, control, and management planning for invasive species, supported by provincial strategies and local government bylaws. This legislation supports coordinated planning, compliance, and decision-making.

- Seven federal government acts focus on invasives species, and 11 acts are related to invasive species.
- 10 provincial government acts address invasives species, and these acts are managed by five different ministries.

Key Takeaways

- **Federal laws** focus on preventing entry and national spread through import controls, seed regulation, aquatic invasive species rules and shipping pathways.
- **Provincial laws** require active control of listed invasive plants, regulate management activities on Crown land, and set standards for pesticide-based interventions.
- **Local governments** may add further restrictions through bylaws.
- **Provincial strategies and priority lists** guide coordinated action and resource allocation across B.C.

Provincial Legislation

	Act	Function
1.	Weed Control Act Ministry of Forests	Requires private landowners and government agencies to control provincially and regionally listed noxious weeds. British Columbia currently regulates 66 noxious weed species.
2.	Forest and Range Practices Act Ministry of Forests	Lists prescribed invasive plant species that require mandatory management on Crown lands, including many high-impact species such as knotweeds, Scotch broom, purple loosestrife, and thistles.
3.	Integrated Pest Management Act & Regulation Ministry of Environment and Parks	Governs the use of pesticides and integrated pest management (IPM) methods, including requirements for Pest Management Plans (PMPs) for invasive plant control on provincial public lands. This Act applies on provincial, regional, municipal and some private lands, with the exception of agriculture.
4.	Environmental Management Act Ministry of Environment and Parks	Enables regulation of additional plant taxa at the regional level through Spheres of Concurrent Jurisdiction.
5.	Wildlife Act (Controlled Alien Species Regulation) Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship	Restricts possession, breeding, shipping and release of exotic animals that may indirectly contribute to invasive plant spread (e.g., through habitat alteration).

6.	Pipeline Act Ministry for Energy and Climate Solutions	Requires companies constructing or operating pipelines for oil, gas or solids to root out and destroy each year, before they seed, thistles and noxious weeds growing on land adjacent to its pipelines.
7.	Community Charter Ministry of Housing and Municipal Affairs	Enables municipalities to create additional bylaws for invasive plant control under the Community Charter and Local Government Act. The plants that may be controlled are only those listed in the Community Charter (78 species). The Act enables management of provincial and regional noxious weeds under Weed Control Act Regulations.
8.	Local Government Act Ministry of Housing and Municipal Affairs	Enables regional districts to establish a weed control function to manage invasive plants listed under the provincial Weed Control Act Regulations. To enact this power, regional district must first establish a service having weed management as one of its purposes.
9.	Hydro and Power Authority Act Ministry for Energy and Climate Solutions	Establishes the British Columbia Hydro and Power Authority and exempts them from certain provincial regulations, including the BC Weed Control Act, Community Charter and Forest and Range Practices Act.
10	Right to Farm Act Ministry of Agriculture and Food	Protects activities classified as normal farm practices including the application of pesticides.
Supporting Provincial Strategies & Programs		
7.	Invasive Species Strategy for British Columbia (2024–2028) Invasive Species Council of BC	Lays out a coordinated, province-wide approach emphasizing prevention, early detection, rapid response, and ecosystem protection.
8.	Provincial Priority Invasive Species Lists Ministry of Forests	Identifies high-risk species and supports consistent priority-setting across agencies.
9.	Provincial Public Lands “Top 25” Invasive Plant Priority List Ministry of Forests	Guides annual planning and resource allocation for invasive plant management across public lands.

Federal Legislation

	Act	Function
1.	Plant Protection Act Canadian Food Inspection Agency	Provides authority for the regulation of invasive plants as pests, including restrictions on importation, domestic movement, and other phytosanitary control to prevent establishment and spread. The focus of this Act is the agriculture and forestry sectors.
2.	Seeds Act (Weed Seeds Order) Canadian Food Inspection Agency	Regulates noxious weeds through the Weed Seeds Order, designating prohibited and restricted weed seeds that cannot be sold or moved in seed lots.
3.	Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) Regulations (Fisheries Act) Department of Fisheries and Oceans	Prohibits importation, possession, transportation, release, and introduction of listed aquatic invasive species (160+ species). Establishes a national enforcement and permitting framework for managing AIS pathways.
4.	Canada Shipping Act (Ballast Water Management) Ministry of Transport & Ministry of Fisheries and Ocean	Regulates ballast water to reduce aquatic invasive species introductions through marine shipping.
5.	Canada Border Services Agency Controls	Enforces restrictions on high-risk goods (plants, soil, firewood, aquatic organisms) to prevent cross-border introductions and the resulting harms.
6.	Wild Animal and Plant Protection and Regulation of International and Interprovincial Trade Act Ministry of Environment and Climate Change	Regulates the protection of certain species of wild animals and plants and the international trade in these species to prevent overexploitation and illegal trade and to protect Canada's ecosystems from the introduction of harmful species.
7.	Species at Risk Act Ministry of Environment and Climate Change	Prevents endangered or threatened species from becoming extinct. The Act calls for recovery plans which address control and eradication of invasive species that threaten the habitat of species at risk.

Background: UBCM Resolutions and Provincial Responses on Invasive Species (2010 – 2025)

Topic/Decision	UBCM Resolution	Provincial Response
<p>Adequate Funding for Invasive Species Management Invasive Species Union of BC Municipalities</p> <p>Convention Decision Endorsed</p>	<p>Year 2010 Number B29 Sponsor(s) Squamish</p> <p>WHEREAS invasive plant species grow rapidly and outcompete native species, threaten public and animal safety, and have a significant environmental and financial impact on communities throughout British Columbia; AND WHEREAS the spread of invasive plant species is the second greatest threat to global biodiversity, after habitat destruction by land clearing: THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Province of British Columbia minimize the further introduction and spread of invasive species by: 1. educating the public, government agencies, and other land managers about non-native vegetation and their impacts; 2. dedicating resources to government agencies for control of invasive species; and 3. instituting a grants program to assist local organizations in invasive species control; AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Province act as a conduit to information and sources of expertise on invasive species including identification, prevention and control.</p>	<p>Ministry of Natural Resource Operations</p> <p>The Province of BC currently provides support to various initiatives to assess and manage invasive plants on Crown lands, and inside Protected Areas. Ministries work collaboratively with other levels of governments and organizations like the Provincial Invasive Plant Council to deliver invasive plant control programs. This includes the assessment of various types of projects, such as land development, in-stream works and vegetation management proposed by both government agencies and private sector industry. The Province also provides information on the risks, appropriate mitigation and monitoring strategies to project proponents, various practitioners and property owners who are seeking input on various types of activities that are not directly regulated provincially. The assessment and management of invasive plants is also a major consideration of ongoing monitoring and assessment work being conducted by the Province. In a difficult economic climate, limited resources and competing priorities constrain the Provinces ability to directly financially support new initiatives. Improving awareness of what efforts various levels of government, Crown corporations, non-government organizations and industry could contribute in this regard would be beneficial and enhance the overall management of invasive plants in BC.</p>
<p>Ban on the Sale of Invasive Species Ban on the Sale of Invasive Species Union of BC Municipalities</p> <p>Convention Decision Endorsed</p>	<p>Year 2017 Number B28 Sponsor(s) Squamish-Lillooet RD</p> <p>Whereas the introduction and spread of invasive plant species within British Columbia bring adverse impacts to the environment and economy; And whereas significant financial and human resources are being allocated to control treatments, labour and research while at the same time the commercial sale of known invasive species continues to occur through retail outlets in British Columbia: Therefore be it resolved that the Province ban the sale of known invasive species plants and seeds at retail outlets.</p>	<p>Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations Rural Development</p> <p>The Inter-Ministry Invasive Species Working Group has been reviewing current legislation and policy regarding the sale of invasive plants and their seeds in BC. Discussions with the federal government about the Canada Seeds Act and the sale of certain seeds e.g. wildflower mixes are also ongoing. The Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development is committed to looking at opportunities to improve the provincial Weed Control Act and the Weed Control Regulation. Preventing the introduction of invasive plants is the most cost-effective method of controlling these species. Banning the sale of listed invasive plants noxious weeds and their seeds is one of several options to help prevent new introductions of these species. The Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development has developed collaborative partnerships with the Invasive Species Council of British Columbia ISCBC and regional invasive species organizations throughout the province. These organizations have taken positive steps to educate the horticulture industry and the general public about invasive species, which has resulted in a reduced number of potentially harmful species being offered for sale at retail</p>

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		outlets. The Grow Me Instead booklet available on the ISCBC website provides information on dozens of invasive plants and seeds and offers alternatives for gardeners: http://bcinvasives.ca/resources/publications/grow-me-instead-booklet
<p>Invasive Species Funding Invasive Species Funding Union of BC Municipalities</p> <p>Convention Decision Endorsed</p>	<p>Year 2020 Number EB49 Sponsor(s) Burns Lake</p> <p>Whereas the spread of invasive species on provincial public lands results in the adverse effect on the economic wellbeing of municipalities and regional districts; And whereas effective management of invasive species requires long-term stable funding before the invasion is irreversible: Therefore be it resolved that UBCM lobby the provincial government to budget for long-term, stable funding for invasive species management.</p>	<p>Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development</p> <p>The risks and impacts of invasive species are well recognized by the Government of British Columbia. Invasive species do not obey boundaries, so their management requires coordination across all jurisdictions. Over the past three years, the provincial government has committed close to 12M per year in staff and operational funding to address invasive species. Under the BC Economic Recovery Plan announced September 17, 2020, an additional 12M will provide training in invasive species identification, detection and control and up to 350 jobs across British Columbia over 12-17 months. Increasing annual resources dedicated to invasive species management must be considered against all other government fiscal pressures. Working collaboratively with partners has enabled leveraging of additional external funding and facilitated more land managers engaging at the local level to help address new invaders and reduce the impacts caused by existing invasive species populations. The introduction of new invasive species and spread of those already in BC is increasing and the Province is examining potential opportunities under CleanBC and the Climate Preparedness and Adaptation Strategy to increase resources dedicated to invasive species prevention and control.</p>
<p>Invasive Species Act Invasive Species Act Union of BC Municipalities</p> <p>Convention Decision Not Considered - Automatic Referral to Executive</p> <p>Executive Decision Endorsed</p>	<p>Year 2020 Number NR57 Sponsor(s) Burns Lake</p> <p>Whereas there is no current provincial legislation that specifically addresses the negative impacts that invasive species cause for the economic wellbeing of municipalities and regional districts: Therefore be it resolved that UBCM lobby the provincial government to develop a comprehensive Invasive Species Act that addresses all taxa, prohibits the sale of invasive species, and includes appropriate enforcement clauses.</p>	<p>Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development</p> <p>The Province recognizes that there are gaps in the current invasive species management and legislative framework in British Columbia, with the potential result that many high-risk species and their pathways of introduction may not be adequately controlled. The federal government has the legislative authority to prevent the introduction of invasive species of concern to Canada. Once a species has established in one or more areas of the country, the responsibility for prevention or management generally transfers to the provinces and territories. The Inter-Ministry Invasive Species Working Group IMISWG is the coordinating body for invasive species prevention and management and has representation from all resource and land management ministries. IMISWG completed a review of current legislation and policy and identified specific taxonomic groups and invasive species that are not addressed, and areas where changes and improvements to policy would support the prevention of invasive species introduction and spread. Ontario is the first provincial territorial jurisdiction to have an Invasive Species Act and regulations. Their staff have been sharing lessons learned through that process with the Inter-Ministry Invasive Species Working Group. The risks posed by invasive species are well recognized by the Provincial government. Invasive species do not obey boundaries, so their management requires coordination across all jurisdictions. The Province is committed to continuing to pursue improved policy solutions to address all invasive species.</p>

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<p>Invasive Species Amendment to the Weed Control Act</p> <p>Invasive Species Amendment to the Weed Control Act Union of BC Municipalities</p> <p>Convention Decision Endorsed</p>	<p>Year 2023 Number EB34 Sponsor Okanagan-Similkameen</p> <p>Whereas the Weed Control Act RSBC 1996 Chapter 487 provides that an occupier must control noxious weeds growing or located on land and premises, and on any other property located on land and premises, occupied by that person; And whereas the proliferation of invasive plants has grown exponentially throughout British Columbia; And whereas invasive plants continue to be sold commercially to uninformed property owners and landscapers; And whereas S. 41 of the Weed Control Regulation provides that no person shall transport, keep for sale, offer to buy or sell, or buy or sell any screenings containing seeds of a noxious weed, it says nothing about plants: Therefore be it resolved that UBCM request that the Province amend the Weed Control Act to restrict the commercial sale of plants identified in Schedule A, Part 1 2, of the Weed Control Regulation.</p>	<p>Ministry of Forests</p> <p>The risks and impacts of invasive plant species are well recognized by the Government of British Columbia. The BC Weed Control Act is an older piece of legislation that does not fully provide the foundation for improved regulation that could address invasive plant noxious weed sale, movement or trade. The Ministry of Forests recognize that there have been consistent, collective requests over the past 15 or more years for improved legislation to better address invasive species in BC and that this has been reflected in the Invasive Species Strategy for BC. The BC Inter-Ministry Invasive Species Working Group has completed a legislative gap analysis and policy work to address invasive species legislation needs. Closing pathways of introduction and spread of invasive plant species e.g. sale, movement, trade is a cost-effective and critical approach to reduce risk and future impacts.</p>
<p>Ban on the Sale of Invasive Plant Species</p> <p>Ban on the Sale of Invasive Plant Species Union of BC Municipalities</p> <p>Convention Decision Endorsed</p>	<p>Year 2023 Number EB35 Sponsor(s) West Vancouver</p> <p>Whereas invasive plants can cause significant economic harm by damaging crops, fisheries, forests, and infrastructure, and impose costs on industry and taxpayers for control and eradication efforts; And whereas regulating the sale and distribution of invasive plants is a key strategy for preventing their introduction and spread, and for protecting native ecosystems and economies: Therefore be it resolved that UBCM request that the Province ban the sale and distribution of invasive plants within the jurisdiction of the Province of British Columbia, except for plants that have been determined to be non-invasive.</p>	<p>Ministry of Forests</p> <p>Preventing the introduction and distribution of invasive plant species continues to be a priority for Government, as we recognize the significant impacts invasive plants can have on economic, ecological, social and cultural values across BC. The Ministry of Forests leads invasive plant management and is aware of the gaps in the current invasive species legislative framework. High-risk invasive plant species and their pathways of introduction and spread are not adequately controlled and there are limited provisions to stop the retail sale, trade, barter, gifting or movement of regulated species. The Inter-Ministry Invasive Species Working Group IMISWG is the coordinating body for invasive species prevention and management and has representation from all resource and land management ministries. The IMISWG has completed a review of legislation and policy and identified invasive species that are not adequately addressed, and areas where improvements to policy would support preventing the introduction and spread of high-risk invasive plants and animals, which includes preventing their sale, trade, barter, gifting and transport. This review also determined that the Weed Control Act is antiquated and not feasible to update to make the improvements required to include needed prevention and movement prohibition provisions. Exploring the development of a new, comprehensive Act with supporting Regulations and policy has been recommended as the best approach to adequately address all high-risk invasive species and their pathways of introduction and spread. Creating new legislation is a</p>

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<p>Controlling Invasive Scotch Broom</p> <p>Controlling Invasive Scotch Broom Union of BC Municipalities</p> <p>Convention Decision Endorsed</p>	<p>Year: 2025 Number: E B39 Sponsor(s) Cowichan Valley RD</p> <p>Whereas Scotch Broom (<i>Cytisus scoparius</i>), a plant species not native to BC, has been identified by the BC Invasive Species Council as a Regulated Invasive Species and as the top worst offender impacting Species at Risk by the Coastal Invasive Species Committee as a Priority Invasive Plant; And whereas the proliferation of Scotch Broom results in ecological and economic impacts including displacement of native plant species, harm to sensitive ecosystems, reduced productivity on agricultural and forest lands and increased risk of wildfire; And whereas Scotch Broom spreads readily along disturbed corridors such as highways and power transmission lines, lands which are outside the jurisdiction of local government bylaws: Therefore be it resolved that UBCM lobby the provincial government and BC Hydro for increased support and resources to manage Scotch Broom (<i>Cytisus scoparius</i>) across the province including control, containment, eradication and prevention.</p>	<p>large undertaking, however, in the interim, the province is committed to continuing to pursue improved policy solutions to address invasive plant species.</p> <p>Submitted Directly to UBCM Resolutions Committee Recommendation: Endorse</p> <p>UBCM Resolutions Committee Comments: The Resolutions Committee notes that the UBCM membership endorsed resolution 2023-NR51 which sought to control the spread of scotch broom and resolution 2013-B31 which asked the Province to designate Scotch Broom as a noxious weed under the BC Weed Control Act. The Committee also notes that the membership has endorsed Resolution 2020-EB49, which called on the Provincial government to budget for long-term, stable funding for invasive species management.</p>