

**Barren-ground Caribou Species at Risk Assessment**

Mr. Speaker, caribou herds across northern Canada have been declining. Many are at or near historic low numbers.

These declines prompted the Committee on Status of Endangered Species in Canada to assess barren-ground caribou across Canada, including herds in the Northwest Territories, as a threatened species in November 2016.

Decisions on this listing and a resulting recovery strategy will be made by the Government of Canada in consultation with the Government of the Northwest Territories and our co-management partners. Canada's consultation on the legal listing of barren-ground caribou as a threatened species under the federal *Species at Risk Act* is expected to take a least a year.

Mr. Speaker, the legal listing as a threatened species results in automatic prohibitions to protect the species and its habitat on federal lands only. It also results in a requirement for provinces and territories to identify and protect critical habitat.

This Government has committed, through our priorities and mandate, to effective co-management of caribou herds and other wildlife which can lead to improved food security through enhanced local production and traditional harvesting depending on the status of the herd.

Recovery actions to conserve barren-ground caribou herds in the Northwest Territories are already underway. These actions will contribute to the recovery of the species.

Department of Environment and Natural Resources staff will continue to work with their federal counterparts to coordinate consultation with stakeholders prior to the listing.

The Northwest Territories Species at Risk Committee will assess the territorial status of barren-ground caribou in April.

Mr. Speaker, we will continue our collaborative efforts with our co-management partners, stakeholders and NWT residents to conserve barren-ground caribou for present and future generations.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.