

Bathurst Caribou Range Plan Initiative

Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to provide an update on the progress made on the development of a range plan for the Bathurst caribou herd.

As Members may be aware, cumulative impact concerns were raised during environmental assessments of the Gahcho Kue, Fortune Minerals NICO project and the Jay Pipe project expansion. Each Environmental Assessment recommended that the Government of the Northwest Territories develop approaches for cumulative effects monitoring.

In response to these concerns and measures, the Government of the Northwest Territories began a collaborative process in 2014 for development of a range plan to reduce and manage disturbance to caribou and caribou habitat from human and natural change.

This initiative supports the following two priorities of this Legislative Assembly and the mandate:

- Improving coordination and effectiveness in resource management systems, recognizing traditional knowledge, land claims agreements and devolution; and
- Effective co-management of caribou herds.

Mr. Speaker, a Working Group, which includes representatives from federal, territorial and Aboriginal Governments, industry, wildlife co-management boards, Aboriginal and non-government organizations have been meeting to discuss and consider management options for a Bathurst Caribou Range Plan.

I am pleased to report the Working Group has completed a draft discussion document on concept and approaches that could be used to develop the range plan. The document will

be used to engage Aboriginal governments, regulators, communities, stakeholders and the public on management options and potential tools.

These tools include:

- cumulative disturbance thresholds, which reflect limits of acceptable change based on ecological, cultural, social and economic values and perspectives;
- conservation areas to formally protect important migration corridors and sensitive habitats
- activity guidelines to manage locations and timing of human land use activities to reduce direct impact on caribou when they are in certain areas at certain times; and,
- access management approaches to address issues such as construction methods and route orientation to reduce barriers to caribou movement, consolidation of routes and use of seasonal roads.

Engagement on the concepts and approaches to protect important caribou habitat will start in the next few weeks.

Mr. Speaker, decisions about caribou management is a shared responsibility and must consider ecological, cultural and economic values to achieve balanced outcomes.

I encourage Aboriginal governments, communities, decision-makers, stakeholders and the public to review, discuss and provide feedback on these options so we can achieve balance in managing the range of the Bathurst caribou herd for the benefit of current and future generations.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.