

### **Update on Boreal and Barren-ground Caribou Management**

Mr. Speaker, decisions about caribou management are a shared responsibility in the NWT and are made in collaboration with Indigenous, territorial and federal governments and boards that have responsibilities for wildlife management and land use planning decisions. Overall population and herd-specific management plans define monitoring and management actions in the NWT, and play a key role in overall caribou management. As part of our government's mandate, Mr. Speaker, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources has made commitments to implement an updated management strategy for Barren-ground caribou and develop a range planning framework for Boreal caribou.

Most caribou herds across northern Canada have been declining or are stable at low numbers. Many are at, or near, historic low numbers. Mr. Speaker, Boreal caribou are listed as a Threatened Species under both the federal and NWT *Species at Risk Acts*. Population declines across Canada are linked to habitat disturbance from industrial activity such as roads, logging and seismic lines, and forest fires.

Under the federal *Species at Risk Act*, there is a requirement to protect critical habitat. The Act stipulates that across Canada, jurisdictions must maintain at least 65% undisturbed habitat within each local Boreal caribou population range. This is a national threshold set by the Government of Canada that all jurisdictions are bound by.

ENR is leading the development of a Boreal Caribou Range Planning Framework outlining the GNWT's approach to meet this requirement in a way that integrates environmental protection with economic and social needs, supporting both self-sustaining caribou populations and sustainable economic development. It is a made-in-the-NWT approach

drafted with co-management partners, developed with wildlife co-management boards and with other GNWT departments through the Inter-departmental Species at Risk Committee.

We have completed a draft of the Boreal Caribou Range Planning Framework and will begin engagement with stakeholders and Standing Committee on Economic Development and Environment in March. This work will be completed early in the life of the next Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, with respect to Barren-ground caribou, they were recently assessed as Threatened by both the federal Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada and the NWT Species at Risk Committee. As required in legislation, ENR is currently conducting broad public engagement and consultation on whether Barren-ground caribou should be added to the NWT List of Species at Risk.

Building on the previous Barren-ground Caribou Management Strategies from 2006-2010 and 2011-2015, an updated Barren-ground Caribou Management Strategy for 2018-2022 is in draft form and ENR is set to begin engagement and consultation this month with Indigenous governments, co-management partners, stakeholders, Standing Committee on Economic Development and Environment and the public. A final Strategy is expected to be completed in the fall.

Mr. Speaker, the GNWT has a history of cooperative working relationships and partnerships with Indigenous governments when it comes to wildlife management, something that contributes to a successful approach to Indigenous reconciliation that ensures Indigenous views and priorities are part of government decision making.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.