



DEC 19 2019

MR. RONALD BONNETROUGE  
MLA DEH CHO

### **Oral Question OQ7-19(1): Bison Management Plan**

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This letter is in follow up to the Oral Question you raised on December 10, 2019 regarding the Bison Management Plan.

Wood bison are an important and valued species to residents of the Northwest Territories (NWT). The Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) has worked closely with its co-management partners to support the recovery of this Threatened species, and the Mackenzie population has been a success story in wood bison conservation territorially and nationally.

A *Mackenzie Bison Management Plan* was completed in 2018, and provides overall guidance to management of the Mackenzie population. This plan was developed collaboratively by the Mackenzie Bison Working Group comprised of Deh Gáh Got'îê First Nation, Fort Providence Métis Council, Fort Providence Resource Management Board, Hamlet of Fort Providence, North Slave Métis Alliance, Northwest Territories Wildlife Federation, NWT Métis Nation, Tłı̨chǫ Government, Wek'èezhìi Renewable Resources Board, Yellowknives Dene First Nation, and the Community Government of Behchokǫ.

Three diseases pose a challenge to wood bison populations in the NWT. Anthrax is a naturally occurring disease, and outbreaks can result in the death of large numbers of bison in a short period of time. The last outbreak in the Mackenzie population occurred in 2012, resulting in the loss of almost half the population.

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (ENR) monitors the Mackenzie population for anthrax every summer through bi-weekly surveillance flights that cover all of the bison populations range. In the event that a suspected anthrax case is found, ENR conducts immediate testing and implements its *Anthrax Emergency Response Plan*. This plan is designed to help reduce the impact of the disease on the population and reduce the chance of future cases.

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Two diseases that are important to wood bison are bovine brucellosis and tuberculosis, which are found in bison in and around Wood Buffalo National Park. The Mackenzie bison population is considered free of both diseases, and ENR periodically monitors the population to ensure it remains healthy. ENR also maintains a Bison Control Area, a buffer zone used to prevent the spread of these diseases from infected populations to the disease-free Mackenzie and Nahanni herds.

Technical staff from ENR has enjoyed a very positive and collaborative working relationship with the community of Fort Providence. ENR shares results of bison and disease monitoring with both the Deh Gáh Got'îê First Nation and Fort Providence Métis Council by email, letter and at in-person meetings. We look forward to continuing this ongoing co-management approach to bison management.

If you would like any additional information, please let me know.

Sincerely,



Shane Thompson  
Minister  
Environment and Natural Resources

c. Clerk of the Legislative Assembly

Legislative Coordinator,  
Executive and Indigenous Affairs

Ms. Erin Kelly, Ph.D.  
A/Deputy Minister  
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**Mr. Troy Ellsworth**  
**Superintendent, South Slave Region**  
**Environment and Natural Resources**