



MAR 26 2019

MR. KEVIN O'REILLY
MLA, FRAME LAKE

Oral Question 511-18(3): Consultations on the Bathurst Caribou Herd

This letter is in follow up to the Oral Question you raised on February 6, 2019 regarding consultations on the Bathurst caribou herd. I would like to provide you with the following information regarding the community meetings held last month in the North Slave region and the status of the Bathurst Caribou Range Plan.

1. As you may recall, the results of the Bluenose-East and Bathurst numbers were released on November 20, 2018, which included an invitation to further discuss the population estimates, the co-management process and next steps regarding caribou management actions. As soon as the numbers were released, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (ENR) took steps to notify leaders from Indigenous governments and MLAs from communities on the range of these two herds.

Since then, ENR staff have met regularly with Tłı̨chǫ Government staff to develop the content of two joint management proposals (management proposals) that were submitted to the Wek'èezhì Renewable Resources Board (WRRB) last month.

In order for new management actions to be in place by the start of the next caribou harvest season, the deadline to submit the management proposals to the WRRB for review was early January 2019. These tight timelines were necessary to ensure that the Board could properly review both proposals and conduct their processes which will include a public hearing for the Bluenose-East herd.

Consultation on the management proposals began in January 2019. So far this consultation has included a joint Tłı̨chǫ Government/ENR tour of the four Tłı̨chǫ communities, meetings with the Délı̨nę Renewable Resource Council, Yellowknives Dene First Nation, Salt River First Nation, the Fort Smith Métis Council, Smith's Landing First Nation, Łutselk'e Dene First Nation and the North Slave Métis Alliance which took place on February 18, 2019.

The Standing Committee on Economic Development and Environment (SCEDE) is encouraged to participate in the process to review the caribou management proposals through the WRRB's public registry.

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ENR is committed to our well established wildlife co-management process, and will accommodate any requests for further meetings with affected communities.

2. The Bathurst Caribou Range Plan (Range Plan) is a key tool for managing Bathurst caribou, and will provide specific guidance on how to monitor, assess, and manage cumulative habitat disturbance on the range of the herd. Development of the Range Plan was completed in collaboration with 21 organizations including Indigenous governments and organizations (IGOs), wildlife co-management partners, industry, and environmental organizations from the Northwest Territories and Nunavut to ensure the diversity in values and perspectives are represented.

A draft Range Plan was completed in December 2018 and is currently under final review by various Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) departments. The draft plan is anticipated to be submitted to Cabinet for approval to submit to the WRRB and SCEDE prior to the end of the current fiscal year.

ENR is currently working with the Departments of Industry, Tourism and Investment and Infrastructure to conduct an updated assessment of how future "reasonably foreseeable" and "high" development scenarios may impact the Bathurst caribou range. This scenario modelling will assess how potential projects, including GNWT infrastructure initiatives, will contribute to total disturbance if they all go ahead.

I want to assure you that ENR is committed to continuing to build relationships with our co-management partners through the co-management process, and we will continue to engage our partners throughout the development of this very important guidance document in order to address the cumulative effects of caribou habitat disturbance.



Robert C. McLeod
Minister
Environment and Natural Resources

- c. Clerk of the Legislative Assembly
Legislative Coordinator, Executive and Indigenous Affairs
Deputy Minister, Environment and Natural Resources