

Update On NWT Barren-Ground Caribou Management Strategy

Hon. J. Michael Miltenberger

June 8, 2006

Statement to the Legislative Assembly

Mr. Speaker, in February, the NWT Barren-ground Caribou Management Strategy was released. It identified the actions this government, our partners and users need to take during the next five years to help caribou herds recover. Today I would like to update Members on the actions we have taken to date:

- Measures identified by the wildlife co-management boards are being implemented.
- Harvest levels have been reduced.
- A two-week delay in the release of maps showing the locations of caribou has been implemented.
- Additional collars were deployed during the spring distribution surveys in March. The collars are used to determine locations of caribou during summer surveys.
- Additional compliance patrols were carried out throughout the Northwest Territories this winter.
- There has been an increase in public information materials, including radio and newspaper advertisements.

Mr. Speaker, the following further actions are planned for this summer:

- Additional regulations to restrict harvesting, based on recommendations of the co-management boards, will be completed in July.
- The department is working with Industry, Tourism and Investment to address hardships resulting from the low caribou numbers.
- Public information materials, including radio, television and newspaper advertisements, are being developed to help harvesters prepare for the fall hunting season.

A commitment was made to this House to survey the caribou herds again this year to confirm the numbers from last summer and some of this work is already underway with more planned for later this summer. A photographic calving ground survey to obtain a new estimate of the Bathurst caribou herd is underway. A reconnaissance of the calving ground of the Ahiak herd is scheduled for later this month and post-calving photo census for the Cape Bathurst, Bluenose West and Bluenose East survey is scheduled for mid-July.

Computer technology has made counting caribou easier and more accurate. The photos are loaded into a computer program and as staff point at each caribou, the program

tags it with a number. The results from the summer surveys will be provided to our partners and the public in September. Workshops involving wildlife co-management boards and users will be held this fall in Inuvik and Yellowknife to evaluate herd-specific results and to review management actions.

Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned before in this House, plans are underway to host a caribou summit with all stakeholders across the North, once we have gathered the information needed to give us a comprehensive picture of the current state of our caribou herds.

We will continue to work with the people of the Northwest Territories and our partners to ensure our caribou herds are conserved and treated with respect so we can continue to depend on this valuable renewable resource.

Thank you.