

**Kevin O'Reilly—MLA Frame Lake**

**June 16, 2016**

**RETURN TO ORAL QUESTION 32-18(2):  
BATHURST CARIBOU HERD MANAGEMENT**

**HON. WALLY SCHUMANN:** Mr. Speaker, I have a Return to Oral Question asked by Mr. O'Reilly on February 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2016, regarding Bathurst Caribou Management. The Government of the Northwest Territories, or GNWT, acknowledges the hardships experienced by communities who are unable to partake in caribou harvesting activities and is working very hard in collaboration with partners to put actions, plans and processes in place to support the recovery of the herd on a number of fronts.

Restricting harvest is not the only management action that is being taken to address the status of the Bathurst herd nor is it one that is applied lightly; however, in terms of relative impact on the herd it is one of the key management levers we have to reduce impacts on the herd.

Developing approaches to habitat protection is a long-term endeavor necessitating the engagement of many parties. Environment and Natural Resources, or ENR, has been involved in a few initiatives to advance habitat protection and to protect caribou from disturbance during sensitive time periods. One is the involvement in the Nunavut Land Use planning process. ENR is a registered participant in the Nunavut Planning Commission, or NPC, process for developing a Nunavut Land Use Plan.

The GNWT has put forward the position that industrial activity of any type, including mineral exploration and production, construction of roads, pipelines and other infrastructure, should not be permitted in the calving areas. NPC is attempting to build consensus on approaches for habitat and disturbance management through a combination of tools such as conservation areas, as well as seasonal and locational restrictions on development activities.

Another initiative to protect habitat is range planning. ENR, with the support from the Departments of Industry, Tourism and Investment and Lands, is working towards the development of a range plan for the Bathurst caribou herd. This plan is being undertaken by a working group of 21 partners including the Tlicho Government, Wek'eezhii Renewable Resources Board, other Aboriginal organizations, industry and environmental non-governmental organizations.

The Range Plan will be a guidance document for use by wildlife management authorities, including the government, in making recommendations on habitat management issues such as conservation areas, acceptable levels of disturbance on the range and seasonal or mobile caribou conservation measures. It is scheduled for completion in March 2018 and will apply across the historic range of the Bathurst herd.

Actions related to individual projects are typically addressed through environmental assessments, the regulatory permitting process and through the development, implementation and review of wildlife management and monitoring plans for proposed and existing developments.

Specifically, ENR remains engaged in a review process of proposed developments within the Bathurst range in the NWT and Nunavut to ensure that possible effects on the Bathurst herd are duly considered and mitigated where possible. For projects in the NWT, ENR is in the process of developing guidelines for industry to support development of Wildlife Management and

Monitoring Plans which are now be required for operations that may cause significant disturbance to wildlife or habitat. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.