

**KEVIN O'REILLY—MLA FRAME LAKE**  
**Boreal Caribou Management Plan and Monitoring**  
**Committee of the Whole—2018-2019 Operating Budget Review**  
**Dept. of Executive and Indigenous Affairs—February 27, 2017**

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks, Mr. Chair. Let's start with boreal caribou. In the business plan, it says that the National Recovery Strategy is legally required and has to have at least a minimum of 65 per cent of undisturbed habitat. The next sentence says that currently approximately 66 per cent of the Northwest Territories range is undisturbed. We have a 1 per cent margin for the boreal caribou habitat remaining undisturbed to meet the National Recovery Strategy requirements.

Boreal caribou are important. We have this 1 per cent disturbance sort of limit that's out there. In the budget, though, boreal caribou monitoring is going to be cut by \$150,000. Can someone tell me how much money remains for boreal caribou monitoring after this cut? Thanks, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Blake):** Thank you, Mr. O'Reilly. Minister McLeod.

**HON. ROBERT MCLEOD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, the Member is correct. There is a legal requirement for 65 per cent, and we're at 66 per cent, but that number changes as we get some new previously burnt areas coming back on stream. I have to add our 1 per cent is actually quite large compared to the other jurisdictions, but his point is well taken.

The \$150,000, we're just trying to get the number here as to what's left in the budget, but I can inform this House that we are working with Environment and Climate Change Canada for funding under the Federal Species at Risk Act. These funds will be used to complete the Range Planning Framework. We haven't got an exact dollar figure yet, but my early understanding is going to be significantly more than \$150,000. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Blake):** Thank you, Minister McLeod. Mr. O'Reilly.

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thanks, Mr. Chair. While the Minister and his staff are digging out the number, I guess I'll turn to: there is out now for public discussion a framework for boreal caribou range planning. A big part of this document really revolves around what's called adaptive management. It's basically a tiered approach to management and looking at disturbance levels and starting to do things with regard to regional range plans.

A big part of this document is really about monitoring. We have our government's own document talking about the need for more monitoring, but we're cutting the monitoring by \$150,000. Can someone try to explain this again for me, because I just don't understand why we're making a cut to this funding when our own documents are calling for more monitoring of boreal caribou? Thanks, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Blake):** Thank you, Mr. O'Reilly. Minister McLeod.

**HON. ROBERT MCLEOD:** Yes, thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, because the federal government declared this a species at risk, I mean, they are going to fund the

monitoring of the caribou, and my understanding is it is going to be significantly more than the \$150,000 that is being reduced. We will have the necessary appropriation to do all of the monitoring on the boreal caribou, and I will turn it over to Dr. Dragon to add on to some of the Member's other points that he raised. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Blake):** Thank you, Minister McLeod. Dr. Dragon.

**DR. DRAGON:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Yes, in looking at our monitoring approach for boreal caribou, we realize that we are going to need significant funding in order to be able to do this. Our recent conversations that we have had over the past, I would say, six to seven months with Environment and Climate Change Canada was looking at, we will see the numbers in the budget that came out today, but there is going to be some significant money that is going to be available for that research. The Northwest Territories is one of the largest jurisdictions for boreal caribou. We have come up with a very strategic approach to the adapted management and the tiered approach within the boreal caribou range. We think that, based on our conversations that we have had with Environment and Climate Change Canada, we should have significant money that is going to be coming through that arrangement. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Blake):** Thank you, Dr. Dragon. Mr. O'Reilly.

**MR. O'REILLY:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Okay. We have some hints that there might be some federal money coming, so that gives us reason to cut back our contribution to boreal caribou monitoring? That just doesn't make any sense to me. I am going to leave this one for now. I do not think this is a good cut. I think it is another one that is being made for Cabinet's fiscal reduction strategy that is not evidence-based. I do not know why the department is doing this. It does not make any sense whatsoever. I want to move on, though, to barren-ground caribou, and there is a line item in the business plan that reads: "Continued well-being of the Bathurst caribou herd related to the Jay Pipe Project," and it's \$310,000. The Minister talked about it in his opening remarks as well. Why is GNWT paying this money, and not Dominion Diamond? Thanks, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Blake):** Thank you, Mr. O'Reilly. Minister McLeod.

**HON. ROBERT MCLEOD:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I am going to respond to the Member's first point about the boreal caribou and the \$150,000 reduction, and then I am going to go to Dr. Dragon to add to the Member's second part. Again, it is not a hint that we are going to get money from the federal government. We are certain we are going to get money from the federal government, and when we do get that money, I will be happy to sit down with committee and share that amount with them. We are very confident in this, and I do not think it ruined this just because it is a reduction. I mean, some of the savings realized here are able to be used in other areas of Environment and Natural Resources. We would not do this if it was just a hint, Mr. Chair. We are confident that we are going to get money, and it is going to be significantly more than \$150,000. I will be more than happy to share that amount with the Member when we get the amount, and then I am going to ask Dr. Dragon to add on to the Member's comments about the Bathurst caribou herd. Thank you, Mr. Chair.