



December 14, 2018  
For Immediate Release

## **All harvesting of George River caribou should cease, says Minister**

Lands and Natural Resources Minister Tony Andersen says he's pleased to see Indigenous groups from Quebec agreeing with the Nunatsiavut Government's call for a ban on all harvesting of the George River Caribou Herd.

"Caribou is a part of our cultural identity which has helped to sustain our people for thousands of years as a valuable source of food, clothing and tools," says Minister Andersen. "However, we have reached a point where the George River herd is struggling to survive and sacrifices have to be made if there is to be any hope of recovery."

A census carried out this summer estimates the herd at 5,500 animals, a 38 per cent decline from 2016. While the Nunatsiavut Government anticipated a decline in numbers, says Minister Andersen, the census results came as a shock.

"Never did we think the decline would be as much as it was, and we can only attribute it to continued harvesting activities," the Minister says.

The Nunatsiavut Government held multiple meetings with the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, the Innu Nation and the NunatukKavut Community Council leading up to and following the release of the census results.

"During all of our meetings we firmly stated that we believe there should be no harvesting whatsoever from the George River Caribou Herd," notes Minister Andersen. "We stand by that position."

In October, the Nunatsiavut Government renewed its call for a zero harvest to members of the Ungava Peninsula Caribou Aboriginal Round Table (UPCART). Both the Cree and the Inuit of Quebec have since publicly called for all harvesting to cease.

"We are pleased to see other Indigenous nations support our position, and we call on others who have traditionally harvested George River caribou to follow suit," says Minister Andersen. "We remain committed to working with all members of UPCART, as well as the Innu Nation, to create a path forward that will hopefully see the herd recover to a point where we can all continue to maintain our cultural connections to this vital resource."

The Minister is urging all Beneficiaries of the Labrador Inuit Land Claims Agreement to adhere to the provincial harvesting moratorium on George River caribou. He is also renewing calls for stricter enforcement measures.

“The Government of Newfoundland and Labrador put the ban in place, but is refusing to enforce it because it is more concerned about the political backlash it will receive than it is about protecting the future of the George River caribou.”

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