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For Immediate Release

Beneficiaries urged to continue adhering to George River hunting ban

While information released today by the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador shows a slight increase in the population of the George River Caribou Herd, Nunatsiavut's Lands and Natural Resources Minister Greg Flowers says it could still be many more years before a sustained harvest can take place.

A census carried out this past summer by wildlife officials from both Newfoundland and Labrador and Quebec estimate the current population of the herd to be 8,100. This was the first census carried out since 2018 when the population was estimated to be 5,500. The census also revealed that some 35 per cent of the population are calves, with a healthy calf/female ratio of 69 calves per 100 females. This is the highest calf production recorded in the past decade. As a result of improved natural survival and reduced illegal harvest, the decline in adult mortality since 2018 has also contributed to the overall increase.

“This is encouraging news, but we must continue to maintain a cautious approach when it comes to harvesting,” says Minister Flowers. “The provincial hunting ban, which was implemented in 2013, remains in effect, and we encourage Labrador Inuit to continue adhering to that ban.”

Any harvesting at this point will significantly impact the recovery of the herd, Minister Flowers maintains.

“As Inuit, we have relied on George River caribou for many years for social, cultural, and nutritional purposes to feed and cloth ourselves, our families, and our communities,” adds Nunatsiavut President Johannes Lampe. “The sacrifices Labrador Inuit have made to protect the herd are starting to pay off, but we still have a long way to go if we are to ensure the future survival of this vital resource.”

President Lampe is also calling on other Indigenous groups in Labrador to encourage their members to adhere to the ban.

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