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For Immediate Release

## **Nunatsiavut Government opposes recommendation to list George River and Torngat caribou as endangered**

Lands and Natural Resources Minister Darryl Shiwak is urging the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to not accept recommendations of the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC) to list both the George River and Torngat Mountains caribou herds as endangered under provincial legislation.

Minister Shiwak has written provincial Minister of Fisheries and Land Resources, Gerry Byrne, outlining a number of concerns with the COSEWIC recommendations.

“We have asked the Minister to take into account new information, and noted that there are other measures that can be implemented to provide protection and help ensure the long-term sustainability of both herds,” says Minister Shiwak.

An historic agreement signed this past October by Indigenous leaders that make up the Ungava Peninsula Caribou Aboriginal Round Table established a management strategy with a stated goal: “To adapt to population highs and lows to the extent possible, while accepting natural variability and working within its confines, and making the right decisions at the right times to optimize social, spiritual, economic and cultural benefits for all peoples, while respecting priority of access for Indigenous Peoples.” As well, a Land Use Plan for the Labrador Inuit Settlement Area – yet to be accepted by the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador – contains key caribou protection measures, noted Minister Shiwak.

“(Newfoundland and Labrador) support for the UPCART Management Strategy and NL approval of the Land Use Plan for LISA will provide the necessary tools for the sustainability of the George River caribou,” Minister Shiwak wrote in his letter to Minister Byrne. “It would be very concerning to us should the Government of NL decide to accept a recommendation from COSEWIC, while at the same time refusing to acknowledge a Regional Land Use Plan that provides protection for and recognizes critical caribou habitat.”

Population estimates of the Torngat Mountains Caribou Herd are not based on accurate information or scientific facts, or supported by traditional Inuit knowledge, added Minister Shiwak.

“Given a lack of understanding for a population trend or clear understanding of a baseline population estimate, the Nunatsiavut Government cannot support a COSEWIC recommendation for the Torngat herd.”

Labrador Inuit and Nunavik Inuit are the traditional users of the Torngat Mountains Caribou Herd, not the seven member nations who are traditional users of the George River caribou and signatories to the UPCART agreement. In recognition of this, the UPCART generally agree that the management of the Torngat herd should remain with the Nunatsiavut Government and the Makivik Corporation. The Torngat Mountain National Park Co-Management Board, which has representatives from both the Nunatsiavut Government and Makivik Corporation, is also responsible to recommend management measures to the Government of Canada when necessary.

“We have advised Minister Byrne that there are already sufficient measures in place to allow successful management of the Torngat herd, and a COSEWIC listing would not be helpful in the context of adding additional responsibilities at this time,” said Minister Shiwak. “As well, the Nunatsiavut Government’s experience with provincial Species at Risk legislation has not been positive, and we don’t support additional provincial legislative measures for the Torngat herd.”

With respect to the current hunting ban on George River caribou, the Nunatsiavut Government has asked the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to make provisions to allow for a one per cent Indigenous harvest, as outlined in the UPCART strategy.

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