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## COURTESY TRANSLATION

MAY 24 2022

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Original signed by

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Daniel Shewchuk  
Chairperson  
Nunavut Wildlife Management Board  
P.O. Box 1379  
Iqaluit, Nunavut  
X0A 0H0

Dear Mr. Shewchuk,

Thank you for your consideration of the proposed addition of Caribou, Barren-ground population as Threatened on Schedule 1 of the Species at Risk Act (SARA).

The range of this wildlife species spans three territories and three provinces. Throughout this range, the persistence of these vital caribou is crucial to the well-being and future of communities. In arriving at his response to the decision of the Nunavut Wildlife Management Board, the Minister must also examine other aspects of the situation. These include the concerns of the many communities within the Nunavut land settlement area, and those under the Tłıchǝ Government, as well as land claim beneficiaries within the Inuvialuit, Gwich'in, and Sahtu Settlement areas, and certain Indigenous communities within the provinces of Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba. He must also consider the best way to ensure that the future of these caribou is secure.

Therefore, on behalf of Environment and Climate Change Canada, I would like to request flexibility concerning the period within which the Minister of Environment and Climate Change responds to your decision on this matter either accepting or disallowing the Board decision. As provided for in the Nunavut Agreement 5.3.18, would you and the Nunavut Wildlife Management Board agree to vary the deadline within which a response from the Minister is required?

If the Board is agreeable to a variance from the 60-day deadline, we propose one of 120 days. Would your Board accept this duration for the proposed variance?

Thank you for your attention to this issue.

Respectfully,

Julie Spallin

Director General, Wildlife Management Division,  
Canadian Wildlife Service  
Environment and Climate Change Canada



MAY 24 2022

Mr. Daniel Shewchuk  
Chairperson  
Nunavut Wildlife Management Board  
P.O. Box 1379  
Iqaluit NU X0A 0H0

Dear Mr. Shewchuk:

Thank you for your letter of January 25, 2022, conveying the Nunavut Wildlife Management Board's decision to reject the proposed listing of the barren-ground population of caribou (*Rangifer tarandus*; referred to as barren-ground caribou) as a threatened species under the *Species at Risk Act* (SARA). I regret the delay in responding.

I appreciate the Nunavut Wildlife Management Board's concerns regarding the listing of barren-ground caribou under SARA. I agree with the Board that while we can conclude from the Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit (IQ) and the scientific studies that most caribou herds undergo regular fluctuations, the prevailing cumulative threats appear to be unprecedented.

I recognize that there is some dissatisfaction with the extent of IQ that was incorporated into the 2016 Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC) assessment. The COSEWIC assessment relied on the best available information at the time. Environment and Climate Change Canada shares the Nunavut Wildlife Management Board's interest in developing methodologies for the use of IQ in species assessments, and increasing the IQ that supports the development and implementation of all phases of the species at risk process in the future. In the case of barren-ground caribou, I am grateful for the significant engagement of Inuit to identify and enhance available IQ on this species during listing consultations. I understand that while the consultations were difficult, they provided a space for meaningful exchanges that have allowed all partners to hear and understand each other's points of views, information and perspectives. Working together in collaboration is key to ensuring the conservation of this important species.

Since 2018, Environment and Climate Change Canada has supported surveys for barren-ground caribou herds in order to obtain new population estimates. This is part of the Department's commitment to conserving barren-ground caribou,

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which is a priority species under the Pan-Canadian Approach to Species at Risk Conservation in Canada. However, additional avenues to support conservation would become available if this species is listed under SARA. When species are added to Schedule 1, the federal government has responsibility for co-ordinating their recovery across Canada.

To recover wildlife species with wide ranges, local circumstances must be recognized. Therefore, if listed, the co-operation of the responsible jurisdictions and wildlife management boards would be sought on all recovery planning documents. This collaborative approach would provide the opportunity for those affected to contribute to the design and drafting of the recovery strategy, ensuring IQ and all relevant information sources are considered, to the extent possible.

The shared efforts, contributions and continued investments in caribou stewardship would inform the next assessment, which COSEWIC is likely to undertake in 2026. The combined efforts from numerous parties on barren-ground caribou will contribute to a secure future for this species, and for a sustainable harvest for generations to come.

As noted in your correspondence, the process for harvest management is outlined in the Nunavut Agreement. This agreement will continue to be the process used to manage harvest in Nunavut, regardless of the listing outcome. This was an important point raised on many occasions, and we will continue to rely on the established co-management process.

While most Inuit organizations consulted in Nunavut opposed this listing, this was not the case throughout the rest of the Canadian range of barren-ground caribou. I have considered the Nunavut Wildlife Management Board's reasons, as well as advice on the outcome of the consultations with Indigenous communities for whom these caribou are crucial. These communities span Nunavut, the Northwest Territories, Yukon, and the northern Prairie provinces. If these caribou were listed under SARA, the long-term outcome for important habitats across their range would be enhanced. I am also aware of the significant recommendations for conservation of lands important to caribou being made in the current draft of the Nunavut Land Use Plan.

Therefore, after due consideration, I respectfully reject the Nunavut Wildlife Management Board's decision to not list barren-ground caribou as threatened under SARA. I look forward to completing and fulfilling our responsibilities of the Nunavut Agreement Article 5 decision-making process, and await the Board's final decision in response to this letter.

I understand that the Nunavut Wildlife Management Board has treated this matter as a priority. I assure you that Environment and Climate Change Canada officials and I share your concerns for the future of this species, and we will work with the Board to conserve barren-ground caribou.

Please accept my best regards.

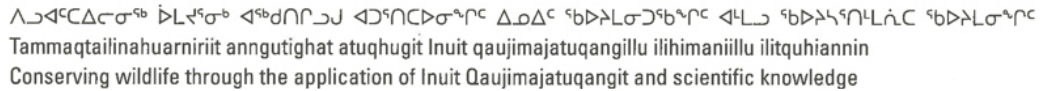
Sincerely,



The Honourable Steven Guilbeault, P.C., M.P. (il/lui/he/him)

c.c.: Ms. Tara Shannon, Assistant Deputy Minister, Canadian Wildlife Service,  
Environment and Climate Change Canada  
Ms. Julie Spallin, Director General, Wildlife Management, Canadian Wildlife  
Service, Environment and Climate Change Canada  
Mr. Bruce MacDonald, Director, Canadian Wildlife Service, Northern  
Region, Environment and Climate Change Canada











“Inuit were concerned that if barren-ground caribou are listed, caribou harvesting in Nunavut could come under increased scrutiny by non-government organizations, including animal rights activists and the international community, who may influence the implementation of prohibitions on harvesting barren-ground caribou or selling products made from caribou outside Nunavut. They also stated that the increased national and international attention caused by the listing would put pressure on Nunavut decision-makers to implement more harvesting restrictions and unduly infringe Inuit harvesting rights resulting in negative implications for food security in Nunavut. Comparisons were made by some to the listing of polar bears and the subsequent negative pressure felt by communities exercising harvesting rights of a listed species.”

The NWMB is confident that Environment and Climate Change Canada shares the Board's view that in Nunavut, caribou harvesting is more than a source of nutrition; it is also an expression of Inuit identity and a celebration of culture. Inuit have managed caribou for thousands of years and have a more vested interest in the sustainable management of caribou today than any outsider. We hope we can rely on the federal government, relevant co-management partners, and other stakeholders to uphold and defend Inuit's constitutionally protected rights to access caribou as enshrined in the *Nunavut Agreement*.

#### Prevailing cumulative threats appear to be unprecedented

The Board considered Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit and scientific studies suggesting that most caribou herds have undergone natural fluctuations in numbers in the past; however, the Board remains aware that the cumulative threats may be without historical precedent. The Board considered ongoing threats to barren-ground caribou identified and described in the 2016 COSEWIC assessment and status report, including threats from climate and industrial development, habitat loss and fragmentation, and increased human population. The Board recognized that when all herds are considered, barren-ground caribou abundance has declined by at least 30% in the past three generations, exceeding the threshold for abundance decline that typically leads to categorizing a species as threatened.

#### Additional support for barren-ground caribou conservation will be available if they are listed as threatened

The Board is aware that if barren-ground caribou are listed as threatened, a recovery strategy to identify threats and propose actions to support recovery would be developed in





Ottawa, Canada K1A 0H3

SEP 22 2022

Mr. Joshua T. Arreak  
Acting Chairperson  
Nunavut Wildlife Management Board  
P.O. Box 1379  
Iqaluit NU X0A 0H0

Dear Mr. Arreak:

Thank you for your letter of July 20, 2022, providing me with the Nunavut Wildlife Management Board's final decision to accept the proposed listing of the barren-ground population of caribou (*Rangifer tarandus*; referred to as barren-ground caribou) as threatened under the *Species at Risk Act* (SARA). I appreciate the consideration that the Board gave to the reasons outlined in my letter of May 24, 2022, regarding the listing of this species, and I regret the delay in responding.

I accept the Board's final decision to approve the listing of the barren-ground caribou as threatened under SARA. This completes the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement's Article 5 decision-making process. Over the coming months I will take the next steps required under SARA regarding the listing decision for the barren-ground caribou.

On the topic of recovery planning, I recognize the importance of the continuing shared leadership in Nunavut for the conservation of the barren-ground caribou. If the Governor in Council decides to add the species to Schedule 1 to SARA, a recovery strategy will be developed with planning and implementation done collaboratively with all territorial and relevant provincial and Indigenous partners.

Local circumstances must be recognized to recover the barren-ground caribou. While the final recovery strategy will be the product of collaborating with many parties, I acknowledge and share the Board's interest in having it suit each herd. I will direct Environment and Climate Change Canada officials to undertake this approach for the barren-ground caribou in order to integrate range-wide concerns with herd-level nuances within one overarching recovery strategy.

Regarding Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit, Environment and Climate Change Canada continues to work with the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada on improving the inclusion of traditional knowledge into species

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assessments. In Nunavut, the Department will continue to work in close collaboration with Inuit to ensure Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit is a part of the recovery planning phase for the barren-ground caribou.

I understand that the conservation of the barren-ground caribou and its habitat is a priority for the Nunavut Wildlife Management Board and all Inuit. Bringing so many communities and organizations together for recovery planning will be a challenging but worthwhile effort, as we all work to secure the future of these caribou for generations to come.

Please accept my best regards.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Steven Guilbeault', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

The Honourable Steven Guilbeault, M.P., P.C. (il/lui/he/him)

c.c.: Mr. Jason Akearok, Executive Director, Nunavut Wildlife Management Board