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August 12, 2019

Honourable Joe Savikataaq Minister of Environment Government of Nunavut

Dear Minister Savikataaq:

Re: Reconsideration of Proposed Changes to the Nunavut Polar Bear Sex-Selective Harvest Ratio and the Flexible Quota System

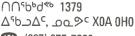
At the Nunavut Wildlife Management Board (NWMB or Board) March 2019 Regular Meeting, your Department asked the Board to adjust the polar bear harvest sex ratio from two males for every female (2:1) to one male for every female (1:1), applicable to all Nunavut sub-populations. The proposal also asked for a revision to the provisions of the "Flexible Quota System" to accommodate these changes. The Board considered this proposal during its In-Camera meeting (IC001-2019) on March 8, 2019, and postponed decision making until the *Nunavut Polar Bear Co-Management Plan* decision-making process is complete.

During its internal In-Camera meeting (INT009-2019) on July 24, 2019, the Board reconsidered this proposal, and reached the following resolution and recommendation:

Resolved that the NWMB establish, per sections 5.3.3(c) and 5.6.48 of the Nunavut Agreement, a sex-selective harvest ratio of one female bear harvested for every male bear (1:1), applicable to all polar bear subpopulations in the Nunavut Settlement Area, until new science or Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit information becomes available.

Further, recommends that the Government of Nunavut revise the 'Flexible Quota System,' used in Nunavut to administer community polar bear

¹ The flexible quota system is used in Nunavut to administer the portion of the Total Allowable Harvest allocated to a given community. The system allows for credits to be accumulated when the annual allocation is under-harvested and for over-harvested bears to be subtracted from the next year's base allocation.



Box 1379



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allocations, to reflect the 1:1 harvest sex ratio and provide the revised document to the NWMB for consideration.

In reaching these decisions, the NWMB considered the following:

1. The NWMB decision paves the way for the completion of the *Nunavut Polar Bear Co-Management Plan*.

On March 20, 2019, the NWMB sent its decision package concerning the management plan to you, per section 5.3.8 of the Nunavut Agreement. In it, the NWMB changed the polar bear harvest sex ratio from the current 2:1 system to a 1:1 system, whereby the overharvest of males or females is penalized by removing the same number of males or females from the following year's allocation. This NWMB's decision took into consideration the views of parties to the management plan public hearing, who expressed frustrations about the difficulties in the administration of the sex-selective harvesting and the excessive penalizations that occur when females are over-harvested.

On May 17, 2019, you disallowed the NWMB decision partially because of your Department's perceived legislative challenge in making changes to polar bear sex-selective harvest through a management plan.

The NWMB has considered your position and is now providing you with a separate *Nunavut Agreement* s. 5.6.48 decision for consideration. In reaching this decision, the Board considered and applauded your willingness to listen to Nunavummiut who have expressed concerns about the 2:1 harvesting system. Even though the 2:1 system has been instrumental to the recovery of several polar bear subpopulations in Nunavut while maximizing harvesting opportunities for Inuit, the NWMB agrees with what we heard from Inuit at the hearing: that changes to the current harvest management system are required to address today's challenges—especially threats to human safety. The NWMB hopes that this decision will pave the way for prompt completion of the management plan decision-making process so that together with our co-management partners, we can deliver on the much-anticipated *Nunavut Polar Bear Co-Management Plan*.

(888) 421-9832

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2. There is a need for a comprehensive review of the Flexible Quota System to accommodate changes to the sex-selective harvest ratio.

In your proposal to the NWMB, you asked the Board also to approve changes to the Flexible Quota System, so that (1) harvesting of females over 50% of a community's allocation in one year will reduce the allocation the following year, and (2) communities will be allowed to harvest males up to the limit of their allocation. The NWMB is open to considering such changes but would like to do so within the context of a comprehensive review of the entire Flexible Quota System (Appendix C of the *Nunavut Polar Bear Co-Management Plan*), because some of these proposals might represent a deviation from the 1:1 sex-selective harvesting approach. For example, it is not clear if communities will be able to carry over female credits if males are overharvested within or above the community quota. The Board welcomes an opportunity to consider revisions to the Flexible Quota System at the earliest time possible.

The NWMB looks forward to your reply and prompt completion of the *Nunavut Agreement* Article 5 decision-making process.

Should you or your officials have any questions or concerns about the content of this letter, please contact the NWMB

Yours sincerely,

Daniel Shewchuk Chairperson of the

Nunavut Wildlife Management Board

cc - Drikus Gissing, Director of Wildlife Management, Nunavut Department of Environment

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