



MAR 20 2012

Ms. Cathy Towntongie
President
Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated
P.O. Box 638
Iqaluit, Nunavut
X0A 0H0

Dear Ms. Towntongie:

Thank you for your correspondence of March 8, 2012, regarding Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated's proposal to amend section 5.6.25 of the *Nunavut Land Claims Agreement*.

As was discussed by our officials during their meeting in Iqaluit on February 23, 2012, the Department of Fisheries and Oceans does not support addressing the establishment of basic needs levels for beluga, narwhal and walrus by way of an amendment to the *Nunavut Land Claims Agreement*. The Department has consistently supported the existing provisions and responsibilities set out in the *Nunavut Land Claims Agreement* regarding the establishment of a basic needs level, and supports the continuation of existing processes related to the establishment of basic needs levels for beluga, narwhal and walrus, such as the public hearings proposed by the Nunavut Wildlife Management Board.

However, given the priority placed on narwhal by all of the co-management organizations, it remains the Department's opinion that our immediate focus should be on completing the Integrated Fisheries Management Plan for narwhal by January 2013. We understand that the Nunavut Wildlife Management Board is prepared to hold public hearings on changes to narwhal management once Fisheries and Oceans' consultations with Nunavut communities are completed in March 2012. The Nunavut Wildlife Management Board will have the opportunity to address the establishment of a basic needs level for narwhal during these public hearings, so that it can consider community comments prior to the establishment of Total Allowable Harvest levels and any non-quota limitations required to implementing proposed changes to the existing narwhal management regime.

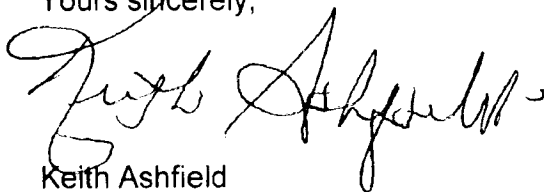
Subsequent to the public hearings and completion of the *Nunavut Land Claims Agreement* decision making process, any revisions to current narwhal management measures will be reflected in the finalized Integrated Fisheries Management Plan. This will assist Canada in defending the sustainability of the narwhal fishery, should a proposal be tabled to uplist narwhal to an Appendix I species under the *Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Fauna and Flora* at the next Conference of Parties in March 2013.

As you know, the Department has already confirmed to Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated that it supports the proposal that the Total Allowable Harvest level serve as the basic needs level for narwhal (Fisheries and Oceans' letter to T. Audla, Dec 9, 2011). Given that the parties have reached consensus on the process for implementing s.5.6.25 for narwhal, the Department does not believe that this issue should delay the Nunavut Wildlife Management Board public hearings related to narwhal.

Given the significant challenges that remain to complete the narwhal Integrated Fisheries Management Plan by 2013 and the need for further dialogue on implementing s.5.6.25 for beluga and walrus, the Department suggests that basic needs levels for these two species be addressed after the narwhal Integrated Fisheries Management Plan is completed, perhaps at the same time as an Integrated Fisheries Management Plan for walrus is developed by the co-management partners.

Thank you for writing and I look forward to the continued work between our organizations on the development of the Narwhal Integrated Fisheries Management Plan.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Keith Ashfield', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Keith Ashfield

cc.: The Honourable Leona Aglukkaq, P.C., M.P.
Senator Dennis Patterson