

Monday, January 25, 2010

Honorable Charlene Johnson  
Minister of Environment and Conservation  
Government of Newfoundland and Labrador  
Confederation Building  
St. John's, NL  
A1B 4J6

**Re: Polar Bear Total Allowable Harvest**

Dear Minister Johnson:

In the fall of 2009, the Board was made aware that the Nunatsiavut Government had requested an increase in polar bear quota. Given the Torngat Wildlife and Plants Co-Management Board's mandate to establish total allowable harvest levels for non-migratory species of wildlife, the Board has held extended discussions on polar bear. On behalf of the Board, I am writing to inform you of a decision for polar bear management in Nunatsiavut.

The Board met three times in 2009, once so far in 2010 and polar bear was an agenda item at each meeting. During the Board's May meeting, Dr. Lily Peacock, former Polar Bear Biologist for Nunavut, presented a report on the Davis Strait subpopulation. At that time we learned that the current subpopulation was estimated at 2142 bears in 2007.

Notwithstanding the polar bear science that was reviewed, the Board considered many other factors including Inuit symbolism, benefit maximization of polar bear resources, the local knowledge of increased bear sightings, and the international focus that has been placed on the species.

In making our decision, a major consideration of the Board is the inequitable distribution of the current polar bear harvest which is contradictory to the 2006-2010 Polar Bear Management Plan for Newfoundland and Labrador which states that the bears are allocated in an equitable manner. The 5 year average harvest by Quebec Inuit of 11 bears combined with a quota of 2 for Greenland, 6 for Newfoundland and Labrador and 46 for Nunavut highlights this inequity.

The Board has set the Total Allowable Harvest at 12 bears for 2010. The decision has been reached following an interpretation of the Labrador Inuit Land Claims Agreement sections 12.9.1(a), 12.9.4 and the definition non-migratory species of wildlife in 12.1.1.



Understanding that the bears in Nunatsiavut and Labrador are part of the Davis Strait subpopulation, the Board will be making representation at an upcoming inter-jurisdictional meeting and request that the Nunatsiavut increase be offset by a reallocation amongst jurisdictions. These parallel actions demonstrate the Board's interest in the sustainability of the polar bear population.

The Board will have a representative at the inter-jurisdictional meeting planned for February 4, 2010 in Montreal, Quebec and the Federal and Provincial/Territorial Polar Bear Technical Committee meetings between February 2-4, 2010 in Ottawa, at which time a better understanding is expected on the perspectives from Nunavut and Nunavik.

We appreciate your attention and concern for this timely matter. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me. The Board looks forward to receiving your reply.

Kind regards

*for* Bruce A. Roberts  
Chairperson  
Torngat Wildlife and Plants Co-Management Board

cc. Tony Andersen, Minister of Lands and Natural Resources  
Jim Prentice, Minister of Environment  
LILCA Implementation Committee

