



Honourable Joan Shea
Minister of Environment and Conservation
Government of Newfoundland and Labrador
P.O. Box 8700
St. John's, NL, Canada
A1B 4J6

January 15, 2014

Re: Polar Bear Season Dates

Dear Minister Shea,

On behalf of the Board, I am pleased to respond to your letter of November 15th, 2013, in which you request a recommendation respecting season dates for Polar Bear in the Labrador Inuit Settlement Area. You reference a letter from the Nunatsiavut Government dated October 11th, 2013, which we have read and considered, as well.

The Nunatsiavut Government letter of October 11th asks whether limitations on the Polar Bear harvesting season are intended to satisfy a Conservation purpose, and if not, whether the limitation is consistent with the Labrador Inuit Land Claims Agreement (“the Agreement”).

Part 12.3.1 of the Agreement sets out potential limitations on the Inuit right to harvest at all times of the year, which include (a) Inuit Laws, (b) purposes of Conservation under Laws of General Application, and (c) federal Laws on firearms control.

The Board is of the view that removing the season limitation may be cause for conservation concern if it impacts total mortality, reproduction, or survival. However, the Board recognizes also that any potential concern would be mitigated by (a) existing limitations on harvest (TAH of 12), (b) areas (the Labrador Inuit Settlement Area), and (c) general prohibitions on the harvesting of cubs, and females with cubs, and (d) on the harvesting of bears in or near an active den.

Given that removing the season limitation may impact Conservation the Board therefore recommends:

- That the Polar Bear hunting season of February 1st to June 30th remain in effect for the present time.

We invite the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador and the Nunatsiavut Government to work with the Board to fully analyze the Conservation value of season limitations, and we recommend that we work collectively towards a decision in the fall of 2014.



The Board recognizes that Polar Bear season limitations have value outside of Conservation. In exercising its powers under 12.3.1(a) to establish Inuit Laws, the Board recommends that the Nunatsiavut Government consider fur primeness and value, best practices for meat handling and storage, and how to best allocate harvesting opportunities amongst beneficiaries and communities.

We look forward to engaging with the Nunatsiavut Government and the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador in this dialogue, which will help to build a shared approach and a way forward with this matter.

Sincerely,

Ron Sparkes Ed.D
Chairperson
Torngat Wildlife and Plants Co-Management Board