



Joint Communiqué

Government of Nunavut proposes Action Plan for M'Clintock Channel

CAMBRIDGE BAY, Nunavut (May 30, 2001) – Sustainable Development Minister Olayuk Akesuk met with those parties affected by the reduction of the polar bear quota in M'Clintock Channel.

Representatives of the Kitikmeot Hunter's and Trapper's Association and the three Hunter's and Trappers' Organizations (HTO's) of the affected communities met with the Minister to discuss a proposed action plan on polar bear management in M'Clintock Channel and economic options for the communities.

In January 2001, the Nunavut Wildlife Management Board (NWMB) decided to reduce the 2000/01 polar bear quota in M'Clintock Channel from 32 to 12 bears. The NWMB also decided to put a moratorium in place for the 2001/02 season. The decision came after reviewing the results of scientific research by the Department of Sustainable Development. Following the decision on the quota reduction, Minister Akesuk visited Talyoak, Gjoa Haven and Cambridge Bay to discuss the impact of the decision.

“When I met with community representatives in January, I heard concerns about the economic impact of the quota reduction, and I heard very strong advice on how the department could improve its scientific effort,” Minister Akesuk said. “The six initiatives I outlined this week are a direct response to those issues.”

The plan unveiled by Minister Akesuk included the following initiatives:

- **Special Economic Initiatives Fund:** The Government of Nunavut has set aside \$200,000 this year in a Special Economic Initiatives Fund to assist affected communities in developing economic alternatives to the harvesting of polar bears.
- **Inuit Qaujimaqatungit (IQ):** Proposals to carry out community-based IQ studies of polar bears in M'Clintock Channel over the next two years are now in development. The Department of Sustainable Development has been working with Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated on the details, with research expected to begin in fall of 2001.
- **Scientific Research:** Scientific research on the bear population in M'Clintock Channel will be completed by the Department of Sustainable Development over the

next two years. In addition to the population research, research on sea-ice conditions and seal populations will be carried-out in response to hunters' concerns that these factors have affected the polar bear population.

- **Quota Sharing:** The Department of Sustainable Development and community of Gjoa Haven will work jointly on obtaining a small number of tags from other communities to allow Gjoa Haven residents to hunt in the neighboring Gulf of Boothia polar bear population. .
- **Meat Sharing:** Under its Community Organized Hunt program, the Department of Sustainable Development will make available funding during the moratorium period to transport polar bear meat to Gjoa Haven from other communities.
- **Discussions with the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS):** The department will continue to maintain contact with the USFWS with a view to seeking re-authorization of M'Clintock Channel for US sport hunting as soon as possible once survey work and IQ studies in the area have been completed. Approval of other polar bear populations such as in the Gulf of Boothia will also be sought.

Representatives of the HTO's agreed that the review process for the Special Fund will be carried out by a management committee consisting of the chairmen of each of the HTO's from the affected communities and the Department of Sustainable Development's regional director in the Kitikmeot. The fund will provide communities with a foundation to leverage funding from other sources.

“ We are in agreement that the work that needs to be done in our communities is on developing other economic initiatives, particularly for the people most affected by the loss of sport hunts,” said Abel Aqqaq, Chairman of the Taloyoak HTO. “It is going to take a combined effort of the people in our communities, the Government of Nunavut, Inuit organizations, and other agencies. The economic initiative package of the Government of Nunavut is greatly appreciated,”

“Gjoa Haven has been tremendously affected by this decision. The Minister's plan has taken our concerns seriously, and we are hopeful that good things can come from a very bad situation,” said Louie Kamookak, Chairman of the Gjoa Haven HTO. “We were very concerned that Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit be considered directly in any of the future decisions on M'Clintock Channel polar bears. I feel that the Minister has shown us that he is committed to this.”

Vivienne Aknavigak, representative of the Cambridge Bay HTO was pleased “that DSD has responded to this situation” through the plan outlined by the Minister.

“This has been a very hard and trying time for everyone involved. From the meetings over the last two days I can say that this is a good demonstration of the Inuit way of willingness to work together,” remarked Phillip Kadlun of the Kitikmeot Hunter's and Trapper's Association.

Details on the Special Economic Initiatives Fund will be released as soon as the management committee has had an opportunity to meet.

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