



July 13, 2011

Dear Premier Stelmach:

We are writing to you on behalf of the Canadian Boreal Initiative and the Pew Environment Group, regarding woodland caribou. Woodland caribou herds are in decline across Canada's boreal region. History and experience teach us that if nothing is done about this situation it can ripen into a resource management crisis. We have enclosed a briefing paper entitled "Keeping Woodland Caribou in the Boreal Forest: Big Challenge, Immense Opportunity." This analysis was prepared by a panel of internationally recognized scientists and it shows that significantly improved stewardship of woodland caribou is necessary to maintain healthy populations of this magnificent animal, which is so important ecologically, culturally, and economically.

Specifically, these scientists advise that very large protected areas need to be established across Canada's boreal region in order to maintain the levels of intact boreal habitat necessary for this species to persist. They emphasize that the time is now — government-supported actions are needed through land use planning for conservation and sustainable development to ensure that this iconic boreal species remains a part of our future, rather than a memory of our past.

Now more than ever, urgent action is required by the Alberta government to sustain caribou populations throughout the province. We appreciate that the Land Use Framework provides new tools for establishing new thresholds for development and opportunities for conservation. We therefore recommend that your government act now to protect key habitats and implement a comprehensive caribou protection plan to ensure that this iconic species is sustained for future generations. The Canadian Boreal Forest Agreement offers new opportunities for accomplishing that goal, but it will also be critical for government to respectfully engage First Nations as full partners in the land use planning process. As this report demonstrates, there is no other viable option for maintaining both long-term prosperity and environmental quality in northern Alberta.

We would be pleased to provide a detailed briefing on the analysis, and look forward to the opportunity to discuss this top priority matter with your government.

Sincerely,

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Cc: The Honourable Rob Renner, Minister of Environment
The Honourable Mel Knight, Minister of Sustainable Resource Development