

October 25, 2017

Dear federal, provincial and territorial leaders,

RE: Caribou: A Shared Responsibility

We, the undersigned, are writing to urge Canada's federal, provincial, and territorial governments to honour their commitments to protect the boreal woodland caribou and prevent this species from disappearing from the boreal forest.

Canada's boreal woodland caribou population stretches from coast to coast. It is an iconic Canadian species whose population reflects the health of the boreal forest region. Yet, due primarily to industrial activity in caribou habitat, boreal caribou have lost over 50% of their range in Canada. They are assessed as threatened under the federal *Species at Risk Act (SARA)* and continue to decline. In 2012, the federal government released a Recovery Strategy for boreal caribou and called on all provinces and territories to take action to protect and restore caribou habitat. Canada is not immune to the ongoing, human-caused sixth wave of extinction, and protecting caribou habitat can help prevent significant biodiversity loss in Canada.

All Canadians have a shared responsibility to stewarding Canada's wildlife; Canada's decision-makers must act to protect and recover boreal caribou across this country. Communities in the U.S., moreover, as the largest consumers of some provinces' boreal products, purchase these products based on the understanding that Canada will protect its species and honour its commitments to Indigenous Peoples.

On October 5, an important five-year deadline for provinces and territories to protect caribou habitat passed. We call on the provinces and territories to immediately stop the degradation and destruction of boreal caribou habitat, and to work with Indigenous Peoples, scientists, conservation organizations and progressive industry to put in place long-term range protection plans. These jurisdictions must ensure that these range plans are accompanied by mandatory and enforceable legal protections. If the provinces and territories fail to act, we urge the federal government to step in and protect critical habitat.

There are many compelling reasons why action is required:

- Caribou are a cornerstone of multiple Indigenous Peoples' culture and history; for thousands of years Indigenous Peoples from across what is now known as Canada have relied/continue to rely on caribou for sustenance and as a central part of their culture. The decline of caribou has significant impacts on many Indigenous Peoples' rights, cultures and traditional livelihoods;
- The current provincial and territorial approaches to caribou increase industrial disturbance in caribou habitat and are driving caribou populations towards extirpation;
- Caribou and their predators have co-evolved and existed symbiotically for thousands of years. Predators are not the root cause of caribou decline: human activities are. As such, predator control measures, conducted while ongoing habitat destruction continues, scapegoat predators and cause further ecosystem disrepair;
- Nature has limits that must be respected—there are thresholds of habitat destruction that, once crossed, threaten caribou survival;

- Canada has a global responsibility to stem the tide of biodiversity loss. Protecting and recovering species at risk is consistent with commitments made under the Convention of Biological Diversity; and,
- Protecting the habitat of boreal caribou will help fight climate change. Boreal forests store more carbon than any other terrestrial ecosystem on earth and conserving caribou habitat is an approach that has a dual benefit of protecting biodiversity while preserving carbon stores.

Protecting the habitat of boreal caribou is of global importance, and doing so bolsters Canada's reputation as a leader in sustainability. We urge the federal, provincial, and territorial governments to act swiftly and responsibly to protect this iconic species.

Sincerely,

Margaret Atwood
Arjun Basu
Robert Bateman
Michael Bloomfield
Six Nations Council
Hubert Forcier
Graeme Gibson
Chellis Glendinning
Tim Grant
Franke James
Cathy Jones
Thomas Lovejoy
Becky Mason
Tim McCaskell
William Rees
Chris Shaw
Chief Johnny Yellowhead