

resources could have lasting detrimental effects on aboriginal peoples in the Yukon and the Northwest Territories. The area within the refuge proposed for development called the 1002 Lands contains up to 80 per cent of the calving grounds of the Porcupine caribou herd. It also includes critical habitat for the snow geese and polar bears which migrate across the Yukon-Alaska border.

• (1740)

The Northwest Territories, Yukon and Canadian Governments have co-operated in efforts to conserve and manage this herd and its calving grounds in Canada, and strongly support efforts to safeguard the herd's critical habitat in Alaska. The best way to accomplish this goal would be to designate the area as wilderness and to twin it with the protected area in northern Yukon known as the Northern Yukon National Park.

Conservation of the herd is required under the terms of an international treaty signed in July 1987 by the then U.S. Secretary of State, Donald Hodel, and Canada's then Environment Minister, Tom McMillan.

The Porcupine caribou herd is a resource shared by the people of Alaska, the Yukon and the Northwest Territories. It is one of the last great animal herds to roam North America. Its health is vital to northern aboriginal people. Access to the herd helps to sustain the self-sufficient life-style of about 7,000 aboriginal people in northern Canada and Alaska.

In Yukon, the Indian people of Old Crow are the most consistent users of the herd because of their proximity to the herd's traditional migration route. Indian people in Dawson and Mayo also harvest the herd.

In the Northwest Territories, the communities of Fort McPherson, Aklavik, Tuktoyaktuk, Arctic Red River and Inuvik use the herd. The impact of full or partial leasing of the 1002 area for development could reduce the subsistence harvest of these animals by the aboriginal people.

A U.S. Department of the Interior report expects the proposed development would bring, and I quote, "an accelerated rate of change in traditional native culture

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and probably some cultural disorientation." That is an understatement of the effects on aboriginal people.

Opening up the coastal plain to development would be devastating to caribou and other wildlife that share these lands and to the people who depend on this wildlife.

What would happen to the aboriginal people if the herd declined? I would like Hon. Members to hear the words of aboriginal people from the North.

Norma Kassi, member of the Yukon Legislative Assembly from Old Crow, has worked tirelessly to protect the herd and her people from the proposed development. She has stated:

We do not need oil and gas development in the 1002 lands. We want wilderness designation for the area. We have lived here for thousands of years and we know what we need to sustain us. The caribou are our life. We must safeguard the herd forever.

A councillor from Old Crow put it this way:

Those caribou need that country to survive. When you take away their nursery it is going to hurt them. It is like taking a troop of soldiers into a maternity ward.

When the question of what would happen to the aboriginal people if the herd declined was put to the Chairman of the Porcupine Caribou Management Board, who is also a Yukon Indian, he responded this way:

It would ruin them. Every aspect of their lives depends on the caribou. Their economy, their life-style, even their health. If they lose the caribou, they lose everything. The caribou are the heart of their communities. People hunt caribou, eat caribou and talk caribou. Without the caribou they would be an empty people in a dead land.

The recent economic downturn in the delta has reinforced the economic and cultural importance of the herd. The peoples ties to the land are an essential part of their life-style and culture. As much as we can discuss all this, I am afraid my time has come an end. I thank you very much for having had this opportunity to speak, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): It being 5.45 p.m. it is my duty, pursuant to order made Tuesday, April 4, 1989, to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of Interim Supply and for the passage of all stages of the Bill based thereon.