News Release

Minister of Environment: Polar Bear Not an At-Risk Species

IQALUIT, Nunavut (May 28, 2010) – The Honourable Daniel Shewchuk, Minister of Environment, today announced a change in the Government of Nunavut's position on the proposed up-listing of the polar bear as a species of Special Concern under the Federal *Species at Risk Act* (SARA). Due to a lack of evidence indicating that polar bears meet the criteria for the Special Concern designation, the Government of Nunavut is not supporting Environment Canada's proposal to change the listing.

Inuit hunters have a close relationship with the land and wildlife. They have observed that the overall population of polar bears in Nunavut is not declining as some suggest, but rather is thriving. No known environmental or other factors are currently posing a significant or immediate threat to polar bears overall. Furthermore, Inuit knowledge and science corroborate that the species can and will adapt to changing and severe climatic conditions, as it has done for centuries.

"Nunavut has an excellent track record of collaborative wildlife management using the best available scientific information and the Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit system of values, knowledge and beliefs" said Minister Shewchuk. "It is important that we rely on the science and local observations and not cave to external pressure and uninformed opinions. There is simply no clear evidence to support a proposed up-listing."

Polar bears are an important and iconic species both globally, and to the Inuit who depend on a sustainable and well-managed population. As such, the Department of Environment is committed to working with all co-management partners to continually monitor and study polar bear populations and how they may be affected by factors such as changes in sea ice abundance and distribution. Polar bear co-management partners in Nunavut acknowledge some specific conservation concerns such as the Baffin Bay polar bear population, and have taken appropriate management steps to address those issues.

"Wildlife management is dynamic in nature and must be able to quickly respond to changing conditions" Minister Shewchuk added. "As such, we remain committed to ongoing collaborative research and monitoring and to making appropriate and timely management decisions to ensure that polar bears remain for future generations".

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