

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF THE**

**NORTHWEST TERRITORIES**

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NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

SESSIONAL PAPER NO. 8  
(Second Session, 1965)

AIRCRAFT SPOTTING OF CARIBOU FOR HUNTERS  
IN THE RICHARDSON MOUNTAINS

DISPOSITION

Accepted as Read.....  
Amended..... **JUN 21 1965** ..... See Text.  
Rejected..... See Text.  
Deferred..... See Text.  
Not considered.....

## AIRCRAFT SPOTTING OF CARIBOU FOR HUNTERS

### IN THE RICHARDSON MOUNTAINS

At the February, 1965, Session, Council requested that a pilot project be carried out in the Richardson Mountains to determine the effectiveness of the use of aircraft for locating caribou herds and reporting their exact location to local hunters. Information on kill, waste, transportation, disposal or storage of meat, costs and time requirements as well as special problems was also to be determined.

The pilot project could not be carried out because the Game Department was fully committed at the late date the request was received. However, reconnaissance of the subject was made by the Superintendent of Game.

Upon his arrival at Aklavik on April 23, it was learned that a caribou herd had passed through the Richardson Mountains on its northward migration. This herd of approximately 2,000 had arrived at Horn Lake on the last day of March where it was intercepted by about 12 Aklavik hunters who took an estimated 120 animals. Most of the carcasses had been flown out to Aklavik by commercial aircraft.

On April 9th the herd had arrived at Canoe Lake, 24 miles due west from Aklavik and 40 miles NNW of Horn Lake where the animals had been located at the end of March. No hunter from Aklavik was interested in going to Canoe Lake to obtain additional caribou. Apparently, they had sufficient meat for the coming summer.

In order to obtain authentic information on its daily movements the Superintendent decided to charter an aircraft and relocate the herd. When flying from Aklavik to Horn Lake it was observed that some caribou must have been left inadequately cached on the lake for many ravens were stirred up by the approach of the aircraft. Wolves and ravens had already taken the major part of the meat. That portion which was still fit for human consumption was properly covered and the Game Officer was instructed to tell the owner that unless he would immediately recover the remaining meat, charges would be laid against him under Section 15 of the Game Ordinance.

Continuing the flight in a northern direction, no caribou were observed until the Blow River-Rapid Creek area. There, the herd was found scattered over a wide range. There could be no doubt that this was the same herd that had passed Horn Lake. It had moved from Horn Lake to Canoe Lake within 10 days and then had migrated an additional 55 miles within 14 days. The herd had covered an average of four miles per day, a relatively fast migration.

At this time the caribou had already moved too far from Aklavik to make it appealing to the hunters to go out again. An adequate meat supply had been secured and the approaching rutting season kept the trappers on their traplines.

Although a pilot project in its proper meaning could not be carried out, the restricted reconnaissance flight, as well as the situation encountered, allow the following conclusions to be drawn:

- (a) Local hunters seem to be well acquainted with the seasonal migrations of caribou so that advice as to the exact location of migrating herds seems to be unnecessary.

- (b) Caribou travel relatively fast during their spring migration, so that it will be difficult to predict their exact location. After a few days the caribou will be miles away from where they were spotted.
- (c) Hunters have proved that they are capable of planning and timing their hunts to their own advantage.

The cost for this restricted experiment amounted to \$261 for chartering aircraft alone. When considering the use of aircraft by Game Officers for spotting and reporting caribou as a common practice, it must be concluded that at least \$10,000 will have to be spent for an enterprise of little or no apparent value.

In the Commissioner's view such expenditure would not be justified.