

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF THE
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES
5TH COUNCIL, 33RD SESSION**

**RECOMMENDATION TO
COUNCIL NO. 8-33**

TABLED ON NOVEMBER 7, 1966



October 13, 1966.
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for release before
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33rd Session of
Council.

NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

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Tabled on November 7, 1966

ABOLISHMENT OF THE ARCTIC ISLAND PRESERVE

DISPOSITION

Tabled	To Committee	Accepted as Read	Accepted as Amended	Deferred (to Session)	Rejected	Noted not Considered

Abolishment of the Arctic Island Preserve

The Arctic Island Preserve was established on July 19, 1926, to reserve the Wildlife resources within its boundaries for the use of resident Indians and Eskimos. With the influx on non-residents to hunt and trap in the Northwest Territories during the depression, when trapping was a very profitable enterprise, such protection was very important. Further protection became necessary at a later date, and subsequently, only persons who hunted prior to July 1, 1945, in the Arctic Island Preserve are now authorized to hunt in the area.

However, conditions have substantially changed during the past two decades. Lower fur prices and wage employment opportunities in the south have halted the influx of non-residents. Smaller Game Management Zones and Trapping Areas have been designed to protect the interests of those who depend on trapping for their livelihood. Population shifts where Eskimos from outside areas have been relocated in the Preserve, and where others have left the Preserve, have in addition rendered the former value of the Arctic Island Preserve meaningless. Abolition of the Arctic Island Preserve cannot be considered as being synonymous with unrestricted hunting and trapping activities; on the contrary, it will enable the Administration to more adequately utilize the game resources in presently underharvested areas.

The major effects of Abolition

1. Holders of General Hunting Licences, now not eligible to hunt and/or trap in the Preserve could, upon moving into the area in the process of relocation, take caribou and other species for their subsistence, and could take fur-bearing animals, provided the area in which to trap is not a Registered Trapping Area. No changes in the Game Ordinance would be required.
2. All persons residing in the Preserve would be able to obtain a Game Bird Licence, thus obtaining at least some fresh meat. There are no indications that bird hunting either for upland game birds or for migratory species would ever be excessive or detrimental to the Eskimos. While the cyclic abundance or scarcity of ptarmigan will be a decisive factor for the annual take, the seasonal availability of migratory species will only permit a very restricted kill (if any).
3. The Game Management Service will be able to design a rational harvesting program for fur-bearing species by assigning and/or assisting any person willing to trap in areas of the Preserve presently not utilized. Present restrictions prohibit such flexibility.
4. If it is the desire of persons now authorized to hunt in the Preserve, and if game populations warrant it, sport hunting for certain game species could be instituted. If sport hunting should not be desired, present privileges would not be violated.
5. Depending on the availability of caribou, a restricted take of this species by persons other than those authorized to hunt in the Preserve, could be considered in future years.

Views on Abolition

A paper explaining the former purpose of the Preserve as well as the major effects of the proposed abolition was prepared and given widest publicity throughout the Territories. Nine replies to this paper were received, all but one of which were in favour of the abolition. A reply in favour of retaining the Preserve status came from outside the Preserve (Fort McPherson) while the eight replies favouring the abolition came from settlements within the Preserve boundaries.

Since distributing the paper to the residents of the Arctic Islands Preserve the Deputy Commissioner of the Northwest Territories and the Superintendent of Game have visited twenty settlements and have discussed the abolition of the Preserve with the Eskimo people concerned. These discussions revealed the following two facts:

1. More than 90% of the Eskimos were unaware of the existence of the Preserve and most of those who had a knowledge of it had become aware of it from the distributed paper.
2. All Eskimos consulted consented to an abolition of the Preserve but expressed a desire to retain their present trapping privileges.

The Canadian Wildlife Service, on the other hand, is not in favour of abolishing the Preserve until proper safeguards for subsistence hunting by the Eskimos have been established, until control of hunting through enforcement and education is possible and until adequate research has been carried out. They also believe that if the Preserve is abolished, a policy statement should be published, on the extent, if any, that sport hunting will be allowed.

Conclusions

Considering the abolishment of the Preserve in the light of the latest developments and taking the recommendations of the Canadian Wildlife Service into account, the involved problem can be assessed as follows:

1. The abolition of the Preserve will initially permit holders of game bird licences to bag a limited number of migratory birds and ptarmigan which have little significance in subsistence hunting by Eskimos.
2. Trapping rights of the indigenous people will not be infringed upon.
3. The majority of persons residing in the Preserve have been adequately consulted and have consented to the abolition.
4. Sport hunting for other species would only be considered if adequate survey results become available and if the mandatory biological data can be assured.
5. Law enforcement and educational programs will be developed in accordance with actual requirements and economic considerations.

Recommendation

As no actual disadvantages for the residents of the Preserve, nor for the game and bird populations, are to be expected, the Commissioner recommends that the Arctic Islands Preserve be abolished.