



Manitoba Model Forest Inc.

A "Forest Communities Program" Site

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Honourable Bill Blaikie
Minister of Conservation
330 Legislative Building
450 Broadway
Winnipeg, MB R3C 0V8

August 11, 2011

Re: Recommendation for Immediate Conservation Closure to Moose Hunting in GHA 26

Dear Minister Blaikie:

On June 9, 2011, the Manitoba Model Forest Committee for Cooperative Moose Management (CCMM) submitted a letter to you (for which we have not received a response) regarding the moose population crisis in Game Hunting Area (GHA) 26, and the committee's recommendations for management actions that would help to recover the moose population to a sustainable level. A key recommendation, unanimously supported by all members of the CCMM, including First Nation members and wildlife associations, was that Manitoba Conservation:

“Close moose hunting to all peoples in GHA 26 until the population reaches a level where a sustainable harvest can be re-introduced” and,
“The hunting closure should apply to both licensed and rights-based hunting”

We were very disappointed that your announcement of July 4, 2011 did not include a conservation closure for GHA 26, despite announcing a conservation closure to hunting for all peoples for certain GHAs in western Manitoba. The CCMM has operated for 17 years, providing a forum for all interested stakeholders, communities and government to work cooperatively together on moose management issues in eastern Manitoba. While pleased that a conservation closure decision could be made so quickly for western Manitoba, we are dismayed that a similar announcement was not made for GHA 26, especially considering that community and public engagement in moose management has been a cornerstone of wildlife management in the Model Forest area of eastern Manitoba for almost 2 decades.

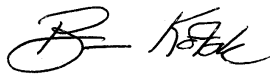
We fully understand that the Province of Manitoba has the legal obligation to consult with Aboriginal communities when management decisions may affect their Aboriginal and Treaty Rights. We also understand that such consultations have been on-going with several First Nation communities who utilize GHA 26 for moose. It is important that these consultations continue. However, it is also imperative that a conservation hunting closure be implemented immediately in GHA 26 to ensure that the moose population does not decline further. Once a moose population reaches a critically low threshold, it may never recover. The CCMM held a meeting on August 10 to discuss this issue and discussed the need for Manitoba Conservation to act on all methods of management action immediately, including a conservation closure. Time is of the essence, as the fall hunt for moose by some First Nation individuals has already started.

A conservation closure is important, and not just for moose. One of our First Nation committee members summed up the need for immediate action very well: "A closure on moose hunting to all people is needed now. Not just for the benefit of the moose that we depend on as First Nation people, but for the betterment of all people of Manitoba, not just First Nations". To not take immediate action, including a conservation closure, will have dire consequences for moose in our region and to our communities, for many years to come. The CCMM recommends an immediate conservation closure to moose hunting for all peoples.

The CCMM will continue to provide a critical mechanism to bring together all with an interest in moose conservation in our region, and, as has been the case over the last 17 years, will work collaboratively with Manitoba Conservation to ensure a healthy, sustainable moose population in the region.

We look forward to further announcements from Manitoba Conservation on the implementation of recovery efforts for moose in our region.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "B. Kotak".

Dr. Brian G. Kotak
General Manager, and
Chair of the Committee for Cooperative Moose Management

cc: CCMM Members