



RESPONSE TO THE NUNAVUT WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT BOARD (NWMB)

Re: Submission for information: “*Pangnirtung HTA Beluga Harvesting By-laws to be Implemented in 2026*” prepared by Michael Ferguson (at the request of the Board of Directors of the Pangnirtung HTO, and as supported by the Executive Committee of the Qikiqtaaluk Wildlife Board (QWB)) Regular Meeting No. RM 001-2026

Cumberland Sound Beluga (CSB) are a key subsistence resource for Inuit of Pangnirtung, where the current system used to manage the CSB population has been a source of frustration and concern for the community of Pangnirtung for many years.

Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) acknowledges the work done by the Pangnirtung Hunters and Trappers Organization (HTO), with support from the QWB, in developing beluga harvesting by-laws for the management and conservation of beluga in Cumberland Sound. We thank the Pangnirtung HTO and QWB for providing a copy of the by-laws to DFO with their submission for information to the NWMB.

In the Pangnirtung beluga harvesting by-laws, it was clearly identified that the Pangnirtung HTO does not believe harvesting restrictions apply to the beluga population referred to as “smaller” in Cumberland Sound. DFO is familiar with the interest expressed in unrestricted harvesting of the “smaller” beluga in the Pangnirtung area, and has actively been looking for ways to support the HTO in the collection of information to further their identification and distinction. At this time however, it should be advised that the quota of 41 beluga set in the *Marine Mammal Regulations* (MMRs) applies to all beluga in the Pangnirtung area. See map in Figure 1, below.

Background:

The current quota for beluga in the Pangnirtung area was established through the NWMB – Minister decision making process in 2000, with implementation in 2002. When the current quota was established, it was based on the abundance of all beluga in the area during the summer. Inuit Qaujimagayatuqangit (IQ) and recent genetics work by DFO Science have confirmed there are beluga from at least two populations within the Cumberland Sound stock during the summer when the harvest occurs. Discussions have begun at the CSB Working Group table regarding how best to manage the stock going forward given that the beluga are from more than one population.

At the last CSB Working Group meeting in November 2025, we began to discuss a project to explore the potential for targeted harvesting of beluga in Cumberland Sound. The Pangnirtung HTO has been saying for many years that experienced Inuit of Pangnirtung are able to recognize the population of “smaller” beluga in Cumberland Sound, and this statement is also included in the new beluga harvesting by-laws.



Next steps for DFO:

DFO continues to be very interested in the Inuit-based, community management systems that the Pangnirtung HTO board members and elders want to see implemented for beluga in Cumberland Sound. As such, DFO would like to continue the conversation about targeted harvesting of beluga in Cumberland Sound within the CSB Working Group, with a goal of putting in an application to the NWMB for decision, for a modification of the quota to allow the targeted harvesting of “smaller” beluga.

DFO will be reaching out to both the Pangnirtung HTO and QWB in the coming weeks to discuss ways we can work together to support their goals for the revised management of beluga in Cumberland Sound and the broader Pangnirtung area.

We look forward to continued conversations and collaboration with the Pangnirtung HTO and the broader CSB Working Group about how best to ensure conservation and sustainable harvesting of beluga in Cumberland Sound.

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