



November 21, 2025

Mr. Iola Metuq
Chairperson
Nunavik Marine Region Wildlife Board
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Chairperson
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Subject: Extension of the 2021-2026 Beluga Management System in the Nunavik Marine Region, including the areas of overlap with the Eeyou Marine Region.

Dear Mr. Metuq and Mr. Tomatuk:

Thank you for the letter sent on September 26, 2025, informing me of your initial decision to extend the 2021-2026 Beluga Management System in the Nunavik Marine Region until January 31, 2027.

We have carefully reviewed your initial decision and the submissions from the public hearing you conducted in the spring of 2025. I wish to inform you that I accept your decision to extend the 2021-2026 Nunavik Beluga Management System until January 31, 2027. I recognize the complexity of the situation and the need to proceed with caution to ensure we find a balance between Inuit harvesting rights and the principles of conservation, so I very much appreciate the important work being undertaken by the Anguvigaq in the collection and documentation of Inuit Knowledge on Nunavik beluga. By increasing our collective understanding of beluga stewardship, we can help ensure the best possible outcomes for rights holders and wildlife.

While I am encouraged to hear of the action co-managers, including my department, have begun taking to address these concerns, I do remain concerned with the health of the Eastern Hudson Bay beluga stock, particularly around the consistent harvesting in excess of recommended levels. The 2023 genetic reanalysis of beluga samples, which identified the Belcher Islands beluga population, along with the 2024 abundance estimate, have significantly changed our understanding of the stock structure. These findings indicate that harvest levels

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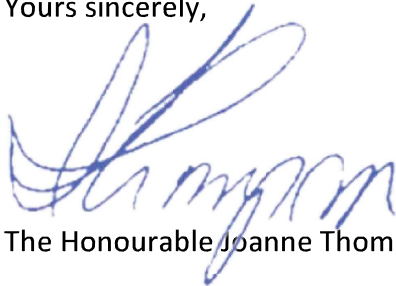
throughout the stock's range exceed sustainable limits. If current harvest rates continue, the stock could reach quasi-extinction within 12–14 years. I therefore encourage co-management partners to continue collaborating to identify and implement solutions that will reduce harvest pressure on beluga summering in eastern Hudson Bay and support the recovery and long-term health of the stock.

I feel strongly about the importance of Indigenous harvesting rights, and also of the principles of conservation that underpin the wildlife management systems in the *Nunavik Inuit Land Claims Agreement (NILCA)* and the *Eeyou Marine Region Land Claims Agreement (EMRLCA)*, and feel that it is only by working toward both of these objectives at the same time that we can succeed. Maintaining the health of beluga stocks that are vital to northern communities, and rebuilding stocks that are depleted, are priorities for both myself and the department.

I would like to reaffirm the Department's commitment to working together in the spirit of co-management. We look forward to working with the representatives of the wildlife management boards, the Anguvigaq, and Makivvik in order to sustainably co-manage marine wildlife in the Nunavik Marine Region, including the areas of overlap with the Eeyou Marine Region.

If you have any questions, we encourage you to contact Michael Hale, Regional Senior Fisheries Management Officer, Fisheries and Oceans Canada-Arctic Region.

Yours sincerely,



The Honourable Joanne Thompson, P.C., M.P.

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