



**Green Party of  
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## **Forest Fire Cautionary Wake-up Call for Caribou**

*-Statement of Support from Green Party of Manitoba Leader James R. Beddome-  
(August 20, 2010)*

**-FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE-**

The Green Party of Manitoba supports the Wilderness Committee, and Manitoba Wildlands in calling for a pause on all industrial activity within the NAOSAP caribou range following a forest fire which destroyed core habitat this summer.

The Green Party of Manitoba believes that a new form of harm evaluation is needed; we espouse the virtues of the precautionary principle! Rather than asking: "how much harm is allowable?" We need to be asking "how little harm is possible?" The precautionary principle is mentioned in the Province's 2006 caribou recovery strategy, but it is just that mentioned, amounting to pure lip-service.

"Manitoba has the unique opportunity to establish protected areas before habitat is disrupted, ... To lose this opportunity by delaying action would be a grave loss." wrote Dr. James Shaeffer, Associate Biology Professor at Trent University, in a 2007 review of the provinces current recovery strategy. Dr Shaeffer identifies three deficiencies in the Government's current strategy:

- ✘ critical habitat is not identified;
- ✘ there is no plan to aggressively protect habitat by establishing new parks and protected;
- ✘ most importantly, recovery action in Manitoba does not reflect the urgency the situation faced by this species.

Shaeffer also notably writes, "[o]ne can be assured, in the fire-prone ecosystems of Manitoba, that caribou ranges are going to burn. ....frequency of fires stemming from the global climate change underscores the need for ecosystem management ...as part of caribou conservation."

The forest fires in the NAOSAP caribou range should be a wake-up call that we should have, and urgently need to do more to protect large continuous tracts of land from industrial development—mining, logging, hydroelectric developments, etc.

The effects of this years forest fires on Caribou populations may not be known for another 20 years. This is compounded by the fact that caribou population census data is not presently adequate. Thus it is critical to have the appropriate information, and to exercise precaution by acting immediately to protect caribou habitat! Delaying will simply precipitate the loss of the this threatened and majestic species.

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James Beddome is the current Leader of the Green Party of Manitoba (he is presently in Toronto at the Green Party of Canada Convention). Founded in 1998, the Green Party of Manitoba was formed by a group of citizens dissatisfied with the Manitoba Government's inaction on ecological issues. More information can be obtained via our website:

[www.GreenParty.mb.ca](http://www.GreenParty.mb.ca)

#### References:

James Shaeffer (2007). *A Review of Manitoba's Conservation and Recovery Strategy for Boreal Woodland Caribou*, CPAWS & Sierra Club of Canada.  
[www.cpawsemb.org/sites/default/files/MB\\_Caribou\\_RS\\_Review\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.cpawsemb.org/sites/default/files/MB_Caribou_RS_Review_FINAL.pdf)

*Guidelines for Applying the Precautionary Principle to Biodiversity Conservation and Natural Resource Management* (brochure), The Precautionary Principle Project.  
[www.pprinciple.net/PP\\_guidelines\\_brochure.pdf](http://www.pprinciple.net/PP_guidelines_brochure.pdf)

*Precautionary Principle* (website), The Science & Environmental Health Network.  
[www.sehn.org/precaution.html](http://www.sehn.org/precaution.html)

*Manitoba's Conservation and Recovery Strategy for Boreal Woodland Caribou*  
[http://www.gov.mb.ca/conservation/wildlife/sar/pdf/bw\\_caribou\\_strategy.pdf](http://www.gov.mb.ca/conservation/wildlife/sar/pdf/bw_caribou_strategy.pdf)