

Mr. Darrin Moore, Director

Lands Management Division

Dept. of Environment and Conservation

Via e-mail: dmoore@gov.nl.ca

May 28, 2014

Dear Mr. Moore,

I write to you in my capacity as President of Newfoundland and Labrador Trappers Association (NLTA) in an effort to expedite the process of a trapper cabin policy review that better facilitates the professional trappers of our province. Since our initial contact with Minister Burke in February 2014, we have not been party to any action toward this goal. In actual fact, a pre-emptive legal action by your agency against a long-standing founding member of NLTA, prior to the resolution of this process, brings into question the sincerity of your agency toward our request.

In the matter of this person, Mr. Gerald Spencer of Glenwood, we are awaiting your provision of correspondence from Minister Tom Osbourne responding to concerns expressed by MHA Kevin O'Brien on behalf of Mr. Spencer, who is one of his constituents (as requested in our e-mail correspondence to you of May 12). We understand from Mr. Spencer that he has been granted a reprieve by the Small Claims Court order to have a hearing concerning his case. Since this may be a precedent-setting matter for trapline cabins in NL, we intend to represent Mr. Spencer at this hearing. We therefore again ask you for a copy of this return correspondence from Minister Osbourne to Kevin O'Brien, or if non-existent, then an acknowledgement of this fact. On June 6, Mr. Spencer again met with Kevin O'Brien, who believes that no response from Mr. Osborne was ever received. This would suggest that Mr. Spencer acted in good faith toward a resolution to this conflict, and that Crown Lands was negligent in not seizing this opportunity. Mr. Spencer claims that Minister O'Brien will attempt to defer the current action against him until the trapper cabin policy review has concluded.

In an effort to better understand some of the obstacles confronting our members in acquiring trapper cabin leases, we have invited our members to respond to us via our website at www.nltrappers.com where we have posted our initial request to Minister Burke and her response, along with background information on the matter. Similarly the same information has been published nationally in The Canadian Trapper magazine, which all of our members receive.

Since posting this request, we have had several responses from members and are in the process of gathering their detailed info for our files. In brief, one trapper currently paying three separate fees for small trapper tilts made a request to acquire a fourth to better facilitate coverage of his extensive trapline. He was advised that there are no more trapper cabin leases, and he would be required to acquire a recreational cottage lease. In the second case, another senior trapper, who wanted to enlarge

his trapping cabin to make it more functional, was advised that he would only be able to do so if his trapper cabin lease was converted to a recreational cottage lease. Once we have factual accounts of these occurrences, we will bring these forward with our file. These variances, if substantiated, suggest that there is no formalized cabin policy presently in place, and that decisions are made indiscriminately in various geographic areas of the provinces at the whim of regional staff.

Through our own investigations, and correspondence with trapper associations in other relevant provinces, we have determined that in general trappers do not incur fees to have trapline cabins, that one lease or tenure allows for the occupation of multiple smaller “line cabins”, and that size restrictions are conducive to safe and functional facilities that are considerate of OHS concerns, particularly hygiene.

We ask that these considerations also be given high priority by your agency in the upcoming review. In return, we are supportive of meaningful screening criteria for trappers to ensure that there is no abuse of trapper cabin privileges, and will work with you in establishing such criteria. Similarly, we offer to work with you to establish reasonable guidelines that facilitate safe and functional cabin policy and procedures.

In conclusion, we hope to have at least a draft revised trapper cabin policy available for the scrutiny of our members at our AGM in Eastport on August 16. We also encourage your agency to reconsider Mr. Spencer’s case in the context of a fair trapper cabin policy, and to negotiate a mutually satisfactory settlement with him, and any others in a similar predicament as a result of archaic policy.

Thank you,

Kenneth White, President, NLTA