

SENATE



SÉNAT

The Honourable Mac Harb

CANADA PE - COURRIER
EP - ENTRÉE L'honorable Mac Harb

April 20, 2009

27. 04. 2009

Dear Hans-Gert PÖTTERING:

N° 4737

I am writing to you as both a Canadian senator, and as a representative of the majority of Canadians who are opposed to Canada's commercial seal hunt, to urge you to support a total ban of the trade in seal products in the European Union with an exemption for Inuit sealing. I recently introduced a bill that is currently before the Canadian Senate calling for an end to the inhumane and unsustainable commercial seal hunt.

You may be surprised that Canada's commercial seal hunt, a dying industry, is so strongly supported by government intervention against the popular will of Canadians. Currently any political party that does not support the seal hunt would likely lose votes in the 32 parliamentary seats available in Atlantic Canada. After successive minority governments no party is willing to take this risk. While those seats represent just 10% of the total, their disproportionate influence leaves the vast majority of Canadians feeling frustrated and ignored.

Last year's \$7 million hunt (less than €4.2 million) generated about \$1000 (approx. €600) for each of the 7000 active sealers before deducting expenses. These sealers need support to transition into sustainable, 21st century jobs rather than the millions in indirect subsidies – paid for by Canadian taxpayers - that barely keep this bloody business alive.

For the Canadian Inuit, who live thousands of kilometres away from the commercial seal hunt, hunt at a different time of year and kill less than 0.5% of the total harp seals killed, sealing remains an important part of their culture. By enacting a ban with an exemption for Inuit hunters European leaders will help maintain this traditional way of life.

Canada does not have animal welfare legislation. Canada's woeful animal cruelty legislation has not been adequately modernized since it was written in 1892. The meager legislation that does exist treats animals as property leaving stray and wild animals virtually unprotected. This disregard for animal welfare is further compounded by the fact that seals are classified as fish in Canada, rather than sentient mammals.

Your vote to ban the trade in seal products will help the vast majority of Canadians – who watched in admiration as the Russian Federation ended its 'bloody seal slaughter' last month – to force their politicians to look beyond political expediency to what is right and to end this inhumane hunt once and for all.

On behalf of the majority of Canadians who are opposed to Canada's commercial seal hunt, thank you for the leadership you are taking on this issue. It is much appreciated.

Yours sincerely,

Mac Harb

Hon. Senator Mac Harb

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