

SÉNAT



SENATE

*L'honorable Céline Hervieux-Payette, c.p.
(Bedford, Québec)*

*The Honourable Céline Hervieux-Payette, P.C.
(Bedford, Quebec)*

CANADA

Ottawa, July 30, 2009

The Honourable Gail Shea
Minister of Fisheries and Oceans
Confederation Building
229 Wellington Street, room 556
Ottawa (Ontario)
K1A 0A6

Dear Minister,

The growing threat to the future of our seal hunters originates with powerful lobby groups that claim they want to protect seals but actually want to impose vegetarianism on the entire society.

The European Union's decision of Monday, July 27, to boycott seal products is so cynical that it ignores all scientific arguments, proposes not a single measure in favour of animal welfare and violates international free trade rules.

I therefore unreservedly support your initiative of appealing the EU decision to the World Trade Organization. However, I believe that more needs to be done.

Recently Prime Minister Stephen Harper approved \$3 billion worth of assistance for General Motors and \$1 billion for Chrysler. Seal hunters have just as much right to government protection of their jobs as automobile workers do.

I therefore urge you to approach the Prime Minister about swift financial compensation for our seal hunters, threatened as they are by ideologues and a European decision that is highly questionable both legally and morally.

This financial compensation for loss of income should continue until the WTO hands down its final decision and/or the dispute with the EU has been settled.

In 2006, the seal hunt generated over \$55 million for the economy of Newfoundland and Labrador and \$1 million for the Aboriginal populations of Nunavut. The hunt provides jobs for more than 6,000 seasonal workers in the province of Newfoundland alone.

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These economic spinoffs will increase once the threat from the vegetarian lobby groups disappears, since companies will then be able to invest without fear of harassment in research and development of seal-derived products (collagen, omega-3, heart valves, and so on). This will maximize the use made of each animal harvested, which is the sign of a steadily “greener” hunt.

To ensure the long-term survival of the hunt, I am convinced that an international consensus on seal hunting practices must be reached. That is why last April I released the Universal Declaration on the Ethical Harvest of Seals (www.sealsonline.org). Ultimately the Declaration will have to be tabled to the United Nations.

I appeal to you to consider supporting this approach, as the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador has already done, so that Canada can assume world leadership in the protection of communities that live from the seal hunt, guarantee the promotion of hunting practices that respect animal welfare and the environment, and adopt the means needed to combat lobby groups that are as dangerous as they are powerful.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Celine Hervieux-Payette'.

The Honourable Céline Hervieux-Payette, PC
Senator