

HUMANE SOCIETY of CANADA

Protecting Animals and the Earth

15th February 2007

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The Hon. Loyola Hearn
House of Commons
Minister of Fisheries and Oceans
Parliament Buildings, Wellington Street
Ottawa, Ontario
Canada, K1A 0A6

Re: Seal Hunt Regulations

Dear Minister,

I am writing to you on behalf of the millions of Canadians who share our views concerning the protection of animals and the environment which is in sharp contrast to the much smaller number of sealers you represent from one province. Thirty two million Canadians who do not slaughter seals vs. the four to five thousand people from Newfoundland & Labrador who want to continue having the rest of Canada pay for their seal hunt. These sealers make up less than 0.009% of the population of Newfoundland & Labrador and each year participate in the largest taxpayer subsidized slaughter of marine mammals anywhere on earth.

Finance Canada reports that 1.4 billion dollars of taxpayers' money was sent last year alone from the rest of Canada to help the people of Newfoundland & Labrador. And in return, every time a seal pup is stabbed, shot or clubbed, the shockwaves from the selfish actions of these four to five thousand sealers are felt across the entire Canadian economy. These arrogant and wilful sealers contribute nothing but harm to the rest of Canada. Billions of dollars are being lost through resulting boycotts of seafood, tourism and related industries and Canada's international reputation continues to suffer because of their actions.

Humane Society of Canada for
the Protection of Animals and the
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If four to five thousand sealers want to shoot, club or stab seal pups in front of their mothers, then let them pay for it themselves. Within short order, without this artificial subsidy to prop them up, the market will end the seal hunt once and for all. It is only a matter of time before a complaint is filed against Canada for this artificial trade subsidy at the World Trade Organization and there is no doubt whatsoever in our mind that Canada will lose badly.

Along with your colleague, the Premier of Newfoundland & Labrador, whose principal claim to fame is his lack of skill in negotiating a better livelihood for his people, which is only overshadowed by his ability to alienate those who can help; you both continue to refuse to consider our offer to harness public goodwill from across Canada and around the world by raising funds for a seal licence buyout and eventual phase out of this taxpayer funded slaughter.

Regrettably, as politicians from Newfoundland & Labrador you have long since determined that fighting those from “away” plays well to the home town crowd and helps with your re-election campaigns. However, don’t believe for a moment, you have fooled the rest of Canada into believing that this is right, just or even honest.

More specifically on the subject of the seal observation permits, thank you for giving us the opportunity to participate in the Department of Fisheries & Oceans’ annual charade known as “public consultations.” Please provide us with any examples where recommendations from legitimate animal protection organizations were followed vs. the number of recommendations from sealers, civil servants and elected officials that have been implemented.

Your “public consultations” are nothing more than an annual and poorly disguised transparent effort to surround the largest taxpayer slaughter of marine mammals anywhere on earth with a cloak of respectability – an exercise at which you fail miserably.

The irony is that if Newfoundland & Labrador had not joined Confederation in 1949, you would still be a part of the United Kingdom, and this brutal taxpayer funded seal slaughter would have been brought to an end decades ago.

Each year, sealers, with the full collusion of law enforcement officials, routinely play the “tag you’re it” game - with sealers moving too close to observers, and then claiming it was the observers’ who are at fault. Observers, along with journalists and their video cameras, are then removed from the scene, so that the slaughter funded by the rest of Canadian taxpayers can continue without being recorded. Although it is only the sealers’ word against the observers’ word, the sealers are allowed to continue with their activities. Charges against observers are then delayed in court by sympathetic local prosecutors and judges until the following year, when every effort is then made to ensure that the observers do not receive further permits.

What you consider to be clever manoeuvring, the rest of Canada refers to as allegations of corruption amongst elected officials and civil servants.

Our recommendations are as follows:

- ✓ In our opinion, under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the requirement for observer permits is illegal and should be the subject of a taxpayer funded public challenge (please provide us with other examples of where such permits are required to observe any other hunting activity anywhere else in Canada);
- ✓ Until a legal challenge can be mounted, in the interim, all sealers and observers be required to carry standardized GPS and laser range finding equipment with tamper proof seals that accurately records with a time and date stamp their precise location at all times;
- ✓ In addition to records made by observers, professional broadcast quality audio and video footage must be taken and broadcast unedited each day by law enforcement personnel (this footage must also be made available on the Department of Fisheries and Oceans’ website for download and royalty-free use by the media and any other interested parties and it is the responsibility of DFO to ensure that this information is freely available at all times);
- ✓ Observers should be allowed within ten feet of any sealer;
- ✓ All law enforcement personnel should be drawn from Central or Western Canada and be required to sign a declaration that they have no friends or family participating or benefiting in any way from the seal hunt; and that they have never participated or benefited in any way from the seal hunt;
- ✓ In the event of a dispute under these regulations that results in the removal of observers, then the sealers making the allegations must also be removed from the hunt for the same period of time;

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- ✓ Any allegations of corruption relating to law enforcement personnel, elected officials or civil servants should be rigorously investigated and if there is sufficient and admissible evidence, they should be prosecuted under civil and criminal law, with the full findings made public the same day as the case is decided;
- ✓ All disputes or charges must be heard within three months by a federal court in Central or Western Canada, with the full findings made public the same day as the case is decided;
- ✓ Beginning with the 2007 seal hunt, a projected budget and all actual costs of any description related to the seal hunt by any civil servant or elected official over the past five years must be a matter of public record with supporting documentation no later than 1st January of each year;
- ✓ Beginning with the 2007 seal hunt, the four to five thousand sealers are personally required to bear all of the costs associated with the seal hunt.

Awaiting your reply, I remain, yours sincerely,



Michael O'Sullivan
Chairman & CEO