



News release

Government of Nunavut responds to court decision on polar bear hunt

IQALUIT, Nunavut (January 10, 2001) – Sustainable Development Minister Olayuk Akesuk released the following statement in response to last week's ruling by the Nunavut Court of Justice on the proposed polar bear hunt by Mr. Noah Kadlak of Coral Harbour:

“The Government of Nunavut has reviewed the decision by Justice Kilpatrick regarding Mr. Kadlak's request to hunt a polar bear by harpoon, accompanied by a film crew.

“When the Minister of Sustainable Development made his decision in October 1999, he was in good faith, attempting to fulfill his responsibilities under the *Nunavut Land Claims Agreement*.

“Article 5.3.3 of the *Agreement* gives the Minister the authority to disallow the hunt on the basis of public safety. The Minister reviewed Mr. Kadlak's proposal and concluded that the hunt posed an unacceptable risk to public safety. This was not an easy decision for him to make.

“The Nunavut Court of Justice acknowledged in its decision that the Minister had the right to consider public safety in his decision.

“However, Justice Kilpatrick was not satisfied that the Minister had adequate reasons to disallow the decision on the basis of public safety, and overturned the Minister's decision. We are disappointed that the Minister of Sustainable Development's decision was not upheld by the Court, however we respect the rule of law. Justice Kilpatrick has referred the decision back to myself for further consideration.

“The GN remains firmly committed to the idea that Nunavut's laws relating to wildlife be respectful of Inuit traditions while at the same time balancing the needs of a modern Nunavut.

“It remains the Government of Nunavut's belief that matters relating to hunting methods are of such broad public interest that they can best be dealt with during the forthcoming public consultations on a new wildlife act rather than on a case by case basis in the courts.

“This case signals the need for thorough consultations with Nunavummiut on all aspects of the *Wildlife Act* so we can obtain their views on matters of this nature. We have begun that process in cooperation with Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated and the Nunavut Wildlife Management Board.

“The Government of Nunavut is currently studying the decision with respect to the next step.”

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