



NEWS RELEASE

WTO Process: A Necessary step by Canada in Response to Seal Ban

IQALUIT, Nunavut (July 28, 2009) The Government of Nunavut today endorsed Canada's appeal for the European Union to re-consider Monday's decision to ban seal products, and supported the federal government's intentions to defend the interests of Canadian sealing under the World Trade Organization [WTO] agreements.

"We are once again disappointed with the ratification by the Council of Ministers of the European Union's ban on seal products," said Environment Minister Daniel Shewchuk.

The Government of Nunavut has continued to work with the federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans, and the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, after the May 5th vote by European Parliamentarians, to engage European officials on exempting the Canadian harvest from the proposed ban and on the prospect of exemptions for Inuit communities.

"We've been telling Europe that an exemption for indigenous peoples has not worked in the past and we have no reason to believe it will work today," continued the Minister. "The European Union persists in listening to the animal rights activists and ignoring the words of Inuit. They have adopted this legislation that negatively impacts our communities without consulting with us. It's disappointing –as a trade issue, the WTO process is a necessary step."

Concern remains about the impacts of the ban on the Canadian sealing industry generally and specifically on Inuit harvesters who rely on the sale of surplus sealskins for income.

Premier Eva Aariak had met with EU representatives to Canada this summer and she added that there needs to be a way to communicate with Europeans on the cultural importance of the seal harvest. Premier Aariak expressed the hope that "both on the seal issue and on last year's EU Arctic Policy statement—there is an opportunity to help Europeans understand the realities of our Inuit communities and the perhaps unintended consequences of their policies and legislation on Inuit, Nunavut, and Canada's North."

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