



News Release

INUIT EXEMPTION FOR EUROPEAN SEAL BAN POINTLESS

IQALUIT, Nunavut (March 10, 2009) – Nunavut Premier Eva Aariak and Environment Minister Daniel Shewchuk said they are both very disappointed with the European Union’s (EU) vote last week towards a ban on seal products. Although the ban provides an exemption for Inuit hunts, it will not protect Inuit communities.

“I am very disappointed in the decision by the Committee,” said Premier Aariak. “History has shown that the entire market collapses when countries talk about banning seal products. Inuit in Nunavut will be affected by this decision, whether or not an exemption is in place and that is not right.”

“There is a common misconception that an exemption protects Inuit, this is absolutely not the case,” said Shewchuk. “We’ve seen how pointless these exemptions were in the 1980s as a result of the European ban on white-coats. They included Inuit exemptions back then, but our communities still suffered. Once again, the Inuit are being used to further a cause based on misinformation from animal rights groups opposing the hunt in any form.”

The exemption in the proposed ban only allows Inuit to trade seal products for cultural, educational or ceremonial purposes. Any commercial sale would be prohibited. Inuit hunters and seamstresses depend on the seal to address limited economic opportunities in remote communities and to offset the increasing costs of groceries shipped from great distances in the south.

The European Union first introduced a “Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council Concerning Trade in Seal Products” last summer. On March 2, 2009, the European Parliament’s Committee on Internal Market and Consumer Protection considered whether strict labelling would be sufficient and voted against it. The European Parliament will be voting on the proposal, which bans the trade of all seal products except those produced by Inuit for cultural, educational or ceremonial purposes, in early April, 2009.

- 30 -

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