



# News Release

## **Disappointed with EU sealing decision**

**Iqaluit, Nunavut (May 5, 2009)** – Environment Minister Daniel Shewchuk said he is disappointed with the European Union’s decision to impose a ban on sealing products.

“Seals are an abundant natural resource, and sealskins are a commodity like any other. That the EU voted to take this course of action against our seal products despite all the information we have provided them is frustrating,” said Minister Shewchuk.

The European Union voted on May 5, 2009 to impose a ban on seal products. The ban provides an exemption for Inuit hunts, but it will not protect Inuit communities. The current ban’s exemption only allows Inuit to trade seal products for cultural, educational or ceremonial purposes: any commercial sale to Europe would be prohibited.

Many Inuit hunters depend on the sale of surplus sealskins for income where there are limited economic opportunities in remote communities and rising costs for goods from the South.

“There is apparently a misconception in Europe that an exemption protects Inuit. This is absolutely not the case,” says Minister Shewchuk. “We have seen how pointless these exemptions were in the 80’s as a result of the European ban on white-coats. They also included Inuit exemptions back then, but our communities still suffered. Once again, Inuit are being used to further a cause based on misinformation from special interest groups opposing the hunt in any form.”

The EU went ahead with this ban despite intensive lobbying from the governments of Canada, Nunavut, Newfoundland and Labrador and other affected parties.

However, even with today’s decision by the EU, the sealing issue is not over. The federal Minister of International Trade, Stockwell Day, has committed Canada to launch a complaint against the ban to the World Trade Organization. The application would claim that the EU is engaged in an unfair trade practice --an argument the Government of Nunavut supports.

“The federal government has been supportive over the last few months, and I am very pleased that Minister Day is prepared to take the next crucial step on this issue,” said Minister Shewchuk.

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