

News Release

Premier Aariak: EU Seal Ban Suspension Good News for Nunavummiut

IQALUIT, Nunavut (August 19, 2010) – News about the suspension of the European Union (EU) ban on seal products was celebrated in Nunavut today, as importation of seal products into the EU remains open. The European Parliament's Seal Ban Regulation was scheduled to come into force on August 20th, 2010, however; legal action taken by a multi-stakeholder group representing Inuit interests effectively halted the process. Having been granted an injunction, the plaintiff group, led by Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK), will have the chance to present its case before European courts. The court case was financially supported by the Government of Nunavut, among other federal, provincial and territorial jurisdictions.

"This is a big day for Nunavummiut," said the Honourable Eva Aariak, Premier of Nunavut. "I am very pleased with the great strides that have been made in defense of the seal harvest as a vital part of the Inuit cultural identity, way of life, and economic well-being."

While the EU legislation allows Inuit to trade seal products for cultural, educational or ceremonial purposes, the Government of Nunavut views this exemption merely as a token gesture which will do nothing to protect Inuit access to markets, nor save Inuit from the overall loses that will be suffered by the industry. Since the EU seal ban legislation came into effect, there has been a significant negative impact on the market for Nunavut sealskins. The Nunavut Department of Environment has continued to provide incentives to fur harvesters in an attempt to minimize negative impacts to Nunavut harvesters as a result of the ban.

"The Department of Environment remains committed to supporting Nunavut harvesters, and standing firmly in opposition to the EU ban, which would have serious negative consequences for Nunavummiut," said the Honourable Daniel Shewchuk, Minister of Environment.

On behalf of seal harvesters territory-wide, the Government of Nunavut is hopeful that this legal action will result in the permanent withdrawal of the seal ban legislation. According to the official court order released today, the current suspension will remain in effect pending the conclusion of the court proceedings and final ruling on the application for annulment.

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