

News Release

For Immediate Release

GN Disappointed with European Court Decision on Seal Ban

IQALUIT, Nunavut (April 25, 2013) – Today the General Court of the European Union ruled to uphold the European Union's seal ban in the face of a legal challenge by a group of plaintiffs led by Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK) and the Fur Institute of Canada. The court ruled against the plaintiffs' second application for annulment, which challenged the legality of implementing rules for the seal ban.

"The Government of Nunavut is disappointed with this ruling," said the Honourable James Arreak, Minister of Environment. "The EU ban was enacted purely for political reasons. We believe all trade bans must have a sound scientific basis and had hoped that the European court would support this justified challenge."

Following the adoption of the EU seal ban in 2009, international demand and prices for all sealskins collapsed, despite an Inuit exemption to the ban. Since 2009, most Nunavut sealskins have been sold within Canada and Nunavut, but prices have stayed well below pre-ban levels. The Government of Nunavut, along with its fur marketing partners – the Government of the Northwest Territories and Fur Harvesters Auction – has been working to market sealskins internationally.

"We will continue to support Nunavut seal hunters and continue our work to find other market opportunities for seals," said Minister Arreak. "At the same time, we remain hopeful that the plaintiffs' other appeal case on their first application for annulment, which remains before the courts, will be successful."

Seals are hunted in Nunavut for the fresh, nutritious food that they provide in communities where fresh food is expensive or unavailable. The replacement value of seal meat as a food staple in Nunavut is estimated to exceed \$5 million annually. Seal pelts, the useful byproduct of the hunt, are sold to offset the costs of harvesting activities and the high costs of northern living. The Government of Nunavut plans to continue purchasing sealskins from hunters through the Department of Environment's Fur Pricing Program.

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