

NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

Government of Nunavut Disappointed in WTO Seal Ban Decision

IQALUIT, Nunavut (November 25, 2013) The Government of Nunavut is disappointed with the World Trade Organization's (WTO) response to Canada's challenge to the European Union (EU) seal ban. The WTO agreed that Inuit sealers have been treated unfairly, but defended the EU's legal right to adopt trade bans based on "public morality".

"We strongly support the Government of Canada's decision to pursue an appeal against this misguided ruling," said Premier Peter Taptuna. "We feel that the public morality argument is misplaced. Seal populations are abundant and the Canadian seal hunt has been scientifically demonstrated to be humane."

Following the adoption of the EU seal ban in 2009, international demand and prices for sealskins collapsed. The Government of Nunavut continues to purchase sealskins from hunters through the Department of Environment's Fur Pricing Program; however, sealskin prices remain well below pre-ban levels, and demand from within the EU for Nunavut sealskins has disappeared.

"How is the seal hunt more harmful to public morality than any other animal harvest?" said Johnny Mike, Minister of Environment for the Government of Nunavut. "The market collapse caused by the EU seal ban has had a major impact on Inuit, and the Inuit exemption to the ban has proven to be ineffective at protecting the market for our sealskins."

Seals are hunted in Nunavut primarily for the nutritious food that they provide in communities where fresh food is expensive or unavailable. Seal pelts, the useful byproduct of the hunt, are sold to offset the costs of harvesting activities and the high costs of northern living. Seal populations in Canadian waters are healthy. Historically, market demand for Inuit sealskins has been closely linked to market demand for other Canadian seal skins.

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