



Seals & Sealing Network

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Seals and Sealing Network on location to document the start of the sealing season

Ottawa – April 15, 2014 – Members of the Seals and Sealing Network (SSN) will be on location to document the start of the North Atlantic sealing season, speaking with sealers, processors and members of the coastal communities whose livelihoods depend on the sustainable and responsibly managed industry.

"The domestic market for seal products is improving," says Dion Dakins, CEO of Carino Processing Ltd. "We know Canadian's support sealing, recent polling indicates that 70% of Canadians support the seal hunt in some form and a diverse community of supporters have really rallied to voice their support following Canada's appeal at the WTO in March."

The sealing industry is highly regulated and carefully monitored. Each sealer requires a license and undergoes mandatory animal welfare training which has been approved by veterinarians.

"Sealers are trained professionals who live off their local resources" says Eldred Woodford, President of the Canadian Sealers Association. "Despite what the well-funded animal rights groups say, sealing in Newfoundland is not just a 'drop in the bucket,' it's a real industry which makes a real economic difference in the lives of thousands in our communities."

Despite challenges in recent years due to the EU import ban, which is currently being challenged by the Government of Canada, as well as Inuit groups, the sector is diversifying with a number of different products to meet changing consumer needs explains Denis Longuépée of the Magdalen Islands Seal Hunters Association.

"In addition to seal garments and high quality Omega-3 seal oil, in the last few years we have seen a significant increase in the demand for seal meat from people in urban places like Montreal. People are excited to try the local, sustainable and highly nutritious meat."

The Department of Fisheries and Oceans estimates that the Northwest Atlantic harp seal population now numbers 7.3 million, 3 times its population in 1970. The large number of seals is having an impact on Canada's fisheries, consuming 15 times more fish than the entire east coast fishing fleet catches.

"Our Government has been rock solid in its support of the sealing industry, and the coastal communities that rely on it," said federal fisheries Minister Gail Shea. "We will continue to do what it takes to showcase and open new markets for high-quality Canadian seal products."

FACTS:

- A clear majority of Canadians support the seal hunt. In a 2014 poll conducted by Abacus Data, 70 % of Canadians indicated that they are in favour of the seal hunt in some form. Only 22 % of Canadians indicated that they are opposed to the seal hunt in any form.
- Seal hunting methods in Canada conform to established practices of animal welfare as recommended by the Independent Veterinarians' Working Group, The European Food Safety Authority, The North Atlantic Marine Mammal Conservation Organization, and the Canadian Veterinary Medical Association.

- In Canada, seal hunting is an instrument of conservation. Federal Fisheries resource managers set the yearly allowable catch at a sustainable level, based on precautionary management principles in order to maintain abundant populations.
- Sealing is a seasonal source of income that can account for 35% of a sealer's annual income and is available during a time of year when other rural employment opportunities are virtually non-existent. In addition to sealers themselves, thousands more rely on the industry in supporting sectors, such as truck drivers, supply shop owners, plant workers, furriers, Omega-3 producers and distributors.

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To speak with a representative from Canada's sealing community, please contact:

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[SSN YouTube Channel](#)

*The **Seals and Sealing Network** is a national non-profit organization promoting sustainable and wise use principles committed to the conservation and respectful harvesting of the world's seal species through sound scientific management and internationally accepted sustainable use practices. The Seals and Sealing Network is comprised of Conservationists, Inuit, Veterinarians, Health care practitioners, Government, and Industry representatives. For more information, please visit www.sealsandsealing.net*