What are the Values of Sustainable Seal Hunting?

At Issue: Animal-rights extremists want the public to think that seal hunting is both unnecessary and wasteful. They imply sealing is unimportant to coastal people, just an “off-season profit venture”, and a hunt “only for fur”. These anti-sealing campaigns grossly misrepresent the economic, social and ecological contexts of seal hunting. For a fuller perspective, please consider the following:

Economic Value for Rural Canada
• Between 2006-2008, sealing activity yielded $53 million (CAD) in direct “landed value” to sealers based in the provinces of Quebec (QC) and Newfoundland and Labrador (NL). This seasonal source of revenue can account for up to 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 recent years, between 5,000 and 6,000 sealers were active.
• Between 2006-2008 the value to the economies of QC and NL in product production and trade was over $120 million. These numbers do not include economic benefits from supporting and “spin-off” activities from sealing, such as transportation, grocery retail, gear outfitting, fisheries science, monitoring and enforcement, etc.
• In Canada’s northern Territory of Nunavut, traditional hunting by Inuit produces sealskins as by-products, which are sold commercially. The yearly revenue of approximately $1 million serves to sustain hunting activities, while the food obtained from hunting takes the place of southern imports, which would cost typically five times the value of yearly revenue.

All-Natural Product Value
• Seal hides, or “pelts” are handled locally in Canada, where they are tanned into high-quality materials. Best grades go to full garment manufacturing, where sealskin is prized as a naturally beautiful and long-lasting material. Other sealskin products include boots, gloves, hats, musical drums and any variety of high-quality leather products.

Bottom line: Despite what extremists say, in the 21st Century, seal hunting remains a highly valuable, relevant and necessary activity. Sealing contributes to diversity of both human life and the environment in rural places where lifestyles demand it. To attack this or other similar rural livelihoods is both misguided and ecologically irresponsible.

References available upon request.