

Standing Committee on
Fisheries and Oceans



Comité permanent des
pêches et des océans

HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
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NEWS RELEASE

HOUSE COMMITTEE EXPRESSES SUPPORT FOR THE SEAL HARVEST

Ottawa, April 30, 2007 -

Mr. Gerald Keddy, Chair of the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans, tabled today in the House of Commons the Committee's unanimous report on the Canadian seal harvest. The report entitled Ensuring a Sustainable and Humane Seal Harvest makes 18 recommendations for the Government to increase its ability to defend the seal harvest abroad and to implement various new management measures, including measures to deal with the safety of sealers and observers on the ice. During the course of their study, Committee members travelled to the Northern Gulf of St. Lawrence to observe the seal harvest and DFO's enforcement activities.

"It is the Committee's opinion that the Canadian seal harvest is a sustainable and humane activity that plays a crucial role in achieving and maintaining an ecological balance with other marine species," said Mr. Keddy. "The seal harvest is an important part of the economic, cultural and social fabric of Canada's East coast and the North where thousands rely on this activity as an important source of income," he added.

"We looked at the evidence, and guided by the overarching principles of sustainability and conservation of marine resources, we remain united in our support for the commercial seal harvest," said Mr. Bill Matthews, Vice-Chair of the Committee.

The Committee also looked at the current anti-seal harvest campaigns. "For over 30 years, the seal harvest in the Northwest Atlantic has been the target of campaigns to end the harvest of these marine mammals. Campaigns of recent years have been characterized by misinformation and appeals to emotions through the use of inflammatory images and language," said Mr. Raynald Blais, Vice-Chair of the Committee.

Among its recommendations, the Committee is asking the Government of Canada to:

- Invite the Europeans to jointly examine the Canadian seal harvest in the context of broader wildlife welfare and management issues
- Invite Inuit and other seal harvesters to participate in Canadian delegations abroad whose mandate is to discuss the seal harvest
- Implement the recommendations of the Independent Veterinarians' Working Group on the Canadian Seal Harvest
- Explore management and regulatory mechanisms to accommodate the short window of time that is available for the seal harvest
- Increase to 100 metres the minimum distance to be maintained between observers and seal harvesting, and to increase this distance to 400 metres where a rifle is used to take seals
- Require that all observers be clearly identified on the sealing grounds

The Committee's report is available on the Parliament of Canada's web site at: www.parl.gc.ca/fopo. Copies can be obtained by contacting the Clerk of the Standing Committee.

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Members of the Committee: Gérard Asselin (Manicouagan, QC, BQ); Raynald Blais (Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, QC, BQ); Blaine Calkins (Wetaskiwin, AB, Cons.); Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, NS, Lib.); Randy Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission, BC, Cons.); Gerald Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's, NS, Cons.); James Lunney (Nanaimo—Alberni, BC, Cons.); Lawrence MacAulay (Cardigan, PEI, Lib.); Fabian Manning (Avalon, NL, Cons.); Bill Matthews (Random—Burin—St. George's, NL, Lib.); Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, NL, Lib.); Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NS, NDP);

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