



JUN 19 2019

Ms. Natalie Wanga
Director
Bont voor Dieren
Panamalaan 110
1019 AZ Amsterdam
The Netherlands

Dear Ms. Wanga:

The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau, Prime Minister, has forwarded me a copy of your correspondence of April 3, 2019, which I received on May 11, 2019, concerning the commercial seal harvest in Canada.

The Canadian government supports the seal harvest as an important economic and cultural activity in communities in Atlantic Canada, Quebec and the Arctic. The government is committed to ensuring it is sustainable and is conducted safely and humanely.

The seal harvest provides important part-time seasonal employment in a number of Canada's remote coastal and northern communities. Residents of these locations depend on seal harvesting as a means of providing for their families. That being said, there has been no subsidy for the commercial seal harvest as provided by the government of Canada.

Canadian seal harvesters, processors, artisans, and Inuit produce some of the finest quality products in the world. The value of these products to northern communities should be measured not only in terms of dollars for local economies, but also for their significance to culture and tradition. These further outcomes are also of key importance to the Government of Canada.

When conducting population assessments, Fisheries and Oceans Canada's (DFO) scientists take into account multiple factors. This includes considering the effects of climate change and the yearly mortality rate of young seals that can occur as a result of poor ice conditions.

Decisions to implement management measures for sustaining Atlantic seal populations (including, but not limited to licensing policy decisions) are based on long-term conservation and sustainability principles as well as DFO's management plan, consultations with industry, and the latest science advice. Given that Atlantic seal populations (harp, grey and hooded seals) are healthy and abundant, there are no plans for a licence retirement program at this time.

Thank you for providing me with your thoughts on this matter.

Yours sincerely,

Jonathan Wilkinson, P.C., M.P.
Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard