

## THE STANDING SENATE COMMITTEE ON FISHERIES AND OCEANS

## EVIDENCE

OTTAWA, Tuesday, November 15, 2011

The Standing Senate Committee on Fisheries and Oceans met this day at 5 p.m. to study the management of the grey seal population off Canada's East Coast.

**Senator Fabian Manning** (*Chair*) in the chair.

**The Chair:** It is my pleasure to welcome you to the Standing Senate Committee on Fisheries and Oceans. My name is Fabian Manning, Senator from Newfoundland and Labrador and Chair of the Committee. Before I introduce the witnesses, I would like to invite the members of the committee to introduce themselves.

**Senator MacDonald:** Michael MacDonald, from Cape Breton Island, Nova Scotia.

**Senator Patterson:** Dennis Patterson, from Nunavut.

**Senator Raine:** Nancy Greene Raine, from British Columbia.

**Senator Hubley:** Elizabeth Hubley, from Prince Edward Island.

**Senator Harb:** Mac Harb, from Ontario.

(French follows -- **Le sénateur Losier-Cool** : Sénateur Losier-Cool...)

(après anglais)

**Le sénateur Losier-Cool :** Sénateur Losier-Cool du Nouveau-Brunswick.

**Le sénateur Poirier :** Sénateur Rose-May Poirier du Nouveau-Brunswick.

(The Chair: The committee is continuing its study...)

(anglais suit)

(Following French by **Senator Poirier**: ... du Nouveau-Brunswick.)

**The Chair:** The committee is continuing its study on the management of the grey seal population off Canada's East Coast and will hear from the Canadian Sealers Association.

The Canadian Sealers Association was formed in 1982 in response to negative publicity against the sealing industry. It is based in St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador, and represents more than 6,000 sealers. Representatives are here today to talk about the role of the association as well as its objectives and priorities. I am pleased to welcome Eldred Woodford, President; and Frank Pinhorn, Executive Director.

On behalf of the members of the committee, I thank you for accepting the invitation to appear before us today. You have the floor and after some opening remarks, senators will follow with questions.

**Frank Pinhorn, Executive Director, Canadian Sealers Association:** Thank you Mr. Chair. On behalf of the sealers in Newfoundland and Labrador, we would like to thank the Standing Senate Committee on Fisheries and Oceans for the opportunity to address you today and to respond to any questions you may have on the sealing industry. We understand that you are studying the grey seal populations on Canada's East Coast, but we will share with you our experiences in particular with harps and hoods.

The CSA was formed in 1981 as an advocacy organization representing the interests of sealers in Newfoundland and Labrador. The harvest of seals commenced with early settlement hundreds of years previously, and was an integral part of our history, culture, and means of supporting families in rural parts of the province. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, the sealing markets collapsed due to intense pressure by public relations experts enhanced by well orchestrated videos and unlimited funds, whose main goal was the support of lavish lifestyles and not the welfare of animals.

The Canadian Sealers Association and our counterpart, the Northeast Coast Sealers Co-operative [\[mj1\]](#), were instrumental in keeping the sealing industry alive through education, training of sealers, product diversification and development, and undertaking a public relations and media campaign to address the misconceptions being spread about the industry.

The CSA is a voluntary organization that depends on the loyalty and support of its members to operate. In more recent times, the face of the sealing industry has changed, especially in an international context. We believe that the CSA has to keep pace with these changes. Accordingly, over the last 10 months, we have completed an organizational review and work plan and a five-year strategic plan, which we are confident will put us on a firm financial footing and will enable us to undertake and concentrate on the central issues that we believe will lead to diversification and growth of the industry. The organizational review was completed by the CSA in conjunction with the Fish, Food and Allied Workers' union [\[mj2\]](#) in Newfoundland, the Professional Fish Harvesters Certification Board [\[mj3\]](#) and the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador. It was a joint effort on the part of all four groups.

In Eastern Canada, there are three main species of seals -- harps, hoods and greys. The size of each herd is estimated at 10 million harps and about 400,000 to 500,000 each of hoods and greys; and the

numbers are getting larger every year. They inhabit large geographical areas; consume large amounts of commercial species, some of which we are attempting to rebuild; and create a huge imbalance in the fragile ecosystem. The federal government, as custodians over the marine resource, has to take this into consideration when formulating policies and making management decisions with respect to the resource. Over the last three years, sealers in Newfoundland and Labrador have harvested only 40,000 seals per year out of a total quota of 335,000 -- about 10 per cent. Prices are at an all-time low. The industry is being unfairly impacted by other governments and self-interest groups. The federal government needs to take a more aggressive approach in dealing with this matter as a trade issue. That is the critical element today in generating the interests and enthusiasm to rebuild the sealing industry in our province.

The current management tool for maintaining a sustainable seal resource is based on the "N70 model[[mj4](#)]," which ensures a threshold level. However, as a herd increases in size, the threshold level also increases; and you know where that will lead us. When the herd was 5 million, the threshold level was 3.5 million; today, with a herd of 10 million, the threshold level is 7 million. As the numbers rise, the threshold level rises.

The basic principle of the CSA is that we support the wise and sustainable use of all natural resources. In the first instance, we support a commercial seal harvest. That is the principle of our being.

The East Coast of Canada has one of the largest seal resources in the world -- and with renewed interest in a food-based industry for meat, oil and by-products as well as the bio-medical application and with a renewed demand for seal pelts -- we believe the industry today is poised for growth and development. There is considerable interest in China for all seal products and we believe this should be pursued vigorously. As a side note, there have been at least 10 delegations to my office in the past six weeks, all looking for seal meat. Already there are several shipments prepared in Newfoundland and Labrador, but they are being unnecessarily held up because of the delay in finalizing the Canada-China trade agreement. Chinese businessmen have assured us that they want substantial quantities of seal. They talk about 5,000 to 10,000 tonnes.

There are currently 11,000 licensed sealers in our province. It is estimated that in terms of annual income, about 15 to 55 per cent is derived from sealing. There are hundreds of workers employed in processing plants when they are operational and other support industries. I want to impress upon you that rural Newfoundland and Labrador was settled by people who depended upon the ocean for survival. That is truer today than ever in our history. Rural Newfoundland will live and die harvesting marine resources.

One of the main strengths identified in the organizational review we did was there was general consensus from all industries that the CSA is best positioned to represent the interest of all sealers in our province.

We had the concurrence of the provincial department of fisheries, the Fish Food and Allied Workers[[EC5](#)] and the Professional Fish Harvesters Certification Board[[EC6](#)]. We are the main contact group for seals in Newfoundland and Labrador.

We believe it is essential that all sealers be trained and certified in all aspects of sealing. We not only have to satisfy ourselves that it is being done properly. It has to withstand the test of international scrutiny. The CSA also maintains that training has to be made mandatory in order to be effective and build a professional industry. The CSA, in conjunction with other industry participants, agrees with the three-step

process for harvesting all seals, but recognizes that adjustments had to be made for each species and size being harvested.

Our new office is intended to become a focal point for all activities related to sealing in our province. We will promote education, training and advocacy for sealers, as well as media and public relations. We have already redeveloped our website, which is [www.sealharvest.ca](http://www.sealharvest.ca). We intend to promote the positive aspects of the industry. There is one other point we would like to make about animal rights groups and observer permits they obtained from DFO to observe the harvest. We have told DFO for years that they are too liberal in giving out the permits and there had to be conditions and restrictions to them. There should be a requirement for independent observers to go out with them, so whatever they do would be above board and have a purpose.

Thank you for your attention. Mr. Woodford and I welcome your views, comments and questions.

**The Chair:** For those that may not be familiar, could you go through the three-step process for us? The process that was adopted a couple of years back.

**Eldred Woodford, President, Canadian Sealers Association:** I am a commercial sealer and fisherman from the northeast coast of Newfoundland. I have been sealing and fishing for the last 23 years. I own and operate a 50-foot fishing vessel.

With respect to the three-step process, it was a regulation that was put in place last year or the year before. As the Sealers Association, we were party to implementing that regulation and forming it. We had several meetings with DFO dealing with the whole process of creating this three-step process and getting it into a manner where it could be workable for sealers. When it was first presented, it was not workable.

When you go sealing you have to stun the animal. That involves either striking the animal with a hakapik [\[EC7\]](#) or club, or shooting the animal in the head. Then you have to check the skull of the animal to ensure that both hemispheres of the skull are crushed, leaving the animal irreversibly unconscious. After that there is a third step, which is bleeding. It involves cutting both axillary arteries [\[EC8\]](#) under the armpits of the seal, which is actually one of the first steps in pelting the seal. Before we can pelt it we have to bleed it, and then we have to leave it one minute to ensure it is completely bled out before we carry on and continue pelting the seal.

**The Chair:** I wanted to have that on the record.

**Senator Hubley:** Welcome and thank you for bringing the information from the sealing group.

I wonder if you could confirm the numbers of harp seals, hood seals and grey seals for me. I think you gave the numbers at the beginning of your presentation.

**Mr. Pinhorn:** The number of harp seals is estimated at 10 million. Each year the pup production rate is 1.6 million a year.

When I started with the CSA in 2005, the herd stood at 5.6 million. I have been with the CSA now about six years and in that amount of time, the herd has gone from 5.6 million to 10 million.

The number of grey seals is estimated at about 400,000. The number of hooded seals is about

500,000. The number of hooded seals born each year is about 90,000.

**Senator Hubley:** We are talking about the grey seals today and the problems that they have produced in numbers.

We have heard from DFO officials and also from the Fisheries Resource Conservation Council. They noted in their September 11 report that the non-trivial question of how to practically remove tens of thousands of seals from a large sub-boreal marine ecosystem at the rate and magnitude required for adaptive management experiments is now the critical path.

Do you agree with that statement? I wonder if you might have other suggestions for this committee. Are there other efficient ways of controlling the size of the grey seal herd?

**Mr. Pinhorn:** I remember years ago the grey seal herd was kept under check in Newfoundland and Labrador on the south coast. We do have small quantities of grey seals in the gulf in Newfoundland and Labrador and on the south coast.

Years ago there was a bounty in place. If you killed a grey seal you would get your \$5, \$10, \$15 or \$20 dollars or whatever the bounty was. That kept them in check for years.

I always attended the Atlantic Groundfish Advisory Committee meetings when I was with the Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture. [\[EC9\]](#) There was always concern after the bounty was eradicated that the numbers were starting to increase. Then we saw increases in worm infestation in the cod in the gulf. There were cries that the numbers were getting larger and had to be brought under control.

In Newfoundland and Labrador now, the grey seals are well into the gulf.

They are going into the northern gulf, which is up towards Belle Isle. The numbers are getting larger, which is why I raised the issue with respect to harps. We are assuming we have to do something with the harps because they are approaching 10 million. We will get to 11, 12 and 13 million, and they will have to be brought into check. We are only taking out small quantities. They consume large quantities of commercial species. I believe we should try to do it commercially. In the absence of that, you know what the choice is.

**Senator Hubley:** That would be a cull, just to reduce the herd, without looking, perhaps, at what resources we might be able to draw from the herd.

**Mr. Pinhorn:** I have had extensive discussions with the Chinese over the past six or seven weeks. They are talking about tremendous quantities of not only the meat but also the hearts, kidneys, livers and other internal organs. They are talking about putting processing plants in Newfoundland that would take the whole quota of harp seals. I assume the properties of grey and hood seals are very similar. As I said earlier, our first preference is a commercial setting. We believe that the Chinese market is there. We met with Minister Fast and with Minister Peter Penashue at the end of September. We impressed upon both of them that it is a trade issue. There is product produced in Newfoundland. The containers are packaged and ready to go. There just needs to be a joint announcement between the Canadians and the Chinese to get that deal crystallized and to get on with people going to work. That is our first preference.

**Senator Hubley:** Thank you.

**Senator Patterson:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I would like to thank both gentlemen for the presentation. I am impressed that there are 11,000 licensed sealers in Newfoundland and Labrador. You mentioned training and the three-step process. Are those sealers trained and able to harvest grey seals?

**Mr. Pinhorn:** We have 11,000 licensed sealers. We have training programs put in place that have accounted for about 3,000 of them. They would certainly be fully versed in the three-step process, and I know sealers in Newfoundland and Labrador would be able to harvest. Would you agree, Mr. Woodford? They would be able to harvest any type of seal. They do harvest some greys, as well as the harps and the hoods. In my mind, they could do either one.

**Senator Patterson:** Thank you. You mentioned the tremendous increase in the populations of harp and grey seals. I understand that, in 1960, there were estimated to be about 13,000 animals.

Can you account for the growth of the grey seal population? Why has it grown to such an extent since 1960, from 13,000 to between 4 and 500,000?

**Mr. Pinhorn:** It is simple. I did allude to the fact that there were bounties in place in the 1960s and 1970s. The numbers were always kept in check because of that. The parasites incur a tremendous cost to the groundfish in the gulf as well.

When the bounty stopped, the numbers were about 25 to 30,000. Seals, as I told you with respect to harp, do multiply very fast. If you take 30,000 seals and leave them unchecked for 20 years, this will happen. Even when they opened up the harvest of grey seals in Nova Scotia, Sable Island was untouchable, which is where the main herd was. They were only allowed to harvest the periphery areas, and they could never take more than a few hundred, irrespective of what the market wanted. The main herd was always on Sable Island. I grew up in a little village in Trinity Bay and that area had the only bit of northern cod left when the moratorium was called. Harps are down there now. When I was growing up, if you saw a few seals in the latter part of April and May that would be it. Now you see seals 12 months of the year. They are down there because Random [\[k110\]](#) Sound is the home of northern cod. The stock in Random Sound saved northern cod. The seals are down there now, and they are there 12 months a year, feeding on cod, crab, shrimp, turbot and whatever is in the ocean.

**Senator Patterson:** You mentioned, Mr. Pinhorn, that your preference would be a commercial harvest. I take it that would be through developing a market, particularly the promising markets in China.

Are there other ways of reducing the grey seal population? You had mentioned a bounty. Do you have any other comments on other methods of reducing the population?

**Mr. Pinhorn:** I was working with the provincial government in Newfoundland and Labrador for 27 years. One of our objectives at that time was to utilize harp seals. We introduced subsidies on them for so many years. We bought grinders, and we fed them to foxes and mink. We did all kinds of things.

There is an avenue for their use as animal feed. Some things have been worked out in cat and dog food. There are other things that can be done, in my mind.

When I was with the province, we did a lot of research through Memorial University and the

Marine [\[k111\]](#) Institute. There was a lot of work done at the time. We even did seal protein concentrate, which is like sugar. You can use it as a food supplement in underdeveloped countries. All kinds of things can be done with it.

Our last resort is to go out and cull seals. I am a geographer by profession, and we do not destroy our environment.

**Senator MacDonald:** I want to go back to grey seals. The last time this committee met, we had numbers showing the biomass of cod off the coast of Nova Scotia. You are both Newfoundlanders, and you know how important the fishery has been to communities. It is no different in Nova Scotia. Nova Scotia is surrounded by small fishing communities, and the small towns are evaporating because there is no fishing left.

You talk about how there used to be a small cull for grey seals in Newfoundland. These are big animals, much bigger than harp seals.

How did they secure this and collect it? Did they have to present the animal? How did they monitor this cull?

**Mr. Pinhorn:** You mean when there was a bounty on them?

**Senator MacDonald:** When there was a bounty on them.

**Mr. Pinhorn:** They would bring in a part of the animal, the head. There was a bounty of, I think, 10 or 15 dollars. It was not a large amount.

It was in place in the 1960s and the 1970s.

**Senator MacDonald:** Is there any difference in principle in establishing a market for a grey seal product, as opposed to a harp seal product?

**Mr. Pinhorn:** No.

**Mr. Woodford:** To get back to your question, the problem is not with the market. The market is there; the sealing industry has never had access to it. The markets are limited because of certain factors.

The grey seal population is not really our area of expertise. However, over the last 12 years, being involved with Atlantic seal consultation meetings, with DFO and with fellow sealers from Cape Breton, P.E.I., Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, it has been made known that there were never sufficient numbers of grey seals coming in from the commercial hunt to go out and promote grey seal products. Sealers were telling us at the time that they had a quota of grey seals that they were allowed to go out and harvest but that they were never allowed to harvest in the areas where it was commercially viable to go and seal, namely, Sable Island and other nearby islands along the shore. They were not allowed access to the islands where the seals were. Unlike the harp, which pup and live on the ice pans, grey seals live on the land. Sealers were restricted in that manner; that is, in being able to go out and actually prosecute the commercial hunt that they had. This was a big factor in limiting their ability to promote grey seals and to market them. The substantial quantities required to promote the products were just not available to the processors because the sealers were disallowed from hunting in the areas where they could actually go out

and make a commercial hunt viable.

We have been told this for the last 10 or 12 years. It is a known fact at every Atlantic seal consultation meeting. There is another one coming up in the Magdalen Islands in January, and we will hear the same thing again. As a sealer in Newfoundland, when the commercial hunt opens, I can go out and I can kill seals. Provided they are not within 10 limits or whatnot, I can kill seals wherever I want to kill them or wherever they end up being found. In the gulf, in the southern gulf and along the Cape Breton shores and the Nova Scotia shores, sealers were not allowed to go and harvest the seals. That was a big stumbling block to their ability to harvest their commercial TACs [\[v12\]](#), thus not allowing enough substantial product for the processors to go out and promote the products that they could have.

**Senator MacDonald:** As I said, these are fairly substantial animals. They are good-sized animals. If we were to cull them, what sort of cull would you suggest? Should it be a pup-based cull or a combination of pup based and a mature animal cull?

**Mr. Woodford:** Again, they are large animals. I have never killed a grey seal myself, but I have killed several hoods. The hooded seal is the largest of them all. We have never had a problem with harvesting hooded seals, so I do not see a problem with harvesting the greys. I forget what you asked first.

**Senator MacDonald:** I am talking about the best approach to reducing the numbers of animals.

**Mr. Woodford:** If you are concerned about rebuilding groundfish stocks, then I would imagine that the best way to address that problem would be to harvest the older dog seals. I do not know if people understand this, but a seal is a pretty playful animal. A seal will go out and he will kill a codfish but he will not eat all the codfish. He will do what we refer to as “belly bite” them; that is, eat the liver in the stomach. This could be a reason why there are a limited amount of traces of groundfish found in seal stomachs; that is, they only eat a portion of it, but the fish dies. To address the groundfish issue, it would have to be an adult harvest.

**Senator MacDonald:** I want to get to another point here and maybe preface it a bit. In terms of their survivability, animals are categorized in five categories: extinct, extirpated, endangered, threatened and vulnerable. None of these animals fit any of these categories. Their numbers are booming. I have always felt strongly that successive governments of Canada have mishandled this issue when land-based mammals can be trapped. To dispatch a harp seal with a hack pick in a matter of seconds as opposed to leaving an animal in a trap to suffer for days or for weeks seems to be a bit amiss. In any event, the harvesting of seals seems to be caught up in world politics and our mishandling of it at this end. We want that fish to return to Nova Scotia, to the cod fishery. There is no fishing going on by fishermen in the inshore. For 20 years now it has flatlined, basically. There is almost no biomass. However, there are other elements at play that I want to mention. We have things like the Atlantic whitefish or the Canadian whitefish, which is a rare species that is around the Tusket [\[v13\]](#) River. They are related to salmon, I believe. They are endangered, threatened, and the grey seal is feeding in the same area as this species. You are a sealer so you are very familiar with the harbour porpoise. There are three quarters of a million of them around the world. They used to be quite common on the Atlantic coast. They are still around, but they are less common. From what I am reading, there is more pressure on the harbour porpoise on the East Coast of Canada than in any of the other areas in the world where it is normally located. These animals are not particularly big, but have a high metabolism. They can eat 10 or 15 pounds a day. They are feeding on the same stock that these 400- and 500-pound seals are feeding on. We know who will

win that fight; there is no doubt about that.

There does not seem to be enough emphasis -- and I think we are all guilty of it -- on the burgeoning numbers of grey seals and harp seals, and the pressure they are putting on not only cod stock but the other marine-based animals. Has your group looked into the pressures that the grey seal has put on other marine-based animals? I believe it is putting pressure on them.

**Mr. Pinhorn:** In Newfoundland and Labrador, we have done a lot of work on the stomach content of hoods and harps. They had done some work on that in parts of the gulf. As I said, the grey seals are extending further into the northern gulf. I talked to the FFAW about this and they are still very concerned about it in the gulf parts of Newfoundland and Labrador. They think that it will be a problem very soon. When I was with the department, we did samples. We have taken as many as 56 turbot out of one seal. Each one was about a foot and 10-inches wide. You know what a turbot is. It is a flatfish. We have taken a 5-gallon bucket of shrimp out of one seal and a whole crab out. They are voracious feeders; we all know that. They are up in the rivers in Labrador, on trout and salmon. When you talk to Chief Roy Jones on the Queen Charlotte Islands, Haida Gwaii, he has told me that there are a hundred rivers there that are decimated. There are no fish left there. He is a member of our association and he agrees that we need a commercial harvest for seals. They have to be kept under control.

**Mr. Woodford:** Further to that, a friend of mine sent me two photos last year. Right now we are dealing with groundfish. Believe you me, the groundfish resource is important, but it is very trivial with regard to the shellfish industry, both in Canada and in Newfoundland.

I received two photos last year of two old seals that were killed. One had 85 female crab in its stomach, and the other had 136 female crab plus one male in its stomach. Currently on the northeast coast of Newfoundland, we are facing dramatic reductions in our total allowable catches for snow crab, yet we have a herd of nine to ten million harp seals substantially increasing every year, foraging on everything they can get. It is not only an issue with regard to grey seals -- I know we are here about that today -- but the overall picture is that we have herds of seals that are substantially growing. Every fishery and every stock of fish is diminishing. It seems to me like no one wants to do anything about it.

We have had a moratorium in Newfoundland since 1992 on northern cod. We have a mediocre quota of 3,000 pounds per fisherman on the northeast coast of Newfoundland, yet we have 10 million seals that are eating us out of house and home. This is a major issue, both in the Gulf and elsewhere in Atlantic Canada.

**Senator MacDonald:** I want to assure you that there are people around this table who would like to do something about it. Thank you.

**Mr. Pinhorn:** This past spring, the Chinese were in Newfoundland, they bottled the product, they had it ordered and they had had to stop production because the Chinese deal was not signed yet. There is product out there now, and it will not clear customs in China. You can get it out of this country, but you will not get it into China. You will not get the papers in place to do so unless the deal is signed first.

As I said, Minister Shea on the television last week was premature; she should have made a joint statement with the Chinese. It was done wrong in the first place. I do not know whether it was intentional or not.

I have been working on the seal file with the provincial government, the Canadian Sealers Association, since 1980, which is 31 years. I know it is a difficult subject matter to deal with, but it is not impossible. There are interested groups in the world. I had emails yesterday that the Vietnamese are looking for seal meat. This is an international issue. It is an international issue with the Europeans. They went over there dealing with a free trade agreement, but for some reason or another, seals were not treated as a normal natural resource. They have to be separated, put on a back burner, put in a bucket or put somewhere and dealt with after the fact. The problem is, after the fact never comes.

**Senator Harb:** Thank you, Mr. Pinhorn and Mr. Woodford. I greatly appreciate your comments, especially the last part of them. I can hear your frustration and your disappointment. You have every right to be frustrated and disappointed because you, as well as your industry, have been used as a political football in order to score partisan points, nothing more, nothing less, and that fact speaks volumes.

I will tell you as a fact, you may not hear this from many others, but I will tell you as a fact that they are. The United States shut the market down on you back in 1974. The European Union shut the market down on you last year. The market will not open up in China, despite what the minister announced in January 2011. The Chinese populations are taking defensive and offensive action. They do not like to be force fed seals. As the minister and others have said, the Chinese will eat anything and they do not differentiate between one animal and another. Those comments were not helpful to your cause.

I have to tell you that your producers have gone and packaged, produced and prepared themselves in order to make shipment of product based on the minister's comment, when in fact, as you said yourselves, those comments were very premature. In essence, the minister has exposed your industry to a massive liability because she did not do her homework.

There was no agreement. That is an important point, and I am sure the witnesses want to hear that. There was never an agreement. We have asked over and over again to find out what the nature of this agreement is. There was never an agreement. There was some sort of a communication, a discussion, and a statement made, but there was no agreement. If you apply and ask for an agreement, there is none.

Knowing what we all know, that the government is letting you down, as part of your five-year strategic plan, just like every corporation has an exit strategy as part of their strategic plan, have you or your members considered going to the Government of Canada and asking, on behalf of the 11,000 sealers you represent, for compensation because of the lack of tangible action on the part of the government? You have a right as an industry to ask for compensation and transition like other industries have done when we have free trade deals with the United States and we have set up compensation packages for certain industries. There is also the minister's statement, which was premature, and I quote, "In retrospect, the announcement by Gail Shea may have been a little premature." I would appreciate your comments on that.

**Mr. Pinhorn:** First and foremost, we have always maintained that the federal government's position on seals has been weak. We have always maintained that, even when I was with the Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture. We have not asked the federal government for compensation. Our funding comes from the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador; we have not requested funding at all from the federal government in any respect, not for the CSA or the industry. We have not done that.

One of the issues we have with the federal government, and I related this to Minister Fast and

Minister Penashue in September, the federal government does not appear to be serious about the issue. It is an international trade issue. It is not a fisheries issue because we had access this year; we could have taken 500,000 seals this year, which would have kept the numbers down a bit. However, we cannot bring them in because we have no place to sell them. The price is so ridiculously low, with ammunition at and all time cost and fuel at \$1.20 per litre, for both to go sealing, it is not unusual for them to pay \$3,000 or \$4,000 or \$10,000 in fuel. You have to take in a lot of seals at \$20 each to break even, along with your 100 or 200 or 2,000 rounds of ammunition, whatever they get. It is an expensive undertaking.

Like I said earlier, seals have been in our history. Newfoundland and Labrador settled on cod and seals 500 years ago. The Aboriginals and First Nations were using seals long before that. This issue will not go away.

When the clerk called me to appear here, I jumped at the chance because I simply want to relate to you that this issue will not go away and it will have to be dealt with one way or another. As our friend here said, the senator from Nova Scotia, they have a problem with parasites in the Gulf, but we will have an even bigger problem than that, as Mr. Woodford related to. The seals are ranging south further and they are covering larger geographical areas. There are 1.6 million born each year, and the numbers are getting bigger and bigger.

When we met with the two ministers in September, we impressed upon them the need for the federal government to take a more aggressive approach and to try to deal with this as a trade issue. We cannot do anything unless the market is there, not a thing. We can train our sealers, we can educate them and give them all gold certificates, but it will not do a bit of good until they start bringing in product.

Rural Newfoundland and Labrador depends on cod, crab, shrimp, turbot, lobster and everything out there, including seals. There are 11,000 sealers from Maine right down to Cape St. Mary's. It covers the entire province except for small areas of the south coast, and it has a tremendous bearing on the ability of rural Newfoundland and Labradorians to make a living for their families.

**Senator Harb:** You must be very disappointed that the government wants to kill 70,000 grey seals and dump them on the market. They are now looking at ways to utilize the seals. Not only do you have the problem of not being able to sell the harp seal, you also have the government wanting to kill 70,000 seals and dump them on the market. How do you feel about that?

**Mr. Pinhorn:** I said earlier that I do not agree with it, and our first and foremost objective is the commercial development of the resource.

**Senator Harb:** Thank you very much.

**Mr. Woodford:** You mentioned the Marine Mammal Protection Act that was signed in 1974 in the U.S. At the time that act was put in place, seals were included in it because at that time we had 2.1 or 2.2 million seals and it was considered a conservation issue. In the last decade and a half to two decades, we have up to 10 million seals, so obviously it is not a conservation issue. The federal government should try to promote within the U.S. the opening of that large market for us.

You spoke about the ban in Europe which came into effect last year. Europe and the U.S. manage seals in a manner similar to what we are contemplating doing with the grey seals now; a cull -- kill it,

destroy it, forget about it.

It would be a crime to humanity to manage our resources in that manner. That is something that our association does not want to partake in. However, having said that, as a commercial fisherman who has witnessed the decimation that the seal herds are inflicting, the time will come when we will all be promoting a cull of these animals. There is currently potential to control them with a commercial activity, which will provide badly needed income to families in rural Atlantic Canada. It would be a great injustice if our government ended up destroying a natural resource on our doorsteps that can provide good economic value plus good nutritional value to the 7 billion people in the world today.

It should be a crime to even contemplate that there is not a market for these products. If it was promoted and marketed in the manner that it should be, not one ounce of any seal that is killed should be discarded. It is our full belief that a sustainable commercial hunt is far more valid than any cull. However, the market does not currently exist. There has to be something done to address the grey seal issue in the southern gulf. There is a lot of support out there to do something and to do it now rather than waiting until later.

(French follows – Senator Losier–Cool: Merci, messieurs. Je suis un nouveau membre )

(après anglais)

**Le sénateur Losier-Cool :** Merci, messieurs. Je suis un nouveau membre de ce comité. Par les statistiques que vous nous donnez, j'apprends la fragilité de notre écosystème.

J'aimerais revenir sur votre association canadienne. Vous avez dit que votre association compte 6 000 membres, mais vous avez 11 000 chasseurs de phoques. Est-ce que j'ai bien compris les chiffres?

Est-ce que ces 6 000 membres proviennent plutôt de l'Est du Canada ou est-ce qu'il y a, puisque c'est une association canadienne, des membres partout au pays?

(Mr. Pinhorn: First, our membership...)

(anglais suit)

(Following French)

**Mr. Pinhorn:** First, our membership is voluntary. It is not 6,000 members, but we collect pelt levies from 6,000 sealers. Each sealer pays a fee each year of \$25, and for each seal he brings in he contributes 25 cents to the Sealers Association. If 100,000 seals are harvested, we get \$25,000. It is a voluntary organization. The number of 6,000 is what we get through pelt levies. Our membership is actually only about 600 who pay the \$25 fee per year direct.

We have members all over Canada. We have members in Ottawa and the member of Parliament for Grand Falls, Scott Simms is a member of our association. He pays us \$25 and we send him a copy of our newsletter to keep him informed of what we are doing. We send out a newsletter once or twice a year to let all our members know what is happening in the industry in terms of product development, marketing, et cetera.

The 11,000 sealers I referred to is the number of commercial sealers who are licensed in Newfoundland and Labrador to harvest seals.

**Senator Losier-Cool:** You have anticipated my second question. I was going to ask you about how your association is funded.

**Mr. Pinhorn:** That is why I said earlier that we are a voluntary organization.

(French follows - Senator Losier-Cool: Pour revenir aux chasseurs de phoques)

(après anglais)

**Le sénateur Losier-Cool :** Pour revenir aux chasseurs de phoques, ai-je bien compris qu'ils doivent suivre une formation obligatoire afin d'apprennent les méthodes de prélèvement sans cruauté?

(Mr. Pinhorn: We have asked the federal...)

(anglais suit)

(Following French)

**Mr. Pinhorn:** We have asked the federal government to make the training and education of sealers mandatory. We have been running a program through the Professional Fish Harvesters Certification Board for three years, and we have about 3,000 sealers who are trained in all aspects of harvesting seals. We will continue that program each winter until all sealers are trained. In the meantime, we have asked the federal Minister of Fisheries to select a date, perhaps in 2012 or 2013, to make it mandatory that all seal harvesters have to be trained and certified.

**Senator Losier-Cool:** Who supervises the training?

**Mr. Woodford:** It is being done through the Professional Fish Harvesters Certification Board. They train all commercial fishers in Newfoundland and Labrador.

**Senator Losier-Cool:** How do you think Canadians feel about the policy or the politics of seal hunting? You mentioned the government.

(French follows - Senator Losier-Cool continues: À votre avis, comment les Canadiens...)

(après anglais)(Sén. Losier-Cool)

À votre avis, comment les Canadiens voient ces politiques fédérales? Sont-ils conscients, comme je le mentionnais plus tôt, de la fragilité de l'écosystème? Est-ce que les Canadiens sont conscients de ce que vous venez de nous dire?

(Mr. Pinhorn: When I am asked...)

(anglais suit)

(Following French)

**Mr. Pinhorn:** When I am asked that question I always make the comparison between farming cows and sheep, harvesting moose and deer and elk, and harvesting seals. It is sheer hypocrisy to tell me that you can harvest a pig, you can harvest a sheep, a moose, an elk, a deer, a wild boar in Germany -- they hunt them by the hundreds of thousands, and you are telling Mr. Woodford that he cannot kill a seal. That is sheer hypocrisy. That is what I would call that.

I have driven from Newfoundland to Grande Prairie twice. I told you earlier I was a geographer by profession. I drove to Grande Prairie twice to look at the farms in Wisconsin, North Dakota, South Dakota, Manitoba, Alberta and Saskatchewan, and I saw that the farmers are like the sealers in Newfoundland and Labrador. They are poor. They try to earn a living the best way they can from harvesting the land. In Newfoundland and Labrador, for 500 years they are not harvesting the land, they are farming the ocean. They harvest shrimp, crab, cod and turbot, and they have to harvest seals to feed their families. How do Canadians feel about it? The fiddle player, Ashley [\[np14\]](#) MacIsaac, was on the news last week, wearing his sealskin boots. When I was interviewed from Ottawa, he asked me what I thought about it. I said he should be made a First Canadian because he is standing up for our culture, our heritage, more so than the federal government.

When Michaëlle Jean went to Northern Canada, she ate raw seal. She would not insult us. She acknowledged that it was part of what the people do. Part of what the people do in Alberta is farm land. They grow wheat and do what they have to do to make a living. There are 5,000 people in Newfoundland and Labrador who do the same thing. Jacques Cousteau said, "Do not tell me you can harvest a pig but you cannot harvest anything else." The problem with harvesting animals is that the animal rights groups have seals elevated above all animals on earth, above human beings. Seals are way up here, and they are untouchable. That is why this man has a problem in Nova Scotia, because we have 11 million seals now in greys, harps and hoods, and if we keep on the same path we are treading now, we will have 12 and 15 million in two or three years. I will be here again in three or four years if I am alive and you will be still going through the same questions.

What do Canadians think about it? Canada was built on the fur industry. We all know about the Hudson's [\[np15\]](#) Bay Company. We do not have to go into that. It was built on the fur industry.

I was over at the Fur [\[np16\]](#) Institute of Canada today. There were beavers and muskrats there and whatever fur they are involved with throughout Canada. They are not ashamed of that.

I went to Government House last Thursday and I had dinner with our Lieutenant-Governor. He gave me a seal bow tie. I said to Mr. Woodford when I came here today that the only regret I had, I should have brought the tie and worn it here this evening. That is what I think about the sealing industry and that is what Canadians should think of it.

**Senator Harb:** They do not.

**Mr. Woodford:** Maybe we should look at what rural populations versus urban populations think of it. That is where you will see the major difference. As Mr. Pinhorn said earlier, if you go to downtown

Toronto or downtown Ottawa, there are a good many restaurants, supermarkets and stores selling beef, pork and chicken. Animals died, and believe you me, nothing makes a sealer proud when he kills a seal. I have been out to the hunt and been out for days in search of seals before the hunt opened. I admire that resource. When six o'clock in the morning comes, the day of the opening, you turn off a switch. You turn off that switch and you go hunting seals, similar to a farmer who raises 10,000 herd of cattle or 1,000 pigs or 1,000 sheep. I do not say it gives them great pride to send them to a slaughterhouse, but in those slaughterhouses things are not seen or shown. We as sealers have to put up with the scrutiny of helicopters flying over our heads at 100 yards or 100 feet in the air, taking every picture of this bloody ice pan. There is nothing pretty about it and it is nothing that we take pride in.

We take pride in our work, do not get me wrong, but we do not take pride in killing something. It is a necessity, and that is what Canadians should understand, and most do, I do believe.

**Senator Poirier:** Thank you both for being here and for your presentation. It is greatly appreciated.

We are talking about the grey seal problem and the eastern coast in Atlantic Canada. I know you are both from Newfoundland and we are talking about the number of sealers in Newfoundland and we have touched it a little bit in Nova Scotia. Please educate me. Are there any grey seals in New Brunswick or Prince Edward Island? We do have seals. Are they the grey seals?

**Mr. Woodford:** Yes, there are grey seals in the Bay of Fundy bordering on the New Brunswick side and the same thing in the southern gulf on the northeast coast of New Brunswick. They are pretty much everywhere. Grey seals have expanded now into the eastern seaboard of the U.S. It was only last week I had emails about seals going as far as New England and washing ashore.

**Senator Poirier:** Are there licensed sealers in Nova Scotia, New Brunswick or Prince Edward Island, or is it mostly in Newfoundland and Labrador?

**Mr. Pinhorn:** The majority of sealers are from Newfoundland. There are 14,000 licences Atlantic-wide, the majority of which are in Newfoundland.

Quebec has 1,000 or a little better. Nova Scotia, there are somewhere around 140; P.E.I., maybe 20; and New Brunswick, there are only three or four.

They are always party to our meetings and the interest is there in New Brunswick to have trained commercial sealers. With the limited amount of seals, namely the harp that is of commercial viability at this time, there is very little interest. There is pretty much an overcapacity of seal hunters in the gulf. With any increase in commercial activity with regard to the grey seals, there is considerable interest in New Brunswick to get involved in the seal industry.

**Mr. Pinhorn:** The way the share structure of seals is broken down is that 90 per cent of the quota is assigned to Newfoundland and 10 per cent to everyone else, which would include the Magdalen Islands, the Quebec north shore, Nova Scotia, P.E.I. and New Brunswick.

Most of the seals come down from Labrador and they inhabit the part of what is normally referred to as the front. A small portion goes into the gulf, and that is why the bulk, 90 per cent of the herd, is attributed to the Newfoundland share and the remaining part is divided among the other provinces.

**Mr. Woodford:** That is in consideration with the harp seal. The grey seal is 100 per cent utilized by the Atlantic provinces -- Nova Scotia, P.E.I. and New Brunswick.

**Senator Poirier:** You mentioned in your comments the possibility of the agreement with China. That was for the harp seal, if I understand correctly.

**Mr. Pinhorn:** It was for all seals.

**Senator Poirier:** You also mentioned that the market was there but you do not have access to it. I know you are referring to the situation with China.

What other market is there? Where are your other contact markets that you have right now? I know the prices are low and there is not a lot of access, but are there any other places that you are selling right now?

**Mr. Pinhorn:** There is a portion that goes into Taiwan and a portion goes into Hong Kong. Russia takes the fur because they still make their fur caps. Some goes to Korea.

**Senator Poirier:** Is that all harp seal?

**Mr. Woodford:** It is harp, hood, ringed [\[np17\]](#).

**Mr. Pinhorn:** They will take any kind of seal.

**Senator Losier-Cool:** Is there demand?

**Mr. Pinhorn:** Yes, there is.

**Senator Poirier:** They say that harp seal products consist of leather, handicraft, meats for human and animal consumption, seed oil, original omega 3 fatty acids that are widely believed to have health benefits, and new product developments such as research into the use of harp seal heart valves in human surgery, which is ongoing.

With respect to the grey seal, do we know of any research on what its products can be used for? I know we talked about animal food and different things, but is there a demand out there, or does more research need to be done for the grey seal?

**Mr. Woodford:** Last spring, there was a Newfoundland company who went to Nova Scotia and got some sealers up there to harvest a limited amount, so that it could go out and check out the heavy metal content of the meat to see if it was fit for human consumption. I have been told the results are that it passed, so there should not be any reason why grey seal products cannot compete with harp seal products.

With regard to the biomedical aspect of it, I believe that research that has been done in Quebec involves all species, but I stand to be corrected. Again, I say if sealers in Atlantic Canada in the gulf regions were given access to the areas that the seals occupy, there should not be any reason why a commercially viable gray seal hunt could not happen.

**Senator Poirier:** When you said that 90 per cent of the quota was in Newfoundland, and the 10 per

cent of the quota was elsewhere, is that just for harp seal?

**Mr. Pinhorn:** Yes, it is.

**Senator Poirier:** Right now, there is no harvesting whatsoever of the grey seal.

**Mr. Woodford:** Not in Newfoundland.

**Senator Poirier:** What about in Atlantic Canada?

**Mr. Woodford:** Last year, there was an experimental licence issued to a Newfoundland company to purchase 200 grey seals. It is my understanding, outside of, I guess, the incidental by-catch and death of grey seals, that those are the only grey seals that were harvested last year.

Years before that, they harvested 1,200 or 1,400, again, going back to the sole fact that this is why the processors have had great problems in promoting the grey seal product. They have had such a limited quantity that you have not been able to go out and promote it. Those sealers, right now, have to tackle 60,000 animals. If they were given access to the seals, I do not think you would have a problem in harvesting them. I do not think the processors would have a problem processing them, and I do not think you would have a problem in selling it, provided the markets were opened.

**The Chair:** The company that had the experimental licence, I guess that is probably knowledge --

**Mr. Woodford:** I believe so. It was the Northeast Coast Sealers Cooperative in conjunction with Seawater Products, out of Fleur de Lys, Newfoundland.

**The Chair:** It might be an idea to have someone appear before us later with some information.

**Senator Poirier:** As we all know, there are movements and groups that are opposing this in a big way. Specifically, the Senate committee is looking at that right now, and we are getting many emails. Many of the emails are similar, but we are getting many.

One of the things I have seen come up a few times in the emails being sent to state their point of view is that the reduction in the amount of cod and other groundfish has nothing to do with the seals eating it. They are saying it has to do more with overfishing of these products, and that is the reason it has been reduced.

In listening to you a few minutes ago when you spoke about examining a seal that had been harvested, it seems the amount of shrimps, crabs and other fish that you found inside contradicts a little what these people are saying. I would like your comments on that.

**Mr. Pinhorn:** There are places inside of Robert's Arm in central Newfoundland where seals would draw the cod literally up on the water. I have videos at home that were sent to me last winter. A man is up there pushing the fish back into the water. That was last winter.

When John Efford was minister in the department of fisheries and aquaculture, he had divers going into parts of Trinity Bay and different areas of the province where they took video cameras down. There is big steak cod down there, three or four feet long, with their soft tissues removed, which is the liver and

what normally is referred to as the soft tissue, and they are dead on the bottom.

There are all kinds of videos available with herring, mackerel and cod being surrounded by seals, and they are voracious feeders. There is a group that takes the periphery, so many go in feeding, and they just rotate. It is all on video.

For you to tell me that there are 10 million seals out there -- they do not eat chickens or turkeys, and they do not feed on grain.

**Senator Poirier:** Thank you for clarifying that.

**Mr. Woodford:** In addition to that, you mentioned about the foreign overfishing and that fishing in general has been a factor with regard to the depleted cod stocks. No one can argue against that.

Back in the 1970s when we had a population of seals on the northeast coast of 2.2 or 2.5 million seals, and we had an abundant ground fishery, chances are we did overfish back in the 1970s and all throughout the 1980s. No one can deny that fact, but we also witnessed an era where we had a population of seals that grew from 2.2 million, up to 3 million, 4 million and 5 million in the mid-1990s up to 2000, and now up to 2011, we have gone to 10 million. There is no way any reasonable person cannot understand that when you have a groundfish stock that has been decimated, that these predators are not one of the major factors in the rebuilding of that resource. In Newfoundland, we have had a moratorium since 1992 on codfish, other than a small, basically non-existent commercial cod fishery.

When you have populations of seals in that significant a number, then, obviously, it has to be one of the major factors in the rebuilding of those ground fishery stocks. To me, as a fisherman, that is just basic common sense.

**Mr. Pinhorn:** To let you know the importance of sealing in our history, in 1834, it was normal for 15,000 men to go out in 600 wooden boats, and one year they brought in 765,000 seals. That is how important it was in the 1830s.

If you hear our lieutenant governor talk about the importance of sealing in our province, our population for years was 20, 30, 35,000, and the reason it hit the 100 and 200,000 level was we were lighting up lamps in London, Paris and all over the world because of the seal oil. Seal oil was important then, and seals are important now, but the time has come for the federal government to deal with it as a trade issue, up front. It seems to me they are either afraid of it or ashamed of it. I told that to Minister Fast and to Peter Penashue, and I said we brought it as far as we can.

We will have our sealers trained and certified. Winston Churchill said they were the best small boat people in the world. We will make them even better than that. They will be the best gunners and the best butchers for cleaning and doing the meat, and they will all be certified, but we still cannot finish the job until the product can be released in the marketplace.

**Senator Poirier:** You mentioned that Canada had the biggest herd of the seal in the world. What other countries are harvesting seal right now, and what kind of support are they going?

**Mr. Pinhorn:** Seals are harvested in parts of Namibia.

**Mr. Woodford:** Namibia has hunts of somewhere around 70,000 or 80,000 fur seals. The Scandinavian countries all have small hunts of different species of seals. Wherever there is a seal population, there is an activity of slaughtering seals, whether it be commercial or whether it be seal cull. In a lot of these countries, they manage their seal populations on a fisheries management issue, which is something we as Canadians have never ever addressed. It is only now we are starting to address it as being a fisheries issue. We are behind the ball in that aspect of it.

As a sealer, the commercial activity should outplay any cull, and I firmly believe that, but the time has come when, as we are sitting here this evening, you are dealing with seals as a fisheries issue. Sooner or later, and let us all agree to this, there will be a major kill of seals. There has to be. If our markets are destroyed and our markets are not promoted and our markets are not holding, what a waste of such a resource.

**Senator Raine:** Thank you very much for being here. I am from the West Coast. I am not sure if you have any information on this, but you mentioned the rivers up in the Haida Gwaii being decimated by seals. I have noticed myself on the coast that there are a lot more seals than there used to be. I take it this is a problem on the West Coast as well with overpopulation or the growth in the seal population?

**Mr. Pinhorn:** Absolutely. When we had our protest three years ago on Parliament Hill, Chief Roy Jones was here with his full ceremonial attire and everything like that. He fully supported what we were doing, and he joined the sealers association and we maintain contact with him. He says that it is a big problem and it will have to be addressed. The rivers are decimated, salmon and trout. You know their history and culture is based on harvesting the rivers and harvesting the seals. Once you get away from it, it seems to multiply very fast and very quickly. Before we know it, it is staring us right down in our face as a big problem that has to be addressed sooner or later.

**Senator Raine:** One question is burning in my mind. Maybe someone could explain to me why they cannot go and hunt the seals on Sable Island?

**Mr. Pinhorn:** It is a reserve.

**Senator Raine:** What is it reserved for? Who is in charge of that?

**Mr. Pinhorn:** Parks Canada, I suppose.

**Senator Raine:** I would think that in Parks, for instance, they should be looking at an ecosystem-wide management, and it sounds like that is not happening. Maybe that is something we should be looking at.

**Mr. Pinhorn:** As I mentioned earlier, the N70 rule applies to all commercial harvests. Once you get into this N70 regime, there are no limits on it and no cap on it. The threshold level keeps going higher and higher. As it goes up, it cannot come back, because that is the part that will be high. You want to keep the main part of the biomass intact for future generations. As the cap rises, it cannot come down.

**Senator Raine:** There is no balancing?

**Mr. Pinhorn:** No, none whatsoever.

**Senator Raine:** Who sets the threshold in the N70?

**Mr. Woodford:** Back in 2001, we as an industry signed on to this precautionary approach manner with the Department of Fisheries and Oceans. A stock or a resource is harvested at a level above the N70 level, which is a threshold. When you come down to that, you have to reduce your hunting or fishing or whatever. As Mr. Pinhorn stated, when we signed on to this in the harp seals in particular, we had a herd of 5.2 million seals, and at 70 per cent of that, we should never let our harp population go below 3.5 million. Yet we have watched the herd increase and increase and increase, and now, the latest count or latest number out there is between 9 and 10 million seals. Now we are at 7 million seals. This old precautionary approach, this N70 level, has just doubled the number of seals in ten years.

**Senator Raine:** Are you telling me that Canada is setting those limits?

**Mr. Woodford:** Yes.

**Senator Raine:** DFO is setting those limits, even those limits that are eating all the other fish? I am shocked.

**Mr. Woodford:** I forget the name of the management system that they have now, but it is supposedly a sustainable way of keeping a resource.

**Senator Raine:** Silos.

**Mr. Woodford:** It is out of whack.

**Senator Raine:** To actually efficiently hunt the grey seals so that you can sell the meat and make the by-products from them, you need to have access to where they are bearing their pups, which is on specific islands. If you are denied that access, then they will grow and grow and grow and eat everything else in the ocean.

**Mr. Woodford:** The grey seals fall under the same regime with the N70, all seals, so as that population increases, you will never get Department of Fisheries and Oceans to allow to you bring that number below that N70 level. Every year, this increases, that number increases, and the problem just keeps getting bigger and bigger.

**Senator Raine:** I would say that there is an opportunity to change those regulations.

**Mr. Woodford:** We as an association have made it clear for the last two years at our Atlantic board meetings that we want to address this issue and get it put back and capped at the numbers when we signed on to it back in 2000, which in all intents and purposes was reasonable numbers. As a sealer, I would not want to see a hunt go out and decimate a resource that is there for my future and for generations to come. I do want to see it managed properly. Maybe if our commercial hunts were never interfered with and we were killing the required numbers of seals each year, the population may have never grown this large, but the population is there, the numbers are there, and someone will have to do some work to get those numbers back down or to put it in a manner where we can bring them back down.

**Senator Raine:** Why do we issue observation permits?

**Mr. Woodford:** We have been asking that question for decades. Apparently, under the laws of Canada, it states that anyone that wants to go out and witness the seal hunt can apply to DFO. If they pass their little bit of scrutiny, they get a permit issued to them and they go out and harass the sealers.

**Senator Raine:** I do not know any other hunt that allows observation permits.

**Mr. Woodford:** Every year, we bring this to DFO's attention, but we do not get anywhere with it. We have been harassed. For years, we on the northeast coast of Newfoundland hunted seals anywhere in excess of 100 miles offshore, because we had huge ice floes coming down each spring. If you are familiar with the geography of the northeast coast of Newfoundland, the ice comes down, hits on the northeast coast and then continues to back up so the sealer that is up in the Davis Strait, up off northern Labrador, when that ice flows south it flows along the outside edge of this land-locked ice floe. We have normally had to go offshore as the larger vessels to harvest our seals, in some years 150 to 200 miles. In the last couple years, because of the lack of ice and seals being much closer to the shore, we are getting harassed in Newfoundland and on the northeast coast with the IFAW, the HSUS, who go out and get these observer permits from DFO and have access. For years we have witnessed the troubles I guess that the poor fellow sealer in the gulf or up in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick have had to endure with regard to the animal rights crowd and we have never ever been bothered with it except the last couple or three years.

We on the northeast coast are starting to get bothered with it, and I do not know what their purpose is. Their purpose, I mean, we had some videos that in working with this whole three-step process a few years back, we worked with the DFO, there was a group of approximately 25 or 30 of us, we worked with the veterinarians who back in 2005 produced a report promoting the three-step killing method and we worked with them. We got it to a workable manner so that we as sealers could harvest seals and we got no problem with it, yet all of these animal rights crowds can go out and get a helicopter, charter a helicopter, fly it over, take videos of a slaughter, of seals being killed, come back, twist and turn, twist and turn, and to someone who does not know the difference it looks atrocious.

We have had some of these videos examined by our experts, I guess we will say, and there is nothing being done wrong to anyone who understands the process, especially with a seal when you kill a seal it has a swim reflex. It looks like it is still alive but it is dead. The head could be completely removed but it will still move. Chickens do it too. These observation permits allow these people the opportunity to go out and capture these images and manipulate them in a manner that to someone who does not know the difference, I mean, it plays on your emotions, it does it all. This is the effect they have.

Another thing they showed, I do not know why or how we could get about doing it but in Newfoundland, whenever you see a seal on television, they show a whitecoat. We have not harvested whitecoat since 1987, when it was banned. The false propaganda and whatnot that play on people's emotions is what has got us into this state and what has destroyed our market. We need help in every which way possible to get these markets back so that we can have a sustainable harvest of seals and we would not have to sit around tables like this discussing ways to cull a resource that should be utilized in a commercial manner.

**Senator Raine:** It would be so good to see the meat be used, especially when you think of places in the world where people are starving and here you have high quality protein that could be processed and shipped to them. There is something wrong.

Thank you very much for your presentation today.

**Senator Patterson:** We are privileged to have a commercial sealer with us tonight and I would like to just ask a few more questions about the three-step process. You alluded, Mr. Woodford, to the distortions of the animal rights advocates, which are very effective ways of raising money. The tools that are used to commercially hunt seals, can you describe that? Maybe first you could tell me what tools are used.

**Mr. Woodford:** Right now the three approved methods of killing seals in Canada is either by use of an hakapick, which has a wooden handle with a metal furrow on the end of it. The dimensions I do not have offhand, but there are size dimensions and weights involved in the measurements of that, so it is an approved tool. We have a club that has to be made of hardwood, and it has to be in excess of 24-inches long, up to 30- or 32-inches long. I could have brought it with me but I do not have it. As well, we have the rifle. The rifle, you cannot use any gun. The gun has to have muzzle energy of 1200-foot pounds and a speed of 1,800 feet per second. It is not every gun you can use.

These are three approved tools that we have as sealers that we can use for dispatching seals. The hakapick, the club and the rifle, provided they are within the standards set out by the rules, and in Newfoundland 95 per cent of seal are harvested with a rifle.

**Senator Patterson:** I think you have answered this question already with reference to Senator Raine's question, but I have been deluged with emails too from persons who are, I think, greatly misinformed about sealing. They talk about seals being decapitated. They talk about seals being skinned alive. Are those practices that you have ever seen in your experience as a commercial seal harvester?

**Mr. Woodford:** Time and time again I have seen seals shot and heads completely removed from the seal if that bullet hits that seal in the right manner. There is a restriction with regard to the gun calibre in the minimum part of it but there is no size. You can use a really high calibre gun if you want to. The higher the calibre gun you use the more destruction you will do to the head of the seal. I have witnessed it many times that the head has been completely severed off.

With regard to seals being skinned alive, I cannot honestly say that I have witnessed seals being skinned alive. I cannot honestly say that I have not done that, knowing the fact that there have been times that seal is irreversibly unconscious, no movement to my eye in that seal. Years ago we had the blink reflection whereas if you touched the cornea of the seal and even the veterinarians said you had to be a real qualified veterinarian to see any movement there that would justify that there was some life left in that seal.

As with regard to going out and taking a seal that is visually moving about, life still into it and actually skinning it, it may have been done. I have never done it and I have never witnessed it, for the sole fact that when we sell seal products, namely the furs, our price paid to us is generated from the quality of that fur. One of the main things in the pelting process is that first cut through that seal. The straighter it is, the more equal with regard to the alignment on each side of the flippers is crucial, so if you had a live seal there that was flustering around – and believe me, the knives we use are not like that pencil, they are sharp – one cut through three or four inches of blubber. The actual part of sealers going out and pelting live seals, it is something that was always blown out of proportion. It may have been done.

No matter what you do, you do not go out and harvest 300,000 and 400,000 animals and everything

would be perfect. If someone is there at the right time to take that picture of just when that seal actually moves, maybe it is a swim reflex. Someone who does not know the difference will say he is skinning that seal alive, which we have witnessed before with regard to some of the videos.

The purpose of the three-step process is to eliminate that. You first strike the seal; stun the seal by your hakapik, club or the rifle. You watch that seal for any directed movement – directed movement being any movement of the head with regard to raising of the head or any movement regarding the front flippers where the seal wants to escape. If we witness any directed movement, we must shoot that animal again, until there is no directed movement. When we see no directed movement, we check that skull. If that skull is not palpated, both sides of the cranium crushed, we must strike that seal with the hakapik or the club to crush that. When that skull and cranium is crushed, that animal is irreversibly unconscious, never to feel pain again. Now, comes the bleeding. We bleed that seal. Once that seal is bled out, we have a time limit of one minute that we must wait before we continue on pelting it. Once that seal is completely bled out, then that seal is completely dead. We continue on with our practices of years ago. Maybe there was a time, like I said maybe in the rush in things, that everything may not have been done perfectly. Believe you me, today, every seal is killed under that three-step process in the most humane way possible.

I was party to the committee that never helped with the three step process but we worked with it to put it in a manner where I, as a sealer, could actually seal with it. I have to admit that years ago we hunted seals with a rush mentality. We were driven by the number of vessels and the short seasons. We wanted to get seals. I could send off two of my smaller auxilliary boats to hunt seals. They came back with 25 to 50 seals on the boats. This was before the three-step process came onstream. Anyone familiar with the hunting knows that there are times you could shoot an animal and stun it, and it might not move. You might think it is completely dead so you put it on your vessel and pile another 25 or 30 of them on the vessel. When you get back to the larger boat, you winch them aboard. I have looked back from the wheelhouse and have seen a seal blow bubbles through his nostrils. I admit I have seen it once or twice in the 25 years I have been sealing. I said in Montreal when we signed off on it the last time that is the practice I would never ever witness again. Believe you me, the guys working the deck of my vessel killed that seal right there and then. If there was one on board a vessel, and it did not happen intentionally, it was taken care of right away. With the three-step process, you will never see that again.

With regard to this whole issue of dealing with international countries with seals, and especially Europe, I was party to a delegation that went over a few years back. I knew the difference but I had a belief that they were concerned about animal welfare. I wanted to work with them and take any experience they had with regard to animal slaughters so we could come out with the best possible hunt we could have. Yet, for some unknown reason, the ban was put in place. It was all about emotion. They could care less about the welfare of the animal. We Canadians have one of most humane hunts compared to anything in this world with regard to our seal harvest.

I took a veterinarian on board my vessel three years ago. He told me he wanted to do some research. I said to come aboard; I will seal as I always seal and you report it the way you want it reported. When we finished, he said he had no problem with the seal hunt. He said it was comparable to anything he had ever witnessed.

**Mr. Pinhorn:** He compared it to the abattoirs.

**Mr. Woodford:** No abattoir is 100 per cent efficient. There needs to be a lot of work done promoting

this industry, some of which is scientific work similar to the work done on my vessel a few years ago. That was voluntary with no government help or what not.

Before it slips my mind, someone asked earlier whether anything else could be done with regard to addressing the grey seal issue. Back two years ago, DFO came out with their plan of either a cull or birth control methods for seals. DFO was also given a third option from the Fur Institute of Canada [\[mj18\]](#) — where I sit as a board member. Maybe some of you are familiar with the proposal. The Fur Institute of Canada, which is a round table association of all industry participants -- animal welfare experts, government officials with the environment, wildlife directors, processors, sealers, hunters and trappers. We put forward a proposal to DFO back in 2010, which was never acknowledged. That proposal meant taking industry and participants and using the expertise of all those involved to develop a plan to address the grey seal issue. There was no response.

Maybe this committee should consider meeting with the Fur Institute of Canada, whose office is based in Ottawa.

**The Chair:** They are on our list.

**Mr. Woodford:** He will bring you more up to speed on exactly what was involved in that proposal.

**The Chair:** Perhaps you could provide the committee with the proposal.

**Mr. Pinhorn:** I have it here.

**Mr. Woodford:** We are not in a position to release it. The FIC will release it. You will see the proposal.

**The Chair:** It will be nice to have it.

**Mr. Woodford:** The proposal entertained using industry players, sealers, processors, science and animal welfare experts to sit down together and develop a plan. The expertise is within that group from the Fur Institute of Canada to put that plan to work. If the plan did not work, it meant that there were stumbling blocks somewhere outside of the expertise within that group, such as areas where you can and cannot hunt. We should be able to identify within that proposal why we have had such a problem with addressing the grey seal issue in Atlantic Canada. As I said earlier, there was no response from DFO. They were given the proposal twice in 2010.

**The Chair:** You received no response both times.

**Mr. Woodford:** No response. I will not elaborate. I will leave that to the Fur Institute of Canada.

**The Chair:** Two senators have put their names forward to ask more questions, and we are two minutes away from shutdown. My experience is that neither of them can get a question out in a minute. We will hold off for another time because we are down to this. I am sorry; I do not trust either one of you to be a minute long. We said seven o'clock. It has been a great discussion; and everyone has had a chance to ask a question. Certainly, I look forward to receiving some more information from you. Our study will be ongoing for the next several months. We have plans to travel to Atlantic Canada and Quebec and hopefully gain some more interest and information. We reserve the right to have you back if need be. As

we progress, if there is anything you think we should be aware of, we ask that you feel free to pass it on to us through the clerk of the committee. We appreciate your presence here this evening.

**Mr. Pinhorn:** On behalf of all the sealers in Newfoundland and Labrador, we appreciate the opportunity. It is the first time ever that such a situation as this has developed where we could explain to you what we are doing and how we want to do it. We are having our annual meeting in Deer Lake in December. We will tell our board and sealers that we made a presentation and discussed the issue with you. We appreciate it very much.

**Mr. Woodford:** I thank you all and apologize for referring more to the harp seal over the last two hours. My expertise as a sealer is with the harp seal. In saying that, there is no reason why we cannot use that expertise when dealing with the grey seal issue.

**The Chair:** We understood that; and that is why we invited you. Thank you for your presence.

(The committee adjourned.)

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[mj1] See <http://www.thetelegram.com/News/Local/2011-02-24/article-2275891/Northeast-Coast-Sealers-Cooperative-of-Newfoundland-eyes-markets-in-Asian-countries-for-grey-seal-meat/1>

[mj2] See <http://www.ffaw.nf.ca/default.aspx>

[mj3] See <http://www.releases.gov.nl.ca/releases/1996/fishaq/1119n07.htm>

[mj4] See <http://www.sealsandsealing.net/faq.php>

[EC5] <http://www.ffaw.nf.ca/default.aspx>

[EC6] <http://www.pfhcb.com/>

[EC7] [http://www.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/fm-gp/seal-phoque/faq-eng.htm#faq\\_7](http://www.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/fm-gp/seal-phoque/faq-eng.htm#faq_7)

[EC8] [http://www.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/fm-gp/seal-phoque/faq-eng.htm#faq\\_7](http://www.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/fm-gp/seal-phoque/faq-eng.htm#faq_7)

[EC9] <http://www.fishaq.gov.nl.ca/>

[k10] <http://www.assembly.nl.ca/legislation/sr/regulations/rc100008.htm>

[k11] <http://www.mi.mun.ca/>

[v12] please verify TACs NOT tacks

[v13] spelling verified.

[np14] <http://ashleymacisaac.com/home>

[np15] <http://www2.hbc.com/en/index.shtml>

[np16] <http://www.fur.ca/>

[np17] <http://animals.nationalgeographic.com/animals/mammals/ringed-seal/>

[mj18] See <http://www.fur.ca/>