



**CONSEIL CANADIEN DE LA FOURRURE**  
**FUR COUNCIL OF CANADA**

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**EUROPEAN HYPOCRISY ...**

Dear Editors,

To mark the tenth anniversary of their accession to NATO, in an article in a Canadian national paper, the ambassadors for Hungary, Poland and the Czech Republic wrote glowing praise for Canada's help in freeing Europeans from tyranny during World War II and the Cold War ("Ten years in NATO -- thanks Canada", Globe & Mail, Mar. 6)

Canada, the ambassadors reminded us, steered NATO to enhance western unity and a love of democracy, much like the "velvet revolutions" in their own countries sought to "empower the powerless" and "live the truth", in the words of Czech playwright and president Vaclav Havel.

Unfortunately, while the ambassadors wrote these kind words, their governments (under the EU presidency of the Czech Republic) are pushing for a complete ban on seal products from Canada, which will cause needless hardship for thousands of "powerless" Canadians in coastal regions.

"Living the truth"? European fishing fleets scoop up endangered fish stocks just outside Canadian waters, but seek to ban the import of products from seals that have tripled their numbers over the past twenty years. Meanwhile, Mediterranean bluefin tuna stocks are at 5% of historic levels and face imminent extinction, as does the Mediterranean Monk seal -- but no action is taken because of the complexities of European politics. A recent study by the World Conservation Union (IUCN) found that 14% of terrestrial mammals and 22% of marine mammals could soon disappear from EU territory.

"Living the truth"? The European Union's own lawyers say the proposed ban on seal products is completely indefensible under European and international trade law. But seals are an easy bone to throw to the "green" or "left" wings of fragile European coalition governments; a convenient "motherhood" issue for members of the European Parliament preparing for re-election -- especially because Canadian sealers do not vote in European elections.

Europeans do not oppose killing animals: most Europeans eat meat every day. Many EU countries have strong hunting cultures and manage commercial deer and wild-boar hunts. Seals that interfere with fishing gear in EU waters are fair game; the EU even subsidizes a small-scale seal hunts in Finland and Sweden for economic development.

If the European Union is truly concerned about animal welfare, not just self-serving politics, they should join Canadian efforts to develop international science-based seal-hunting standards. We hope we can count on the ambassadors to speak this truth to their own governments.

Sincerely,

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