

Northern News Services **ONLINE**

- Subscribers
- News
- Free Features
- Entertainment
- Business
- Special Pages
- Visitor Guides
- CLASSIFIEDS
- ADVERTISING
- SPECIAL ISSUES
- SPORTS
- OBITUARIES
- NORTHERN JOBS



CHATEAU NOVA
HOTEL & SUITES

Shop locally
Save 15% off your stay

Serious About Smiles
Fly Inter-Community Stand-By at reduced fares in the Kitikmeot, Qikiqtani and Beaufort Delta Regions.



CANADIAN NORTH
seriously northern




NUNAVUT EASTERN
ARCTIC SHIPPING INC.



PLACE YOUR
SEALIFT ORDER



Home page



Text size



E-mail this page

Norway supports Nunavut's seal fight

Ambassador couldn't find seal meat in Iqaluit to take back to Ottawa

Casey Lessard

Northern News Services

Published Friday, March 16, 2012

IQALUIT

In the fight to overturn the European Union seal products ban, Nunavut has a friend in its country's ambassador to Canada. Else Berit Eikeland, said during a visit to Iqaluit Feb

"I want to really support the Inuit seal hunt here in Nunavut," Eikeland said. "We really appreciate and support you with your connection to the Inuit culture, the lifestyle, and the seal hunt."

Norway is the only other country with an active seal hunt, she told the audience at the Unikkaarvik Visitor Centre, noting she thinks she is the "only ambassador in Ottawa who really likes to eat seal meat, and who has grown up eating whale meat and seal meat."

She said Norway is working with Canada to challenge the EU ban at the World Trade Organization, "to bring the EU ban on exports of articles made of sealskin to the WTO. We're working very closely with Ottawa on those issues."

Nunavut needs friends in its export ban fight. For now, the government is waiting to see how Greenland fares in "working through the logistics of the exemption" for Inuit-hunted products. That exemption requires Inuit hunters to use traditional tools to capture the

The effects of the ban are dramatic. In the Report on the Impacts of the European Ur



Ambassador Else Berit Eikeland told crowd that Norway is on Nunavut's side in the European Union ban on seal products. She is the only other country that allows commercial seal hunting. - Casey Lessard/NNSL photo

Classifieds
ONLINE

http://classifieds.nnsi.com

Go there now →

Newspaper portals

Subscriber pages

- News Desk
- Columnists
- Editorial
- Readers comment
- Tenders



Search NNSL



presented in the legislature by Environment Minister James Arreak Feb. 27, the total seal skins fell to 1,000 in 2008 from 8,000 after the ban was introduced, and the value of skins was less than \$100,000 from \$500,000. Those numbers bounced back to 4,000 pelts for 2009 to 2011, and the total annual value rebounded to about \$250,000 from 2009 to 2011.

"An annual production of fewer than 8,000 pelts is insufficient to generate market interest on an international scale," the report's authors write, noting the ring seal hunt piggybacked on the Maritime harp seal hunt for sales.

Noting that other European countries don't understand the seal hunt because it is for sustenance and not for pleasure, Eikeland said Norway has struggled in the face of the ban.

"We used to export our skins to the Baltic states, but now that's impossible," she said. "It's very problematic for the sealskin industry in Norway. I was very much surprised by the Russian market hearing about China following. There are probably influential groups behind this."

At the end of the day, Nunavummiut will continue to hunt regardless of the ban, the report said.

"Traditional seal hunting is central to the cultural fabric of Inuit communities and will continue regardless of the decreased demand for sealskin products in Europe."

The government will continue to buy ringed sealskins from Nunavut hunters for \$50, more than double the market price of \$20, Arreak said, because it helps increase food security in hunters' communities.

"The replacement value of domestic seal meat consumption in Nunavut is estimated at \$5.5 million per year."

That's because all parts of the seal are eaten by humans or dogs, and seals make up 10% of the animal weight harvested in the Qikiqtani region, according to a 1986 study cited in the report.

"I think we need to start eating much more seal meat and stop importing meat from the States," Eikeland said. "I had hoped to buy seal meat here to bring back to Ottawa to my colleagues in Ottawa, but I understand it's difficult to get seal meat here now."

In the end, she believes it's time the EU and other countries mind their own business.

"We have this principle of sustainable hunt," she said. "As long as the seal hunt is based on research, we should not have any other countries tell us what to do."



We welcome your opinions. [Click here to e-mail a letter to the editor.](#)