

# Sarah McLachlan renews opposition to seal hunt

BY NATALIE STECHYSON, POSTMEDIA NEWS APRIL 10, 2012



Protesters picket against the East Coast seal hunt in Halifax in March.

**Photograph by:** Paul Darrow, Reuters

Songstress Sarah McLachlan has reiterated her opposition to the East Coast seal hunt in a letter to Prime Minister Stephen Harper.

The Grammy and Juno award-winning singer and songwriter, who hails from Halifax, N.S., wrote Harper on behalf of People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, asking him to stop defending the industry.

There's no commerce left in seal furs, McLachlan said in the letter, dated April 5 and posted to PETA's website.

"Now that Russia, which had been buying 95 per cent of Canadian seal fur, has joined the European Union and the U.S. in banning seal-fur imports, this business is about as lucrative as an eight-track tape factory," McLachlan said.

"It seems that the only reason why the federal government defends the dying seal-slaughter industry is to control the parliamentary swing seats in Newfoundland and Labrador."

The Department of Fisheries and Oceans has set April 12 as the tentative opening day for Newfoundland and Labrador's spring seal hunt.

The annual hunt has attracted significant international attention, with animal rights activists lobbying for

years to end the hunt.

More recently, the financial future of the seal hunt was put in question after the EU and Russia banned the import of Canadian seal products. The federal government is fighting the EU ban at the World Trade Organization.

McLachlan has publicly opposed the seal hunt for years.

In 2009 she wore PETA's "Hug Me, Don't Club Me" T-shirt during Canada Day celebrations on Parliament Hill, and told CTV News the sealing industry was "perverse and sick."

In her letter, McLachlan asked Harper to "lead the way" and help Canada's sealers move away from the industry. She argued that the oil boom has left Atlantic Canada with a reliable source of money.

"The sealers — like tobacco farmers and asbestos miners — need leaders to devise a practical energy strategy for them," McLachlan said, "not waste millions more in hopeless World Trade Organization challenges or paying to stockpile pelts when buyers already have seal pelts going back several years."

Sealers argue that much of the information animal rights groups put out is misleading and that seals are killed humanely. The hunt is crucial to rural sealers who can earn up to half of their annual income in one sealing season, according to the Canadian Sealers Association.

Last year, the federal government permitted hunters to catch up to 400,000 harp seals, 60,000 grey seals, and 8,200 hooded seals.

In last year's hunt, one of the worst on record, commercial sealers killed about 38,000 harp seals. That's less than 10 per cent of the total allowable catch.

[nstechyson@postmedia.com](mailto:nstechyson@postmedia.com)

[Twitter.com/natstechyson](https://twitter.com/natstechyson)

© Copyright (c) Postmedia News