


No seal meat to be had on Northern Peninsula



Published on April 11, 2012

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The seal hunt opened in the Gulf of St. Lawrence Tuesday, but some residents on the Northern Peninsula are complaining.

Abel Taylor, living in Raleigh on the Northern Peninsula, said that if the area wasn't so "maggoty" with fisheries enforcement poached a couple of seals earlier this year.

"You can't go and poach one because, I mean, it's crawling with (enforcement officers)," Taylor said.

"If they spent the money that they're spending on guarding the seals and put it into search and rescue, maybe we'd be better off."

Taylor has a commercial sealing licence, but at 70 years old he's retired and doesn't want to go out to the ice. Earlier this year the seals and the ice pans were right in on shore, and he said he could have just gone down to the beach and taken

"The younger people growing up today don't want it. They're too far into hamburgers and chicken and hot dogs and so on. People, I mean, we all depended on it for years and years and years, and we still like to have access to do it until we

New Democrat MHA Christopher Mitchelmore said he's been hearing from quite a few people who say they've been denied licences.

Commercial licences cost about \$5 and allow a hunter to take an unlimited number of seals. Mitchelmore said new commercial

The personal use licences cost the same amount, but a licence holder can only take six seals.

Mitchelmore said a lot of people don't know that they can get a personal use licence, though.

"A significant number of people don't realize they can get up to six seals under a personal licence," he said. "It's not the department of fisheries and oceans at a level that is acceptable."

Mitchelmore said that the enforcement and regulation is just too strict, and it's keeping from people from getting seals.

"They wanted to have access to seal — no more than three seals — so they can have a fresh meal of seal and to a certain extent. We do want to make sure that the resource is managed and it's very sustainable, but we shouldn't have restrictions that it's impacting seniors. It's impacting people and their way of life."

Ron Burton, area chief of conservation and Protection for DFO, said that all you need for a personal use licence is a DFO information session.

“These sessions include training in the three-step process for ensuring humane harvest. In 2012 Fisheries and Oceans use seal information sessions throughout the province,” he said. “Any time we do these kinds of educational session public notices, different media, sometimes in the paper, sometimes it’s on the Fisheries Broadcast or a combination

As far as enforcement, Burton said that shouldn’t matter.

“It’s illegal. If the season’s not open, it’s not open. Whether there’s an officer in the area or not, people should not be they go sealing or not.”

The folks on the Northern Peninsula have an unlikely ally on the issue, in Sheryl Fink, director of the seal program for Welfare. Fink said the IFAW is opposed to the intergenerational trade of seal products, but if the meat or fur is being used

“If the meat is being consumed locally or if the fur is being worn locally, that’s really more of a subsistence hunt,” she animals are being hunted and their parts are being put into the international wildlife trade because historically, we see substantiality and conservation.”

Fink and a group from IFAW are in the province to observe and document the seal hunt, looking for fisheries violation

Taylor, for his part, says he won’t be going out this year. When the seals are in close to the shore, he could basically but he isn’t going to go out to the front in a boat.

And while the sealers who do go out will bring back flippers, Taylor said it’s just not the same.

“I mean, you go into a restaurant and yes, they’ll say ‘fresh cod.’ But, I mean, where do they get the fresh cod? It’s fine know what fresh is,” he said. “The same way with seal. I mean, you go out and go to some of those commercial boat fishery, the flippers or whatever they bring in are all thrown in a vat or a tub of some kind on top of each other, not ice that’s not like fresh meat.”

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