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Commercial Seal Hunt

Hon. Céline Hervieux-Payette:

Honourable senators, opponents to the seal hunt and to any human involvement with animals are far from backing down, after the declaration of a European boycott of seal products. On the contrary, their victory has encouraged them.

Yesterday, animal rights activists protested loudly in the other place, interrupting Question Period.

Others try to win us over by inviting us to events to supposedly protect animals.

We must take action to respond to this multimillion-dollar lobby, which takes many shapes, and uses both soft and hard approaches, and both friendly and violent tactics.

Our seal industry is being viciously attacked. Seal hunters will lose income, and have already lost income because of the pressures from this lobby.

The Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, the Honourable Gail Shea, was kind enough to reply to a letter I sent to her during the summer. I asked that the seal hunters receive financial compensation for the losses incurred by this unfair European boycott, until the WTO renders a decision.

Minister Shea responded that the Conservative government would not offer any financial compensation, but that the government would defend the quality of Canada's killing methods to the WTO, and would try to have the boycott lifted.

I am pleased that Minister Shea and Minister Stockwell Day are contesting the European decision before the WTO. I urge them to take the appropriate action as quickly as possible.

But this decision is far from being enough. It will leave our hunters in disarray while they wait out some obscure procedures without any guarantee of a positive outcome.

I am therefore formally asking Minister Shea to reconsider her position and to ask the Prime Minister to provide annual financial assistance, while the proceedings are before the WTO. After all, seal hunters are worth just as much as automobile workers.

I am calling on the government to do everything it can to stop the unbearable pressure from this vegetarian lobby on Canadian soil.