



Sen. Fabian Manning statements while speaking in the Senate about Bill S-210

The incorrect information provided by Senator Manning and his colleagues from Newfoundland includes:

“The commercial hunting of seals is critical to the livelihood of more than 6,000 sealers in rural communities across Atlantic Canada, Quebec and the North. Sealing can provide as much as 35 per cent of a sealer's annual income.” - Senator Manning

This is false and misleading. In reality, only a few hundred sealers have participated in the seal hunt in recent years¹ and, on average, sealers earn only a very small fraction of their annual incomes from killing seals.² The landed value of the seal hunt in Newfoundland in each of the past four years has been in the region of \$1 million,³ which is less than one half of one percent of the GDP in Newfoundland and less than 2% of the value of the fishery.

“The current estimated population of harp seals in Canada is about 9 million to 10 million. It has more than quadrupled since the early 1970s.” – Senator Manning

This is false. According to the Canadian government, the harp seal population measured approximately 11 million in the 1800s,⁴ while the most recent government estimate puts the harp seal population at 7.7 million animals⁵ with the population declining.

Overhunting in the 1950s and 1960s, at similar levels witnessed in recent years, quickly reduced the harp seal population to a dangerous low. By the early 1970s, the harp seal population had crashed to approximately 2 million and senior Canadian government scientists warned that the population could be lost altogether.⁶ For Senator Manning to suggest that the harp seal population recorded in the early 1970s is optimum is unacceptable.

“Through the efforts of government, seal populations are managed using a precautionary framework...” – Senator Manning

¹ Fisheries and Oceans Canada. Access to Information Request AO-2012-00039 / hct. September 28, 2012.

² Livernois, J. 2010. “The economics of ending Canada’s commercial seal hunt”, Marine Policy, Elsevier, vol. 34(1), pages 42-53, January.

³ <http://www.nfl.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/e0012089>

⁴ http://www.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/csas-sccs/Publications/SAR-AS/2011/2011_070-eng.html

⁵ http://www.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/csas-sccs/Publications/SAR-AS/2011/2011_070-eng.html

⁶ Lavigne, D., and K. Kovacs. 1988. Harps and hoods: Ice-breeding seals of the Northwest Atlantic. Waterloo, Canada: University of Waterloo Press.

This is false. The Canadian government does not employ a precautionary approach in setting seal quotas, and independent scientists have criticized the Canadian government seal management plans as reckless and irresponsible.⁷

“...quotas are set annually based on peer-reviewed scientific advice...” – Senator Manning

This is misleading. The science advice provided to the Ministry is not peer reviewed in the same fashion a scientific article would be in an academic journal. Rather, these papers are reviewed by selected “experts” – which can include industry representatives – at meetings set by the DFO.

“Seal quotas are determined on the basis of an ecosystem approach and considerations such as ice conditions, climate and the abundance of seal herds.” – Senator Manning

This is false. In 2012, the Fisheries Minister ignored the advice of his own scientists and allocated a quota of 400,000 harp seals. DFO scientists had recommended the quota be reduced by 100,000 in light of the impacts of climate change on the ice dependent harp seals.⁸

“...the seal fishery, as it is called, off the northeast coast of Newfoundland and the east coast of Labrador is a highly regulated business in which all seals that are killed are actually killed with high-powered rifles and not with bats, as some people would have us believe.” – Senator Baker

This is false. In reality, the Marine Mammal Regulations permit the use of wooden bats, hakapiks, rifles and shotguns to stun seals in Canada and killing is performed by severing arteries with knives.⁹ Video evidence proves sealers continue to routinely club and shoot seals off Newfoundland’s coasts (LINK TO OUR VIDEO FOOTAGE). Veterinarians conclude that the killing in these areas is not adequately monitored¹⁰ and that the killing is not humane.¹¹

“Recently, the European Parliament approved a seal cull to protect its fish stocks.” – Senator Chuck Furey

This is false. The European Parliament is a trading bloc, not a federal government, and has no authority, whatsoever, to approve a seal cull of any kind. In a similar fashion, NAFTA could never approve a cull of seals in Canada.

The EU regulates trade, and in that capacity has prohibited commercial trade in seal products. So while a few individual European countries have limited culls of seals—numbering in the few hundreds or less annually—the products of those culls cannot be commercially traded. This means commercial profit cannot be a motive for culling seals in these countries.

⁷ Harris, S., Soulsbury, C. and G. Iossa. 2007. Harp seals in the northwestern Atlantic: modeling populations with uncertainty. School of Biological Science, University of Bristol, UK. Available at <http://www.hsicanada.ca/pdfs/Harp-seal-populations-in-the-northwestern-Atlantic.pdf>. See also: Johnston, P. and Santillo, D. 2005. The Canadian seal hunt: no management and no plan. Available at http://www.greenpeace.org/international/PageFiles/25714/GP_Seals_def_lowres.pdf.

⁸ <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/prince-edward-island/story/2011/12/26/pei-harp-seal-quota-548.html>

⁹ <http://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/regulations/SOR-93-56/page-8.html#docCont>

¹⁰ Smith, 2005. http://www.ccwhc.ca/publications/TVWG_Report_new_website.pdf. See also Simpson, 1966, 1967a; Jordon, 1978, 1985; Malouf, 1986; Smith, 2005; EFSA, 2007; Butterworth *et al.*, 2007; Butterworth and Richardson, 2012.

¹¹ Butterworth and Richardson, 2012. http://www.hsi.org/assets/pdfs/Marine_policy_animal_welfare_seal_hunt_2012.pdf

Unfortunately no such restriction exists in Canada, and unethical politicians are calling for a massive cull of grey seals in absence of any scientific justification, in an underhanded attempt to force Canadians to fund commercial sealers to carry out the killing and marketing groups to promote the products.