

Canada Should Stop Marketing Seal Products to China:
An Open Letter from Chinese Environmental Groups to the Senate of Canada

Dear Honorable Senators:

We are more than 50 Chinese environmental and animal protection groups representing tens of millions of supporters across the Chinese mainland and we write to seek your help.

Since 2010, efforts by the Canadian government and sealing industry to expand seal product trade with China have met with nationwide opposition in our country. We appeal to you today to respect Chinese values and stop exporting seal products to our country.

Please be assured that China will never become a dumping ground for products of cruelty that the rest of the world has so overtly rejected. Like their Canadian, American, European and Russian counterparts, Chinese consumers care about animal welfare and food safety, and we strongly oppose trade in products from commercial seal slaughters.

Statements by Canadian sealing industry representatives that seal meat should be in demand in China because “Chinese people eat anything” are offensive to say the least and highly misleading. In China, seals are a protected species, and seal meat is not a part of our tradition. Despite the massive subsidies invested by unwilling Canadian taxpayers for more than three decades to promote seal fur and meat in China, significant markets have never emerged. Knowing full well the public opposition to commercial sealing, the animal welfare problems associated with seal slaughters and the food safety issues surrounding seal meat, the Chinese authorities have, in fact, made no commitment to importing this product. Chinese consumers are increasingly concerned with food safety, and both the Chinese government and public are aware of the reported high levels of PCBs in seals.

For the most part, in the last 63 years, Canada had an impeccable image in the minds of the Chinese people. Dr. Norman Bethune, a Canadian surgeon who sacrificed his life for China’s war against foreign invasion, built in the hearts of the Chinese people a monument of love and compassion. Mark Roswell has won the hearts of the Chinese audience with his genius mastery of the Chinese language and is arguably the most popular Canadian in our country.

Unfortunately, the ongoing efforts by your government to promote seal products to an unwilling public have seriously damaged this reputation. This, in turn, has caused confusion among the Chinese public. Many of our supporters are asking: how can Dr. Bethune’s homeland sanction cruel, outdated and needless slaughter of defenseless seal pups?

Canada is one of the wealthiest nations in the world, and with that economic status comes the expectation that cruel and outdated practices that cause severe suffering to animals are ended rather than promoted. Your nation could have ended commercial sealing decades ago through a sealing industry buyout, as was suggested by economists in the 1980s. Instead, the Canadian government subsidizes the clubbing and shooting of three-week old seal pups to produce fur coats at taxpayers’ expense – a direction that has confounded the world.

The Canadian government's promotion of seal products in China has elicited a strong reaction from Chinese citizens. In November 2010, a press conference was held in Beijing calling on the public and the government to resist seal product trade. Over the next week, tens of thousands of citizens expressed shock and disbelief about Canada's cruel seal slaughter. In March 2011, Chinese animal protection groups from across the country gathered in Beijing and launched a nation-wide campaign against seal product trade. At a conference to promote "green trade and animal welfare," held in the same month, the official Chinese Chamber of International Commerce called on the business community to stay away from products that are ecologically and ethically problematic. The Chamber followed up with a policy recommendation to the highest Chinese authorities on the risks of seal product trade. The Chinese campaign against seal trade swept across 14 mainland Chinese cities, reaching millions of Chinese consumers. Our campaigns against the trade are escalating and will continue until there are no more seal products on the market in China.

The international trade in seal products contributes almost nothing to Canada's economy. Yet it causes serious damage to Canada's global reputation and your relations with some of your most important trading partners, including China.

Like the rest of the world, China is far from perfect. Yet, compassion for animals is a strong part of our tradition, and it is this cultural perspective that underpins the widespread Chinese opposition to seal product trade.

It is our hope that Canada, as a Western democracy, can support China's political, social and moral progress by dropping the idea of expanding the Chinese market for seal products. We further urge you, respected Senators, to stand on the right side of history by supporting Senator Mac Harb's bill to end commercial sealing in Canada.

Yours respectfully,

Undersigned here:

Beijing Capital Animal Welfare Association
Chinese Journalist Salon for Animal Protection (Beijing)
Panjin Chinese Seals Conservation and Volunteer Society (Liaoning)
Chinese Youth Animal Protection League (Shandong)
Beijing Green Cross Wildlife Conservation Group (Beijing)
Save the Earth Network (Beijing)
Compassion First Guangdong Volunteer Group (Guangdong)
Zhejiang Animal Protection Association (Zhejiang)
Suzhou Animal Protection Association (Jiangsu)
Chengdu Home of Love Animal Protection Center (Sichuan)
Chongqing Animal Protection Association (Chongqing)
Guangyuan Animal Protection Association (Sichuan)
Haerbin Animal Protection Association (Heilongjiang)
Dalian Compassion to All Creatures Society (Liaoning)

Dalian Pet 100 (Liaoning)
Xiamen Animal Protection Education Experts Committee (Fujian)
Beijing Bingtang Animal Protection Station (Beijing)
The Green Beagle Environmental Institute (Beijing)
Animals 110 Network (Hainan Province)
Jinan Yellow River Rescue Center (Shandong)
Ta Foundation (Beijing)
Wild China (Beijing)
Jinan Zhonggong “Love from the Heart” Rescue Group (Shandong)
Shandong Taishan Animal Protection Center (Shandong)
Beijing ARB Animal Protection Group (Beijing)
Xi’an Companion Animal Protection Center
Nanjing Ping An A Fu Animal Protection Center
Nanchang Animal Protection Center
Beijing Ruijia Animal Protection Group
Dalian Love for All Creatures Rescue Group
Yang’s Animal Rescue Team (Beijing)
Guangzhou Pet Lovers Group (Guangdong)
Shenzhen Dog Protection Association (Guangdong)
Tianjin Stray Animal Rescue Team (Tianjin)
Xixi Forest Guangzhou Cat Protection Association
Yia-an Animal Protection Center (Sichuan)
Zhangzhou Animal Care and Rescue Center (Fujian)
“On the same journey” Animal Help Center (Beijing)
Anyang Wildlife Rescue Association (Henan)
Sunshine Animal Protection Association of East China Normal University (Shanghai)
Wuxi Animal Protection Association (Jiangsu)
Beijing Black Stone Rescue Center (Beijing)
Tongji University Animal Protection Society (Shanghai)
Guangdong Zhongshan Animal Protection Center
Kunming 90 Animal Protection Team
Inner Mongolia Hohhot Angels Team
Zhoushan Animal Protection Center
Angels (Beijing Volunteer Group
Home for All (Tianjin)
Shanxi Animal Protection Center
Shijiazhuang Miai Rescue Center
Foshan Home of Love Rescue Group
Anyang Home for All Wildlife Protection Association
Shunde Animal Protection Group
Wuhan Animal Rescue Center

Contact: Dan Zhang, telephone: 86-10-13801356725; email: zhangdan5501@163.com