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Chair

Mr. Fabian Manning

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•(0815)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Fabian Manning (Avalon, CPC)): I want to call the meeting to order and welcome everybody here.

Welcome, Ambassador Sullivan. We realize, Ambassador, that this is very short notice and we certainly appreciate the opportunity of having you come before the committee this morning.

At our meeting on Tuesday we were discussing some future business and somebody suggested that we get you here to have a chat about your travels and experiences in dealing with the seal hunt, seal harvest. I informed them that I knew you were in town, so we managed to arrange a meeting.

I want to say sorry to all the committee members, and especially to Mr. Simms for making him have to get up so early in the morning, but time is of the essence and Mr. Sullivan couldn't make it at any other time other than 8:15. We know that it bothers you, but that's all we can do about it.

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windor, Lib.): I'm not a morning person.

The Chair: Mr. Sullivan, we throw the floor open to you to make some opening remarks.

Mr. Sullivan has to leave around five to nine, so what I had hoped to do was to give everybody an opportunity, at least each party an opportunity, to ask a question if we can.

Ambassador Sullivan, the floor is yours.

Mr. Loyola Sullivan (Ambassador for Fisheries Conservation, Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade): Thank you, Mr. Chair and members of Parliament, for the opportunity to give you an update on what's happening on the seal file.

Last March my first involvement with it was when I was asked to take a lead on a delegation going to Europe, a delegation of sealers from different parts of the country, the Premier of Nunavut, and a minister from Newfoundland and Labrador—I think there was an election in Quebec at the time and it wasn't as practical for them to attend—and we had hosts from industry. We hit five European countries over a two-week period, in London, Brussels, The Hague, Vienna, and Berlin.

We had a series of meetings with a variety of parliamentarians, media, and senior officials in government, putting forth the Canadian viewpoints and trying to correct the inaccuracies that have been out there.

I consider that reasonably effective, concerning the grounding that the issue has in Europe. Some unbiased, fairly balanced media did emanate from that as a result, but by and large, some of the major media and tabloids just didn't show up and carried their own story of outdated videos.

Since that time it's been an issue on which I've spent considerable time. I've gone to a host of meetings—no fewer than a dozen, well into the double digits—interdepartmental meetings here in Ottawa, looking at strategies and trying to get resources to deal with this issue and to be able to advance it on the European scene.

Part of that involved working with the provinces. I met with representatives of the province of Newfoundland and Labrador, I met with representatives of the province of Quebec recently, and I met with the Premier of Nunavut on Friday on this issue also, to be able to work together, pulling on one oar in this particular battle we have that's been grounded in Europe for at least two or three decades.

Within that, I've had a series of other meetings and interactions. I've met with like-minded countries to get support for our issue within the European scene. I met with parliamentarians and the most senior officials within the governments of Finland, Norway, Denmark, and Sweden to advance our cause, to get like-minded support on the issue.

Also, recently I went to some not so like-minded areas and met with parliamentarians, senior officials, and chairs of committees in legislatures. I just got back last Friday from Europe. I had 22 meetings in eight days, in Berlin, Paris, Copenhagen, Rome, and Brussels, with numerous people, on this particular file, from meeting with the committees that deal with it in Parliament to advisers to the chancellery to a variety of places in different countries.

It's been a very significant file that has taken up a reasonable amount of the time on the files I've been asked to deal with overall—that is, the broad spectrum of the fishing file generally, with different countries.

We do know that the European Commission received a request to deal with it at the European level. To give you an example, on April 28 last year, it was well advanced in Belgium. In fact, a lot of this advancing of legislation and resolutions being passed goes back two and three years. On April 28 last year, Belgium passed legislation banning the importation of seal and seal products. On October 23 last year, it was banned in the Netherlands and officially came into law. These are processes that have been very, very well advanced.

Our goal, certainly, looking at it, was to try to halt any other countries from moving on this ban. That's why the focus was on areas that had given indication that there would be a ban—Germany, for example.

Italy, Austria, and the U.K., for example, have said it's a European Commission matter and it should be dealt with on a European-wide level. That's why it has been handed to the European Commission.

Under the environment, Commissioner Dimas is responsible for the file. He indicated back on March 15 last year, in the plenary session of the European Parliament, that they don't have a problem with the conservation part of the issue but there have been conflicting reports on the humaneness aspect and they will look into that.

● (0820)

As a result of that, the European Commission commissioned EFSA, which is the European Food Safety Authority, a reputable, professional organization with veterinarians and expertise, to render an opinion on humaneness. There was considerable input leading into that process, I guess, from public stakeholders, particularly Canada. We responded to meet all the deadlines that were requested. They had a meeting in Parma, Italy. The first stage of that occurred in early October. There were other submissions that needed to be made by November 1. We submitted information to correct any inaccuracies and to update aspects of the preliminary draft report, which came out at the end of September.

EFSA rendered its verdict and issued its report. It was published on December 19. It's on the website and is publicly shown. In the EFSA report to the European Commission, they indicated that many seals can be and are killed in a humane manner. It indicated that the rifle and the hakapik are humane methods of killing when used appropriately. EFSA gave a scientific report to the commission. It's not something the commission can hold up and wave. NGOs I think issued a news release on that, hailing it as a victory for them.

The Minister of Fisheries and Oceans indicated that it's a very decent report and one we accept, because it establishes what would be considered humane methods of killing. They made certain recommendations in that report, the very same recommendations on humaneness that the international veterinarian working group released in their report in November 2005.

One of the steps that's not currently in the regulations in Canada is the bleeding process. In the killing process, sometimes a seal is pretty well decapitated, with expanding ammunition, and the bleeding becomes a moot point. Through consultations in Atlantic Canada and in the Quebec regions—there were four series of consultations with sealers—there was agreement by sealers to advance this third step and include that. That's a process that has been moving for the past couple of years. It wouldn't have been practical to put that into the regulations if we started today, but it's practical to put it into regulations for 2009 and to use that as a condition of licensing in 2008, which will allow that framework to advance.

We will meet all of what are considered humane standards, as outlined in EFSA's report to the European Commission. But that's not the only report the European Commission is dealing with. They

commissioned another report by a Danish consulting firm, and that would be the COWI report.

The COWI report was released as a preliminary draft, and we received it on January 10. On January 14, 2008, there was a validation workshop with stakeholders, one from each of the countries affected, and there was input followed and input gathered from provinces that made submissions to correct inaccuracies. There are a lot of gaps in the report. The final report will be released on March 1. It will not necessarily be public. It will be turned in to the European Commission, which commissioned that report, and it's going to deal with broader issues.

The EFSA report will fit into that, but it will deal with socio-economic aspects, legislative requirements, and broader aspects. That will be handed to the European Commission on March 1. Where they will go with that, and so on, who knows?

I don't want to take up all the time speaking, so I will stop.

I'll just make this last point. There are two dynamics in Europe. One is the European Commission, which is authorized to deal with this. The other dynamic is the European Parliament, and I'm not referring to PACE, the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly. The European Commission will deal with it as the authoritative body for the European Union.

Members of Parliament are elected at large in all the countries of the European Union—785 of them. They signed a resolution, too, some 450, the largest number ever signed, to advance this issue. A lot of that has been misinformed information. I met with significant groups in that parliament and their leaders on some of these issues, in addition to going to a whole host of other meetings, which I won't get into at this time. I realize that you want an opportunity to ask questions and probably advance some points you are interested in.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

● (0825)

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Ambassador.

For all the years I've known you, it's the first time I've known you to come in on time. You even have nine seconds left.

We're going to cut everybody a couple of minutes to give Scott the same as you.

Mr. Simms, you go ahead. You have seven minutes.

Mr. Scott Simms: You cut me down to size.

The Chair: Yes, in order to fit everybody in. Seven minutes.

Mr. Scott Simms: Thank you, Chair.

Thank you, Ambassador Sullivan, for coming in. It seems as if you've been quite busy, to say the least, with an itinerary that's quite blocked. And I thought I was busy.

I have a quick question about the trade aspect of what has been happening in the past little while. When it comes to trade bans in Belgium, when it comes to talking about Germany, the Netherlands, is trade policy for the European Union handled by Brussels or is it handled by the individual states?

Mr. Loyola Sullivan: With trade policy, there's a DG of trade within the European Commission too. There are 27 member states at the European Commission, and trade is one. Commissioner Mandelson is the commissioner of trade. There is a directorate dealing with trade too.

Mr. Scott Simms: What is the effect, then, of an individual nation that says they will ban the importation of seal products? The European Commission is key here, obviously. I get mixed messages from them.

Essentially, what I'm saying is, is it going to happen or not when it comes to the European Commission?

• (0830)

Mr. Loyola Sullivan: I'll try to put a perspective on that one.

Number one, I think it's fair to say that trade is a concern for the European Commission and for member states on this issue. It's an issue that I've raised with individual member states, and I've indicated to them and to their leadership on this file that they have a responsibility too, as member states, to have an input on this decision, because it affects them as member states.

The EC would normally issue a directive on what action they would take, and they would expect member states to follow that directive, as happened in the 1982-83 ban on whitecoats and bluebacks.

We felt strongly on the trade issue, and I spoke with numerous ministers on this file. I felt that it's an issue that should get to a decision, to the WTO challenge. The Government of Canada served notice to the European Commission on July 31 last year that they were going to take the WTO process.

There was a panel convened, and that process has begun. The consultations on that issue occurred on November 14 in Brussels. We've challenged that at the WTO.

We're in the stage of a consultation process, which is an opportunity to be able to hopefully get to an amicable resolution. Probably 40% to 45% of cases that go to the WTO get resolved at that phase. Others don't, and a choice then has to be made to go to a full-scale panel.

Mr. Scott Simms: What are you hoping to get from the WTO process?

Mr. Loyola Sullivan: On the WTO process, number one, we hope to get an amicable resolution. I've always indicated, and I've said in public interviews and otherwise, that the resolution to this is an amicable one that doesn't prevent the opportunity for us to export our seal and seal products. What that will be, I can't tell you.

I've been at three sealing fora, and I've been dealing with sealers and dealing with everybody at the Fur Institute and anybody who has been around the file.

A similar thing happened back in the 1980s with leghold traps in Canada—

Mr. Scott Simms: I remember that quite well—everybody was involved.

I guess what bothers me is that the individual states here may get to a situation of critical mass to force the hand of the European Commission.

Mr. Loyola Sullivan: I can update you on my efforts in that regard too. Hopefully it doesn't get to that stage.

We have targeted the ones that had resolutions or legislation pending. Those countries would be Germany, Austria, and Italy. Those three have pending legislation.

In Italy it went to the Italian Parliament. On December 21, the environment committee of the Italian Senate passed a resolution to advance this, which means that it could become law in Italy through one of two ways: one is the fast process, where all the committees and people agree and it gets fast-tracked, and the other process is a longer legislative process.

The day I was in Italy, Prime Minister Prodi spoke to the Parliament and called for a non-confidence vote, which did occur in the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate. The government now, technically, has fallen, and it may not advance this before the European Commission deals with it.

Mr. Scott Simms: No, I understand that. From what I understand, non-confidence votes are an annual event in Italy.

Mr. Loyola Sullivan: But this is a little—

Mr. Scott Simms: But in this particular case, when it comes to Belgium or the Netherlands, which did pass the legislation, in your opinion, where did we go wrong? If you had to do it all over again, what would you have done differently?

Mr. Loyola Sullivan: I don't know the dynamics before March of 2007. This goes way back into the.... This was initiated in their Parliament in 2005. So looking back over the history of it, I think it was a file where advocacy would have probably been needed to counteract the NGOs infiltrating the minds of the public and the parliamentarians and pushing the issue; we would have probably had to mount a campaign over a decade ago to be able to counteract what's going on in the public forum over there.

Mr. Scott Simms: But you know, a lot of people say that we were acting ten years ago. I'm just struggling over where we go. It seems to me that something has to be done differently, because if you're looking at a decade long.... That's my problem, essentially, that we've gone so far, we've gone through these interventions, we've had these delegations. You can go back to the seventies when Frank Moores was around, and all have come down to this where we're struggling for these nations to realize that it's us who have a say in this and not the IFAW or Greenpeace who's king.

• (0835)

Mr. Loyola Sullivan: Yes. I think what I see on the issue, from my perspective, is that there were efforts made on numerous different bases but there was no lead on the file. There was nothing glued to keep it together. There was an effort here, there was an effort made another year, an effort made here. DFO doesn't do advocacy. That's not the role. It's to regulate, to manage that file. Who stands up and does advocacy to counteract what's going on in Europe?

The embassies have been very active in sending letters, in giving information, in counteracting those falsehoods within each of the particular jurisdictions there, but there was no glue to it, so when I looked at it and came back from Europe in May, I said we have to get some direction on this file; I'm coming to Ottawa. I wanted to have meetings with a variety of people. I met with numerous people from ministers to deputy ministers, assistant deputies. I went to numerous departments I have a concern with—International Trade, Foreign Affairs, the Privy Council Office, Fisheries. I met with a variety of people on this file and had a number of meetings with at least 30 in attendance representing interdepartmental aspects and said we have to pull this together. We've got to get some direction on this. We have to get cohesiveness, not an ad hoc appearance, and that's why I'm working with the provinces so that we all of us can work together on this file and see what's the best strategy now to move from here in this.

There were two things emanating from last summer. This has advanced really far. How do we stop it? There are two avenues I see. One is the European Parliament. I have met with three of the people on major groups. In particular, I could say one is a very strong ally who represents a group of 285 in the European Parliament. I met with other groups that might not be so friendly on the issue and tried to.... While 785 parliamentarians are not going to be experts on this, the leaders of the respective groups on this file are important.

So we'd be looking at a process of educating, providing information to them, two-way communications, because the European Parliament will have an impact. Even though they're not a structure that's a legislative and legal entity, they will influence this decision and the outcome of this. Even though the European Commission is handling it, the European parliamentarians elected by their jurisdictions to go to Brussels will have an input.

So there are two things we're working on. We're working in the EC with the like-minded, and going to the countries that are opposed to try to drive that point home and also deal with parliamentarians in other fora to be able to show them the truth and the facts and to make decisions not on emotions but to make them basically on science and based on sustainability and other factors that we've been putting forth.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Simms, and thank you, Ambassador.

When I give seven minutes to someone, that includes the questions and the answers. So could you tidy it up a bit at the end? I realize that it's very informative, but at the same time, in the interests of time....

Mr. Blais, seven minutes.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Raynald Blais (Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Good morning, Mr. Sullivan.

[*English*]

The Chair: Just a second.

We need more than one interpreter here this morning.

Mr. Ambassador, can you hear the interpreter?

Mr. Loyola Sullivan: Yes, I can.

The Chair: Mr. Blais, you have seven minutes.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Raynald Blais: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Sullivan, I am certainly prepared to give the seal hunt file a chance, but you are the one running with it. You mentioned in your presentation that you have to run left and right, up and down and all over the map to meet so-and-so from such-and-such a department in this, that or the other country.

I have the impression—tell me if I am on the wrong track—that at the moment you are like a firefighter trying to put out fires that have been burning all over the place for thirty years or so. Some have consumed everything in their path and we have to rebuild, some are just flaring up, now here, now there.

You referred to legislatures that are passing new resolutions. Things are even happening on different fronts at the Council of Europe, the European Commission and the European Parliament.

I am not at all convinced that what you are proposing is actually an action plan to address the situation. I am looking for an action plan that mobilizes a group of people, not just you alone. Otherwise, you are going to become exhausted doing all that running around.

I would like to know your opinion about the way I see the situation.

● (0840)

[*English*]

Mr. Loyola Sullivan: Thank you.

I've had a team with me on each of these occasions. On this last trip, for example, and on my previous trip I've asked to have experts with me. I personally requested Dr. Garry Stenson, a senior marine mammal scientist who spent 22 years on the file and who was consulted by EFSA as an expert in the world—probably more expert on the seal file in the north Atlantic, I would say, than perhaps anybody else in the world today—who accompanied me on these files.

I had people accompanying from DFAIT and also from Fisheries and Oceans. I wanted to get people around who, whether in resource management or in science, and in particularly in selling this, I think, on science, had a lot of credibility. We had a team of 16 who went to Europe last year, with Jean-Claude Lapierre—I think from your constituency—and Leo St. Onge, a Quebec sealer. Industry came; government representatives came. We went and looked at different aspects that each of us would touch on.

When something is started, to take the fireman analogy, you have to go to the core of it; not try to deal with the symptoms but deal with the cause. So we tried to go to the core of it, to the people in the process who intend to legislate, and to put it on the table with these people—the departments, the senior guys, the deputy minister equivalents who are going to advance it, and the parliamentarians and the ministries in those countries that are going to put it forth—to say, this is not correct. It's sustainable, it's humane, it has a very strong socio-economic value.

We do that. We have a team; we go as a team. I am not a lone person on these ever. I've always had a minimum of three and a high as a delegation of sixteen.

We look at it strategically, at what is most strategic. It's not always, I guess, best to publicly release strategies. We deal with NGOs and other people who have spent hundreds of millions of dollars on this issue.

But I will say we are looking very seriously at this file. We are looking at avenues whereby we can stop the train that started on this issue. If some firefighting has to be done, I call it putting accurate information in the forum of legislators and parliamentarians so that they can make an informed decision, not an emotional decision because their constituents tell them “this is what we want”.

[Translation]

Mr. Raynald Blais: First, let me remind you that a trip with a team of 16 people, such as you have just mentioned, happened only once. One group trip is not going to make the difference. I think we agree on that.

Could you tell me about any action plan of yours that requires a large team. I really would like to know where you are coming from and where you are going, so that I can appreciate the efforts you are making. In that sense, someone like you, with your budget...I have already told you that your budget for a task like this is ridiculous and I continue to say so.

In the next few months, what is your plan of action to deal with this situation using a team approach? The Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans is a member of the team, after all.

[English]

Mr. Loyola Sullivan: Thank you.

I guess the strategy has been multi-pronged. Number one, it's to strike alliances with like-minded countries within the European Commission that would get us support for getting a resolution within. We have Denmark as one of the European communities. Sweden and Finland are there; I've met with them. I know that those countries, Sweden and Finland, have written to the European Union asking that no ban be instituted unless there's a scientific basis to do so.

These countries have responded and have worked internally. I don't think it's practical to expect a country within to start clamouring in a public forum, but working within, with like-minded people within and like-minded people outside, such as Norway. When we went to Italy, Norway came, and Denmark came, and we sat down with the delegation from Greenland—I met with the

minister of fisheries in Greenland last week—to get a joint effort before the Italian committees in Parliament on those countries.

That's the like-minded approach. The other approach within the EEC countries that are spearheading this is to focus on the countries that are looking at legislation and to put forth facts to them that refute information they have that has been put on an emotional basis.

A third prong is a challenge: that if they're going to do something on a ban that is contrary to their obligations under the GATT and the technical barriers to trade positions of the WTO, we will challenge it as being a right to defend a legitimate hunt that's putting money into the pockets and that is a way of life, a tradition, a culture, an economic activity.

We have looked at that. As for the future, we're looking at a discussion, on the agenda tomorrow in Montreal with the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and the aquaculture and fisheries ministers, of this issue. I spoke with Premier Charest two weeks ago on this issue before he went to Paris, and he said he was raising the issue with the Prime Minister in Paris.

We are looking at how we control the provinces together. The Province of Quebec has indicated they're very supportive of this issue—the premier has indicated he is very supportive—and Newfoundland and Labrador and Nunavut, which form over 99% of the sealing constituency in Canada. We're looking at how we could put on a combined effort, whether with parliamentarians on parliamentarians, whether with premiers or fisheries ministers in these jurisdictions, over the next while.

That's in process now. What should we do in March on the international day of protest? Probably this will come to a head in four or five months, with decision-making maybe in late spring in the European Commission. How do we deal with this? How do we respond when these decisions come into effect?

So it is a fairly comprehensive look at this issue.

● (0845)

The Chair: Mr. Blais, don't even look at me.

Thank you, Ambassador. You're doing a great job, and I expect you'll be invited back, because you're not going to get it all in this morning.

Mr. Stoffer, you have five minutes.

Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you, Ambassador, for taking the time to come to brief us on your journeys in Europe.

There's an old saying that when one door closes, another one opens. While you're battling the propaganda war with IFAW and all those other groups.... There's another saying that you don't let the facts get in the way of a good story, and IFAW and HSUS and those other organizations are very effective at pulling at the heartstrings of citizens in European nations. If Germany, if Holland, if Italy do instruct a ban, the only other legal way to do it is to force it through GATT and WTO discussions in that regard.

But you spoke about like-minded countries. Have you solicited the assistance of Russia, which also has a sealing concern going, or Spain, or Portugal? What is the position of the United States on all of this, as well?

Mr. Loyola Sullivan: The United States in 1972 instituted a ban on the importation of marine mammals, period, to the United States.

Mr. Peter Stoffer: But not for their own.

Mr. Loyola Sullivan: No, but for their own within Alaska. There's hunting occurring in Alaska.

In 1975 CITES followed the Marine Mammal Protection Act in the United States, and the United States did not institute a ban on the basis of humaneness. Theirs was on the basis of conservation. CITES was post-Marine Mammal Protection Act and it has not referenced seals as being an issue to be listed under CITES and there was no basis.

So on four occasions in the late 1990s and early 2000s, the Government of Canada made interventions at the highest levels of the United States to change that. They have been reluctant to undo or change what's been done. It's as if enacting legislation and coming back and undoing it is probably a lot tougher than doing it. I don't know what their reasons are, but four approaches have been made from the late 1990s to the early 2000s to have this changed, but they haven't been receptive to it.

So I think it's fair to say that the United States.... I'm going to be having meetings with the United States in the month of February on this issue.

With regard to other countries, yes, we've looked at strategies on other countries. In the Baltics there are numerous things under consideration at the moment. There are numerous other member states within the EU that are on the Baltic—right from Poland to Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, and also Russia.

There are other issues besides the like-minded, because it's seals today but it's something else tomorrow. Whether it's hunting wolves in another country or it's other species there, this has broader implications for member states of the EU—and we've been looking at it strategically to get support—because if the domino falls, it doesn't stop. There are serious other implications.

Certainly I think it's fair to say that has been a consideration, and it is under discussion, yes, and some meetings have been held on this issue already.

• (0850)

Mr. Peter Stoffer: My last question is—

The Chair: A quick question and a quick answer.

Mr. Peter Stoffer: Yes.

We haven't been successful in challenging the United States on their import ban on this. I have a feeling we may not be successful in Europe. But I notice in your report here that in 2005 it shows Hong Kong at 3% of exports and yet China a year later was 6%. It appears to me that China may be an emerging market for seal and seal products. Have you been involved at all in working with the provinces and Nunavut and the government in promoting seal and seal products in the countries of China and Taiwan and those areas as well?

Mr. Loyola Sullivan: Well, it's the companies that are involved in buying them. I met with all the companies. The companies were at the seal consultation process.

The markets now are primarily that the seals go to Norway, about 60% in this past year—and it can vary from 50% to 60% over the past two years—and Finland, about 14% and 19% respectively over the last two years. A lot of these end up in Russia and China. That's where they end up, because there are tanning processes that occur there. There's processing and some tanning occurring in eastern Canada. Three locations at least do tanning in eastern Canada now. And that's where the market is. While the point of entry could be Norway or Finland, in fact about 13% went in through Germany, was exported, and almost all of them are trans-shipped through Germany.

So if there's a ban there, it's all trans-shipped through Germany. And I indicated to the German government the obligations of the WTO, that the bulk is in Germany, the majority of what goes into the European Community is in Germany, and almost all are trans-shipped through Germany.

The Netherlands has said no trans-shipments through its ports. Belgium has indicated its legislation allows trans-shipments through its ports. So the European Commission has to get on one page on some of this also. We're very much aware of the destinations and very much aware of the dynamics.

The Chair: Thank you.

And some of us legislate the answers.

Mr. Keddy, we wait with anticipation. You have your seven minutes.

Mr. Gerald Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's, CPC): Thank you, sir. I have no intention of allowing Mr. Loyola Sullivan to answer this question. I'm just going to talk.

First of all, Mr. Sullivan, thank you very much for coming in this morning. There were a couple of points made by my colleague that you answered directly, but I think you might have missed the point, especially with Monsieur Blais.

I think what Monsieur Blais was getting at is that when you go to Europe and take a group from the provinces, that's important, but it would also be important to take some federal politicians with you. Most of us have been there. We've been at discussions, at the Parliament, at the Council of Europe, and have been involved in this issue for several years, and would be happy to help in any way we can.

The other point I want to raise is that we saw a video here last spring by Raoul Jomphe, I think his name was, who actually attended the hunt, invited by the Humane Society of the United States, and found a number of inconsistencies that occurred there. The Humane Society of the United States, in one instance, found a seal that hadn't been killed immediately. Basically, instead of allowing this seal to fall into the water and drown, which would have been the humane thing to do, they actually pulled it out of the water so they could watch it suffer a long and lingering death on the ice, but they could get it all on camera. He has recorded this. It's an actual fact.

We're not dealing with a group of people here who have any intention of playing by any set of parameters or rules. These guys are modern-day terrorists, and we have to point that out. And I'm being polite. I really think in much stronger terms than that.

So I think that film should be purchased by the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, and it should be put on the BBC and on public television in Europe and allow the Europeans to see another side of this story. It was a terrific film.

We know we're behind the eight ball here, and we know we're not going to convince the Europeans overnight. You mentioned here, a minute ago, like-minded countries. When we met with the fishery committee from the Council of Europe, in 2006 I think it was, the members there from Ireland and from Scotland had voted against the seal hunt. Once they listened to our delegation, they said, "Wait a minute; we made a mistake." The members from Spain and from Portugal were onside and are actually looking not for a hunt, but for a cull, in their own countries.

So there are like-minded countries there. You mentioned Denmark, but Iceland is certainly much more like-minded. Scotland is, again, on board. I know you're looking at these opportunities, but I can't stress it enough, especially that film by Mr. Jomphe. It should be on public television in Europe, however we can get it there, because there are two sides to this story.

Now I'm going to give it over to you, and I know I won't get another question in.

• (0855)

The Chair: He had half the time on the question, and you have the other half to answer.

Mr. Loyola Sullivan: I will keep it short.

We aired the film by Raoul Jomphe in Amsterdam. We had a public opening there and invitations. We showed *My Ancestors were Rogues and Murderers*, a film done by Anne Troake. We did it in Italy recently, with 20 different media there, and a media forum occurred in Italy on that issue. We have been using those avenues.

We've been preaching that this is the Humane Society of the United States, basically an NGO out there concerned with humaneness, and they pulled the seal back onto the ice to video it for another 25 minutes or 45 minutes, a suffering seal, when there was a sailor, Jean-Claude Lapierre, no distance away, from Îles-de-la-Madeleine, who could have come over and put the seal out of its misery, but no one has ever mentioned to a sealer to do that. At that type of event we speak that, we say that, we correct that.

We do have in Scotland Ian McCartney, who was a minister there. He was one of the drivers between the ban in Europe from Scotland on this issue. I got very good support from a group, members of the European Parliament, with a Scottish person who was very sympathetic and understands this, who I met just recently in Brussels, last week, and I consider an ally to advance it.

It's kind of difficult to talk about strategies in a more public forum. An in camera forum here I think would accomplish a lot more and make you more informed, because I don't want to talk about aspects. That's like going and strategizing with two teams, and one team is out in the public giving out their strategy and the other team doesn't. It's really difficult in the session to do that, and I want to be honest and open on this process.

Mr. Gerald Keddy: I have one more question, if I could just ask it, and I have about a minute.

On the recommendation on bleeding, that recommendation is easily enforced, I think, for the sealers using hakapiks. However, most of the sealers use rifles, and if we don't differentiate there.... Ninety-five percent of the hunters are shooting those animals from 50 to 100 metres away and they do bleed out, especially, as you mentioned, with expanding ammunition. But it's not easy to jump off that boat, run across the ice, and bleed that seal immediately, so we have to be careful, if we implement a rule like that, how it's done.

Mr. Loyola Sullivan: Yes, we're very much aware of that in resource management. We had independent veterinarians participate in our consultation with sailors. A lot of these issues did come up. And that's not an expectation. When you reach the seal and you notice the seal is not dead, you have to then kill that seal and then you follow the process.

There are situations to deal with that, and there'll be no regulations or conditions of licence that would have them doing the impossible, but only what's fair and reasonable as soon as possible within the timeframe there. No one should risk their life. Human safety is the number one issue. The humaneness and the state of the animal is secondary to human safety.

• (0900)

Mr. Gerald Keddy: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you. And having you, Mr. Keddy, on time, with eight seconds left to go, is amazing.

Ambassador, thank you for your time here this morning. We realize that it's short, but it's very informative.

There certainly is a great interest around the table in regard to the seal hunt, and we certainly want to reserve the right maybe to call you back at some future date to have a more detailed discussion and everybody have the opportunity to go through a two-hour session. That's maybe something we could look at down the road.

I'd ask you, if you could, to make some closing remarks. One thing I would ask is whether in your travels you have had any discussion on anything we could do from a legal aspect to deal with the people who are protesting against the seal hunt. At any time has anything been discussed as to how we could address that from a legal aspect?

As I've said, with your wealth of knowledge on it, one thing I have to admit is you never know what the definition of "short" is. So with that, I ask you to make some closing comments.

Mr. Loyola Sullivan: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I said months ago that there has to be a law against using false information to earn money. I've asked to have that pursued to get a legal opinion. I've been told they're looking at it. I haven't seen an opinion on it. There has to be something on trying to dupe the public into giving money to do something and spread false information on a better cause. There has to be consumer protection surrounding the issue. I don't have an answer for that now. I've requested that, and I feel strongly that something has to be done about it.

I will say in closing that I'd certainly be only too delighted at any time to appear before the committee to answer any questions on this issue. It would be helpful, I suggest—that's your prerogative, Mr. Chair, your committee—that sometimes an in camera meeting would help in getting a lot of information out. It's not always good to tell the world what you're going to do.

Somebody could spend hundreds of millions of dollars, when I have an operating budget just over half a million dollars. That covers staff and an office and transportation. I have to depend on resources elsewhere. I'm only too delighted if members of Parliament can accompany and participate in this process. We've invited provincial legislators. We welcome anybody—out of your budgets, of course. I don't have a budget for that.

And dealing with parliamentarians I think is important, because from my experience of being there for 15 years and dealing with parliamentarians, I think it's positive to be able to talk to them on the basis that you understand where they sit. I welcome that and any future opportunity to discuss this further.

The Chair: Thank you, Ambassador, and certainly we'll take you up on that.

Okay, we're going to adjourn for now.

Thank you.

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