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Right Honorable Stephen Harper
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Dear Prime Minister Harper,

The International Anti-Fur Coalition is an alliance of animal welfare and animal rights organizations based in more than 40 cities and nearly 30 countries worldwide. This global network is drawn together by our common goal of eradicating the suffering of fur-bearing animals. We write to express our fervent opposition to the Canadian seal-hunt.

As the newly elected leader of Canada, you take the helm of your country with clean hands and with the opportunity to leave a legacy of compassion and humaneness. You have inherited the policies of your predecessors and cannot be held to blame for them. However, with your new position of power, you accept great responsibility and are accountable for the choices you make now. You have an obligation to all Canadians to effect their wishes, to do what is in their best interest, what is in Canada's best interest. And as a human being you have the same responsibility we all have to minimize the harm we inflict on the other creatures with whom we share the planet. Your duties as Prime Minister and as a human being are not inconsistent. What is good for the seals is good for Canada. Thus, we urge you to ban the seal hunt immediately. Until you do, we will continue to boycott all Canadian seafood and all travel to your country.

It is hard to imagine how a civilized nation such as Canada could defend an utterly brutal massacre of innocent lives. Yet the government takes a proud and defiant tone in defense of the hunt. It is understandable that in order to justify such unspeakable atrocities, Danny Williams, Premier of Newfoundland and Labrador, has resorted to telling lies and making unfounded accusations. Despite Mr. Williams' claims, neither the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) nor the Canadian Veterinary Medical Association (CVMA) has ever taken the position that the hunt is humane and well managed. In contrast, an independent veterinary study conducted in 2001 found that 42% of the seals examined had likely been skinned alive while conscious. The same study further found that 40% of seals were shot or clubbed and left to suffer, and at least 30, of the 179 observed, were hooked while still alive.

The justifications given for the hunt include economic benefits, preserving a way of life and preserving fish populations. However, not one of these arguments can be sustained. Sealing is primarily conducted off-season by a few thousand fishermen who make only a small fraction of their annual incomes from sealing. To the extent that the seal hunt generates income, that income can be replaced with other non-lethal activities such as whale watching, or seal watching for that matter. Why not subsidize such a

peaceful activity rather than the massacre of primarily baby animals? Furthermore, justifying the hunt because it has been done for 500 years is simply a non sequitur. Slavery has been practiced for most of human history, and yet I am nearly certain you would not argue that precedent makes slavery acceptable today. Finally, as even Mr. Williams has acknowledged, the primary reason for cod depletion in Canadian waters is over-fishing by humans, not seals. And so, we are left to wonder, why then? Why the senseless slaughter of the innocent?

Prime Minister Harper, for whom are you fighting this battle in support of the seal hunt? According to a 2005 poll, 69% of Canadians are opposed to the commercial seal hunt, and yet Canadian taxpayers are forced to subsidize it. Like the blood staining your ice-floes, the seal slaughter stains the image of Canadians throughout the world. This is terribly unfair to the majority of Canadians who stand with the international community in their opposition to the hunt.

As you must know well by now, international pressure against the seal-hunt is building and opposition is strong. We urge you to act immediately to end this massive and unnecessary slaughter. What you do now will determine how you are to be remembered throughout history. Will you be remembered as a savior or an assassin? Will you be remembered for expanding the circle of compassion to the less fortunate or for closing your ears as millions of animals scream out in agony, pleading in their own way for help? Will you be remembered for giving a voice to the voiceless, the least fortunate members of your society, or for coldly closing your eyes and turning away at the sight of ice-caps stained red with the blood of millions of innocent, sentient creatures? As Harriet Beecher Stowe put it: "It's a matter of taking the side of the weak against the strong, something the best people have always done." We implore you Prime Minister Harper, to exercise your power and save these animals. You will have the support of the majority of Canadians, the world and posterity.

Yours Sincerely,