

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**  
**FFAW-UNIFOR COMMENDS ATLANTIC SEAL SCIENCE TASK TEAM REPORT AND  
ANNOUNCEMENT BY MINISTER MURRAY**

May 13, 2022 – FFAW-Unifor is commending the Atlantic Seal Science Task Team (ASSTT) report that was released May 11<sup>th</sup> by the Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO). The Union also welcomes yesterday’s announcement by Ministers Joyce Murray and Gudie Hutchings of a Seal Summit to be hosted in St. John’s this Fall as a first step to actioning the Report’s recommendations.

FFAW participated in an information session in May 2021 to contribute to the Team’s investigation into the relationship between seals and fish populations and is pleased to see much of the perspective and experiences of inshore harvesters reflected in the Report’s nine recommendations to DFO on the need for clear management objectives for seal species in Atlantic Canada.

For years, fish harvesters have been calling on DFO to collect more accurate information on seal populations around Newfoundland and Labrador that are impacting the abundance of adjacent fish resources. FFAW launched a national awareness campaign in February 2022 focused on seal overpopulation and the associated prey consumption that is causing an imbalance in the marine ecosystem.

“Year after year natural mortality from predation remains the largest factor in the health of valuable fish stocks,”, says Keith Sullivan, FFAW-Unifor President. “Harvesters are deeply frustrated with the lack of consideration for seals on predation for important species like capelin and northern cod. DFO has dragged their feet on conducting science on seals and it is encouraging to read the key conclusions of the Report that acknowledge just how important a full understanding is for improving stock assessment science.”

In addition to recommending that DFO work urgently to address gaps in seal diet information, population distribution, and the relationship between seals and the dynamic of important fish stocks, the Report also identifies the opportunities in working with members of industry. This includes consideration to support industry vessels to expand data collection efforts and for the Government of Canada to work to open markets and reduce trade restrictions for seal products, such as fur garments, meat, and oil.

FFAW’s campaign for regulated management of seal populations has been met with support from like-minded organizations across Canada who also recognize the potential for the sealing industry to complement the federal government’s strategy for a blue economy. The importance of bringing together diverse voices from all levels of government, the sealing industry, the fishing industry, Indigenous peoples, and international partners cannot be understated in the pursuit of more fulsome data on seals and the economic growth that is possible with seal product development.

“We fully support the objectives outlined in the ASSTT Report and the announcement by Minister Murray and Minister Hutchings to work towards a better understanding of seal species and the importance of a meaningful collaborative approach. The recommendations in the Report, together with affirmation that DFO Science is holding limiting information, is an essential starting point for true environmental sustainability and market innovation.”

“It is time for seal to be recognized as a valuable resource that has the potential to address global consumer needs. Understanding seal populations and developing a federal framework to mitigate impacts should ultimately preface addressing trade barriers, as well as destigmatizing the seal harvest,” Sullivan concludes.

ASSOCIATED LINKS:

[\*The Atlantic Seal Science Task Team report\*](#)

[\*Sealing Our Fate – An Ocean of Hypocrisy campaign\*](#)

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