

Canada to take action against EU over seal product ban

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Canada will take action against the European Union if it bans imported seal products, Trade Minister Stockwell Day said Friday.

"Despite scientific evidence that supports humane harvesting techniques, and testimony from Inuit communities as to the harmful effect of the proposed ban, the EU continues to push forward with a proposal that will damage the livelihood of coastal and northern Canadians and their families," Day said in a statement.

The EU-wide ban currently being considered may not contain an exception for seal products that are humanely harvested.

Canada's quota is 280,000 young harp seals for this year. There are nearly six million seals on Canada's East Coast — three times as many as in the 1970s, according to Day.

He sees no justification for a ban given that "Canada goes to great lengths to ensure a humane, well-regulated and sustainable seal hunt," which prohibits the harvesting of whitecoats.

Sealers in many isolated coastal communities throughout Atlantic Canada, Quebec and the North rely on sealing for a significant source of income, up to 35 per cent in some cases, said Day's statement.

If a ban is instituted, the Government of Canada will launch a World Trade Organization action, Day said.