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Nunavut Maligaliurvia
Legislative Assembly of Nunavut
Assemblée législative du Nunavut

RELEASE

Nunavut MLAs Stand Up for Wildlife Harvesting Sector

QUÉBEC CITY, Québec (August 12, 1999) - Members of the Legislative Assembly of Nunavut spoke out this week in Québec City in support of the territory's wildlife harvesting sector.

Six Nunavut MLAs are attending the 38th Canadian Regional Conference of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association. The annual meeting brings together parliamentarians and officials from Canadian jurisdictions and Commonwealth nations. The Members spoke at a working session to address the issue of supporting Canadian industries that have come under international criticism.

"The situation faced by the people of Pelly Bay shows just how much effort is needed to promote understanding of our culture and traditions," said Uriash Puqignak, MLA for Nattilik. "I sensed a lot of sympathy at this forum for our concerns," he said.

The community has attracted widespread attention by its efforts to secure the release of traditional Inuit marionettes recently seized by American customs authorities under the provisions of the Marine Mammal Protection Act. The marionettes contained parts from seal skin and whale bone.

"The sealskin vest that I'm wearing today could just as easily be seized at the border as those cultural treasures from Pelly," said Hunter Tootoo, MLA for Iqaluit Centre. "I believe a lot of misconceptions are out there about the real nature of harvesting in Nunavut."

The audience of legislators included delegations from Asia, Latin America and Britain.

"This occasion provided a perfect opportunity to make the case for a healthy, sustainable harvesting sector in Nunavut," said Olayuk Akesuk, MLA for South Baffin. "It is important that our partners in Canada and abroad recognize that this industry is vital to our people and communities."

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