

Dear Senator Busson,  
Honourable members of the Standing Senate Committee on Fisheries and Oceans

I would like to thank you once again for giving me the opportunity to testify last Thursday before the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans alongside my former senator, the Honourable Céline Hervieux-Payette.

Over the last few days, however, I have been haunted by one of your questions: what new approach could you suggest to better support seal hunters?

I tried to offer an alternative approach during my testimony but in hindsight, I think I lacked clarity. Therefore, I hereby, submit to you my suggestion for a new approach.

First of all, please allow me to outline some background information surrounding my thinking. I had the chance to familiarize myself with foresight and to consider the future from the perspective of upcoming disruptions.

As I mentioned on Thursday, the world is facing unprecedented challenges, including the current collapse of biodiversity, due to our development model, and therefore calls for the adoption of a sustainable economic model. Indeed, the World Economic Forum, the OECD and the United Nations are all calling on Member States to shift the values that underlie the mainstream western economic model and development.

For example, in its 2021 report called “Our Common agenda”, the Secretary General of the United Nations stated: “Even with our planet undergoing rapid and dangerous change, economic models continue to assume endless expansion and growth and overlook the broader systems that sustain life and well-being. We need a pathway that protects people and the planet, allowing for sustainable development. This means broad shifts in what prosperity and progress mean, how to incentivize and measure them, and how to evaluate policies”. [Common Agenda Report English.pdf \(un.org\)](#)

More specifically, here are few concrete examples that indicate a trend toward this change:

- United Kingdom: the British Academy is the UK’s national academy for the humanities and social sciences. From 2017, it has undertaken a redefinition of capitalism, recognizing the need to put purpose before profit. The objective of this largest and most ambitious project the Academy ever conducted, according to its own words, is to reform business for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. According to the new definition proposed by the Academy in 2019, the purpose of a business is: **“Producing profitable solutions from the problems of people and planet, and not profiting from creating problems”**. <https://www.thebritishacademy.ac.uk/publications/future-of-the-corporation-principles-for-purposeful-business>
- Scotland: based on this new definition of business, the Government of Scotland launched in 2022, a National Strategy for Economic Transformation which aims to shift its entire economy towards a purpose-driven model by 2032. “The ambition of this strategy is not just to grow our economy but, in doing so, to transform our country's economic model so that we build an economy that celebrates success in terms of economic growth, environmental sustainability, quality of life and equality of opportunity and reward.” [Scotland's National Strategy for Economic Transformation - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](#)

- Wales: in 2015, the Government of Wales passed the Well-being and Futures Generations Act to align all decisions from public bodies listed in the act to improve the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales for current and future generations. This Act includes the creation of a Future Generations Commissioner whose duty is to promote the sustainable development principle and ensure the compliance of decisions with the Act. [Well-being of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act 2015: the essentials \[HTML\] | GOV.WALES](#)
- France: in 2019, France passed a Bill called "Loi PACTE", to support growth and business transformation, introducing the notion of "Société à mission" – which can be translated by "companies with a mission." Recognizing that the definition of a company, in French law, never met the notion of social interest, the new law modified the definition of a company in the Civil Code by breaking with the sole interest of its partners or shareholders and by specifying that "the company with a mission must be managed in its social interest, taking into consideration the social and environmental issues of its activity." <https://lelab.bpifrance.fr/Etudes/guide-pratique-se-doter-d-une-raison-d-etre-devenir-une-societe-a-mission>
- Canada: in 2022, Canada joined the Wellbeing Economy Governments network (WEGo) alongside Scotland, Wales, New Zealand, Iceland, and Finland. A wellbeing economy is based on the principles of prosperity, equality, sustainability, and resilience. <https://weall.org/wego>

What do these examples tell us?

**That the 21st century economy could – should – reconcile the 3 Ps: People, Planet and Profit.**

What does this have to do with seal hunters?

I think it would be useful if we manage to promote the economic activity of seal hunters as part of this virtual circle, connecting:

- People – seal hunt provides a healthy food to people, including Canadians; help rural communities – potentially the most vulnerable peoples – to thrive, including through employment; and support Indigenous culture.
- Planet – under Canada's regulation, seal hunt fosters a balance and healthy ecosystem, while ensuring animal welfare; and
- Profit – Canada's seal hunt industry contributes to a sustainable and wellbeing economy.

By doing so, it will help anchor sealers in modernity and foster a change in perceptions about them in the long term.

As I tried to express during my testimony, I believe that the lobby groups opposed to the seal hunt are a construction of our 20th century economic model, radically opposing the regrettable but real excesses

of the Western development model of this era – even if the seal hunt has been used by these groups as a scapegoat.

Showcasing the seal hunt within the framework of the wellbeing – or “3Ps” – economy, that the 21st century desperately needs, is an alternative and positive approach, which would make anti-seal hunting rhetoric irrelevant, without even having to systematically confront the lobby groups directly, without even having to systematically counter each of their statements. Indeed, I share the concern expressed by Senator Petten that a point-to-point confrontation with lobby groups could perpetuate, or even amplify, the message of the seal hunters’ opponents, while continuing to anchor in people’s mind the Canadian seal industry in the old economy. Let’s take a step aside and chart a positive path.

If, for one reason or another, it proves difficult to promote the seal hunting industry within this 3Ps economic model, the committee might want to recommend that support to sealers be provided in this direction or that this model be strengthened. It seems to me that the future of seal hunters depends on it.

From an Indigenous perspective, I don’t think I am too far wrong in saying that we are just reinventing the wheel: indigenous economies are all based on this connection between people, planet and profit. If demonstrating their belonging to the 3Ps economy is no longer necessary, communication and promotion nevertheless remain an important issue.

Now, let’s pursue the scenario a little further: let’s imagine that there is an eco-label or certification that recognizes the conformity of the Canadian seal industry and its products to the 3Ps economic model, such as what the Marine Stewardship Council proposes (<https://www.msc.org>), developing best practices and standards for a sustainable seafood market and a logo that identifies ethical products. We could thus better promote Canadian seal products thanks to this recognition. This is what Senator Hervieux-Payette tried to do in 2009 when she brought together experts to draft the Universal Declaration on the Ethical Harvest of Seals – publicly supported by the governments of Quebec, Newfoundland and Labrador and the North-West Territories. I submitted the latest existing bilingual copy of this document to the committee clerk on Thursday. A version in Inuktitut was produced by the Library of Parliament and may still be available in the archives.

Let’s also imagine that seal hunters have frameworks in place with clear indicators to better measure their social and environmental impacts, produce data and promote their stories. The committee might want to recommend to help build sealers capacity in this regard. In this context, it would become more difficult for foreign countries to justify their opposition to products meeting the criteria of an economic model that they themselves seek to promote, and which represents a model for a common and better future.

To conclude, I think one needs to pay attention to the terminology. I have heard the same words about the seal hunt as those used to describe the economy that the lobby groups denounce: we generally talk about industry; available resources; profits generated; processed or derived products... so many terms that would apply similarly to a multinational oil company or the agri-food industry. I believe that focusing a lexicon around sustainable economy; positive social and environmental impacts; healthy ecosystem; wellbeing economy; community livelihood; food security; or natural food, would be worth considering.

I hope that this additional reflection will be useful to you and to the other honourable members of the committee.

Best regards,

Maximilien Depontailier