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Senator Wilfred Moore
Senate of Canada
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0A9

Dear Senator,

My attention has recently been brought to the fact that the Parliament of Canada is considering a bill of your initiative, S-203, that would put an end to the practice of keeping whales and dolphins captive. I am writing to express my support for this legislation and express my opinion on the matter, with the hope that you and your colleagues in government will find it useful.

I am a marine scientist, British, resident in Italy, with 50 years of research behind me, much of it in the field of fish population dynamics and fisheries management and oceanography but also, since 1961, deeply involved with study and conservation of whales and dolphins. During my career, I have held senior positions in the UN System, with the FAO, UNESCO, UNEP the UN itself.

The aquarium industry attempts to justify the captivity of the whales and dolphins as a means of 'obtaining crucial scientific knowledge' for their conservation, but this is generally false.

I do not know of a commercial or other public aquarium where it could be justly claimed that its activities were important for the conservation of the species it held. There are certainly interesting observations that have been made but not, as far as I know, any that have contributed meaningfully. Claims that research performed on captive animals is for THEIR benefit are specious, at best.

Captivity is by no means a requirement for us to continue to learn about these animals. There are, in fact, other proven, more ethical ways of performing research with whales and dolphins that do not require a life in captivity and are more likely to provide information that is directly relevant to their life in the wild. For example, I and many others have conducted productive research on bottlenose dolphins in lagoons, from which they could escape, and return, at will.

In the case of highly migratory cetaceans such as belugas, who are used to traveling vast distances, to be held in ponds, pools, and tanks is, I think, a special form of cruelty. No one has ever produced a compelling reason to justify such treatment - certainly not a scientific or conservation-based reason.

My current scientific interest is in the evolution of self-awareness in the animal kingdom. Through experiments, supported by sophisticated neuroanatomical studies (mostly benign research on live free individuals and occasional stranded ones), we now know of a small, but increasing number of animal species who are self-aware. Among them are at least two cetacean species – the bottlenose dolphin and sperm whale, and although the experimental

results have not yet been published, it appears to be almost certain that - unsurprisingly - the orca (the largest dolphin) is also self-aware. More will undoubtedly be added to this list. This is for me is, in itself, sufficient reason for no cetaceans to be held captive, except temporarily for the purposes of rescue and rehabilitation or, for scientific purposes, in special facilities where voluntary exit is permitted.

I wish you every success in your effort and very much hope that your government will embrace this bill and take a leadership role on this important issue.

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