

SENATE



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Hon. Michael L. MacDonald

L' hon. Michael L. MacDonald

25 October, 2022

**The Honourable Steven Guilbeault**

Minister of Environment and Climate Change  
200, boul. Sacré-Coeur  
Gatineau, Quebec K1A 0H3  
ministre-minister@ec.gc.ca

**The Honourable Joyce Murray**

Minister of Fisheries and Oceans  
200 Kent St, Station 15N100  
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0E6  
DFO.Minister-Ministre.MPO@dfo-mpo.gc.ca

Dear Ministers Guilbeault and Murray,

I am writing to urge our government to support several proposals relating to the protection of sharks at the upcoming meeting of the Conference of the Parties (CoP19) of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) in November of this year.

The proposals (numbers 37, 38 and 40) would list all requiem and hammerhead sharks, and guitarfishes, all at a comprehensive family-level listing on Appendix II of the Convention – providing for protection from over-exploitation. Appendix II provides for the regulation of species that are not necessarily now threatened with extinction but that may become so unless closely controlled.

Sharks have been swimming in our oceans for at least 420 million years. They predate the dinosaurs by 150 million years and, as apex predators, they play a most critical role in maintaining the health of our ocean biodiversity and ecosystems. Despite their longevity, sharks are particularly vulnerable to exploitation because of their slow maturation and reproductive rates.

They are one of the most vital species on the planet, but many shark populations are being decimated to the point of nearing extinction.

Human exploitation is driving this decline. It is estimated that as many as 100 million sharks are killed per year, primarily to satisfy the global demand for their fins. Most of these sharks will have their fins cut off at sea, usually while they are still alive, and are then thrown overboard to drown or bleed to death.

It is an unsustainable, irresponsible and ecologically reckless practice, and it is supplying trade in countries where the exploitation of unlisted shark species remains unmanaged. It is an ecological disaster in full progress.

Unfortunately, 70% of requiem sharks are now listed as a threatened species on the IUCN Red List, and we continue to see population declines driven by high volumes of requiem shark fins within international trade.

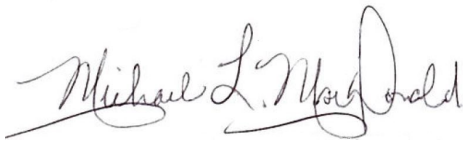
Recent studies have also shown that, although larger-bodied hammerheads are listed on Appendix II, the fin trade is also being supplied by smaller-bodied species of hammerhead that are not currently protected with an Appendix II listing. Listing the entire family of hammerhead sharks would also ensure that the fins of large-bodied hammerheads are not falsely claimed to be of the unlisted species of smaller-bodied hammerheads.

In 2017, I introduced Bill S-238, the Ban on Shark Fin Importation and Exportation Act, which proposed to ban the importation of detached shark fins into Canada. The provisions of S-238 would eventually be incorporated into government legislation and adopted. Canada emerged as a global leader in the protection of sharks, being the first industrialized country to introduce such a ban on fin trade.

Although Canada's commitment to limit the fin trade domestically was an important initiative, the solution to ending the exploitation of sharks will most certainly have to be at the international level.

Canada and our partners at CITES must have a more proactive approach – such as is provided by the comprehensive family-level protections that the proposals would offer. We must continue to act as a global leader in the protection of sharks and I fully support these proposals at the upcoming meeting of CoP19 of CITES and urge our government to do the same.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Michael L. MacDonald". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Michael" and last name "MacDonald" clearly legible.

Michael L. MacDonald, Senator – Nova Scotia (Cape Breton)

cc: The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau, Prime Minister of Canada  
The Honourable Marc Gold, Government Representative in the Senate