

ONTARIO FEDERATION OF ANGLERS & HUNTERS



Ontario Conservation Centre

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OFAH FILE: 402
January 7, 2016

Mr. Sylvain Gauthier, General Manager
Holiday Inn Toronto International Airport
970 Dixon Road
Toronto, Ontario
M9W 1J9

Dear Mr. Gauthier:

Re: Cancellation of African Hunting Expo

I am writing on behalf of the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters (OFAH), our 100,000 members, supporters and subscribers, and 725 member clubs. As Ontario's largest non-profit, conservation-based organization (and a past customer of your establishment on numerous occasions), we were very troubled by your recent decision to cancel the African Hunting Expo. Much has been said in the media recently about trophy hunting, mostly by organizations that are woefully misinformed. We feel this misinformation led to the cancellation of this event and, therefore, felt compelled to address some of these inaccuracies.

Firstly, it is critical to recognize that there is a clear distinction between legal, regulated hunting and illegal poaching. The OFAH does not condone illegal activities of any kind – in fact, we firmly believe that poaching and other illegal activities should result in harsh penalties. Your decision to cancel the event implies that hunters should be ashamed of their pursuit of trophy animals, and blindly reinforces the misconceptions about trophy hunting and, by extension, all forms of regulated hunting.

When properly regulated according to proven ecological, biological, and economic principles, sustainable hunting can be a valuable tool for wildlife conservation. Regulated sustainable hunting offers numerous benefits for wildlife populations and society as a whole, including wholesome food, valuable hides, predator control, habitat restoration, and protection of property. This is particularly true in developing countries where habitat loss and other pressures on wildlife can be high, and impoverished communities have no other incentive to protect wildlife habitat. Revenues from intensely managed hunting can provide these important incentives for landowners and local communities to protect habitat, and for ongoing enforcement, management, and species reintroductions. For instance, an estimated 1,394,000 km² of land is utilized for trophy hunting in sub-Saharan Africa, which exceeds the area encompassed by National Parks by approximately 20%. The benefits of regulated hunting in these countries have been demonstrated in numerous research papers, which I would be happy to share with you.

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The benefits of regulated trophy hunting have also been recognized by various global wildlife conservation organizations, including the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Species Survival Commission, the Convention on the International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), the Wildlife Society (TWS), and the International Council for Game and Wildlife Conservation (CIC). All of these respected organizations are dedicated to protecting and conserving the world's wildlife and they all recognize the benefits that regulated trophy hunting provides. Species that have directly benefited from a big game hunting industry include bontebok, black wildebeest, and cape mountain zebra. Perhaps the best example is the recovery of the white rhinoceros in South Africa, where the legalization of white rhinoceros hunting motivated private landowners to reintroduce the species onto their lands. This resulted in a population increase from fewer than 100 to over 11,000 rhinos – all while supporting a limited and tightly regulated trophy hunting industry.

Your cancellation of the event is an unjustified persecution of a group based on their participation in a legal activity, and implies that hunters should be ashamed of their involvement in this activity. Why is it acceptable for hunters and legitimate, law-abiding outfitting businesses to be discriminated against because a segment of society does not agree with the activity or the event? We as a society do not always share the same perspectives and beliefs as others. That is a fact and an inevitable reality of the modern society we live in, and requires all members of society to show tolerance for others. Religious, cultural, racial, gender-based and other forms of discrimination are not tolerated, so why is it acceptable to discriminate against members of the hunting community for pursuing legal and beneficial activities? If these activities are legal and benefit society in some way - social, economic, ecological, or personal - then why are they being so obviously discriminated against? I respectfully request that you provide justification for your decision to cancel this event.

I also encourage you to become better educated on the benefits that regulated hunting provides to society. Until a response is received, the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters will not consider doing business with your facility and we will encourage our membership to do the same.

Thank you for your time and attention to this matter and I look forward to receiving your response.

Yours in Conservation,



Angelo Lombardo
Executive Director

AL/jb

cc: Canadian Wildlife Federation Affiliates
OFAH Board of Directors
Lezlie Goodwin, Editor-in-Chief, Ontario OUT of DOORS
Matt DeMille, OFAH Manager, Fish & Wildlife Services
Greg Farrant, OFAH Manager, Government Affairs & Policy
Robert Pye, OFAH Manager, Business Development & Corporate Messaging
Shawn Cayley, OFAH Manager, Communications
Brian McRae, OFAH Zone/Member & Club Services Liaison

African trophy hunting show in Toronto cancelled

LIAM CASEY, THE CANADIAN PRESS

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This handout picture taken on October 21, 2012 by the Zimbabwe National Parks agency shows a much-loved Zimbabwean lion called "Cecil," which was killed by American dentist Walter Palmer. (AFP)

TORONTO - A Toronto hotel has cancelled an African trophy hunting show after animal activists protested the event in an online petition.

The Holiday Inn Toronto International Airport hotel says in a Facebook post it cancelled the African Hunting Events show, but didn't provide a reason.

A spokesman for InterContinental Hotels Group, which owns the Holiday Inn chain but not the airport hotel, said the Toronto hotel decided to cancel the show earlier Thursday.

But Birgit Johnstone, a director with African Events Canada -- the organizer of the the two-day show along with others in Calgary and Saskatoon -- says the event will go on because she has a legal contract with the hotel.

She says about 40 people have booked trips and secured visas to travel from Africa for the event, which is an important part of their business.

Animal Justice lawyer Camille Labchuk, who led the online petition, says Holiday Inn showed leadership by standing up against the "senseless slaughter of majestic animals."

"More and more companies are stepping up to the plate and refusing to play any part in the trophy hunting industry," Labchuk said.

"The noose is closing around the neck of this cruel industry."

Johnstone said there is a fundamental misunderstanding about the trips that are being promoted at the show.

"This is about sustainable utilization of wildlife in Africa," she said. "It's not about a mass slaughter of wildlife. These are legal hunting trips."

The websites of some of the exhibitors promote hunting lions, elephants and giraffes along with photos and videos of the kills.

Johnstone said hunting is only part of what the exhibitors offer.

"There are also fishing trips, photographic trips, regular safaris, too."

Johnstone is livid with the Holiday Inn.

"I've never tried to hide anything," she said. "The hotel knew what the event was about for months and only now are they changing their minds because of public pressure."