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Canada Bans Keeping Whales and Dolphins in Captivity

Canada this week joined a growing group of nations that have outlawed the capture and imprisonment of dolphins and whales. Under the recently passed “Free Willy” Bill, dolphins and whales in Canada will soon be guaranteed their freedom from captivity when it becomes law at the end of the month. The Bill also outlaws the captive breeding of whales, dolphins and porpoises. Former Senator Wilfred Moore of Nova Scotia, who introduced the measure, formally known as the “Ending the Captivity of Whales and Dolphins Act”, said that phasing out the animals’ captivity was a “moral obligation.”



But it is not governments only who are taking action to ensure freedom for these intelligent, sociable sea creatures. Increasingly airline companies and the cruise industry are turning their backs on this inhumane practice and tourists, who are becoming increasingly environmentally conscious, are advocating for “Freeing Willy”.



Dolphins off the coast of Soufriere

In Canada, Marineland initially resisted the Bill but on Monday said that their position had evolved and that they plan on complying with the new law. The Vancouver Aquarium, which also held the animals in captivity, bowed to public opposition last year on the issue. “The public told us they believed the continuing importation and display of these intelligent and sociable mammals was unethical and incompatible with evolving public opinion and we amended our bylaws accordingly,” Vancouver Park Board Chair Stuart Mackinnon said.

In their scramble to prolong the life of this dying industry, promoters are seeking out countries like Saint Lucia where governments appear to be not as progressive, humane or sensitive to public opinion, to set up shop. Given global trends, this could tarnish Saint Lucia’s global image as a tourism destination, to the detriment of this vital industry and the jobs it sustains.