

Remarks by Dr. Lori Marino to the Niagara Falls Committee of Adjustment concerning the whales at Marineland Canada

Hello, Committee members,

I am Dr. Lori Marino, the President of the Whale Sanctuary Project. And we are creating a seaside whale sanctuary in Nova Scotia. I am here because we want to offer a solution for the remaining belugas at Marineland.

I have studied dolphins and whales for over thirty years, during which time we found they have overly large complex brains and are, therefore, highly intelligent and emotionally sensitive.

In a study my colleagues and I conducted in 2000, we found that they are self-aware beings, which means that, just like us, they can reflect upon their lives in the past, present and future.

In 2017 I testified to the Senate Committee about The Ending of Captivity of Whales and Dolphins Bill, which bans the breeding and keeping of dolphins and whales for entertainment purposes and was made into law in 2019. At that time, I did so because there was an urgent need to address the welfare issues at Marineland for the belugas, dolphins, and the one surviving orca, Kiska. Today, though many of those animals are gone, the need is just as great for those remaining.

The Whale Sanctuary Project is an international team of marine mammal and veterinary experts, and others who are concerned about the welfare of the whales and dolphins at Marineland.

Since 2019, 18 beluga whales have perished at this facility, along with other animals. This is a startling number of animals to die at one facility in a brief period and it increases our desire to help them in any way we can.

We are also very concerned about the inclusion of the term 'expeditious removal' of marine mammals required by Marineland's bridge-loan financier, and the likelihood that the whales would be sold off to yet another entertainment facility, perhaps in China, where the welfare laws are almost nonexistent. Such a move would be entirely contrary to the intent and spirit of the law to Bring an End to the Captivity of Whales and Dolphins.

The Whale Sanctuary Project has spent the last eight years creating a seaside sanctuary for belugas and orcas where they can be transferred from concrete tanks to a natural ocean environment and still be cared for.

We have 40 hectares (100 acres) of ocean space in Nova Scotia. We have conducted three years of environmental testing on site and have shown that the site is a clean, safe and healthy environment for whales.

And we are now poised to begin construction of this expansive site, with a one-mile-long perimeter net and a bay pen that will serve as a special care and medical facility, along with buildings for staff, food storage, and equipment.

This site is right here in Canada. The animals at Marineland have entertained and contributed to the economy of Canada for over 50 years. And we believe that it is a national priority for us to provide a safe and comfortable retirement in a natural setting, thus completing the arc of the law that will bring an end to keeping whales and dolphins in captivity and will distinguish Canada as a leader in animal welfare.

We are ready to work with all parties – Marineland, animal protection organizations, the government, foundations and other donors – towards providing a better future for the beluga whales and the dolphins at Marineland.

Thank you.