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a log book for MNR's files and also on the trapper's licence. The officer then stamps each pelt with a permanent seal.

It is illegal for a fur buyer or the fur auction company to have in their possession unsealed pelts. Only after the pelts have been sealed, can they be shipped to the fur auction facility. MNR has a permanent staff position assigned exclusively to the auction house to monitor, audit and enforce numerous complex regulations and to ensure the proper collection of fur royalty.

FHA does not buy the pelts directly from the trapper. Fur harvesters ship or deliver their pelts to be consigned to auction with thousands of other fur pelts from other trappers. They are sold on auction to the highest bidder. The trapper receives the highest market value for his skins less an 11% commission. This commission goes to the auction house to pay salaries, utilities, and so on.

Royalty is also deducted from the trapper's cheque. The royalty is a tax which applies to each species of furbearer. This tax fluctuates on a yearly basis; it rises and falls depending on the market price of the species. The royalty is determined at 5% of what each species averaged the previous year. For instance, beaver are now averaging \$26.50; therefore, next year, every trapper will be taxed \$1.30 per pelt sold.

The FHA - an internationally recognized auction house - is a good example of what can result by combining the history and tradition of our ancestors with the modern technology of fur harvesters and marketing. Each individual pelt is tagged and controlled with accurate computer traceability that will instantly identify the owner and origin of the pelt. Individual pelt traceability is maintained throughout the entire province.

Fur Harvesters Auction is recognized as a world leader in providing consistently graded bundles or "Lots" of fur. Technicians expertly sort and grade the 22 furbearer species handled at the FHA. There are no endangered species of furbearer in the province of Ontario. The pelts are graded to size, quality and



*This trapper is getting his pelts sealed by a Ministry of Natural Resources Officer.*



*A ten-year old girl participating in the Youth Beaver Skinning Competition at the annual convention.*

colour. Within the international fur trade, North Bay is renowned for its proximity to the abundance of quality wild fur available from the Northern parts of Canada. Fur buyers from around the globe travel to FHA in North Bay, a picturesque city of 50,000 people located on the shores of Lake Nipissing.

Every winter, in February, FHA hosts an



annual convention. Over the years, crowds of several thousand trappers have flooded into North Bay to attend the three-day event. The convention agenda includes activities for all ages, from MNR's Canadian women beaver skinning competition to youth trap setting contests. Three days of events, seminars, trapper education lectures and banquets keep attendants busy.

The case for trappers and the fur industry is one of conservation, as well as economics. A prohibition of the annual fur harvest would quickly result in the over crowding of fur bearers and large scale die offs through starvation and disease. It would also inflict financial loss on both native and non-native trappers.

The harvesting of wild fur was Canada's first land based industry, and it has produced an annual crop of fur for more than 300 years. There is probably no other renewable, natural resource that produces more money per acre of land than a beaver colony. The trapline management program in Ontario, begun in 1946, is the finest of its kind. Laws and regulations are based on facts, and not emotion. Trapline management in Ontario may well be the greatest conservation achievement of the century.

The fur industry is important to residents of Northern Ontario. It provides many with the money to clothe and feed their families. Furbearers are also a vital source of protein in the north. The meat is often valued more highly than the pelt.

Fur harvesters are an intricate part of the natural scene, perhaps more so than any other section of our society. Most of Ontario is suited to the production of fur bearers, and some of it is suited to little else.

If travelling through or near North Bay, take time to drop by Fur Harvesters' facility on Bond Street. Fred, Mark or Don will be pleased to walk you through the operation. If you have a group interested, you can make prior arrangements for a presentation by a registered trapper, conservation officer and fur auction manager.

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