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NEWS CANADA

Spring bear hunt could generate millions of dollars annually, new report finds

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A new report released by Northern Policy Institute recommends that the provincial government reintroduce the spring bear hunt with a non-resident component on a trial basis. The report, *Does the Spring Bear Hunt Make 'Cents?'* was researched and written by Dr. Mike Commito, policy analyst with Northern Policy Institute.


The report recommends reintroducing the spring bear hunt because it will be a boon to many Northern Ontario communities with strong outfitting industries, the current black bear population can sustain additional harvesting, and other provinces such as British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Quebec, New Brunswick, and Newfoundland and Labrador all offer spring bear hunting opportunities.

According to Commito, reintroducing the spring bear hunt could generate millions of dollars annually for the province. In 1997, a provincial mail survey found that non-resident hunters spent \$25.2-million on spring and fall black bear hunting.

"History has demonstrated that non-resident bear hunting, primarily individuals from the United States, has been big business for outfitters and guides in Northern Ontario, particularly during the spring season (1937-1998)," Commito writes. "In the wake of the moratorium in 1999, resident and non-resident hunters have participated in extended fall seasons. The most recent data from the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry has placed the number of resident and non-resident hunters in 2012 at 16,378 and 4,843 respectively. Based on the cost of licenses for the 2012 season, this amounts to an estimated \$1,825,693 in license sales alone."

Commito adds that according to the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry the current black bear population in Ontario, estimated to be between 85,000 and 105,000, can sustain additional hunting in the spring. The MNRF estimates that the current black bear population can withstand a 10 percent harvest threshold.

"While the 10 percent harvest rate is generally applicable across the province, it could be too high in certain parts of Ontario's Boreal Forest region, so it is important to keep stock of these local variances in terms of acceptable harvest rates," Commito writes. "[. . .] Going back through the last fourteen seasons from 1999 to 2012, the estimated combined legal harvest for trappers and hunters is 75,754 black bears. This gives an expected annual average of 5,411 and therefore places Ontario in an acceptable harvest range of 5-6 percent of the total population."

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