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## NEWS LOCAL

# Report calls for return of spring bear hunt



By Alan S. Hale, The Daily Press  
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Black bear.

TIMMINS - Reinstating the spring bear hunt would inject millions of dollars into Ontario's economy, according to a recent report by a Northern Ontario-based think tank.

The Northern Policy Institute has released a report recommending the Ontario government bring back the spring bear hunt on a trial basis. The hunt, it suggested, should be open to hunters from outside the province as well because it would provide an enormous economic benefit for Northern Ontario.

The think tank's data shows that in 1997, when Ontario had both a spring and fall bear hunt, hunters spent \$30.3 million on everything from licences to hunting camp packages — \$25 million of which was spent by hunters coming from outside Ontario.

The spring bear hunt was cancelled in 1999 by the Mike Harris government after years of political pressure to do so. In 2013, the spring hunt was revived in certain areas of the province as a pilot project, but only for resident hunters.

Now that the pilot project is over, the Northern Policy Institute says it should be opened up to everyone. Otherwise, the think tank argues the province would be denying itself millions of dollars in tourism revenue.

Guy Lamarche, the City of Timmins' manager of tourism, agreed.

"I was involved in tourism when the spring bear hunt was alive and well and was, in fact, a huge generator for the tourism industry," said Lamarche. "I can say with 100% certainty that any new big game hunt that is well positioned and properly executed will draw big money."

Angie Chartrand is the owner of Big Bear Camp, Horwood Lake, southeast of Foleyetwhich does healthy business in hunters coming up for the fall bear hunt.

She said that nearly all the hunters who pay for her hunting packages are American, and that by banning non-residents from hunting in the spring, she is missing out on \$20,000 a week in revenue during the hunt, at the very least.

"Having a spring bear hunt would help a lot," she said. "There's almost no hunting going on during the spring, and we can only take on so many hunters in the fall. A lot of people are waiting two or three years to be able to come up to the camp. We lose a lot of money when we can't say yes to these people."

The spring bear hunt was initially banned due to mounting political pressure from people opposed to the practice of baiting bears and concerned by the risk of accidentally killing female bears and orphaning her cubs.

For the latter reason, the think tank recommends if the bear hunt is brought back, it should be a male-only harvest. To cut down on misidentification of females as males, the institute said penalties for killing a female should be stiffened.

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