

tvo

The Next Ontario (/current-affairs/the-next-ontario)

The Food Chain (/current-affairs/the-food-chain)

Shared Values (/current-affairs/shared-values)

Why the spring bear hunt isn't about public safety

Facebook share link: http://www.facebook.com/sharer/sharer.php?mzw&[url]=http://tvo.org/article/current-affairs/the-next-ontario/why-the-spring-bear-hunt-isnt-about-public-safety
Twitter share link: https://twitter.com/intent/tweet?url=http://tvo.org/article/current-affairs/the-next-ontario/why-the-spring-bear-hunt-isnt-about-public-safety&text=Why+the+spring+bear+hunt+isn't+about+public+safety+%7C+TVO
Email share link: /mailto:
subject=From%20TVO%2A%20Why%20the%20spring%20bear%20hunt%20isn't%20about%20public%20safety&body=Following%20a%20summer%20of%20rampant%20bear%20sightings%20in%20some%20parts%20of%20northern%20Ontario%2C%20the%20spring%20bear%20hunt%20is%20returning%20after%20a%2016-year%20government%20ban.%20But%20even%20supporters%20of%20the%20hunt%20say%20it%20will%20not%20curb%20bears%20wandering%20into%20towns%20or%20food.%2C%A%0%D%A%0%AMore%20at%3A%20http%3A//tvo.org/article/current-affairs/the-next-ontario/why-the-spring-bear-hunt-isnt-about-public-safety

Published Nov 17, 2015 by Jenny Appel, Special to TVO.org
Follow @jenny



for a summer with more than a 1,000 bear sightings around Sudbury alone.
http://www.theweeknetnetwork.com/news/articles/more-than-1000-bear-sightings-reported-in-sudbury
http://www.theweeknetnetwork.com/news/articles/more-than-1000-bear-sightings-reported-in-sudbury
http://www.theweeknetnetwork.com/news/articles/more-than-1000-bear-sightings-reported-in-sudbury

But how effective is the hunt in keeping people safe from errant bears? Are there other ways to curb bear wanderings without resorting to force?
Hunters will now be able to shoot male black bears between May 1 and June 15 for at least the next five years in 88 hunting regions across the province. A hunt this size will be the first since 1979, when Mike Harris' government banned the spring hunt in response to pressure from environmentalists and animal rights activists concerned about the welfare of vulnerable female bears and their cubs. (http://www.ontario.ca/next-ontario) Under the new spring hunt, it will still be illegal to hunt bear cubs and females with cubs.

Public safety is a key reason the government is going for the return of the spring hunt. Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry Bill Marzulli says, "The government is committed to addressing the public safety concerns of Ontarians who are concerned about human-bear conflicts, and to serve as a boon to tourism and economic growth in the region."

Mark Ryckman, senior wildlife biologist with the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters (OFAH), explains the return of the hunt, for which he has advocated since its abolition, but sees very little public safety benefit as temporary.

"If we were to list in order of importance all the benefits of a spring bear hunt, then public safety would be down near the bottom." The socioeconomic benefits are huge, Ryckman says. "We're talking about tens of millions of dollars annually spent in areas that really rely on those outside tourism dollars to sustain their businesses."

"If we were to completely ignore the public safety benefits, we believe that the spring bear hunt has the merit to stand on its own."

An August 2014 report from the Northern Policy Institute (http://www.northernpolicy.ca/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/NI-Report-2014-08-20-Northern-Policy-Institute-Report-2014-08-20.pdf) found that the idea of reintroducing the spring hunt to protect people from potential bear attacks.

"Black bears are smart, large and powerful animals that are capable of being dangerous, but conducting the spring bear hunt with public safety as a motivation is a misunderstanding of the animal that has ramifications beyond the hunting season," the report states.

The report supports the reinstatement of the hunt, but not for public safety purposes. Its authors want to use the hunt to provide a boost to northern Ontario hunters by opening it up to non-residents.

So what explains the government's emphasis on the public safety angle?
Dylan Gordon, a University of Toronto PhD candidate in anthropology who researches the Canadian trade of wild food products, says the government's focus on reducing human-bear conflict is a product of Ontario's rural-urban divide.

Ontario's southern cities are filled with relatively wealthy and familiar with hunting as a way of life and may not be as supportive of a bear hunt seen as a cash grab. They're more likely to support it if it's framed in terms of keeping them safe, he says.

"A lot of people who are pro-animal rights would still agree that a human's life is more valuable than a bear's," says Gordon.

Mike McInnis, founder of Bear with Us, a sanctuary and rehabilitation center, calls both the government's justifications for reintroducing the hunt "a bunch of misleading."

He blames hunting groups like OFAH for pressuring the government into supporting a policy that ignores the issue at hand — hunting. It's not that there are too many bears wandering northern Ontario, McInnis says, but that they're being drawn into cities by hunters.

"If there were more regulations referring to hunting, it would make it a much more legitimate, honest and ethical hunt," he says.

"The bears aren't the dangerous ones," says McInnis. "The hunters are."

Ryckman rejects the notion that hunting is a necessary battle. He says it has no impact on bears' use of natural food, and that they are still going to come into cities looking for food. (http://www.ontario.ca/next-ontario) The idea that bears are wandering into cities because of the hunt is a myth, he says. "Proper bear management requires the use of all available tools," he says, "including regulated hunting."

Next
Previous
http://www.ontario.ca/next-ontario/why-the-spring-bear-hunt-isnt-about-public-safety
http://www.ontario.ca/next-ontario/why-the-spring-bear-hunt-isnt-about-public-safety

For over four decades, TVO has built a reputation based on trust, quality and depth. To make a donation or to find out how you can help. Donate Now / Donate now!

Comments TVO
Recommended Share
Start by clicking
Start the discussion...

Be the first to comment

REGAR CAC: Revolution Justified
Canadian Singer
The Agenda discusses two approaches - realist and idealist
The battle over truth is 'real'

Read the latest from The Next Ontario

How Ontario's steel industry is manufacturing a new future
Ontario's steel industry is manufacturing a new future. The industry at St. Catharines Steel Works is investing in new technology and infrastructure to ensure its long-term survival.

How Ontario's research has changed the world
Ontario's research has changed the world. From the development of the first computer to the discovery of the Higgs boson, Ontario has been at the forefront of many of the world's most significant scientific and technological advances.

Queen's Park This Week - Women's Caucus: Chinese trade; Tobacco bushes smother market security
Queen's Park This Week - Women's Caucus: Chinese trade; Tobacco bushes smother market security. The Ontario Women's Caucus discussed various issues during their meeting on November 17th.

Read all articles from The Next Ontario (current-affairs/the-next-ontario)

likely make the world a better place through the power of learning.
Donate Now / Donate now!