



January, 2014

Dear Friend,

Fifteen years ago (as you may recall), we celebrated a hard-fought but wonderful wildlife protection victory. The Ontario government of Progressive Conservative Premier, Mike Harris cancelled one of that province's cruelest sport hunts: the Spring Bear Hunt.

Our four year long, winning campaign saved the lives of thousands of black bears and prevented thousands of bear cubs being orphaned, and cruelly left to die.

Two things made that victory possible: the close cooperation of organizations across Ontario and, more importantly, an unshakeable foundation of financial support and defiant advocacy provided by people like you. A winning, animal-saving coalition.

A coalition we must now rebuild, because of Ontario's new Premier, the Hon. Kathleen Wynne.

Liberal Premier Kathleen Wynne has callously reintroduced the horror of the Spring Bear Hunt. Why? According to a senior Liberal MPP (who spoke with me in confidence), Wynne did it for the most cynical, and self-serving of political reasons. She thinks sport killing bears and orphaning cubs who will suffer and die a prolonged death from dehydration and starvation will help her hang on to seats in northern Ontario in the next provincial election.

I'll give you more details below about the Spring Bear Hunt (past and present) and, equally troubling, about Premier Wynne's war on animals and the environment, but for now remember this above all.

Premier Wynne and her Ontario Liberals have shown themselves eager to disregard all environmental, animal, and wildlife protection laws and regulations to serve their single-minded goal of getting re-elected—all the while willfully ignoring environmental damage done and animal cruelty caused.

Included with this letter are a Petition and an Action Mailer addressed to Premier Wynne. Please, it's vital that you post your Action Mailer as soon as possible.

As for the Petition, I know that it can be very difficult getting people to sign a Petition, but every name you can get will help us show Wynne and the Liberal political machine that the electoral consequences for Wynne's despicable decision to re-open sport slaughtering bears in the Spring will be devastating to her and the Liberals' political ambitions.

(IMPORTANT: Please mail your completed petition to our office. Thank you.)

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As important as your Petition and Action Mailer are, today's cynical politics (and politicians) demand more of us, if we're to save animals and the environment. We need to prove—measured in votes lost—to the Wynne Liberals (and the other parties) that bad animal and environmental protection policies will cost them votes, seats, and possibly even the next election.

If we want good animal and environmental protection policies, there must be serious electoral consequences for politicians who promote and implement bad policies. There's no other way forward.

However, this self-serving political hypocrisy can, actually, serve us (and the animals) well. The Ontario Liberals—as their recent scandals have shown, and as Wynne, herself, continues to show with her policies—make decisions based not on what is good public policy, but solely on what they believe wins votes.

So, how to stop the Spring Bear Hunt (again)? Prove to Wynne and her Liberals that bad policies about animals and the environment will cost them seats, and perhaps even the next election. We'll do that by campaigning in the upcoming by-election in Niagara Falls. As you read these words, we're organizing and recruiting environmental and animal protection groups across Ontario to campaign with us.

You are critical to planning and running the most effective campaigns possible. We must—absolutely must—have your financial support to pay for campaign literature; print and radio advertising; and provide logistical support for our campaign volunteers with transportation and meals.

Now, let's talk in more detail about the Spring Bear Hunt, and Ontario Premier Kathleen's Wynne's war on animals and the environment.

Killing animals solely for sport—sheer gratuitous amusement—is profoundly and fundamentally immoral. It is human beings gratifying the worst demons of their natures. Sport hunting is inherently cruel. It inherently harms the species targeted. And, it is inherently environmentally destructive. The Spring Bear Hunt promotes all of these evils, and more.

The Spring Bear Hunt is not a “hunt” at all. There is no “hunt”, only the “fun” of killing. Typically, shooting platforms are erected in trees, where the hunters lie in wait for their victims. For weeks prior to the actual hunt, the hunters bait the area with garbage food to attract the bears. The bears are coming out of hibernation and are ravenous, and natural food is often scarce. The hunters count on the bears becoming accustomed to human scent and dependent on the bait food. Unsuspecting, they visit the bait sites daily to eat.

On the day of the hunt, the sportsmen merely await the scheduled arrival of the bears and shoot them from the safety and comfort of the tree platform.

But, there's an even darker side to the Spring Bear Hunt than the cruel and meaningless killing of the bears. Often, the bears being shot are females with cubs. Without their mothers to feed and protect them, the cubs die from starvation, dehydration, injury, or predation.

Oh, of course, there are regulations against killing female bears with cubs, but like all of Ontario's wildlife protection laws they are no longer effectively enforced, and don't protect animals at all. In fact, it is so bad that the Minister depends on the hunters to report killing females with cubs.

One of the reasons that former Ontario Premier Mike Harris gave for ending the Spring Bear Hunt in 1999 was the orphaning and deaths of cubs, thousands of them according to best estimates—something that does not seem to concern Premier Wynne.

The “official” reason for re-introducing the Spring Bear Hunt is to reduce human/bear conflicts. However, research shows that hunting actually increases human bear conflict whereas programs like Bear Wise, a strategy based on non-lethal, humane, and responsible methods, reduces them.

In 2003, the year before City of Elliot Lake, Ontario implemented Bear Wise, there were 500 nuisance bear reports and three bear shootings. In 2004, thanks to Bear Wise there were 87 nuisance bears and no shootings.

When Wynne was elected leader of the Ontario Liberal Party, and became Ontario's Premier, one prominent environmentalist wrote, “...environmental advocates can now reasonably assume that under Premier Wynne, the Ontario Liberal Government will continue to emphasize her predecessor's signature environmental commitments.”

Instead, what Wynne is actually doing is depriving most environmental and animal protection programs of funds and human resources, dismantling them, or downloading them to cash-strapped municipalities that lack the necessary expertise. Those few “signature environmental commitments?” All but abandoned.

Most Ontario environmental and animal protection laws are no longer enforced, save for a few “quick and dirty,” show-case, ineffective enforcement stunts staged for their public relations value and nothing more. And, just like the Stephen Harper Government in Ottawa, the Kathleen Wynne Government has taken a chainsaw to the scientific research needed to make sound decisions about environmental and animal protection, and sustainable development.

It may be hard to believe, but the dirty fact is that the Wynne Liberals now boast a worse environmental record (with the sole exception of phasing out coal-fired electrical generation) and animal protection record than Prime Minister Stephen Harper's, the Canadian prime minister with the worst environmental record in recent Canadian history.

(See the enclosed “Excerpts from Ontario's Independent Watch Dogs.”)

Please, help us stop the new Spring Bear Hunt. Help us stop Premier Kathleen Wynne and her Liberal Party's war on Ontario's animals and the environment. Help us put together a new winning coalition, like the one that convinced former Premier Mike Harris to end the Spring Bear Hunt in 1999.

We need—actually, the bears, other animals, and the environment need—your financial support and (if you have the time and live within a reasonable commute to our offices in Toronto or Niagara Falls) your volunteer time.

Please, be as generous as you can with both your time and your donations.



Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Liz White', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Liz White, Director

P.S. As expected, Premier Wynne has just called the by-elections. Voters go to the polls in Thornhill and Niagara Falls on Thursday, February 13. Please, I urge you to support our Niagara Falls by-election campaign to hold Wynne accountable for her tragic animal and environmental protection record, and for reopening the Spring Bear Hunt.

A final point, our campaign in Niagara Falls to hold Wynne and the Liberals accountable will send a strong message to the other candidates and parties. They, too, will begin to realize that they will also be held accountable in elections for their environmental and animal protection policies and record.

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