

OPINION

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Leave baby geese alone

I am venting my reaction to witnessing a most disturbing and vile incident.

As most people know, spring yields many cute and cuddly hatchlings, including the goslings. While trying to photograph them, what I saw was truly despicable.

The geese were resting near Musselman's Lake, just beside Lakeshore Road, when someone went after them with a rake and shooed them back into the water.

Not only does this person most likely not own the land, but she stayed there waiting for the geese to swim far away from the alcove. She even took a light swing at one.

Obviously, many people don't like having geese in their yards because they are harsh on the grass, but goslings don't have much control over where they rest.

All geese need land to live on and they don't mean any harm by staying on land that is already unkempt.

If someone is willing to shoo small, defenceless goslings into the water, this person must hate geese and probably most animals, for that matter.

Whoever you are, I hope you feel ashamed and remain that way because if those geese had the power to shoo you out of your house, they would not treat you as you have treated them.

COREY KNECHT
WHITCHURCH-STOUFFVILLE

All but feds hurt by gas prices

Re: *Nowhere to go but up for price of gasoline, analysis by Sean Pearce, April 24.*

It's all very true, but why stop there? How much energy does your school board use heating schools and operating buses?

Stop in at your municipal works garage and ask how much they spend on energy per year to run transit systems, garbage collection and other services.

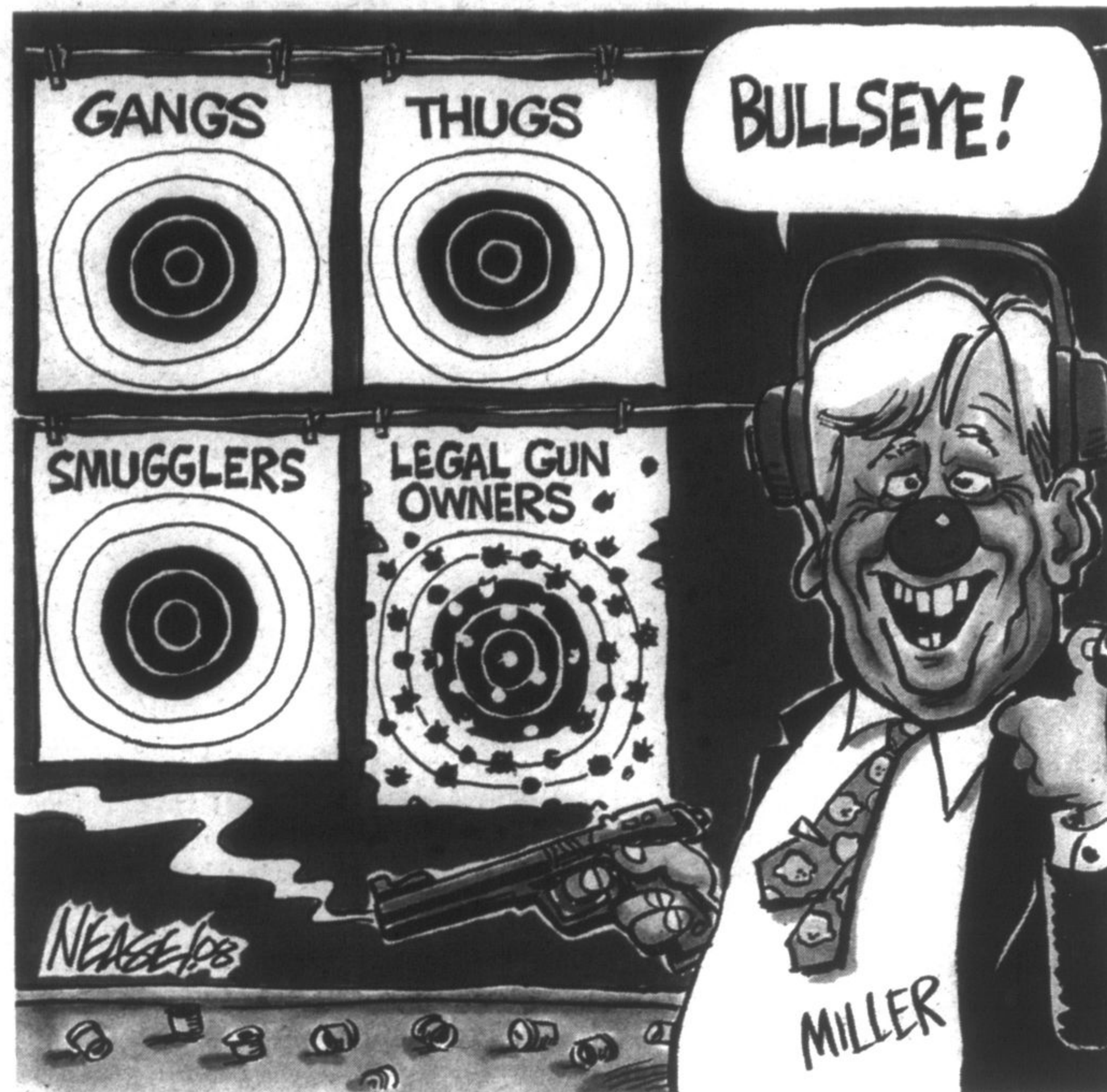
The province, with all its ministries, has thousands of vehicles on the road, a multitude of buildings to heat and, with its share of the fuel taxes on a volume basis (a set number of cents per litre), it does not benefit from higher prices.

Actually, if the population really does cut back on usage, it will receive less revenue, so look for its additional costs on your provincial tax return.

How about the hydro suppliers? Their costs will increase significantly. Look for all of these new costs on your tax and hydro bills.

Is there a winner in all this? Why, the federal government, of course. Its tax on energy is a percentage, the GST. It will receive billions of additional tax dollars. Is it going to share this windfall with the beleaguered taxpayer? If you believe that, in all probability, you also believe in the tooth fairy and Easter bunny.

J.B. MURRAY
STOUFFVILLE



Canada lackadaisical on polar bear status

The United States has listed the polar bear as a threatened species under its Endangered Species Act.

The U.S. Interior Department made the decision under pressure, including legal petitions, from environmental organizations.

Its reluctance to legally protect the species is evident in the caveats on the listing, most notably, limiting the implications for U.S. climate-change policy.

Nevertheless, the ruling does give polar bears more protection in the U.S. than in Canada.

Despite similar pressure from conservation groups in Canada and recommendations from the federal government's own committee of experts on endangered wildlife, little has been done to acknowledge the precarious position of the polar bear in this country.

In April, the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada assessed the polar bear (*Ursus maritimus*) as a species of special concern — one step below

a threatened listing and two below endangered — but the government has not yet listed it as such under the federal Species at Risk Act.

The bear was also assessed as special concern in 1991, 1992 and 2002, but in 2005, the federal government referred the issue back to the committee for a reassessment.

The lesser designation is to reflect the fact the species was evaluated as a whole; although the decline of some populations has been well studied, other polar bear populations aren't yet showing declines.

The bear is protected, to some extent, under provincial law. Manitoba, Ontario and Newfoundland and Labrador have all listed it under endangered species acts.

Thirteen of the world's 19 distinct polar bear populations, or 15,000 of the Arctic's 20,000 to 25,000 bears, live in Canada, with 12 of those populations living at least partly in Nunavut. Studies have found numbers for five populations are declining.



David Suzuki

But the factors in those declines, including melting ice flows caused by global warming, habitat loss, overhunting of some populations, increased shipping traffic and oil and gas exploration, and persistent organic pollutants, may put other populations at risk as well.

Although Canada's Environment Minister John Baird acknowledged the role of global warming when he commented on the U.S. decision, both the current government and the previous Liberal gov-

ernment have dragged their feet on the issues of global warming and polar bear protection.

The U.S. government took pains to ensure the polar bear's new legal status is not used to address the main cause of the problem.

According to the New York Times, Interior Secretary Dirk Kempthorne said it would be "wholly inappropriate" to use the listing to deal with greenhouse gases that cause global warming. That, despite his admission that "the decision was driven by overwhelming scientific evidence that 'sea ice is vital to polar bears' survival," and all available scientific models show that the rapid loss of ice will continue."

Mr. Baird has at least come around to expressing concern about the link.

"Let's be clear there's no doubt that global warming is a major factor and a major concern in this," he told the Vancouver Sun after the U.S. announcement. "It's not just global warming, but it's human-

induced global warming, which is what we need to take action on."

The international community has also flagged global warming as a major threat to the survival of polar bears. Regarding listing the polar bear as a "vulnerable" species, the International Union for Conservation of Nature stated: "Due to their long generation time and the current greater speed of global warming, it seems unlikely that polar bear will be able to adapt to the current warming trend in the Arctic. If climatic trends continue, polar bears may become eliminated from most of their range within 100 years."

With global warming opening up northern seaways to more shipping and oil and gas exploration, the federal government must do more to protect polar bear habitat, on land and at sea.

The committee's recommendation that the polar bear be listed as "special concern" under the Species at Risk Act will go to government in August.

LETTERS POLICY

The Sun-Tribune welcomes your letters. All submissions must be less than 400 words and must include a daytime telephone number, name and address. The Sun-Tribune reserves the right to publish or not publish and to edit for clarity and space.

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