ATTACHMENT 6

UNIVERSITY of GUELPH

Ontario Veterinary College
Department of Pathobiology

November 12, 2012

To Toronto City Council,

By request I am submitting the text version of the comments and clarifications which I presented to the City of Toronto Executive Committee meeting on Monday November 5'th, 2012. I hope this information assists Council in their quest to understand the implications of the previous decision regarding the Toronto Zoo elephants.

Thank you

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My name is Dale Smith. I am a veterinarian and am certified as a specialist in veterinary pathology by the Canadian Veterinary Medical Association. I am a Professor in the Department of Pathobiology at the Ontario Veterinary College at the University of Guelph, the Acting Director of the Canadian Cooperative Wildlife Health Center (Ontario and Nunavut Regions) and the manager of the joint program in Pathology and Graduate Training between the Toronto Zoo and the Ontario Veterinary College. For over 30 years my professional area of expertise has been zoo animal medicine and pathology.

I have three main points which I will elaborate on fully:

1. I believe that it was inappropriate and unprofessional for City Council to make the decision on the elephants' future without sufficient consultation with the responsible staff at the Toronto Zoo.
2. The Zoo and PAWs are in what I might call the prenuptial arrangements of a disaster of a marriage that should not be allowed to continue.
3. The shipment of elephants without any evidence of tuberculosis to a location where animals have died with active disease, and where a strong possibility exists of there being additional infected animals, is an unethical decision.

1. I completely agree with Emily Parr, speaker number 6, in that it was unfortunate and inappropriate that on October 24, 2011 the Toronto City Council took the decision regarding the future of the Toronto Zoo's three elephants out of the hands of the Toronto Zoo Board. The decision was thus made by politicians without substantive input by the professional staff that the City of Toronto hires in order to provide the best quality of care and make the best decisions for the Toronto Zoo animals. I have had a professional relationship with Toronto Zoo personnel for over 30 years. This experience has given me a high level of respect for the dedication, knowledge, and sincerity of the staff. I **disagree strongly** with the insinuations made here tonight that zoo staff is incapable of an unbiased and appropriate decision on where the elephants should be sent.

I do not understand the reasons why numerous speakers tonight felt it relevant or even appropriate to slander the Association of Zoos and Aquaria (AZA), and the Canadian Association of Zoos and Aquaria (CAZA). This decision is not about those organizations. One of the criticisms was that they are "self-regulated". Self-regulation is the way most professional bodies, including the veterinary, medical, and legal professions, operate. Being self-regulating in no way implies a lower standard of expectations. Comments were also made that the lack of AZA, and possibly CAZA, accreditation are of no import. These groups are not old boys clubs - they are organizations of serious individuals doing their best to set and improve standards for the care of animals in zoological facilities. Losses of accreditation will have significant implications for the zoo's conservation and endangered species breeding programs, and for its reputation as a professional institution within the zoo community.

2. The arrangement between the Toronto Zoo and PAWS is a hostile one by all accounts. It is conducted acrimoniously, in the press, and through lawyers. Toronto has the opportunity to withdraw from this arrangement. Given the difficulties and lack of progress, the lack of cordial relations and mutual mistrust among the parties I cannot understand why council wishes to continue in this relationship. Douglas Christie mentioned PAWS' contractual inability to provide full information to the Toronto Zoo, but this in no way negates the zoo's requirement and responsibility to complete due diligence before making a decision.

3. Since inception the Toronto Zoo has always maintained the highest standards in ensuring that significant strains of Mycobacteria be kept out of the collection. We have especially been concerned with ensuring freedom from *Mycobacterium tuberculosis*, a bacterium that can cause significant pathology in a variety of animal species, including elephants, and is a zoonotic agent, meaning that it can spread to and cause disease in humans. Sending the elephants that we have carefully protected for over 30 years to a facility where active infection with *Mycobacterium tuberculosis* is present in elephants that have died or been euthanized, and where additional animals may be infected, goes completely against the disease control programs that are inherent in managing the health of the animals under out care. There is a need for homes for elephants infected with tuberculosis, but I do not believe that combining them with tuberculosis-free elephants is ethical or appropriate.

I therefore urge the Toronto City Council Executive Committee to recommend to City Council that the arrangement with PAWS be dissolved and to let the Zoo and its professional staff go about their business in determining the best location for the elephants to be rehomed for the remainder of their days.

In response to questions from councillors I also made the following comments:

- A diagnosis of *Mycobacterium tuberculosis* is not an insignificant finding or a "red herring". It is a serious contagious disease with substantial negative health effects which the zoo community is trying to contain. Treatment of the disease is not simple, practical, or always effective. It requires large amounts of expensive drugs administered for extended periods of time with no guarantee of success.
- In my opinion the climate of Florida is more suited to elephants than that of Northern California, but I freely admit that I am not an elephant management expert and that elephants can be kept in cold climates given appropriate management strategies.
- A cross-country trip by road to California is a very long trip and there is a risk of the animals becoming upset and injuring themselves, of capture myopathy developing, and of other significant or fatal negative outcomes. I was asked if this could happen and I replied that it was certainly possible, but I hoped not likely. Reducing transit time reduces the likelihood of any of these adverse events occurring. Florida is substantially closer than California. Although I did not state it at the time, I would have serious professional doubts about placing geriatric elephants in travel crates (which must substantially restrict movement in order to provide security) in which they would have to travel without rest or an opportunity to stretch or move their limbs fully for a period of 40+ hours.

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