



Toronto Zoo New Governance Model Public Consultations

Summary Report: public meetings held November 19th & 20th, 2012

Background

On September 5th, The Toronto Zoo Board endorsed the recommendations within a report titled "The Future of Toronto Zoo Governance" - one that proposed a new governance model that would allow the Zoo to become both financially less dependent upon the City and to continue to embrace its core mandate (of preservation, conservation and education) within a regionally relevant context. .

In October 2012, City of Toronto Council directed the city manager and the Board of Management of the Toronto Zoo to fully explore the report (outlining the new governance model for the Toronto Zoo) and report back to the executive committee in January 2013. As part of the due diligence process, the Zoo Board was asked to conduct public consultations to seek input from Torontonians about the new governance model.

Mansfield Communications was asked to organize two public consultations to primarily solicit feedback from the membership and general public.

Notification Process for the Consultations

The Toronto Zoo posted an invitation on its website and sent a notice via email to its database of members, during the week of November 12th, 2012 to give Torontonians an opportunity to attend two sessions to discuss the contents of the report and learn more about the governance structure plans.

The first open house was held in a central location (at Metro Hall on Wellington Street West) on Monday, November 19 and the second was held at the Toronto Zoo (361A Old Finch Avenue) to provide accessibility for people from across the city.

Attendance

The diverse range of attendees included Toronto Zoo members, volunteers, and engaged citizens. In total, 52 people attended the sessions.

Approach

The consultation was run as an open forum for questions and free flowing dialogue. For those who were not as comfortable speaking in public, there was an opportunity to provide feedback and pose questions privately before and after the event and by a written form at the entry points.

Attendees also had an opportunity to confidentially fill out their response to polling questions related to Zoo governance (see below for the full results).

Summary of Consultations Input

The overarching feedback from the open houses was that participants believe this is an exciting time for the Toronto Zoo to build upon current success and continue efforts within its core mandate - to further conservation, education and environmental efforts. It was unanimous that the key to prosperity and moving forward for the Zoo is to ensure that it is not fully run and managed by the City of Toronto. There was a range of topics and issues that were addressed including the Zoo's AZA accreditation, the Board composition, impact for union members, volunteer involvement, future partnerships, sponsorships and the creation of a hub for universities and colleges.

Poll Results:

- 1) "Given this widespread movement, would you support or oppose an initiative by the Toronto Zoo to follow the trend and become a community based model with an independent Board of Directors? This question seems either incomplete or it has been cut from a larger set of questions.
 - Fully support – 95 %
 - Some support – 5%
 - Somewhat oppose
 - Fully oppose

- 2) Do you think the fulfillment of this Toronto Zoo mandate is greater achieved through publicly/community owned and operated or privately owned & operated? [Currently, the Toronto Zoo is owned by the City of Toronto- public]
 - Public/Community- 100%
 - Private

- 3) Are you more likely to give a donation to a Zoo that is run by a Board of Directors composed of citizens from the community or are you more likely to donate to the Toronto Zoo run by the City of Toronto government appointed Board of Directors?

- a) Community appointed Board- 100%
 - b) City appointed Board
- 4) Given the geographic proximity of the Toronto Zoo to both the Rouge National Urban Park (RNUP) and the U of T (Scarborough) would you support or oppose these entities jointly working to further conservation, education and environmental initiatives?
- a) Very supportive- 84%
 - b) Somewhat supportive- 16%
 - c) Somewhat against
 - d) Very against

Summary of Issues Raised

The New Board of Directors

- Q: How do people get on the Board?
A: People from all walks of life will be represented on the new board, but experts on corporate fundraising and other skill sets are needed as well. Politicians' representation will be minimized. Right now it's one member but not an executive member. Current report couldn't explore the finer details because it's in the early stages.
- Q: Is the Zoo Board already chosen?
A: No, there will be a transparent process conducted with a third party consultant to choose the best candidates. The guidelines have yet to be established but once they are known, we will come forward in a transparent way.

Management Agreement and City Involvement

- Q: Question of clarification in regards to the City's money for "state of repair."
A: City will continue to give state of repair money to maintain buildings.
- Q: How will "checks and balances" and the management agreement improve things?
A: Contract will make the Society more nimble because it gives authority to it instead of the City. Maintaining some City involvement will provide a check on the Zoological Society.

- Q: What's the incentive to the City to pay the \$6 million payments for state of good repairs?
A: City still owns those assets and they will be responsible for maintaining them.
- Q: Was the 30-3 vote in favour of the new governance model at City Council for this specific model?
A: Vote was a direction to stop REOI process and deal directly with Zoo management using this report as the guiding mechanism.
- Has the City of Toronto committed to this?
They have committed to the negotiation process first, EOI process put on hold. TRCA owns much of the land and didn't want for-profit ownership of the Zoo.

AZA re-accreditation

- Q: How does timing on this help or hinder March 2013 timeline for re-accreditation?
A: It is highly likely that the new model will be looked at more favourably, but the implications of potential delays in this process are unknown. Decision on re-accreditation isn't made until Summer/Fall.

Impact on Union

- Will there be union representation on the new Board?
A: This hasn't yet been decided but will be a consideration.
- Q: How will it affect the union and any future bargaining?
A: Probably no fundamental change, union was written into report (maintaining relationship is a priority).

Partnerships, Sponsorships and Funding

- Q: What will university involvement look like? Both participation and financial?
A: It is still early on in the process. The Zoo will be a major gateway to Rouge National Park, opportunity to share responsibilities and costs with partners (parking, shuttle buses). As of right now, the University of Toronto Scarborough campus has fully committed to participating physically in Rouge Park. Looking at similar arrangements

- Q: Will corporate sponsorships mean infiltration of brands at the Zoo? The message could get lost.
A: It is a balancing act. Municipally owned entities need funds desperately, need sponsorship dollars. Must create opportunities to get these sponsorships, corporations are conscientious and participate at the level where they get acknowledgement in education efforts. Not known what sponsorships will look like at this time.
- Q: Will there be any funding from the province or the federal government?
A: Minimal; depends. There have been sporadic grants, but current legal model doesn't allow the Zoo to go to those levels of government directly like the Calgary Zoo can. Currently the Zoo's wishes have to go through the City. New model will allow direct requests.

Other considerations for the Toronto Zoo in regards to Membership, Community and Volunteer Involvement:

- Q: Would it be possible to have a non-voting member from the organization on the Board to prevent Conflict of interest on Board? Will Members of Toronto Zoo become members of the Zoological Society? Will they elect members of the Zoo Board?
A: Toronto Zoo Members probably won't elect Board members but this hasn't been decided. Typically there will be staggered terms for Board members. Other non-profit organizations are being consulted on board structure.
- Q: Membership wants to be engaged, should be used for the Zoological Society to act on conservation efforts. Members would like the Zoo to have more interaction with the public, children, education efforts and would provide valuable input
A: There is certainly lots of potential for large scale participation is there, just a matter of organizing/streamlining it.