



THE ELEPHANT MANAGERS ASSOCIATION
1513 Cambridge Street, Houston TX 77030

21 November, 2011

To the Board of Directors, Toronto Zoo:

It is with great disappointment that the Elephant Managers Association (EMA) learned that the Toronto City Councilors disregarded the Toronto Zoo Board of Management's authority by voting to send the Toronto Zoo's remaining elephants to a facility outside of the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA). It is our expectation that an important decision regarding the future care and welfare of the zoo's elephants should be left to the decision makers that are qualified in the field of animal management and who are well versed in the facts surrounding the situation. The fact that city councilors are disregarding the Zoo Board's expertise is irresponsible on their parts and demonstrates their lack of understanding of the reality of the situation. We strongly encourage the Zoo Board to do anything they can to follow through with the original decision to seek an AZA-approved facility for placement of the elephants.

The Elephant Managers Association (EMA) is the largest international non-profit organization of professional elephant handlers, administrators, veterinarians, and researchers in the world. The EMA is dedicated to the welfare of the world's elephants in all settings through improved communication among professionals, high standards for animal husbandry, scientific research, and public education. All of our members are committed to providing elephant care at the highest professional level, and participating in cooperative efforts to improve and advance the science of elephant care and conservation. The EMA remains steadfast in our commitment to the long-term survival of elephants across the globe, along with professional colleagues in the AZA.

The issue of where to place these elephants has become an unfortunate conflict of *opinions* about who can provide the best care for them. However, the reality of this situation is that the elephants are being leveraged in a negative public relations campaign that animal rights extremists are aiming against the Toronto Zoo's elephant program and the entire professional elephant community. These extremists make no secret about the fact that they do not want to see *any* animals under human care in *any* setting. They are experts at manipulating facts through political maneuvers in order to portray all elephants as animals in need of rescue from those who work with them. The only ones immune to their unrelenting assaults are those who directly support their misguided agendas and defame their own colleagues in the field of animal management. The extremists are becoming more brazen in their unfounded attacks on elephant programs, and we hope that it is not lost on the Zoo Board that one of the primary organizations at the forefront of this movement has an individual with the job title of Elephant "Campaign" Director spearheading their efforts. Elephants are a high profile, political target for them to exploit since it is easy to appeal to human emotion in order to garner well intentioned but misguided support, in the absence of any real experience or knowledge in their arguments.

The EMA membership and AZA-accredited zoos are, quite simply, the best source for elephant care knowledge and expertise. There are more than 70 AZA accredited facilities currently caring for over 300 elephants. While

there may be some minor differences of opinions among professionals in any field, every one of these facilities is required to meet the AZA Standards for Elephant Care and Management and agrees that meeting them is crucial to maintaining a responsible and productive elephant program. These widely vetted and approved standards have been in existence since 2003, and have recently undergone an extensive revision in March 2011 to continue to improve their effectiveness. Thus the AZA standards are in their second iteration as the most widely approved and mutually agreed upon care standards in the professional elephant community.

In addition, the AZA and the EMA together constitute the largest body of professional elephant experience in the world, and their expertise regarding exemplary elephant care is recognized by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), the government organization charged with overseeing the care and well being of elephants in this country, under extensive regulations in the Animal Welfare Act. The USDA recently collaborated with both EMA and AZA in the placement and care of confiscated elephants seized due to welfare concerns. In two cases within the last two years, the USDA directly sought the intervention and recommendations of the EMA in determining placement of several elephants in need of relocation, as well as providing expert resources. In both situations, after extensive investigation of all possibilities both within accredited zoos and in private facilities, the USDA, with input from the EMA, decided to place the elephants in AZA facilities in order to provide the best care and long term housing for the elephants.

The reality of the matter is that the proposed facility chosen by the Toronto City Council is a privately owned facility that upholds standards based solely on the opinions of its owners. The fact is that all AZA zoos operate cooperatively to share knowledge and to improve practices. To ensure that the elephants continue to receive the same high level of care they have been given consistently at the Toronto Zoo, it is critical that the Board of Directors consider AZA-accredited institutions as the most suitable location for their placement.

Again, the EMA Board strongly urges the Toronto Zoo Board of Directors to keep their elephants in the AZA professional elephant management community in order to ensure they receive the highest levels of care possible. The EMA is willing and available to aid the Board in any way necessary, and we hope that fact and science prevail over emotional rhetoric and misinformed opinion in this difficult situation.

Thank you for your time and consideration. Please contact us if you require additional information on this or other important matters of concern to the elephant care community.

Sincerely,

Andrew Smith
President

EMA Board of Directors:
Mike McClure, Baltimore, MD
Joanne Smith, Perris, CA
Trudy Williams, Polk City, FL
Ellen Wiedner, Los Angeles, CA
Daryl Hoffman, Houston, TX - Executive Director