



STAFF REPORT

To: Board of Management

From: John Tracogna
Chief Executive Officer

Subject: **ZOO ACCREDITATION**

Date: 2014-05-30

Summary:

This report is intended to advise the Board of Management in relation to the request by City of Toronto Council to conduct a comparison of animal care standards between the zoo accrediting bodies and the Global Federation of Animal Sanctuaries. Canada's Accredited Zoos and Aquariums (CAZA) and the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) have each undertaken a standards comparison and both organizations provide convincing arguments that their standards are appropriate and in our case exceed the standards of the animal sanctuary community. The report will also deal with the impacts of the loss of AZA accreditation in 2012 and address how these impacts will be more detrimental to the Toronto Zoo as time goes on if this issue is not addressed.

Recommendation:

It is recommended that the Board:

- 1. Declare its satisfaction with the standards of care and the enforcement of the guidelines by Canada's Accredited Zoos and Aquariums (CAZA) and the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA);**
- 2. Direct the Chief Executive Officer to immediately apply to the CAZA Accreditation Commission for re-inspection to continue the Toronto Zoo's status as an accredited institution; and**
- 3. Work with the City of Toronto and AZA to satisfy the requirement for acceptable governance structure to permit re-application to AZA for accreditation.**

Background:

City Council on 2012-11-27, adopted the following motion:

City Council request the Chief Executive Officer, Toronto Zoo to apply for admission to the Canadian Association of Zoos (CAZA) and the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) once both of these organizations demonstrate that their standards of care meet or exceed the standards of care adopted by the Global Federation of Animal Sanctuaries (GFAS) and both CAZA and AZA enforce their own guidelines, to the satisfaction of the Toronto Zoo Board.

A request was forwarded to CAZA and AZA earlier this year that these two accrediting bodies undertake a comparison of animal care standards and enforcement and provide their analysis to assist the Toronto Zoo in meeting the intent of the Council motion.

Both CAZA and AZA agreed to assist and replied with a detailed analysis. (The reports are appended hereto as Schedule I and II).

The Toronto Zoo has continued its status as being an accredited member of CAZA. Although CAZA initially tabled our accreditation in 2012, pending a hearing with the CAZA Accreditation Appeal Panel. On 2013-07-15, the Panel re-confirmed our status as a fully accredited institution. The next CAZA accreditation inspection is due this year. We will need to formally apply for the inspection now in order to stand for re-accreditation in 2014.

The AZA removed its accreditation of the Toronto Zoo in April, 2012. We have not applied for re-consideration given the on-going uncertainty of the decision-making in relation to animal oversight. However, on 2013-10-11, City Council requested the City Manager to review the board governance and develop a "Relationship Framework" between the City and the Toronto Zoo for Council approval. If the Relationship Framework reaffirms that the Zoo makes decisions relating to animal matters, this will permit the Toronto Zoo to be accredited by the AZA.

Comments/Discussion:

From a review of the two documents it is apparent that the two associations have taken this requirement seriously and have put considerable effort into the task. The two documents review the respective accreditation systems, the development of a comprehensive set of standards, manuals and policies by each, and where appropriate, attempt to compare and contrast their methodologies and standards with the Global Federation of Animal Sanctuaries. They also provide examples of how they enforce their standards through mentoring, re-inspection, and in some cases withdrawal of accreditation.

In both cases, the associations conclude that the comparison is problematic given that the nature of the two types of organizations (sanctuaries and zoos/aquariums) are very different in terms of operations, goals, methodologies and basic 'raison d'être'. Therefore, the comparison is rendered almost meaningless by the fact that GFAS, by their own admission, would not attempt to accredit a zoo; and sanctuaries would not be able to achieve accreditation by either AZA or CAZA.

Similar to many professional groups and industries, accreditation by our peer organizations is very important to the Toronto Zoo for a number of reasons. Essentially it can be seen as an external "seal of approval" by industry experts who know what our organization stands for and aspires to be. In addition, accreditation is important for the following reasons:

1. To both the public at large and to our own staff, the accreditation process is a test that we are meeting a level of excellence based upon established standards that are directly related to the operation of a zoo.

2. Accreditation facilitates the exchange of animals between organizations by providing a basis for comparison. We can be assured that the accredited zoo we are dealing with has had to undergo the same accreditation inspections based on the same set of standards by which we operate as an institution.
3. The coordination of effort and sharing of results of conservation and research projects is enhanced between agencies that have common objectives, shared standards and formalized communication processes. We know when we deal with other accredited zoos that they share our values about the importance of animal care, the necessity of proper research protocols, the involvement in conservation projects, etc.

The reports from CAZA and AZA demonstrate a long-term commitment to the development, maintenance and enforcement of animal care standards and other standards relating to the operation of zoos, in order to maintain accredited institutional status.

Impacts of Non-Accreditation

The Toronto Zoo has been a long-term member of both CAZA and AZA and staff have been heavily involved in Species Survival Plans (SSPs), Taxon Advisory Groups (TAGs), Recovery Teams, conservation and research projects, and various interest groups. With the loss of AZA accreditation, and potentially CAZA accreditation, there are direct impacts that will have far reaching implications for the Conservation, Education and Wildlife Division and the Zoo as a whole. Some implications are listed below:

- Loss of accreditation can negatively affect the perception of the Toronto Zoo in the public forum and by other institutions in the zoo community, specifically with regard to our quality and credibility as an animal care facility. In the public's view, being labeled as "unaccredited" would place the Zoo in the same rank as a "roadside zoo".
- Various species that are under the jurisdiction of the US Fish and Wildlife Service have permits that stipulate in order to receive animals you must be AZA accredited (e.g. golden frogs, Mississippi gopher frogs, black-footed ferrets, etc.). This will have significant impacts on our participation in very important conservation and recovery programs.
- In Canada, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) has added to updated policies and permit requirements, that permits will only be issued if the facility is CAZA accredited. Removal of CAZA accreditation would have a major impact on Toronto Zoo in acquiring permits to bring in animals and will remove us from very important conservation breeding programs.
- AZA accredited zoos have their own internal policies that restrict them from sending animals to non-accredited facilities. This has resulted in Toronto Zoo not receiving animals that were SSP breeding recommendations (e.g. Masai giraffe) which, in the long term, could have a significant impact on sustainability and genetic management of the whole North American population.

- There is the possibility that animals on loan to the Toronto Zoo (numbering 380 specimens, representing 30 species) may be recalled due to our non-accredited status. Some of these animals are very high profile and part of conservation breeding and recovery programs (Puerto Rican crested toad, black-footed penguins, Komodo dragons, black-footed ferret, Vancouver Island marmot, etc.).
- We currently have 239 animals out on loan to AZA accredited facilities. It is conceivable that some of these zoos may want to send these animals back to us if these animals are not part of an SSP and are not given breeding recommendations. This would have a serious impact on the Zoo as space, staff and resources are not in place to accommodate these additional animals.
- Loss of access to AZA/CAZA funded grants. In recent years, the Toronto Zoo has received numerous grants totaling approximately \$69,300 from the AZA Conservation Endowment Fund and the CAZA Conservation and Education Fund for many projects including conservation education, reproduction, research, and recovery programs. As a non-member, these funds are/will no longer be available to the Toronto Zoo.
- Our management staff are no longer classified as “Professional Fellows” in AZA and are accorded a lesser status as “Associate” members. In this capacity the staff are no longer able to hold elected positions in SSPs and TAGs. This prevents Toronto Zoo staff input into important regional planning, legislation, and policy making decisions that may impact our Zoo and other Canadian facilities. Additionally, when AZA accreditation is not regained following a two-year grace period, the Institutional Liaison (IL) and all Institutional Representatives (IRs) are also removed from TAGs.
- There have been issues with participation in various SSPs & TAGs. It is now required that we apply as non-members to participate in “green” (high priority) SSP programs. The Zoo currently has 13 green SSPs for some of the most charismatic species including giant panda, Sumatran orangutan, Amur tiger, Sumatran tiger, gorilla, black-footed penguin, Puerto Rican crested toad, radiated tortoise, etc. Due to our loss of AZA accreditation, some green SSPs have not assigned any breeding recommendations for the Zoo and have denied animals being transferred in or out of our facility.
- Other zoological institutions will require additional documentation assuring the Zoo’s credibility before animals will be considered for transfer to the Toronto Zoo (i.e. loans, donations, or other transfers). This process has recently proven to be sufficient to deter or delay other institutions in the transfer of animals to the Zoo, as was recently the case in the transfer of white rhinos.
- When we transfer animals to other institutions, there will be additional costs to the Zoo regarding the need for in-depth investigation of non-accredited facilities, as medical and other animal husbandry records may not be complete from non-accredited facilities.
- We are experiencing a loss of access to AZA education and professional resources or conversely an increase in fees to attend training schools, conferences and business meetings. The AZA Management School provides discounted training to member institutions.

- As a non-member of AZA, the Toronto Zoo has been excluded from attending some meetings and workshops dealing with very important issues pertaining to veterinary, nutritional, and taxonomic initiatives. In other instances we have been excluded from SSP approved research projects (e.g. reproductive studies, virology studies with cheetahs, etc.), which have direct implications for the conservation of species in peril.

The Toronto Zoo has been negatively impacted by the loss of AZA Accreditation since 2012 and these impacts will only become more detrimental over time. Given the constant change of zoo standards, legislation and regulations, there are likely going to be additional impacts that could have far more serious consequences on the Toronto Zoo. As we move forward and the longer that we remain a non-accredited AZA institution, the impacts will weigh heavy on our important conservation and education programs. It is imperative that we strive to regain our accredited status if we want the Toronto Zoo to live up to its Vision and our strategy to continue to be Canada's premier zoo.

John Tracogna
Chief Executive Officer

List of Attachments:

Schedule I - CAZA - Comparison of Animal Care Standards
Schedule II - AZA – Accreditation Process