



BRIEFING NOTE: North Zoo Site Redevelopment

BAC Issue / Purpose:

To propose an amendment to the 2006-2010 Capital Works Plan of the Toronto Zoo in order to integrate the Tundra Phase (Phase I) of the North Zoo Site Redevelopment into the 2006–2008 timeframe within the capital target for the Zoo.

Background:

In 2003, staff and consultants completed the North Zoo Site Redevelopment Feasibility Study which examined the redevelopment needs of the northern portion of the Zoo site. The North Zoo Site project will address significant state of good repair issues related to the existing Canadian Domain exhibits that are in need of major renovations for the welfare of the animals and viewing by the public. The need to eliminate the long walk and steep hill at the Canadian Domain for the primary Canadian/North American animal experience is immediately necessary because of the absence of the Domain Ride. Although the Valley is a spectacular backdrop, the area has received visitor complaints concerning the long walk and outdated exhibits in the Valley.

The North Zoo Site Redevelopment project will ultimately complete the more efficient integration of visitor site circulation changes at the Zoo by bringing key Canadian animal exhibits now in the Rouge Valley up onto the tableland.

Phase I of the project is now in the detail design stage. In the initial 2006-2010 Capital Budget submission, a sequence of construction phasing was proposed, starting in 2006, to reduce the initial investment required, minimize operational disruptions for Zoo staff/public and to provide for an extended period of opening events. The various phases in the original submission are outlined as follows:

Phase I: Tundra Biome, will feature expansion and renovation of the existing polar bear exhibit and the addition of other sub-Arctic exhibits, along with the development of the remainder of the Tundra Biome exhibits.

Phase II: Eurasia Rehabilitation, will consolidate and intensify the experience by shortening the visitor path in the existing Eurasia area. The renovation of this area in 2007/2008 is necessary to make way for the Phase III construction. A key component of the improvement includes a public ride in the area as recommended in the Revenue & Visitor Experience Enhancement Study.

Phase III: Mixed Woodland Biome/Boreal Forest Biome, completes the Canadian Wilderness Experience area and will feature a wilderness Orientation Centre and a variety of exhibits

including new Beaver/Otter, Cougar and Moose exhibits. Funds are provided in the budget in 2008/2009.

Phase IV: Tropical Americas Rehabilitation, will involve the relocation and consolidation of the South America exhibits along with the refitting of a portion of the exhibits in the Americas Pavilion for Tropical American animals. Funds are provided project budget in 2009/2010.

With the completion of the schematic design for North Zoo Site Redevelopment, funding approval was requested for the construction of the first three phases of the Project. However, the Analyst Briefing Notes for the BAC Meeting on November 10, 2005 refer to the North Zoo Site Redevelopment but do not include the financial impact that was included in the Zoo's original submission. The primary reason for excluding this project in the Analyst Notes was based on the Zoo's ability to remain within the debt requirements of the City for the duration of the 5-Year Capital Plan.

Comments / Discussion:

The Toronto Zoo has submitted a plan for re-phasing the 5-year capital plan to incorporate specific elements of the North Zoo Site Redevelopment Project (Appendix 1). The revised plan meets the objective of remaining within the prescribed target of \$5.5 million annually for new debt and would allow completion of the design and construction of the Tundra Biome (Phase I) in 2006 / 2007. This phase addresses significant State of Good Repair issues related to several animal holdings and exhibits. It also enables the completion of the design only for the Canadian Wilderness & Eurasia (Phase II) and complies with existing consulting contract for design of Phase I and II.

Proceeding with the reprioritized plan would address longstanding problems and accreditation deficiencies with the Americas outdoor exhibits and holdings, particularly the Polar Bear Exhibit which is too small with cramped holdings and poor viewing. It also provides for renewal of a major area of the Zoo with a significant opening "The Tundra" in early 2008. Incorporating the completion of the design only for Phase II into the re-phased plan provides continuity in the planned redevelopment of the Zoo and shows progress to external authorities towards meet accreditation standards, animal welfare requirements and public viewing expectations. Finally, the revised plan accommodates the time required to properly initiate the external funding effort by defining the development program, funding requirements and providing fundraising promotional materials. A fundraising consultant is currently evaluating the fundraising potential for the Zoo to secure external funding from public and private sources for this project.

Conclusions:

Approval of the re-phasing of the 2006-2010 Capital Works Plan of the Toronto Zoo will meet the common objectives the City and the Toronto Zoo by:

1. Remaining within the City's prescribed target of \$5.5 million annually for new debt;
2. Addressing several major State of Good Repair issues for the Zoo;

3. Providing for a major opening of “The Tundra” in 2008 (first in four years) to ensure that visitor interest is stimulated;
4. Providing an appropriate timeframe to evaluate potential external funding sources and initiate fundraising efforts for future phases of the project.

Prepared for: Budget Advisory Committee

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Appendix 1

TORONTO ZOO 2006-2010 CAPITAL WORK PROGRAM - DEBT REPHASING					
	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Revised 5-Year Plan (New Debt)	5,500	5,500	5,500	5,500	5,500
Incremental Adjustments					
Building & Services	(1,464)	(1,934)	(1,932)	1,343	145
Exhibit Refurbishment	(500)	(500)	(497)	193	
Grounds & Visitors		31	(263)		(145)
Information Systems		(405)	(420)		
Food Services	154	(395)	241	-	-
Kids Zoo Barn	(238)				
Animal Health Centre			(392)	(1,536)	
North Zoo Site (New Debt)	2,048	5,203	3,263		
Net New Debt (pre-OMERS Allocation)	5,500	7,500	5,500	5,500	5,500
OMERS Allocation		(2,000)			
Proposed New Debt	5,500	5,500	5,500	5,500	5,500