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## **2005 BUDGET BRIEFING NOTE: Improvements to Visitor Experience**

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### **Issue**

In order to ensure a continued stimulation of visitor interest in the Toronto Zoo, it is important that improvements to the Zoomobile Ride, Membership Services and Education are funded in order to complete the required changes.

### **Background**

The Zoomobile ride has served as the primary visitor transportation system for the past 5 years and required changes would make the ride more interactive with the objective of increasing ridership. An audio-visual component would be included in these changes together with static displays along the route and interactive displays at each station.

The Main shop at the Zoo has not been updated since it was first built in 1986. The shop has had a number of "band aid" solutions as fixtures deteriorated. Deferral of capital improvements to the front entrance necessitates continued use of the existing main gift shop through 2007 and beyond. Interim improvements to the shop are necessary to attract and stimulate visitor traffic, with the objective of maintaining and growing the revenue base. These changes include new design to the physical plant include new lighting, fixtures, wall treatments and cash wraps. It is expected that a retail consulting firm will be hired to provide input with respect to the modifications necessary towards achieving the budgeted revenue targets in retail. Although retail revenue has grown over the past few years, it has not achieved the aggressive budget targets for this area. The required work would need to be completed in the fall of 2005 in order to be ready for the spring of 2006.

Memberships in the Toronto Zoo have grown by 39% since 1996 to a total of 28,200. It is important that Membership interest be continually recognized and their experience enhanced for these key supporters of the Zoo. Additional staffing (Seasonal clerks) is required to improve the turnaround in responding to Members and for the Guest Services area to improve throughput at the front entrance and processing of guests during the peak season. In order to support the tremendous growth in the Education programs, a School Workshop / Camp Coordinator is also required for this area together with improvements to the Bush Camp area. All of these areas are growing and providing a positive impact for the Toronto Zoo.

### **Implications**

The implications of not approving these key operating budget issues will be a deferral of the necessary changes for maintaining visitor satisfaction and interest. Enhancing the Zoomobile ride, attracting visitor traffic to the main gift shop, servicing and turnaround to Members, and education programs are all key

issues in ensuring positive public perception, maintaining and growing key revenue sources, and increase awareness related to educational programs.

### **Current Status and Next Steps**

The 2005 Operating Budget of the Toronto Zoo has been submitted to the City of Toronto. Details related to these key marketing issues have been documented as new Business Case and at the present time, the EMT recommendation does not include any of the \$377,500 outlined. The next step for the Budget Advisory Committee and City Council is to consider the importance of funding related to these key operating budget issues.

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**Prepared for:** Budget Advisory Committee

**Prepared by:** Calvin J. White Telephone: (416) 392-5909  
General Manager & CEO

**Contact for further information:** Robin D. Hale Telephone: (416) 392-5913  
Executive Director  
Administrative & Site Services

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