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For Immediate release

## Canadian Giant Panda initiative

**August 23, 2010, Toronto:** With the endorsement of Prime Minister Stephen Harper, the effort to bring a pair of giant pandas to the Canadian public as a Giant Panda Cooperation and Research Project with China is getting closer to a reality. At a recent state dinner with Hu Jintao, President of China, celebrating Canada-China relations, PM Harper “expressed Canada’s pleasure that negotiations will soon begin to secure a long-term loan of giant pandas to Canada”. Earlier this summer, the Governor General Michaëlle Jean, led a delegation to China that included visits to Beijing and the Chengdu Panda Research Base in Sichuan Province and continued these very positive discussions with President Hu about the Canadian Zoo proposal. Toronto, Granby and Calgary Zoos (accredited not-for-profit Canadian institutions) are working together to facilitate this national, tripartite agreement.

The Toronto Zoo has been dedicated to the giant panda initiative since 2000 and this initiative is strengthened by the Zoo’s long standing partnership with Chongqing, China, Toronto’s sister city. The Zoo’s goal is to introduce the new giant panda cooperation and research project in conjunction with the 2015 PanAm Games to be held in the Greater Toronto Area. The Zoo Board will receive a panda update report at its meeting August 24 with a delegation planned to travel to China this fall coincident with the 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Canada-China Relations in October.

2015 would mark thirty (30) years since the Toronto Zoo last had a giant panda exhibit. At that time, two giant pandas, Quinn Quinn and Sha Yan, were enjoyed by millions of Toronto residents for a three-month visit. Canada’s securing of giant pandas, a worldwide symbol of conservation will help raise awareness of the need to preserve and protect not only giant pandas and their habitat, but also many other endangered species in Canada and around the world.

The Toronto Zoo is one of the leading zoos in wildlife conservation in North America. In 2009, the Zoo achieved its third highest attendance ever with 1,459,580 visitors. The most recent exhibit opening is the award-winning Tundra Trek in the summer 2009. It features the return of mature polar bears, Inuksuk, Aurora and Nakita, orphaned cubs that were first recovered and raised by the Toronto Zoo.

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Zoo Hours – 9:00am to 7:30pm. Last admissions one hour before closing. **Admission fees including HST are:** General 13-64: \$23, Children 3 and under are free, Children 4-12: \$13 and Seniors 65+: \$17. Parking is \$10. Event schedules and admission prices are subject to change without notice. The Zoo is located at Meadowvale Road and Hwy. 401, Exit 389 east and west bound. The Toronto Zoo is open year round (except Dec. 25<sup>th</sup>). For general information, call (416) 392-5929 or visit

**[torontozoo.com](http://torontozoo.com)**