

MOTION

Vancouver Aquarium Cetacean Program

MOVER: Commissioner Sharma

SECONDER: Commissioner Barnes

WHEREAS:

1. The Vancouver Aquarium is a world-leading aquarium for marine science and conservation, and plays a vital role in rescue and rehabilitation of marine mammals;
2. In 1996, the Vancouver Aquarium, operated by the Vancouver Aquarium Marine Science Centre (the "Society"), became a world leader by becoming the first aquarium to ban the import of wild cetaceans to be kept in captivity;
3. The Vancouver Aquarium exists on public park land under the jurisdiction of the Park Board;
4. In 2006, the Park Board committed to reviewing the Parks Control By-law with respect to cetaceans in captivity in 2015;
5. On April 28, 2014, the Park Board commissioned a third-party report to review the Vancouver Aquarium's current operations pertaining to cetaceans in comparison with other aquariums ("Gaydos Report");
6. The Park Board committed to pursuing an open and public discussion on the future of keeping cetaceans in captivity;
7. The Gaydos Report found that the cetacean program at the Vancouver Aquarium contributes to marine mammal conservation and allows the aquarium to provide a stranding and response program to injured marine mammals;
8. The Gaydos Report identified a need to examine whether the applicable standards and regulations for cetaceans in captivity at the Vancouver Aquarium are sufficient to ensure the well-being of the captive cetaceans;
9. The Gaydos Report identified a need to assure the public that cetaceans held at the Vancouver Aquarium are receiving the highest standard of care;
10. All cetaceans owned by the Society have been deemed non-releasable and therefore would not survive in the wild;
11. The Park Board received emails, public comments, and inquiries from thousands of concerned citizens on all sides of this debate and all based upon the well-being of the cetaceans at the Vancouver Aquarium; and
12. The Park Board has concerns about the cetacean captive breeding program and whether this program contributes to the Society's mandate;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT:

- A. The Board calls upon the Society to continue their international leadership and work with the Board and other relevant partners to undertake a detailed examination of the applicable animal care standards (including those applied by Canada's Accredited Zoos and Aquariums ("CAZA"), Association of Zoos and Aquariums ("AZA"), and Alliance of Marine Mammal Parks and Aquariums ("AMMPA") and the implications of those standards on the behaviour of captive cetaceans. This study should:
 - i. use all available scientific data to determine if cetacean well-being is possible within the confines of the Vancouver Aquarium's cetacean compounds; and
 - ii. be based upon measurable criteria as determined by scientific experts in the field of cetacean biology and behavioural science.
- B. The Board directs staff to establish an Oversight Committee, consisting of animal welfare experts with the mandate to provide public oversight to ensure the well-being of all cetaceans owned by the Society. This Oversight Committee will prepare a bi-annual report to the Park Board on the status and well-being of all cetaceans owned by the Society.
- C. The Board directs staff to work with the Society to investigate and, where viable, implement alternatives to cetacean exhibition and continue to research cetacean rehabilitation and release.
- D. The Board directs staff to prepare, and bring forward for enactment by the Board, an amendment to the Parks Control By-law to prohibit the breeding of captive cetaceans in Vancouver parks unless, in each particular instance, the captive cetacean is a threatened species and the Oversight Committee, the Board, and the Society agree that captive breeding is necessary for the survival of such threatened species.

Carried Unanimously