

David Gagnon, Clerk
House of Commons Standing Committee on Finance

Dear Mr. Gagnon,

The way forward to economic recovery will be complex and require time. Canada's Accredited Zoo's and Aquariums (CAZA) have been a proactive part of the solution and stand ready going forward.

It can be argued there are two aspects to recovery, the emotional and the very real economic, we think Canada's 29 accredited zoos and aquariums can do both. The attachment people have to animals is very real, in fact most of our 29 accredited facilities each has thousands of members, the Calgary Zoo has 90,000 memberships. As charities, accredited facilities receive donations from around the world, however it does not hide the economic reality.

In April we formed an industry 're-opening committee' where best practices are shared respecting health authority guidelines. Our 29 facilities were developing protocols long before they were required. These health protocols remain in use, some of which may voluntarily become permanent. Accredited facilities are tourist destinations, for both locals and those from outside any given region, welcoming over 12 million visitors each year. Safety has always been our top priority.

Accredited zoos and aquariums operate to a high standard of animal care and overall operations and are subject to peer review through our accreditation system. We have an accreditation Commission tasked with maintaining our standards and an Ethics and Compliance Committee that investigates any complaints. We believe this leads to a better visitor experience, a commitment to animal species conservation and a general high standard of care.

Like everything else, the impact of the global pandemic has hit accredited zoos and aquariums hard.

Accredited facilities must maintain the highest level of animal care, this places fixed costs on them no other business has. During this pandemic our monthly surveys have consistently found animal care has not suffered, in fact as our facilities across Canada opened animal behavior was very positive. However, the economic reality of 29 facilities is such that over the Fall and winter months continued federal government assistance is needed.

Our July 2020 survey of accredited facilities demonstrates the importance of government assistance not only in recent months, but also going forward.

- 82% applied for and received federal financial assistance
 - 100% made use of the CEWS
 - 32% made use of the CEBA
 - 20% BCAP
 - 19% Temporary 10% wage subsidy
 - 13% made use of, CECRA, RRRF and deferred payments on commercial leases and licenses of occupation
- 44% applied for and received provincial financial assistance

Canada's 29 accredited zoos and aquariums need continued financial assistance after the tourist season winds down and many facilities will be closed during the winter months.

Our 2020-2021 federal government budget ask is:

1. All current federal COVID-19 financial assistance programs continue for the full 2021 calendar year;
2. All Canada's 29 accredited zoos and aquariums be eligible for any Canada Infrastructure program investments; and
3. The federal government create a tourism incentive program similar in nature to The Explore NB Travel Incentive program.

To provide some further context and explanation, we would like to meet with you to discuss the contents of this letter further. Given the time, we understand it will have to be virtually, here at CAZA we use MS Teams most often.

As part of the Canadian cultural fabric, Canada's 29 accredited zoos and aquariums serve many rolls, during this time of uncertainty they can be a place of healing bring joy to people of all ages.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jim Facette', is positioned above the typed name.

Jim Facette
Executive Director
Canada's Accredited Zoos and Aquariums
jfacette@caza.ca
Tel.: (613) 627-3779