



## Applauding Community Action for Elephants: Toronto's Support of Sanctuary for Toka, Thika, and Iringa

2012-04-25

The Elephant Sanctuary in Tennessee supports the rights of every City Council that oversees a community zoo, funded by taxpayer dollars, to make the decisions that are both financially right for their community and ethically right for the animals in their care. The Toronto City Council has recognized that Toka, Thika, and Iringa deserve a peaceful retirement. Through their decision to send their elephants to PAWS, they have provided their elephants the opportunity to live out the remainder of their lives together in an environment as close as possible to their natural habitat.

Toronto joins the ranks of other progressive zoos who have broken with the political norms. They are now in good company with reputable facilities such as the Detroit Zoo and, at over 150 years in operation, the country's oldest – the Philadelphia Zoo. These communities have chosen to recognize the limitations of their facilities to meet the overwhelming needs of their elephants, and have opted to put the elephants' needs first by closing their pachyderm exhibits and sending their elephants to sanctuary. We recognize that this is not always a popular decision but thanks to the expert opinions of the regulatory agencies and those of elephant welfare specialists from around the world, the Toronto City Council, members of the Toronto Community, and the staff of the Toronto Zoo, can all rest assured that PAWS will provide exemplary care and the best possible environment for their elephants' physical, social and mental wellbeing.

Anyone who claims that an elephant is better off euthanized than being provided the opportunity to live out their lives in sanctuary is putting politics before the elephants.

Every elephant that makes its way to sanctuary, either at PAWS or TES, comes from a life in the circus, zoo or the entertainment industry – we Sanctuaries accept these elephants knowing full well that they bring with them a wealth of chronic health problems and risks. It is our role as nonprofit organizations, funded almost exclusively by generous donations from the public, to take care of those elephants who are sick as well as those who appear healthy – so they can all spend the remainder of their lives freely during their retirement in Sanctuary. We applaud the actions of the Toronto Community to safeguard the future of their beloved elephants Iringa, Toka, and Thika, and our friends at PAWS to whose expert care they are being entrusted.