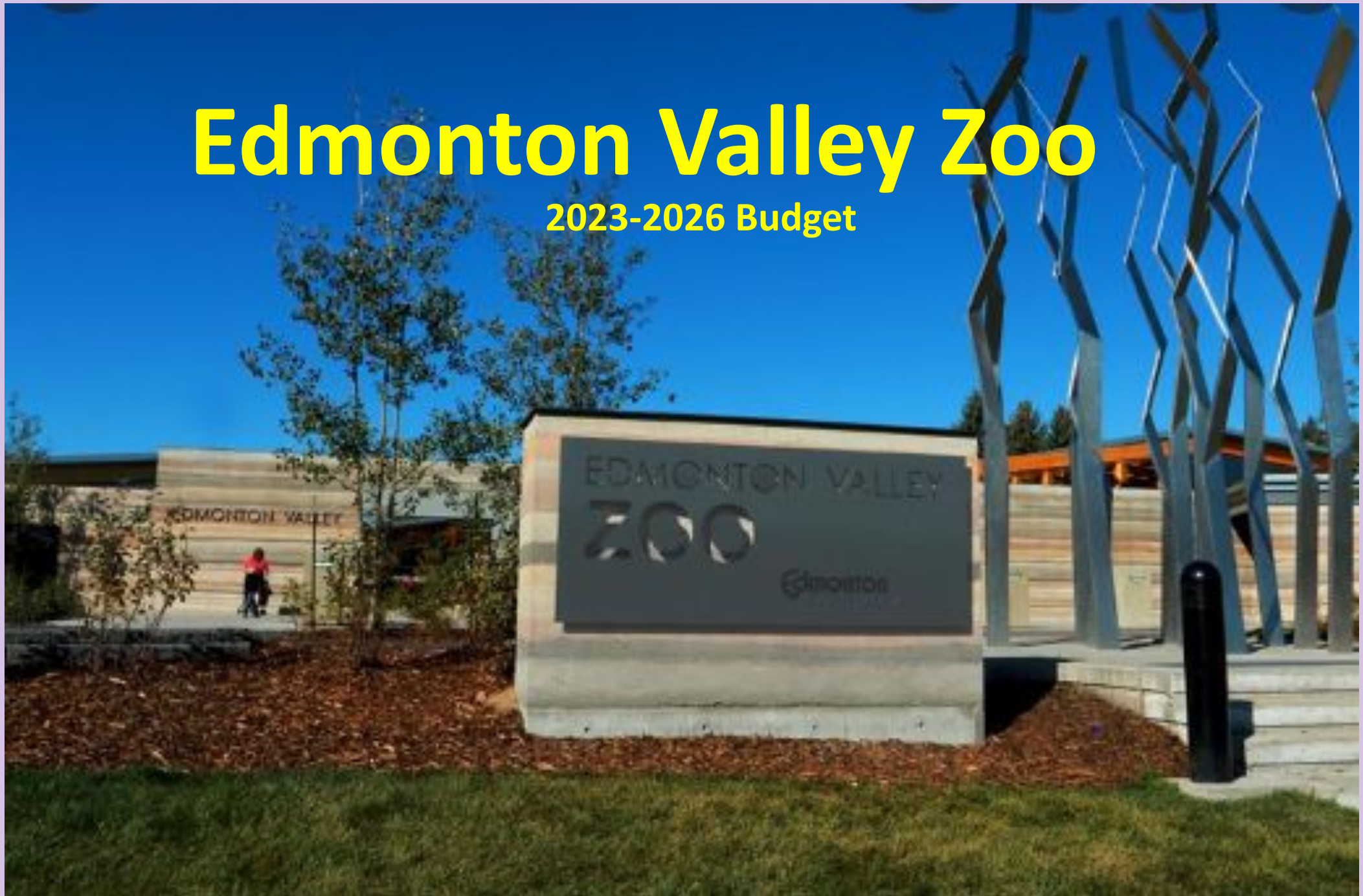


Edmonton Valley Zoo

2023-2026 Budget



Local News



Edmonton Valley Zoo could be shut down, lose accreditation without repairs: city budget

Without repairs, the zoo risks losing its accreditation with the Canadian Association of Zoos and Aquariums and its licence to operate from the Alberta government

Lauren Boothby

Nov 02, 2022 • November 2, 2022 • 4 minute read

16 Comments



EXCERPTS EJ NOVEMBER 2, 2022

- The Edmonton Valley Zoo could be forced to shut down if it doesn't fix some significant problems putting animals, staff, and the public at risk, according to the city.
- The zoo is asking the city for \$10.9 million to repair and upgrade enclosures for zebras, Lucy the elephant, birds of prey, and several other species in a damning report that is part of the draft 2023-2026 capital budget. (1)
- City administration recommends council fund repairs given the urgency. The zoo also expects continued funding for the second phase of its Nature's Wild Backyard expansion. (2)
- Lucy has respiratory problems which is abnormal and concerning for elephants, according to the most recent public veterinary records from fall 2021. (3)

Findings from the City of Edmonton Budget Report

- Zebras – even though EVZ is actively breeding these endangered species as a member of the species survival program, the barn area does not meet even basic standards, its **design has been deemed unsafe** which have **resulted in injuries** to the animals and the stall do not allow for training and safe veterinary procedures.
- Bactrian Camels – the zoo has 5 camels living in an area that was not designed for them and lacks critical infrastructure for managing them. **Safety issues with regard to veterinary procedures and staff access were also cited.** These animals are critically endangered and again are not afforded an appropriate habitat in which to live.
- Sichuan Takin – This is an endangered species that also isn't being housed appropriately or safely. The zoo has 9 of these animals housed in 2 areas, **one of which was not designed for this species who can at times be dangerous.**
- Birds of Prey – this is one of the most appalling areas in my opinion. I have had so many people mention being in tears after visiting this area of the zoo. The report states the **area is deemed too small to allow flight.** Also, in consideration of the re-emergence of the Avian Flu as a threat to their health, **improvements are needed to reduce the likelihood of outbreaks and provide adequate space for isolation.**
- Elephant: Upgrades are required to provide increased access to space and additional necessary enrichments. **A humidifier is required in her barn along with an exhaust system in the building to eliminate as much dust as possible that the elephant and staff are breathing in.** UV lights in the building are required to provide more light. The public fence set back from the perimeter of the bull yard needs to be pushed back further to meet standards that will allow the animal to use the yard unsupervised. A number of enrichment structures and amenities need to be added such as poles placed in the large yard to create a structure that enrichments can be suspended from; a large rock in her yard; rough poles that are hung horizontally so she can rub her back; a large, heavy plastic ball; more chains to hang enrichments; large pieces of PVC pipe to make toys; basketball nets; interactive projection games; and a storage system for the enrichments.

Edmonton Valley Zoo approved for \$50.3-million in renovations to winterize habitats, excluding Lucy the elephant

Lauren Boothby

Mar 21, 2022 • March 21, 2022 • 3 minute read

The public will soon be able to see more animals year-round at Edmonton Valley Zoo now that the city has given its stamp of approval to begin \$50.3 million in renovations.

Homes for creatures like meercats, gibbons, tamarin, wallabies, emus, lemurs, and exotic birds are being upgraded in renovations in four zoo zones so more animals can stay in their habitats during the winter. Lucy the elephant's habitat is not included.

The red panda and urban farm exhibits, a restaurant and ice cream station were completed in the first phase of [Nature's Wild Backyard](#). The second phase was delayed for several years, but then included in Edmonton's 2019-2022 capital budget. Last week, council approved borrowing \$44.9 million to fund it. The remaining funding comes from the Valley Zoo Development Society.



Lucy the elephant on her morning walk at the Edmonton Valley Zoo on March 23, 2021. PHOTO BY ED KAISER /Postmedia, file

A report on Lucy's health from Charles Gray in October 2021 recommended the zoo build a pool or bathing area for her.

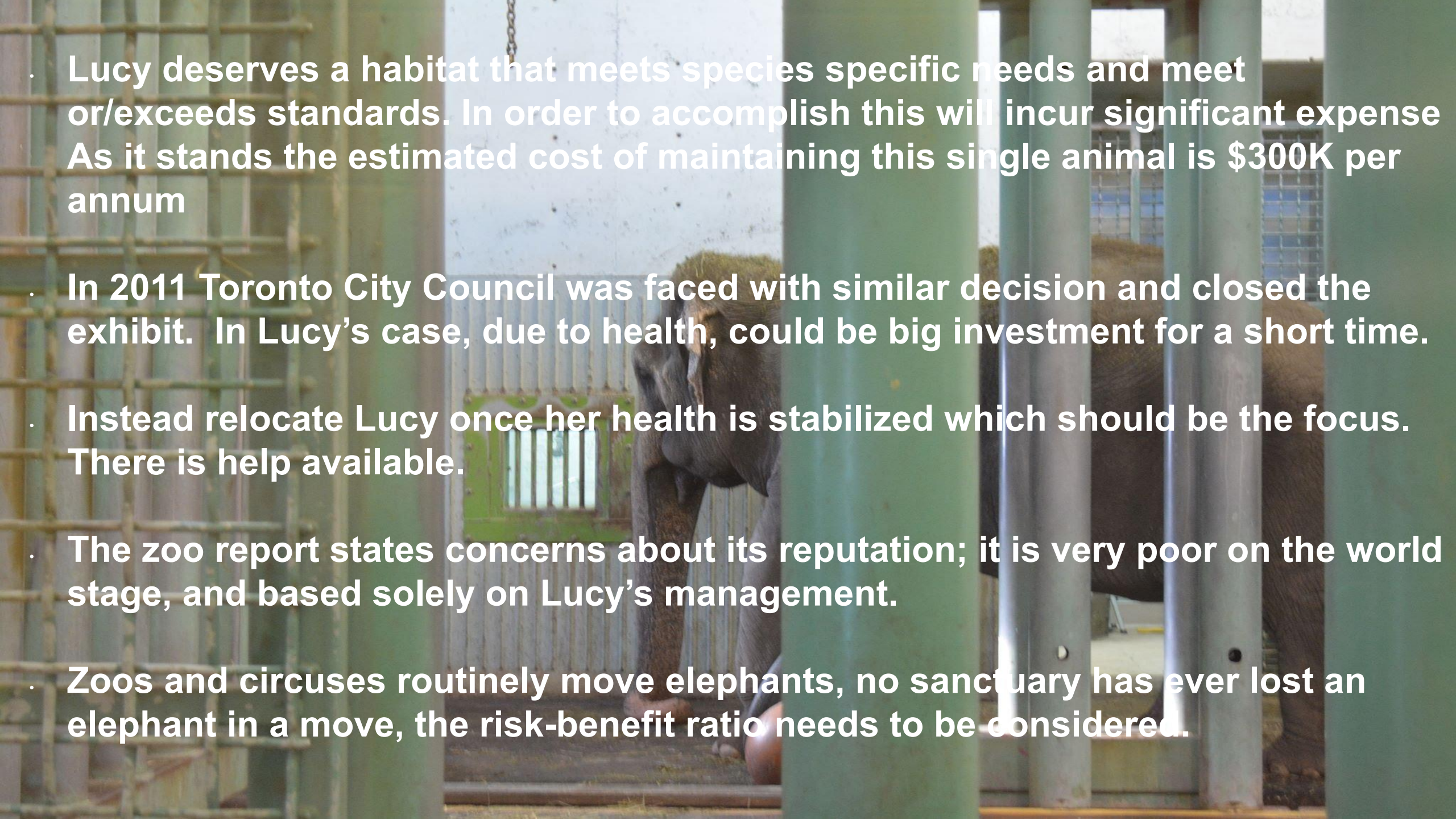
"Ideally this amenity would be available for year-round use so it will need to be contained in a heated structure. This would provide an enriching experience for her, allow for low impact exercise as well as give her an opportunity to take the weight of her legs and feet," states the [report](#).

Why does the city/zoo foot the bill to bring in consultants only to ignore their recommendations. There are numerous examples aside from this one.

SUGGESTIONS

- **Ensure stronger oversight as to how revenue is used by the Valley Zoo.**
- **Reverse the decision for funding Nature's Wild Backyard phase 2 (and now possibly a phase 3) and upgrade the issues outlined in this report. In addition, ensure all current exhibits meet the Alberta Standards for Zoos before any new areas are added.**
- **It's long past time Lucy gets what she should have had decades ago. A hydrotherapy pool – not a wading pool to be shared with others as stated by Gary Dewar. The Valley Zoo's own consultant has recommended a 5-6 foot deep heated indoor pool for Lucy to improve her mental and physical health.**
- **Lucy needs a larger area with access to mud and many more enrichments as outlined in your report as well as a new humidifier, filtration and UV lighting system to address contaminants.**

- **Lucy deserves a habitat that meets species specific needs and meet or/exceeds standards. In order to accomplish this will incur significant expense As it stands the estimated cost of maintaining this single animal is \$300K per annum**
- **In 2011 Toronto City Council was faced with similar decision and closed the exhibit. In Lucy's case, due to health, could be big investment for a short time.**
- **Instead relocate Lucy once her health is stabilized which should be the focus. There is help available.**
- **The zoo report states concerns about its reputation; it is very poor on the world stage, and based solely on Lucy's management.**
- **Zoos and circuses routinely move elephants, no sanctuary has ever lost an elephant in a move, the risk-benefit ratio needs to be considered.**



**Thank you for this
opportunity!**