

## **TOURISM INDUSTRY DIGS IN FOR EARTH DAY**

### **New on-site food source for Toronto Zoo animals a first in Canada**

**TORONTO (April 21, 2011)** – Tourism Toronto is rallying the tourism industry for a massive tree planting at the Toronto Zoo in celebration of Earth Day. Today, approximately 150 volunteers are planting 10,000 saplings to establish a new “browse plantation” for the Toronto Zoo’s animals.

In a first for the Toronto Zoo, and any zoo in Canada, a large sustainable plantation of willow and poplar trees will be cultivated and used as feed for the Zoo’s animals. “Browse,” which is essentially branches, leaves and berries, is an important component of many animals’ diets both from a nutrition standpoint – it’s very high in fibre - and from an emotional standpoint. In the wild, animals spend hours a day foraging for food and when in captivity with readily available food can become overweight, bored and suffer other emotional problems.

Tourism Toronto, along with staff from 11 tourism organizations (Metro Toronto Convention Centre, Delta Chelsea, Fairmont Royal York, Holiday Inn Toronto Airport East, InterContinental Toronto Centre, Marriott Toronto Eaton Centre, Renaissance Toronto, Sheraton Centre Toronto, Toronto Hilton, Westin Harbour Castle and Greater Toronto Hotel Association) is dedicating a day to help plant the 10,000 saplings that will make up the browse plantation, plus 450 native hardwood trees.

“Toronto has a reputation around the world for being a green destination and those of us in the tourism industry who benefit from that reputation can also do much to boost it,” said David Whitaker, President and CEO of Tourism Toronto. “It’s our privilege to play a small but important part by joining with our partners to establish this significant new aspect of the Zoo’s sustainability efforts.”

Spearheading the program is the Animal Nutrition Centre staff at the Toronto Zoo along with the Rouge Park and the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority.

“The Toronto Zoo is proud to be the host venue for this exciting initiative and to partner with Tourism Toronto, the Rouge Park and the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority,” said John Tracogna, CEO of Toronto Zoo. “The sustainability of the Toronto Zoo animal nutrition program will benefit greatly from this project.”

“A day Like Earth Day gives people in our industry a chance to roll up our sleeves and make a difference,” added Mr. Whitaker.

#### **About Tourism Toronto**

Tourism Toronto, Toronto’s Convention and Visitors Association, is an industry association of more than 1,200 members established to sell and market the greater Toronto region as a remarkable destination for tourists, convention delegates and business travellers around the globe. Tourism Toronto operates in partnership with the Ontario Ministry of Tourism and Culture as Regional Tourism Organization 5. For more information please visit [www.seetorontonow.com](http://www.seetorontonow.com).

**About the Toronto Zoo**

The Toronto Zoo is home to over 5,000 animals and award-winning exhibits including the newly renovated south end of the African Pavilion with new ring-tailed lemurs and the Tundra Trek, which features the Zoo's three playful polar bears and Arctic wolves. The Toronto Zoo is committed to the conservation of wildlife through the exhibition of animals, plants and ecological habitats and through conservation, preservation, research and educational programs.

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**Note to Editors:**

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