

Leatherdale International Polar Bear Conservation Centre Takes in Second Orphaned Polar Bear Cub This Year

For immediate release: Winnipeg, December 12, 2016 – An orphaned male polar bear cub has arrived at the Leatherdale International Polar Bear Conservation Centre at the Assiniboine Park Zoo. This is the second cub to arrive at the Centre this year after being identified as in need of intervention and transfer by Manitoba Sustainable Development.

The male cub is approximately one year old and weighs just 39kg (85 lbs) which is the lightest orphan the Centre has received to date. Members of the Assiniboine Park Conservancy's Polar Bear Rescue Team traveled to Churchill to supervise the cubs' trip to Winnipeg on Friday. He has now settled in at the Zoo and has adjusted well to his new surroundings.

"Each year we hope that the ice formation is not delayed and polar bears can get out on the sea ice," said Dr. Stephen Petersen, Head, Conservation & Research at Assiniboine Park Conservancy. "This year it was very late and has put enormous pressure on polar bears, people, and conservation officers in Churchill."

"We are always here to help but can't forget that this is a reminder to all of us about the close tie between sea ice and polar bears," continued Dr. Petersen. "The loss of sea ice due to climate change is alarming and it is critical that we work together as a community to reduce our carbon foot print and take personal actions to positively impact the environment, not only for polar bears but for all wildlife."

Conservation officers observed the cub for quite some time alone in the Churchill area. After several failed attempts to connect him with other female bears in the area, it was clear that intervention was needed. Cubs of this age need to stay with their mothers for at least one winter, or through freeze up of the Western Hudson Bay, to learn how to hunt and for protection from other bears. Wildlife experts agree cubs this young are not able to survive on their own.

The cub will now undergo the standard 30 day quarantine period at the Leatherdale International Polar Bear Conservation Centre.

The Assiniboine Park Zoo's Journey to Churchill exhibit focuses visitors' attention on the species, people and issues important to the Arctic while educating them about the significance of action against climate change. The 10-acre exhibit is currently home to eight polar bears:

Storm, Aurora, Kaska, Blizzard, Star, York and Eli, as well as a female polar bear cub that arrived in late November.

-30-

For interviews and information requests, please contact:
Laura Curtis, Manager, Marketing & Communications
Office: 204-927-6057 Cell: 204-793-4316, lcurtis@assiniboinepark.ca