



Canadian Institute of Forestry
Institut forestier du Canada

November 4, 2013

Mr. Antonio Urcelay
CEO - *Toys R Us*
1 Geoffrey Way
Wayne, New Jersey 07470
USA

Dear Mr. Urcelay,

The Canadian Institute of Forestry – Institut forestier du Canada (CIF/IFC) represents over 2400 members across Canada, acting as the national voice of forest practitioners and promoting public awareness and understanding of good forest stewardship and sustainability. Our members are concerned with the implied message of your company's recently aired television commercial, and what it is saying to the customers of *Toys R Us* and to the general public. The advertisement, in which children are surprised with a trip to one of your stores instead of an outdoor education field trip, implies that nature is boring and that children do not enjoy the outdoors or outdoor education.

The benefits of outdoor activity including a walk in the woods, the observation of plants and wildlife, playing in a park, or hiking on a nature trail, are many. Surrounding ourselves with nature is fun and helps to improve physical, mental, and emotional wellbeing. Outdoor activity also helps combat "nature deficit disorder", which refers to the occurrence of behavioural issues amongst children spending little time outside. First put forward by Richard Louv in his book *Last Child in the Woods*, this theory is being increasingly confirmed by research, greatly supporting the need to reconnect children with nature. Further, an appreciation for nature encourages children to respect and conserve the environment, and to better understand the many benefits that it provides. Getting outside to visit green spaces reduces stress, increases creativity, and improves mood; it also provides opportunities for children to be physically active while using *Toys R Us* products!

We respectfully suggest that you integrate a more positive image of nature and the benefits of going outside within your advertisements, showing the use of many of your products as part of outdoor activities. For example, a *Toys R Us* telescope for observing the stars, a magnifying glass allowing a child to learn about insects, or a bicycle used on a path through the woods. In this way, your brand would be integrated with the value of outdoor activity and education. We believe such an approach would indeed add depth to, and improve the *Toys R Us* brand - in a time when our society is beginning to recognize the fundamental need to reconnect with nature, and for healthy, active outdoor lifestyles.

Getting youth outside again is very important to the CIF/IFC in that it encourages consideration of career paths that include sustainability and conservation – like modern interdisciplinary forestry. Please do not hesitate to contact us for additional information or more constructive ideas.

Yours truly,

Dr. C. Tattersall (Tat) Smith
President CIF/IFC
Dean Emeritus, Faculty of Forestry, University of Toronto

John F. Pineau
CEO CIF/IFC

Voice of Forest Practitioners / La voix des professionnels de la forêt

Canadian Institute of Forestry/Institut forestier du Canada

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