

Report on the Operation of Horse-Drawn Carriages in Victoria, B.C.

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Victoria Horse Alliance is the primary organization holding the horse-drawn carriage companies accountable in Victoria.

- Created in 2016 to address ongoing concerns with the horse drawn carriages.
- We have documented and released to the public dozens of videos and images of the inhumane, unsafe, and unprofessional operation of the horse carriages.
- We have also filed over a dozen complaints with the BC SPCA and the City of Victoria By-Law enforcement over the past 3 years.
- VHA has addressed the City of Victoria directly at council meetings over a dozen times to raise awareness of these concerns with council.



- VHA currently has an active Change.org petition with over 38,000 signatures in support of a ban of the horse carriages.
- We have conducted peaceful demonstrations and outreach successfully without incident, always treating the carriage operators and their staff with respect. Our focus is on the issue, not the people.

Documentation and reporting

There is little hard documentation or observation of the horse carriages prior to Victoria Horse Alliance.

- Through FOI request with the Victoria Police Department and the city of Victoria, along with our own documentation, 35 incidents of concern (traffic collisions, inhumane treatment, or unsafe business practices) with the horse carriages have been filed in the last three years.
- This does not include any complaints to the city from citizens regarding things such as odour, traffic congestion, feces on the streets, etc.
- Horse carriages are essentially unregulated or self-regulated. Little to no accountability unless Victoria Horse Alliance calls them out on these issues.
- City of Victoria's only action related to horse carriages over the past three years is to put numbers on the horses for identification.



May 4th, 2018.

- Two horses collapse at Ogden Point, allegedly after the trolley they were pulling is bumped by a vehicle from behind.
- Initially, carriage company staff report to council and media that the horses were spooked and were laid down by staff and then easily got back up.
- VHA then acquires video of the incident which shows the horses struggling for a prolonged period on the ground and staff failing to take appropriate steps to help them up.
- This video is viewed nearly 500,000 times on Facebook.
- This event along with the years of documentation released by the VHA and filed with the BC SPCA triggers the BC SPCA to recommend a ban on horse carriages and trolleys on Victoria city streets.



BC SPCA Recommendations:

- *"The BC SPCA recommends Council prohibit the operation of horse-drawn vehicles on Victoria's streets."*

- *"Permitting the continued operation of horse-drawn tours on busy streets places horses at risk of injury or death. In light of this recent accident, it is imperative Council mitigate the significant safety risks associated with horse-drawn tours by ending the practice on traffic-congested streets."*

- *They also specifically condemned the efforts of the carriage companies to deceive the public and council: "It is decidedly troubling that Victoria Carriage Tours chose to inappropriately downplay a serious incident which put the public at risk."*



- The city of Victoria votes to forward the recommendations to staff to report back on with options.
- Any work on this report has seemingly disappeared and no report or direction of staff to report on this issue currently exists.

Actions for council to take:

- It has been a year now since this major accident at Ogden Point. Since then, there have been further incidents that have gone unaddressed by council. These include a two-horse trolley running into a parked vehicle at Ogden Point narrowly missing a crowd of tourists, and horses being worked while air quality warnings were in effect during the BC wildfires.

- Council is asked to take action on the BC SPCA recommendations as this is unfinished business of the last council which needs to be addressed as more safety and welfare issues will occur.

- Follow the example of the city of Montreal by instituting a ban of the horse carriages through a phasing out period of no more than 2 years and restricting special event permits during this time.

- Consider offering a small phase out incentive of \$1000 per carriage horse to carriage companies to help with the transition.
- As per the BC SPCA recommendations concerning the safety of operation, immediately ban the two-horse trolleys as part of the phasing out transition.

