

January 31, 2018

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City of Victoria

Re: Stand Renewal for Horse Drawn Carriages

The issue:

As per Schedule C of the City of Victoria Vehicles for Hire Bylaw, the lease for the sightseeing stands (i.e. operating location) for Tally-Ho Carriage Tours and Victoria Carriage Tours expired as at December 31, 2017. The last lease was renewed effective January 1, 2014, for a 4 year term.

Our request:

The operators are seeking a **ten-year renewal** term of our **existing location**. We feel this request is reasonable and highly beneficial to the city for the following reasons:

10-Year Term

The current short-term nature of our stand renewal hinders our ability to properly plan for long-term horse care and business operations. Extending our renewal period to ten years will enable us to thoughtfully and properly plan for business demand, enhancements and continuity; and maximize our ability to operate safely.

1. Horse-drawn carriage businesses are iconic, well-loved symbols of Victoria:

- We are a highly-recognized and sought-after attraction associated closely with the image of Victoria. As such, we are key contributors to our local tourism economy.
- We have documented a huge amount of support from residents, local businesses, and world travellers, who love our horses and service, and rave about their experience(s).

2. As demand increases, so must our herd capacity:

- As a top-rated travel destination, Victoria's tourism market continues to grow. The carriages continue to be a major attraction, as confirmed by our year-after-year sales growth.
- We operate at maximum capacity in peak periods (e.g., when cruise ships are in port), and continue to see increasing demand. As we work to meet demand, we must increase the size of our herds.

3. Larger herds require larger investments:

- The industry has close to 60 draft horses in various stages of life (in-training, working, retired, etc.) and invests over \$1 million annually in basic care (feed, veterinary, foot care, housing, etc.). As herd sizes increase, so does our contribution to our local economy.
- Training: As we on-board new horses we make significant financial and time-intensive investments in their training. It can take up to two years to properly train a new horse to work safely in downtown Victoria.

- Retirees: Horses need to be managed as long-term team members. Every horse is a minimum 20-year commitment, with many much longer. In their retirement, many of the horses remain with us and we must have a financial plan for their long-term care.
- The infrastructure required to house the horses and equipment is massive. Additional capital investments must be financed through banks/loans which prefer low-risk, long-term stability in operating environments. The biggest risk to our business continuity is changes to our governing bylaw by the City.

4. Enables us to attract and keep longer-term staff:

- Consistency in our staff and their communications with our equine partners is a key element in developing the horses' mental fitness and trust, which is a key contributor to our excellent safety record (0.0001% accident rate over the last 20 years).

5. Recognizes that Victoria's carriage businesses are well run, industry leaders:

- We work cooperatively with the City to ensure our regulations provide appropriate oversight and care for the horses and we abide by our bylaw. In recent letters to citizens who have expressed their support for the horse-drawn carriage industry, the City of Victoria has acknowledged "We have not witnessed any behaviors that could lead to revoking a business license, for either of the tour operators in Victoria, in the past five years".
- We have never had any complaints validated by the BC SPCA. In a recent letter to the city from the industry's acclaimed farrier, he states "I have worked on backyard horses, ranch horses and show horses in multi-million dollar barns and I have met very few horses that are as well kept and as happy as the horses that work on the streets of Victoria!".
- Both companies continually implement process improvements to ensure our horse care and equipment is top notch and relevant, and collaborate for the betterment of the industry. We hold ourselves to high standards, and it shows on the world stage that is Victoria.

Existing Location

1. The City has invested significant infrastructure and resources in our current location:

- Our current location (corners of Belleville and Menzies Streets) has been specifically designed for our purposes, including:
 - Access to city water to ensure we are able to frequently offer clean, fresh water to the horses; and clean the streets to reduce horse smells. (Note that one side of the street has had ongoing issues with access to the water for almost two years.)
 - Hitching rails so we can tie our horses up when at rest, and enable our carriage drivers to take breaks/rests.
 - Public benches specifically designed to enable us to store (hide) our necessary but not esthetically pleasing equipment such as manure buckets, cleaning supplies, food, etc.

2. Customer Service Standards:

- While the operating location for Tally-Ho Carriage Tours has moved over the last 115 years (at one time it was in front of the Empress Hotel; and then in front of the Legislative Buildings), the industry has been in the current operating location since the 1970s.
 - Our guests and our tourism partners know where we are, and how to find us. We have significant customer loyalty from locals and repeat travellers.
 - Our marketing materials direct our guests to our current location. A change in location could cost up to \$100,000 as we would need to remarket EVERY advertisement (web, print, local hotels, etc.), requiring significant lead time (our location is printed in sales materials at least a year in advance of travel [e.g., ranging from large tour operators such as Scenic Tours, to documented cruise ship excursions, to local free maps, etc.]).

- Our tour routes are established based on our current location. Unlike buses or other tour operators, we are restricted in our routes to ensure we remain in low-traffic areas of the city. A change in location would require us to re-route every tour, creating a challenge to ensure we continue to offer visually pleasing, historical tours within set boundaries and timelines.

3. Impact on Horses

- Horses crave consistency as it helps alleviate their natural fears of the world around them: consistency is a key element of their safety and well-being.
 - Our herds have been trained to know that our existing location is their rest place – they know they are safe there, and will relax between tours. These moments of relaxation help keep them grounded and thinking clearly throughout their day.
 - The horses leave from our current location, cover consistent tour routes, and return to their 'home base'. Every piece of their day is as familiar to them as we can make it. No surprises make for great days!
- A change in operating location would require every working horse to be retrained: not only is this an unnecessary stress on our animals, but it would require a significant time and financial investments from us; and would require us to cease operations for an undeterminable amount of time while we completed the retraining process to the point where we could operate safely again.

4. Safety

- With the ever-increasing harassment our young, predominantly female, staff endure on a daily basis, our location offers protection in the following ways:
 - Legislative and inner harbour cameras are positioned to monitor our operations: if something untoward happens, it will be caught on camera.
 - Legislature security guards patrol the area regularly, which adds a level of oversight that may be enough to thwart any potential threats to the staff or horses.

We would be pleased to discuss this request further, at your convenience, and may be reached as indicated below.

Yours truly,

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