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Mayor and Council
City Hall
453 West 12th Ave
Vancouver, BC V5Y 1V4

November 8, 2016,

Dear Mayor and Council,

I am writing to express our concern about the recent incident involving a horse-drawn carriage in Stanley Park, which put both the public and horses at risk.

As television news reports showed, the horses were frightened by a car horn and bolted off their route on to the seawall, demolishing a park bench and racing along the seawall edge, with the driver and several passengers being thrown from the carriage.

This incident illustrates why horse-drawn carriages should not be permitted in urban areas. As prey animals, horses have a highly developed flight drive that is easily triggered when they are startled by an unexpected or threatening stimulus. This reaction can happen to even the best-trained and well-mannered horses, and is often the cause of accidents for horse-drawn carriages.

In addition, the constant exposure to traffic, noise, and pollution; the long hours of standing and walking on hard surfaces and the hard labour under sometimes extreme weather conditions make urban areas unsuitable for carriage horses.

This incident could have been much worse, as the carriage could have veered into traffic or over the seawall. It was sheer luck that no pedestrians, passengers or horses were hurt. Had it taken place in the busier tourist season the consequences would likely have been catastrophic.

For these reasons, we urge you to ban horse-drawn carriages from the city, including Stanley Park. The risks are too great and should there be similar incidents in the future City Council will be found wanting in protecting public safety and supporting animal welfare.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Debra Probert'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name 'Debra' being more prominent than the last name 'Probert'.

Debra Probert
Executive Director