



## Proposed Changes to Management of Gorge Waterway

Date: Friday, February 12, 2016

For Immediate Release

VICTORIA, BC — At an information meeting this morning, proposed changes to the management of the Gorge Waterway to enhance recreation use of the Selkirk Water and prohibit residential use and the storage of vessels, were shared with the community.

Next Thursday, City Council will consider staff recommendations for the City Council to initiate a rezoning process to amend the current Gorge Waterway regulations to allow anchoring for a period of up to 48 consecutive hours, but not exceeding 72 total hours in a 30-day period.

Located northwest of the Selkirk Trestle, the Gorge Waterway is a sheltered area that has become popular for anchoring vessels for storage and residents living aboard their vessels. The City is concerned about the negative impacts that unregulated marine activities are having on the marine environment and Victoria residents.

Having received a Licence of Occupation this past October to further establish its management authority over the Gorge Waterway, the City had initially aimed to prohibit all anchoring in this area. However, a full ban on anchoring has recently been tested by a BC Court of Appeal decision regarding anchoring in West Kelowna. It suggests that a municipal bylaw which does not allow for some anchoring, may be viewed as interfering with federal jurisdiction over navigation and shipping, that it exceeds provincial jurisdiction and is constitutionally invalid.

The current proposed approach for short-term anchoring minimizes the current impacts to the environment and residents, while respecting constitutional rights and federal jurisdiction.

Should the recommendations be approved next Thursday, there would be further public consultation including a community meeting in March. Based on public input, the City would prepare a draft bylaw to implement the zoning regulation changes, on which the community would have the opportunity to provide feedback to Council at a public hearing.

The City has developed a comprehensive compliance strategy that would move forward once the Gorge Waterway area has been rezoned. Introduction of new zoning regulations would include an initial education and voluntary compliance phase, followed by an enforcement phase. If the rezoning bylaw were introduced in April, education and outreach would follow in May, with the posting of notices on vessels and floating wharves in June and July, and injunctions to remove remaining vessels in August and September 2016.

There are currently four anchored wharves, 22 vessels and 12 small vessels (e.g., dinghies) anchored in the Gorge Waterway, in addition to two sunken and one partially submerged vessel. It is estimated that between five to eight vessels are used for living-aboard purposes.

Long-term vessel anchoring in the Selkirk Water is not compatible with the land uses in the area and generates several community concerns including the discharge of sewage effluent and garbage from live-aboard vessels; the discharge of fuel and lubricants from unseaworthy vessels; noise and nuisance activities from live-aboard vessel residents; abandonment of unseaworthy vessels and vessel debris; obstruction of the waterway that affects recreational use by the general public; and erosion of the shoreline and riparian areas from occupant access routes.

The proposed changes to the Gorge Waterway regulations shared today will be presented to City Council for consideration at a meeting on Thursday, February 18, 2016. The report is available at: [www.victoria.ca](http://www.victoria.ca).

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**For More Information:**

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