

LETTER: Tunnel vision on bridge barriers

North Shore News

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Dear Editor:

I wanted to comment on the Iron Worker's Memorial Bridge upgrade. I think the three-metre high fence is overkill and the esthetics of this type of design needs to be revisited. I'm really disappointed with the impacts on the views.

Some of the most fabulous views in the city are from our bridge decks and they help to reduce the stress of being stuck in traffic.

Now when driving over the bridge I feel like I'm in a tunnel and the view is obstructed, whether I'm driving or whether I'm a passenger, unless I look at 90 degrees from the direction that the car is moving and even then the view is greatly diminished.

Also at sunset and sunrise, the strobe effect from the sun shining though the railings is quite strong and very disconcerting and could impact people with epilepsy.

I understand that the fence is to prevent suicide attempts. Given that we live in an area with plenty of choices of high places from which to jump, I don't think this will prevent suicides, just choice of location. (I lost a very close family member to suicide from jumping, so please don't think I don't empathize or understand, but I think this is misguided.) Where does it end? Why don't we build three-metre fences on all highway overpasses to stop someone from jumping in front of cars, what about suspension bridges, every cliff on the North Shore, or every apartment building?

I've heard that there are plans to do the same on other bridges in the region, starting with the Burrard Bridge. Where is the science that shows this type of fencing reduces the number of suicides, rather than just causing someone who has already made the decision to choose a different location?

There has to be another solution that would be less intrusive and potentially less costly. Everyone I have spoken with is not happy with this design and does not want to see this happen to any of our other bridges.

We value the views here, some of the best ones are from the bridges as we travel around the city and it's one of the reasons why many of us are happy to live here. To our politicians and bridge designers for future bridge upgrades, please reconsider the design.

Lynn Landry
North Vancouver

Editor's note: In a 2008 report, the B.C. Coroners Service recommended that five Metro Vancouver bridges (the Lions Gate, Ironworkers, Granville Street, Pattullo and Burrard Street bridges) be refitted with high barriers for suicide prevention. The Ironworkers is the first of those bridges that has been fitted with high barriers.

Restricting access to "lethal means" can make the difference between a death and an opportunity to help a distressed individual, the report authors wrote, "and is considered one of the most effective universal approaches to suicide prevention."

Studies conducted on prevention of suicide from jumping over the past several decades concluded that people who are prevented from jumping from bridges do not go on to commit suicide by other means.

One famous study tracked more than 500 people who were prevented from jumping from the Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco for 30 years, and found 90 per cent of them went on to live normal lives and did not die by suicide.

What are your thoughts? Send us a letter via email by clicking [here \(http://www.nsnews.com/opinion/send-us-a-letter\)](http://www.nsnews.com/opinion/send-us-a-letter) or post a comment below.

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