

## LETTER: Earthquake prompts building code concerns

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### Dear Editor:

Something we seem to be missing in the present dialogue on earthquake safety is how certain construction practices permitted by our local municipalities put us in danger.

Almost every residential street on the North Shore is marred by huge pits that have been dug to accommodate monster houses.

Incredibly, our municipal governments allow builders to excavate right to the adjoining property lines.

The occupants of houses on both sides of these pits are faced with a drop-off of up to 25 feet only six feet from their homes. The faces of these excavations are usually not supported or shored up in any way.

To allow builders to do this is both irresponsible and dangerous.

My wife and I discovered just how dangerous three years ago when the District of North Vancouver allowed a developer to do this at the lot next to our home. Half of the walkway at the side of our house fell away into the excavation. There was no earthquake then.

If there had been, the sides of the excavation would in all probability have collapsed and our house would have fallen into this pit, taking us with it.

Our municipal governments should enact residential building codes that prevent excavation up to adjoining property lines and compel adequate shoring of excavations.

Otherwise, all their talk of earthquake preparedness is hollow and meaningless.

**Joseph W Hind**

**North Vancouver**

*Editor's note: District of North Vancouver spokeswoman Jeanine Bratina provides this response: "Without knowing the details of any particular case, the public should be advised that the district requires that new construction be monitored by professional structural and geotechnical engineers and WorkSafe BC. This ensures that procedures for sound structural design, safe excavation and shoring, and acceptable proximity to property limits are followed throughout construction. The BC Building Code also heavily regulates new construction, and as the code evolves, more stringent seismic requirements are put in place. The district actively works with the province, professional associations and WorkSafe BC to mitigate any risks during construction."*

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