

north shore news

When trees fall, environment loses

Matt Henderson / North Shore News

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North Vancouver - Dear Editor: Re: West Van Mulls Monster Homes, May 29 front-page story Although I do not have any personal objections over a "monster house" as a final product, I do have serious concerns during the construction of them. It is my understanding that West Vancouver does not require an erosion and sediment control plan to accompany every building permit application; it is only required after an offence has occurred. The retention of vegetation, including trees, is the best practice in controlling the erosion of soils.

Marque Thompson of Marque Design was quoted as saying, "In order to build new, trees have to be sacrificed," and, "If a tree is old and it's removed and a new one is put in its place, that's probably better." These two comments are an insult to the people of West Vancouver and every other district that this company operates in. First, I would assume that trees have to be sacrificed in order to increase the house footprint. Second, the removal of an old tree (define "old": five years? 50? 500?) rarely is "probably better" than replacing it with a newer tree. Older trees offer more food, living habitat, and protection for insects, birds, and animals than younger trees. Many large dead trees (or "snags") have more ecological value than smaller, younger trees. And most importantly, larger trees offer the most erosion protection of soils. As a former director of the West

Vancouver Streamkeepers, and as a practicing certified professional in erosion and sediment control, I know first hand the common practice of developers on the North Shore. Soil retention practices are not valued, and the receiving environments (storm sewers that dump into waters of local creeks) pay the ultimate price.

Only after the District of West Vancouver and other municipalities implement mandatory sediment control plans to accompany building permit applications will developers take this issue seriously. Residents spoke of "forest esthetics" at the meeting last week.

These esthetics go beyond residential yards and roadways. They include the local creeks, wetlands, and riparian areas that historically supported an old growth forest filled with - you guessed it - old trees.

Matt Henderson

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