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LAUTENS: Rule 1: Never sell. Rule 2: See rule 1

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Self-interest (aka money) rules. The real estate industry expertly knows how to twist the monster home issue: Divide the neighbours.

There's no end of chat about prospective monster home property buyers. Almost none about the other side of the deal: the sellers. It takes two to tango.

These are the owners who, if enough money is waved at them, will sell. And if their neighbours are furious about the prospect of something bulky enough to look like a hotel, as a reader described one house now under construction in West Vancouver's Dundarave, well, too bad — the seller is leaving the neighbourhood, well-heeled and conscience-clear.

Equally obvious: there's migration from one side to the other. One of my most reliable agents, 7yc44D, recalled a contented long-time resident with no intention of selling — until offered \$14 million for his property. He sold.

A recent media item reported on a homeowner who considers the sale of his WV property as his pension plan. The fear of running out of money before running out of years grips the old especially.

I've mused about making real money writing a real estate advice book. For free, here's No. 1 principle: If you own Vancouver, and especially West Vancouver, property — never sell. Never. Your heirs, if they plan cannily, will bless you 200 years from now. How do you think the rich-beyond-the-dreams-of-avarice Grosvenor family, builders of Grosvenor Ambleside, made their pile?

As for Monday's WV council meeting on bylaw changes — swollen by potential sellers with \$-signs in their eyes — I didn't attend. It was a choice between going to a predictable meeting and watching a new episode of The Big Bang Theory. At least I didn't know how the latter would end.

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I live in the serene conviction that there is no point in having second thoughts if your first are perfect beyond improvement. But enough laughable delusions. After a careful re-reading, I'm troubled that my last opus on the conflict among bikers, hikers and neighbours on the North Shore mountains, especially Mount Fromme, too easily let off the angries among the neighbours.

An email from one neighbour, warmly congratulating me on that column, reminded me of the old saw that you can't be too careful in choosing your friends. I prefer Oscar Wilde's witty remake: "One cannot be too careful in choosing one's enemies."

This correspondent shows no concern that such action could kill, or leave a rider paraplegic. (I emphasize the writer is not the woman accused of mischief to property likely to cause death, for allegedly booby-trapping trails apparently set for mountain-bike cyclists.)

Some excerpts: "Mother Nature drops large trees on the trails ... and her branches fall from the tree canopies. Rocks and stones become loosened from the forest floor as bike tires erode the trails. All hazards ... The mountain bikers ... knew about those log and forest debris 'traps' for years (a mere annoyance to them, until now. Many riders just 'bunny-hopped' the

small logs).”

This calm equating of the natural fall from trees with deliberate human intent to place dangerous objects on bike trails should raise more than an eyebrow. The writer concludes: “Thank you . . . for letting people get a peek at the ‘dark side’ of the mountain biking community,” and if mountain bikers throw “any derogatory comments” at me for my previous column, “it is just in their nature to do so.”

Thanks, but no thanks. Still, one must empathize with neighbours at the end of their tether after years of conflict. The vicious postings by bikers, as noted in my previous piece, are indefensible. There’s enough blame to go around on this issue.

A wise letter to the editor Feb. 15 by John Sharpe, a mountain biker for 20 years, weighs the very well organized and funded lobbying group, the North Shore Mountain Bike Association, against “a very few random, frustrated voices in the community sticking up for what they believe in.”

My second thought echoes my first: This is an ugly, dangerous war zone. Send in the peacemakers. John Sharpe would be a fine nominee.

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I try to maintain a mask of ho-hum professional cynicism about government folly, but the B.C. Liberals’ crazed water legislation takes the gateau.

After decades of giving our groundwater free to Nestle’s, B.C. will charge this bloated Swiss behemoth — world’s biggest food company, in 2011 declared the world’s most profitable corporation by Fortune Global 500 — a ludicrous \$2.25 per million litres, less than the retail price of a dozen bottles. And not for the water. That’s the bureaucratic fee for accessing it. The water’s free.

“Water should not be used as a revenue stream by government,” Environment Minister Mary Polak declared. Why not our natural gas too? Has Premier Christy Clark considered projections that water will be the oil of the 21st century?

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