

LETTER: Silent spring is already here in treeless blocks

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Dear Editor:

I was heartened to see your Feb. 21 headline that West Vancouver is to consider measures to preserve its urban tree canopy.

When I first saw aerial photos of Greater Vancouver some 40 years ago, West Van and much of the North Shore jumped out as green oases. Over the past 10 years, once-verdant blocks in Ambleside and Dundarave have been rendered almost treeless by relentless redevelopment and the gratuitous removal of beautiful, healthy trees.

Reasons cited for tree removal are that they block sunlight and views, are “dirty” in shedding leaves and needles, or cause bad feng shui. While retained large trees soften the visual impacts of new construction and help preserve the neighbourhood streetscape, it has become standard procedure to clear-cut building lots stem to stern. Often all that is replanted is lawn and a few small trees and shrubs, ensuring that the urban canopy will never be restored.

West Vancouver is doing important and sensitive restoration work along its foreshore.

The lack of any protection for the upslope urban forest that provides wildlife habitat, shade and at least some semblance of a natural ecosystem, is a huge oversight. As for the argument that private property rights give one the right to obliterate landscapes and disrespect your neighbours – this is West Vancouver 2016, and not the wild west. With spring approaching, take a walk through a well-treed neighbourhood, hear the songbirds and squirrels, and breathe in the scent of the cedars and fir.

Contrast this to the sad bleakness of blocks dominated by steroidal new construction – there, the “silent spring” has already arrived.

David Sheffield
West Vancouver

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