

West Vancouver to consider tree cutting rules

Residents petition council for protections

[Brent Richter](#) / North Shore News

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Nic and Sharon Tsangarakis and Farzana Logan have added their names to a petition signed by West Vancouver residents concerned about the lack of tree-cutting bylaws in the district, in an effort to halt clearcuts on private properties like this one on 2000-block Inglewood Avenue. photo Mike Wakefield, North Shore News

District of West Vancouver council is looking to silence the chainsaws – although maybe not as fast as some would like.

A group of West Vancouver residents appeared as a delegation before council Monday night to request the district acknowledge there is a problem with sweeping clearcuts of mature trees on lots and challenge council to develop a policy that would be “win-win” for tree-loving West Vancouver residents and property owners looking to rebuild. The district currently has no bylaws protecting trees on private property.

“We believe there needs to be a combination of both disincentives as well as incentives with a view to encouraging the right type of decision-making as well as behaviour from our residents,” said Nic Tsangarakis, a 17th Street resident.

Beyond reining in the destruction of mature trees, Tsangarakis also asked council to help replenish the supply of trees that had been lost. He pointed to the City of Vancouver’s example of aiming to plant 150,000 more trees by 2020, which should up the city’s tree canopy density by more than 20 per cent.

“I think that is a wonderful goal, an auspicious goal and I think we can be doing something similar,” he said.

Tsangarakis and his supporters had also gathered 273 signatures for a petition. While council was largely receptive to the ideas, residents will have to wait until the fall before they can get a look at some proposed bylaws that would target tree retention on private property.

For some on council, however, the fall can’t come fast enough. Coun. Bill Soprovich questioned whether council could put in place a moratorium on tree cutting until the new policy is finalized. Council didn’t opt for Soprovich’s chainsaw

ban, but others did note that while they deliberate and consult, more trees are being lost.

Coun. Craig Cameron referenced a letter and photos of a yard looking like a clearcut that had been delivered by a resident.

"It just underscores the urgency of the problem because while we mull these things seemingly endlessly – certainly for a longer period of time than I would like – this is what happens and so there's a real cost to delay," he said, adding that many of the felled trees were outside the building envelope and therefore did not need to be cut. "I'm really very concerned about the time this is taking us to come to this issue and I want to see something substantive and enforceable in a period of weeks or a month or two, not six months or eight months."

Still, a measured process is better than a knee-jerk response, argued Coun. Michael Lewis.

"There is substantive community consultation that's taking place around this issue and our response will be measured and well thought out, as identified, early this fall. I think we mustn't forget the potential for unintended consequences – the issue of property rights," he said.

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