

City of North Vancouver to consider tree cutting bylaw

[Maria Spitale-Leisk](#) , [Jeremy Shepherd](#) / North Shore News

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file photo Paul McGrath, North Shore News

If a tree bylaw falls in the City of North Vancouver, does it make a sound?

The city will investigate instituting a tree cutting bylaw later this year following a council meeting Monday, but whether any new rules take root remains to be seen.

“While there may be some pros, there’s also some costs and some cons,” said Mayor Darrell Mussatto on the possibility of a new tree bylaw.

Unlike neighbouring North Shore municipalities, City of North Vancouver homeowners – barring a land covenant – are free to chop till they drop. That absence of regulation has allowed the city to be more efficient, according to Mussatto.

“We haven’t had to have a lot of staff time go into regulating trees, and we can put more money into putting trees in the ground,” he said. “I’m leaning towards what’s been working so far.”

West Vancouver passed its first-ever tree protection bylaw last month, prompting Coun. Don Bell to look at the city’s regulations.

There is a “public interest” in at least having city staff study the issue, said Bell, who put forward the motion.

While the city’s higher density development has made private property tree bylaws less of a priority than in West Vancouver or the District of North Vancouver, Bell stressed that residents still come to the city for its trees.

“If they wanted flat ground with no trees they’d live in Richmond or Langley or somewhere like that,” he said.

Coun. Craig Keating said he’s leaning towards the status quo when it comes to tree cutting rules in the city.

“I think the tree cutting bylaw or restrictions against that are great for people who don’t own the property in which the trees exist,” said Keating, adding new regulations could potentially create unintended consequences.

West Vancouver’s new bylaw protects trees that are 75 centimetres in diameter or larger and carries a fine as high as \$1,000 for those in violation of it. The District of North Vancouver first enacted tree cutting regulations in 1993, within an environmental protection and preservation bylaw.

District council passed a tree protection bylaw in 2012, under which homeowners can cut down a large tree on their property so long as they have a permit and either replace the tree or pay a \$500 fee.

Couns. Rod Clark and Pam Bookham did not attend the meeting.