

[Jeremy Shepherd](#) / North Shore News

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West Vancouver resident Liesa Norman is upset over the clearcutting of trees in her neighbours' backyard. The trees were felled just before West Vancouver council passed a bylaw regulating tree-cutting on private land in the municipality. photo Mike Wakefield, North Shore News

At least two dozen mature trees were chopped down in a West Vancouver backyard this week, some falling [just hours before council passed the district's first ever tree protection bylaw](http://www.nsnews.com/news/west-vancouver-adopts-tree-protection-law-1.2234733) (<http://www.nsnews.com/news/west-vancouver-adopts-tree-protection-law-1.2234733>).

"It looks like they clear cut a section of Stanley Park," said neighbour Liesa Norman.

Council unanimously voted on Monday to introduce an interim bylaw protecting trees with a diameter greater than 75 centimetres. The tree bylaw was voted into law at a special council meeting Wednesday night.

But before that happened, chainsaws revved up outside the Altamont home next door to Norman on Tuesday, filling the air with a scent like "Christmas in spring." Norman watched as the last of the 28 large trees were reduced to stumps Wednesday afternoon.

"You're taking out a giant," she said, estimating some of the cedars measured over 10 storeys high. "You can't just grow this back."

After knocking on her neighbour's door and getting no response, Norman said she contacted municipal hall and was told a \$1,000 fine could be administered if the clear cutting continued after Wednesday.

"People up here don't care," she said. "It's not even a slap on the wrist."

There have been reports of chainsaw-wielding residents taking action to beat the tree bylaw across West Vancouver this week, according to Coun. Mary-Ann Booth, who called the news "unfortunate but not surprising."

Booth was one of a few councillors who anticipated trees would be felled before the new rules became law.

“There’s going to be some pain,” she said. “Long-term gain, short-term pain.”

While the loss of trees is disappointing, Booth said the community’s green canopy would have faced a greater risk if council did nothing. “We’re trying to build trust in the community around this,” she said. “Are there going to be fatalities in the form of trees? There are. We have to accept that.”

Booth and Coun. Craig Cameron agreed they didn’t want to impose harsh measures on homeowners.

“We don’t want to declare war on our own community,” Booth said. “I’ve got to remember who elected me. I want to see consensus around this.”

Despite unanimity on council, there remains dissonance in the community between those who value trees and those who don’t, according to Norman.

“It’s going to look like everywhere else in the world if we’re not careful,” she said.

Coun. Nora Gambioli suggested changing the bylaw to protect smaller trees during council’s debate Monday, but backpedalled after sensing her motion would be defeated.

Bylaw infractions can be reported to West Vancouver at 604-925-7152.