

## VIEWPOINT

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### mailbox

# 'Jumper' remarks callous

Dear Editor:

Poor set-up on Trevor Lautens is furious he had to detour over the Ironworkers Memorial Second Narrows Crossing because the Lions Gate Bridge was closed to help prevent a suicide.

In his Nov. 27 column Let's Keep It Moving on Life's Highways, he makes callous, altogether stupid remarks about the person who caused such inconvenience, referring to him or her as "an egocentric exhibitionist" and as vainly "self-centred."

It's an absolutely astonishing, know-nothing misdescription of what leads to a suicide attempt, not least when it involves someone who is seriously mentally ill as it usually does.

If the person on the bridge were a member of Lautens' own family, would he be so pompous and dismissive? That's the real test. Say it was his youngest boy who's at an age when schizophrenia, for example, can manifest itself. Keep in mind,

too, that half of all those with schizophrenia will attempt suicide at least once in their lifetime.

I can't imagine, in such a circumstance, that Lautens would begrudge the police taking necessary care to avert the suicide, including stopping the traffic with its noise and sensory overload.

It's not fun to be held up while trying to cross the inlet, but it's not fun or wilfulness or lack of consideration, either, when you are so ill and in such distress that you contemplate ending your life.

Let the police do what they have to do in helping someone in such crisis, and, for the rest of us, cool it when it happens. We have no right to be angry, and wouldn't be angry if we understood.

Herschel Hardin, president  
North Shore Schizophrenia Society

# Closing a bridge to save a life defines 'decency'

Dear Editor:

The message behind Trevor Lautens' Nov. 27 column on Lions Gate "jumpers" is so abhorrent that a more cynical person might think that it's merely a pathetic grab to get attention — anyone's attention. That said, I'll take the bait.

You're missing the point, my dear Mr. Lautens. The big secret. It's not about the person jumping, it's about us. The reason you can fit over a half-mile of water in total comfort is because of thousands of years of sacrifice and compassion.

Even if we don't say it out loud every day, we live in the luxury that we do in part because we all "know" deep

# No need to close bridge if screens can be deployed

Dear Editor:

As pointed out in Trevor Lautens' Nov. 27 column Let's Keep It Moving on Life's Highways, it is quite ridiculous to shut down the bridge when some disturbed individual wants to jump.

There is a simple alternative in the form of a 10-metre by five-metre tent structure which could be kept folded in the traffic office and brought out for just such an occasion. The individual would be obscured from traffic with this screen while it would provide room for rescue and medical staff to attend. Police and ambulance vehicles could be held at the traffic office on the north end of the bridge and the flow of cars and buses would be allowed to carry on as usual.

Stan Ward

West Vancouver

*(Editor's note: The West Vancouver Police Department has created just such a screen structure that can possibly be used in these types of events. It should be noted that the WVPD is not always the primary responder to these types of events. The Vancouver police handled the incident on Nov. 22.)*

# Make walking trails bicycle-free

Dear Editor:

Following your correspondent's letter Make Some Trails Dog-free (North Shore News, Nov. 25), I would like to respond with a suggestion that these foot trails should be made "bicycle-free." Quite often we will be walking around Ambleside Park and up the western side of the Capilano River when a head-down-devil-may-care cyclist comes charging up behind us without so much as a courteous ring of their bell — if in fact they have got one.

James C. Sandison

West Vancouver

down that saving a fellow human's life is fundamentally more important than making it to a play on time.

We close the bridge and make every effort to save these people (however attention-seeking they may be) because they are somebody's brother or sister, somebody's mother, father or child. If we don't at least try to help, then we all lose a piece of our human decency.

So, try not to trouble yourself so much the next time you're stuck in traffic — it's not about you.

Jonathan Ritchie  
Bowen Island