

Trestle \$2 million funding race is on

By Sarah Simpson, The Cowichan Valley Citizen
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Using his position as the Chair of the Cowichan Foundation's Kinsol Trestle fundraising campaign, Jack Peake handed over the first \$100 cheque Wednesday, in what many hope will be a brisk endeavour to raise the remaining \$2 million required to save the historic span. Peake joined members of the campaign, Cowichan Valley Regional District officials, members of Duncan and North Cowichan councils and various other community stakeholders at the north end of the Kinsol Trestle to officially launch the crusade.

"This is one of those things in your life that comes along that you just can't help but get excited about," said Peake of the \$5.7 million restoration project. "This particular day is the second most important day in the history of this trestle. The most important day is about 18 months from now when we actually stand here and cut a ribbon. "I guarantee you that is going to happen."

Long-time Cowichan Foundation board member and CVRD Chair Gerry Giles said Peake was the perfect fit to spearhead the project. Some \$4.1 million has already been secured from the provincial government and others for the rehabilitation work that will replace unsound timbers, reinforce eight structural trestle bents and build a new 614-foot pathway for hikers, runners, bicyclists and equestrians.

"It has us all very excited," said Giles. "It will ensure that the historic characteristics, including the span, the height and the timber design of the original structures are preserved as timbers are replaced where necessary." Now it's the wider community's turn to step up to the plate, said Peake.

"Two million is still needed and it has to come from all sources. Whether it's \$25 or \$25,000 or \$250,000, we need everybody to participate. Having key early supporters to the campaign sets the tone, inspires others and we're looking also of course for not just the dollars, but the in kind donations.

Western Forest Products, one of the region's largest employers, is joining forces with the United Steelworkers Local 1-1937 to further the cause. Peake said the lumber needed alone costs around half a million dollars.

"Think how beneficial that is to have companies stand up and say 'I can supply you that material.' That \$500,000 out of a \$5.7 million project is a huge gift," he said. "We're talking on one hand, a supplier of raw materials, on the other hand, the supplier of labour. That's exactly what it's going to take to bring this thing to a conclusion," said Peake. "I am just thrilled and delighted to see these two organizations coming forward and allowing us to use their skills."

Peake said the project would create an estimated 59 jobs, including 30 in direct construction, 20 indirect jobs in manufacturing and support and nine in engineering and project management. What's more, "the benefits to this are absolutely huge," said Peake. "The number of folks who will come to visit our area, our Island, will leave all kinds of spendable dollars behind. Great things are under way. You can't argue with it. Some gifts have been secured but we still need a significant amount of money to reach the target." And he isn't about to just talk the talk.

"You can't stand up here and talk about anything of this nature without putting your money where your mouth is," said Peake. He then offered the first individual pledge -- a \$100 personal cheque to get the ball rolling. Gerry Giles followed Peake's lead.

"Today I plan to make my gift to this campaign and I hope everyone will consider making one as well. With your help, in whatever way you can, we will reach our target and this magnificent structure will be restored." Some \$1,000 was raised right then and there at the edge of the trestle, with even more promised. The race to \$2 million is officially underway.

"Even if you personally can't give, talk to your friends and encourage folks who could contribute to do so. This is how this thing is going to snowball and we'll get to that \$2 million quicker than any of us could imagine."