

# Work could begin on Kinsol Trestle next spring

By Judith Lavoie, Times Colonist  
October 24, 2009

The rickety Kinsol Trestle will be transformed into a major Vancouver Island tourist attraction by early summer of 2011, the chairman of the trestle fundraising campaign said yesterday.

The group still needs about \$1 million of the \$6-million cost, either in cash or donated goods and services, but the goal is close enough that construction tenders will go out as soon as design details are completed, which could be as early as this fall, Jack Peake said. Work on the historic railway trestle, which soars 45 metres above the Koksilah River near Shawnigan Lake, is set to begin in the spring.

The contribution that tipped the restoration project into certainty is an offer of lumber and labour from Western Forest Products and Local 1-1937 United Steelworkers IWA Council.

The gift-in-kind, believed to be worth about \$200,000, means the fundraising group is close to coming up with its share of the three-way infrastructure funding.

It was announced last month that the federal government would commit \$1.88 million, matched by a similar contribution from the province -- \$1.3 million of which had been committed earlier -- leaving the local group scrambling to come up with its one-third share.

"Now we have a very clear deadline that has to be made," said Peake. "There's no doubt this is a go-ahead. There's no way this thing is going to stop now."

Western Forest Products will provide timber and milling facilities and the Steelworkers will arrange for volunteers to provide the manpower.

Steve Frasher, CEO of the forest company, said he hopes other companies and organizations will contribute to restoring the Cowichan Valley landmark.

In addition to the restoration costs, between \$300,000 and \$500,000 is needed to maintain the trestle and others on the 120-kilometre Cowichan Valley Trail, which will become part of the Trans-Canada Trail.

The 188-metre Kinsol Trestle fell into disrepair after the last train crossed the 1920 Canadian National Railway bridge 30 years ago. The province acquired the CNR right-of-way in 1984, but without maintenance, timbers rotted and a fire damaged many of the supporting structures.

Hikers and cyclists now have to take a 10-kilometre detour because the trestle is unsafe. In 2005, the community began debating whether it should be demolished, replaced with a cheaper modern design or restored. Three years later, fundraising started in earnest.

"This will be a huge economic benefit to the Cowichan Valley and Vancouver Island as a whole," Peake said.

[jlavoie@tc.canwest.com](mailto:jlavoie@tc.canwest.com)