

# Langford engineer: Interchange not just for Bear Mountain traffic

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A Langford official disputes the provincial government's view that a proposed Spencer Road interchange on the Trans-Canada Highway is geared mostly to helping a private developer.

Transportation Minister Kevin Falcon told the legislature this week that the interchange largely benefits the Bear Mountain golf course and residential project.

"They're creating all the traffic as a result of their development," said Falcon in response to questions from John Horgan, New Democrat MLA for Malahat-Juan de Fuca.

Horgan had asked about the provincial government chipping in a quarter of the estimated \$35-million cost of the interchange.

"This is not a government that is in the business of subsidizing business," Falcon said during debate of his ministry's spending estimates. The value of the benefit to the Trans-Canada Highway is "maybe \$2 million to \$4 million" with the rest going to the developer, he said.

But Michael Baxter, city engineer for Langford, said computer modelling has shown that most of the traffic using the interchange will actually travel south of the Bear Mountain development. The interchange would serve other parts of Langford, such as the planned Westhills development, and Colwood and Metchosin, Baxter said.

Langford, together with a group of developers, has agreed to pay 50 per cent of the share of the cost of the overpass. The municipal share would come from developer cost charges without directly impacting ratepayers, Baxter said.

At least four private landowners with property north of the Spencer Road intersection are willing to contribute cash to the project, in addition to Bear Mountain, he said. Private owners are also offering the land needed.

Bear Mountain is owned by a group of investors headed by former NHL player Len Barrie.

Traffic is already becoming overloaded on the Millstream Road interchange, the only other major direct access into Langford from the Trans-Canada, Baxter said. The bottlenecks prompted Langford council last week to put a temporary halt to all new development in the municipality north of the highway.

The proposed interchange would be built in two phases, with a bridge and one ramp costing \$20 million in the first phase. Four additional ramps would be added in the second phase, Baxter said.

The previous Liberal federal government had pledged to provide a quarter of the cost of the interchange. Horgan said that according to Keith Martin, Liberal MP for Esquimalt-Juan de Fuca, the current Conservative government "is well in process" in finding that contribution.

But Falcon said he doubts that is the case: "I would not hold your breath for federal dollars coming forward on that particular project."

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