

Article rank ■■■ | 24 Apr 2011 | The Province | BY FRANK LUBA THE PROVINCE

Activists rally against new road

DELTA: Construction of South Fraser Perimeter 'freeway' upsets environmentalists

About 200 people opposed to the South Fraser Perimeter Road marked Earth Day with a rally against the massive \$1-billion project.



LES BAZSO — PNG

Protesters from StopThePave.org and other groups march on Earth Day against construction of the South Fraser Perimeter Road.

The group is also promising to occupy the site for “at least two days” but that might not have any effect because work on the project doesn’t resume until next week. They set up a campsite and planted trees on the road bed Friday afternoon, vowing to stay and stop the construction project they call a “climate crime.”

The 40-kilometre road runs along the south side of the Fraser River, connecting Deltaport with the Trans-Canada Highway and the Golden Ears Bridge. It is a joint project of the provincial government — which has

contributed more than \$ 600 million — and the federal government (\$363 million) to the highway as part of its Asia-Pacific Gateway.

But environmentalists object to the road chewing up farmland and introducing more traffic, especially container trucks, to the area. They also fear the road is going to have a negative effect on Burns Bog.

Bob Ages lives in East Ladner about half a kilometre from the road and said it's "not needed, not wanted."

While he's unhappy about what happening so close to his backyard, Ages is also a national board member of the Council of Canadians, which was one of the Friday rally organizers, along with StopThePave.org and the Critical Criminology Working Group at Kwantlen University.

Ages said the new trees planted at the site replace the ones that have been clear-cut for the project.

"We've heard rumours there's a plan for a permanent protest camp," said Ages.

A news release from rally organizers said they hope the camp will grow as people learn about the blockade.

But the construction project manager, Geoff Freer, said he doesn't anticipate any problems.

"Protest is a normal part of the democratic process," said Freer.

"We don't anticipate any delays to our construction from this."

While the project is more than 25-per cent complete, Ages doesn't think it's too late to stop what he calls the "South Fraser Freeway."

"It may start small but we believe it will be the focal point for a growing movement of opposition," he said.

Ages characterized the project as "1950s technology" that was contributing greenhouse gases while destroying farmland and neighbourhoods. "We're not going to solve the problems of the 21st century if we're looking at that type of time warp," he said.

Freer countered that the road has been in the regional transportation plans for more than 20 years.

"It's really hard to turn the clock back," he said.

The first phase of the perimeter road, east of the Pattullo Bridge, is scheduled to be completed by December 2012. The second phase west of the Pattullo is to be completed by December 2013. fluba@theprovince.com
twitter.com/frankluba

Printed and distributed by NewspaperDirect | www.newspaperdirect.com, US/Can: 1.877.980.4040, Intern: 800.6364.6364 | Copyright and protected by applicable law.