

# Next year at Talisman

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(by Don Crosby)

The new owners of the former Talisman property hope to have renovations completed in time for celebrations on Canada Day 2015.

"Next Canada Day, you can come onto our front lawn to celebrate Canada Day," Brian Ellis, one of the new owners, said during Canada Day celebrations in Kimberley on July 1.

Ellis heads up a Toronto development team with partner Wayne Levy and realtor Phil Calvano that purchased the 200 acre former family-oriented ski resort and snow board destination in May for \$1.8 million with plans to re-open under a yet-to-be determined new name as a wellness centre and spa.

He invited residents to help in the selection of a new name for the former resort property located in the Beaver Valley. For legal reasons, the new enterprise couldn't be called Talisman.

The resort closed in the spring of 2011 and two tax sales were held by Grey Highlands to recoup more than \$2 million in back taxes.

There were no bidders for the facilities.

During the signing of the purchase agreement in mid-May, Ellis estimated the buildings and grounds including a nine-hole golf course, convention facilities and day lodge would need upwards of \$7 million in renovations - and that's without reopening the ski hills. He told Kimberley residents at the Canada Day celebration that damage from water and mold since the shutdown was so extensive that the buildings were almost beyond being salvageable and without intervention by fall would have had to be torn down.

"How disappointed I was going through the buildings and seeing the condition they were in. A few more weeks and the buildings would have had to come down," said Ellis with his grandson Liam Ellis by his side.

## Canada Day gathering told



**NEWS ABOUT PLANS FOR FORMER TALISMAN**  
- Brian Ellis (rt) and one of his partners Phil Calvano at Kimberley Canada Day celebrations.  
(Photo by Don Crosby)

He expects that the removal of mold and restoration of the buildings will ensure their continued use for another 50 years.

"Hopefully, Liam and other grandchildren will be running the Talisman property," he added.

To date, mold has been removed from one building, work will begin on a second building this week followed by the day lodge which will eventually become the spa.

Ellis said he's recently learned that the buildings need a major electrical upgrade.

Plans are underway to renovate the nine-hole golf course starting with the greens. There are no plans to expand the golf course.

"There's a lot of work to do on the golf course to rehabilitate it, but so far it's going very well," said Calvano who accompanied Ellis to the Canada Day celebrations in Kimberley.

Calvano said he has a nostalgic attachment to the former Talisman resort where his kids learned to ski, but is also attracted to the peace and serenity of the Beaver Valley.

"It's nice and quiet. It's a place for people to go and relax. That's the direction we would like to go, make it the type of resort," he said.

As well, the swimming pool will be cleaned up and renovated. It will become part of the outdoor spa facilities with large hot tubs against the back drop of the natural beauty of the Beaver Valley.

Ellis said plans are to open the hotel, restaurants and restore the golf course by the summer of 2015. After that, they plan to develop a major spa with outdoor hot tubs and waterfalls, similar to the popular Scandineve Spa near Collingwood, except people who come to the former Talisman property will have a place to stay overnight and restaurants on the property.

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The facility has about 85 overnight accommodation rooms, and there are plans for two restaurants which will be open to the general public.

"We're very positive about what is happening at the new Talisman or whatever it's going to be," said Viv Nelles who lives next door to the

former resort.

"We've had a long period of uncertainty but these people seem to have a very clear plan; they seem to be well supported financially and they seem to be very deeply committed to working with the community. This is all very positive. We're very happy with that."

There are no immediate plans to bring back skiing. Ellis said he was told it would cost \$10 million to restore the lifts and snow making equipment.

Instead he's met with

representatives of the Beaver Valley Ski club, a private club located a few kilometres to the south of Talisman to work out some agreement for guests at the Talisman resort to use the Beaver Valley Ski Club

facilities.

"It would be more business for them and we have the amenities - restaurants and accommodations," Ellis explained.

Ellis and his partners discussed constructing a longboarding facility but ruled it out saying it didn't fit into the plans for the new resort.

"We don't see longboarding as being something we would be interested in doing. It's just not in keeping with the market we're going after," he said. "We're looking at more of an adult market, more of a wellness centre. Longboarding is going to cater to teens and young adults and it's not really the market we're looking at,"

Calvano said he and Ellis have worked on several projects during the past 25 year and plan to add this one to their long list of successful ventures.

"We always like a challenge. This is a challenge. I believe we will be very successful and that is why we have to plan it properly, put the right people in our organization to make sure we make the right decisions," Calvano said.

Calvano and Brian Ellis, along with Wayne Levy, are associated with Florida Homebuyers of Canada, which runs seminars here and helps match Canadians with properties down South.

Anyone with an idea for a new name for the former Talisman resort can send the suggestion to Ellis at: Breholdings@Rogers.com