

THE BLUE MOUNTAINS COURIER-Herald

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(Pg 1 of 2)

Bankrupt resort



resembles a ghost ship

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**Talisman hotel
wide open to the
elements, ani-
mals and people**

ERIKA ENGEL, CHRIS FELL
meafordexpress@simcoe.com

The last person out forgot to shut the door.

Talisman Mountain Resort is still getting plenty of visitors these days - both human and animal - but not the paying kind.

The bankrupt resort - once a thriving ski resort in the heart of the Beaver Valley - now sits wide open to the elements, to wildlife and to looters.

The main hotel resembles a ghost ship in the Bermuda Triangle - table cloths and cutlery are still placed neatly on dining room tables, glasses hang above the bar, and many of the rooms still have their beds made, just waiting for guests to arrive while rental equipment gathers dust in the pro shop.

However, the hallways are dark after the hydro was cut off over a year ago, the ceilings droop in the corners where water has leaked through, and patio doors

hang open, ripped from their frames. Some windows have been smashed, shards of glass scattered in the melting snow.

Footprints track through layers of dust and animals have scavenged through the kitchen and dining rooms sniffing out what food was left behind.

The Municipality of Grey Highlands, which the resort owes in excess of \$2 million in property taxes, recently conducted a tax sale on three properties owned by the bankrupt resort.

Two smaller properties sold for just over \$400,000, but there were no bids on the main resort.





Left: Broken windows and doors allow easy access to the interior of Talisman.

Above: The interior looks like a ghost ship.

After visiting the site, it was obvious that people are getting into the building, where there is no working fire alarm system, no lights in the dark stairwells, no fire extinguishers - save the ones lying discharged on the floor - and where there are many hazards including broken glass, doors locked from the inside and mold.

Grey Highlands CAO Dan Best told The Express if people are entering the building it's trespassing and a police issue.

When informed of the state of the property, including the open doors and windows, Best said it was the owner's responsibility to secure the site.

"We are assessing all of

our options," said Best. "At the present time it's basically a closed facility ... the public would be trespassing."

Best said in an interview that town staff have not been to visit the hotel site, despite its being abandoned for more than two years.

"We have the ability to go on the property," said Best. "It's part of our due diligence ... staff has not made a decision yet."

The Grey Highlands' property standards bylaw states "unused buildings shall be protected against risk of fire, accident or other danger and entrance to unused buildings by all unauthorized persons shall be effectively prevented."

There are no "no trespassing" signs on the Talisman property. The access roads are not chained and not only are the doors unlocked, they are sitting open.

According to the municipality's bylaw - and the Ontario Building Code - in the event of non-compliance, such as Talisman, the municipality's bylaw enforcement office may make an order for compliance and a deadline.

See TALISMAN, Page 5

Pg
2
of
2

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Resort crumbles while in limbo

● Talisman, from Page 1

"If an order is not complied with, the Municipality may cause the property and buildings to be repaired or demolished accordingly," states the Grey Highlands property standards bylaw, and the owner billed for the work. But since the resort is bankrupt, the municipality would place a lien on the property for the cost of the repair or demolition and hope to recoup the money when the property is sold.

As time drags on, though, the property continues to deteriorate, and the chances that it will sell decline as well.

Expert commercial and residential real estate appraiser Perry Stewart, AACI, of Stewart and Milhausen Real Estate Appraisers in Collingwood said buildings of a type similar to those located at Talisman could suffer a high degree of physical depreciation and deterioration after two years without heat and hydro.

"Combined with water damage and exposure to the elements it is possible that buildings of that type could suffer a high degree of physical damage which could render them almost valueless," said Stewart.