

The

MA 3333 Nov.2018
Read Hilton
252 Blue Jay Cres. RR 4
Markdale ON N0C 1H0

Volume 135, No. 35

ADVANCE

Sherraton • Markdale • the Municipality of Grey Highlands

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 17, 2018.

.75 a copy



Talisman owners Philip Calvano and Brian Ellis

Talisman owners need major chain partner to do \$30 million more work

(by Don Crosby)

The owners of Talisman Mountain Springs say an additional \$30 million is needed to bring the resort up to an international standard of operation.

Brian Ellis and Philip Calvano recently updated Grey Highlands council. They said they are working to finalize the additional financing, and that completion should take another 18 months.

They said that an independent industry leader told them that Talisman's success will be directly related to the scope of the resort from the day it first opens.

And that means expanding some of the current services and creating new ones.

BRANDING PARTNERSHIP

The review revealed that the current 92 rooms are not enough from an effective business perspective to satisfy the growing needs of the hotel, they said.

"It has been shown that optimal overnight accommodations required to sustain that overall business model is 150 suites," Ellis said.

New plans are being made on that basis. Ellis

predicts the new resort will be a prestige product associated with a degree of flexibility because of the uniqueness of Talisman.

"The brand has allowed us to keep the name Talisman Mountain Springs Inn, and their name will be attached right underneath," Ellis said.

The additional suites of varying sizes would be located on top of building two. Design and engineering is to start early in the New Year.

A new lobby would connect building one, the main lodge, with Building two, the rooms and suites. The new lobby is to contain two elevators to serve building two.

Branding of the new resort has been under way for the past year.

"It's important that Talisman branding reflect the immense upgrade to the hotel and amenities, while taking advantage of a premier booking system that involves millions of reward points members," Ellis said.

NORDIC SPA

Talisman will be under contract with a premiere hotel chain that will meet the needs of the hotel/spa.

Together with the branding exercise, a

management team for the new resort by one of the nation's premiere boutique hotel management teams will steer Talisman through the startup process and build the resort into a premier getaway destination.

"The management companies and the hotel brands and all of the professionals say we're going in the right direction but it does take time," Calvano said.

Ellis said plans are to include Talisman as part of a major hotel chain.

"It gives you their booking system which is great; it also gives you access to their huge membership which is worldwide, about 70 million," Ellis said.

A Nordic spa is considered a vital component of the new plans and is projected to attract 40,000 visitors a year. Ellis said spa guests will be drawn to Talisman for the spa amenities and the availability of overnight accommodations.

The spa, which will be developed around the former day lodge (building three), will include several zones. The spa will offer a full kitchen, restaurant and views of the surrounding

hills and parts of the Beaver Valley.

AMENITIES TO EXPAND

The new Talisman is being planned as a four-season destination. Development of the resort is planned in phases in the future with a number of amenities.

About 5.4 hectares (12 acres) of land near the spa will become a vineyard which will add to the aesthetics of the site, but also become part of a winery planned for the resort. There are also future plans for a brewery.

Talisman's nine hole executive golf course has been open for almost two years now and Calvano said the feedback from local golfers who know the course best say that it's now in better condition than it has ever been.

A former premier ski destination in the region for decades, Talisman can continue to benefit from local skiers, as the team reported that the Beaver Valley Ski Club, located next door, is interested in developing the relationship between the two resorts. They said this could help boost membership to the ski club as well as ensure steady patronage at Talisman during the winter months.

Conferences, team building activities and weddings are among some of the services to be offered with all the amenities of an upscale hotel.

Completion of phase one will include upgrading the suites many with fireplace and all of the suites wired for Wi-Fi access.

The existing 200-seat restaurant will be renovated and furnished to meet the needs of upscale clientele, while keeping some of the charm of the former Talisman restaurant. The addition of an outdoor dining area will allow for late spring, summer and

continued on page 12

Talisman

continued from page 1

early fall outdoor dining experience.

Renovated and updated conference facilities will include five meeting and banquet rooms. The main ballroom has seen the biggest change which now includes an additional event bar and prep kitchen room. The third level bar and fireside lounge will be available to visitors, holiday guests and corporate clients.

Calvano said the partners are committed to putting the extra effort into a long term commitment.

"It would have been easier to tear it down but then you would lose the heritage, history and the charm of what Talisman was all about. Our goal is keep that intact and to build on that," he said.

Both partners said it's been an incredible challenge with \$7 million of their own money invested to date.

But it's the vision which motivates them to see the

plan through to completion.

"Whenever we see the vision it makes it that much easier to see it through. The vision is that the Beaver Valley will have one of the premier resorts in the province of Ontario," Calvano said.

Ellis noted that wellness tourism is the fastest growing form of tourism in the world. And Talisman expects to tap into that market.

"We expect to bring people in from China, Germany, other parts of Europe and the United States and the eight million people within two hours of Talisman," he said.

Ellis stressed that a project of this size can only be accomplished with a great deal of planning and development and the full support of the municipality. He said the new resort envisioned will create 200 direct jobs.

"We look forward to working with the municipality throughout the process," Ellis said.

Thanks

Reed