

Talisman renovation behind schedule

(by Don Crosby)

The owner of The Talisman Mountain Springs Inn says his plans to complete renovations in time for July 1 were delayed due to unforeseen problems.

"Our renovation is becoming a lot more extensive than we had originally planned for. For that reason it has set us back several months now," said Brian Ellis who is now predicting September as the earliest completion date.

"There was old wiring behind walls; we had issues with lack of insulation between rooms. We had some mould issues, and rotted wood.

Ellis bought the 200-acre former Talisman property in the spring of 2014 for \$1.8 million.

Ellis said he has mixed feelings about not being ready to open in time for this year's Canada Day

"I would have loved to have everybody there to celebrate and people tour the place. But at the same time, I'm not disappointed, because we're revamping this place to last another 60 years. It will be a really good place," he said.

With delays and unforeseen challenges have come additional costs. The original \$5 to \$7 million estimated cost to complete the renovations has been revised.

"At this point I'm projecting about \$1 million over (budget) only because of the amount of work that had to be done," said Ellis, who explained that it's not unusual for a major renovation to encounter hidden and unexpected challenges.

The original building opened in 1961 and, over the years, several additions and modifications were made that are being uncovered during the renovations.

"It's costing me more, but it's not something I didn't consider when we bought it

that there would have to be a contingency," Ellis said.

Ellis is disappointed that so much money is being spent on structures and equipment that won't be visible to visitors, even though these improvements will greatly add to the quality of the buildings and visitors' experience.

"You're not going to see it but you're going to feel when you're in there. You're going to feel that it's cozy and warm, you're going to feel the peace and tranquility of not hearing your neighbour next door and you're going to be walking around in a place that you know is good, safe and secure and probably be there for many, years to come."

Renovations to the nine-hole golf course were also delayed when the person who was supposed to take care of the course fell seriously ill in May and had to be replaced.

"Trying to find a golf course professional in May around here is impossible. We're hoping to get our group in to start rehabilitating the course and expect to be done by the fall sometime, which probably means it won't be ready for use until early next spring," Ellis said.

The renovations continue to evolve with an indoor swimming pool now planned for the former disco area, along with an outdoor pool to be located behind the main building as well as the spa with its hot and cold pools.

There will be plenty of dining spaces, enough to accommodate conferences and large events such as weddings and family gatherings.

Along with the main dining area with its 280-seat capacity a smaller room is planned beside the main dining room to be called the wine room. A lounge and bar are planned for upstairs in the main building. An open air dinner area will provide an outdoor experience during the spring, summer and autumn. Another dining room is planned for the spa area in building three.

The new name - Talisman Mountain Springs Inn - was chosen after receiving suggestions in a contest Ellis held.

Ellis said there are a lot of people who wanted Talisman kept in the name. He was able to do that because the buildings are located on Talisman mountain.

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