
Joint Statement from the Algonquins of Ontario and the Taggart Family

Recent reporting about the governance of the Algonquins of Ontario Realty Corporation and the Tewin partnership creates an incomplete and, in important respects, misleading impression of both the joint venture partnership and the role of the Algonquins of Ontario.

We want to set the record straight.

There have long been different perspectives among Algonquin communities about representation, governance and the path toward reconciliation. Those perspectives deserve to be heard and respected. They should not, however, be used to diminish the legitimacy of the Algonquins of Ontario or the significant work that has been undertaken over decades by Algonquin representatives.

The Algonquins of Ontario are a formal party, alongside the governments of Canada and Ontario, to the ongoing negotiations toward a modern-day treaty. In 2016, those three parties signed an Agreement-in-Principle that established the framework for negotiations toward a Final Agreement.

That is an important fact.

It is equally important to understand the governance structure surrounding Tewin.

Tewin is a major, multi-generational real estate development undertaken through a partnership between the Algonquins of Ontario and the Taggart family. In joint ventures of this nature, it is neither unusual nor inappropriate for representatives of the partners to participate directly in the governance of the corporate entities responsible for delivering the project. In fact, it is widely

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understood in significant real estate, energy and infrastructure partnerships with First Nations groups that the private partner leads the initiative. These partnerships are taking place across communities throughout our city and country.

The presence of Taggart representatives within the governance structure does not eliminate the Algonquins of Ontario's financial interest in Tewin, nor does it change the nature of the partnership.

The purpose of that governance structure is to bring together the respective strengths of the partners: the Algonquins of Ontario's vision, values, stewardship principles and long-term objectives for their communities, with Taggart's development, financing and project-delivery expertise.

Strong governance is essential to ensuring that the benefits flowing to the Algonquins of Ontario through this partnership are protected and delivered for the benefit of Algonquin people.

This partnership has always been about more than building houses.

The Taggart family and the Algonquins of Ontario established the Taggart Award for Algonquin Students to support Algonquin youth pursuing post-secondary education. The partnership is creating opportunities for education, training, employment and economic participation. Over 100 scholarships have been awarded to Algonquin students along with job opportunities in the Taggart Group of Companies for graduates and summer students.

Algonquin values are also being incorporated directly into the planning and design of Tewin. Algonquin leaders, representatives and knowledge keepers have participated in shaping a community intended to reflect Algonquin

teachings, environmental stewardship and a relationship with the land. The planning work includes opportunities for cultural representation, ceremony and healing, and the incorporation of Algonquin teachings into parks and public spaces.

These are tangible commitments.

Reconciliation cannot be limited to acknowledgements, ceremonies or words. Economic reconciliation requires Indigenous peoples to participate meaningfully in major economic opportunities occurring on their traditional territories and to build assets, capacity and prosperity for future generations.

That is what the Algonquins of Ontario and the Taggart family are working to accomplish at Tewin.

We recognize and respect that there are different perspectives within the broader Algonquin community. Debate and disagreement are legitimate. But disagreement should not be transformed into assertions that erase the role of the Algonquins of Ontario, mischaracterize an established business partnership or suggest that the participation of an experienced development partner somehow negates Indigenous economic participation.

It does not.

Tewin remains a partnership. The Algonquins of Ontario remain an Indigenous partner and financial beneficiary of the project. And both partners remain committed to ensuring that Tewin delivers lasting cultural, social and economic benefits for Algonquin people.

Reconciliation is not advanced by questioning Indigenous peoples' ability to choose their own economic partners or structure their own business relationships.

It is advanced by creating the conditions for Indigenous communities to participate, build capacity, create wealth and shape what happens on their traditional lands.

That is the work we remain committed to doing together.

Jim Meness

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "J. Meness".

Jim Meness
Executive Director
Algonquins of Ontario

Michelle Taggart

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "M. Taggart".

Michelle Taggart
President Tamarack Homes & Tartan Homes
Taggart Group of Companies