

**Grey Highlands' Conditional Sale of Its Talisman Lands in the Beaver Valley –
a Betrayal of Public Trust**

Statement by Rob Leverty, President, Niagara Escarpment Foundation

July 30, 2021

The Niagara Escarpment Foundation strenuously opposes the conditional sale by the Municipality of Grey Highlands of the municipally owned land parcels on the former Talisman property, announced on July 29.

As the Foundation wrote in its May 11, 2021 [submission](#) to Grey Highlands Council, “If the public lands currently owned by the Municipality of Grey Highlands at Talisman are sold to maximize development and profits, this would constitute an unprecedented rupture of the historic tradition of private-public partnership faithfully supporting the Niagara Escarpment Plan in the Beaver Valley.”

While the Foundation received neither acknowledgement of nor response to its 9-page submission from Grey Highlands, the Council betrayed the public’s trust by quietly working for several weeks with Westway Capital on a deal to sell the municipal lands. In ignoring the submissions and proposals from Beaver Valley community members as well as the Foundation while secretly considering the Westway Capital offer to purchase, Grey Highlands has not engaged in fair play.

The Foundation’s May 11 submission presented an alternative vision for the future of the Talisman lands, building on the half-century legacy of environmental protection for the Niagara Escarpment in the Beaver Valley. Key to this vision is keeping the municipal lands in public ownership to help meet the enormous public demand for publicly accessible rural protected areas to enjoy low-impact outdoor recreation. There are significant economic opportunities in meeting this demand for low-impact, nature-based activities.

It is profoundly disappointing that the Grey Highlands announcement makes no reference to the Niagara Escarpment, ignoring its designation as a United Nations Biosphere, and makes no reference to either the Greenbelt or the environmentally protective Niagara Escarpment Plan that directs the types of land uses allowed on the Talisman lands. It is precisely because of the protective policies of the Niagara Escarpment Plan that the Beaver Valley is green and shielded from rampant development along its continuous natural corridor. Mayor Paul McQueen is Grey County’s representative on the Ontario government’s Niagara Escarpment Commission and would do well to remember that as Grey Highlands plans for the future of the Talisman lands.

Grey Highlands Council should abandon the conditional sale of its Talisman lands to Westway Capital and instead, consider all conservation-first proposals for the future of the property.

The Niagara Escarpment Foundation is an independent, non-government, not-for-profit corporation and registered charity founded in 2001 to encourage public awareness of the natural and cultural significance of the Niagara Escarpment and to conduct research related to protection of the Niagara Escarpment. Visit us www.nefoundation.ca