

Algonquin Nation Secretariat

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February 8, 2021

Via email

Re: Tewin Development

Dear Mayor Watson and Council,

We are writing with respect to the proposed Tewin development, to advise you of our serious concerns about the project. The Algonquin Nation Secretariat represents the communities of Timiskaming, Barriere Lake and Wolf Lake. We are Algonquins of the Ottawa Valley. We have rights and interests in both Ontario and Quebec, as do our sister communities, who have already communicated with you on this issue. We are requesting that you accept the staff recommendation and hold off on approval of the Tewin project until there has been adequate study and consultation. To do otherwise would be a grave mistake.

Over the past three centuries, our nation has seen our lands dispossessed and our communities marginalized. Reconciliation is long overdue. But we believe that it must be done in the right way, and with the right parties. This is why we have such concerns about the Tewin project.

Our first concern relates to the Algonquins of Ontario (AOO). This group is a corporation which has one recognized First Nation (Pikwakanagan) as a member, but the vast majority of its members are not necessarily Algonquins at all. We have spent many years conducting historical and genealogical research for our communities, and we have carefully reviewed the 2015 voter list for the AOO. According to our review, only about 10% of the AOO membership are registered Algonquins. The rest have varying degrees of connection to the Algonquin nation. Of this group, about 40% - literally thousands of individuals - claim entitlement based on one or a couple of ancestors in their family trees from centuries ago, and have apparently not intermarried with Algonquins for 100 or more years. We, and our sister communities believe that this is a travesty. We have raised this issue for years, but the AOO, Canada and Ontario have ignored our concerns.

At the same time, the AOO process refuses to recognize or accommodate the legitimate rights and interests in the land that our communities possess in Ontario. This has led to a "land grab" where the AOO has been selecting lands in areas where our members claim exclusive or shared interests, without any consideration of our rights. The AOO has been able to use its position to leverage economic development opportunities - like the Tewin project - at the expense of the rest of the nation. We don't think it's right that one group with questionable standing should be able to monopolize the process and effectively shut other communities out of lands, and economic development opportunities to which they have an interest.

Again, we have raised this issue consistently over the past 20 years with Pikwakanagan, Ontario and Canada, but our rights, and our concerns, have been ignored.

Make no mistake, we support Pikwakanagan in its efforts to resolve its land rights. But we strongly object to the AOO's standing and the way in which the AOO negotiation process has been used to deny and compromise the rights of other legitimate Algonquin communities. The fact that the governments of Ontario and Canada have given legitimacy to this process makes it even more egregious.

The City of Ottawa has a choice to make which goes beyond the Tewin proposal. While we understand the idea of support for reconciliation is great in theory, in practice it has a way yet to go. Our communities in the past have expressed our concerns with including the AOO when it comes to consultation. We have also participated with the city in the development of the Algonquin Anishinabe Nation Cultural Civic Protocol. The issue of who to include in consultation had come up in the early protocol discussions. It would seem that our initial concerns are still yet not resolved and our voice has not been heard. It's perverse to think that the City of Ottawa would perpetuate a continuing injustice in the name of reconciliation.

And, aside from the concerns we have outlined above, the fact of the matter that a hasty decision on Tewin is just poor planning, and contrary to the City's own staff recommendations. Given the circumstances, we believe that the most prudent course would be for Ottawa Council to accept the staff recommendation that the Tewin project be put on ice and undergo a proper and thorough review from the planning perspective. This would allow time for Ottawa Council to sort out its relationship with the Algonquin nation and do reconciliation right – in particular, with those Algonquin First Nations who have rights and title in the Ottawa area.

Mayor Watson, you and your Council need to think carefully about this. We are available to provide further background information and additional thoughts on these matters. As for now, we are respectfully asking that the decision on Tewin be postponed until proper consultations have been made, and that you follow the advice of your staff.

Respectfully,



Chief Lisa Robinson, for ANS Chiefs

cc

Chief Steeve Mathias, Long Point First Nation
Chief Adrienne Jerome, Conseil de la Premiere Nation du Lac Simon
Chief Monik Kistabish, Conseil de la Premiere Nation Abitibiwinini
Chief Regis Penosway, Conseil des Aniciapek de Kitcisakik
Chief Lance Haymond, Kebaowek First Nation
Chief June Black, Wahgoshig First Nation
Chief Dylan Whiteduck, Kitigan Zibi First Nation
Chief Wendy Jocko, Algonquins of Pikwakanagan First Nation

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