

## **Cummings Avenue Project Press Conference Nov 21. 2009**

Good Morning

Thank you Yasir (Naqvi MPP) for the introduction

Thank you Charlie (Hill) for the opening prayer

I want to recognize the Algonquin Nation and Grandfather Commanda on whose territory this event is being held.

Minister Watson; Local Municipal Officials; Don McBain from the Ontario Aboriginal Housing Support Services; Friends & Neighbours

A good, affordable home is a basic requirement for a healthy life...it supports family, strengthens community and adds to the local and national economy. It is a doorway to health, education, employment and economic opportunity.

Gignul is committed to providing affordable homes for Aboriginal families and in doing so it is the organization that our community counts on to meet its housing needs. With six First Nations within a 100 mile radius representing a population of 35,000 people, Ottawa is the city of choice for Aboriginal people in pursuit of advanced education, health services, training and jobs. According to the 2006 census Ottawa's Aboriginal population has increased by 41% since the previous census... and continues to grow.

Gignul has worked on this housing project since the announcement of the Affordable housing programs in 2001. It wasn't always the same site, or the same set of business partners or the same project team but our goal remained constant and our

perseverance never wavered. The positive thing about that is that we have gained a great deal of experience in that time, met many new friends and partners, and are much better positioned for this great opportunity here today.

When good things happen it is often due to the efforts of many. Today, we want to recognize and thank those who have lent a hand to, or placed a shoulder behind, advancing our goal towards meeting Aboriginal housing needs in Ottawa. This project won't do it all, but it is a healthy start.

I want to begin by thanking the federal government for the enactment of Bill C 48 and introducing the urban Aboriginal Housing Trusts. In addition, I want to thank CMHC and its officials for their continued support with Seed Funding to help develop and shape the proposal.

I especially want to thank Minister Watson, who inherited the difficult challenge of putting the Aboriginal Housing Trust into action...when it was stalled. Minister Watson moved aggressively to identify Aboriginal delivery partners to design a workable program and to create a functional delivery process. Minister, on behalf of the Aboriginal community we applaud your success and that of your government. We thank you, and are delighted with your decision to support the Cummings Avenue Project which will add 28 new affordable homes to our community.

I want to recognize and congratulate the Ontario Aboriginal Housing Support Services Corp for its expediency in creating the First Nations Inuit and Metis Urban and Rural Program with the structure and stewardship to make the program operational. Don

(McBain) we are excited about continuing to work with you and your staff as the project moves forward.

I want to recognize the Ottawa Housing Branch for the support and advice they have provided along the way. The drive to address the long waiting list of applicants for affordable housing is a mutual challenge and is the basis of our open and positive relationship with the Branch.

I thank the City of Ottawa for the alliance we share through the Aboriginal Coalition. This has led to a formal avenue of response to Aboriginal issues in the city planning process. New relationships with the Office of the Federal Interlocutor, Ontario Aboriginal Affairs Branch, the City of Ottawa and the United Way are cornerstones for the implementation of the Urban Aboriginal Strategy in Ottawa... and housing and homelessness are among the top priorities.

We attribute our success, firstly, to a Board of Directors that has remained stable and consistent in its vision for safe adequate and affordable housing and secondly, led by Executive Director Marc Maracle, the Gignul staff delivers a standard of performance that is committed to results. I thank them for that.

I would like to draw your attention to the fine architectural drawings we have mounted and recognize the members of the Project Team - Doug Hardie, Architect, Deborah Edwards, Development Consultant and Mike Perron, Design Contractor along with the Gignul Team of Marc Maracle, Terry Conroy, Jerry Rakus, Charles Hill and myself.

In closing, I want to thank the Aboriginal people of our community for continuing to voice their housing concerns with conviction and great patience.

Meegwetch

Jim Lanigan