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NORTH COUNTRY REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL HOLDS FIRST PUBLIC MEETING

Public invited to provide feedback and input throughout the strategic planning process

The North Country Regional Economic Development Council met today and conducted its second meeting, which consisted of an open session for the public. More than 100 people convened at SUNY Potsdam for this meeting, attended by Lt. Governor Robert Duffy, and led by North Country Regional Economic Development Council co-chairs Garry Douglas, President of the North Country Chamber of Commerce, and Anthony Collins, President, Clarkson University. The North Country Regional Council, which is comprised of a diverse group of 30 area leaders from the private and public sectors, labor, chambers of commerce, higher education, and community-based organizations, is working to create a five year strategic plan for economic development in Clinton, Essex, Franklin, Hamilton, Jefferson, Lewis and St. Lawrence counties.

"The Regional Council's work is really getting underway now," said North Country Chamber of Commerce & Regional Council Co-Chair Garry Douglas. "We have several working groups engaging in active discussions about everything from tourism and infrastructure to the region's strategic clusters and its special connection to Canada. This includes not only all of the council members but dozens of other talented people volunteering their time and experience. And we are finalizing a multi-faceted public participation strategy that will get us out throughout the region in the coming weeks and will offer a number of ways for the public and various stakeholder groups to provide us with their opinions and suggestions. We're a vast region and have a rigorous timetable within which we must accomplish a huge task, but everyone involved is not only committed to the process but excited about the opportunity given to us by Governor Cuomo."

"These early stages of identifying our region's unique assets underscore the vision of the process Governor Cuomo has initiated to generate sustainable economic growth and create

jobs across the state,” said Clarkson University President & Regional Council Co-Chair Anthony Collins. “We are a region of remarkable diversity and expertise to build an economic development strategy that works for the North Country. One of our competitive advantages in this process is our region’s willingness for collaboration among private, nonprofit and public stakeholders who are well aware of each others’ talents and abilities to contribute to a shared vision and plan. We have seen this in the past and we will build on it in the future.”

During today’s session, the group announced and outlined the activities of its nine work groups:

- Planning Committee – Adore Kurtz, Chair
- Adirondack Park – Bill Farber, Chair
- Strategic Clusters – Bill Murray, Chair
- Infrastructure – Jim Wright, Chair
- Canadian Connection – Garry Douglas, Chair
- Tourism Development – Jim McKenna, Chair
- Community Development – Cali Brooks, Chair
- Small Business Development – Anne Merrill, Chair
- Public Participation – Eric Virkler, Chair

In addition, the council detailed its public engagement strategy and announced they will be holding public forums around the region starting next month. They are as follows: September 12, Plattsburgh; September 14, Tupper Lake; September 19, Watertown. The Council’s goal is to integrate the public into the strategic planning process to design an economic development plan that reflects the local communities’ vision for job creation and economic opportunity. The Council encourages public participation and feedback through outreach, community meetings, forums, and online at <http://www.nyworks.ny.gov>.

The next regular scheduled North Country Regional Economic Development will be September 9 at SUNY Potsdam.

Created by Executive Order by Governor Cuomo, the Regional Economic Development Councils represent a fundamental shift in the state's approach to economic development—from a top-down development model to a community-based approach that emphasizes regions' unique assets, harnesses local expertise, and empowers each region to set plans and priorities.

The North Country Regional Economic Development Council is one of ten regional councils across New York that will serve as a single point of contact for economic activity in the region. Through their strategic planning process, the Councils will identify and expedite priority projects that demonstrate the greatest potential for job growth. As part of the initiative, up to \$1 billion in state resources will be accessible to eligible economic development projects through existing program grants and tax credits.

Each Regional Council will develop a plan for the development of their region, which will provide a regional vision for economic development, address critical issues and opportunities,

and lay out an implementation roadmap for future growth. The state will work with the Regional Councils to align state resources and policies, eliminate unnecessary barriers to growth and prosperity, and streamline the delivery of government services and programs to help the Regional Councils carry out their plans for development.

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