



For Immediate Release: Friday, November 4, 2011

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NORTH COUNTRY REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL HOLDS PUBLIC COMMENT SESSION ON DRAFT STRATEGIC PLAN

The North Country Regional Economic Development Council today at its meeting presented its Draft Strategic Plan and held a public comment session on the summary at SUNY Potsdam. It was 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 of Clarkson University. To allow for greater participation across the North Country region, the meeting was also webcast on the North Country Regional Economic Development Council's website at www.northcountryopenforbusiness.com.

The Council will accept comment on the Draft Plan until November 11, when they will meet at Clarkson University in Potsdam to approve and adopt the final Strategic Plan before the submission deadline of November 14. Co-chairs urged the public to review the draft plan and strategic planning documents online and then submit feedback directly to council members, through the website, or by email at nys-northcountry@empire.state.ny.us.

"Through this process and with this plan, the North Country is well positioned to lead the economic renaissance of New York's small cities and rural communities," said Anthony Collins, President of Clarkson University and Council Co-Chair. "By redesigning how state government works, Governor Cuomo and his administration have opened the door for the North Country to leverage its strengths in small business development and strategic clusters, connections to Canada, innovative energy and agricultural opportunities, as well as the recognition that our landscape is a special place to visit, live, work and study with unique infrastructure needs."

"Today, the council all but completed its work on the first comprehensive economic development plan this seven county region has ever had," said Garry Douglas, President of the North Country Chamber of Commerce and Council Co-Chair. "From a blank sheet of paper three

months ago, we now have a remarkable document that covers the diversity of this great region from tourism and agriculture to our several exciting strategic clusters. We have said from the start that the measure of success will be in the content of our plan, and that means we are very much on the verge of success. And it is entirely due to the volunteer commitment of the council's members and a great many other volunteers who have been dedicating an almost fulltime effort to this. But that's how we do things in the North Country."

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.

Created 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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