

Testimony by Edward Bartholomew, President & CEO EDC Warren County Joint Budget Hearing: Economic Development February 12, 2019 930am

Thank you for the opportunity to address this Committee. I am Edward M. Bartholomew, President and CEO of Economic Development Corporation, Warren County (EDC) based in Glens Falls. EDC is a private 501c3 not for profit organization whose mission is to lead economic development by working collaboratively with public and private partners within Warren County to lead business attraction, and expand and retain businesses and investment.

EDC is governed by an independent board of directors including senior leadership of the region's top companies, institutions and residents. The board also has representation of the local municipalities of Warren County, Town of Queensbury and the City of Glens Falls each of which EDC has contracts for economic development services. EDC has enthusiastically joined the Council of Business Advisors formed by the FUND for Lake George.

EDC has been in existence since 2000 and works on behalf of Warren County including the communities that border Lake George. EDC's mission is to build a sustainable four season economy for its residents and businesses. Unlike many areas that have a strong tourism economy developed by its destination/attraction model; Warren County and the region have a natural asset at its core that is the main attraction- a body of water of water named Lake George- formed by ice glaciers over 10,000 -12,000 years ago . The lake 32 mile long that was once described by Thomas Jefferson in a letter to his daughter stating:

"Lake George is without comparison, the most beautiful water I ever saw; formed by a contour of mountains into a basin... finely interspersed with islands, its water limpid as crystal, and the mountain sides covered with rich groves... down to the water-edge: here and there precipices of rock to checker the scene and save it from monotony."
-- Thomas Jefferson, May 31, 1791

The lake itself and its health are paramount to building a successful and sustainable community and economy that provides for its residents as well as growing year round visitors. As part of the State tourist economy

Imagine if you will; other major natural attraction destinations without their primary natural asset:

Central Park,
Niagara Falls
Grand Canyon
Yellowstone Park
National Seashore

If the primary natural attraction is damaged, tainted or polluted there would be a devastating environmental impact on the regions they serve but also from an economic point of view.

Not to overstate this matter; but EDC believes this potential situation is rapidly emerging in Lake George if we don't act as a unified force - state, local and regional communities, governments and businesses to assure the Lake's water quality remains pristine for present and future generations. Surveys from a variety of tourism groups are conclusive that the Number 1 reason visitors come to Warren County/ Lake George area to recreate or vacation or take up year residence is due to the beauty, clarity and cleanness of the Lake's water.

EDC is pleased to provide its full support to the Village of Lake George's application to construct a new Wastewater Treatment Plant to service the entire southern basin of Lake George. This is a project of vital importance not just to the Village but to the entire Southern Adirondack region. Lake George's role as the showcase for international tourism destination is directly dependent on its unmatched water quality which has drawn visitors to the region for decades. It is a top priority to update and replace the badly deteriorating facility that was built in the 1930's or effluent will continue to leach its way into the lower end of Lake George causing more chemical imbalances that leads to increased algae blooms and invasive species- a phenomenon that is being observed now and will grow if not stopped. Eric Sly of the FUND for Lake George has outline the environmental concerns and need for a new waste water facility.

Lake George's economic impact on the Adirondacks, New York State and the Capital Region cannot be understated. Economic estimates for Lake George as calculated by the Jefferson Project, a high tech collaboration by RPI, IBM and the Fund for Lake George to monitor water quality range in the \$1 billion dollar range as far as annual economic impact regionally. Multiple industries including hospitality, marine & boating, restaurants, and numerous service businesses are all dependent on the Lake's tourism economy. Revenues to local municipalities depend on the seasonal tourism dollars that come from visitors spending. The Village of Lake George's year round population of under 1,000 residents (growing to over 50,000 in the summertime) cannot alone underwrite the extremely high cost of building a new \$18 M facility with the best technology.

EDC Warren County respectfully requests funding assistance in the amount of \$6M be provided to construct a new Lake George Wastewater Treatment Plant so that the economy of this region and New York can continue to grow and attract new visitors, investment and jobs.

Annual Impact of Tourism on the Lake George /Adirondack Region (2017)

Travelers spent \$1.4 Billion in Adirondacks, supporting 21,347 jobs

Warren County represents 42% of those sales with \$603 million in direct spending

In Warren County, travelers spent:

\$243 million on lodging

\$14.8 million on recreation

\$114 million on retail and services

\$143 million on food & beverages

9,364 employed representing 24 per cent of all tourism generated employment in the Adirondack

Tourism generated:

\$42 million in local taxes in Warren County

\$33 MILLION IN STATE TAXES IN WARREN COUNTY

\$177 MILLION IN STATE & LOCAL TAXES IN THE ADIRONDACKS

\$298 million in labor income in Warren County

\$411 million in direct labor income in the Adirondacks

\$679 million in indirect & direct labor income in the Adirondacks

Warren County has the most significant tourism generated labor income generating \$298 million in labor income including indirect and induced impacts

Warren County produced nearly 43% of the regions tourism tax base

NOTE: Adirondack Region consist of Warren County, Clinton, Essex, Franklin, Hamilton, and Lewis

SOURCE: The Economic Impact of Tourism in New York (Adirondack Focus) – 2017 by Tourism Economics (Oxford Economic Company)

Other Facts about Lake George

\$17.5 million in direct output impacts of boating expenditures

\$28 million in total output (direct, indirect, induced) boating

\$6.3 million direct labor income boating expenditures

318 direct, 444 total direct/indirect/induced employment in boating

Travel Tourism is a substantial and ongoing component of the our regional, and state economy

Failure to address this significant environmental concern will result in a devastating environmental and economic calamity for the Adirondacks and Warren County.

Your consideration is greatly appreciated. Thank you

Respectfully Submitted

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