



The Power of Region

Home of:

Adirondack Coast

Visitors Bureau

North American Center

of Excellence for

Transportation

Equipment (NAMTrans)

North Country

Service Corporation

North Country

Industrial Council

Quebec - New York

Corridor Coalition

SCORE

Serving:

Clinton

Essex

Franklin

Warren

Hamilton

Akwesasne

Southern Quebec

TO: Senate Finance Committee and Assembly Ways and Means Committee

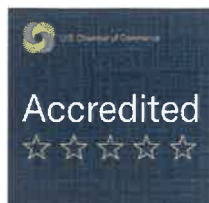
TESTIMONY: For Economic Development Hearing, January 30, 2024

SUBMITTED BY AND ON BEHALF OF:

The North Country Chamber of Commerce is the largest business and economic development organization in northern New York, linking more than 4,000 employers across Clinton, Essex, Franklin, Hamilton, and northern Warren Counties and Akwesasne. We are joined this year in presenting a shared "2024 Adirondack Economic Agenda" by the Adirondack Association of Towns and Villages, the Regional Office of Sustainable Tourism, the Adirondack Economic Development Corp., and the Lake Champlain-Lake George Regional Planning Board.

The full agenda (included herewith) expresses a comprehensive but practical agenda for enhancing and sustaining the economy in the unique Adirondack region of New York. In the direct category of **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**, we seek consideration and support for the following:

- **FAST NY:** We encourage adoption of the requested funding for the FAST NY Program, opening the way to further progress across the state in the creation of shovel ready industrial sites, providing water, sewer, roads, power, and broadband at locations where there is demand for such space but an inability by localities to extend the infrastructure, creating ready sites which in today's world are indispensable.
- **CFA GRANTS:** We ask that the state urgently look at retooling CFA grants for small businesses, addressing the 20% grant cap, the long lead time, and the 100% reimbursement based funding model, offering small businesses greater flexibility, and thereby opening the way for more state support for these enterprises which are even more the backbone of the Adirondacks than elsewhere.
- **BUSINESS TRANSITIONS:** Supporting successful transitions of existing businesses to new ownership and securing their survival and future growth is a crucial part of economic development but not sufficiently supported through current state programs. We need the door open to state funding to assist with successful small business transitions for inventory, equipment and working capital, up to \$50,000. A business saved through successful transition is as important as a new business or expansion.



The Power of Region

- **LOANS:** Empire State Development needs additional capacity to provide bridge loans that can complement grant programs.
- **CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES:** We call for an enhanced state effort to achieve economic reuse of closed correctional facilities including the Moriah Shock Incarceration Facility.

Our agenda further addresses needs in the important area of **TOURISM DEVELOPMENT:**

- The upgrading and new development of lodging in key underserved tourism hubs across the Adirondacks must be an economic development priority. It must be accepted that numbers and higher development costs in the Adirondacks generally require higher funding support than the usual 20% grant level to achieve this critical aim.
- We need expansion of the 1% Tourism Loan Fund.
- We support continuation of the DRI and NY FORWARD initiatives which must be seen and utilized as planning opportunities. To this end, the small communities of our region need new forms of state assistance with pre-planning for the application process.
- We support and encourage state funding for the proposed "Blacks in the Adirondacks" permanent exhibit at the Adirondack Experience Museum in Blue Mountain Lake.

We thank you for your consideration of this practical agenda and would welcome any and all opportunities to further discuss economic and tourism development in the Adirondacks.

Garry Douglas
President and CEO
North Country Chamber of Commerce
www.northcountrychamber.com
P.O. Box 310, Plattsburgh, N.Y. 12901
garry@northcountrychamber.com

ATTACHMENT: 2024 Adirondack Economic Agenda



2024 ADIRONDACK ECONOMIC AGENDA



HOUSING:

1. Housing Trusts present one of the key opportunities to address the growing housing challenges in the Adirondacks. New York State should create a state funding program for Housing Trusts as part of its response, including funding for the Adirondack Community Housing Trust.
2. A mortgage assistance program is urgently needed, targeting families up to 200% of the Adirondack Area Median Income, and not restricted to first time homebuyers.
3. We need a program of Adirondack Park Agency (APA) pre-approval to help encourage and facilitate workforce housing development projects.
4. We need the APA to urgently develop new approaches to hamlet expansions aimed at creating zones for new development of workforce housing.
5. Added support is required for water and wastewater infrastructure with provisions that will facilitate needed funding for small systems that are often facing competitive disadvantages and a need for higher funding given the very small tax bases involved. This could also include added weight for such projects which will in turn support workforce housing development.
6. We need state funding eligibility for Technical Assistance for non-profits and municipalities to complete site pre-development for workforce housing.

BROADBAND/CELLULAR ACCESS:

1. An Adirondack Cellular Alliance is needed to follow-up on the findings of the state's Adirondack Cell Service Task Force.
2. Reforms are urgently needed in the State Transportation Department's ROW (Right of Way) costs imposed on broadband developers/owners for fiber along state roads, including elimination of onerous survey requirements. We cannot continue to have unnecessary additional costs on the challenge of closing remaining rural broadband gaps.
3. New York State must unify ALL state agencies around prioritizing tech for everyone.
4. The state must focus its federal and state funding on the build out of open access middle mile fiber, so communities are ready for opportunities for last mile funding. This must be viewed as also a key building block in expanding cell phone service.
5. We must acknowledge that affordability issues look different in terms of challenges in rural areas, and we must adjust approaches and funding accordingly.

TOURISM DEVELOPMENT:

- The upgrading and new development of lodging in key underserved tourism hubs across the Adirondacks must be an economic development priority. It must be accepted that numbers and higher development costs in the Adirondacks generally require higher funding support than the usual 20% grant level to achieve this critical aim.
- We need expansion of the 1% Tourism Loan Fund.
- We support continuation of the DRI and NY Forward initiatives which must be seen and utilized as planning opportunities. To this end, the small communities of our region need new forms of state assistance with pre-planning for the application process.
- We support state funding for the proposed Blacks in the Adirondacks permanent exhibit at Adirondack Experience.
- We need completion by NYSDOT of remaining infrastructure work in support of the Adirondack Railway from Thendara to Tupper Lake.

ECONOMIC & BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT:

- We ask that the state look at re-tooling CFA grants for small businesses, addressing the 20% grant cap, the long lead time, and the 100% reimbursement based funding model, offering small businesses greater flexibility and thereby opening the way for more state support for these enterprises which are even more the economic backbone of the Adirondacks than elsewhere.
- We need the door open to state funding to assist with successful business transitions for inventory, equipment and working capital, up to \$50,000. A business saved through successful transition is as important as a new business or expansion.
- State bridge loans are required that can complement grant programs.
- We call for an enhanced state effort to achieve economic reuse of the closed Moriah Shock Incarceration Facility. Redevelopment efforts around several closed correctional facilities across the North Country have to date been failures.

CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS:

- First legislative passage is needed in 2024 of two pending constitutional amendments in positive support of the Adirondacks: 1) An amendment saving the historic Debar Pond Lodge from destruction, exchanging 400 acres of land for the 6 acres the lodge stands on. 2) Facilitation of reuse of the long-closed Camp Gabriels correctional facility property.