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LEGISLATURE LAYS OUT 2012 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN
FALLS DOWNTOWN, HIGH-TECH, AGRI-BUSINESS, AIR BASE ALL ON AGENDA

LOCKPORT—Niagara County lawmakers gained insights into the Niagara County Center for Economic Development's 2012 economic development strategies Tuesday night in Lockport, as the county's two top economic development officials laid out a bold strategy for the county and its largest city.

This was the second half of a two-part presentation by Legislature Economic Development Committee Chairman Rick Updegrave, R-Lockport, and Niagara County Industrial Development Agency Chairman Henry M. Sloma.

Updegrave touted recent successes with "shovel-ready" site planning as a cornerstone of economic development policy moving forward.

"Creating shovel-ready development sites and centralizing information on project review procedures at various level of government are the types of initiatives that help speed up the development process, which is an incentive for businesses and developers," Updegrave said.

Updegrave also addressed a top concern for the region's economy, the potential closure of the Niagara Falls Air Reserve Station as the Obama Administration cuts defense spending.

"The defense of the Niagara Falls Air Reserve Station remains a top priority for this government, as it has been for the past decade," Updegrave told fellow lawmakers. "With Defense Secretary Leon Panetta announcing his intention to cut \$487 billion in Defense spending, and indications that the Defense Department will seek to initiate a new BRAC, our commitment to the Niagara Military Affairs Council has not wavered. The air base continues to be the largest employer in Niagara County, with 3,500 employees and a \$169 million annual economic impact."

"This Legislature and the Center for Economic Development are committed to standing up for the Niagara Falls Air Base," Updegrave said.

Immediately before Updegrave spoke, Legislator Kathryn Lance, R-Wheatfield, Deputy Majority Leader Dave Godfrey, R-Wilson, and Legislature Chairman William L. Ross, C-Wheatfield, presented a \$40,000 check to Niagara Military Affairs Council (NIMAC) officials.

As in previous years, Updegrave also reiterated the government's commitment to the ongoing growth at the Niagara Falls International Airport, which now hosts three regularly-scheduled airlines.

"Last month's establishment of the Niagara Falls International Airport Stakeholders Group, which brought together not just government, but also new marketing partners from the Seneca Nation of Indians, is a major step toward expanding the airport's role and significance further," Updegrave said.

Updegrave also vowed to expand the county's efforts in emerging sectors of the economy, including "green" jobs. After calling for expanded efforts to market that sector in 2010 and 2011, a new initiative at the Center for Economic Development to construct a 50,000-square-foot "green" incubator building for new businesses seeking to gain a foothold in the local economy.

Pointing to initiatives as varied as agri-business along the Niagara Wine Trail to an ongoing Canadian marketing initiative that has seen Center for Economic Development officials regularly traveling into the Greater Toronto Area in Canada, Updegrave vowed that the county's economic development policy, while heavy on high-tech, would not ignore any areas.

"Recent successes must serve as launching points from which further development and job creation can occur across entire sectors of the economy," Updegrave said. "The Niagara County IDA will create synergies and build critical mass around the information technology and green technology sectors by attracting more companies to Niagara County like Yahoo!, Globe Metallurgical, Metaullics Systems, and Ashland Advanced Materials."

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