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ROSS URGES REGIONAL COOPERATION AT REGIONAL AGENDA ROLLOUT
BOOSTS OLCOTT HARBOR, USAR CENTER PROJECTS WITH PARTNERSHIP

BUFFALO—The chairman of the Niagara County Legislature seized on an annual economic development ritual to promote two key Niagara County projects before a regional audience Monday night.

Speaking at the annual rollout of the Buffalo Niagara Partnership's Regional Agenda for 2010, Legislature Chairman William L. Ross, C-Wheatfield, called for federal support for all components of the county's federal and state economic development agenda, but highlighted two projects—the multi-year \$2 million Olcott Harbor Breakwater and a new \$2.5 million repurposing of the U.S. Army Reserve Center at the Niagara Falls International Airport.

Ross, a former Army reservist, is intimately familiar with the latter facility having served there while a company commander, and noted that existing structures at the 22-acre U.S. Army Reserve Center, adjacent to the airport, were "more than shovel-ready—they're already there."

"It's a great venue with one of the best hangars in Western New York," Ross noted. "It was built during the war years, and then was decommissioned. But it's a tremendous venue with heated concrete floors, office space, storage space. With some renovations, what a great 22 acres for economic development."

When the Army Reserve pulls out of the facility, it will revert to the town of Niagara's control. Ross said he sees real opportunities at the site, ranging from aviation and aerospace to light industry, or possibly even an educational facility focusing on aircraft piloting and maintenance training—what Ross termed an "Embry-Riddle of the North," referencing the Daytona Beach, Fla.-based Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University.

Ross also revisiting a theme from his address to regional economic development planners at last year's Regional Agenda rollout.

"The Olcott Breakwater Project is important," he said. "Over the years, the Breakwater slipped into disrepair, along with a lot of the infrastructure there. But it's on the way back. And we have a project that we think will really help."

The \$2 million Breakwater project will devise a wave attenuation system and help with waterfront development and redevelopment at Olcott Beach in the town of Newfane.

Ross said a key aspect of any economic development project is the creation of jobs, particularly given the current weakened condition of the U.S. and New York state economies.

"Jobs will pull us out of this funk that we're in and makes this a better place to live," Ross said. "Remember: jobs, economy. Economy, jobs."

The leader of Niagara County's government, who was joined by Erie County Executive Chris Collins and Buffalo Mayor Byron Brown at the event, said he sees regional cooperation as key to economic development's success in both Erie and Niagara counties.

"Many of the venues we have in Niagara County overlap, and that works both ways" with Erie County, Ross said. "So, it is a coordinated effort to work together to get this economic development going."

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