



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Timothy M. Kennedy

# **As NHL Lockout Drags on, Senator Kennedy Urges State Action to Provide Emergency Support to Local Businesses**

Timothy M. Kennedy

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***Kennedy calls for an end to the NHL lockout before more economic damage is done. Without relief for local businesses, lockout threatens continued private investment at Canalside.***

***As more games get canceled, Kennedy wants state's top economic development agency to be ready to support local businesses.***

***Kennedy: NHL Lockout is Putting Small Businesses in the Penalty Box; Relief is Needed to Prevent 'Lockout' on Local Economic Progress.***

BUFFALO, N.Y. – As the NHL lockout drags on with no end in sight, Senator Tim Kennedy, the ranking Democrat on the Senate Committee on Commerce, Economic Development and Small Business, wants state actions to help ensure local small businesses are able to survive without the influx of customers that hockey season brings. Kennedy called on Empire State Development to start shaping emergency-support plans to help small businesses make ends meet during this uncertain period of lockout-driven downturn.

“Instead of doing the right thing and coming together to resolve their differences, the NHL owners and players are stuck thinking only about their own pocketbooks,” said Senator Kennedy. “The NHL lockout is putting small businesses, working families and fans in the penalty box. The lockout needs to end before more damage is done to our economy and community.”

Local businesses say they are feeling the pinch from the NHL lockout, and now it's likely to only get worse. NHL Commissioner Gary Bettman has said that it would be impossible to play a full 82-game season, if a collective bargaining agreement was not settled by Thursday. The Thursday deadline has come and gone, leaving the 2012-13 season in jeopardy. Friday morning, [the NHL announced it is canceling the entire schedule through November](#).

"The NHL lockout is icing local business development. With no end in sight, Empire State Development needs to gear up with emergency-support plans to prevent a 'lockout' on local economic progress," said **Senator Kennedy**. "This ongoing NHL dispute is roughing up the economy of Buffalo and Western New York, but the only people getting penalized are local business owners, workers and their families - not to mention the fans, many of whom have invested hundreds or thousands of dollars to purchase season tickets. It's time for the dispute to be resolved and the lockout to end - but if the players and owners can't reach an agreement and more games are canceled, the state needs to be ready to partner with local businesses to ensure continued economic development in downtown Buffalo."

In a [letter to Empire State Development](#) President Ken Adams, Senator Kennedy asked the economic development agency to begin developing emergency-support plans to help local businesses survive the lockout and keep their employees working. He encouraged ESD to partner with local businesses to ensure they can weather this economic storm caused by the NHL.

Several local business owners and managers stood with Senator Kennedy Friday to express the urgent need for an end to the lockout. The ongoing NHL dispute has caused a substantial financial strain on local businesses in Western New York. If it continues, the lockout could potentially stunt ongoing development at Canalside and throughout downtown Buffalo.

"While the players and the owners are fighting, downtown Buffalo is losing," said **Mark Croce, owner of the Statler Lobby Bar, Buffalo Chophouse and several other downtown restaurants and taverns**. "Not only will my businesses take a hit, but my employees will take a hit. I hope the NHL can come to an agreement, but if not I want to thank Senator Kennedy for working to provide critical support to businesses in the downtown area."

“I hope the NHL can work something out for the fans’ sake and for the sake of all of these downtown businesses – who have a lot lose,” said **Bryan Drew, General Manager of Embassy Suites in the Avant Building downtown.** “Our hotel typically hosts the visiting teams’ players, coaches and support staff, not to mention often 40 to 50 fans of the opposing team. I am glad Senator Kennedy recognizes the challenges we all face and is looking to roll up his sleeves and help.”

“As business owners, especially in the restaurant industry, we are constantly finding solutions to challenges that face us in an ever-changing market,” said **Jeff Lang, General Manager of Lagerhaus 95 located in Buffalo’s Cobblestone District.** “We applaud Senator Kennedy for working with small business owners to create solutions to help Western New York businesses as the NHL lockout continues. The team at Lagerhaus 95 is proud to be a part of the Western New York community, and we look forward to continuing to work with the Buffalo Sabres and Empire State Development Corporation.”

“Buffalo is a hockey town,” said **Tim Wiles, owner of the Swannie House on Ohio Street just feet from the First Niagara Center.** “Sabres games kept our bar and restaurant lively through the cold winter months, when many people don’t want to come out. Whether there are 500 people at the bar or 5, we need to make sure that we keep the lights on and make payroll. I applaud Senator Kennedy for helping us ensure that Swannie House remains a Buffalo staple for another 100 years.”

Senator Kennedy also offered a set of suggested emergency-support actions for Empire State Development to consider.

- Partner with the New York Power Authority and local energy providers to create a one-time utility grant for businesses that can prove significant financial hardship due to the NHL lockout. This could be 30% of their utility cost or \$2,500, whichever is less. These grants would help businesses pay the bills they have regardless of how much revenue they are bringing in.
- Work with the NHL to ensure the viability of businesses suffering from the lockout by developing an emergency hardship grant. This economic support funding from the NHL should be set aside to help businesses make up for lost revenues.
- Offer interest-free financing for business owners to pay short-term debt obligations that they would otherwise be unable to meet due to the lockout. In

the same way that the federal government works with banks to provide these loans, ESD should cover the interest on the loan and guarantee the loan 100 percent. The loans could be used for payments on existing loans, business credit card expenses and other short-term obligations.

[Click here to read Senator Kennedy's letter to Empire State Development requesting enhanced support for businesses experiencing financial hardship as a result of the NHL lockout.](#)

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*Senator Timothy M. Kennedy represents the New York State Senate's 58th District, which is comprised of the towns of Cheektowaga, Eden, Hamburg and West Seneca, the city of Lackawanna and parts of the city of Buffalo. More information is available at <http://kennedy.nysenate.gov>.*