



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

Lawmakers and Shoreline Residents Hear Insights on Record High Water at Joint Hearing on 2017 Lake Ontario - St. Lawrence River Flooding

PATTY RITCHIE October 11, 2017



In front of an auditorium full of local shoreline home and business owners Tuesday night, Senate Agriculture Committee Chair Senator Patty Ritchie and Senate Environmental Conservation Committee Chair Senator Tom O'Mara, along with Assemblymen Will Barclay and Bob Oaks came together for a Joint Hearing on 2017 Lake Ontario-St. Lawrence River Flooding.

Held at Mexico High School, the hearing was an opportunity to examine all of the possible factors that led to this spring and summer's record high water levels and the devastating flooding that ensued. Factors discussed included everything from the unusual weather—snow run-off and record rains—to the installation of the water-flow management plan known as Plan 2014.

The near five-hour hearing included testimony from various stakeholders, including homeowners and business owners, state agencies and local officials about the historic flooding event, the damages they suffered, the work they did to help neighbors in need and their concerns for the future.

Representatives from the government bodies that regulate water flows also provided testimony, including the International Joint Commission and the International Lake Ontario – St. Lawrence River Board.

It was also a chance for the Senators and Assemblymen to ask questions of the witnesses that will be included in the official record.

“People who live along the St. Lawrence River and Lake Ontario are extremely concerned about what happened, why it happened and what will be done to help them, both now and in the future,” said Senator Ritchie. “This is their property, their homes, their businesses and their lives. Their passion is both understandable and welcomed. I hope that this hearing—and the testimony provided—gave them a small peace of mind. Moving forward, we must stay involved, work together to share information, take steps to protect property and provide resources to those impacted.”

“I greatly appreciated the opportunity to join Senator Ritchie, and Assemblymen Barclay and Oaks, to hear directly from homeowners, local business owners, representatives of shoreline

communities, regulators, and all of the other stakeholders who have been so severely impacted by this flooding,” Senator O’Mara said. “Their input will remain enormously valuable as we continue to work to move forward on the rebuilding and recovery effort, as well as on better understanding the steps we need to take to try to ensure that this never happens again.”

“I’d like to thank Senators Ritchie and O’Mara for hosting this hearing and thank those who provided valuable testimony,” Assemblyman Will Barclay said. “The public hearing provided a good opportunity to talk directly with the IJC and the International Lake Ontario-St. Lawrence River Board and enabled us to share our concerns regarding the impact these record-high lake levels have had. Additionally, it was helpful to hear from a wide group of stakeholders on these damaging floods.”

“The Senate Environmental Conservation Committee public hearing at Mexico Academy provided extremely helpful information to begin to address the best course of action following this year’s devastating Lake Ontario flooding. New York State needs to push for changes to the existing regulations to better protect property owners on Lake Ontario’s south and east shores, as well as the St. Lawrence River,” Assemblyman Oaks added.

The hearing also featured discussion about federal and state funding programs that were put into place to help people get back on their feet and protect their property. That included the Lake Ontario-St. Lawrence Seaway Flood Relief and Recovery Grant Program—which both Senator Ritchie and Senator O’Mara, along with Assemblymen Barclay and Oaks sponsored—that provides \$45 million in funding to impacted year-round and seasonal homeowners, small businesses, farms, not-for-profits and municipalities. Recently, Governor Cuomo announced that everyone who applied would receive funding. Senators Ritchie and O’Mara have also been in contact with the Governor’s office, on a near daily basis, to discuss the need for more funding now and in the future.

A full video of the hearing is available by clicking [here](#).