



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Pamela Helming

Legislators, Community Unite to Examine Flooding, Plan 2014, and its Impacts on Local Communities

Jonathan Monfiletto - 315-568-9816

November 10, 2017

Image not found or type unknown



ONTARIO CENTER – Senator Pam Helming, in partnership with Senator Tom O’Mara, Chair of the Senate’s Environmental Conservation Committee, and Assemblyman Bob Oaks, last night hosted a public hearing to examine the International Joint Commission’s Plan 2014 and its impacts on local communities.

The hearing, which drew over 150 people to Wayne High School’s Performing Arts Center in Ontario Center, comes in the wake of the flooding disaster along the

southern shore of Lake Ontario and follows a similar public hearing that Senator O'Mara hosted with Senator Patty Ritchie last month in Oswego County. Senator Helming believes the state has an obligation to examine what caused the historic flooding and, now that the flooding has subsided, discuss how all levels of government can collaborate with one another to prevent a similar catastrophe from happening again.

"As State Senator, I was proud to bring this public hearing to our region and to the people most impacted by the flooding along the southern shore of Lake Ontario. This was nothing more than a man-made disaster that the federally appointed IJC could have prevented. The people responsible for this situation must be held accountable and must answer for their actions. I will continue my aggressive advocacy on behalf of the local homeowners and businesses that bore the brunt of this man-made disaster. More funding will be needed for recovery efforts, and it is critical that we work together at every level of government to ensure that this never happens again. I am thankful for Assembly Majority Leader Joe Morelle's leadership in helping secure \$45 million in funding to help local homeowners, businesses, and governments. I commend Senator O'Mara, Assemblyman Oaks, and my colleagues for their participation in this hearing and unwavering support for local communities along the southern shoreline," Senator Helming said.

Senator O'Mara said, "I greatly appreciated this opportunity to join Senator Helming, Assemblyman Oaks, and all of our legislative colleagues to hear directly from homeowners, local business owners, representatives of shoreline communities, regulators, and many other stakeholders who have been so severely impacted by this flooding. 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."

Assemblyman Oaks said, "The New York State Senate Environmental Conservation Committee hearing on the impact of the flooding from historic high water on Lake Ontario this year provided an important opportunity to question key decision-makers

and shareholders ranging from the IJC itself, to local elected officials, to affected homeowners and business owners. It is critical that we use this information and work collaboratively to develop policy that will help protect property owners in the future.”

Senator Helming and her colleagues from both the Senate and Assembly heard from a diverse group of stakeholders to share their expertise and experience with regard to Plan 2014 and its impacts on local communities. They also discussed government programs intended to assist homeowners, local governments, and small businesses recover. Those who testified included representatives from the International Lake Ontario-St. Lawrence River Control Board, the International Joint Commission, New York State Offices of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, Homes and Community Renewal, and Empire State Development, as well as county and local officials, shorelines organizations, local business owners, and property owners.

Senator John DeFrancisco said, “In the wake of an emergency, the state government should work hard to provide relief to its citizens in need. That’s why I was very pleased to participate in this public hearing, which allowed us to hear from a diverse group of individuals on Plan 2014 and how record lake levels have devastated their properties. The hearing also served as a great way for us to discuss how all levels of government can come together to prevent such flooding in the future.”

Senator Joe Robach said, “Homes and small business across my district have had their lives turned upside down by the high water and flooding of Lake Ontario. I stand with those in our communities who live along the lake and will continue to work with state and local officials as we look at any and all ways to deal with this high water and flooding situation moving forward.”

Senator Rich Funke said, “I want to thank Senator O’Mara for coming to the Finger Lakes region and Senator Helming for hosting this hearing to discuss flood relief with local stakeholders and organizations who were affected by the flooding this spring.

I'm proud of the work that the Senate has done already and look forward to continuing to work with my colleagues to best address the issues brought forth today."

Senator Patty Ritchie said, "After our initial hearing in Oswego County last month, it became clear that all parties must stay involved and, most importantly, work together to share information, provide resources to those impacted by this historic flooding, and take steps to protect property in the future. I thank Senator O'Mara, Senator Helming, and my other colleagues for working with me to keep this important discussion alive and giving residents another chance to hear from the experts about what happened, why it happened, and how we can help those affected both now and in the future."

Senator Robert Ortt said, "My colleagues and I have seen firsthand the damages that the IJC's Plan 2014 has caused for our Lake Ontario residents. Our residents and business owners have provided invaluable feedback regarding the amount of devastation to their properties. As long as Plan 2014 is in place, we will need to be prepared to assist our residents with future flood damages. I look forward to working with my colleagues in order to make sure we are doing all that we can at the state level to protect our residents. Thank you to Senator Helming, Senator O'Mara, and Assemblyman Oaks for hosting this public hearing."

Assemblyman Mark Johns said, "It was great to join my colleagues Senator Pam Helming, Senator Tom O'Mara, and Assemblyman Bob Oaks to discuss lake level concerns with experts and constituents. All levels of government need to work together to insure that this extreme flooding does not become an annual occurrence."

Assemblyman Peter Lawrence said, "The IJC has been unable to demonstrate to residents along the southern shore of Lake Ontario the benefits of Plan 2014. The stark reality of the Commission's procrastination on this issue has placed stakeholders along the southern shore in peril. The time to act is now, otherwise residents will continue to have their lives and livelihood disrupted by the flooding

that is certain to occur if the IJC does not change course and abandon Plan 2014.”

Assemblyman Steve Hawley said, "I was very pleased to join Senator Helming and the other Senators & Assemblymembers to hear, firsthand, testimony from homeowners, business owners, government agencies and experts on lake levels. As elected officials, we need to continue to work to assure that lakeshore property, residences, businesses and municipalities are protected against the unprecedented water levels which occurred this year on the south shores of Lake Ontario. We need the IJC & DEC to be active participants in this process!"

Assemblyman Angelo Morinello said, “I am pleased to have been invited to participate in this very important hearing. Too many constituents have been negatively impacted by Lake Ontario water levels, and it is time we address the true cause and work to protect our Lake Ontario southern shoreline.”

Assemblyman Mike Norris said, “I was pleased to join my Senate and Assembly colleagues to hear critical testimony on behalf of those residents and business owners who have been devastated by the flooding and high water levels of Lake Ontario. This must remain a top priority for New York State, and I will continue fighting for these residents, their interests, and their concerns.”

Senator Helming has been at the forefront of the Lake Ontario flooding starting as far back as early spring when the flooding first began. Earlier this year, Senator Helming championed legislation in the Senate to provide a total of \$45 million in relief to communities impacted by the historic Lake Ontario and St. Lawrence River flooding. The legislation expands eligibility and funding for programs previously announced by Governor Cuomo and will provide vital assistance to homeowners, small businesses, farms, not-for-profit organizations, homeowner associations, owners of multiple dwellings, and local governments that have suffered direct physical damage as a result of the flooding.

Senator Helming represents the 54th Senate District, which consists of Seneca and Wayne Counties, parts of Cayuga and Ontario Counties, and the towns of Lansing and Webster. For more information, please visit Senator Helming’s website, or follow @SenatorHelming on Facebook or Twitter.

###