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THE SENATE
STATE OF NEW YORK



JAMES L. SEWARD
SENATOR, 51ST DISTRICT

December 6, 2010

Acting Commissioner Peter M. Iwanowicz
Department of Environmental Conservation
625 Broadway
14th Floor
Albany, N.Y. 12233

RE: Rogers Center, Sherburne, NY

Dear Commissioner Iwanowicz:

As you may know, the announced closing/staff reduction at the Rogers Environmental Center in Sherburne has prompted concern from educators, patrons, citizens, business owners and civic officials in my district about the center's future, upcoming events, and the state's plan for a valuable community conservation and education resource. I share the concern.

I certainly agree that New York is in desperate financial straits. Because of an oppressive tax and regulatory climate in New York and a faltering economy, we have no new businesses in our area to share the burden of funding valuable public programs and services. We need to address the state's deficit, and the new senate majority will do so in the upcoming budget.

At the same time, the Rogers Center offers local economic and educational benefits that should be salvaged and preserved, even if on a smaller scale. Local citizens and the Friends of Rogers Center are willing to work with the department and DoB to maintain local programming in a way that meets state financial requirements for deficit reduction.

I would appreciate your considering the following issues and questions:

1. Will the department work with local organizations to maintain programming at the facility using volunteers and other organizations?
2. Will the facility be available for the use of organizations?
3. What is the department's intent for allowing the public to use the building and grounds (trails, etc.)?
4. If local citizens and officials offer a use/re-use plan for the facility, will the department entertain proposals to maintain the exhibits and permit use of the facility?
5. Will the Rogers Center be given priority for re-opening, as funds allow?
6. Would the department consider maintaining a 'bare bones' operation, in lieu of closing, until the next state budget is finalized and funding availability is determined?

I would welcome the department working with local officials to ensure the center's continued viability, even if state resources and commitment are reduced. I cannot overstate the value and importance of the Rogers Center to the Chenango-Madison area and central New York.

Please do not hesitate to contact me to discuss this matter further.

With best wishes, I remain

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "James L. Seward". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent initial "J".

JAMES L. SEWARD
State Senator