



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

Senator Ritchie: Biomass Could Fuel 140,000 Upstate Jobs

PATTY RITCHIE September 6, 2011

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Attends hearing on proposals to grow energy jobs

State Senator Patty Ritchie today said that promoting the development of biomass energy projects like a proposed cogenerator plant in St. Lawrence County could help create as many as 140,000 new jobs across Upstate New York, while helping generate electricity to fuel renewed economic growth.

Senator Ritchie attended a hearing of the Legislature's bipartisan Commission on Rural Resources, co-chaired by Western New York Sen. Cathy Young, where advocates for biomass energy explained that bureaucratic red tape was holding back an industry that could help reduce New Yorkers' reliance on foreign oil, put vast stretches of New York's abundant timber lands into productive use, and create jobs. "The Commission was told we could create 140,000 new jobs by harnessing this emerging local energy resource," Senator Ritchie said. "But state laws that favor renewable energy sources like wind and solar are written to specifically exclude wood, grasses and other biomass sources."

“If New York wants to create more private sector jobs and investment, we need to capitalize on the rural resources we already have available on our farms and commercial forests,” Senator Ritchie said. “We need to stop talking about the benefits of ‘green energy’ and start looking at the resources in our own backyards.”

Senator Ritchie noted that one developer has proposed a cogeneration project using biomass for Ogdensburg, which would mean a \$50 million, private sector investment, and the creation of 150 local jobs.

“Our forests are constantly growing, faster than they are being harvested,” Senator Ritchie said. “Creating new markets like the Ogdensburg cogenerator biomass facility will help to create new jobs, but it will also help us to provide a new revenue source for farmers, timber companies and rural families who own woodlots.”

New York State depends on out of state sources for 92 percent of its energy needs, according to the New York Biomass Energy Alliance. The State imports 1.8 billion gallons of fuel oil each year at a cost of \$5.5 billion.