



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Robert G. Ortt

Holster Maker Marked for Power Allocation

CHRIS PECK December 1, 2016

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LOCKPORT—Niagara County economic development officials and the leader of the County Legislature's governing Majority Caucus hailed a Wednesday decision by the county's power proceeds board to approve a 75-kilowatt power appropriation for a local company that manufactures leather holsters.

Majority Leader Randy Bradt, R-North Tonawanda, who is one of two county lawmakers appointed to the Empower Niagara Board, which oversees distribution of the county's share of hydropower generated by the Niagara Power Project, praised the decision to award power

to Alessi Leather Corp. Empower Niagara's grant helps spur a \$400,000 investment and the creation of seven new jobs at a Niagara Falls Boulevard facility.

"This Legislature's constant, guiding principle has been that government policy should be conducive to the creation of private sector jobs," Bradt said this morning, after a vote by the Empower Niagara Board that forwards Alessi Leather's allocation to the Legislature for approval. "This is consistent with that vision, and it's good news for the families that will benefit from the creation of those jobs."

Alessi Leather acquired a preexisting business, the Niagara Gun Range, an indoor pistol and rifle range located at 3355 Niagara Falls Blvd., and continues to operate the facility in its original role. Under Alessi's application for the power allocation, however, they will carry out up to \$400,000 in renovations including the addition of a 5,000 square foot training area for law enforcement.

This also moves Alessi Leather's manufacturing facilities from Buffalo to Wheatfield, where they will be collocated with the gun range.

Bradt noted that Alessi Leather's application for the low-cost power incentive program came after state Sen. Robert G. Ortt, R-North Tonawanda, referred the company to county economic development planners.

"This is a great partnership between the Buffalo Niagara Gun Range and Niagara County," Ortt said. "Owner Tom Kulwicki, his family, and his team at Alessi Leather are an impressive addition to the county. Mr. Kulwicki's unique business is an asset to our communities, and will strengthen the economic viability of our region."

Bradt, a pistol permit holder, added that he was glad to see quality firearms accessories being manufactured in Niagara County.

“Consumers nationwide continue to demand access to firearms, as was demonstrated just last week, when Black Friday saw gun background checks hit a record high,” Bradt said. “We’d be happy to see some of those gun owners buy accessories manufactured by local workers.”

The chairwoman of the Legislature’s Economic Development Committee agreed.

“This is an investment by the County of Niagara in an industry that we believe will succeed, will meet its targets, and grow,” Legislator Kathryn L. Lance, R-Wheatfield, said. “Our Center for Economic Development studied industry-wide trends and concluded that Alessi Leather was making a product that the market is calling for. We heard anecdotal stories of people having to wait many weeks or months for custom leather holsters, and of wait times increasing. This is a market niche that we expect will be successful.”

Lance’s Economic Development Committee will meet Tuesday, and she indicated she expects the panel to approve the application quickly. It will then need approval from the Legislature’s Administration Committee, where it is also likely to win. The full Legislature would then vote to approve the Empower Niagara deal on Dec. 13.

At least one county lawmaker was praising the proposed power allocation after learning of its passage.

“In Niagara County, we’ve invested heavily in the sporting industries. We’ve worked to improve our natural harbors on Lake Ontario. We’ve worked to expand rights for hunters and owners of defensive firearms. We’ve ensured our county has marketed sports tourism. This is an early return on that investment,” said Legislator John Syracuse, R-Newfane, who has been a champion of the sporting community and gun rights. “This is a most welcome new company, and I hope more like it follow, creating jobs that are compatible with our existing sporting industry.”