



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

## Ritchie and Barclay to Host Lake Ontario-St. Lawrence River Flood Hearings

PATTY RITCHIE September 25, 2017



State Senator Patty Ritchie and State Assemblyman Will Barclay will welcome Senator Tom O'Mara, Chairman of the New York State Senate Standing Committee on Environmental Conservation, to Oswego County as they partner to host a special hearing on the record high water levels of Lake Ontario and the St. Lawrence River this spring and summer.

It has been 100 years since Lake Ontario water levels were as high as they were in 2017. While the water has gone down, it eroded hundreds of miles of shoreline, flooded property,

damaged homes and businesses. It destroyed docks, breakwalls and took an entire tourism season with it. The damage is so significant it could be years before things begin to feel normal. Some losses will never be recovered.

This critically important hearing will be an opportunity to examine all of the factors including the unusual weather—snow run-off and record rains—and the installation of the water-flow management plan known as Plan 2014.

The hearing will be Tuesday, October 10th, at Mexico High School, located at 3338 Main Street in Mexico.

Senators Ritchie and O'Mara and Assemblyman Barclay have invited stakeholders from across the state to discuss their experiences with Plan 2014 and their concerns moving forward. They have also invited Great Lakes regulatory bodies such as the International Joint Commission and various other lawmakers and agencies to share their expertise, including the Department of Environmental Conservation and New York Sea Grant.

The Senators and Assemblyman will also discuss federal and state programs designed to help people get back on their feet and protect their property, including the Lake Ontario-St. Lawrence Seaway Flood Relief and Recovery Grant Program—which Senator Ritchie, Senator O'Mara and Assemblyman Barclay sponsored—that provides \$45 million in funding to impacted year-round and seasonal homeowners, small businesses, farms, not-for-profits and municipalities. This program is in addition to the \$22 million made available by New York State in May.

“First and foremost, our hearts go out to those who live and work on the shorelines of Lake Ontario and the St. Lawrence. We have been able to help with the financial cost of the flood damage, but we must also do what we can to ease the toll this damage is taking on

everyone's physical and mental well-being," Senator Ritchie said. "So while I'm proud to have sponsored the Lake Ontario-St. Lawrence Seaway Flood Relief and Recovery Grant Program to help people get back on their feet financially, everyone affected will now get the chance to hear directly from all of the stakeholders and decision makers."

"It is no doubt that the high lake levels have been devastating for shoreline communities and its residents. As a result of higher lake levels, property owners, businesses and municipalities have incurred millions in damages," said Assemblyman Barclay. "Like the Senator, I am proud to have worked on and sponsored the Lake Ontario-St. Lawrence Seaway Flood Relief and Recovery Grant Program. This program enacted by the state is helping residents and communities rebuild. However, moving forward, we need to get answers from stakeholders, including the IJC, as to why the lake reached such devastating levels this year so that this can be prevented in the future."

If you were unable to attend the Lake Ontario-St. Lawrence Seaway Flood Relief and Recovery Grant Program workshops, Senator Ritchie put together a short video from one of them, which is available on her website, [www.ritchie.nysenate.gov](http://www.ritchie.nysenate.gov).

You also still have time to apply for funding. The deadline for Central and Northern New Yorkers to submit an application is Friday, September 29th. For more information, you can contact Neighbors of Watertown by visiting [www.neighborsofwatertown.com](http://www.neighborsofwatertown.com), or by calling (315) 782-8497. Small businesses in need of assistance to help offset losses are encouraged to contact Empire State Development by calling (518) 292-5348 or by visiting [www.esd.ny.gov](http://www.esd.ny.gov).