



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Thomas F. O'Mara

Senate holding public hearing today to examine Lake Ontario and St. Lawrence River flooding: O'Mara and Ritchie will host government colleagues and water experts in Oswego County, livestream will be available

THOMAS F. O'MARA October 10, 2017

| ISSUE: **FLOODING**



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Mexico, New York, October 10--The New York State Senate is holding a public hearing later today in Mexico, Oswego County, to examine the recent record flooding along the St. Lawrence River and Lake Ontario. The hearing is being held by Senator Tom O'Mara (R,C,I-Big Flats), Chair of the Senate Environmental Conservation Committee, and Senator Patty Ritchie (R,C-Heuvelton), Chair of the Senate Agriculture Committee.

Throughout the spring and summer, heavy rains and flooding caused erosion along hundreds of miles of shoreline. Homes and properties were heavily damaged by flooding of historic proportions. Businesses that depend on the lake and river were left helpless as water washed away a majority of the season or, in some cases, the entire season. Many tourists that the shoreline communities depended upon never came. People could not live, work, or play on the water. There were physical, financial, and emotional losses that will never be recovered.

As the safety and viability of increased lake levels through the International Joint Commission's Plan 2014 are called into question, this important hearing will be an opportunity to examine the Plan and to hear from those who have been impacted by high water, including residents and business owners. Also invited to participate in the hearing are Great Lakes regulatory bodies such as the International Joint Commission, the state Department of Environmental Conservation, New York Sea Grant, and various other lawmakers and agencies to share their expertise. The Senators will also discuss federal and state programs designed to help people get back on their feet and protect their property.

The hearing will take place at **4 p.m. at Mexico High School, 3338 Main St. in Mexico**. An additional hearing is expected to be held in Wayne County in November, with details to be announced at a later date. The hearing will be livestreamed **HERE**.

O'Mara said, "Throughout the Great Lakes region, we have all seen the toll record flooding has taken on our shoreline communities. Homeowners and local businesses are still recovering. While funding through the Lake Ontario-St. Lawrence Seaway Flood Relief and Recovery Grant Program is a giant step in helping people rebuild, it is critical that we hear from stakeholders and regulatory bodies to understand what happened, why it happened and what steps we need to take to make sure it never happens again. This hearing will provide that opportunity."

Ritchie said, "As I toured various shoreline communities affected by this historic flooding, it was obvious not only that people needed help financially, but also that they needed to know what steps we could take so their homes or businesses don't end up underwater again. Part of the recovery process for so many will be that peace of mind in knowing that we will get to the bottom of this and we will continue to be out there, working to protect them and their property for the future. I would like to thank Senator O'Mara for his tireless efforts in helping make this hearing possible."