



BUSINESS COMMUNITY EXPRESSES ITS VIEWS AND CONFIDENCE

The North Country Chamber of Commerce released the results of its Annual Issue Survey today, providing a snapshot of the collective position of the North Country business community on a number of state and federal issues as well as an indication of its business expectations for the year ahead.

BUSINESS UP = 75%
BUSINESS STEADY = 21%
96%



Each year, the Chamber gauges the region's Business Confidence Index, which is a combination of those expecting their business activity to grow this year and those expecting their business to remain steady. For 2018, 75% expect business to be up while 21% expect it to be steady for a "Business Confidence Index" of 96%. This is up 3% from last year's index of 93% with a notable shift of 8% from the steady to growth indicators.

"We see several factors supporting this optimism and confidence," states Garry Douglas, Chamber President, "including 59% expecting the national economy to grow this year. We also continue to enjoy an historic wave of good news and major investment in the area, including the launch of Norsk Titanium, continued investment and progress at Plattsburgh International Airport, the opening of the Institute for Advanced Manufacturing at Clinton Community College, the state's \$10 million investment in downtown Plattsburgh, our continued strength in drawing Canadian visitors and spending, significantly lower unemployment and our recognition once again as one of the top ten micropolitan Cities of the Future by fDi Magazine."

The North Country Chamber sees the index as a sign of continued confidence in the strategies and work of the area's economic and workforce development team, including the Chamber, the Development Corporation, the North Country Regional Economic Development Council, the North Country Regional Workforce Development Board, Empire State Development, CITEC, area IDA's and partner officials at the federal, state, county and local levels, among others.

VALUING OUR ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP WITH CANADA

The overarching importance of the North Country's growing economic partnership with Canada was once again strongly reflected in responses to questions related to federal matters.

When asked if they "agree that the U.S.-Canada economic partnership is working for the North Country and needs to be differentiated from other trade agreements, focusing on ways to further build and strengthen it", a resounding 98% agreed. Valuing, protecting and enhancing the U.S.-Canada economic relationship is the region's number one priority on the federal level.

On other federal issues, 91% support significant regulatory reform and relief, and 83% support plans for a major new federal funding commitment for the nation's infrastructure.

NEW YORK STATE ISSUES

On New York State issues, 91% believe it is time this year to make the state's 2% property tax cap permanent, while 86% support a permanent 2% cap as well on the growth in annual state spending and 98% call for the current state budget gap to be closed without tax increases.

There is 93% endorsement of greater and more flexible state and federal support for workforce development and training, aimed at addressing skill gaps and meeting the needs of North Country employers.

98% support general continuation of the Regional Economic Development Council system for economic development support in the state, believing it has served the North Country well. Other key findings include:

- 95% support for continued state and federal efforts to close remaining broadband service gaps in the region, along with fresh efforts to help close cellphone gaps as well.
- 92% support for doing more to encourage and incentivize the sharing and consolidation of local government services.
- 88% opposition to extending the requirement of Project Labor Agreements to include more state funded projects.
- 87% support for reducing state healthcare taxes, assessments and surcharges as a means of lowering health insurance premiums.

Overall state priorities this year are as follows:

- #1 - More support for workforce development and training.
- #2 (tie) - Make 2% Property Tax Cap permanent.
- #2 (tie) - Close state budget gap without tax increases.
- #3 - Close broadband and cellphone service gaps in the region.

The North Country Chamber of Commerce is the largest business and economic development organization in northern New York, linking more than 4,000 employers across Clinton, Franklin, Essex, Hamilton and northern Warren Counties and Akwesasne. It serves as a leading advocate in Washington, Albany and elsewhere on behalf of the North Country economy.