

Mayor Paul Dyster's Statement on NYPA Assistance Agreement

\$13.4 million to Help Address Budgetary Gap Created by Casino Revenue Dispute



I want to thank Governor Cuomo and the New York Power Authority (NYPA) Board of Trustees for assisting the City of Niagara Falls address budget issues related to the ongoing casino revenue dispute between the State of New York and the Seneca Nation of Indians.

This plan is another example of Governor Cuomo's leadership and creativity. Many New York municipalities face economic hardship, but our case was special, and needed unique attention. The state is just starting a major recovery from Hurricane Sandy and government operations have been disrupted with previous priorities pushed aside to deal with the emergency situation. Despite all of that, Governor Cuomo made helping Niagara Falls a top priority.

I have been working with the Cuomo Administration and New York Power Authority on this agreement for quite some time. There was constant communication, and details remained confidential before they were fact. **As Mayor, I worked with the State to craft the best possible short-term solution to our ongoing casino payment issue. It is not my nature to announce agreements before they are real, or to grandstand.** It has been difficult not to speak publicly about this effort while details were being nailed down, but I did not want to risk subjecting the community to a roller coaster ride of possibly false expectations only to have their hopes dashed – **that is not responsible government, and it is not what I am about.**

I urge the Niagara Falls City Council to approve the NYPA proposal immediately and I appreciate the Council's cooperation in a far from ordinary budget year. This \$13 million changes the 2013 City of Niagara Falls budget outlook. Difficult decisions will still need to be made, but I will submit an amended budget to the City Council for its consideration, as I am eager to work with them in addressing our fiscal situation. I hope the Council and the public now understands that negotiating this agreement affected the timeliness of the 2013 budget presentation. If we could have announced this initiative weeks ago, it would have changed the budget projections and timeline. In fact, when we finally thought we had reached the end of the road, the emergency surrounding Hurricane Sandy resulted in the cancellation of a NYPA Board meeting on October 29 that would have put this initiative in the public record before my budget presentation on November 1.

NYPA assistance is critically important, however, it obviously does not resolve the ongoing issue with the Seneca Nation. The \$13 million spin-up does not solve all of the City's issues (after all, we are owed \$60 million), and no one is pretending it will. Arbitration is still ongoing, and there are long-term questions that need to be answered. I am assured the state will continue to explore ways to assist the City of Niagara Falls, and look forward to working with our State representatives in seeking solutions to the outstanding issues. I want to specifically thank Senator George Mazarz and Assemblyman John Ceretto for diligently working with the administration to find a solution to a complex and difficult problem.

Ultimately, the larger dispute needs to be resolved by the Seneca Nation of Indians and the State of New York. However, \$13 million is most definitely a good start and I sincerely thank Governor Cuomo for delivering funding at a time it is needed most.