

Testimony of Bob Flint, Executive Director of Springfield Regional Development Corporation to House Commerce – 2/9/17

(These are bullet points for the items I'll be discussing in more detail)

EXPANDING TECH ED – A proposal will be forthcoming from the Tech Center Directors. This was developed through a recent process that included the CTE Directors and Board Chairs in the state (I am the Board Chair of River Valley Tech Center, one of the 3 “independent” tech center school districts).

WORKFORCE – I'm attaching a recent Business Climate survey we completed last year. 60% of the companies that responded felt that there was “not a sufficient supply of employees for their businesses”. This is a complicated issue and, in our region at least, not only includes the lower tier jobs, but also the professional/managerial.

ACCD/DOL – The RDC's of Vermont are supportive of the concept of moving some of the workforce development programs from DOL into what is now ACCD. Better utilization/deployment of these resources would be welcomed as a first step towards better coordination of all of the various programs across various state agencies/departments.

VEGI/VTP – The RDC's continue to be supportive of the VEGI and Vermont Training programs. I served as one of the 2 RDC reps to the summer study committee that reviewed the questions posed about VEGI in legislation last year. It continues to be a critical resource for our region, especially being a border area with NH. The Vermont Training Program is also invaluable as a tool to help businesses in our region.

TIFS – The RDC's are supportive of legislation to remove the moratorium on Tax Increment Financing (TIF) Districts in the state. In our region, the Town of Springfield is participating in a group of communities who are very eager to see this take place. It would be another very useful resource for driving infrastructure growth that is critical to development.

RESOURCES – Those that have been in this committee have heard me lament the disparity in financial resources available for economic growth. Property values are low. Lease rates are low and there is not enough deal flow to attract the more sophisticated developers and investors. This becomes a vicious circle. And, combined with the challenge with commercial appraisals, it makes it even more challenging to consider large-scale projects.