

The 7th Annual North Country Symposium
***“Opportunities for Sustainable Growth in Today’s
Economy”***

April 1st and April 2nd, 2009

Eben Holden Conference Center, St. Lawrence University

Program Overview

“The mission of the annual Symposium is to convene stakeholders in northern New York to explore and ultimately enhance the region's economic, environmental, and educational vitality.” The Annual Symposium is sponsored by the Ellen C. Burt '42 Endowment for North Country Education at St. Lawrence University.

This year’s North Country Symposium, the 7th annual conference, takes place amidst economic conditions in both the region and nation that have not been seen in several decades. Some commentators have gone so far as to use the terms “uncharted waters” and “depression.”

The Chinese pictogram for “crisis” contains two ideograms – one for “danger” and the other for “opportunity.” Despite the sense of imminent crisis and its related challenges, our strong North Country communities and natural resource base present genuine opportunities for sustainable growth. This year’s North Country Symposium explores how the “crisis” provides opportunity, not just danger.

The opening session of the Symposium this year will be on Wednesday evening, April 1, when the nature of the “crisis” as it relates specifically to our region will be explored as well as a preview of some ways in which opportunities exist within today’s limited economy. The following day, Thursday, April 2, the Symposium will go into full swing, both to explore the work of groups creating sustainable development initiatives on the local level, and also to meet with the Symposium’s “Action/Research Teams” to plan for work in the coming year.

This year’s keynote speaker, Mr. Jeff Yost, President and CEO of the Nebraska Community Foundation (NCF), will speak briefly on Wednesday evening and provide the keynote address on Thursday morning. Since its inception in 1993, the NCF has secured and reinvested nearly \$60 million in Nebraska’s small communities that struggle with the same issues we face in the North Country. The Foundation is heralded as a national model for its innovative work in empowering community leadership, estimating the intergenerational transfer of wealth to craft community endowment building strategies, and linking charitable giving to building greater economic opportunity through entrepreneurship. In 2005, NCF received one of only six grants from the W. K. Kellogg Foundation to expand its “HomeTown Competitiveness” initiatives. Mr. Yost will share some of the results of his work with the NCF and how its model relates to our work in New York State’s North Country.

