

Politicians herald start of Champlain bridge construction

By Fred Herbst
fred@denpubs.com

CROWN POINT — To residents of the north-eastern New York and western Vermont, the construction of a new Lake Champlain Bridge is much more than a huge engineering project, top officials of the two states said this week as they conducted a ground-breaking ceremony for the span.

Gov. David Paterson said the event was a landmark in the lives of citizens from both states.

"This is an important step in reconnecting our two states and restoring this critical link for commerce, tourism, employment, education and medical services," he said.

Vermont Gov. Jim Douglas offered similar remarks.

"Those who live and work in the area surrounding the Lake Champlain Bridge share family, friends and business relationships on both sides of the lake," he said. "The ease and timeliness of transportation across Lake Champlain is critical to their way of life and economy."

Douglas and Paterson were among a roster of federal, state and local officials at the ground-breaking ceremony, held June 8 at the base of the former bridge in Crown Point.

Construction of a new \$69.6 million bridge is to begin June 11. The Lake Champlain Bridge was closed last October because of safety concerns, and was demolished Dec. 28. A ferry service now links Crown Point and Addison, Vt.

The new structure, which has soaring spans that reflect the trend-setting arches of the former bridge, is expected to be completed in September 2011.

State Sen. Betty Little said the groundbreaking represented a turning point in area citizens' lives.

See **BRIDGE**, page 9



"Since the bridge's closure, our local communities, families and businesses have been managing through a sort of triage to deal with the loss of this vital link," she said. "Today marks the first step on the path to full recovery."

State Assemblywoman Teresa Sayward and Vermont Rep. Diane Lanpher echoed those comments.

Flatiron Constructors, Inc. of Boulder, Colorado was awarded the contract to build the new bridge. While Flatiron will bring a core team of about a dozen managers, there will be jobs for local workers, U.S. Rep. Bill Owens said.

"This will help create jobs in communities that desperately need them," Owens said. "I hope to see many people from my side of the lake, from my district, hired to work here."

Rep. Scott Murphy said the Crown Point Bridge is a critical entryway to the North Country, and the area economy depends upon it for economic development and survival.

"Since the closure of the bridge, North Country communities have faced a tremendous challenge, and I applaud Gov. Paterson for providing this critical funding that will not only help our small businesses and farms, but will get our local economy back on track."

Town of Moriah Supervisor Tom Scozzafava said the bridge project is an example of how government can and should operate effectively.



Dignitaries from New York and Vermont gathered June 11 to commemorate construction of a new Crown Point bridge across Lake Champlain. The new \$69.6 million bridge will be built at the same location as the previous structure and is expected to be completed in September 2011.

Photo by Nancy Frasier