

Remarks for Burt Symposium
By Karen St. Hilaire
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- Today I have the privilege of sharing with you my ideas and observations about a little spot on the earth called St. Lawrence County.
- This speck of land- totaling 2,846 square miles- is a place, where in a world filled with conflict, one can live a life in relative peace and harmony.
- It is a place where farmers and professors live side-by-side sharing space and ideas.
- It is a place that, at first glance appears to be homogeneous... and then, you discover that one community has people who come from 40 different countries.
- It is a place where your nearest neighbor can be right next door or ... a half-mile away.
- It is a place where you can canoe for three days and never see another soul.
- It is a place that has 200 lakes, rivers, and ponds bustling with activity or alive with stillness.
- It is a place where you can cross country ski into the deep woods and hear only the sound of your skis sliding on the snow.
- It is a place where over 3,000 people gather in one spot any winter weekend to watch the best of NCAA hockey.
- It is a place where you can see a solar car cruising down the highway at the same time you are passing a horse and buggy.
- It is a place which borders two nations- one, to the north and one comprised of those who were here long before our ancestors.
- It is a place where castles hold the lure of another era... and islands total many more than the thousand their name suggests.
- It is a place where one out of every two music teachers in New York State is trained.
- It is a place where people with ideas can start new businesses and be applauded for their success.
- It is a place where ice storms bring communities together and the welfare of your neighbor is very much your concern.

- It is a place where the population density of one town is 1.2 people per square mile.
- It is the birthplace of a world-renowned artist whose works are on display for all to see.
- It is a place that has educated astronauts, scientists, corporate leaders, opera singers, actors, politicians and entrepreneurs.
- It is a place where people from around the world travel to catch fish that we discard.
- It is a place which attracts bird watchers from throughout the Northeast and a place which has one of two important bird areas for bank swallows in the country.
- It is a place where you can dive in crystal clear waters to explore shipwrecks from another century.
- It is a place where you can raise buffalo, elk, emu, llamas, alpacas and still be in the top three dairy counties in the state.
- It is a place where the sunshine of the summer drives you to seek shade and the ice and snow of the winter drive you to seek shelter.
- St. Lawrence County – a place of extremes.
- A place of opposites...
- A place where some live in relative comfort and too many live in poverty.
- A place which is always in the top ten of unemployment, where the per capita income is among the lowest, where jobs continue to depart as companies look to cut their costs by taking jobs abroad.
- For many of us St. Lawrence County is Shangri-la
- For many others... it is home and a place we will not leave...
- But it is a place of struggle... to survive, to feed families, to operate businesses... to keep our young people from leaving.
- A struggle to secure a piece of the American dream.
- My hope today is that we will begin to look at how to reverse the downward economic slide we have come to see as "normal" ...
- That we will begin to focus on how to turn around our economy so that all may share in the wonders and joys of the St. Lawrence County I have come to know and love.