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Cuomo sees \$500M for broadband work

Governor also lands Business Council endorsement again
By Matthew Hamilton
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Gov. Andrew Cuomo greets workers at Plug Power where he was endorsed by the state Business Council Wednesday, Oct. 8, 2014, in Colonie, N.Y. (Will Waldron/Times Union) [Buy this photo](#)



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In a two-pronged event at the fuel cell manufacturer Plug Power, Gov. [Andrew Cuomo](#) announced his plans to make high-speed broadband available statewide and received the

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backing of one of the state's largest private business organizations.

This isn't Cuomo's first mention of broadband expansion: The Empire State Development Corp. has approved funding to increase broadband access in smaller shots during Cuomo's first term, and \$25 million went to high-speed internet expansion in March 2013 through the Connect NY Broadband Grant Program.

But the sizable investment discussed Wednesday would be the largest yet. Cuomo

called for \$500 million in state investment for the New NY Broadband Fund, and matching outlays from companies that want to apply to provide the service to any given area. The resulting \$1 billion would be used to lay 6,000 miles of fiber optic cables across the state.

Cuomo said upstate New York would be a key beneficiary of the plan.

"Broadband availability is going to be what the interstate road system was in the '50s," Cuomo said at Plug Power. "The way you needed road access and access to basic utilities to do business, electric and phone — you're going to need access to broadband if you're going to be competitive."

While announcing his latest initiative for the second term he hopes to win, Cuomo simultaneously picked up the state Business Council's backing. The endorsement followed pleas for support from Cuomo and Astorino at the group's annual meeting three weeks ago in Bolton Landing.

"It's not just about a campaign," Cuomo said. "It's about a relationship and how we govern. ... One of the fundamental shifts in state government over the past few years is we're not warring with the business community, we're not jockeying with the business community. We're working in partnership with the business community, and that makes a major difference."

In making the endorsement, Business Council President Heather Briccetti touted Cuomo initiatives that have led to a decline in unemployment, lower taxes and disciplined spending.

Cuomo received the Business Council's first-ever endorsement of a statewide candidate in 2010. While it wasn't certain he would receive the endorsement for the Nov. 4 election, it seemed more likely following the annual meeting on Lake George. While Cuomo offered standard campaign rhetoric, Astorino took a different approach in his speech, which employed an almost scolding tone to warn the business community about the Republican's belief the state was headed in the wrong direction.

Briccetti said Astorino's speech didn't play into the decision to endorse the incumbent. An Astorino campaign spokeswoman didn't respond to a request for comment.

Instead, the endorsement was "related to the success of the last four years and the ability to accomplish some very difficult challenges, including maintaining fiscal discipline in New York, which is something we haven't seen in a very long time," she said.

The Business Council announced a second endorsement just after Cuomo's event: It supported Republican attorney general candidate John Cahill, citing policies that in many cases contrasted with those of Cuomo.

It praised Cahill's desire to move forward with natural gas hydrofracking (a Cuomo administration review of the technique has dragged on for his entire term), reform of the state's controversial labor statute known as the scaffold law (the governor has made it clear that he



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thinks reform is a non-starter in the current political climate), and tort reform (something Cuomo has never seriously backed).

The place where the Democrat and Republican agree is on state-level oversight of the state's financial services industry, which the Business Council also cited in its endorsement of Cahill.

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When Cuomo was HUD chief he advocated a regulation that mandated that mortgages sold to Fannie Mae include subprime mortgages. That mandate led directly to the subprime crisis. In effect, Cuomo brought down the entire US economy. Now, Cuomo is making half-billion-dollar investments in broadband. One must wonder whether the entire Internet will collapse as a result. In reviewing Cuomo's donor list, the extent and breadth of super rich support for Cuomo is shocking. Cuomo is not just getting... » more

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This had to be a difficult decision for the business council. They had to choose between two republicans. The US pretends to be superior but the facts refute it. Health care and broadband are only two examples. The US ranks way down on the list in both cases for cost and quality.

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