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## State sends money to boost the town's industry

By Brian Lee TELEGRAM & GAZETTE STAFF

**STURBRIDGE**— In hopes of spurring business growth, the state is sending grants totaling \$793,000 to town.

The bulk, \$750,000, is intended to provide public water to the Sturbridge Technology Park, Gov. Deval L. Patrick said yesterday during a conference call.

The water line project will be guided by the Massachusetts Opportunity Relocation and Expansion jobs grant program, which began in 2006, the year before Mr. Patrick took office.

The other \$43,000 is for Photonis USA to train 21 employees through a work-force training fund.

Town Administrator James J. Malloy said in an interview the line for public water stops at the Center at Hobbs Brook, Route 20. The absence of public water to the technology park impedes efforts to attract companies with more than 25 employees, Mr. Malloy said.

Optim, a manufacturer of medical flexible endoscopes, was instrumental in Sturbridge's MORE grant application, said Thomas V. Root, the firm's president and CEO. Optim has 46 employees and looks to add at least 40 in the next 18 months.

The firm moved into the park, at Routes 20 and 49, in 1994. It has since envisioned adding 20,000 square feet to its current 10,600-square-foot quarters.

However, environmental rules protecting well water made it impossible to house the number of employees necessary for growth, Mr. Root said.

Mr. Root said the Worcester Business Development Corp. went to bat for Sturbridge's share of MORE money, and he commended Mr. Malloy and Department of Public Works Director Gregory Morse for helping get it.

"Jim really worked his tail off to get this application out," Mr. Root said. "We did, too. There was a lot of work to prove to the governor we were going to produce these sustainable jobs" over at least a five-year period.

Mr. Root also commended property developer Daniel Prouty.

"Dan wants to develop the land. I want to employ people and grow more business. The town wants to have more jobs. The commonwealth gets more taxes, and that's how it goes," Mr. Root said.

He said he was grateful the governor and state see the area of Interstate 84 and the Massachusetts Turnpike in Sturbridge as a good place to invest in growth.

"In this time of high gas prices, there are a lot of people driving 50, 60 miles east who probably won't have to do that any longer if we can get this done," Mr. Root said. "I mean, this opens up almost 30 acres of developable land at the park."

Earlier this year, a decision not to proceed with a large state-assisted project in Boston doubled the MORE program from \$10 million to \$20 million.

The MORE program and the worker training program are "two parts of a multi-part strategy to invest in our economy, to strengthen it in the short-term for long-term growth," said Mr. Patrick, who will next visit the region on July 23 in Webster, as part of a series of town hall meetings.

The governor said that for the short-term, his administration has moved \$24-plus million in MORE grants across the state.

It has also invested more than \$35 million to train about 40,000 workers at 1,600 companies since he took office in January 2007, he said.

State Sen. Stephen M. Brewer, D-Barre, asserted during the conference, "We're seeing the reality from the rhetoric."

The rhetoric that the senator cited is Mr. Patrick's inaugural address and state of the state address when he said "the government doesn't create jobs, but it can work as a partner in providing the infrastructure: wastewater treatment capacity, water lines, bridges and roads."

"Any kind of a government so-called handout directly to business, frankly will only sustain as long as that cash flow goes," he said.

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