**CONFERENCE SPEECH**

**FOR**

**JAMES O’BRIEN**

To colleagues and contractors, officials, vendors, distinguished guests, and to all of the members, Board of Directors, and Board of Governors, welcome to the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ annual conference of the Associated General Contractors of New York State. (**If you want to make a little joke, you can say**)... This organization has functioned as the backbone for the contractors and creators of the greatest state in the nation for the past **EIGHTY** years.... we exemplify dedication, hard work, ingenuity, and the ability to get the job done... did I say **INGENUITY**??? Of course!!! Here we are, in this gorgeous place, the Grand Cayman Islands.... in the middle of January!!! Clearly, we **KNOW** how... and **WHERE**...to get the job done!!! (**Wait for the laugh**). All jokes aside, it’s a gift to have a working break in such an inspired atmosphere... we know how to build... we work together to manage a complex infrastructure that supports all, and we provide diverse and time tested experience to work within government mandates to keep all the parts moving correctly and optimally.... we advocate for best practices throughout the dynamic state of New York.... and being here I realize... if we could only get together... align on a strategy... and do **SOMETHING** about our **cold** **weather** back home... **THAT** would be an accomplishment!!! (**Wait for the laugh**).

As professionals, integrally involved with managing, administering to, and providing a strong, functioning, effective matrix for New York State, we all know what it means to have dedicated, insightful, proactive leadership. Fortunately, for the past year, I’ve had the privilege to work very closely with a man who exemplifies the mission of the AGCNYS. We travelled together, all over the country.... networking... connecting... questioning... resolving... issues and ideas that will continue to provide sound infrastructure for all that we intend to accomplish as leaders in our chosen areas of concentration. I would like to thank Mike Elmendorf, our President and CEO, for being that person... for making the best of each situation and for encouraging this organization to be stronger, more aware, and more active and effective in our mutual, ongoing mission of having New York continue to be the beacon of commerce, creativity, and community.  To Barry Fries, I’d like to acknowledge your contribution as our current Vice Chairman, and to congratulate you as you fulfill your next progression in the AGCNYS as our next Chairman.  For those of you that may not know, Barry is the President and CEO of B.R. Fries and Associates, LLC. He has demonstrated his great abilities within his own entity and throughout his time within this organization. As he goes forth, standing on the shoulders of those who preceded him, I speak for all of us when I say that I offer sincere congratulations and eagerly anticipate witnessing and participating in, the continued growth, outreach, and impact of this organization.  To the incomparable AGC staff I’d like to acknowledge all of you for being the **backbone** of the **backbone** (!) of this group. It is a pleasure and a privilege to have your support and thoroughness in the realization of our aggregate team goals. Thank you for all the work that you do for the members throughout the year. It makes a tremendous difference...

We represent and **literally** support the growth, safety, productivity, and security of a great state, one in constant motion. While the New York State Comptroller reported that New York’s Gross Domestic Product for 2017 was over 1.5 trillion dollars, it also claimed, according to one estimate, that by 2035, the GDP of New York City **ALONE** just might grow to **2.5 trillion dollars**... and while we all clearly know that geographically, New York City is just a tiny portion of our vast and varied state, we all go, and **GROW** together.

Every issue... every challenge... is a gift. They provide each one of us the reason to rise to the varied and complicated opportunities that, in turn, drive us to improve our own vision and effectiveness ... they encourage us to continually improve our responses and actions to see to it that all aspects of being a New Yorker... from the places within which we live, work, shop and function, to how we get there, be it through public transportation or the infinite and varied roads, streets, and highways, all **WORK**. Ultimately, we move, house, and protect New York... it’s incumbent on **US** to provide the most thorough, mindful, safe, and innovative environments for success and well being. AGCNYS is a vital and critical component in accomplishing what sometimes seems to be the impossible. Through the pathways and connections this organization provides, the opportunity to encourage mindful, innovative, communication exists, and while it’s great to bask in this stellar environment for the next few days, it’s incumbent on all of us, as we soak up this atmosphere, to remember the power of the bonds and networks we forge and continue to build on them.

Some wise person once said, “The opposite of networking is **NOT** working”... (**Wait for the laugh**)... Being here, we’re lucky to have the opportunity to do both.... and to discover it’s really **ALL** networking... I look forward to the next few days of sun, fun, and **LOTS** of insight and connection!! Thank you all!!