



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

George D. Maziarz

## Support growing for Wallenda walk over Niagara River Gorge

GEORGE D. MAZIARZ June 28, 2011

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The Mayor of Niagara Falls, Ontario, has endorsed the plan to invite Nik Wallenda to perform a high-wire walk across the Niagara River above Niagara Falls. Such a feat has not been accomplished legally in more than a century. In a letter he recently sent to State Senator George Maziarz, Mayor James Diodati acknowledged the great potential for the act to put Niagara Falls in the world's spotlight.

"Bringing an act of such exceptional quality and stellar reputation as the Wallenda's to Niagara Falls would be a great highlight for our city," wrote Mayor Diodati on June 20. "We already host many world famous attractions and we invite top quality entertainers to perform here. More than 12 million visitors travel here each year to partake in attractions, view the scenery and to be entertained with their families. Giving our visitors the opportunity to see the Wallenda's in high wire action would be outstanding." Senator George Maziarz, an advocate for the event on the American side, said, "More and more officials are coming to realize and appreciate the value of this exciting tourism opportunity. This is not a stunt. This will be a professional, world-class performance that everybody will be watching. We look forwarding to working with Mayor Diodati, and all our counterparts on both sides of the border, to make it happen."

Last week the New York State Legislature approved special legislation to allow Nik Wallenda, a member of the famous "Flying Wallendas," to traverse the Niagara River Gorge on a high wire within one year after Governor Andrew Cuomo signs the bill into law. The legislation further directs that the Wallendas will be completely responsible for financing the event, and that the Wallendas will fully indemnify the state against any liability claims.

Senator Mark Grisanti said, "I look forward to this event and it will be exciting for all residents and tourists who attend."

Assemblyman John Ceretto, a chief proponent of the bill in the Assembly, said, "I am pleased to have helped pass this important pro-tourism legislation. Nik Wallenda is an accomplished, world-class performer and this event will attract attention to 'our' Niagara Falls, bring in needed local revenue, and help to showcase our region as a top tourist destination. I urge Governor Cuomo to sign this legislation into law and I look forward to working with officials throughout the region to strengthen Western New York's tourism industry in order to make this inspiring event happen."

The Wallenda event was endorsed recently by Jerry Genova, Chairman of the Niagara Falls (USA) Tourism Advisory Board, who wrote in an op-ed piece for local newspapers that, "Such a performance would harken back to the highwire walking feats of Niagara's past while potentially expanding tourism business and exposure for Niagara Falls across the world.... There is simply no way that a Wallenda trip across our gorge would fail to enthrall the world with its daring."

The event has also been supported publicly by John Percy, President and Chief Executive Officer of the Niagara Tourism and Convention Corporation, and Ron Anderluh, Revitalization Coordinator for the Niagara Street Business Association.

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