



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

Ritchie, Griffo Forming International Border Caucus

PATTY RITCHIE October 5, 2011

| ISSUE: **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

Panel of Bi-National Lawmakers Will Explore Closer Ties, Job Growth and Cooperation

State Senator Patty Ritchie and Joseph Griffo are announcing the formation of a bipartisan, bi-nation, International Border Caucus that will bring together legislative representatives of New York's northern border with Canadian legislators from Quebec and Ontario to work together to solve problems, improve communications and help grow our economy.

The panel is being co-chaired by Senators Ritchie and Griffo, and Senator Robert Runciman, on the Canadian side of the border, and includes elected representatives from across the state's Northern border, which spans more than 450 miles, and is one of the most significant in terms of commerce, history and culture.

The international group will provide an opportunity for US and Canadian legislators to raise issues of shared concerns, improve communication and cooperation between state, national and provincial governments, and work together to explore opportunities to create new jobs.

New York now ranks third in US surface trade with Canada, after Michigan and Illinois, following a 12 percent increase since last year, according to the Bureau of Transportation Statistics, a federal agency. More than \$30 billion in goods—and more people than any other state—cross the New York-Canada border each year, figures that representatives on both sides would like to see grow.

“Over the past year we have seen an increase in problems along our shared border stemming from US efforts to ‘tax’ Canadian citizens, an American fisherman pulled over by Canadian authorities, and concerns that tightened security are frightening away people crossing the border to visit our two great nations,” Senator Ritchie said. “Senator Runciman and I have been working together to find joint solutions to these problems. This initiative will help open new lines of communication and create a chance to explore new opportunities that can benefit both New York and Canada.”

“The United States and Canada share one of the longest open borders in the world, including nearly 450 miles of water and land border between New York and the Provinces of Ontario and Quebec,” Senator Griffo said. “The residents on both sides of the border enjoy a unique bond based on a common history, a shared ancestry and friendships based on more than two centuries as trading partners. Our cooperative caucus will ensure that this mutual respect will help both sides of the St. Lawrence, when we address issues that affect us all.”

“Northern New York and Eastern Ontario share not just a common border, but face the same challenges and opportunities,” said Senator Runciman. “It makes economic sense to look for joint solutions. And the

people in border communities are not just neighbors, but we're good friends, too. I see this group as a way to reinforce that message.”

The bipartisan caucus includes all 11 New York State Senators representing the entire Northern border and five Canadian representatives. The membership is expected to grow.

The caucus includes: Co-Chairs Ritchie and Griffo, and New York State Sens James Alesi, Patrick M. Gallivan, Mark Grisanti, Timothy Kennedy, Betty O’C. Little, George D. Maziarz, Michael F. Nozzolio, David J. Valesky and Catharine M. Young.

Canadian members include: Canadian Co-Chair Bob Runciman and Canadian representatives Gord Brown, Steve Clark, Guy Lauzon, and Ted Hsu.

U.S. Co-Chairs Senators Ritchie and Griffo, and Canadian Co-Chair Senator Runciman and his staff will be meeting Friday, Oct. 7 at the Frederic Remington Museum in Ogdensburg to discuss their plans. A press availability will be held at 12:40 p.m. at the museum.