



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

## Ritchie Joins Forces With Canadian Lawmakers, Local Leaders to Show Support for Easing of Boating Laws

PATTY RITCHIE June 24, 2016



In an effort to boost tourism in communities along the St. Lawrence River, State Senator Patty Ritchie today joined with Canadian lawmakers, as well as other local leaders to call for an easing of stringent reporting requirements for boaters.

At a press conference held on the shores of the St. Lawrence River at the Dobisky Visitors' Center in Ogdensburg, Senator Ritchie voiced her support for legislation introduced by Senator Bob Runciman (Ontario – Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes) that would eliminate

the need for American boaters to report to Canadian customs when passing through Canadian waters, so long as they do not disembark, anchor, moor, make contact with another vessel or import goods.

The measure would also exempt Canadian boaters from reporting to Customs when they return from American to Canadian waters, as long as they meet these same conditions.

Recently, Member of Parliament Gord Brown (Leeds-Grenville – Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes), who also took part in the press conference, introduced similar legislation in the House of Commons.

“The United States and Canada are lucky enough to share the St. Lawrence River, which is not only one of the world’s most majestic natural resources, but also a major economic driver for both of our countries that attracts tourists to our local communities from across the globe,” said Senator Ritchie.

“This common sense legislation would eliminate confusion—especially for people new to the St. Lawrence River—improve relations between Canada and the United States, and make it easier for all people who are boating or fishing on the waterway.”

Senator Ritchie previously joined with Senator Runciman several years ago, asking Canadian officials to investigate the treatment of a U.S. fisherman who had his boat seized for straying into Canadian waters near Gananoque.

“It was Patty who contacted me five years ago when Canada Border Services Agency seized the boat of a New York fisherman who strayed a quarter mile into Canadian waters—she’s a great believer in cross-border cooperation, because she understands the nature of the local economy and the long-standing, close ties between the North Country and Eastern Ontario,” said Senator Runciman.

“Right now, the Customs Act says that if you enter Canadian waters, you have to report to customs, unless you are proceeding directly from one spot in the U.S. to another, using the most direct route. Considering the geography of this region, particularly west of here in the Thousand Islands, I don’t think that is a realistic requirement.”

Also joining Senator Ritchie, Senator Runciman and MP Gord Brown were City of Ogdensburg Mayor Wayne Ashley, Ogdensburg City Councilor Jennifer Stevenson and Gary DeYoung, 1000 Islands International Tourism Council Director.

Following their press conference, the group, along with members of Senator Ritchie’s “International Border Caucus,” met to discuss issues affecting both countries.

One topic of discussion included the possibility of SUNY Canton working with Canadian hospitals to provide nursing students with clinical placements. As Co-Chair of the Legislative Commission on Rural Resources, Senator Ritchie has been spearheading efforts to strengthen health care services throughout rural regions of New York State, and has been working with SUNY Canton President Svi Szafran to help address the issue of a lack of placements for local nursing students.

In addition, the group also discussed ways in which Canada and the United States can work together to strengthen each other’s respective dairy industries. During the meeting, attendees talked with Canadian lawmakers, including MP Gord Brown, who is one of the country’s leaders on dairy issues, about regulations affecting American export of products to Canada.

*(Attn. photo editors: Pictured from left to right in the above photo are Senator Runciman, Gary DeYoung, MP Gord Brown, Mayor Wayne Ashley, City Councilor Jennifer Stevenson and Senator Ritchie)*

