



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

## The Next Step Toward A Better Boating Season

PATTY RITCHIE April 21, 2017



I know firsthand that the relationship between New York State and our neighbors to the north is incredibly special. As the state senator who represents the longest stretch of our state's 450 mile shared Canadian border, I have been active cultivating stronger ties with the government and people of Canada.

Part of that effort has been working with my Canadian counterparts to advocate for legislation that would boost tourism in the Thousand Islands and Lake Ontario region by easing strict reporting requirements for boaters.

In February, I traveled to Canada's capital to testify before the Canadian Parliament's Standing Senate Committee on National Security and Defense in support of the measure, which would eliminate the need for American boaters to report to Canadian customs when passing through Canadian waters. In addition to easing reporting requirements for American boaters, the proposal would also exempt Canadian pleasure boaters from reporting to their own customs officials when they return to Canadian waters, as long as they met the same conditions while in U.S. waters. Earlier this month, the measure was approved by the Canadian Senate. It now heads to the House of Commons for consideration.

This measure stems from a 2011 incident where officers of the Canadian Border Services Agency stopped an American boater in the Gananoque Narrows. The boater was threatened with a \$25,000 fine, handcuffs and boat seizure. While the fine was reduced to \$1 after lawmakers became involved, as I told Canadian lawmakers while testifying, the incident has kept many American boaters from venturing into Canadian waters. Through the aforementioned measure—which I hope will receive final approval from Canadian government soon—we can help to ease the fears of boaters and create a better environment for enjoying our shared natural resources.

This issue is just one of the focuses of the International Border Caucus. This bipartisan, bi-nation group, which I serve as co-chair of, brings together legislative representatives of New York's northern border with Canadian officials to solve problems, improve communications and grow our economies. I look forward to continuing to build upon the work we've done so far through the International Border Caucus, which will help strengthen our region's economy, as well as our state's longstanding relationship with Canada.