



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

Senator Ritchie's Community Spotlight: The 80-Year-Old Thousand Islands Bridge

SENATOR PATTY RITCHIE August 24, 2018

| ISSUE: **HISTORIC PRESERVATION**



Senator Ritchie's Weekly Column

It has long been said that the key to success is relationships. Over the course of my time as a state Senator, I have seen how impactful the relationship is between our region and our Canadian friends to the north.

While I have worked hard to ensure this partnership is one that benefits both great nations, I am simply picking up where others left off.

There is no better example of how well connected we are to Canada, than the largest symbol of our welcome to one another, the Thousand Islands International Bridge.

On August 18, 1938, on Wellesley Island, a ceremony featuring then President Franklin Roosevelt and Canadian Prime Minister William Mackenzie and 25,000 Canadian and American citizens marked the official opening of this marvel, which as President Roosevelt said on that day, turned a boundary into a gateway, enhancing trade, tourism and relationships.

Eighty years later, this month, the community once again came together to celebrate this partnership, an anniversary event with a host of festivities for American and Canadian families—another symbol of our good will towards one another.

The Thousand Islands International Bridge is a system of five bridges, covering 8.5 miles as it crosses the St. Lawrence River from Northern New York and the beautiful Thousand Islands all the way to Ontario Canada. It immediately became a critical aspect of both American and Canadian economies with more than 150,000 vehicles crossing over each year. Today, that number is now two million vehicles.

I was able to bring some of my colleagues to see the bridge recently, and during our discussions with the system's management, the Thousand Islands Bridge Authority, I learned that the system needed to update its safety and security abilities for all motorists, including businesses, visiting or trading goods between our two nations.

From those discussions, I was able to secure \$100,000 in funding for a new fiber-optic cable link that stretches all the way across Wellesley Island to the border.

The new link will allow cameras to capture real-time information on all parts of the bridge and transmit the footage to security outposts, enhancing the Authority's ability to identify

safety and security issues.

The Development Authority of the North Country (DANC) has agreed to assist with the link's installation on the bridge, which is so important to the North Country's transportation infrastructure.

The installation is part of a \$400,000 project that will improve security, and aid in the monitoring of the bridge system, while also enhancing operational services for the new U.S. and Canada border facilities and providing travelers with the benefit of increased speed and reliability of E-ZPass at the bridges.

Making investments that protect and upgrade the infrastructure in our region allows trade between Canada and the U.S. to continue to grow and strengthen the economies between our two nations, and perhaps most importantly strengthen our relationship.

If you have never seen the bridge, or the Thousand Islands, I cannot recommend it enough. It is not only something you have to see, but also it is something you have to experience. For more information, go to <http://www.tibridge.com/wp>.