



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Robert G. Ortt

## Ortt, Morinello, and Norris Pass Bills to Fund Discover Niagara Shuttle

ROBERT G. ORTT June 19, 2019

| ISSUE: **TOURISM, NIAGARA COUNTY**

Today, Senator Rob Ortt (R,C,I,Ref-North Tonawanda) and Assemblymen Angelo J. Morinello (R,C,I,Ref-Niagara Falls) and Mike Norris (R,C,I,Ref-Lockport) passed bills that authorize Niagara County to collect hotel room taxes in order to generate revenue for the Discover Niagara Shuttle. Senate Bill 1765 – and its same-as legislation, A.2163 – have received broad support from Niagara County local government, local businesses, and the tourism industry. The creation and success of this attraction is the byproduct of all three members of the New York State Legislature, the Niagara County Legislature, and local tourism organizations.

Established in 2016, the Discover Niagara Shuttle provides free rides to tourists to 17 destinations in western Niagara County, including attractions in the City of Niagara Falls, Whirlpool State Park, Lewiston's Center Street, and Fort Niagara. The Shuttle is a stay-extender that enables Niagara Falls tourists to visit other popular attractions in the county and has provided over 63,000 no-cost rides.

Due to the Shuttle's resounding success, State Legislators, local leaders, and community advocates wish to see the Shuttle make more frequent trips and extend to Lockport, which would significantly increase the tourist traffic across Niagara County.

The tax is only imposed on hotel guests, so Niagara County residents will not face any additional taxes. By funding the Shuttle with hotel guest dollars and facilitating greater tourist spending at shops and restaurants, this bill benefits the Niagara County economy by capitalizing on the county's tourist allure, while redirecting funds into this sector.

**Senator Rob Ortt (R,C,I,Ref-North Tonawanda)** said, "Niagara Falls draws tourists from around the world, and the Discover Niagara Shuttle is an essential tool in making sure that those tourists are enjoying all that our beautiful county has to offer. By bringing Niagara Falls tourists to Fort Niagara, the shops in Lewiston, the gorge, and now, the Lockport Locks, this bill will infuse tourist dollars into businesses across the county and give tourists a complete Niagara County experience they'll be sure to tell their friends about."

**Assemblyman Angelo J. Morinello (R,C,I,Ref-Niagara Falls)** said, "Niagara Falls is an internationally recognized tourist attraction, however, there is so much more to our region. The Discover Niagara Shuttle expands the 'Tourist Experience' to Lewiston, Youngstown, Old Fort Niagara, and the Lockport Locks. 'Hop on, hop off' shuttles are an important amenity to a successful tourist area and our region will now have a dedicated source of revenue to continue to provide this service."

**Assemblyman Mike Norris (R,C,I,Ref-Lockport)** said, "The Discover Niagara Shuttle is a critical transportation service for tourists and visitors to take part in the beauty, tourism attractions, shops, and restaurants in Niagara County. I am proud to have worked with my colleagues, Senator Rob Ortt and Assemblyman Angelo J. Morinello, local elected officials and Director Sara Capen to ensure that the shuttle has a dedicated source of revenue needed to continue and expand across our county, which will bring additional tourism dollars and economic activity to our region. I look forward to the continued success of the Discover Niagara Shuttle and am particularly grateful that it is being expanded now to the Lockport Locks and Erie Canal tourism and business corridor."

**Becky Wydysz, Niagara County Legislator** said, “We here in Niagara County have a tremendous working relationship with our state representatives. On behalf of the legislature and the businesses in my community, we thank them for their tireless efforts to secure the Niagara Shuttle. This shuttle has become a vital link for tourists to move around Niagara County to see the tremendous attractions we have to offer.”

**Sara Capen, Executive Director, Niagara Falls National Heritage Area** said, "Since 2016, the Discover Niagara Shuttle has connected more than 100,000 visitors and residents to 17 destinations along the Niagara River corridor from the "Falls to the Fort". The Discover Niagara Shuttle is a critical tourism infrastructure project that contributes to a vital tourism economy in Niagara County by extending the stay for tourists and connecting residents to parks, attractions, services, and small businesses. With a dedicated source of funding generated from a 1 percent increase in the occupancy tax, the Discover Niagara Shuttle can continue operations for the remainder of the 2019 season and beyond. The Niagara Falls National Heritage Area is grateful for the tremendous community support of the Discover Niagara Shuttle and the leadership of our partners and elected officials in creating a funding solution for this important service."

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#### RELATED LEGISLATION

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### **2019-S1765**

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- Introduced

- ○ In Committee Assembly
  - In Committee Senate
  
- ○ On Floor Calendar Assembly
  - On Floor Calendar Senate
  
- ○ Passed Assembly
  - Passed Senate
  
- Delivered to Governor
  
- Signed By Governor
  
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Relates to imposing an additional one percent occupancy tax in the county of Niagara to benefit the Discover Niagara shuttle

January 16, 2019

Senate Floor Calendar

Sponsored by **Robert G. Ort**

Do you support this bill?