



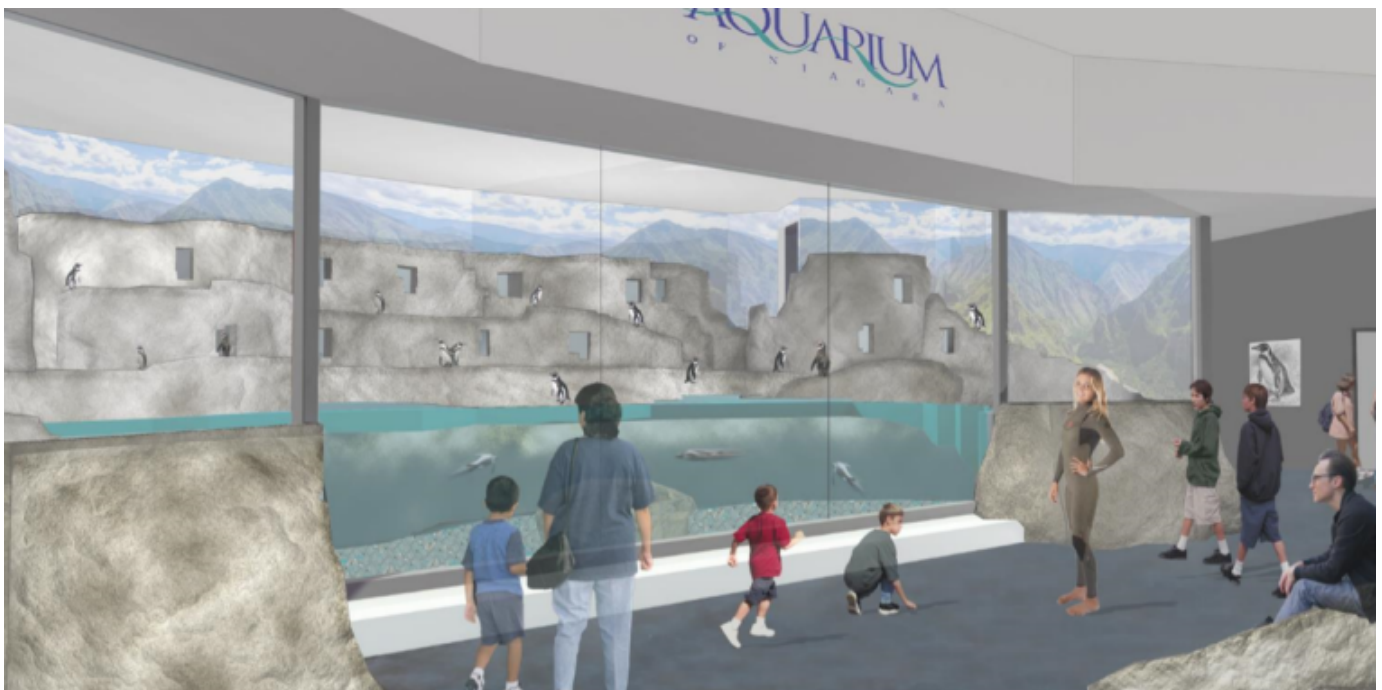
NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Robert G. Ortt

## Aquarium of Niagara Breaks Ground on New Penguin Exhibit

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The Aquarium of Niagara broke ground on a \$3.3 million project for a new penguin exhibit. This exhibit will allow the aquarium to add exciting new programming and interactive features to the already highly popular attraction while providing a state-of-the-art habitat for the colony of Humboldt penguins. The project will quadruple the size of the existing exhibit, allowing the aquarium to seek accreditation from the Association of Zoos and Aquariums.

"This new, state-of-the-art exhibit will be yet another reason to visit the new Niagara Falls, a

city that is truly on the move," **Governor Cuomo said.** "We are investing in Western New York like never before and projects like this are key to increasing tourism and spurring local economic activity. I encourage all New Yorkers and visitors alike to see for themselves what Niagara Falls has to offer."

Accreditation will allow the aquarium to expand the penguin colony through partnership with other AZA institutions and restart a breeding program for these threatened species. The aquarium currently attracts 270,000 visitors annually and the new interactive exhibit is projected to attract an additional 30,000 visitors to the Niagara Falls aquarium each year.

"The new Humboldt Penguin Exhibit is an exciting addition to an already premier tourist destination, which will attract even more families that come to enjoy the beauty of Niagara Falls and this region," **said Lieutenant Governor Kathy Hochul during the groundbreaking ceremony.** "Over the years, I often brought my own children to enjoy this unique asset."

The 3,500-square-foot exhibit and gallery will include 1,600-square-feet of living space featuring a rock beach modeled after the Peruvian coast. Prominent features include nesting areas for the birds and a spectacular viewing area for visitors to enjoy above and below water viewing of the penguins in their new 15,000-gallon pool. Adjacent to the exhibit will be a new interactive classroom, bringing educational marine programs to the region and beyond. The project also includes space for one-on-one penguin encounter experiences as well as treatment areas for use by Aquarium veterinarians.

"We are embracing the future, and are determined to provide a modern and inspiring experience," **said Gary Siddall, Executive Director.** "The community has shown unwavering support, and we are thrilled to enhance visitor engagement by bringing this dynamic exhibit to life."

The Aquarium of Niagara is one of only 20 facilities in the United States and Canada to house the threatened Humboldt penguin species. The current exhibit houses seven Humboldt penguins, half of which are geriatric. When completed the new exhibit it is expected to be home to more than 20 of these flightless seabirds.

"The Humboldt Penguin exhibit is sure to be a hit with families looking for an activity that is both entertaining and educational," **said Empire State Development President, CEO & Commissioner Howard Zemsky.** "The penguin habitat will attract more visitors and entice them to extend their stay in Western New York, adding even more to the tourism industry's significant impact on the regional economy."

The New York Power Authority has provided \$1.75 million to support this penguin project through its Western New York Power Proceeds Allocation Board, which uses earnings from the sale of unused hydropower from the Niagara Power Project to fund economic development projects in the region. Other funding includes \$300,000 from the WNY Regional Economic Development Council and \$100,000 from Market New York.

"This state-of-the-art renovation at the Aquarium of Niagara is another significant step toward enhancing tourism in Western New York," **said Gil C. Quiniones, NYPA president and CEO.** "The Western New York Power Proceeds program has proven to be a highly impactful economic development initiative for the region. This expansion project at the aquarium is a wonderful example of its effectiveness at work. NYPA is delighted to be part of this project that will give Western New Yorkers and visitors the opportunity to enjoy our penguin residents for years to come."

**Mayor Paul Dyster Quote said,** "As Mayor of the City of Niagara Falls, it is important that visitors to our city are not only educated, but entertained. This state-of-the-art exhibit not

only adds to the already popular programming offered by the Aquarium of Niagara, but builds upon the exciting momentum created by Governor Cuomo and our partners in state government to leverage the city's potential as a world-class tourist destination. I am confident that this exhibit will provide yet another exciting experience for visitors to the Aquarium of Niagara and look forward to welcoming our newest colony of Humboldt penguins to their future home."

**State Senator Rob Ortt said,** "The new, modern and bigger exhibit will better reflect the natural habitat of the unique Humboldt penguins, and allow the aquarium to welcome a new colony that will help to bolster the declining population of the species. Once completed, the exhibit will enhance the visitor experience, draw more tourists to the area, and have a positive impact on the city's burgeoning economy."

For more information about the Aquarium of Niagara, visit this link:

<http://www.aquariumofniagara.org>.