



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

Sen. Ritchie Joins Canadian Senator Opposing New Us Tax on Tourists

PATTY RITCHIE March 22, 2011

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Sen. Runciman: Inspection Tax Could Hurt Tourism, Border Communities

State Senator Patty Ritchie and Canadian Senator Bob Runciman are urging their legislative colleagues to join them in condemning a U.S. proposal that could cripple tourism in border communities like Cape Vincent and Alexandria Bay, damage U.S. – Canadian relations and hurt the economies of communities across Northern and Central New York.

"The federal government's scheme to impose a \$5.50 'inspection tax' on Canadians who visit the U.S. by sea or air is an insult to America's largest trading partner and one of our closest allies," Senator Ritchie said. "Thousands of Canadians travel to our shores each year on the picturesque Wolfe Island Ferry and others visit Alexandria Bay's Boldt Castle by taking the Canadian tour boats."

"I am very concerned that just as we are beginning to attract Canadian cruise ships to communities like Ogdensburg, these kind of fees will end these new tourism ventures in Northern New York," Senator Ritchie said.

Senator Runciman, who represents the Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, said that Canadians will avoid the tax by passing up visits to U.S. border communities.

“President Obama’s proposal to help balance his budget on the backs of Canadians will have dire consequences for cross border tourism,” he warned. “In my area, Canadian tour boat operators are unlikely to even stop in the U.S. if the \$5.50 passenger inspection fee is levied. This deals a significant economic blow to northern New York.”

Senator Ritchie said that she had been contacted by constituents and community leaders along the border who asked her to help educate her colleagues in the state legislature about how the measure will reduce the number of tourists visiting New York State.

“At a time when our border communities are already reeling from the effects of the tightened security measures that are scaring off our Canadian friends, we do not need to start taxing them if they do try to come to visit,” Senator Ritchie said. “The economies of our two great nations are very closely intertwined because of our shared border, our common culture and our close family ties.”

“It is imperative that all of us who count ourselves as friends of our ‘Northern Neighbor’ stand together and make certain that the federal government does not discourage any more visitors from shopping at our stores or dining at our restaurants,” she said. “We need to be looking at ways to increase the number of Canadians visiting our shores instead of creating new schemes to treat them like cash cows.”

“I have written a letter to the Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano to make her aware of how disastrous this fee would be for communities along the St. Lawrence River and Great Lakes,” Senator Ritchie said. “And I will be working with my colleagues in the state

legislature to rally opposition against this new tax on our Canadian visitors.”