



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

Ritchie, Runciman Ask for Explanation on Border Incident

PATTY RITCHIE June 17, 2011

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Canadian Senator Says Treatment Of U.S. Fisherman 'Outrageous'

State Senator Patty Ritchie and Ontario Senator Robert Runciman are asking Canadian officials to investigate the treatment of a U.S. fisherman who had his boat seized for straying into Canadian waters near Gananoque.

"When I heard about this incident, I immediately contacted Senator Runciman, who has been working with me on border issues. I knew he would work with me to make sure Canada's top officials were aware and took appropriate action," Senator Ritchie said. "We need to continue to work together to encourage residents on both sides of the border to enjoy what both of our nations have to offer."

"A lot of people who live or fish on the St. Lawrence and Lake Ontario have called me here in Albany and asked me for my help," Senator Ritchie said. "While I have been busy with the closing days of the legislative session, I also understand that for our border communities, our summer tourism season is so short it's critical we take action to prevent this problem from escalating."

Senator Runciman has asked the Canada Border Services Agency to clarify the agency's policy, calling the incident "outrageous" and the wrong message to be sending to Americans

as the summer tourist season opens.

Roy M. Anderson, a seasonal resident of Thousand Island Park, who had to pay \$1,000 to get his boat back after it was seized by Canada Border Services Agency officers on May 30.

Anderson, who has a license allowing him to fish in Canadian waters, was fishing a favorite spot in the Gananoque Narrows, less than a quarter mile in Canadian waters when his boat was boarded by officers. The boat was seized and he had to pay \$1,000 on the spot, using his credit card, to regain possession.

He said he was told that any American boat in Canadian waters must be heading toward a port of entry to check in with CBSA, or it will be considered in violation of the law. In the past, American fishermen needed a Canadian fishing licence, but weren't bothered as long as they were not anchored or on shore.

"This sends a message to Americans that we don't want them over here, that they're not welcome," Senator Runciman said. "I'm all for protecting the border against terrorism and smuggling, but this kind of over-zealousness does nothing to make Canada safer, while treating law-abiding visitors as if they're criminals."

"I'll be asking the Canada Border Services Agency to clarify their policy and I'll take it all the way to the Public Safety Minister if I have to," Senator Runciman said. "Requiring fishermen to check into customs every time they stray across the border simply means they'll stay as far away from Canada as they can. It serves no one's interests."

Senator Runciman said he plans to work with Ritchie on issues of cross-border concern.

"Northern New York and Eastern Ontario have a lot in common and I'm very encouraged by Senator Ritchie's desire to work co-operatively to strengthen the region," Senator Runciman said.