



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

Border Caucus Identifies Issues

PATTY RITCHIE October 7, 2011

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The newly formed “International Border Caucus,” co-chaired by State Senators Patty Ritchie and Joseph Griffo and Ontario Senator Robert Runciman, discussed problems posed by delays at Northern New York’s border crossings for both Americans and Canadians.

“I am very pleased that our first organizational meeting of this international legislative group identified the problems everyday citizens and business people from both sides of the border are having when they visit each other’s countries,” Senator Ritchie said. “That’s the

number one complaint I hear from the people I represent.”

“Senator Runciman spent 45 minutes waiting in line at 10:30 a.m. at the Ogdensburg bridge today,” Senator Griffo said. “Long lines and lengthy waits are discouraging people from crossing the border. Agencies need to step up their efforts to determine how many staff are needed at various times of the day to insure that citizens of both nations are not forced to wait in long lines to go on vacation or to get to work.”

Other topics discussed include:

- The 100 percent tariff on Northern New York produced wines that Canadians must pay to bring them home to Canada.
- Discussed water levels on the St. Lawrence River.
- Singer Castle’s need for a U.S. Inspection station to allow Canadian tour boats to visit the Hammond tourist attraction.
- Concerns that the Obama administration’s “Jobs” bill includes provisions that could hurt Canadian businesses.
- Canadian concerns that the U.S. may someday install a border fence along parts of the Northern border.
- Plans to develop a public forum to educate U.S. anglers who have Canadian fishing licenses on when they need to call Canadian border officials.

The organizational meeting was held at the Frederic Remington Art Museum in Ogdensburg. The group intends to hold periodic meetings at locations in the U.S. and Canada to familiarize legislative leaders with the issues facing communities along the border between

New York State and the provinces of Ontario and Quebec.

The meeting included a presentation on Sen. Ritchie and Griffo's bill to expand Ogdensburg's Foreign Trade Zone to include all of St. Lawrence County which passed the legislature earlier this year and was signed into law by the governor.

Senator Ritchie presented bottles of award-winning Coyote Moon wine to Senator Runciman who promised to bring the issue of tariffs on U.S. produced wine to Canadian panel looking at federal tariffs.

The caucus includes 11 New York State Senators and five Canadian representatives and organizers predict it will expand its membership.