



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

Ritchie Crosses the Border to Find Ways to Strengthen Ties and Grow North Country Economy

Patty Ritchie

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Building Ties with our Neighbor as a Way to Create Jobs Back Home

State Senator Patty Ritchie took her International Border Legislative Caucus initiative on the road Friday, and travelled to Brockville, Ontario, to discuss tourism, economic development and cultural opportunities with Canada's leaders.

Senator Ritchie met with Canadian federal and provincial representatives who are members of the Caucus she co-founded in 2011 with Senator Joe Griffo, at the shorefront Bud's on the Bay restaurant in downtown Brockville, for a far-ranging discussion that included topics like promoting locally produced wines and agricultural products, fishing and outdoor opportunities, and finding solutions to extended wait times at border check points.

In addition to Senator Ritchie, participants at the meeting included Canadian Senator Robert Runciman, who is the Canadian co-chair of the Caucus; Gordon Brown, a member of Canada's Parliament, from Brockville, Steve Clark, a member of Ontario's Provincial Parliament, representing Leeds-Grenville, Clayton Supervisor Justin Taylor, Ogdensburg City Manager John Pinkerton and St. Lawrence County Legislator Joseph Lightfoot.

"New York State shares one of the longest international borders of any state with Canada, and I helped form the Legislative Border Caucus to encourage open dialogue with our Northern neighbors aimed at boosting our local economy and creating jobs in the North Country," Senator Ritchie said.

"This meeting provided some fresh ideas that I will be exploring with my colleagues in New York State government to help strengthen our ties with a leading trade partner, and find new ways to collaborate to grow our economies."

At the meeting, Canadian officials agreed to join Senator Ritchie in calling for the Ministry of Resources to work together with New York State to address the cormorant problem that is damaging the sport fishing industry on the St. Lawrence River and Lake Ontario.

Those in attendance also discussed the need to address problems at border crossings—including those at Alex Bay, Ogdensburg and Massena—in terms of ease and reduction of delays.

A large part of the lawmakers' discussions also revolved around ways to increase cross-border tourism, including promotion of North Country wineries, craft brewers and distillers, and an idea for creation of an "international wine trail."

They discussed the need for improved signage on both sides of the boundary to promote individual communities and tourist destinations, an idea that Senator Ritchie had earlier raised as a participant in Governor Cuomo's recent New York State Tourism Summit. As a result, the Governor directed state officials to install improved signs on the New York side of the boundary.

Senator Ritchie highlighted the success of the recent international fishing tournament hosted by the Village of Waddington and the lawmakers agreed to search for similar events to promote the world-class fishing opportunities in the St. Lawrence River and Lake Ontario.

"These sessions have proven very productive in helping to grow our friendship, and it is my hope that, working together, we can continue to identify new opportunities for cooperation that benefits our communities and both of our nations," Senator Ritchie said.

The International Border Legislative Caucus includes 10 members of the New York State Senate, and five Canadian representatives.

Senator Ritchie said she would seek to organize another session of the caucus at the State Capitol in Albany next Spring.

(State Senator Patty Ritchie is pictured in the above photo with Member of Parliament Gord Brown and Senator Runciman)