



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

Ritchie: New Canadian Law Lifts Cloud Over U.S. Boaters

PATTY RITCHIE June 14, 2017



State Senator Patty Ritchie has announced the passage of a new Canadian law that lifts a cloud of uncertainty over boaters rights on the St. Lawrence River that was hurting 1000 Islands tourism and threatening to sour longstanding bonds of friendship between two of the world's greatest nations.

Under this new law, American boaters who do not anchor their boat or step foot on Canadian soil do not have to report to Canadian Customs. In addition, the measure will also exempt Canadian boaters from being required to report to their customs officials when they

return to Canadian waters, as long as they met the same requirements while they traveled in U.S. waters.

Earlier this year, Senator Ritchie made a trip to Ottawa and delivered historic testimony in support of this bill.

“The waterways our nation shares with Canada are scenic gems that not only provide endless opportunities for recreation, but also help to drive economies on both sides of the border,” said Senator Ritchie. “I cannot thank Senator Runciman and Member of Parliament Brown enough for working with me to ensure boaters can enjoy our shared waterway without headaches, which in turn will strengthen the local tourism industries for our nations.”

“I made a promise that I would make the passage of this measure a priority and I’m thrilled the House of Commons has approved this legislation,” said Member of Parliament Brown, who represents Leeds-Grenville–Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes. “By easing these burdensome boating requirements, the relationship between our two nations will continue to grow for years to come. Many thanks to Senator Ritchie for tirelessly advocating on behalf of this issue.”

“Tourism in the Thousand Islands region is so important to the economies of Canada and the United States and I am pleased to see this legislation finally pass and become law,” said Senator Runciman, who represents Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes. “I would like to thank Senator Ritchie for her continued support on this issue and other issues that affect our shared waterways. I stand by what I said on the floor of the Senate, ‘Canada has no better friend in the United States than New York State Senator Patty Ritchie.’”

This measure is a result of an incident, which occurred six years ago, when a U.S. boater was stopped by Canadian Border Service Agency officials. The boater was told by Canadian officials that if he didn't pay a \$1,000 fine on the spot, he would be handcuffed and could face thousands of dollars in penalties.

Once Senator Ritchie became involved with this issue, she worked closely with Senator Bob Runciman and Member of Parliament Gordon Brown to get the fine reduced, which also led to the formation of the binational "Legislative Border Caucus." This caucus works jointly on issues involving the border and looks for new opportunities to bolster the bonds between the two countries.

The bill will become law after it receives what's known as "Royal Assent," which could come as early as next week.