

Dear Assemblyman Ceretto:

Although you have been an opponent of total gorge parkway removal in the past, and a former OPRHP employee, the NHP believes it's now time for you to step forward as a strong advocate of total Niagara gorge parkway removal. Evidence provided by the EDR study and reason demonstrates total removal to be the lone rational choice. This, as you know, Assemblyman, would be at least from downtown Niagara Falls north to the City Line at Devil's Hole State Park--and then a few thousand feet more to include the lanes over the Power Plant itself, so that a greenhouse in that location might be considered. (The actual concrete of the Power Plant parkway lanes would be left intact, not removed, in any case.)

An out-of-date MOU agreement currently sees removal stopping at Findlay Drive, a decision that cannot be justified in terms of municipal boundaries, environmental values--or the unsupported claims that this commuter route is crucial to the economic health of the north towns.

Any "plan," or reconfiguration of the gorge parkway that keeps lanes of a road north beyond Findlay maintains the detour around the business districts of Niagara Falls, especially Main Street, and does so at the expense of regional economic growth via ecotourism.

Retaining parkway lanes from Findlay north would be a continual reminder of the insult Robert Moses gave to us--(and which Congressman Higgins recently did such a magnificent job of documenting).

Now, because you are a ranking Republican on the Assembly Tourism Committee, we await your recognition of the significant role ecotourism could play at Niagara as it relates to total gorge parkway removal. If you genuinely intend, as you say you do, "to help promote, enhance and expand our region's tourism industry," then it seems absolutely necessary that you re-examine this issue and strongly endorse total removal. This has been a major feature of the removal advocacy from the beginning.

You further say you're interested in preserving the area's "environmental stability." It seems to us that the first step you need to take is admitting the area has no "environmental stability," to speak of. If you think it does, we ask you to define what you mean by that.

The time for "hosting events" as it pertains to the fate of the gorge parkway is long gone.

State Parks seems to be in the process of ignoring such "events." OPRHP failed to send a representative to the public unveiling of the EDR study results, which concluded the gorge parkway should be totally removed; OPRHP has failed to deliver, after a year and a half, the selection of gorge rim options worthy of further study. Let's stop pretending State Parks would participate in any meaningful discussion--when what they intend to do is make the final decision about the gorge parkway regardless of contrary evidence.

The OPRHP behavior and role in decision-making here should be scrutinized at the highest levels of government.

It's now time for you, as a leader, to endorse total removal of the gorge parkway and the restoration of natural landscapes, as proposed.

Further details and rationale for the Niagara Heritage Partnership advocacy are provided at www.niagaraheritage.org ...especially in the following, under Recent Postings:

Parkway Saga: Reason vs Fear and Ignorance
Total Gorge Parkway Removal: The Reasonable Choice
Ecotourism Best Way to Extend Tourism Season at Niagara

Benefits of total removal:

- 1) Only total removal saves millions in reconstruction costs and pays for its removal over a short span of years by essentially eliminating maintenance expenses;
- 2) Only total removal sees the gorge rim restored into a wonderful natural park for residents and visitors;
- 3) Only total removal permits the Olmsted vision to be realized and preserved along the gorge, using authentic native plants.
- 4) Only total removal embodies the potential for a new population of visitors to be invited to our region by direct marketing;
- 5) Only total removal creates the potential for regional economic growth via ecotourism for generations yet to come.
- 6) Only total removal eliminates the detour around the business districts of Niagara Falls.

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Further, the potential of the greenhouse should be intriguing to you.

Greenhouse over power plant parkway lanes, potentials private and public:

(There's over a mile of potential greenhouse possible...it need not all be utilized, or be constructed at once....)

- 1) space for a State Botanical (or DEC, etc) facility and the germination of genetic-authentic botanicals (as discussed by botanist Patricia M. Eckel) needed for genuine gorge rim restoration, and threatened species for elsewhere in the state--as well as functioning as a research facility.
- 2) space for schools and colleges with environmental and/or horticultural programs.
- 3) public/private potential for regional nurseries and landscaping firms.
- 4) rental space for special events--garden clubs, etc.
- 5) a roofed space for a trail-user restaurant.
- 6) potential for educational tours for elementary grades and beyond, etc.
- 7) ongoing potential for media coverage that would be ongoing.
- 8) a tourist attraction!

This location is imperative for this--this would be a world famous retro-adaptation, a multi-use facility, and a further contribution of NYPA toward a green tomorrow. There's a potential for heat generated by the turbines to be used, though the success of the project doesn't depend on it. (the massive concrete of the structure would be a positive for heat retention.)

(Some believe, NHP among them, that the elimination of unrestricted vehicular traffic from crossing over the face of the power plant would also reduce forever a clear threat to homeland security.)

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{The idea of a "standard" greenhouse at DeVeaux State Park as suggested by some--with off-season heat (other than the sun) totally supplied by oil, gas--fossil fuels--would be an unimaginative and unacceptable substitute.}

Further information that may be of interest available at www.niagaraheritage.org in:

Bob Baxter's Niagara Greenhouse, by P.M. Eckel(in Document Archives)

Response to Greenhouse Critics.....(in Document Archives)

Homeland Security at the NYPA Facility (Recent Postings)

Niagara County's Homeland Security Concerns(Recent Postings)

We look forward to hearing from you about these issues.

Sincerely,
Bob Baxter
Conservation Chair
Niagara Heritage Partnership
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ps: btw, when Robert F. Kennedy Jr. spoke at NCCC, we explained our advocacy to him--after a few questions and a quick assessment, he pinned a "Total Removal" button onto his lapel, signed our petition, stepped onto the stage, spoke eloquently for close to an hour, and left.

Now Ed Begley, Jr., Ralph Nader, David Suzuki, and Robert F. Kennedy, Jr., are together in supporting total Niagara gorge parkway removal--and we are waiting for you to join them in reclaiming our natural gorge rim legacy.

If you do so, your name will be forever linked with that of Olmsted and his vision and philosophy being reclaimed here on the Niagara Frontier.

+++ NOTE: letter sent Feb. 2013. There was no reply. In the Niagara Gazette (25 March 2013) a front page article announced Ceretto's endorsement of a plan that essentially keeps the parkway in place.