

THE ASSEMBLY  
STATE OF NEW YORK  
ALBANY

**John Ceretto**  
Assemblyman 138th District



RANKING MINORITY MEMBER  
Cities

COMMITTEES  
Election Law  
Environmental Conservation  
Housing  
Tourism, Parks Arts and Sports Development

Ms. Rose Harvey  
Commissioner  
New York State Office of Parks,  
Recreation and Historic Preservation  
Empire State Plaza  
Agency Building 1  
Albany, NY 12238

October 19, 2011

Dear Commissioner Harvey,

In late June, as the 2011 session was wrapping up, you met with us and Lewiston Town Supervisor Steve Reiter, to discuss the shabbiness of Niagara Falls State Park, the proposed transfer of Joseph Davis, and several proposals to allow Niagara Falls State Park to retain more of its own revenue.

In that meeting you committed to an immediate infusion of \$3 million into Niagara Falls State Park in order to begin park improvements. We would like to know specifically how that money has been spent. In addition, you committed your department to finding a long-term funding solution. After four months, we would be interested in hearing it and working with you and your department to put that plan into action.

Here in Niagara County we can boast of some of the most remarkable parks in the country, parks that bring millions of people to New York State and Western New York each year. Yet, we see parks just across the river in Canada thrive while ours fall into disrepair. We see only one solution to this problem: to alter the funding structure of Niagara Falls State Park.

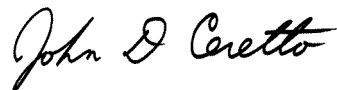
We have proposed legislation in the Assembly and Senate which would compel New York State to pay property taxes on the parkland. This is already done in 13 other park sites across the Empire State. This additional revenue would allow the City of Niagara Falls and Niagara County the resources to develop along the park grounds. We have also proposed the Niagara Parks Reinvestment Act, to allow Niagara Falls State Park to keep a portion of its parking revenue, revenue that is inherently unique to that park, in order to undertake park improvements. These measures would allow Niagara Falls State Park, our nation's oldest state park, to flourish like its counterparts in Canada.

Finally, it is our understanding that New York State parks receive \$3 million each year from the Niagara River Greenway Commission. This money, as we understand it, goes into the state parks general fund. We would like a detailed itemization of how that \$3 million has been spent each of the past 10 years. This is money that is specifically meant for Niagara County and we would like to ensure it is being well spent.

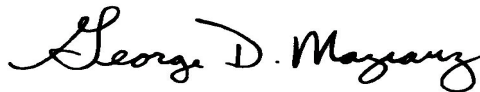
Commissioner, it is very troubling to us to see the shape the parks in Niagara County are in. Trails are not being maintained, buildings are being abandoned and no one can seem to figure out who is responsible for cutting the grass. Our parks are a great resource for my constituents and many tourists from across the world. They serve as a destination for tourists, a recreation center for our residents and an economic engine for the region.

We look forward to receiving your correspondence detailing how the Niagara River Greenway Commission dollars are spent and how your plan for greater investment in Niagara Falls State Park is developing.

Sincerely,



John D. Ceretto  
NYS Assembly  
138<sup>th</sup> District



George D. Maziarz  
NYS Senate  
62<sup>nd</sup> District