

Good Afternoon,

My name is Lisa Vitello I am here today on behalf of the Niagara Falls Tourism Advisory Board.

The Niagara Falls Tourism Advisory Board is responsible for helping to provide tourists with a rewarding experience when they visit our city. We search for new ways to increase the tourism industry in Niagara Falls. We study new trends in tourism. We endorse ideas for new projects and activities and help implement those plans. The board also studies ways to market our area and increase the stay of our visitors.

The Tourism Advisory board supports removal of the Robert Moses Parkway.

The board contends that in order to develop concepts such as eco-tourism, cultural tourism, heritage, and ancestral tourism we must create access to our most valuable land. At this time the board feels that we are not putting our best foot forward in the development of new trends in tourism. We feel that part of the problem is that our city is completely cut off from its waterfront. This stands in the way of our ability to fully develop such trends as eco or historical tourism.

For example The Travel Industry Association of America, The Office of Travel & Tourism and LOHAS estimates that eco-tourism is a \$77 billion dollar industry. Theses tourists are interested in historic sites, recreational areas, protected areas, wildlife refuges, reserves and management areas, hiking trails, wildlife observation areas, swimming, snorkeling, bird watching, cross-country skiing, canoeing, kayaking, and biking.

The Tourism Advisory Board feels that removal of the Robert Moses Parkway and returning that area to parkland could greatly increase our ability to market our area to this type of tourist and thereby bring millions of dollars into our city and the surrounding areas.

Imagine if that road were removed and our city was reconnected to our beautiful gorge. We could then provide tourists with many of the things they are seeking in today's tourism market. This type of tourist would spend additional time in our area increasing tourism dollars across the board.

Niagara Falls is on the brink of many new and exciting projects. The train station and Underground Railroad exhibit. The restoration of Old Falls Street, the possibility of the Culinary Arts Institute are just some of the new undertakings unfolding in our city. The tourism advisory board feels that freeing our waterfront from the chokehold of the Robert Moses Parkway is simply the next natural step in the process of working to extend the stay of our visitors.

Cities all around the globe have already finished or are in the process of removing roads that create barriers to increasing tourism. Milwaukee, Toronto, Vancouver, Trenton, Chattanooga, Seoul, Boston, San Francisco and Portland are just a few. These cities have realized that transportation decisions made decades ago have devastated what were once vibrant and economically healthy communities.

Locally every city and town around us make the most of their waterfront. Lewiston, Youngstown, Lockport, Wilson and Olcott all realize that waterfront areas must be utilized to the fullest degree. They realize that reconnecting their cities and towns to their waterfronts translates into big revenues. Many of our tourists are puzzled by the existence of the Robert Moses Parkway.

I think everyone can agree that if we could turn back the clock, knowing what we know today about tourism we would never have chosen to put that road along one of our most important natural resources. But that doesn't mean we have to leave it there.

Many people will say that a project of this nature is too overwhelming and expensive for our government to handle. Not true. We contend that that is the role of government. To fund projects that will not only benefit the residents of this state but the millions who come here each year. The role of government is to protect the land, and create quality of life for it's citizens.

Lisa Vitello
Niagara Falls Tourism Advisory Board