DutyFree
& Travel Retailing Magazine

2013 FDFA convention kicks off in Niagara Falls, Canada

By **Ryan White** on November, 19 2013 | Associations

The 2013 Frontier Duty Free Association (FDFA) convention and tradeshow kicked off on Sunday, November 17 at the Hilton Fallsview Hotel in Niagara Falls, Canada with an all-day operators meeting where a range of issues were discussed, including liquor and tobacco allowances; credit card transaction fees; continuing to educate the public on duty free's unique offers; and the sharing of information between TFWA and FDFA for the benefit of the industry as a whole.

Rob Rathke, Senior Director of MatchWeld, and Karen Badtke, Group Account Director of MatchDrive, were present at the operators meeting to discuss Match's work on the FDFA's national marketing campaign. Rathke noted that in the months to come, Match will be exploring opportunities for partnerships with a variety of companies, including tour operators, car rental agencies, gas stations, border towns, tourist attractions and more.

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A total of CAD$100,000 has been allocated for the next phase of the campaign, and the funds will be divided up among display ads; partnerships; Facebook ads; Google AdWords; community management activities; changes to the www.dutyfreecanada.com website; and agency execution.

Rathke gave those in attendance a preview of promotional elements for Black Friday and also presented a mock-up of the new-look www.dutyfreecanada.com website. In the future the site's home page may feature region-specific artwork/information, and in the coming months both the site content

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and other marketing initiatives will be geared toward women given that they are often the planners and decision-makers in households.

“In 2012, online travel e-commerce broke US$100 billion,” Rathke noted during the meeting, clearly excited for the potential that the next phase of the marketing campaign holds for the industry.

Laurie Karson, Executive Director of the FDFA, announced that near the end of January 2014 the members of the FDFA board will be meeting to work on creating a number of small committees, each with a specific remit, to better serve the industry. Karson also reminded those in attendance that the deadline for this year’s Doug Waldie Continuing Education Bursary (worth CAD$2,000) is December 16. The bursary was originally conceived to provide operators with funds to foster continuing education among employees.

Karson took time to announce that the 2014 Business Development Summit and Golf Tournament will take place from May 6 to 8 in Kelowna, BC at the Delta Grand Okanagan. “This year’s Business Development Summit and Golf Tournament was a big success and we’re looking forward to another great event in 2014,” she said.

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After a Diageo-sponsored lunch and some housekeeping notes back in the meeting room, the Welcome Reception took place at the Watermark Restaurant overlooking Niagara Falls. Delegates were treated to a tarot card reader, regional cuisine from various Canadian provinces and drinks sponsored by a number of spirits suppliers.

After the Welcome Reception Haleybrooke International invited media and special guests to an appreciation dinner at Brasa Brazilian Steakhouse. Following a delicious meal the networking opportunities continued at the lobby bar, where many from the industry converged to catch up over a drink.

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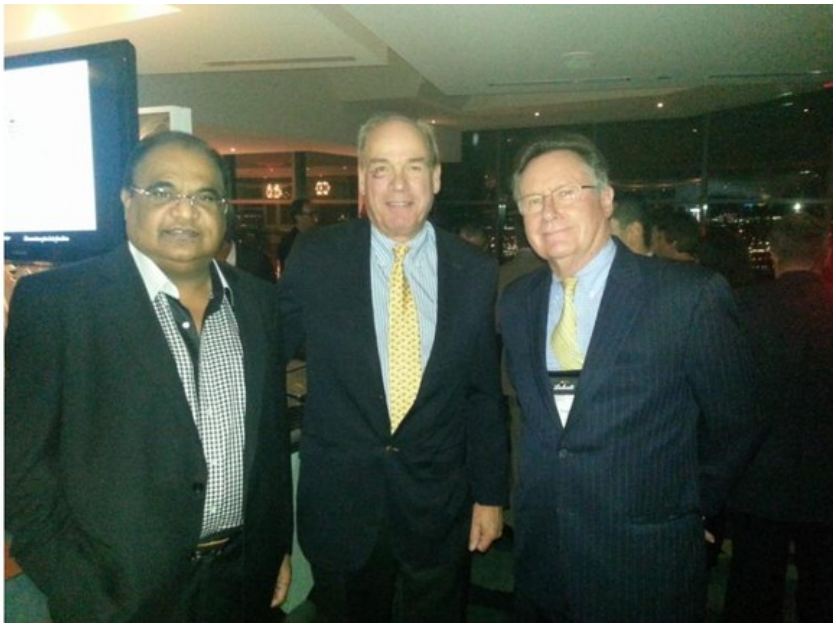

Delegates with energy to spare met in the Hilton’s lobby at 6:30 am on Monday morning for a fun

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run/walk to benefit Child Find Canada before a full day on the tradeshow floor. Rob Rathke again spoke about the FDFA's national marketing campaign at the TFWA-sponsored lunch. The evening saw an FDFA-organized media appreciation cocktail and a Moët event sponsored by Distribution Fontaine.

The tradeshow floor is again open today and there is still much more business to be done before the event closes down at 3:00 pm on Wednesday ahead of the highly anticipated Gala Dinner and Gold Standards Awards Presentation.

Americas Duty Free spoke with Laurie Karson on Tuesday about initial registration numbers and her thoughts on the event to this point: "We've welcomed a total of 223 delegates this year," she explained. "So far it's been another fantastic convention. It's a little bitter sweet because this is our last year in Niagara Falls, but we're very much looking forward to welcoming the industry to Toronto from November 16 to 19, 2014.

"We're up slightly from last year in terms of total registrants, and the number of suites booked by suppliers has also increased," she continued. "Of course, there's still plenty to see and do today and tomorrow. We're excited for our Fun Night at Boston Pizza and we've got a very special Gala Dinner and Gold Standards Awards Presentation planned for tomorrow evening.

"I'd like to thank everyone participating in this year's event—the sponsors, the operators, the suppliers and the media," Karson concluded. "Everybody here is an integral piece of the puzzle. Collectively we form a large industry that spans a very big country, but the show always has a very family-oriented feel and we're very proud of this."

Be sure to stay up to date with all of the breaking news from Niagara Falls as it happens by following *Americas Duty Free* on Twitter. Below are more pictures from the well-attended Welcome Reception.

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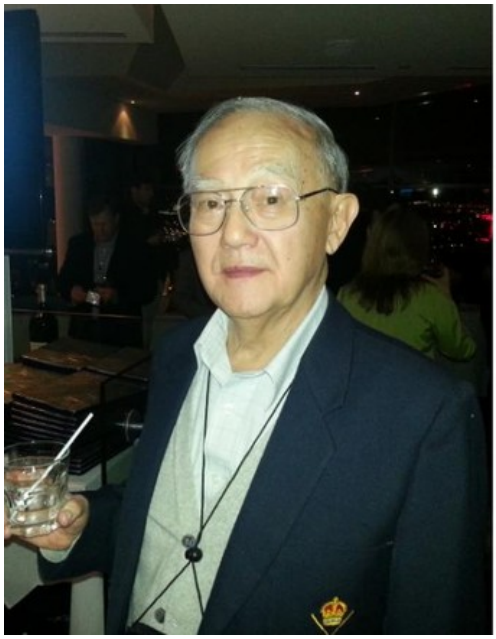

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