

# FDFA Conference 2019: A breath of fresh air



The Frontier Duty Free Association's ribbon-cutting ceremony officially declares the 2019 FDFA Convention open

This year's Frontier Duty Free Association (FDFA) Convention, held at the King Edward Hotel in Toronto, Canada, attracted a total of 227 delegates - a 7% increase on last year's 212 figure.



*Americas Duty Free FDFA issue was given to each delegate upon registration*

The total figure comprised 143 suppliers and 76 retailers, compared to 140 and 64 for last year's event, which was also held at the Toronto hotel.

The venue has proven a popular choice. The FDFA organizers have extended the original contract with the King Edward Hotel from 2020 to 2022, which means the convention will stay in Ontario's capital city for the next three years.

FDFA Executive Director Barbara Barrett told *Americas Duty Free* she was delighted with how the show went. "I am proud of the enthusiasm of our attendees --sponsors, buyer, operators - shown clearly by the increase in numbers. Our sponsors clearly see the value and business that comes out of being a part of the convention and that is ultimately our goal."

Among the many highlights, Barrett picked out as "a big hit" the new Central Hub area and Sip Central, boasting a Baileys coffee/hot chocolate station and a Scotch tasting activation, as well as the other suppliers' exhibition stands. "It gave those suppliers an opportunity to interact with all the show delegates and buyers/operators to have some quick tastings and meetings between other meetings," she enthused.

According to Barrett, key topics during the show included "making sure we protect and enhance the duty free chain and that decision-makers in Ottawa know that we are an export industry".

She continued: "Duty free stores generate significant economic benefits in the regions where the 33 stores across Canada operate and have repatriated close to C\$1.5 billion (US\$1.13 billion) in sales in the past 10 years, which would have otherwise been lost to the US duty free stores and retailers, so it

is imperative that our role in the economic infrastructure is clearly understood by our governing bodies.”

The Frontier Duty Free Association is now in the conversation when it comes to advocacy efforts on Parliament Hill in Ottawa, she said, adding: “arguably punching above our weight given our size. But I have said it before, we are small but mighty.”

When it comes to government lobbying, the FDFA is pitching itself as a stakeholder in the tourism industry. During their recent Hill Day in Ottawa, members met over 35 MPs, senators and staff, spelling out the importance of the duty free trade to the economy and communities in general.

The FDFA continues to advocate for the return of the visitor rebate program and its administration by duty free stores.

Check out snap shots of esteemed exhibitors from the FDFA event below.













