

New Idea Award 2015 (non – Marketing) Peace Bridge Duty Free

In our constant ambition to try and educate travelers about duty free, we are always looking for new opportunities to provide information to cross border travelers. With limited access to signage and billboards along the QEW, we investigated the opportunity to rent space at Grimsby Gateway Travel Center to help provide the needs we were looking for. The Gateway Travel Center is the number one rest stop destination for travelers entering the Niagara Region.

The space available was previously operated by Niagara Tourism and then the Partnership of Niagara who both decided to not renew their lease with Grimsby Gateway due to financial restraints. We approached the Travel Center with the idea of Peace Bridge Duty Free taking over the lease for 4 months during the busy summer travel season. The landlords were thrilled that we were willing to provide the travel and information services seriously required for this area.

With signage on the QEW categorizing this Grimsby location as a travel and information center, it was imperative someone be there to manage these requests or all the highway signage would have to be removed. Since there is no off the highway travel information location between Toronto and Niagara, this Center is a key for people travelling to Niagara and across borders.

We moved into the Grimsby Gateway Travel Center prior to the long weekend in May with duty free staff as well as previous Niagara Tourism staff who could assist us with giving the proper travel information to the customers. We kept the Center open 7 days a week for 10 hours a day.

The Center is stocked with brochures from all over the Niagara Region that included Wine Country, Niagara Falls, Biking Trails, Accommodations to name a few. We added poster information on Duty Free Information and Exemptions for both Canadian and US travelers. We took the brochure information one step further and provided a map making service to help customers get to their destination. This was well received by anyone stopping in as it is nice to having a friendly face who is familiar with the area lead you in the right direction.

From May 15th – September 8th we averaged over 350 people into our information center each day. Some weekends over 700 people would look to us for assistance. This validated the need to provide travel and information services to tourist and travelers visiting Niagara and crossing borders. We truly felt this initiative helped ease the stress of travelling and crossing borders by providing a necessary service to people.

Education and information about Duty Free Shopping in Canada was certainly a focus and we did this with exemption information and showcases that showed a variety of the merchandise found at duty free shops. Although 75% of the people were travelling within Canada to the Niagara region, we truly believed making duty free information available to travelers assisted the confidence when crossing the border either on the current or future trip.