

Executive Summary

This report presents the results from an onsite survey conducted for the National Capital Commission (NCC) among visitors to Commissioners Park and Major's Hill Park during the 2009 Tulip Legacy Exhibit. A total of 439 onsite surveys were conducted during the Exhibit – 220 at Major's Hill Park and 219 at Commissioners Park. All onsite interviews were conducted on the following days:

Friday May 1st
Saturday May 2nd
Sunday May 3rd

Saturday May 9th
Sunday May 10th
Friday May 15th

Saturday May 16th
Sunday May 17th
Monday May 18th

In this section, key findings from the research are presented.

Profile of Visitors to the Tulip Legacy Exhibit

Overall, visitors to the Tulip Legacy Exhibit skewed under 45 years of age, were attending the gardens with others and about half were Ottawa-Gatineau residents with the rest coming largely from the rest of Ontario or Quebec. Regardless of the site, a fairly even gender split was recorded.

The most noteworthy differences between the two sites were on age, with visitors to Commissioners Park being slightly older on average than visitors to Major's Hill Park and Major's Hill Park visitors much more likely to be in attendance with their families.

Overall one in three (36%) visitors to the Exhibit were under 35 years of age with a similar number being between 35 and 44 years of age (32%). Those between 35 and 44 years of age, however, had a slightly lower representation at Commissioners Park (27%) than at Major's Hill Park (38%). Conversely there were slightly more visitors between 45 and 54 years of age (18%) and over 55 years of age (19%) at Commissioners Park than at Major's Hill Park (12% and 14% respectively) and overall (15% and 16% respectively).

While a majority of visitors to the Exhibit attended with their families, those who visited Major's Hill Park (78%) were much more likely than visitors overall (63%) and those at Commissioners Park (48%) to attend with their families. Meanwhile, visitors to Commissioners Park (26%) were more likely than visitors overall (18%) and those at Major's Hill Park (11%) to say they were there with friends. Two in five visitors to both sites were there with their spouse or partner (43% at Commissioners Park and 47% at Major's Hill Park).

Roughly two thirds of visitors to both sites speak English at home, as compared to one in five who say they predominantly speak French at home.

Perceptions of Tulip Legacy Exhibit

Visitors attend the Tulip Legacy Exhibit primarily for one of two reasons: viewing the flower beds; and/or as part of a family outing. That being said, visitors at each location varied considerably on their purpose.

Visitors to Commissioners Park were more likely to have cited “viewing the flower beds” as the reason for their visit (42% vs. 15% at Major’s Hill Park), while the relatively younger crowd at Major’s Hill Park were more likely to be there as a family outing (53%).

Regardless of the location or the reason for their visit a majority (88%) of visitors indicated being very satisfied with the setting and said that they gained a greater sense of pride in Ottawa as Canada’s capital as a result of their visit (85%).

In summary, visitors to Commissioners Park were older than visitors to Major’s Hill Park, less likely to be there with their families and were more likely to be there expressly for the flowers. Visitors to Major’s Hill, in contrast, were there with their families on a family outing.

Awareness of Tulip Legacy Exhibit

The tulip displays, their historic relevance and associated events have long been promoted in the media, by governments and in schools. As a result, it is not surprising that **visitors were most likely to have heard about the Tulip Legacy Exhibit simply from having lived in Ottawa for years**, although a larger proportion of visitors to Major’s Hill Park cited this as a source of information (60% vs. 51% at Commissioners Park).

Majorities at either park were aware that there were other sites in the capital displaying tulips (73% at Commissioners Park and 79% at Major’s Hill Park). However, most visitors did not visit any other garden on the day of their visit. The people who were interviewed at Commissioners Park were slightly more likely to have visited a second garden, with Major’s Hill Park (18%) or the Parliament Buildings (12%) most commonly mentioned. The data on this point and throughout this study suggest that visitors to Commissioners Park have a slightly higher concentration of the more avid fans of tulips and/or gardens.

Among the few people that visited more than one site, a car was the primary means of transportation between sites for those at Commissioners Park (43%), while public transit was the primary means of transportation between sites for those at Major’s Hill Park (20%).

Commissioners Park

The vast majority of visitors at Commissioners Park said they found it easy to orient themselves within the Park (84%) even though most did not visit the Information Kiosk (78%).

Among those at Commissioners Park that said they visited the Information Kiosk while in the park, nearly all found the information provided sufficient to help them orient themselves within the park (95%).

When asked what types of information they would have liked to receive upon entering the park, most visitors to Commissioners Park said they would have liked to receive maps of the capital (23%) and a calendar of events (21%).

In addition, while most visitors to Commissioners Park were not sure what additional activities they would like to see at the Park, those that could offer an opinion, were most likely to say “activities for children” (20%).

Satisfaction with Park’s Beauty

The majority of visitors to the Tulip Legacy Exhibit were very satisfied with the natural beauty of the park’s setting, including the tulip display (88%). Results were virtually identical at either site.

Role of NCC as Capital’s Gardener

On an unaided basis, a plurality of visitors to either park named the National Capital Commission as the organization that is responsible for the planning and upkeep of significant gardens and parks, as well as planting the tulips in the Capital. At Commissioners Park, 48% voluntarily named the NCC and at Major’s Hill Park 44% did. On an aided basis, total recall increased to 71% among visitors to Commissioners Park and 77% among visitors to Major’s Hill Park.

Overall, visitors to the exhibit attributed great importance to environmentally sound gardening practices.

Self-Guided Tours

At both sites, just less than half the visitors surveyed (46%) claimed that they would be interested in an Mp3 self-guided tour of the gardens at Commissioners Park and along the Rideau Canal. Results on this question were identical at each site.

In terms of topics of interest for the Mp3 self-guided tour, topics regarding history emerged as being quite popular among exhibit visitors.

Among those that would be interested in a self-guided Mp3 tour at both Commissioners Park and Major's Hill Park, a plurality of visitors claimed they would prefer a narrator who is a historian (26% at Commissioners Park and 34% at Major's Hill Park). They are however split with regards to the length of the tour. Equal proportions of visitors at Commissioners Park would be interested in either a 10 to 15 minute tour (27%), a 15 to 20 minute tour (28%) or a 20 to 25 minute tour (26%). Meanwhile, those at Major's Hill Park expressed the most interest for a 15 to 20 minute tour (34%).