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Survey Concerning the Parliamentary Precinct

Summary

Prepared for Public Services and Procurement Canada

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This public opinion research report presents the results of an online survey conducted by EKOS Research Associates Inc. on behalf of Public Services and Procurement Canada. The research study was conducted between June 14 and July 12, 2021, with 1,551 Canadians 18 years of age or older using a randomly recruited panel, as well as 501 Canadians responding to an open link announced by Public Services and Procurement Canada through stakeholder networks.

Cette publication est aussi disponible en français sous le titre « Enquête au sujet de la Cité parlementaire ».

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SUMMARY

A. BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVES

The current public opinion research is intended to support the update to the 2006 Long Term Vision and Plan (LTVP), which establishes the framework for the major initiatives of the Science and Parliamentary Infrastructure Branch (SPIB), and supports their ongoing and future projects. The LTVP has taken a long-term view on restoring the Precinct's heritage buildings and landscapes, meeting evolving and growing parliamentarian accommodation requirements, and providing a secure and welcoming environment for parliamentarians, staff and visitors. It forms the backbone of a complex planning and construction program with an overarching vision and direction for physical change. Of particular note, one of the key themes to be addressed in the new master plan is visitor experience.

The public opinion research forms part of the public engagement strategy to obtain feedback on how their experience of Parliament Hill and the broader Precinct could be improved in the future, and how to ensure that the Precinct continues to be a welcoming place that reflects the values and aspirations of all Canadians.

Research findings are expected to guide the project teams responsible for implementing the SPIB program of work, helping to ensure that these initiatives are developed in such a way as to address the needs and interests of visitors, and more broadly the values that Canadians associate with the site. Elements of particular interest include the types of visitor facilities and amenities to provide, how to improve visitor arrival to the site, what types of experiences and/or destinations to develop or enhance, and the values that Canadians would like to see reflected in the Precinct.

B. METHODOLOGY

Representative Survey

The research findings are based on a representative survey of 1,551 Canadians, 18 years of age and older. The survey sample was randomly selected from a probability-based panel. The Probit panel, which is assembled using a random digit dial (RDD) process for sampling from a blended land-line cell-phone frame, provides full coverage of Canadians with telephone access. The distribution of the panel is meant to mirror the actual population in Canada (as defined by

Statistics Canada). As such, our 120,000-member panel can be considered representative of the general public in Canada (meaning that the incidence of a given target population within our panel very closely resembles the public at large) and margins of error can be applied. Thirteen per cent of the survey cases were collected by trained, bilingual interviewers, while the rest were collected through online survey self-administration.

The survey was collected online and by telephone between June 14 and July 12, 2021, in both official languages. This followed testing to ensure public understanding was clear and consistent. The survey length averaged 15 minutes online and 17 minutes by telephone. The overall rate of participation was 24%.

This randomly recruited probability sample carries with it a margin of error of +/-2.5%. The margin of error for most subgroups is between 3.5% and 10.0%. Results are weighted to population proportions for region, age, gender, and education. Chi-square tests were used to compare subgroups to the remaining sample (e.g., Ontario vs. the rest of Canada; 65 years old and over vs. the rest of Canada; women vs. men). Because of the random nature of the sampling, along with weighting along key dimensions, the results can be extrapolated to the broader population of Canadians 18 years of age or older. Details on the rate of participation, as well as sample characteristics, can be found in Appendix A, and the full questionnaire is provided in Appendix B.

Parallel Survey

A parallel survey was also conducted, through an open-source link circulated by SPIB with existing stakeholders who in turn shared it within their networks, as well as to the general public via PSPC's social media, driving respondents to the web site. It relied on the same questionnaire as used to collect the general public sample, with slight modifications regarding sample characteristics collected and the additional comment box. The aim was to gather the views of Parliamentary Precinct stakeholders, as well as residents of the National Capital Region (NCR) who are likely to have visited the Precinct. A total of 506¹ individuals completed the survey. Results of this parallel survey are presented alongside the results for the general public survey in relevant sections. It should be noted that results of the open-source link are illustrative in nature, and are only projectable to these 506 individuals, rather than to the broader population.

¹ Excludes a handful of cases with the same demographic profile, received from the same IP address.

C. KEY FINDINGS

Awareness of Rehabilitation Project

- Awareness that Parliament Hill and the surrounding area are being rehabilitated and updated is high among those engaged on the issue, and residents living in closer proximity to the site, but low elsewhere in Canada.
- Across the country, one in four of the representative sample is clearly aware and another one in three is vaguely aware. This rises to 64% among residents of the National Capital Region (NCR). Respondents to the open link, who are almost exclusively from the NCR, are much more likely to be aware (79% are clearly aware).

Considerations in the Design

- Of the considerations for design tested, the most often rated as important in the rehabilitation and updating of Parliament Hill Area are a space that is welcoming and safe for visitors of all ages and abilities, an area that is open and accessible to the public, and a place to see Parliament in action, according to eight in ten in the representative sample. Nearly as many see it as important for Parliament Hill to be a place to commemorate Canadians and events of national significance (75%). These views are even more strongly espoused by respondents to the open link (88% to 94%).
- In a second tier of importance, just over half feel it is important for Parliament Hill to be reflective of the cultural diversity of the country, to be a gathering place, reflective of Indigenous cultures, and a place to enjoy activities and the outdoors. Again, higher proportions of respondents in the open link said the same (80% for cultural diversity and 68% to 72% for the other design considerations).
 - When asked to select the three most important considerations of the eight tested, “a place to see Parliament in action” was selected most often—six in ten, with one in three saying it is the single most important consideration. This is followed by roughly half selecting “open and accessible to the public” or “welcoming and safe.”
- Six basic values or principles guiding the design were also explored. Roughly three in four Canadians in the representative sample said making the area more accessible for all and heritage conservation are important, followed by the provision of visitor amenities, according to seven in ten. Proportions are even higher among respondents to the open link (83% to 73%, respectively).
- In a second tier of importance, ensuring high architectural and design quality, and making buildings more environmentally friendly were viewed as important by six in

ten members of the representative sample and higher proportions of the open link sample. Engaging with Parliament and the work of Parliamentarians was also seen as important by just under six in ten.

- In selecting the three most important values, heritage conservation and accessibility stood out—selected by six in ten, with close to one in four saying each was the single most important value to guide the design. Heritage conservation, in particular, was even more likely to have been selected as a top value among those responding to the open link.

Areas of Interest for Next Visit

- In terms of key features of interest for a next visit to the Parliament Hill Area, three in four members of the representative sample and close to nine in ten responding to the open link said that the inside of the buildings would top the list. In the representative sample, the grounds and the outside of the buildings were a second tier of features to take in on a next visit, followed closely by special events and activities, as well as monuments (63% to 56%, respectively). Those responding to the open link typically expressed keener interest in the first three (86% to 76%, respectively), although interest is about the same as indicated in the representative sample in terms of monuments.

Previous Visit to the Parliament Hill Area

- Two in three members of the representative sample have visited the Parliament Hill Area.
- Virtually all of those responding to the open link have visited.
 - Four in ten visitors have been to the area within the last six years, while one in three visited six to twenty years ago, and one in five have not been since before 2000.
 - Summer is the most popular season for a visit according to half, while about one in three said they visited in the spring (17%) or the fall (19%). One in seven last visited in the winter.
- Features or areas most often visited include the Centennial Flame and front lawn area, according to eight in ten. This is followed by six in ten taking in the area around Centre Block and Confederation Boulevard. The pathway along the river and Sparks Street have also been elements of the visit for about half, and one in three has been inside the buildings that are open to the public. This is interesting given that three in four Canadians in the representative sample said they would visit the inside of buildings open to the public on their next visit. This may suggest a greater interest

sparked by the rehabilitation, or simply increased demand because of lack of availability over the past few years.

- Most visitors arrive by private transportation (42%) or on foot (38%). Only one in ten use public transit, and even fewer arrive with a tour or by bicycle.
- Visitors most often arrive with family (e.g., partner; 45%) or friends (31%). One in five bring children, although this is mostly among visitors who are between 35 and 64 (30% to 34%), with 20% also noting extended family in the visitor party.

Quality of Key Elements of the Parliament Hill Area

- Among those who have visited and could provide a rating of quality, the sense of safety within the site and the quality of the greenspace and landscaping are rated positively in terms of quality, according to more than eight in ten. Ease of getting to and from, as well as around the area was rated positively among seven in ten in the representative sample, but six in ten in the open link.
- Suggesting some need for attention, signs and maps as well as availability of bicycle parking were rated positively by half of those who visited and could comment, although this is considerably lower in the open link (30% to 31%).
- Accessibility for those with disabilities was only rated positively among four in ten in the representative sample and one in three in the open link. This is a particular area for attention given that accessibility is accorded such importance in terms of considerations.
- Access to mobile-friendly tools availability of food services, washrooms, outdoor seating, shade, and parking were only rated positively by one in three to one in four, with larger proportions rating them poorly. Results are even lower in the open link and in the rating of shelter from weather. These results suggest considerable need for attention, particularly given the importance given to provision of amenities as a design principle, and given that private vehicles is the primary mode of transportation to and from the site.

Conclusions and Recommendations

- Public awareness is fairly low outside of the NCR. As the pandemic ends and there are increased efforts to draw visitors from outside the region back to site, it will be important to draw attention to the rehabilitation of the site.
- Fundamental considerations among the public for the rehabilitation include the Precinct showcasing Parliament in Action, and a site that is safe and welcoming, open and accessible to all, that also addresses the twin guiding principles of heritage conservation and provision of amenities to make the visit comfortable.
- Although many previous visits have only included the outside of buildings, the grounds and surrounding area, the inside of buildings is likely to be the most sought-

after feature of future trips. This highlights the likelihood of significantly increased demand for tours as the public begins to visit the Hill in larger numbers after the pandemic.

- Provision of amenities must be guided by the fact that most arrive by private transportation or on foot, with family and friends.
- Results suggest that a number of aspects of the services and features of the site require attention, based on the perceived quality of visitors over the past six years. While perceptions of the sense of safety and greenspace, as well as ease of arriving, leaving and moving around the Parliament Precinct Area are positive, signage and bicycle parking may need some attention.
- Considerably greater attention may be required to increase the perceived quality of accessibility for those with disabilities, and the availability of food, washrooms, outdoor seating, shade and shelter from the elements, as well as parking, since each of which were given poor ratings.

D. NOTE TO READERS

Detailed findings are presented in the sections that follow. Weighted results from the representative survey sample, collected from the panel, is the main focus of the report. Results are described for the overall national sample in the main portion of the narrative. Results are also described for cases collected in the open link, although in somewhat less detail, using a more comparative tone. Graphic or tabular presentation of results is also provided for both samples under the descriptive text. Results for the proportion of respondents in the sample who either said “don’t know” or did not provide a response may not be indicated in the graphic representation of the results in all cases, particularly where they are not sizable (e.g., 10% or less). Results may also not total to 100% due to rounding.

Bulleted text is used to describe differences between key (e.g., demographic) subgroups of respondents in the representative sample. Only differences that are statistically and substantively different (e.g., five percentage points or greater from the overall mean) are presented. Any significant departures found in the open link from the patterns observed in the representative sample are also described in a more cursory fashion, since results from the open link are not considered projectable to the population.

Details of the methodology and sample characteristics can be found in Appendix A. The programmed survey instrument can be found in Appendix B.

E. CONTRACT VALUE

The contract value for the POR project is \$57,864.53 (including HST).

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F. POLITICAL NEUTRALITY CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify as Senior Officer of EKOS Research Associates Inc. that the deliverables fully comply with the Government of Canada political neutrality requirements outlined in the Communications Policy of the Government of Canada and Procedures for Planning and Contracting Public Opinion Research. Specifically, the deliverables do not include information on electoral voting intentions, political party preferences, standings with the electorate, or ratings of the performance of a political party or its leaders.

Signed by:



Susan Galley (Vice President)