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Ottawa Journal: Tulips across Canada

By David Tilson, MP

It's spring and the tulips are in bloom.

There can be no more enduring symbol of friendship between Canada and the Netherlands than the tulip. All across Canada at this time of year, millions of tulips are bursting with colour, recognizing the incredibly strong bond of friendship between our two countries.

One year ago, I had the good fortune of being in The Netherlands on government business and was able to visit the town of Keukenhof where the tulip originated.

The tulip is a harbinger of the summer to come and is a welcome sight every spring.

The liberation of the Netherlands during World War II is an accomplishment in which Canada takes enormous pride, and I know from first-hand experience how well appreciated it is by our Dutch friends. Canadians are greeted warmly all across the Netherlands as a sign of true friendship.

At this time of year, when I head to Centre Block on Parliament Hill, there are thousands of tulips in bloom, a gift in perpetuity from the Government of the Netherlands to recognize both the liberation and Ottawa's hospitality for the Dutch Royal Family during the war.

What began as a gift of 100,000 tulip bulbs in 1945 and continuing with 20,000 bulbs a year ever since, has now grown to close to a million tulips, of 100 varieties, in 100 flower beds around the city.

Indeed, all across Ottawa, the Tulip Festival is being celebrated by tens of thousands of enthusiastic visitors.

There has been exciting news regarding the release of Canada's official 150 birthday tulip, to honour next year's 2017 sesquicentennial.

The 150 tulip will be a predominantly white flower with red flame-like detail to reflect Canada's national flag. Dutch tulip growers have been collaborating with the National Capital Commission for four years to develop and design this celebratory flower. 300,000 of the new variety will be blooming around the national capital next spring.

Bulbs will be available at participating Home Hardware stores this fall in time for them to bloom next spring. The Canada 150 tulip will stand and grow as a lasting testament to a very special relationship between our two nations.

This past weekend, I had the honour of speaking to assembled guests at the Tulip Blooming Ceremony in Grand Valley. This is another great testament to the friendship between Canada and The Netherlands.

And it, of course, recognizes the sacrifice of our soldiers in liberating The Netherlands from Nazi occupation.

I encourage everyone in Dufferin-Caledon to pay a visit to at the Dutch-Canadian Friendship Tulip Garden at the cenotaph in Grand Valley while the flowers are still in bloom!