

Globe & Mail 27 05 2025

[King Charles visited an Ottawa market and Canada put on a play about itself - The Globe and Mail](#)

Canada uses royal occasion to put on a play about itself

- The Globe and Mail (Ontario Edition)
- 27 May 2025
- Shannon Proudfoot



JUSTIN TANG/THE CANADIAN PRESS

Above: King Charles III and Queen Camilla arrive at the Ottawa International Airport on Monday for a two-day visit to Canada.

Owners of about two dozen booths staged a pretend version of the thing they do every Sunday to welcome the royal visitors

When the King comes to town, you get the world's spotlight trained on you for one brief, bright moment, so you put on a play about yourself and your place in the world. Canada as a whole is doing that over this whirlwind visit from King Charles and Queen Camilla – just 24 hours on Canadian soil – designed to show a certain ochre fellow in the White House that we have bigtime friends, too. And on Monday in Ottawa, community and cultural organizations, along with a handful of farmers' market growers and makers, did the same.

Several hours before the royal couple would arrive at Lansdowne Park, a sporting event and commercial area just south of downtown, Ann Marie Rochon was laying out her produce in perfect, colourful piles like a magazine spread: ruby-and-emerald rhubarb bundles, spiky bridal bouquets of green onions and gleaming strawberries in baskets she reminded a colleague to display with the Rochon Garden logo facing out.

The Ottawa Farmers' Market normally runs in this location only on Sundays, but the rumour was that the King, an agriculture connoisseur, had requested to visit a market. And so Ms. Rochon and the owners of about two dozen other booths were staging what was essentially a pretend version of the thing they do every weekend.

"I'm just grateful that we're here and somebody is talking about us," she said.

The next booth over displayed sheep's milk cheeses and wool from Milkhouse Farm + Dairy. Kyle White said he and his wife, Cait, had joked about this setup being "farmers' market cosplay." He got his plaid shirt ready and everything, but she nixed it for being too on-the-nose.

The Whites had pulled their five-yearold daughter, Margot, out of school for the day, but they managed some expectations with her first: Yes, he's a king, but no, he will not be wearing a crown, and he might not have time to stop and see us. Margot had drawn a bright welcome sign festooned with flowers, and she had a bouquet of the real thing ready, too.

"We talked about the amount of waiting, and we brought Lego and pretty much any toy we could fit in a bag," said Mr. White. "We'll see how destroyed the booth is by the time His Highness shows up."

Out of the baking sun inside a nearby building, displays from community organizations awaited the royal visitors.

The musicians of OrKidstra, which gives free music lessons and long-term instrument loans to Ottawa kids whose families normally couldn't afford either, were there. They prepared behind a black curtain on one side of the exhibition hall, the cavernous room filling with the golden, expectant shimmer of musicians who know their stuff warming up.

And Ingenium, the corporation that runs three Ottawa museums – devoted to agriculture, aerospace and science – beloved by local families, was on hand with two lambs that had been bred for Canadian conditions. Insolently adorable, they looked neither impressed nor distressed by the buzz around them; one was relaxed enough to do something that required a cleanup with what looked like a large cat litter scoop shortly before the royal arrival.

Back outside at the farmers' market, Roxanne and Sarah Garland – daughter and daughter-in-law, respectively, of the family that owns Garland Sugar Shack – were waging a quietly worried war against the sun.

They kept their maple sugar candies in a fridge until they had to set up, then propped the lid of a large plastic bin over them for shade. When showtime drew near, the sugary leaves were nestled on ice cube-filled plastic bags while Roxanne stood over them with an umbrella. She felt badly because she hadn't realized King Charles was visiting, until the market association requested her family's booth for the front row.

“So then I went, ‘ What king?’ ” she recalled, and the answer was “ The King.” She pulled a “whoa” face to explain further.

By the time the man himself pulled up in a purring sedan with the royal standard fluttering above the hood, there were perhaps 1,000 people cheering along the barricades enclosing the market, a small dance platform for several cultural performances and a street hockey surface. This would be the diorama of Canada presented to the royal couple.

King Charles and Camilla slowly worked their way along the fences greeting people, with really-not-messing-around security breaking a path ahead of them and sealing them in from behind. After the initial eruption, crowds were watchful and quiet, just a forest of arms holding phones aloft, except when the King turned in a new direction or raised his hand in greeting, and then they roared again.

Prime Minister Mark Carney and his wife, Diana Fox Carney, accompanied them. By the time they got to the maple syrup table, Mr. Carney found himself benignly ignored as the Garland proprietors chatted with the guests from across the pond.

The location of the booth meant that as Mr. Carney stood gazing at the sweet amber wares, he was directly facing one of the media risers where a few dozen reporters jostled with each other. The Prime Minister picked up a jug of maple syrup and posed with it like he’d just won a prize on a TV game show. The shutters clicked obligingly.

The King dropped the puck on a kids’ street hockey game, there was another meet-and-greet along a barricade, and then the royal entourage disappeared into the exhibition building before climbing back into their motorcade for the next stop at Rideau Hall.

Sarah Garland had been so engrossed in her chat with the King – he wanted to know about their trees and their 5,000 taps – that she hadn’t noticed Mr. Carney pose with her family’s syrup. “Oh my god!” she squeaked in delight. “Well, you know what? If our Prime Minister doesn’t do anything for us, at least he did this.”

The maple syrup candies survived, and to their delight and surprise, Camilla agreed to take one with her.

Over at the Milkhouse booth, Mr. White was still slightly amped-up from the “exciting and terrifying” encounter with a King who knew plenty about sheep’s milk cheeses. Other than the herd of security around him, it was pretty much like talking to a regular customer.

“Absolutely worth it,” Mr. White said. “I will come and sell no cheese any day to do this again.”

For her part, Margot got a pair of royal handshakes, a chance to give her bouquet to Camilla and a moment to greet the Prime Minister and his wife. Not bad for a fiveyear-old skipping school, her dad figured.