

Item EX25.1 - Recognition Review Project Update and Response to the Dundas Street Renaming Petition - Copy of Remarks by The Rt. Hon. Adrienne Clarkson Executive Committee Meeting - July 6, 2021

The name of Dundas has no relevance to Canada, no connection to Toronto. Henry Dundas, Lord Melville, was the all-powerful Secretary of State for Colonial Affairs and second in power only to Prime Minister William Pitt himself in 1792. He was the arch-fixer, the man who commanded votes and dispensed power. He controlled almost the whole parliamentary representation of Scotland, most of the patronage in India and appointments across the rest of the empire.

No wonder John Graves Simcoe, Lieutenant Governor of Upper Canada in the Muddy Town of York wanted to curry favor with the powerful Lord Melville as Henry Dundas became. His boss controlled all that he could hope for in the future - position, power and potential wealth. He wasn't planning on staying in this provincial backwater forever, not when Britain was out there colonizing and bringing home riches from India and the Far East.

And in fact, when Simcoe returned to Britain after his tenure as Lieutenant Governor, he was rewarded for all the places he named after Dundas in this remote backwater and was made Commander-in-Chief of India - that is, Supreme Commander of the British Army in India. Unfortunately, for him, he died in England before he could take up his post. But he had had his reward for all the places he managed to name for his boss!

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Dundas delayed, by parliamentary maneuvering, the passing of the bill to abolish the slave trade which was introduced by the remarkable William Wilberforce from 1792 each year until 1807 when it was finally passed. In this time, it is estimated that at least 600,000 people from Africa were enslaved and sent to the Caribbean and the southern United States to be sold. Had it not been for Dundas, these people would have been free living in Africa, instead of treated as working animals, deprived of humanity.

It means a lot to me as a former Governor General that we have a peaceful democratic parliamentary system and that we have an inclusive society. We are past the days of pathetic colonial bootlicking. I also recognize that we have a dreadful past of shame and injustice towards the Indigenous peoples which we must turn our full attention to as a nation. Knowing that Dundas had nothing to do with Canada and is, as the historian Stephen Mullin of Glasgow University said: “the great delayer of the transatlantic slave trade”, he does not deserve to be honoured by a prominent street and square in the city which is a home to the world in its diversity.

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Toronto should show that we care about what we have become and are going to become in the future as a city of justice and the city that will help to lead in the establishment of honour towards the Indigenous peoples. And that we will pay honour to our foundation in this territory of the Dish With One Spoon on which we are all so privileged to live.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Adrienne Clarkson', with a long, sweeping flourish at the end.

The Rt. Hon. Adrienne Clarkson !