

Dear Executive Committee, City of Toronto

My name is Professor Emeritus Sir Tom Devine of the University of Edinburgh. I have a specialist research interest in the history of Scotland, empire and slavery during a long academic career stretching back to the early 1970s. Attached is a short cv which will give you some idea of my scholarly credentials.

I hope you will forgive this intrusion in your work but I do so with a sincere desire to help you in your deliberations.

I have been advised that you will be having a meeting on July 22 to discuss the renaming of Dundas St and my understanding is that you are willing to accept comments, presentations and submissions on the issues which arise from this topic

I fear Toronto is in grave danger of making a serious historical error which will come back to haunt your city well into the future unless previous decisions on the renaming of Dundas St are carefully reconsidered.

As you are doubtless aware, the charge against Henry Dundas is that he was the prime influence on delaying the end of the British slave trade in the 1790s, thus causing the enforced captivity and early deaths of many thousands of African slaves which would not have occurred if abolition had taken place in that decade. Since 2020 much historical work has taken place and been published on this indictment.

I can assure the Committee that the current academic consensus in the UK is that since this research was carried out and published Dundas has been exonerated by scholars in the field as the prime mover on delay. Instead, explanations now focus on a range of military, political and economic factors which rendered delay in abolition inevitable whether Dundas was involved in the process or not. For the sake of the international reputation of your great city you need to be made aware of these new findings and judge them for yourselves before coming to any final decisions on these matters. I should also add that I personally have had an earlier meeting by ZOOM on 19 November 2020 with Toronto museum officials who were preparing reports on the historical background to the case for renaming the Street. The individuals involved were Cheryl Blackman, Tamara Williams and Wayne Reeves. It was not a happy experience as it quickly became clear to me that their interest was in finding Dundas guilty and not listening impartially to different perspectives from an established scholar in the relevant field. They promised to talk to me again and invite me to take part in a series of seminars they were planning on the subject. Neither took place. It was nothing less than gross discourtesy on their part. More importantly I was

convinced they had already made up their minds and were simply looking for evidence to support their opinions.

I do hope I can be of some assistance to you in your deliberations and look forward to your response in due course.

All the best

Tom Devine

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Professor Emeritus Sir Thomas Martin Devine Kt OBE DLitt Hon DLitt Hon DUniv FRHistS FSAScot FRSA HonMRIA FRSE FBA Fellow of the Academy of Europe.

Tom Devine is the Sir William Fraser Professor Emeritus of Scottish History and Palaeography in the University of Edinburgh, the world's oldest and most prestigious chair in the field. Before then he was Glucksman Research Professor of Irish and Scottish Studies at Aberdeen and Professor of Scottish History at Strathclyde, where he also became Deputy Principal in the 1990s.

He is the author or editor of over forty books, several of which have become international best sellers, and around 100 articles in academic journals and book collections. His most renowned work is *The Scotland Trilogy*, an epic three volume series of over 1600 pages in total, published by Penguin Random House, on the history of the Scottish people at home and across the world since the sixteenth century.

Sir Tom Devine also has a high media profile and contributes regularly to newspapers, social media, periodicals, radio and television both at home and abroad. He was awarded the Senior Public Engagement Prize of the Royal Society of Edinburgh (RSE), Scotland National Academy, in 2010 for his many contributions as a leading 'public intellectual'.

He has received 26 prizes, honorary degrees, and other accolades, both nationally and internationally, during his career. Most notably in 2001, with the Nobel Laureate, the late Sir James Black FRS OM, inventor of beta blockers, he was jointly awarded the Royal Medal, Scotland's supreme academic accolade, by HM The Queen on the recommendation of the RSE. In 2014 he was knighted 'for services to the study of Scottish history', the first scholar to be honoured for that reason. Four years later, the Joint Committee on History and Archives of the Houses of Lords and Commons of the UK Parliament bestowed on him its prestigious Lifetime Achievement Award.

Sir Tom has also achieved the rare distinction for a humanities scholar of being elected to all three of the national academies in the British Isles for which he is eligible: RSE(FRSE), Royal Irish Academy(HonMRIA) and the British Academy(FBA).

The Times noted in 2013 that 'Tom Devine is as close to a national bard of Scotland as the nation has'; while, for *Scottish Field*, in 2014, 'Sir Tom Devine is the rock star of Caledonian historians whose work in unravelling Scottish identity makes him de facto the father of the nation.' The Financial Times asserted in 2021 that Devine is 'Scotland's most distinguished historian since Thomas Carlyle(1795-1881)'.

Tom lives in Hamilton, Scotland with his wife Lady Devine. They have had five children (one deceased) and, to date, ten grandchildren. He enjoys walking in the Hebrides, visiting Italy, a glass of good wine, ganging up with his grandchildren against their parents, watching skillful football.