

July 12, 2021

To: Mayor Tory and Toronto City Council

Re: EX25.1 City Council agenda July 14, 2021

Friends –

I was wrong last week in my presentation to Executive Committee (see below) for the same reason that the Committee was wrong in forwarding EX25.1 to City Council in its present form: We did not have an array of significant facts before us.

Those facts are now widely available and cry out to be attended to.

The report called *Henry Dundas and Abolition – the Missing Pieces* which is now available to Council was not visible to Executive Committee or the public on July 6th because, I am told, it was mistakenly addressed to the Mayor and individual Councillors rather than to Executive Committee itself, and consequently it was not included within the Committee's agenda. It was not referred to in the Staff Update or spoken of publicly even once during the Committee's deliberations.

Two days after the Executive Committee meeting, I received an email from the *Henry Dundas Committee for Public Education on Historic Scotland* – which I'd never heard of before. That email included links to the *Missing Pieces* analysis which I understand has now been forwarded to City Council as well. It contains 51 closely-argued pages of referenced evidence with 179 footnotes. I have examined it carefully, and am persuaded of its importance.

The Staff Update in EX25.1 could be called *The Trial of Henry Dundas*. At issue, in its simplest terms, is the question: **Was Henry Dundas guilty of being right about how to most effectively abolish the maritime slave trade and slavery itself?** The answer to this question leads to the question of what those of us concerned for justice, truth and reconciliation should do, in 2021, about the name of Dundas Street.

The prosecution (i.e., the Staff Update, after consultation with QuakeLab) argued, and set in motion, a re naming process. Some speakers at Executive Committee, notably the Scottish historian Stephen Mullen, asserted that all the peer-reviewed publications by professional academic historians (which, they said, are the only opinions that are worthy of respect) have found Dundas guilty of egregious behavior. This assertion is wrong, and it led to a mistaken conclusion. It seems to me that **on a balance of probabilities** Dundas has been subjected to a wrongful conviction.

City Council can put this train back on a reasonable track. In continuing the process of recognizing and analyzing history and making it meaningful and instructive to Torontonians today, Council should not instruct that the upcoming procedure must lead to a name change (an "immediate and complete abolition" of the Dundas name), but instead **the procedure should determine if and how the name of Dundas Street should be dealt with**. The current procedure unfairly prejudices the outcome as an open and shut case.

Max Allen

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ADDENDUM

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE, ITEM 25.1 (Renaming Dundas Street) VIA WEBEX

Oral presentation by Max Allen: Mr. Mayor, thank you very much. I think this Committee meeting has been remarkable, and I congratulate everybody who's been involved in it.

I have no contribution to the argument about how bad Henry Dundas was. What I do have is an idea that I set out in my letter to the Committee about one way to *manage* the street name, and it has to do with the letter X.

Both the initiator* of the petition that led to this hearing and some of the other people we heard from this morning have been involved in using the letter X as a way to “cross out” or “condemn” a certain person or event; it reminds me of the condemnation and labelling in Nathaniel Hawthorne's novel *The Scarlet Letter*. So one thing we might do – *you* might do – is suggest to Council that Dundas Street be renamed **XDundas**. It's pronounceable, you can say it, and it does not erase the memory of this problem from history; in fact it calls attention to it, and calls attention to what Torontonians in 2021 decided to do about it.

I think this, as a general strategy, is something to think about. You may think it's too complicated, you may think it's too subtle, you may think it's not harsh enough. But if Dundas Street, which is just up the street from where I live, were called XDundas Street on its signs, people would look at it and say “What's this about?”

We don't want the future NOT to know what this is about. Not knowing the past is a serious problem – you know the aphorism *Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it* – and this will be a serious problem in the future, too, if people in the future don't know what we were up to here.

It's clear to me that *some* form of renaming is going to happen. And the basis for the renaming procedure, which has been referred to all morning as “staff work,” is the work of an Ottawa team called QuakeLab which specializes in what they call design thinking. I urge people to read about QuakeLab and what they've done and what their reason for existence is, because it's extraordinarily interesting and useful to know in our circumstances now.

Finally, I want to reemphasize something that we heard right at the beginning this morning from John Ralston Saul. His idea about recognizing the route between two rivers, which is what Dundas Street is, is a gripping idea, I think. Wouldn't it be wonderful if that could be done? Maybe call it Two Rivers Street – who knows? But something to recognize what Dundas Street is, where it goes, and what it connects – that's a marvelous idea.

That's enough from me – it's time for lunch. Thanks.

* Mr. Lochhead identified himself as a student at X – aka Ryerson – University.