

July 15, 2020

TO: Mayor John Tory

FROM: Chris Murray, City Manager

SUBJECT: Responding to the Petition to Rename Dundas Street

Any decision to rename a major arterial road like Dundas requires careful consideration of its potential impacts and an equitable and inclusive public process that responds to the community at large and addresses neighbourhood considerations as appropriate. The process should be coordinated across the City government to review the full range of Dundas-named assets and ensure consistent, coherent community consultation and communications.

I am committed to bringing forward a report to the Executive Committee meeting on September 23, 2020 that will:

- fully assess four options for responding to the petition (do nothing; retain the legal street names with additional interpretation and recognitions; retain the legal street names but rename those civic assets with Dundas in their name, except TTC; and rename the streets and other civic assets now carrying the Dundas name)
- estimate the costs that would be incurred by businesses, organizations, property owners, and residents with a street address on Dundas as well as any service or directory that maps or shows addresses (e.g., the PATH system)
- for the renaming option, outline a community engagement strategy and change management process that simultaneously addresses in an integrated manner all civic assets with the Dundas name (streets, parks, TTC, Toronto Public Library, and Yonge-Dundas Square) by the end of 2021
- beyond Dundas Street, propose a framework to more broadly understand and respond to how systematic racism and discrimination are embedded in City assets, commemorative programs, and naming policies. This might ultimately touch all named City streets, parks and facilities, public monuments, and civic awards and honours, potentially leading to a variety of actions (e.g., renaming streets, removing monuments, revoking awards, or reinterpreting any of these).

Background:

In early June 2020, Andrew Lochhead created an online petition entitled "Lets Rename Dundas Street in Toronto." The petition's preamble included the following:

...Toronto City Council can take a constructive and symbolic step toward disavowing its historic associations with persons who have actively worked toward preserving systems of racial inequality and exploitation.

As such, we ask that Toronto City Council begin a public process to rename Dundas Street in the city of Toronto to honour a more appropriate person, place or event.

We also believe that this process should be transparent and undertaken in partnership particularly with Black-lead organisations and historical societies, Indigenous groups and other community representatives that accurately reflect the rich cultural diversity of the City of Toronto, in order to create a long list of potential candidates.

Lochhead wrote that Henry Dundas, First Viscount Melville (the street's namesake) actively participated as a British MP and Secretary of State in obstructing the abolition of slavery in the British Empire from 1791 to 1806.

This petition, containing 13,955 names, was formally presented by Councillor Layton to City Council on June 29. A letter was also sent to my attention (June 12, 2020) from Councillors Perks, Layton, Fletcher, Cressy, and Wong-Tam supporting a public process to review and rename Dundas Street.

At your request, I committed to bringing forward a briefing note on the matter within 30 days.

Work to Date:

a) Project Governance

A Steering Committee, composed of myself and Division heads and directors from across the organization, has mobilized to provide overall guidance for this project. A staff Working Group, focused on research, information gathering and analysis, has also been created. Engagement with multiple City divisions, agencies, and corporations who may be affected by the renaming of Dundas Street has also started.

b) The Scope of "Dundas Street"

The name "Dundas Street" has existed in what is now known as Toronto from at least the early 1800s. Today there are four legal entities which reference "Dundas Street":

- Dundas Street East (the arterial road east of Yonge St.)
- Dundas Street West (the arterial road west of Yonge St.)
- Dundas Square (a local road south of Yonge-Dundas Square)
- Old Dundas Street (a local road east and west of the Humber River, south of Dundas Street West)

c) Establishment, Naming, and Evolution of Dundas Street

Staff have confirmed that the road was named in 1793 by John Graves Simcoe, the first Lieutenant-Governor of Upper Canada, in honour of Henry Dundas, then the Home Secretary in the U.K. government of William Pitt. Dundas Street was originally a military road running from Burlington Bay (where the town of Dundas was later founded) to the Thames River. By the War of 1812, the road terminated at Queen St. West and Ossington Ave. Dundas Street was slowly extended eastward after 1913, taking in existing roads and expropriated properties. It reached its current end at Kingston Road in 1954.

d) Simcoe, Dundas, and Slavery

During his tenure as the civilian and military head of Upper Canada, Simcoe corresponded frequently with Henry Dundas. Simcoe's motivations for naming the road after Dundas are currently unclear. Simcoe is well-known as an opponent of slavery and for introducing legislation passed on July 9, 1793 to prevent the further introduction of slaves into Upper Canada and allow for the gradual abolition of slavery. No enslaved people already residing in the province were freed outright; children born to enslaved mothers after the legislation was passed were freed upon reaching the age of 25 years. Late in 1793, Simcoe wrote to Dundas about the challenges in getting this compromise through the Upper Canadian parliament.

As the head of a British colony, Simcoe would have been familiar with efforts underway in the British parliament to abolish slavery, in which Dundas had an important role. In 1776, Dundas represented a man who had been purchased as a slave in Jamaica and taken to Scotland; in winning the case, Dundas helped establish the principle that slavery did not exist under Scots law and that enslaved people living in Scotland could claim their freedom. However, in 1792, William Wilberforce's motion in the British House of Commons to immediately abolish the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade was amended by Dundas.

Dundas' proposal – to amend Wilberforce's motion and end slavery on a gradual basis – was adopted in the House of Commons, which then determined the end date should be 1796. Critically, the House of Lords did not consent to the motion and resolutions. It would be 1807 before the Slave Trade Act was enacted.

The intentions and actions of Simcoe and Dundas must be considered in the context of the devastating impact of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade on Black lives and culture. As the United Nations has noted:

The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade was the largest forced migration in history, and undeniably one of the most inhumane. The extensive exodus of Africans spread to many areas of the world over a 400-year period was unprecedented in the annals of recorded human history.

From 1501 to 1830, four Africans crossed the Atlantic for every one European, making the demographics of the Americas in that era more of an extension of the African diaspora than a European one. The legacy of this migration is still evident today...

e) Expert Advice on Dundas' Legacy

Interpreting the role and legacy of Henry Dundas in the abolition and preservation of slavery is complicated. While Dundas made statements opposing slavery, his "gradualist" stance has marked him as a moderate anti-slavery reformer. His motivations for taking this stance need to be examined, including his connections to British West Indian economic interests. Dundas' amendment should be considered alongside the role the House of Lords played in blocking social change and perpetuating slavery.

To prepare advice and recommendations, staff are compiling a list of academics and public historians (especially people of colour) who have studied colonial history, the history of slavery, and renaming processes. To date, contact has been made with:

- Dr. Afua Cooper, Dalhousie University
- Dr. Melanie Newton, University of Toronto
- Dr. Regina Rini, York University
- Dr. Carl James, York University
- Natasha Henry, Ontario Black History Society
- Dr. Carl Benn, Ryerson University

Other potential subject matter experts will be contacted soon. Staff have also consulted with senior administrators from Ryerson University (Denise O'Neil Green & Daniel Bowden) who are responding to the controversial legacy of Egerton Ryerson in relation to Indian residential schools. Processes are underway at the University to address that legacy; their lessons may inform action by the City in regard to the Dundas Street issue.

f) Renamings and Removals in Other Jurisdictions

The Dundas renaming petition is one of many global efforts currently underway to confront anti-Black racism and discrimination against other communities. Staff are working to understand how other jurisdictions are responding to proposals to rename streets and facilities and to remove monuments.

To date, 37 case studies from 2017-20 have been identified, drawn from Canada, the U.S., the U.K., Germany, Spain, and Australia. Key findings, with Canadian experiences highlighted, are:

- 21 municipalities changed the street/community name (Montreal); 12 did not (Kitchener)
- 2 municipalities issued anti-racism statements but have not yet made further changes (Mississauga)
- 6 are looking into other ways to honour Indigenous and equity-seeking communities (Halifax)
- 8 established advisory committees, and 15 included public consultation (Halifax)
- 6 removed monuments (Victoria)
- 4 kept monuments but added new interpretative plaques (none in Canada)
- 9 case studies included costs associated with this work (Halifax, Victoria)
- 3 street naming cases noted the size of the street and the number of residents affected (Fort Frances); most streets were not main thoroughfares
- The Canadian government announced that a Coast Guard ship will be renamed

A monument to Henry Dundas in Edinburgh, Scotland has fuelled intense public debate as to whether it should be removed or reinterpreted. On July 13, 2020, signs were erected by the City of Edinburgh Council and Edinburgh World Heritage announcing the text that will appear on a new permanent plaque accompanying the monument. The text reads:

At the top of this neoclassical column stands a statue of Henry Dundas, 1st Viscount Melville (1742-1811). He was the Scottish Lord Advocate and an MP for Edinburgh and Midlothian, and the First Lord of the Admiralty. Dundas was a contentious figure, provoking controversies that resonate to this day. While Home Secretary in 1792 and first Secretary of State for War in 1796 he was instrumental in deferring the abolition of the Atlantic slave trade. Slave trading by British ships was not abolished until 1807. As a result of this delay, more than half a million enslaved Africans crossed the Atlantic. Dundas also curbed democratic dissent in Scotland, and both defended and expanded the British empire, imposing colonial rule on indigenous peoples. He was impeached in the United Kingdom for misappropriation of public money, and, although acquitted, he never held public office again. Despite this, the monument before you to Henry Dundas was funded by voluntary contribution from British naval officers, petty officers, seamen, and marines and erected in 1821, with the statue placed on top in 1827.

In 2020 this plaque was dedicated to the memory of the more than half a million Africans whose enslavement was a consequence of Henry Dundas's actions.

g) Current Community Metrics for Dundas Street

Staff have begun assembling population and business data from a number of sources, including the 2016 Canadian Census and the 2019 Toronto Employment Survey. Key findings so far include:

- 7,329 properties along Dundas

- 102,466 residents and 48,975 dwellings along and immediately adjacent to Dundas
- 2,095 business establishments with 25,426 employees along Dundas
- 25+ Toronto businesses along Dundas Street with "Dundas" in their name

h) Options for Responding to the Petition

Four options have been identified to respond to the community petition:

- 1) do nothing; or
- 2) retain the legal street names and add ceremonial street names and/or interpretation (e.g., plaques) along each street; or
- 3) retain the legal street names but rename three parkettes and one public library branch with Dundas in their names, and rename Yonge-Dundas Square; or
- 4) change the legal names of Dundas Street East, Dundas Street West, Dundas Square, and Old Dundas Street, as well as other civic assets carrying the Dundas name.

Staff are **not** recommending option 1, do nothing.

i) Potential Impacts of Renaming

If Dundas Street was renamed, preliminary impacts on City assets include:

- 730+ street signs replaced (\$230K)
- 2 subway stations, 2 streetcar/bus routes and numerous transit shelters renamed and signage, etc. replaced
- Yonge-Dundas Square renamed and signage, etc. replaced
- 3 parkettes renamed and 13 park and facility signs replaced (\$36K)
- 1 Toronto Public Library branch renamed and signage, etc. replaced
- 31 Bike Share station and 4 Green P carpark signs, etc. replaced
- 1 Toronto Police Service division headquarters sign replaced
- 1 Corporate Real Estate Management operations centre sign replaced
- New street addresses for 8 Toronto Community Housing Corporation residential properties, 1 fire station, 1 museum and 1 shelter

j) Potential Processes for Renaming

If Dundas Street is renamed, other civic assets would require renaming due to their use of "Dundas" as a geographic orientation tool (e.g. Jane/Dundas Public Library). Council has adopted several tools to guide namings:

- Property Naming Policy, which is used for parks and facilities
- Street Naming Policy, which is used for legal (official) street names and ceremonial (non-official) street names.

Use of the City's Street Naming Policy is not recommended. This policy requires that the applicant provide a single alternate new name and that 75% of the properties along the street give their consent to the new name.

An alternative process would be to modify the one successfully used for the Six Points Interchange project, which resulted in names being established for three new public streets in 2019. The process might include:

- Online/mail gathering of potential street names from public
- Staff and a community advisory panel (including Black representatives and Indigenous knowledge and language keepers) to create a short list
- Online/mail voting by public of the short-listed names (Six Points reserved one street for an Indigenous name)
- Results ranked by staff
- Consultation with the City's Aboriginal Affairs Advisory Committee and Confronting Anti-Black Racism unit's Partnership and Accountability Circle
- Recommendations to Executive Committee

Next Steps

a) Addressing the Specifics of Dundas Street

Any decision to rename a major arterial road like Dundas requires careful consideration of its potential impacts and an inclusive public process that responds to the community at large and addresses local considerations as appropriate. The process should be coordinated across the City government to review the full range of Dundas-named assets and ensure consistent, coherent community consultation and communications.

Staff will continue to gather information on:

- Street and facility renaming and monument removal experiences in other jurisdictions
- Affected stakeholders in relation to Dundas Street, including Black and Indigenous organizations and communities, BIAs, residents associations and local heritage organizations
- The financial impacts of renaming Dundas on the assets of City divisions, agencies, and corporations

Staff will continue to reach out to subject matter experts on the historical questions surrounding Henry Dundas, including his motivations for taking a gradualist approach to ending slavery and the long-term impact of his actions on Black lives. It is critical that any decision by Council affecting Dundas Street be based on sound historical research and analysis. At the same time, staff will consult with human rights experts and/or legal historians to ensure the issue is properly framed within an equity framework.

Staff will more fully assess the four options identified above (do nothing; retain the legal street names with additional interpretation and recognitions; retain the legal street names but rename those civic assets with Dundas in their name, except TTC; and rename the streets and other civic assets now carrying the Dundas name).

Staff will estimate the costs that would be incurred by businesses, organizations, property owners, and residents with a street address on Dundas as well as any service or directory that maps or shows addresses (e.g., the PATH system). This will be significant.

For the renaming option, staff will develop a community engagement model and change management process that simultaneously addresses all civic assets with the Dundas name. The substantial resources required to support community engagement and communications will be determined.

Staff have recommended to me that a single integrated renaming project covering all civic assets (streets, parks, TTC, Toronto Public Library, and Yonge-Dundas Square) be developed. This could

include refinements to the Six Points process, with a view to ensuring that community engagement is comprehensive and equitable.

b) Beyond Dundas Street

At the same time as we develop a response to the specific Dundas Street issue, it is critical that we more broadly understand and respond to how systematic racism and discrimination are embedded in City assets, commemorative programs, and naming policies. In terms of understanding, an approach to reviewing our assets, programs, and policies will be developed for Council's consideration. This review might ultimately touch all named City streets, parks and facilities, public monuments, and civic awards and honours.

In terms of responding, an approach will also be developed that is both retrospective and prospective – one that addresses the past, present, and future. Action on legacy issues might take a four-Rs approach: **rename** (a street), **remove** (a monument), **revoke** (an award), or **reinterpret** (any of the foregoing). Taking a proactive stance might mean revising existing policies or creating new ones; it might also mean identifying notable Torontonians who have yet to be recognized in the city's landscape.

These broader approaches, like the process taken more narrowly to Dundas Street, need to be rigorous and inclusive. Again, substantial resources to support community engagement and communications will be required, but have not been determined at this time.

c) Reporting Back

A staff report on all of the above matters should be ready for consideration by the Executive Committee at its meeting on September 23, 2020. Once Council has made a decision on how to respond to the Dundas renaming petition, staff will implement its direction.

Conclusion

The City of Toronto is at a particularly turbulent moment in its history, facing not only calls for racial justice but the consequences of COVID-19 and its inequitable impact on our racialized communities and residents. The City should reaffirm its commitment and take the necessary action to implement the Toronto Action Plan to Confront Anti-Black Racism, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's Calls to Action, and the Calls for Justice for Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women and Girls. At the mid-point of the UN's International Decade for People of African Descent, taking steps to right wrongs, challenge systematic institutionalized racism, and build a more inclusive Toronto is more important than ever. Addressing the historical legacy of Dundas Street is one of these steps.

Chris Murray
City Manager