

Pilon, Janet

Subject: Contradicting Regulations

From: Mary Poirier

Sent: Tuesday, June 16, 2020 10:07 AM

To: clerk@hamilton.ca

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To the Chair and Members of General Issues Committee,

My name is Mary Poirier. I am 21 years old, and have lived in Hamilton my entire life. I am proud to say I am a mixed race member of your community. While I am half Filipino, I have deep concerns for my fellow black community members.

The former township of Dundas (which has been amalgamated since 2000) is named after Henry Dundas, "the minister most strongly associated with those wishing to resist immediate abolition [of slavery]" (Ferrell). I would like to demand that the city of Hamilton and its responsible council have Dundas change its name.

According to an article titled "Hamilton Street Naming, Renaming, and Addressing Guidelines and Policies that the guide to municipal street renaming recommends the following:

" A) The city reserves the right to rename any street... in the interest of public safety....

F) That there shall be no use of awkward, corrupt, discriminatory or derogatory names, in regards to race, sex, colour, creed, political affliction, or other social factors".

Having a city's name dedicated to a vocally racist and oppressive character in history is harmful to our society whose black members still suffer the ties of systemic racism. It is inherent that the city of Hamilton considers the dangers of dedicating an entire former township with the name of a man who defended the right to own slaves. By doing so, we as a city, are celebrating the oppression of black people.

Additionally, your guidelines for renaming streets dictates that there shall not be discriminatory names in regard to race. By leaving a township with the name of a slavemaster, we are allowing generations of pain and suffering to continue.

Dundas was only able to have a town named after him because he was friends with John Graves Simcoe, previously a lieutenant governor of Upper Canada. This goes against the guidelines which have been placed by Hamilton's current standards, as it delegates that names of consideration include local heroes. A hero does not "force around 630,000 slaves to wait more than a decade for their freedom" (Schofield). As a diverse society, we cannot consider a man who delayed the abolishment of slavery in the British Empire by 15 years a true hero.

By keeping this name, we are applauding those who oppress our people. This is no different than keeping the name of a town dedicated to Adolf Hitler. If there was a town with that name, it would be renamed with no question. So why do we question making changes for the black members of our community? The Immigrants Working Centre claims that there are "over 70 cultural heritage groups in Hamilton". With such a diverse community, we must lend a hand to ensure public safety for all of our citizens.

During World War I, "on Sept. 1, 1916, Berlin officially became Kitchener. Residents voted narrowly to change Berlin's name in the midst of the First World War to prove loyalty and stem the backlash against a city with deep German roots" (Outhit). We must end the war on race. We must take backlash against a society with deep systematically racist roots.

I demand that the name of Dundas, Ontario be changed because it contradicts the policies set for renaming and addressing streets in Hamilton by appraising discriminatory historical figures and demolishes public safety.

I have posted a petition to raise awareness of this issue and you are welcome to view it here: <https://www.change.org/p/fred-eisenberger-change-the-name-of-dundas-on>



Sign the Petition

Change the Name of Dundas, ON

www.change.org

Thank you for your time,

Mary Poirier.

References used

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<https://iwchamilton.ca/resources/know-your-city-hamilton-ontario/hamilton-arts-culture/>

<https://www.iheartradio.ca/610cktb/news/renaming-dundas-street-to-erase-link-to-racist-1.12658213>

<https://www.edinburghnews.scotsman.com/news/people/who-was-henry-dundas-why-edinburgh-statue-scottish-advocate-being-changed-reflect-his-links-slavery-2880569>

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<https://www.cp24.com/news/petition-asks-city-to-rename-dundas-street-over-namesake-s-opposition-to-abolishing-slavery-1.4977538?fbclid=IwAR330BLmkdL6CPqDGq0CBUNmkIX7stTtB34hjht2KL3kXIWHmpzBSSmQThI>

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