

Renaming of Colonial Building – Public Consultation

What We Heard

Background

As part of the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador review to ensure public monuments and observances respectfully recognize and commemorate our history, the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts and Recreation (TCAR) sought public input on the name of Colonial Building. The intent of the public consultation was to seek input from the public on whether Colonial Building should be renamed and, if so, what new name would be appropriate and acceptable.

An online questionnaire was available through the engageNL platform May 19 – June 2, 2022. Individuals unable to participate online, or preferring another format, were invited to send a written submission to TCAR.

TCAR consulted leaders of Indigenous Governments and Organizations directly through a separate process.

Results

Two-hundred-fifteen online submissions to the questionnaire were received. More than 90 per cent of participants indicated they were a resident of Newfoundland and Labrador; six per cent self-identified as a member of an Indigenous community and about ten per cent indicated they were history, heritage, or cultural sector professionals.

An additional eight written submissions were received by TCAR.

Whether the name of Colonial Building should be changed

The online questionnaire asked participants to indicate whether or not they agreed with the statement “The name of Colonial Building should be changed.” While 26 per cent of participants agreed with the statement, most participants (69 per cent) disagreed. Within the responses from participants who self-identified as members of Indigenous communities, about half agreed and about half disagreed with the statement.

All eight participants who made written submissions indicated a preference that the name of the building not change.

A significant number of comments provided online and in written submissions indicated a strong feeling that changing the name of Colonial Building may be interpreted as an effort to erase or white-wash the colonial history of Newfoundland and Labrador. A small number of comments indicated concern that retaining the name of Colonial Building may continue to perpetuate harm.

If the name of Colonial Building is changed, what name should be used

The online questionnaire asked participants their opinion on what a new name for Colonial Building should be, if the name is changed. Of the options presented, 40 percent of respondents preferred “Parliament House”, 11 per cent preferred “House of Parliament”, and 24 per cent indicated no preference. While there was a significant number of respondents who chose “Other, please specify”, most of these respondents suggested to retain the current name, while others provided no suggestion at all.

Summary

Based on the questionnaire responses and written submissions, a large majority of respondents prefer that Colonial Building retain its current name.