

Naming of an existing Public Lane West of Huron Street, extending between Sussex Avenue and Glen Morris Street

Date: April 3, 2025

To: Toronto and East York Community Council

From: Director, Engineering Support Services, Engineering and Construction Services
General Manager, Economic Development and Culture

Wards: Ward 11 - University - Rosedale

SUMMARY

This report recommends that the name "Mel Watkins Lane" be approved to identify an existing public lane located west of Huron Street, extending between Sussex Avenue and Glen Morris Street.

This naming proposal complies with the City of Toronto Street Naming Policy which can be found at <https://www.toronto.ca/city-government/planning-development/street-naming/>

This naming proposal is in alignment with the objectives of the Guiding Principles for Commemoration in the Public Realm.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Engineering and Construction Services and the General Manager, Economic Development and Culture recommend that Toronto and East York Community Council:

1. Approve the name "Mel Watkins Lane" for an existing public lane located west of Huron Street, extending between Sussex Avenue and Glen Morris Street.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

The cost to install street name signage is approximately \$600 and is included within the Transportation Services Division's Operating Budget.

The Chief Financial Officer and Treasurer has reviewed this report and agrees with the information as presented in the Financial Impact section.

DECISION HISTORY

This is the first time that this issue is before Community Council.

COMMENTS

At its meeting on July 19, 2022, City Council adopted the City of Toronto Commemorative Framework and approved revisions to the Street Naming Policy.

<https://secure.toronto.ca/council/agenda-item.do?item=2022.EX34.6>

Community Councils have delegated authority to decide street naming matters which comply with the City of Toronto Street Naming Policy.

An application was received on March 6, 2023, from a resident requesting to name the existing public lane located west of Huron Street, extending between Sussex Avenue and Glen Morris Street, as “Mel Watkins Lane” honouring a local community figure/activist who resided near this laneway from 1976 to 1991.

The applicant provided the following background and rationale:

“Mel Watkins Lane”

“Mel Watkins resided at 31 Sussex Ave (one property removed from this laneway) from 1976 to 1991. During that period, he was an active participant in community affairs and a member of the Huron-Sussex Residents’ Organization.

Mel Watkins was a distinguished professor at the University of Toronto, a leading figure in the study of Canadian political economy, a champion of the rights of indigenous peoples in the development of our natural resources, an environmentalist, and a peace activist. He was appointed to the Order of Canada in 2020 in recognition of his contributions as a political economist and for his social justice advocacy. Mel Watkins passed away in April 2020.”

Historical Research on the Mel Watkins

Mel Watkins lived near the laneway to be named after him for 15 years. Mr. Watkins was Professor Emeritus at the University of Toronto’s Departments of Political Science and Economics. Mr. Watkins began his teaching career in 1958. Mr. Watkins is notable for his contributions to academic discourse around Canadian economic policies and theories, as well as his sustained support of the sovereignty of Indigenous peoples, and environmental activism.

In the 1960s, Mr. Watkins was appointed by Prime Minister Lester Pearson’s government to lead a task force that resulted in *The Watkins Report*. This report

sparked a national debate about how much foreign investment should be allowed in the Canadian economy. Ultimately, the Watkins Report recommendations were not acted upon, but Watkins remained steadfast in his advocacy. In 1969, he co-authored the Waffle Manifesto, which called for the public ownership of Canadian industries, the creation of an independent Canadian labour movement, and supported the feminist movement and Quebec's separatist movement.

Mel Watkins worked with the Dene Nation during the Mackenzie Valley Pipeline Inquiry in the early 1970s, which sought to examine the potential social, environmental, and economic implications of a proposed gas pipeline that would traverse the Yukon and the Mackenzie River Valley of the Northwest Territories. This experience offered a valuable opportunity to consider the complex relationship between resource development and the dispossession of Indigenous land, which often results in a reliance on these resources. As a result of this work, Mel Watkins edited the publication, *Dene Nation: The Colony Within*, in 1977. This book supported Indigenous self-determination as a human right and examined how resource extraction on Indigenous lands works to undermine Indigenous self-determination if there is no land settlement.

Mel Watkins was a committed peace activist; he served as the president of Science for Peace, an organization committed to knowledge sharing and research on demilitarization, decarbonization, and social justice. Mr. Watkins was also a member of the Canadian Pugwash Group; this group focuses on mitigating the global threats of nuclear war and climate change through scientific based policy work.

Mel Watkins' longstanding commitments to Indigenous self-determination, peace activism, and environment. Mel Watkins was recognized as a member of the Order of Canada in 2019 for his scholarship and activism, integrating academic rigor with a commitment to social equity.

A complete Historical Research Report is available upon request.

The proposed name has been circulated for comment and is acceptable to Toronto Police Service, Toronto Fire Services, and Toronto Paramedic Services.

Councillor Saxe, Ward 11 University-Rosedale, supports this naming.

Consent was provided by Kelly Chrichton, the widow of the commemorated party.

Community support was demonstrated with a petition of signatures from the local community inclusive of letters of support from some of the owners whose property abuts the lane being named. In addition to this, a letter of support from the President of the University of Toronto was received on March 2, 2023.

The lane is shown as PART 1 on Attachment No.1 Sketch No. **PS-2025-012**.

CONTACT

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CONTACT

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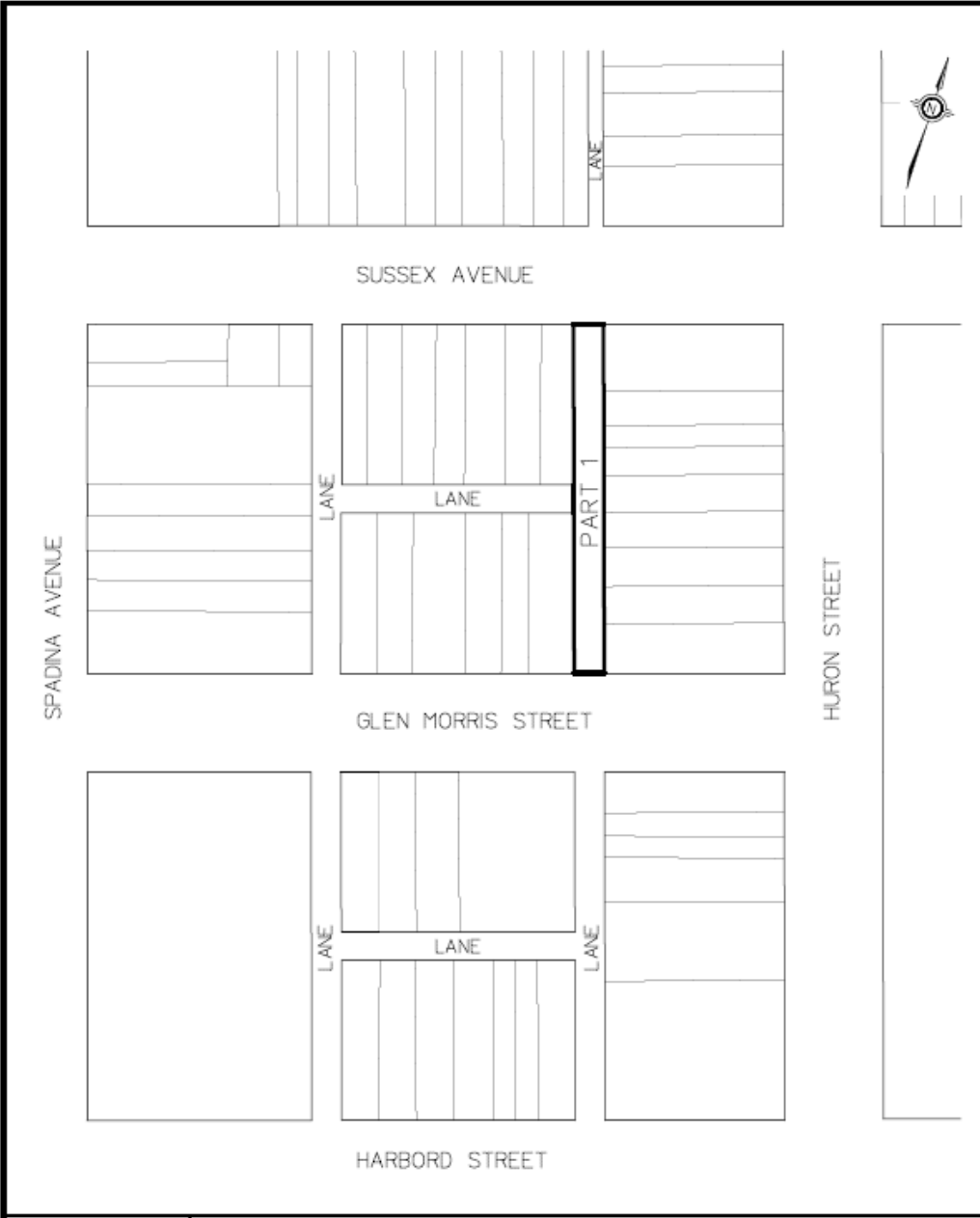

Patrick Tobin, General Manager, Economic Development & Culture

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment No. 1 Sketch No. PS-2025-012

Attachment No. 1 Sketch No. PS-2025-012

Showing the location of an existing public lane located west of Huron Street, extending between Sussex Avenue and Glen Morris Street.

	
PROPERTY INFORMATION SHEET	
NAMING OF A PUBLIC LANE LOCATED WEST OF HURON STREET EXTENDING BETWEEN SUSSEX AVENUE AND GLEN MORRIS STREET	
 <small>ENGINEERING & CONSTRUCTION SERVICES ENGINEERING SUPPORT SERVICES LAND & PROPERTY SURVEYS</small>	
<small>NOTE: THIS SKETCH HAS BEEN COMPILED FROM OFFICE RECORDS. MEASUREMENTS ARE APPROXIMATE</small>	
<small>CHECKED BY: R. SEGUIN PREPARED BY: S. LOMBARDO</small>	<small>WARD 11 - UNIVERSITY-ROSEDALE DATE: APRIL 2, 2025</small>
SKETCH No. PS-2025-012	