

Renaming Lawton Parkette in Honour of Carolyn Bennett

Date: February 11, 2026

To: Toronto East York Community Council

From: General Manager, Parks and Recreation

Wards: 12 - Toronto-St. Paul's

SUMMARY

In July 2022, City Council adopted the City of Toronto Commemorative Framework to guide the commemorative naming and renaming of streets, City properties, and monuments. This report considers an application submitted by Ward 12 (Toronto–St. Paul’s) City Councillor Josh Matlow to rename Lawton Parkette, located at 1600 Yonge Street, in honour of Dr. Carolyn Bennett.

The application was reviewed collaboratively by Parks and Recreation, Economic Development and Culture, and Strategic Partnerships. Staff have confirmed that the proposed renaming meets the requirements of the City of Toronto Property Naming Policy and aligns with the Guiding Principles for Commemoration. Staff therefore recommend approval of the proposed name, “Carolyn Bennett Park.”

RECOMMENDATIONS

The General Manager, Parks and Recreation recommends that:

1. Toronto and East York Community Council adopt the renaming of Lawton Parkette at 1600 Yonge Street to “Carolyn Bennett Park”.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

The costs associated with the production and installation of a new park sign will be accommodated within the 2026 Approved Operating Budget for Parks and Recreation.

The Chief Financial Officer and Treasurer has reviewed this report and agrees with the financial implications as identified in this section.

DECISION HISTORY

City Council on July 19, 20, 21 and 22, 2022, adopted the following:

1. City Council adopt the City of Toronto Commemorative Framework, consisting of:
 - a. the Guiding Principles for Commemoration in Attachment 1 to the report (June 27, 2022) from the City Manager, as amended by Part 2 below:
 - b. the revised City of Toronto Street Naming Policy in Attachment 2 to the report (June 27, 2022) from the City Manager;
 - c. the revised City of Toronto Property Naming Policy in Attachment 3 to the report (June 27, 2022) from the City Manager; and
 - d. the revised City of Toronto Public Art and Monument Donations Policy in Attachment 4 to the report (June 27, 2022) from the City Manager.

[Agenda Item History - 2022.EX34.6](#)

COMMENTS

An application has been submitted to rename Lawton Parkette, located at 1600 Yonge Street, in honour of Dr. Carolyn Bennett (b. 1950). The application includes a summary of Dr. Bennett's career and documentation of community engagement in support of the proposed renaming.

As verified through staff research, Dr. Bennett is a distinguished physician and public servant whose contributions have had a lasting impact locally and nationally. She served as the Member of Parliament for Toronto–St. Paul's from 1997 to 2023 and held several senior federal cabinet roles, including Canada's first Minister of State for Public Health, Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, and first Minister of Mental Health and Addictions. Her work advanced public health, reconciliation, mental wellness, and evidence-based policy, alongside sustained advocacy for human rights, women's leadership, and youth engagement. She currently serves as Canada's Ambassador to Denmark.

Dr. Bennett's professional career reflects a longstanding commitment to healthy and inclusive communities. She played a key role in the establishment of the Public Health Agency of Canada and contributed to primary care reform, health promotion, injury prevention, and pandemic preparedness. She was also an early national advocate for recognizing mental health as a core component of health care.

The parkette holds particular local significance, as Dr. Bennett's former constituency office was located adjacent to the site, and she regularly engaged with residents in this space throughout her political career.

Dr. Bennett's leadership has been recognized through numerous honours, including the Royal Life Saving Society's Service Cross in 1986 for over 20 years of service, awards for contributions to mental health and safety promotion, and her appointment as a Fellow of the Royal Canadian Geographical Society in 2023.

The application demonstrates community support for the proposed renaming. An online survey distributed through Councillor Matlow's Ward 12 newsletter received 125 responses, with more than half indicating support. Additional positive feedback was received directly by the Councillor's office.

Based on the application and staff review, Dr. Bennett's contributions to public service, public health, and community life meet the intent and criteria of the City's commemorative naming policies.

Recommended Park

Lawton Parkette is a small existing park located at 1600 Yonge Street, immediately adjacent to Dr. Bennett's former constituency office.

City of Toronto Property Naming Policy

Community Councils have delegated authority to decide property naming matters that comply with the City of Toronto Property Naming Policy.

Parks and Recreation consulted with Strategic Partnerships and Economic Development and Culture to review this proposal. Staff have confirmed that the proposed renaming aligns with the City of Toronto Property Naming Policy and the Guiding Principles for Commemoration. Accordingly, staff recommend that Community Council approve the renaming of Lawton Parkette to "Carolyn Bennett Park."

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SIGNATURE

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