Report of the

CANADIAN PERMANENT COMMITTEE ON GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES

to the

MINISTER'S GEOMATICS COUNCIL

Prepared for

The Honourable Jake Epp,

Minister

Energy, Mines and Resources Canada

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1. Background

The Canadian Permanent Committee on Geographical Names is the national body coordinating all questions affecting geographical nomenclature in Canada. Its predecessor, the Geographic Board of Canada, was established in 1897, and since that date there has existed, on an on-going basis, a mechanism for standardizing and approving names for places and geographical features in Canada. The composition and mandate of today's committee was confirmed by Order in Council P.C. 1990-549. Currently there are twenty-five members, representing each province and territory, various federal departments (concerned with mapping and charting, archives, translation, national parks, defence, statistics and Indian affairs) and academia.

In May 1990, Mr. Henri Dorion (Director of Research and Conservation, International Relations, at the Musée de la civilisation du Québec) was appointed as the CPCGN Chairperson.

2. CPCGN Mission Statement

As the national body coordinating all matters affecting geographical nomenclature in Canada, the CPCGN has a technical role to record and to approve, through the jurisdictions of its members, names for official use, in accordance with general principles and standards developed by the Committee; and a socio-cultural role to preserve and disseminate information on the historical and cultural significance of Canada's toponyms. The CPCGN is also the body which represents Canada internationally in activities relating to toponymic standards and practices outside the jurisdiction of National Defence.

3. CPCGN Goals

The Committee's goals relate specifically to:

- achieving a basic level of field recording of toponyms across Canada;
- developing national policies and procedures for the standardization of toponyms in Canada's official languages, native languages and, as required, other languages;
- promoting the automation of geographical names records and assurance of the availability of information in digital systems; and,

- disseminating accurate toponymic information to government, industry and the general public.

The following is a list of some of the work undertaken towards these goals during the past year.

- Through federal/provincial/territorial funding, and in conjunction with universities, field recording of locally-used toponyms has been extended in the Northwest Territories and Newfoundland. Quebec has undertaken field work within the province, particularly in the region of Gaspésie -- Îles-de-la-Madeleine.

- The CPCGN's *Principles and procedures for geographical naming* was revised and reprinted in the spring. The Committee undertook a pilot project to determine map users' reactions to a variety of written forms of native (Athapaskan) toponyms on topographic maps. The results will assist the CPCGN in developing policies and procedures for recording and approving geographical names for national use. Progress was made, in conjunction with academia, in developing methodology and an appropriate handbook for collection of geographical names as used by native communities in Canada. Consultations between federal and provincial authorities promoted cooperation towards compatible approaches to the treatment of toponyms, in relation to Canada's official languages.

- A working group on automated toponymic records, led by EMR, undertook a study to develop a vision for a Canadian digital toponymic service, to increase cooperation between federal, provincial and territorial authorities in providing government and the private sector with complete toponymic records for Canada. EMR worked with the Northwest Territories and British Columbia to develop and maintain their own data bases, under the umbrella of the CPCGN, using common standards and formats. Documentation on data in the Canadian Geographical Names Data Base was produced. Data were upgraded and standards developed for the recording and exchange of data.

- Toponymic information was disseminated through publications, talks, displays, media interviews, and digital products, both at federal and provincial/territorial levels. The Committee started planning video products for national and international instruction in toponymic management and procedures.

4. Recommendations to the Minister

- Federal/provincial/territorial cooperation through geographical names programmes which accept common standards, and yet acknowledge regional diversity, should be recognized as an expression of national unity.

- In the same spirit of national unity, work with native communities on geographical name records should be accelerated.

- Encouragement should be given to a more complete, and more accurate, digital toponymic data base for Canada.

- More emphasis should be placed on provision of Canadian expertise, through international programmes, to assist in establishing national authorities responsible for geographical reference bases, in developing countries.

- Support for research in more peripheral areas of geomatics should also be encouraged, and agreements reached with such organizations as SSHRC, to fund jointly with academia, projects of national significance.

- Joint enterprises with the private sector should be encouraged to disseminate accurate national toponymic information in hard copy and digital format (including CD ROMs).

5. The Work of the CPCGN

For this report, the work of the CPCGN is viewed under four major conceptual areas important to all Canadians: **prosperity and well-being;** the **environment; competitiveness and cooperation** and **unity.**

5.1 Prosperity and Well-Being

The prosperity and well-being of the population is, in reality, the ultimate objective sought by all governments. One of the basic elements of well-being is the free movement of ideas, goods, and people. For this movement to be free, easy, rapid and as inexpensive as possible, it requires a systematic framework of geographical designations - the development and management of an appropriately standardized national toponymy to constitute a fundamental base to integrate with geo-referenced data.

To provide such a framework for national services and products the CPCGN must continue to improve its coast-to-coast collection of locally-used and recognized names, must develop and promote national standards for making names official, and must assure that national, provincial, territorial and municipal toponymic data bases contain compatible data. Without ongoing collaboration between federal, provincial, and territorial governments and a continuing programme for local recording of Canada's geographical names, the necessary national toponymic framework cannot be improved, or even maintained.

Access to information and access to knowledge go together in a developed society, and indeed constitute indicators of prosperity. The production of material in different didactic media is of great importance. Audio-visual products, for example, promote a better understanding of the Canadian landmass as a whole and of the diversity of its constituent parts.

The CPCGN is embarking on a programme to create educational modules in an audio-visual medium. Each module will promote an aspect of geographical naming. (For example, the role of a national names authority, and the methodology for gathering and recording geographical names used by the native people of Canada.) Such video footage will be used in valuable training tools for use within provincial and territorial jurisdictions, nationally, or internationally, where Canada's expertise can be of benefit to developing countries, or to countries facing similar questions of toponymic standardization.

Such products constitute a valuable approach to bolstering the country's *cultural* well-being, which is a necessary support to its *economic* well-being.

To increase the general prosperity of the population, the government must share the work with the private sector, which also has rights and responsibilities in certain areas. Within the realm of geographical names activities, this includes an ongoing need to work with the universities in developing methodologies and facilitating their relevant and interrelated research programmes. It means working with industry, particularly on digital services, where the private sector may be the provider of expertise or the users of data. Straight-forward guidelines for selling data and reaching licensing agreements will be mutually beneficial, while further development of mechanisms for the exchange of data and expertise could promote broader dissemination of quality information.

A better knowledge of one's own country through a strong geographical names programme is not only beneficial to the well-being of Canadians. The concept is equally important at an international level, particularly with regard to developing countries where national toponymic inventories are in many cases still deficient. Canada can well share its expertise to promote a greater global awareness of the value of accurate, unambiguous place name designations in countries where toponymic and cartographic activities are being expanded.

In support of these general considerations one could bring several examples to illustrate that good toponymic management and adequate standardization programmes provide large economic and social advantages. Rather than repeating them here we make reference to the text published on this subject by the United Nations in *World Cartography,* Vol. XVIII, p. 23-24, 1986. A copy of this paper is included as an appendix to this report.

5.2 Environment

All policies devoted to protecting the environment, bio-physical and socio-economic, must have recourse to data bases that permit precise location of phenomena. A good locational system is a basic requirement for good documentation (whether for research purposes or aimed at a large audience) and to assure rational and concerted environmental management plans.

To populate toponymic data bases the work of field surveys is indispensable. Managing existing data also requires an ongoing updating programme to assure that usage is consistent with recorded toponymic data and that "official toponyms" become well disseminated as part of an essential base for communication. Official toponyms, recognized through the CPCGN, are key elements of National Topographic System (NTS) maps and of small-scale National Atlas maps, as well as of hydrographic charts, DND and Canadian Parks Service products. To maintain the credibility and usefulness of such products (in paper or digital form) a continuous national toponymic management programme is essential.

Large areas of Canada, particularly the north, have not yet been fully surveyed from a toponymic standpoint. The current recommended geographical names framework is neither of adequate density for reference purposes, nor does it accurately reflect the names used by the people living in the area.

Enhancement of our efforts to achieve more complete base line data for national use is a joint responsibility of federal, provincial and territorial governments. Over the last two years, steps have been made in this regard through jointly funded projects in the Northwest Territories and Newfoundland.

During this past year EMR has initiated work towards the formulation of a long term vision for digital toponymic services in Canada. Acceptance of this vision will forge stronger links between provincial, territorial and federal names authorities, and permit the CPCGN to better address the needs of users of toponymic data. Implementation of a development plan will depend, in part, on EMR maintaining momentum and leadership in addressing both strategic and technical issues which are important to the availability of accurate, consistent toponymic locational data.

Toponymic programmes and good toponymic management are indeed supportive of environmental management, in that toponymy constitutes the locative language of the environment.

5.3 Competitiveness and Cooperation

In the simplest terms, one could say that *cooperation* must be the basic principle of toponymic activity in Canada - cooperation between different levels of government, with private industry and the academic community. Such a mode of operation must serve as a basis to establish and ensure *competitiveness* of Canadian "know-how" in the international market place. This is particularly true in toponymy.

Such principles should allow us to develop mutually supporting structures, exchange information and experience, and eventually develop integrated digital toponymic systems, which although decentralized, permit harmonious management of Canada's toponymy. The only competition that should exist at this level is one of striving for higher quality.

For many years the provincial and territorial toponymic authorities have shared and exchanged experience under the aegis of the Canadian Permanent Committee on Geographical Names, and therefore, on a continuing basis they are able to improve the quality and range of their products and services. Private enterprise also is, and will continue to be, called upon to play an active role in developing systems and services to disseminate toponymic information.

The CPCGN is at present planning to complement the *Gazetteer of Canada* series of provincial volumes with the compilation of a Concise National Gazetteer (in paper copy and/or CD-ROM). Opportunities for private sector partnerships in this publishing field, as well as in manipulation and creation of certain value-added digital products, should be encouraged within a clearly defined framework. The CPCGN also continues to collaborate with universities, through its advisory committees, through research agreements and through joint projects to develop methodology, particularly on issues of nation-wide significance.

The experience accumulated by provincial, territorial and federal authorities in toponymic programmes has become known internationally, and Canada is considered as a world leader in the field. Since 1967 Canada has played a leadership role in international standardization through the United Nations Conferences on the Standardization of Geographical Names. The most recent conference was hosted by Canada in Montréal in 1987. Between conferences Canada has also actively participated in the work of the Group of Experts on geographical names, a group currently headed by the CPCGN Chair, Henri Dorion. Canada has also participated in toponymic training courses organized by the United Nations and by other international organizations, and has provided expertise to several countries of Africa, Asia and Latin America.

Considerable opportunity exists for Canada to contribute to the establishment and development of geographical names authorities in countries which as yet lack good standardized toponymic records. Such help could in turn improve the quality of mapping programmes in these countries and open up opportunities for further Canadian technological exchange.

5.4 Unity

The CPCGN plays the role of catalyst in the field of toponymic cooperation. Members from across Canada exchange experience and expertise; they research common, or at least compatible, standards; and, they work to integrate policies to achieve the best possible degree of national harmony. The respect of these regional differences is in itself a gauge of national unity and understanding. The appropriate use of official languages and native languages is an essential element of the toponymy of

Canada and requires understanding and sensitivity to regional, as well as national, perspectives in order to achieve an equilibrium and a compatibility of policies between different parts of Canada and different levels of government.

The CPCGN is taking a pro-active approach to recording the names used by native people and developing flexibility in the approach to recognizing such names for official use. There are many areas which require further research and policy development, including the standardization of written forms of these names and their application on maps. In its current plans the Committee is addressing the question of improving communications between native communities and toponymic authorities by making available field training programmes in the recording of native toponyms.

In another regard the CPCGN is contributing to the equitable treatment of individuals and particular groups. Some toponyms have in the past been acceptable, but today may be considered derogatory. It is essential that such names when identified are removed from the official records. Only by taking these steps can we have the respect of the communities which make up Canadian society, and so promote a toponymic mosaic which acknowledges the differences, but at the same time upholds our common values and ideals.

6. Conclusion

The pursuit of a coherent programme of standardization and dissemination of geographical names for Canada is indeed a challenge. Undertaken in a spirit of cooperation between federal, provincial and territorial authorities, private industry and the general public, a sound toponymic base can contribute to the prosperity and unity of the country. It is a fundamental reference framework for focussing on environmental issues (both natural and socio-economic) and so aids in the ongoing education of the population on these issues. The expertise developed in toponymic management in Canada is a competitive item internationally, and is certainly a link in promoting the excellence of Canadian technology in the surveying, mapping and remote sensing fields.

"A country well managed is a country well named."

DEPARTMENT OF TECHNICAL CO-OPERATION FOR DEVELOPMENT

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IV. Social and economic benefits of the standardization of geographical names

SUMMARY

In assessing the social and economic benefits of the standardization of geographical names, a distinction must be drawn between national and international name standardization. National standardization serves as a basis for international standardization and mistakes made in the field investigation and offce treatment of names will be reflected on all small-scale national and international maps. National name standardization is very important from the cultural point of view, as correctly recorded geographical names represent an invaluable source for a variety of sciences from dialectology to research into settlement patterns, ethnic history, botany and so on. Moreover, the correct and systematic collection and treatment of geographical names has its practical use, notably in the fields of transport and communications. The international standardization of names is more than just the sum total of the results achieved on the national level. It must initiate or even elaborate internationally acceptable romanization systems for the non-Roman scripts and alphabets that are officially recognized in large parts of the world, as the confusion reigning in this field at the moment is becoming ever more intolerable. Furthermore, in areas beyond a single international sovereignty, the standardization of names acquires special significance as names have to be collected and/or fixed on an international level. This concerns names of maritime features, names of undersea features and antarctic names. Here international organizations have as a rule taken over those tasks in the primary stage of name standardization, which are otherwise carried out by individual states within the scope of national name standardization. There is the difference, however, that naming features in these uninhabited areas assumes a largely normative character, whereas in national name standardization the stress is on fixing the names in accordance with local usage. Naming maritime and undersea as well as antarctic features is as economically important as naming features on land. The generic elements of the names of undersea features will be strictly in keeping with oceanographic terminology; the antarctic names, on the other hand, should reflect and commemorate the history of the discovery and exploration of the Antarctic in a fair and equitable manner.

More recently, the United Nations has decided that features on extraterrestrial bodies of the solar system should also be named in accordance with the criteria governing the international standardization of geographical names. The commemorative aspect is particularly pronounced here and it will be one of the tasks of the respective international bodies to make a fair appraisal of the various nations' share in human culture and history when terrestrial names are transferred to features in space.

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Any study looking into the significance of the standardization of geographical names must distinguish carefully between national and international standardization. National standardization constitutes the primary stage of name standardization in so far as it provides the basis for the secondary stage — international standardization. Any mistake made on the level of national standardization is automatically transferred to the international level. Yet, international name standardization is more than the sum total of the results achieved in national standardization; this is true above all where names fixed in a non-Roman script have to be transcribed into Roman script and where features beyond the sovereignty of nations have to be named.

National standardization aims at fixing the geographical names of a country in a linguistically correct form, which is possible only through the application of exact linguistic methods. The result is a cultural achievement of the first order, since the names fixed on maps and cadastral plans, and in gazetteers represent an important source for any research into historical patterns of settlement or into economic and ethnic history, and, in turn, furnish valuable information for the linguist and dialectologist. In many cases it has been the necessity of recording names from unwritten languages that first stimulated the development of alphabets for such languages. Fixing geographical names in multilingual areas is a cultural and political task of major importance for the coexistence of language groups in a State. The correct recording of names is especially important in languages which are subdivided into dialects. The name the investigator hears in the field will practically always be a dialectal sound formation. In which form should it be written down? Here possibilities range from a strictly dialectal form, of course as a rule within the scope of the alphabet of the respective standard language, to the conversion of the dialectal name into the standard language. In this conversion process the name is either made to conform with formal standard spelling or—in extreme cases—even translated. The way dialectal names are treated depends on a variety of social, political and cultural factors such as regionalism/centralism, social prestige, the existence of a written dialectal tradition, the classification of the generic name element as part of the general vocabulary of the language and the like.

In any case, a large-scale topographical map of a country is a highly important source for scientific research and thus a significant part of a country's cultural heritage. Its value as a source will depend on how carefully and painstakingly the names have been collected and recorded. Rough-and-ready field procedures or faulty methods may detract from its accuracy. True, the scope in the collection and office treatment of names may be limited: in many States the majority of the names of inhabited places are officially laid down by law.

A few examples will serve to show what information the map offers: we learn which languages, sometimes even which dialects are spoken in the area represented; we find traces of languages formerly spoken there or indications of changing sovereignty. Field names often show the advance of civilization as new lands were being brought under cultivation; they point to economic conditions of times long past. The generic elements of names illustrate vocabulary development and word geography. The botanist and zoologist will find clues pointing to the plant and animal life of former times.

The economic significance of national name standardization lies in the fact that in our day and age each significant place, feature, or area of a country must necessarily have an acknowledged and unequivocal name, along with variant names in regions that are legally multilingual. This necessity is particularly obvious where inhabited place names are concerned, which, after all, play a major role in transport and communications. But standardization is no less essential for all other categories of geographical names. In connection with flood control or the construction of hydroelectric plants, and the cadastre or the register of landed property, for examples, it is imperative that physical and cultural names should be clear and unequivocal.

As is noted above, international standardization is based on the results of national standardization. Since, however, the official languages of many countries are written in a non-Roman script and international cartography uses the Roman script, non-Roman scripts must be transcribed. This romanization is by no means the sole domain of those concerned with the standardization of geographical names, though it has received a decisive impetus from cartographers who have seen the pressing need for it in their daily work; a variety of "cartographic romanizations" have resulted.

The conversion of foreign alphabets and scripts is necessary in the cultural exchange between nations. Its outstanding practical value is beyond doubt. It is the object of the international standardization of names that for each topographical feature in a non-Roman script area an internationally acknowledged name form in Roman script should exist in addition to the standardized name in non-Roman script. Those familiar with the confusion reigning in this field in many parts of the world know that it constitutes a real obstacle to communications. They will genuinely appreciate the benefits of an international standardization. Thus it should no longer be possible for a variety of strongly divergent conversion forms to exist side by side for the name of the Greek island ᶜ°dra: Udra, Hydra, Idra, Idhra etc. In this context mention must be made of the fact that international cartography is dispensing with the use of exonyms. Accordingly an international road map will forgo use of the exonyms Venice, Venedig, Velence, Benatky, Mletci etc. in favour of the endonym (locally official name) of Venezia. Since, however, national

publications are likely to continue using exonyms for important topographical features in other countries, it will be the task of the national bodies responsible for the standardization of geographical names to concern themselves with those "conventional names".

A special field of international standardization activities is the naming of features beyond a single sovereignty: names have to be fixed for maritime and many undersea features as well as for topographical features in the Antarctic where, in accordance with the Antarctic Treaty, signed at Washington, D.C. on 1 December 1959, all territorial claims were waived for 30 years.

In all these cases international name standardization enters at the primary stage, assuming tasks otherwise reserved to the individual nations for their respective territories. The cultural significance of these activities lies in the fact that, in comparison with national name standardization, the normative element receives more emphasis. Notably, where names for undersea features are concerned, systematic naming prevails, with the generic name element describing the feature strictly in keeping with oceanographic terminology. The practical economic value of such international names for features beyond a single sovereignty cannot be disputed. Navigation, meteorological services, telecommunications and international law of the sea all depend on a clear and uniform nomenclature.

By way of conclusion it should be pointed out that the United Nations, in co-operation with the International Astronomical Union, has embarked upon the task of fixing topographical names on the extra-terrestrial bodies of the solar system. This is above all an important cultural undertaking. On the one hand the nature of the feature to be named must be precisely identified and, on the other, the possible transfer of terrestrial names must be subjected to close and thorough study. The general practice in giving names to previously unnamed features is to commemorate great personalities in human history, with each nation called upon to submit proposals. The practical and economic impact of this cannot yet be ascertained, but will no doubt be considerable as man advances further into space.

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- Toponymy Research
- Nomenclature and Delineation (formerly Glaciological and Alpine Nomenclature)
- Names of Undersea and Maritime Features
- Canadian Digital Toponymic Services
- [Names outside Canada for Official Canadian Use]

Current ad hoc working groups:

- Concise national gazetteer
- CPCGN video