



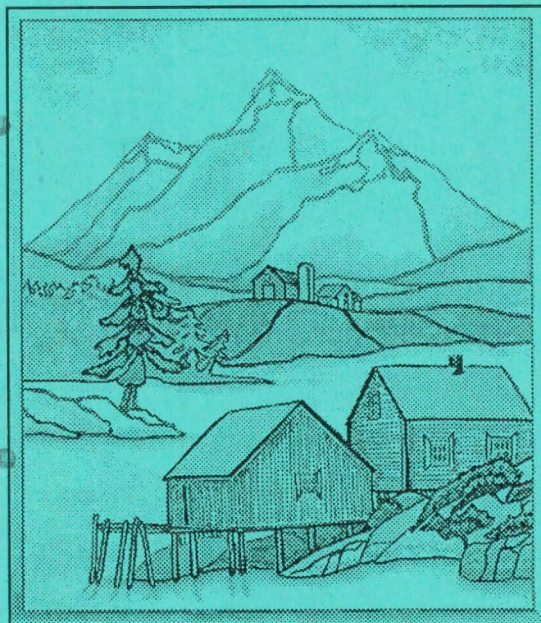
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# COMMISSION DE GÉOGRAPHIE - COMMISSION DE TOPONYMIE

## 85 YEARS SERVING QUEBEC'S HERITAGE AND TERRITORY

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## COMMISSION DE GÉOGRAPHIE - COMMISSION DE TOPONYMIE

### EIGHTY-FIVE YEARS SERVING QUEBEC'S HERITAGE AND TERRITORY

The agency responsible for managing Quebec's place names, whose Centennial will follow soon after that of its federal counterpart, has been involved since the early part of the century in toponymic inventories, the preservation of relevant information and the recognition of toponyms, particularly with a view to their use on maps, survey plans, township plans and so forth.

As far back as 1907, a Quebec representative, geographer Eugène Rouillard, who was Secretary of the Department of Lands and Forests, was appointed to participate in the work of the Geographic Board of Canada.

To underline the one-hundredth anniversary of a national agency dedicated to the concerns of toponymy, a unique event, indeed we have organized Quebec's contribution to this special celebration around the statutory provisions which mark the terms of reference of the Commission de toponymie du Québec.

A number of current and former collaborators of the Commission spontaneously agreed to underscore this anniversary by writing short notes on various aspects of toponymic management. We have linked them to the actual statutory wording of the *Charter of the French Language* to illustrate its appropriateness, since this piece of Quebec legislation was the culmination, in 1977, of 65 years of toponymic and linguistic concerns on the part of our toponymic predecessors, from Eugène Rouillard to Jean Poirier, whose unflagging contribution to the advancement of our discipline cannot be overstated.

The sections of the *Charter* devoted to toponymy form Quebec's response to the United Nations resolutions and recommendations regarding the standardization of geographical names and support for the collective identity of Quebecers.

**Alain Vallières**  
Acting Chairman

## Background of today's legislation

A conjunction of events in 1912 underlay the creation of a Quebec agency dedicated to the management of place names: the Premier Congrès de la Langue française au Canada and the incorporation of the former territory of Ungava into Quebec.

On 10 May 1912, a proclamation by the Governor General of Canada decreed that the *Loi sur l'extension des frontières du Québec* (Quebec Boundaries Extension Act) would come into effect on the 15th of that month, doubling the area of Quebec and placing under the province's jurisdiction hundreds of thousands of geographical features not there before, most of which had no known name.

Moreover, in June 1912, the Premier Congrès de la Langue française au Canada expressed the wish that a permanent board be appointed to name newly-explored places in the Province of Quebec. (*Premier Congrès de la Langue française au Canada. Québec. 24 au 30 juin 1912. Compte rendu.* Imprimerie de l'Action Sociale limitée, 1913, p. 595).

In November of the same year, the Legislative Assembly of Quebec passed the *Loi concernant l'Ungava, et érigeant ce territoire sous le nom de Nouveau Québec* (An act respecting Ungava and erecting that territory under the name of "New Quebec"). On 15 November 1912, the Quebec government established, by Order-in-Council 1373, the "Commission géographique de la Province de Québec" to name the geographical points in the new territories which were still unnamed, to correct inappropriate names as required, to restore where applicable the spelling of names already assigned, and to prune, where necessary, Aboriginal names of doubtful origin and those names whose pronunciation left something to be desired.

From its beginning, the Quebec agency has incorporated into its management the two dimensions of place names: that of signs which serve to locate parts of space, and that of signs which carry a cultural message, a dimension which is particularly marked by a concern for preserving the heritage of French names.

On 6 April 1920, by Order-in-Council 574 issued under Bill 10, George V, Chapter 24, the Quebec government created the Commission de géographie du Québec, whose powers and duties were assigned by the Lieutenant-Governor-in-Council and whose decisions were subject to the approval of the Department of Lands and Forests. The government stipulated, subject to the foregoing, that the Commission de géographie du Québec would decide any matter relating to the designation and naming of places and geographical features in the Province of Quebec; that it would determine new geographical names; that it would correct, as necessary, the old names and decide on their spelling; and that it could establish the rules of nomenclature which would be obligatory for all services of the provincial government.

Despite this legislation, the Commission de géographie du Québec's standardizing activities were curtailed by the development of parallel toponymic jurisdictions. Brought to light in the report by Dominique Alhéricière and Jean-Paul Lacasse, entitled *Les Juridictions choronymiques au Québec* (1974), this situation led in 1975 to the creation of the ad hoc committee on choronymic jurisdiction in Quebec. Chaired by Jean Poirier, which submitted its report in 1976, concluding that the Commission de géographie du Québec, under its incorporating act, did not have the necessary powers to exercise control over Quebec toponymy.

This was the history of the legal framework for the Quebec agency dedicated to the management of toponymy prior to passage of the *Charter of the French Language* in 1977.

**Marc Richard**

### **The *Charter of the French Language* and the management of place names**

As place names are indispensable reference points for all human activities, it was inevitable that the government would take responsibility for managing their accuracy and usage at all levels of operation. Conscious of this necessity, a number of international authorities advocated the establishment of an agency with the mandate to draft the principles, standards, and criteria for toponymic management. The United Nations Economic and Social Council therefore established in 1959 a Group of Experts on Geographical Names and organized five-year conferences, starting in 1967, to study all aspects of toponymic management, both national and international, and to draw up the necessary recommendations.

As part of the Canadian participation in the work of the Group of Experts and of the conferences, the Commission de toponymie du Québec has endorsed the resolutions of these advisory bodies and has reflected them in its practices. Accordingly, the *Guide toponymique* (1968, 1979, 1987, 1990), which constitutes the code of practice for toponymic management in Quebec, adopts in turn the main elements forming the basis for a toponymic management approach that takes into account both the technical aspects and the cultural dimension of toponymy.

The golden rule of toponymic management, in fact, is respect for usage, provided, however, that it does not conceal the risk of confusion which would divert toponymy from its primary objective, that is, to locate and orient correctly. Usage refers both to the language of toponyms and to their grammatical form, to their spelling, and to other sociolinguistic aspects of the public's employment of place names.

Several other rules support or qualify this basic principle, such as the principle of univocity (one place, one name), the rules for spelling in accordance with the requirements of the language, toponymic stability, the use of diacritics, and a number of others. All these rules, none of which is absolute, must be applied with flexibility and in accordance with a balance ensured by the structure of the Commission de toponymie, which consists of a highly specialized technical staff from the public service and an assembly of Commission members from various backgrounds of Quebec society.

Toponymic standardization could not be effective if the toponymic management agencies were not provided with real powers and with resources enabling them to gain a good understanding of the toponymic situation in their territory relative to usage, to orient the administrative use of geographical names, to publicize the rules and criteria concerning the adoption and use of place names, as well as the correct, official forms of toponyms, and to collaborate with the other agencies which produce or use toponymy.

Toponymic standardization is one of the basic elements of sound territorial management, providing important support for effective government. By establishing a Commission de toponymie, the *Charter of the French Language* has fulfilled this requirement.

**Henri Dorion**

## Section 122

*122. A Commission de toponymie is established at the Office de la langue française and is incorporated into it for administrative purposes.*

The change of the Commission de géographie du Québec's name to Commission de toponymie reflects the legislative intent to give Quebec an agency with a broadened mandate to manage the geographical nomenclature of its territory. The term toponymy, which is more encompassing than geography, indicates that the field of activity is not limited to geographical features, as the former name could unintentionally suggest, but includes all types of places, whether classified as punctual, linear or spatial, natural or man-made.

Incorporation of the Commission into the Office de la langue française for administrative purposes does not mean that the Commission is subordinate to the Office or supervised by it in carrying out its mandate. As far as toponymy is concerned, the Commission de toponymie is a completely independent agency. Its administrative attachment is manifested through certain administrative functions, essentially human resource management and legal counsel, which are provided from the Office de la langue française itself.

**Marc Richard**

## Sections 123 and 123.1

*123. The Commission is composed of seven members, including the chairman, appointed by the Government for not more than five years. The Government shall fix the remuneration and determine the fringe benefits and other conditions of employment of the members of the Commission.*

*123.1 The members of the Commission remain in office notwithstanding the expiration of their term until they are reappointed or replaced.*

## **The chairmen and secretaries of the geographical and toponymy commissions**

The Commission de géographie du Québec, established more than 15 years after the Geographic Board of Canada, was attached until 1977 to the Department of Lands and Forests. Eugène Rouillard, who was already Quebec's representative on the Geographic Board of Canada, became the Commission's first Chairman, pursuant to the order of the Queen's Privy Council issued 14 December 1899. The Commission de géographie du Québec met regularly until 1939, holding 181 sessions in that period. Its activities were suspended after that. The appointment in 1941 of Isaïe Nantais as Secretary allowed the Commission's activities to continue; he held that position for the next 20 years. In 1962, the Commission de géographie du Québec was reestablished under the chairmanship of Jean-Marc Léger. Jean Poirier was its Secretary for the next 190 sessions, until 1977. On August 26 of that year, with the sanction of the *Charter of the French Language*, the Commission de géographie du Québec was renamed the Commission de toponymie and Henri Dorion became its Chairman, a position he held three times. During this most recent period, the Commission has held 154 meetings, bringing the total number to 525 sessions since 1912.

The Chairmen of the Commission de géographie du Québec were, successively: Eugène Rouillard (1913-1915); J.-Émile Girard (1915-1916); Arthur Amos (1916-1920); J.-Napoléon Miller (1920-1922); Louis-Arthur Richard (1922-1923); Charles-Joseph Simard (1923-1926); Joseph-L. Boulanger (1926-1929); Georges-Émile Marquis (1929-1930); Lionel Bergeron (1930-1931); F.-X. Fafard (1931-1939); Jean-Marc Léger (1962-1963); Jean-Charles Bonenfant (1963-1967); Benoît Robitaille (1967-1971); Jean-Noël Poulin (1971-1976) and Robert-Wilfrid Bourassa (1976-1978). The Secretaries: Avila Bédard (1913-1915); Eugène Rouillard (1915-1920); Georges-Émile Marquis pro tempore (1920-1922); Émile Larochelle, Secretary Assistant (1922-1923); J.-E. Beauchamp (1923-1938); Isaïe Nantais (1941-1961); and Jean Poirier (1961-1977) handled the paper work.

Chairmen Henri Dorion (1978-1980, 1985-1988 and 1993-1996); François Beaudin (1980-1985); Rémi Mayrand (1988-1992); Philippe Vaillancourt (1996); and Alain Vallières (acting, 1996- ) have directed the Commission de toponymie. Robert-Wilfrid Bourassa (1978); Jean-Claude Fortin (1979-1991); Linda Marcoux, Acting Secretary (1991-1993, 1993-1994); Marc Richard, substitute Secretary (1993); and Denis Tremblay since then, have acted as Secretary of the Commission.

The Commission de toponymie has also wished to commemorate the work of certain chairmen and secretaries. Accordingly, we find in the Quebec toponymic corpus **Lac Bédard**, designated in honour of the first Secretary of the Commission de géographie du Québec, as well as **Lac Nantais**, **Lac Eugène-Rouillard**, and **Mont Jean-Charles-Bonenfant**.

**Jacques Fortin**

## Section 124

*124. The Commission has competence to propose to the Government the criteria of selection and rules of spelling of all place names and to make the final decision on the assignment of names to places not already named and to approve any change of place names.*

*The Government may establish, by regulation, the criteria for the choice of place names, the rules of spelling to be followed in matters relating to toponymy and the method to be followed in choosing and obtaining approval for place names.*

On 26 August 26 1977, the National Assembly of Quebec, under the *Charter of the French Language* (R.S.Q., Chap. C-11), officially enshrined the mission of an agency specifically dedicated to the management of place names in Quebec: this agency was the Commission de toponymie. A related agency had existed since early in the century, but with less extensive powers. Moreover, the *Loi sur la langue officielle* (Official Language Act - known as Bill 22), passed scarcely three years before the *Charter*, did not mention any agency with a toponymic vocation, and the Régie de la langue française established by that statute had no jurisdiction in toponymic matters. A consequence of creating the new Commission, under the *Charter* itself, was to link the issue of language with the issue of place names, which, moreover, confirmed the administrative attachment of the Commission to the Office de la langue française, but we must hasten to add that no legislative provision compelled the Commission to undertake a general francization of place names.

In theory, the management of place names can be likened to a particular component of the function of land management assumed by government; as holder of rights over the public

domain, the government exercises jurisdiction in principle over the attribution of place names, even in the absence of any specific legislation on this point. Similarly, with regard to names of private places, toponymic jurisdiction is inherent, so to speak, in the right of ownership; in actual fact, however, many administrative acts originating with the public authorities involve a standardizing action. The originality of Quebec's toponymic legislation lies in the design of an independent toponymic jurisdiction, as it were, and in entrusting it to a specialized branch of the government. Far from being only advisory in nature, this function clearly has a general decision-making aspect, one which is exclusive for all place names located in unorganized areas and is shared in the case of municipal areas, essentially for the names of thoroughfares.

For some years now, systems of exception have arisen under certain statutes. However, because of the very generality of the terms used in the *Charter* in granting jurisdiction to the Commission, special laws which may sometimes override it always retain an exceptional status, and, according to the principles normally applicable to statutory interpretation, such statutes will be read and applied in a way which limits their scope as much as possible. In any case, legal analysis does not take fully into account the influence of the Commission as the custodian and recorder of place names; it is worth pointing out, moreover, that the Commission exerts intellectual influence and moral and scientific authority, particularly through its publications and in its standardizing activity in matters of geographical terminology.

**Jean Dansereau**

## **Section 125**

*125. The Commission shall:*

*(a) propose to the Government the standards and rules of spelling to be followed in place names;*

## **Policies and standards of the Commission de toponymie**

The Commission de toponymie thought it advisable to adopt toponymic policies to ensure that its decisions were based on a philosophy consisting of principles which reflect Quebec's sociocultural environment. These principles fuel the selection criteria and the spelling rules which it proposes to the government, as well as the geographical terminology of the toponymy which it has standardized or recommended in cooperation with the Office de la langue française. Indeed, as explained in the preamble to the text of these policies:

*"By nature, geographical names build bridges between spaces and languages and are both the medium for knowledge and vehicles for culture. This duality is the basis for the promotion of Quebec's toponymic heritage, which the Commission de toponymie du Québec has been charged with managing."*

The Commission has, therefore, adopted five policies: the policy of standardization, the language policy, the terminology policy, the policy concerning Aboriginal names and the policy on commemorative toponymic designation, which it published in the *Guide toponymique du Québec* in 1987. These policies were reviewed, revised and confirmed in



1995 and submitted the following year to the members of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names at their 18th session.

**Marc Richard**

### **Policy concerning aboriginal names**

In early 1996, the Commission de toponymie du Québec published *La toponymie autochtone au Québec, Bilan et prospective*. From time immemorial, Amerindians and Inuit have given innumerable names to countless geographical features of the land. These designations reveal the wealth and diversity of the Québec toponymic landscape and testify specifically to the value of the Aboriginal cultural heritage. Aware of the importance of this phenomenon, the Commission de toponymie took various measures to protect and promote this heritage.

Accordingly, the Commission adopted a "Politique relative aux noms autochtones" which, incidentally, responded to a consideration in the Preamble to the *Charter of the French Language* which recognized that the Amerindians and Inuit have the right "to preserve and develop their original language and culture."

Between 1968 and 1995, more than 50 inventories were prepared, involving the collection of nearly 20 000 toponyms from the various communities and increasing the number of official Aboriginal toponyms from 1 560 in 1968 to 11 400 in 1996. The percentage of Aboriginal names in the official nomenclature increased from 4.70% to 10.03%.

The problem of processing Aboriginal place names prompted the agencies responsible for managing place names to take concrete action to unite opinion from the largest possible number of stakeholders in the matter. The first measure in this direction was taken in 1979, when the Commission de toponymie organized the Atelier sur l'écriture des noms de lieux amérindiens (workshop on the spelling of Amerindian place names) at which 19 resolutions were adopted to orient the future decisions of the Commission.

The adjustment begun in the 1960s to reassert the value of Aboriginal toponymy resulted in the establishment of a new dynamics in the management of the body of official Québec place names. The densification and, often, the superimposition of toponymic layers of separate languages make it difficult to apply the usual selection criteria. Under such circumstances, however, the Commission makes sure that all the non-Aboriginal stakeholders are aware of the importance of preserving and promoting this particular element of our cultural heritage. To accomplish this, the Commission uses its normal tools of toponym dissemination, such as the *Répertoire toponymique du Québec* and its supplements in the *Gazette officielle du Québec*. But, it has also produced specific files for certain Aboriginal languages — three to date, on the Abenaki, Attikamek, and Naskapi. Aboriginal geographical nomenclature has an important place in the Commission's most recent encyclopedic publication, the illustrated dictionary *Noms et lieux du Québec*.

The various measures taken by the Commission in the area of Aboriginal toponymy bear witness to the agency's response to the expectations expressed in a resolution adopted at the Fifth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names, held in 1987 in Montréal. The resolution recommended that all countries with Aboriginal groups make a special effort to collect their geographical names along with the appropriate information; that, where applicable, a written form be adopted whenever possible for maps and other publications; and that regional and international meetings be held to examine the



methodology for collecting and recording Aboriginal geographical names. The project to publish a toponymic file on the Algonquins, which the Commission intends to produce during the year, confirms the continuing interest of this agency in aboriginal toponymy.

### **Christian Bonnelly**

*(b) catalogue and preserve place names;*

### **Toponymic surveys**

The Commission de géographie du Québec was interested in the toponymic surveys done by land surveyors, geographers, historians, forest engineers and mining engineers who, in their work, crisscrossed Quebec. We read in the account by Eugène Rouillard in 1919 that a month-long cruise was organized along the north shore of the Gulf of St. Lawrence, between Betsiamites and Blanc-Sablon, and that a representative of the Department of Lands and Forests was to explore the rivers and lakes there. Rouillard had done as much himself in 1906 and 1911 on his many cruises in the same area, where he made precise notes of his geographical and toponymic observations. Several other researchers subsequently became interested in toponymy. We should mention in passing the surveys done in 1942 by Jacques Rousseau on Île aux Coudres, those in the 1960s by the geographers Ludger Beauregard and Camille Laverdière north of Montréal and in the Ottawa valley, and, finally, those by the anthropologist Bernard Saladin d'Anglure and his collaborators among the Inuit of Northern Quebec. It was also during these same years that the toponymist Jean Poirier perfected his *Méthode d'enquête* (1965) which, from then on, was to structure the procedure for toponymic inventories.

Only in 1977, however, was a systematic program of toponymic surveys established by the Commission de toponymie. The *Charter of the French Language* had just given it the mandate to do so. The numerous surveys subsequently carried out prompted geographer-toponymist Hélène Hudon in 1986 to produce for the Commission a work entitled *Méthodologie des inventaires toponymiques*, translated into English and Spanish, which would be used a few years later as the basis for the production of a video on the same subject.

The coverage of maps produced by governmental, non-governmental and private agencies guides the choice of areas covered by toponymic inventories. However, there are occasions when the Commission, without waiting for outside requests, will decide to carry out surveys in areas where the known toponymic density seems low compared to its potential. In addition, it regularly does surveys of Aboriginal toponyms, working very closely with the local communities. In 20 years, the Commission's inventory program has covered almost all of southern Quebec; the reader may consult the map entitled *Enquêtes toponymiques sur le terrain* (1996), compiled by Dr. Roger Pitblado, to learn the extent of this coverage, at least in broad terms.

### **Denis Tremblay**

## Preservation of place names

Since the early part of the century, the production of toponymic inventories has resulted in the collation of a large amount of data for several thousand toponyms. It became apparent very early on that the number of names and cross-referencing of the information to be processed warranted the establishment of a toponymic record keeping system. In fact, this file was created quite naturally for large-scale works such as the *Dictionnaire des lacs du Québec*, a manuscript of about 8 000 toponyms prepared by Isaïe Nantais, and through the many geographical and toponymic observations noted by the staff of the Commission de géographie du Québec and by researchers. Thus, around the 1950s, the Commission had its first manually structured toponymic record keeping system containing several thousand entries. On each record, an effort was made, then, to record the administrative and toponymic facts which marked the life of a place name, as well as its spelling history, its variants, its status, the date it appeared in a gazetteer or on a map, and so on.

However, the production of the *Répertoire géographique du Québec* in 1969 and the massive amounts of data to be processed soon required that this manual system evolve in the direction of automation. Accordingly, it was decided that a computerized system would be developed to preserve, manage, and publicize toponymic information. In 1971, therefore, with the technical support of the data processing centre at Laval University, the Commission de géographie du Québec had its first STRATO automated file. Among other functions, this computerized system made possible the updating of toponymic records, the production of lists of toponyms according to various parameters, the retrieval of certain statistics, and, above all, the publication of the *Gazette officielle du Québec* with reports of the Commission's decisions.

After 15 years or so, however, this automated system, which by then contained more than 122 000 toponymic records, no longer adequately met the needs of the Commission, whose responsibilities had substantially grown in the areas of inventories, preservation, official approval, dissemination, and so forth since 1977. It had become necessary to develop an interactive system for processing toponymic data, and so, with the support of the informatics service of the Office de la langue française, TOPOS became a reality in 1986. This data base then contained 18 different fields for each toponym. Toponymists could thenceforth enter a new record or query or modify an existing record.

The early 1990s marked a new turning point in the computerized management of place names. TOPOS was overhauled, increasing the efficiency of information processing and the user-friendliness of its operation. From then on, the Commission would manage its toponymic data base alone on a minicomputer. The number of fields for each toponymic record increased at that time from 18 to 31. Moreover, all the stages involved in producing toponymic files submitted to Commission members became an integral part of the system. Today, TOPOS has more than 310 000 records.

### Denis Tremblay, Alain Vallières

*(c) establish and standardize geographical terminology, in cooperation with the Office [de la langue française];*

In Quebec, it was not until 1968 and 1969 that the first terminological definitions of general toponymic terms were published, in the *Guide toponymique du Québec* and the *Répertoire géographique du Québec*. As the international United Nations Conferences on the Standardization of Geographical Names held in Geneva in 1967 and in London in 1972

stressed the necessity of preparing glossaries related to toponymy, the study group on choronymy and geographical terminology of Laval University and the Commission de géographie du Québec, with their first toponymists, Mr. Henri Dorion and Mr. Jean Poirier, produced the first *Lexique des termes utiles à l'étude des noms de lieux* in 1975. The way was clear and the real process of terminological standardization in toponymy began with the creation in 1977 of the Commission de toponymie du Québec, which had jurisdiction in this area. This mandate was accompanied by the duty to publicize names resulting from subsequent toponymic and terminological analyses.

Since 1977, geographical terminology has been part of the Commission's concerns and is reflected in studies related to the definitions of geographical entities or to those of generics whose use favours a different semantic content. This highlighting of the particular aspects of local usage and the more general aspects of the field of activity requires a standardization process which is clearly spelled out in the various guides produced by the Commission since its inception: the *Guide toponymique municipale* (1979); the *Guide odonymique du Québec* (1987); and the *Guide toponymique du Québec* (1990). The publication of the first *Vocabulaire de terminologie géographique* (1985) (revised and augmented in 1990 from 185 to 298 terms) will make it possible to stabilize the standardization process resulting from these guides. Of course, the creation of the Commission de terminologie géographique in 1979 greatly contributed to progress in the process of toponymic analysis.

After the Commission made its policy on terminology known in 1987, its participation in international activities concerned with the terminology component of toponymy was manifested in 1988, particularly in the proceedings of the Stage international de formation en toponymie (international training course on toponymy); there it provided the theoretical and practical details of the basic principles of this terminology policy, as well as particular aspects of Quebec toponymy. The terminological expertise of the Commission was enlisted in 1996 in a collaborative effort with the Institut géographique national de Paris for the translation into French of the *Dictionary of Toponymic Terminology* prepared by Professor Naftali Kadmon for the United Nations Group of Experts on the Standardization of Geographical Names. Because place names are, in a way, a notional appropriation of space, the Commission will always consider it its duty to ensure that the terminology is a definite reflection of the nature it is intended to describe or define, where necessary.

## **Marcel Fourcaudot**

*(d) officialize place names;*

## **Gazetteers of Quebec**

These productions are the synthesis of decisions made by the Commission de géographie du Québec and the Commission de toponymie du Québec. Six gazetteers have been published since 1916. By comparison with the 1 051 entries comprising the first gazetteer, the Commission de toponymie now includes nearly 114 000 toponyms in its gazetteer and its supplements.

However, the first real index of Quebec toponymy, incorporating all of the agency's decisions, was not published until 1969 and consists of more than 45 000 place names. Ten years later, the new gazetteer increased this number to approximately 75 000 toponyms. The most recent gazetteer was published in the year of the Commission's 75th anniversary, in 1987, and contains more than 107 000 official toponyms.



## Chronology of gazetteers

1916 *Nomenclature des noms géographiques de la province de Québec*. Commission de géographie du Québec, 84 pages.

1921 *Noms géographiques de la province de Québec*, 2nd Edition. Commission de géographie du Québec, 158 pages.

1926 *Noms géographiques de la province de Québec*, 3rd Edition. Commission de géographie du Québec, 158 pages.

NB: This gazetteer would also be published in English under the title *Geographical Names of the Province of Quebec*.

1969 *Répertoire géographique du Québec*. Commission de géographie du Québec, 701 pages.

1979 *Répertoire toponymique du Québec*. Commission de toponymie, 1 199 pages.

1987 *Répertoire toponymique du Québec 1987*. Commission de toponymie, 1987, 1 900 pages; and the *Suppléments cumulatifs*, 1989, 1991, 1993 and 1997.

## Jacques Fortin

### Language indicators

The cultural aspect of toponymy is apparent to everyone. It is a complex, sensitive area which any policy on toponymy must reflect, if it is to be fair and balanced. In fact, it is important to maintain a reasonable balance between the historical memory embodied in place names and the effects of changes in the population. This problem is a particularly sensitive one where it concerns the linguistic profile of Quebec's toponymy, both in overall terms and at the level of each region. Some of the regions have become substantially "Frenchified" over the past century, while in others the immigration of recent decades is diversifying the linguistic profile. Consequently, in all the administrative regions of Quebec except those of Montréal and Laval (differences of 19% and 13%), the toponymy is less French than the population (26% less in the Estrie region [Eastern Townships]).

The policy of "relative francization" applied by the Commission de toponymie, in accordance with the letter and the spirit of the *Charter of the French Language*, the Preamble of which reads as follows:

*WHEREAS the French language, the distinctive language of a people that is in the majority French-speaking, is the instrument by which that people has articulated its identity;*

*Whereas the National Assembly of Quebec recognizes that Quebecers wish to see the quality and influence of the French language assured, and is resolved therefore to make French the language of Government and the Law, as well as the normal and everyday language of work, instruction, communication, commerce and business;*

*Whereas the National Assembly intends to pursue this objective in a spirit of fairness and open-mindedness, respectful of the institutions of the English-speaking community of Quebec, and respectful of the ethnic minorities, whose valuable contribution to the development of Quebec it readily acknowledges;*

*Whereas the National Assembly of Quebec recognizes the right of the Amerindians and the Inuit of Quebec, the first inhabitants of this land, to preserve and develop their original language and culture;*

*Whereas these observations and intentions are in keeping with a new perception of the worth of national cultures in all parts of the earth, and of the obligation of every people to contribute in its special way to the international community;*

has resulted in a major increase, in absolute figures, of the three components of Quebec toponymy: an increase of 40% for Aboriginal place names, 55% for English toponyms and 67% for French toponyms. However, the differences are less if we consider the change in the relative proportion of each of these groups of toponyms: a 5% increase for French toponyms (from 74% to 79%) between 1985 and 1995, stability for English toponyms (11%) and a very slight reduction for Aboriginal toponyms (from 7.4% to 6.6%).

The linguistic development of Quebec toponymy is thus balanced and slow, a positive characteristic, since stability is an essential attribute for toponymy.

## **Henri Dorion**

*(e) publicize the official geographical nomenclature of Quebec;*

### **Quebec place names: an illustrated dictionary**

In November 1994, the Commission de toponymie launched the illustrated dictionary entitled *Noms et lieux du Québec*. This book is both an accurate reference tool and a prestigious work. In a little more than 6 000 entries and 500 photographs and colour maps, this coffee-table-sized volume of nearly 1 000 pages relates the history of more than 20 000 toponyms. It also includes introductory texts, a bibliography, an index of illustrations, and a detailed onomastic index indicating all the variants and old forms found for each official toponym treated. Ecological reserves, municipalities and townships, administrative regions and electoral districts, northern villages and Indian reserves and villages are exhaustively catalogued in this volume. Hundreds of names of hamlets, localities and geographical features are found here as well, because of the physical size of the places, their historical significance or their geographical situation, or because of the originality, linguistic interest, or even folklore interest of the names themselves.

Preparation of the *Dictionary* required more than ten years of research for about 60 people under the Commission's guidance. For this vast project, the agency requested the collaboration mainly of geographers, historians, linguists, photographers, computer specialists, and cartographers.

This publication was very well received by the public, benefitting from excellent media coverage, and was the subject of several positive reviews. In less than two years, 6 000 copies were sold, a remarkable best-seller performance. A new corrected reprint has been available since June 1996. Other projects derived from this volume could be implemented

eventually and are currently being discussed. It is quite possible that a CD (optical compact disk) will be produced from the *Dictionary* and complemented by other types of information (tourist, statistical and so on). In addition, consideration is being given to grouping the toponymic entries by region to create a number of regional mini-dictionaries. A specific clientele other than those interested in the *Dictionary*, could be more interested by this type of product.

It should be emphasized that the Commission has always considered research into and documentation of Quebec's toponymic heritage as one of its important activities related to its duties, and the production of a dictionary is one of the best ways of presenting and publicizing cultural heritage. It will be recalled that in 1906, before the Commission de géographie du Québec was created, two dictionaries of geographical names were published. The first, *Les noms géographiques de la province de Québec*, by Pierre-Georges Roy, included 1 936 entries. The second, *Noms géographiques de la province de Québec et des provinces maritimes empruntés aux langues sauvages*, by Eugène Rouillard, provided explanations on the etymology, translation and spelling of 373 place names of Aboriginal origin. In 1914, Eugène Rouillard, then Secretary of the Commission de géographie du Québec, published the *Dictionnaire des rivières et des lacs de la province de Québec* on behalf of the Department of Lands and Forests. This work contained 2 520 entries (855 rivers and 1 665 lakes), accounting for most of the hydrographic entities which had been visited or explored at the time, and gave a geographical, historical and technical description of them. A new edition of this dictionary was issued in 1925; it contained 2 763 entries (1 035 rivers and 1 728 lakes). Research into the history and location of the lakes, rivers and other types of entities was subsequently continued by Isaïe Nantais, Secretary of the Commission from 1941 to 1961. This information has never been published, but was of valuable assistance during preparation of *Noms et lieux du Québec*.

**Linda Marcoux**

### **Dissemination of Quebec place names by Internet**

It is now possible to gain access by Internet to the official names of Quebec, except names of thoroughfares, from the federal Web site entitled *Welcome to Canada's geographical names* of Natural Resources Canada, which the Commission de toponymie regularly stocks with its updated data through the Secretariat of the CPCGN.

The Commission intends to publicize Quebec's place names itself on the Internet soon (while maintaining dissemination of its data through the federal site) and to eventually provide users of its Web site with access to a broader spectrum of names and data on them. An approach being considered is to allow users to research, in particular, names of thoroughfares and names not officially approved, and to provide additional information for each name found, such as the language of the name in question and the date it was officially approved, where applicable.

The Commission is also examining the possibility of allowing access to the notes of *Noms et lieux du Québec* for the toponyms contained in that publication.

**Marc Richard**



(f) advise the Government on any question submitted by it to the Commission relating to toponymy.

## **Names of municipalities in Quebec**

Currently, some 1 400 municipalities are listed in Quebec. Their names, status, and land areas have considerably changed since the settlement of the first religious missions or parishes which were their beginnings.

Bishop Laval laid the foundation for the organization of the parishes when he arrived in New France, but the first official description of 82 parish districts was prepared in 1722, at the request of Governor Vaudreuil.

The 1722 decree would subsequently be the basis for establishing the boundaries and the designations of a large number of municipalities in Quebec, for, in addition to the district names themselves which were cited, the names of many villages, towns, and localities which were included also appeared later in the municipal designations. The new parishes established later, as well as the townships which began to appear in the late 1700s, were routinely converted to municipalities. The first significant municipal statute in this regard dates from 1845, and 322 municipalities were incorporated by it. This legislation was repealed in 1847 and replaced in 1855 by another statute which is the definitive basis for the municipal legislation which still prevails today. The 1855 statute resulted in the creation or confirmation of 428 municipalities. In 1886, Clément E. Deschamps compiled the names of nearly 800 municipalities in what is considered the first index of municipalities, and this number increased to nearly 890 in the 1896 edition of the same publication.

At the time, standardization of the spelling of municipal names was not yet the subject of any special attention. The practice of systematically abbreviating certain elements of toponyms and the absence of the hyphen in compound names were widespread. It took the adoption in 1912 by the Commission de géographie du Québec of the *Règles de nomenclature géographique* for standardization to begin, at least in its publications. Government publications, other than those of the Commission de géographie du Québec, would not become truly standardized in their use of municipality names until the arrival on the Quebec toponymic scene of the Comité de toponymie du Québec, a private agency formed jointly in 1956 by the Conseil de la Vie française and the Fédération des Sociétés Saint-Jean-Baptiste de la province de Québec. However, it was undoubtedly the publication in 1969 of the *Répertoire géographique du Québec* which most publicized a standardized municipal nomenclature for the government as a whole.

The passage of the *Charter of the French Language* in 1977, the granting of greater authority to the Commission de toponymie, and the inclusion in the *Loi sur l'organisation territoriale municipale* (act respecting municipal territorial organization) (1989) of clauses providing for consultation of the Commission on any matter concerning the names of municipalities ensure that the nomenclature will, henceforth, be of high quality.

## **Christian Bonnelly**

### **Inhabitant names**

The field of inhabitant names (or collective names) of people based on the places where they live, has evolved at a dazzling rate over the past 20 years. The results of a vast survey

of Quebec municipalities in 1978 show that the heritage awareness of Quebecers has awakened to the urgent need for identification of the various territorial divisions. The publication in 1981 of a small book on the issue contributed to a rapid growth in the number of created or existing inhabitant names from 428 at that time to nearly 1 650 now, most of them recorded in collections published in 1987 and 1995. Concurrently with this mastery of identity, the introduction and dissemination of the term "gentilé" (inhabitant name) has given it new life, now largely confirmed throughout the French-speaking world.

**Jean-Yves Dugas**

## **Section 126**

*126. The Commission may:*

*(a) advise the Government and other agencies of the civil administration on any question relating to toponymy;*

### **Commemorative toponymic designations**

The toponymy and odonymy of an area contain reminders of milestone events and important dates in the history of a country, and evoke the memory of people who have influenced their environment or have been recognized by society for their qualities.

Indeed, every village and city has two or three streets whose names recall the earliest pioneers, the parish doctor, notary or founding priest, artists, sports figures, and so on, and, almost certainly, the figures of the local, regional, or even national political arenas. This municipal jurisdiction is exercised as part of compliance with the toponymic standards proposed by the Commission to the government. In numerical terms, the commemorative toponymic designations decided on by the municipalities are far from being the most abundant. However, except for certain hasty decisions, covered widely in the media, to assign names of political figures, right after their death, to thoroughfares which unfortunately all too often already have names, most odonymic decisions are simply recorded in by-laws or resolutions.

In 1987, the Commission adopted a policy for commemorative toponymic designation to ensure a degree of consistency in the choice of designations, and fair regional distribution and geographical diversity in the places chosen.

This policy, which has been widely publicized in a leaflet *Politique de désignation toponymique commémorative*, has enabled the Commission, in cooperation with the communities involved, to give toponymic recognition to more than 140 persons and to recall a number of events which have marked Quebec society. To further highlight certain important toponymic decisions, more than 50 have been the subject of commemorative certificates which have been issued; a few of the most important have even received the approval of the National Assembly of Quebec.

To fuel this programme, the Commission maintains an up to date bank of names and takes advantage of opportunities provided by anniversaries, symposia, thematic days or weeks, and so on to recall events or commemorate individuals. The names of more than 500 deceased Quebecers of note await assignment to a geographical entity.

**Alain Vallières**

(c) in unorganized territories, name geographical places or change their names;

## **Toponymy of outfitting areas and controlled harvesting zones (ZECs) in Quebec**

The whole of Quebec was occupied to varying degrees for a long time by the Aboriginal peoples and then by communities of European origin. Because of this, many Amerindian and Inuit toponyms were collected in inventories done in the areas occupied or previously frequented by Aboriginal people. Ordinary English and French toponyms were also catalogued, particularly in places with few inhabitants, from members of private fish and game clubs, outfitters, and managers of controlled harvesting zones ("zones d'exploitation contrôlée" or ZECs).

Historically, the harvesting of wildlife areas originated primarily with fish and game clubs, the oldest of which date from the 1880s. In the 1970s, there were more than a thousand, whose members had given a number of entities French, English, and Aboriginal names, depending on who was occupying the area. A great many names came from forestry companies, and these were often adopted by the fish and game clubs. The Commission collected these toponyms during field surveys and, to a greater extent after 1976 when many of the clubs provided maps of their areas with the names being used.

In 1978, by means of the *Loi sur la conservation de la faune* (Wildlife Conservation Act) (C-61), which in 1983 became the *Loi sur la conservation et la mise en valeur de la faune* (Act Respecting the Conservation and Development of Wildlife) (C-61.1), the government opened up much more area to the public. The clubs were then replaced by outfitting areas and ZECs, so the *Loi sur les clubs de chasse et pêche* (Fish and Game Clubs Act) was finally repealed in 1987. The outfitting operations are enterprises which offer goods and services primarily for hunting and fishing. There were 800 originally, but by 1996 somewhat more than 650 were still in operation. The ZECs have a more regional application, as they are managed by associations, societies and federations. There are currently 81 of them. The aspect common to both types of institution is that they exploit the same areas as the old fish and game clubs and often have managers who were regular visitors to the areas in the days of the clubs.

Between 1979 and 1996 (18 years), more than 9 500 toponyms were officially approved in the ZECs, while from 1989 to 1996 (8 years), more than 3 500 were officially approved in the outfitting areas. Very often, the specifics, especially those of the names of lakes and watercourses, are surnames recalling club members, distinguished visitors, guides, and so forth, or else they describe the landscape, recall the presence of animals and plants, or remember an event experienced or some activity. Most of the names in use correctly comply with the criteria for official approval, except for certain situations involving homonyms or toponyms which are derogatory or pejorative. In determining whether a place name is acceptable, usage is a criterion of primary importance, although it must be weighed against the antiquity of names.

Today, the opening up of land areas to the public has increased the need for names to be assigned. In fact, the use of areas further and further away from the major centres means that the outfitting operations and ZECs must create hundreds of names. As the number of official names increases, the creation of unused names becomes increasingly difficult.



Faced with these problems, the ZECs and outfitting operations are agreeable to having the Commission propose names. Recently, several hundred names had to be assigned to meet the identification requirements of three ZECs. However, for outfitting operations, whose areas are less extensive, only a few names are processed. In naming the unnamed, various sources of inspiration are used, the general principle being that a designation should relate to the environment concerned. In particular, the sources of names can be drawn from:

- forms of entities (especially for lakes);
- regional or municipal history;
- consultation of geological and forestry maps;
- geomorphological forms, plants, animals in the environment;
- regional vocabulary;
- collections of poems;
- commemoration of persons;
- use of existing toponymy in the area (borrowing of specifics, recycling of toponyms, and so on).

In all cases, it is imperative that the ZECs and outfitting operations take part or collaborate in the process, as they are the primary users of the official names in their areas.

From the late 19th century until 1940, with few exceptions, only the largest lakes were named on the regional maps of the Quebec Department of Lands and Forests, while smaller lakes generally remained nameless. Subsequently, the toponymy gradually became denser through the substantial contribution of the fish and game clubs and their successors, the outfitting operations and ZECs.

## **Claude Rheault**

*(d) with the consent of the agency of the civil administration having concurrent jurisdiction over the place name, determine or change the name of any place in an organized territory.*

## **Management of the names of thoroughfares**

In the 1970s, the Commission became tentatively interested in thoroughfares, especially in rural areas, where it was not uncommon to find the same road identified by three or four different names. With the development of computerized systems suited to land management, standardization measures were called for. The *Charter of the French Language* gave this mandate to the Commission in 1977.

Required to satisfy more than 1 600 municipal clients quickly, the Commission had to conduct terminological research, define the ordinary terms of odonymy, prepare inventories in the field to observe and define usage, give official approval to odonyms, publicize them, and so on. This activity was without precedent in Canada and was even considered novel at the time by the international authorities responsible for guiding the standardization of geographical names. Since then, a number of governments have become interested in the management and standardization of the specific nomenclature known as odonymy, perhaps the most used by the public in their daily lives.

In addition to the usual rules which govern action by the Commission in odonymy (respect for usage, correct spelling, encouragement of originality, and so forth), the legislation,

under section 22.1 of the *Charter*, has provided for the possibility, in designating a thoroughfare, of using with a French generic term "a specific term other than a French term ... if the term is sanctioned by usage or if its use has unquestionable merit owing to its cultural or historical interest."

To date, the Commission has given official approval to 75% of the municipal odonyms. The total is estimated at some 100 000 thoroughfares. The establishment of a permanent electoral list, on which every citizen qualified to vote will be identified by name, has rekindled the interest of municipalities in acquiring a land reference tool which is firmly rooted in urban and rural landscapes — that is, the names of streets, boulevards, roads, and so on. The Commission considers that it will have completed the rough work for its activity in this area within a few years.

## **Alain Vallières**

### **Section 127**

*127. The names approved by the Commission during the year must be published at least once a year in the Gazette officielle du Québec.*

### **The Gazette officielle du Québec**

The Commission de toponymie publishes its decisions once a year in the *Gazette officielle du Québec*. A special issue reserved exclusively for toponymy is normally published during the summer and publicizes the Commission's decisions for the previous budget year (April 1 to March 31). This publication comprises two sections: the first gives the new official toponyms and odonyms and name changes, while the second provides the list of decisions withdrawing official approval. The latter usually amounts to a few pages. As would be expected, each *Gazette* devoted to toponymy mentions the names of Commission members and includes a preamble giving some statistics on the toponymic data concerned, as well as a users' guide accompanied by an explanatory diagram.

For all the toponyms given official approval and appearing in this publication, the following essential information is supplied: the toponym and the type of geographical entity, which is referred to by a clear indication of the generic. For proper location of the toponym, mention is also made of the name of the regional county municipality and of the municipality or equivalent regional area where the place is situated, the geographical coordinates expressed in degrees, minutes and seconds for the latitude and longitude, and, finally, the number of the National Topographic System map sheet at the 1:50 000 scale.

This publication in the *Gazette officielle* is a very important aspect for the agencies of the government, since sections 127 and 128 of the *Charter of the French Language* clearly state that the names approved by the Commission de toponymie during the year must be published once a year in the *Gazette officielle du Québec* and that, as soon as the names approved by the Commission are published in this way, their use becomes obligatory particularly in the texts and documents of the government. Government agencies and departments are obliged to use the official toponyms (generics and specifics), as soon as they have been published, in their publications, regulations, signs, teaching materials, and so on. The very broad distribution by mail of toponymic decisions after each meeting of the Commission keeps government organizations continuously up to date on obligatory nomenclature.

On 15 March 1969, the Commission de géographie du Québec (the name used at the time) published the first list of 45 000 official toponyms and variants in a special issue of the *Gazette officielle du Québec*. This publication is a consolidation of all the official toponymic decisions up to that date.

**Linda Marcoux**

## Section 128

*128. Upon the publication in the Gazette officielle du Québec of the names chosen or approved by the Commission, the use of such names becomes obligatory in texts and documents of the civil administration and the semipublic agencies, in traffic signs, in public signs and posters and in teaching manuals and educational and research works published in Quebec and approved by the Minister of Education.*

### Toponymy in teaching manuals

The teaching manuals for geography and history and the dictionaries used in schools are generally quite densely populated with toponyms which, if not standardized, can easily lead pupils astray.

The Commission de géographie du Québec, under the old statute which governed its operation, had already been consulted occasionally for advice on the toponymic content of certain texts which the Department of Education had to approve prior to their distribution in the Quebec school system.

The *Charter of the French Language* is specific about the mandate of the Commission de toponymie in this matter, in that it now makes the use of names chosen or officially approved by the agency obligatory in all teaching manuals approved by the Department of Education. An agreement has therefore been concluded between the Department of Education and the Commission: all manuals submitted for approval by the Department are first submitted to the Commission for evaluation.

Immediately after passage of the *Charter* many books had to be rejected or accepted on the condition that an errata slip would be added; now, 20 years later most publishers have taken the necessary steps to ensure that the toponymic content of their texts is in compliance. It should be mentioned that the Commission has supported them in this process by publicizing, in the *Guide toponymique du Québec*, the standards to be followed and the list of tools of potential assistance to writers. Although its mandate concerns the toponymy of Quebec in particular, the Commission also provides recommendations and bibliographical references on Canadian toponymy outside Quebec and on international toponymy.

By conveying in this way geographical nomenclature which is always up to date, educational materials will ensure that pupils and students acquire a better geographical knowledge of the province.

**Christian Bonnelly**

## Prospects for the management of toponymy in Quebec

In the short, medium and even long term, as far as we can determine, continuation of the present basic activities involved in cataloguing, processing, officially approving, preserving and publicizing place names, and monitoring their use seems inescapable because the needs which dictate such activities will continue to be felt, both for places requiring names and for expressions related to the identity of local, regional, and national communities. The methods chosen to meet some of these needs, on the other hand, should undergo appreciable change. Even the management of all these activities can eventually take on a new look, which will be shaped by the government's option to spend a smaller proportion of its resources on its programmes. By the turn of the century, Quebec's management of toponymy will perhaps have mastered the following elements, which currently do not exist or have only passed through the embryonic stages:

- The addition of value to geographical information in general through the integration, concerning named places in Quebec (natural geographical features, built-up or developed places, administrative entities, and thoroughfares), of large data bases, particularly data with land-based content from the Department of Natural Resources, the Department of Environment and Wildlife, the Department of Transport, and Hydro-Québec, as well as social data from the bureau of statistics.
- An increase in the volume of potential clients and improved access to the various segments of the clientele through electronic communication methods which will allow subgroups to be formed to receive information and specialized services.
- Effective leadership of local or regional toponymy committees, particularly through the use of specialized discussion groups and teleconferences.
- Emphasis on international collaboration among the various toponymic authorities, particularly within a Francophone division which should be added to the existing linguistic and geographical divisions of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names. Accentuating this cooperation could result in a degree of specialization of the work of the toponymic authorities, at least in the area of international activities. The Commission de toponymie has expertise in setting up the management of place names, which it has already shared with a number of countries, and it will likely try to export this expertise. Moreover, bilateral collaboration with natural contacts, such as France, should be still closer and could even evolve toward a permanent partnership with regard to the elements of toponymic activities in the French-speaking world, in the spirit of the 1994 protocol on cooperation between the Commission de toponymie du Québec and the Commission nationale de toponymie de France.
- A general refinement in designating unnamed places in Quebec, through the promotion and publicizing of largely novel methods of naming which can create place names with greater evocative power.
- The eventual sale of toponymic products and services to partially offset the reduction in resources which the government allocates to its activities in general.
- The evaluation and rating by the Commission de toponymie of external toponymic Web sites to identify sources of information which can constitute approved references.



Through the dissemination of a greater amount of information on the information highway and the development of a network of discussion groups specializing in subjects relating to the management of toponymy, Quebec's toponymic activity should evolve in the medium term toward improved self-sufficiency for the users of place names, while preserving the essentials for toponymic standardization and for fulfilling the territorial and identity needs of Quebec.

**The team of the Commission de toponymie du Québec**



