

SIXTH UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON THE  
STANDARDIZATION OF GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES  
New York, 25 August - 3 September 1992  
Items 12g) and 5) of the provisional agenda

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*"Canada - Geographical Names  
and the Canadian Permanent Committee on Geographical Names"*

(Brochure for public information -  
also available in French)

Document presented by Canada

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Prepared and submitted by the Secretariat, Canadian Permanent Committee on Geographical Names.

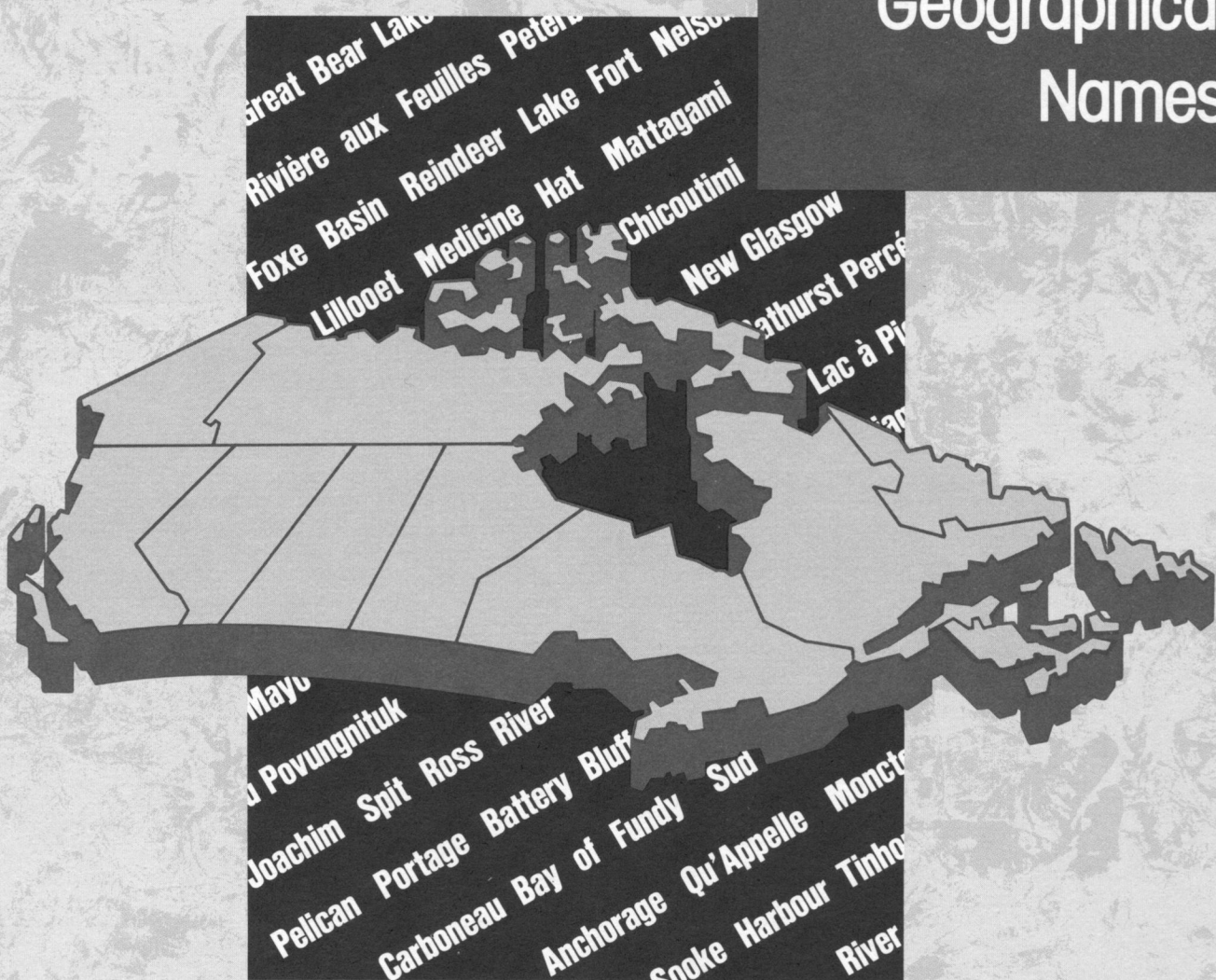
# CANADA

## GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES and the Canadian Permanent Committee on Geographical Names



Energy, Mines and  
Resources Canada

Énergie, Mines et  
Ressources Canada





*Crystal Falls, Goose River, Labrador, Newfoundland.*

## Guiding Principles

In 1898, a primary task for the Geographic Board was to set up standards and guidelines. Originally the Board approved a set of 13 rules of nomenclature. Changing attitudes and perceptions, in particular concerning translation, name duplication, language treatment and the handling of native names, have led to periodic revisions and updates of the principles.

The CPCGN now bases its work on a number of guiding principles. In summary, they are:

1. Names created by legislation are accepted.
2. Priority is given to names well established in local use.
3. Names used by postal, transportation and major utilities are accepted, if in keeping with other principles.
4. Specific limits of features must be recorded. Use of the same generic for part of a named feature as for the whole feature should be avoided.
5. Personal names are not accepted, unless exceptional circumstances exist.
6. Preferred sources of new names (i.e. where no local names are in use) are appropriate descriptive words, names of pioneers, explorers and historical events connected with the area, names from native languages identified with the general area, and names of persons who died during war service.
7. Names should be euphonious and in good taste.

## Procedures for Submitting Geographical Names

The CPCGN and the various provincial and territorial names authorities rarely initiate the naming of geographical features. Almost all names are submitted by the public or have been gathered through field survey programmes.

The use of unofficial names should be avoided in publications. Such names should be submitted to the appropriate provincial, territorial or federal names authority or to the CPCGN Secretariat for possible approval. This should be done well in advance of publication dates, as considerable time may be required for the approval process. The publishing of unauthorized names will not necessarily lead to their official recognition.

To facilitate prompt decisions, information for each name should indicate the reason for the proposal, provide the location of the feature by latitude and longitude, identify on a map the precise extent of the feature, and indicate the origin and meaning. Photographs and sketches should be provided if appropriate.

Reliable, preferably documented, information on corrections in the use, spelling or application of toponyms on maps and charts is welcomed by the CPCGN and by the provincial and territorial authorities.

Inquiries about geographical names can be addressed to the appropriate jurisdiction or to the CPCGN Secretariat.

**Newfoundland Geographical Names Board**  
 Department of Environment and Lands  
 Howley Building, Higgins Line  
 P.O. Box 4750  
 St. John's, Newfoundland  
 A1C 5T7

**Director of Surveys**  
 Department of Lands & Forests  
 780 Windmill Road, Torrington Place  
 Halifax, Nova Scotia  
 B3B 1T3

**Office of the Clerk**  
 Legislative Assembly  
 P.O. Box 2000  
 Charlottetown, P.E.I.  
 C1A 7N8

## Geographical Names

Geographical names provide a basic reference system throughout the world. In both their spoken and written forms, they are a significant expression of culture, and provide important direction for transportation and communications.

Definite, unambiguous designations for populated places and physical features are necessary for correct reference in resource development and planning. Standard forms of names are essential elements of reliable maps and marine charts.

The process of designating names for landscape and seascape phenomena permits the country, the provinces, and the territories to manage and protect Canada's geographical names, as an important element of our culture and heritage.

## Canadian Permanent Committee on Geographical Names

The need for a Canadian names authority was recognized in the late 1800s, when resource mapping beyond the frontiers of settlement and extensive immigration made it an urgent matter to manage the country's geographical names — to standardize their spelling and their application to particular features.

The Geographic Board of Canada was set up in 1897, and was succeeded by the Canadian Board on Geographic Names in 1948. In 1961, the names authority was reorganized as the Canadian Permanent Committee on Geographical Names (CPCGN).

Soon after 1897 the provinces and territories were invited to provide advice on the use, spelling and application of names, although until 1961 decisions were ultimately made in Ottawa. At that time, the responsibility for naming was transferred to the provinces. Since 1979, the authority for naming in Indian reserves, national parks, and military reserves has been jointly held by the appropriate federal department and the province concerned. In 1984, Yukon Territory and the Northwest Territories assumed responsibility for the names in their own jurisdictions.

Among today's roles of the CPCGN as a national coordinating body are the development of standard policies for the treatment of names and terminology, the promotion of the use of official names, and the encouragement of the development of international standards in cooperation with the United Nations and other national authorities responsible for naming policies and practices.



8. A name is usually approved in a single language form in the Roman alphabet. Other forms may be sanctioned by the appropriate names authority. Names from languages other than English or French should be written in the best recognized orthography. Names for some selected features of pan-Canadian significance are recognized in both English and French for use on federal maps and texts.
9. The spelling and accenting of names follow the rules of the language in which they are written.
10. Names of service facilities (e.g. post offices) in a community should conform with the official name of the community. Names with the same specific applied to associated features should agree in form and spelling.
11. Duplication of names should be avoided if confusion may result.
12. The generic term should be appropriate to the nature of the feature. It is recorded in either English or French by the names authority concerned.
13. Qualifying words (e.g. "upper", "west branch", "nouveau") may be used to distinguish two or more features with identical specific forms.
14. The adoption of a name of a minor feature is guided by the relative significance of the feature, familiarity with the name, and the scale of mapping available.

**New Brunswick Geographic Information Corporation**  
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Fredericton, New Brunswick  
E3B 5H1

**Président, Commission de toponymie**  
220, Grande Allée Est  
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Ministry of Natural Resources  
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90 Sheppard Avenue East  
North York, Ontario  
M2N 3A1

**Director of Surveys**  
Department of Natural Resources  
1007 Century Street  
Winnipeg, Manitoba  
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**Saskatchewan Geographic Names Board**  
2045 Broad Street  
Regina, Saskatchewan  
S4P 3V7

**Geographical Names Programme**  
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**Director, Historical Research**  
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K1A 0K2

**Secretariat, Geographical Names**  
Room 650  
615 Booth Street  
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*Marquis, Saskatchewan.*

H. KERFOOT

## Committee Membership

The CPCGN is comprised of 24 members. Its Chair is appointed by the Minister of the federal Department of Energy, Mines and Resources. Each of the provinces and territories is represented, so also are various federal departments concerned with mapping, archives, defence, translation, Indian reserves, national parks and statistics. As well, the Chairs of three advisory committees (on toponymy research, glaciological and alpine nomenclature, and undersea and maritime feature names) serve as full members of the CPCGN.

## The Secretariat of the Canadian Permanent Committee on Geographical Names

The CPCGN's Secretariat is provided by the federal Department of Energy, Mines and Resources. It is headed by an Executive Secretary who, in concert with the Chair and the representatives of the various federal, provincial and territorial jurisdictions, handles on behalf of the CPCGN all routine toponymic matters relating to Canada.

The Secretariat coordinates the information to be included in the automated and graphic name records for national use, arranges for the meetings of the CPCGN and its various committees, organizes workshops and seminars, and undertakes the production of CPCGN publications. It has an important role in encouraging the official use of names and in stimulating the development of standard policies. It provides a focus for contacts with other national names authorities and promotes international cooperation with the United Nations and other organizations concerned with the global standardization of names.

## Publications of the CPCGN

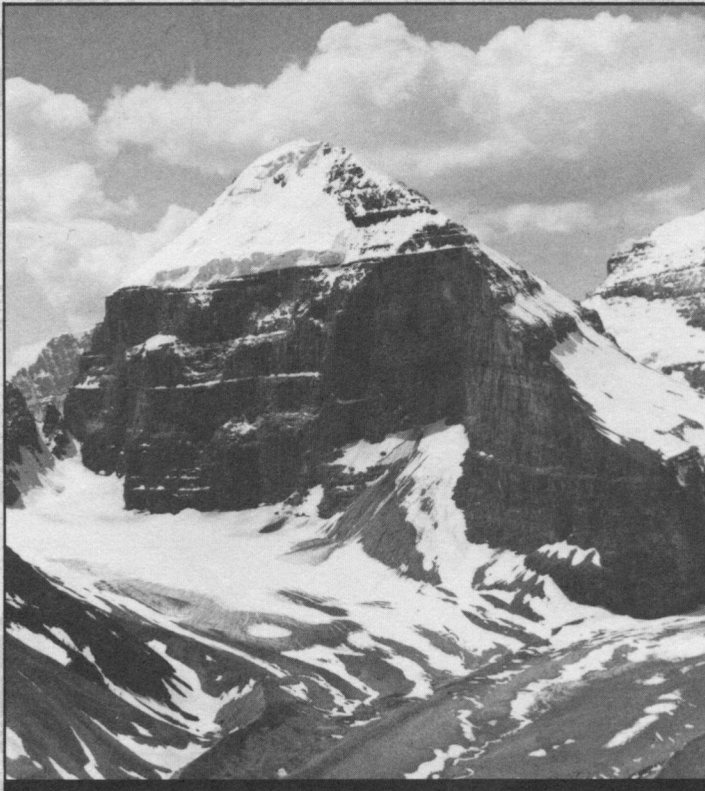
The CPCGN has published a report on each of the five United Nations conferences on the standardization of geographical names in which it has participated from 1967 to 1987. Its report on the most recent conference, held in Montréal, is titled **Canada — Geographical Names and the United Nations**, and is available from the Canadian Government Publishing Centre, Ottawa, K1A 0S9 (catalogue no. M86-24/1987).

The CPCGN's Advisory Committee on Glaciological and Alpine Nomenclature worked jointly with Translation Bureau of Secretary of State to produce **Glossary of Generic Terms in Canada's Geographical Names** (Canadian Government catalogue no. S52-2/176-1987).

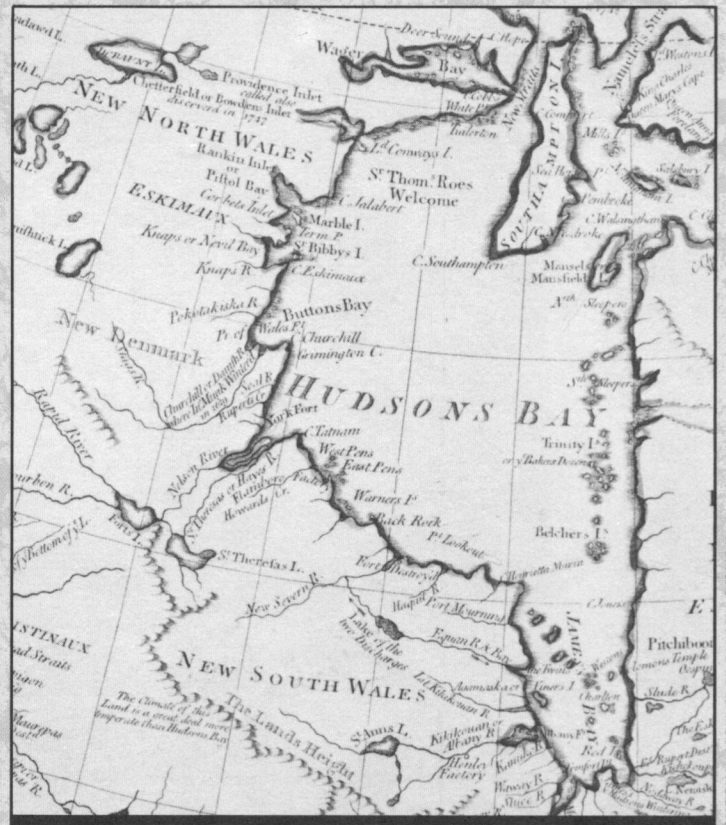
Also in 1987, the CPCGN published a handbook entitled **Principles and Procedures for Geographical Naming**. Appendices are included on writing names used in other countries, naming in alpine areas, and on the official languages and geographical names on federal maps. This bilingual publication is available free from the Secretariat.

Since 1975, the Secretariat has produced, on behalf of the CPCGN, a twice-yearly publication on geographical names information and toponymic developments in Canada. **CANOMA** (an acronym for "names in Canada") is distributed free of charge to organizations and institutions interested in the origin, use and standardization of geographical names. Submissions on topics relating to geographical names and naming in Canada will be considered for publication; information on current toponymic research is also welcomed.

In 1990, the CPCGN's Advisory Committee on Glaciological and Alpine Nomenclature produced the brochure **Naming Canada's Geographical Features** (in French, **La dénomination des entités géographiques du Canada**). This public informs the of the steps to follow in proposing geographical names. Copies are available free from the Secretariat.



Mount Lefroy, near Lake Louise, on the Alberta-British Columbia border.



Part of the Dilly and Robinson map, 1785, showing "Hudson's Bay" (now Hudson Bay).

## Gazetteers of Canada

The **Gazetteer of Canada** series was initiated in 1952 to provide mapmakers and the public with authoritative information on the location and spelling of approved geographical names. The series is produced for the CPCGN by the Canada Centre for Mapping, Department of Energy, Mines and Resources and is available from the Canadian Government Publishing Centre. Volumes for individual provinces and territories are produced from the National Toponymic Data Base, which contains some 500 000 automated name records. Inquiries about the automated data base and the availability of data on magnetic tape and cassette should be addressed to the Toponymy Section, EMR, 650-615 Booth Street, Ottawa, Ontario, K1A 0E9.

The **Répertoire toponymique du Québec 1987** was published by the Commission de toponymie du Québec, and is available from: Les Publications du Québec, 1279, Blvd. Charest Ouest, Québec, Quebec, G1N 4K7 (catalogue no. ISBN 2-551-08590-X).

The **Gazetteer of Undersea Feature Names 1987** was published for the CPCGN by the Department of Fisheries and Oceans (Canadian Government catalogue no. Fs55-1/1987).

The **Place-Names of Alberta Volume I — Mountains, Parks, Foothills**, published in Alberta, will be available in the summer of 1990.

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