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COMMEMORATIVE GEOGRAPHICAL NAMING POLICY

Paper presented by the Commission de toponymie du Québec (Canada)

Translation from French

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TRANSLATION

FROM FRENCH

Since time immemorial, men and women have wanted to name the places they inhabit after historically significant people and events, both large and small. Alexandria, Constantinople and the Appian Way are but a few of the evocative place names that illustrate this long-standing tradition. In Quebec, this practice began in the earliest colonial days, as is shown by toponyms such as Île d'Orléans, Boucherville, Vaudreuil and hundreds of others. It continued in a spontaneous, irregular manner until the twentieth century.

In 1912, the newly formed Commission de géographie assumed the responsibility of naming places for commemorative purposes. In 1977, this geographic board was succeeded by the Commission de toponymie du Québec [Quebec toponymy commission], created by virtue of the Charter of the French language. The Commission de toponymie du Québec has, in the past ten years or so, officialized almost eighty commemorative place names, in response to requests from Quebec residents and cultural organizations.

The Commission is acutely aware of the growing public interest in the creation of place names and the enrichment of Quebec's toponymic heritage.

Naming places is somewhat like giving them a soul, a touch of eternity. It is a very noble act when it perpetuates the memory of people, works and events that have left their mark on Quebec's history.

This is why the Commission de toponymie du Québec, in an effort to encourage these activities in an appropriate manner, has developed a specific program for this purpose and established an official policy outlining its principles, criteria and procedures. I am pleased to present this policy to you in the form of an information pamphlet.

Rémi Mayrand

President

COMMEMORATIVE GEOGRAPHICAL NAMING POLICY

Recognizing that one of its functions is to guarantee the enrichment of Quebec's toponymic heritage, the Commission de toponymie du Québec has decided to develop a commemorative geographical naming policy. This policy allows the Commission to give unnamed places in Quebec names evoking the most significant aspects of the province's local, regional and national history.

The Commission's objective in instituting this policy was to encourage members of the public to play an original and significant role in the creation of geographical place names, and to express the importance they place on preserving Quebec's historical and cultural heritage.

This policy also provides Quebec with a structured means of paying homage to other countries, by honouring significant events in an original and special manner.

1. Scope

1.1 Commemorative object

Personal names may be used for commemorative geographical naming in cases where the person commemorated was particularly distinguished in his or her community or had national or international influence, regardless of the field in which he or she worked or the period with which he or she is associated.

Examples include pioneers who settled an area or region during the colonial period; ancestors of founding families; public figures who made outstanding contributions to the development of their communities; writers, poets, philosophers, artists, scientists or any others whose work was particularly noteworthy; and individuals who, because of exceptional circumstances, shone as models of courage and physical or moral fortitude, or whose noble values were a significant inspiration to others. This list is far from exhaustive; it serves only as an example.

In some cases, the commemorative object may be one of the most important works of the person whose memory we wish to perpetuate. It may be the title of a poem, song, book or painting, the quality and merit of which is widely recognized.

Significant events, from the distant and not-so-distant past, or the key players involved, may also be commemorated. Such is the case with holidays in honour of the founders of educational, cultural, social or religious institutions that have been part of Quebec history since the beginnings of colonization.

We may also honour ethnic groups whose contributions to the development and cohesion of the social fabric and the harmonization of intercultural relations merit recognition. To this end, a commemorative designation may, for example, highlight the leaders of such groups or the historical models to which they attach particular significance.

The Commission may also use this commemorative naming policy to allow Quebec to pay special homage to countries with which it is closely associated through friendship or culture, on the occasion of noteworthy events that it wants to commemorate in a significant manner. Such a designation could highlight the country itself, one of its illustrious citizens or an historical event which took place in that country, particularly one that may have had a significant influence on Quebec.

In addition to these commemorative designations, the number of which is very limited (ten or fifteen a year) and for which a certain protocol must be followed, dozens of other commemorative names are assigned each year by municipalities or through the Commission, although in most cases, these names, which are governed by the Commission's regular procedures, do not have as high a profile.

1.2 Choice of places

A commemorative name may be given to a previously unnamed place, or to a place whose name has fallen into disuse. New place names may also be given where a homonym creates confusion and one or the other of the confusing names must be changed. Unless otherwise justifiable, there should be a strong association between the place to be named and the commemorative object. The place chosen should also be in a region that has a significant connection with the commemorative object.

For example, a mountain, lake, bay, or road to be named in honour of the first colonist of a region or a local figure must be a geographical feature in the appropriate area. However, if the person to be honoured was prominent beyond the boundaries of the region, or was known nation-wide, the place to be named may be chosen according to quality rather than region.

Although naming a bridge after its builder or architect is not, in itself, a commemorative designation, it is conceivable that, in certain cases, it might be regarded as such, if, for example, the bridge should come to be regarded as an architectural masterpiece, or withstand the test of time, as have a number of covered bridges which still exist today.

In principle, it is up to those who have requested a commemorative designation to suggest appropriate places to name, but the Commission can provide assistance in this area.

1.3 Community consultation

Application of a commemorative name requires consultation with those living near the place chosen, and, as necessary, with the relatives of the person to be honoured and those affected by the commemorated person's actions.

1.4 Regional distribution of commemorative names

The Commission de toponymie du Québec endeavours to distribute the number of commemorative designations across the various regions of Quebec as fairly as possible.

1.5 Diversity of geographical features

The Commission de toponymie du Québec also promotes diversity with respect to the geographical features identified as places that may have commemorative names assigned to them.

1.6 Certificate of commemorative designation

Given the prestigious and noteworthy character of all commemorative designations, the act of naming is marked in a special way by the issuing of a Commission certificate attesting to the event. This certificate, generally accompanied by a map of the area, is presented to the legal or family trustees at an official ceremony organized by the applicants, within the framework of a congress, festivities or any other media event.

In cases which do not lend themselves to any particular event, an appropriate certificate of commemorative designation will, nevertheless, be issued.

2 Standards and selection criteria

2.1 Non-use of the names of living persons

Only the names of persons who have been deceased for at least one year may be used as commemorative names. The Commission de toponymie du Québec adheres to the principle stated during the United Nations conferences on the

standardization of geographical names, namely that it is not advisable to assign names of persons to toponymic features until they have been deceased for some time.

2.2 Non-controversial choices

The choice of place and commemorative name (person, organization, group, event or work) should not elicit controversy.

2.3 Compliance with selection criteria, rules of writing and other policies

Commemorative designations should comply with the selection criteria, rules of writing and other policies of the Commission de toponymie du Québec.

2.4 Origin of the proposal for commemorative designation

Anyone who can demonstrate that his or her proposal meets the standards, criteria and conditions described above may submit a commemorative designation proposal to the Commission. The Commission may also initiate naming or invite representative social or cultural organizations to take the necessary steps.

New proposals should, whenever possible, be accompanied by specific recommendations of appropriate places for commemorative designations.

Where city parks or roads are involved, the proposal should, in order to accelerate the process, be accompanied by a resolution from the municipal council concerned.

Approval of a proposed commemorative designation usually takes at least three months.

All requests should be addressed to : Rémi Mayrand

President

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Québec City, Quebec

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LIST OF TOPONYMS FOR ILLUSTRATIONS IN THE
COMMEMORATIVE DESIGNATIONS PAMPHLET

[See French original]