

UNITED NATIONS
ECONOMIC
AND
SOCIAL COUNCIL



Distr.
LIMITED

E/CONF.61/L.29
14 March 1972

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

SECOND UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON THE
STANDARDIZATION OF GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES
London, 10-31 May 1972
Item 9(a) of the provisional agenda

NATIONAL STANDARDIZATION

FIELD COLLECTION OF NAMES

Paper submitted by the Government of Canada*

The collection and recording of geographical names by inquiry on the ground is in a much earlier stage of development in Canada than in countries of the Old World. It is also governed by conditions which differ greatly from those in smaller and more densely populated countries, where names have become stabilized over centuries, and municipal authorities know all the geographic names within their boundaries, and are, in effect, field survey agencies, reporting changes to central administrations. In Canada, even in more settled areas, long distances extend between communities, and vast hinterlands lie beyond main transport routes. Municipal authorities have little knowledge of the toponyms of the extensive, sparsely settled reaches beyond their communities.

Maps reflect similar differences. In Canada, a map at a scale of 1:50,000 is considered to be a large scale map; in Europe, a large scale map is more apt to be considered one at 1:10,000 or 1:5,000. A significant difference occurs in the degree of ground examination lavished on a map at 1:5,000 scale and one at 1:50,000 scale, and the examination of toponyms in each case is likely to be proportionate.

The collection of geographic names is closely related to the development of map coverage. Basic mapping in Canada is still far from complete even at a scale such as 1:50,000, which would be a medium scale in Europe. Revision of such maps in Canada has taken second place to the effort to extend the initial coverage of areas still unmapped at this scale. Consequently, the original collection of map names exhibited on a map produced thirty years previously may not have been rechecked since.

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