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NATIONAL STANDARDIZATION

NATIONAL GAZETTEERS OR OTHER SIMILAR PUBLICATIONS IN WHICH
COUNTRIES MAKE AVAILABLE THEIR STANDARDIZED NAMES

Presented by the Government of Canada*

Introduction

1. Canada presented a paper on its gazetteer programme to the First United Nations World Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names at Geneva in 1967. The original text was identified as E/CONF.53/L.64, and it appears on page 99 of E/CONF.53/4, Volume 2, Proceedings of the Conference and Technical Papers.
2. A number of changes in outlook and direction have affected the Canadian gazetteer programme since the first World Conference. Chief among these has been the need for our gazetteers to reflect the recent establishment of English and French as the official languages of Canada. A second important element has been the impact which toponymic field survey has had on the nature and volume of the information presented. A third has been some change in territorial administration.
3. This paper, therefore, will not only review progress in gazetteer work in Canada since our previous report, but try to indicate how these social changes have modified compilation procedures and presentation.

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I. THE GAZETTEER OF CANADA SERIES

4. The Gazetteer of Canada consists of a series of volumes, each containing names concerned with a particular province or territory. Canada is composed of 10 provinces and two territorial divisions. The areas and populations vary widely. The number of names in a gazetteer for a particular province reflects this. The province of Quebec has an area of 594,860 square miles, and a population of approximately 6,000,000 people. The gazetteer for that province contains in excess of 45,000 names. The gazetteer for Canada's smallest province, Prince Edward Island, with an area of 2,184 square miles and a population of 111,000 people, contains, in the current edition, only 1,150 names. This ratio of gazetteer size to area and population holds true for other provinces, with those for Ontario and British Columbia approaching 50,000 names each, and gazetteers for smaller provinces having correspondingly fewer. The proportion is not true for the two territorial areas, the Yukon Territory and the Northwest Territories, which lie north of the sixtieth parallel. Despite areas of 207,076 and 1,304,903 square miles, respectively, the populations are small and the number of geographic names proportionately lower.

5. Canada has approximately 250,000 geographic names recorded in its gazetteers. There are firm indications from field survey work that the actual number locally used may be almost twice that number.

6. The Gazetteer of Canada series is compiled by a staff directed by the secretary of the Canadian Permanent Committee, and published in uniform formats under the Committee's imprint, except in the case of the province of Quebec. The latter is published under provincial imprint. In gazetteer work, the Committee co-operates very closely with each province.

7. The gazetteers in this series do not include information respecting the origin, history or contemporary statistical data for individual names.

II. GAZETTEER COMPILATION

A. Name verification

8. The basic tool for gazetteer compilation is the record card which exists for each known name. The preparation of a new or revised gazetteer starts with an examination of the card records for the province concerned to determine the status of each name. Names which may have become obsolete, which may have changed in spelling, have been altered in application, or have had no previous official approval are all referred to the Committee member for the particular province for his recommendation. The usage on federal and provincial maps is carefully checked in relation to spelling and feature identification. Any doubtful cases are investigated. If a field survey of the geographic names of the province concerned has been done, the results are incorporated. Field surveys have proven to be extremely informative. In the province of New Brunswick, a two-year survey verified all known named features, resulting in many changes.