



UNITED NATIONS  
ECONOMIC  
AND  
SOCIAL COUNCIL



Distr.  
LIMITED

E/CONF.61/L.33  
6 March 1972

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

---

SECOND UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON THE  
STANDARDIZATION OF GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES  
London, 10-31 May 1972  
Item 7 of the provisional agenda

PROGRESS REPORT ON THE STANDARDIZATION  
OF GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES IN CANADA

Presented by the Government of Canada\*

1. In a country such as Canada, with an area of almost 4 million square miles (10 million square kilometres), one finds an endless quantity and variety of topographic features. They must be counted not by the thousands, but by the hundreds of thousands. Those now identified approach one half million. A much larger quantity remains to be named.
2. Historically, Canada is a very young country. Its centenary celebration coincided with the First United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names in 1967. Canada has been fortunate in having had an authority concerned with geographical names for most of our first hundred years. The Geographic Board of Canada, from which the Permanent Committee has descended, was established in 1897. Each of the 10 provinces of Canada is represented on the national names committee, but each retains jurisdiction over names within its boundaries. Some have established geographical names boards of their own, without detriment to the ideal of nation-wide co-operation. A national gazetteer has been created, with a volume devoted to each province, in which the decisions on names are expressed and made available to the public. The maps produced by national and provincial programmes carefully reflect these rulings.
3. Since the first world conference, Canada has been able to produce two new gazetteers, to issue revisions of four others and to add approximately 30,000 new toponyms to our existing stock of names. We have progressed in the development of field collection techniques, so that in two years we have been able to verify the geographical names of the entire province of New Brunswick - an

---

\* Paper prepared by J.P. Drolet, Assistant Deputy Minister, Department of Energy, Mines and Resources.

area exceeding 28,000 square miles (62,000 square kilometres). From this survey, a new enlarged gazetteer and an historical study have been derived and will shortly be published.

4. In participating in the work of the United Nations leading up to this conference, we have particularly endeavoured to contribute to the study of undersea feature names, a subject of much consequence to a country with a mainland coastline extending for 44,000 miles (70,000 kilometres).

5. Despite these useful accomplishments, many problems and much work remain. Canada has a richly variegated cultural inheritance. While two official languages, English and French, reflect the predominant cultural groups, the native peoples, Indians and Eskimos, are significant elements in the population, and immigrants from many lands have made Canada their home. More than 30 languages are spoken. In this setting, geographical names present especially difficult problems.

6. Canadian delegates will be presenting several papers based on our experience. We hope they will be useful contributions. We hope also that we can gain helpful guidance and new concepts from the geographers, cartographers, linguists, toponymists, historians and other experts present here.

7. Pamphlets describing the functions and responsibilities of the Canadian Permanent Committee on Geographical Names, and listing the principles of nomenclature that guide the decisions of the committee are available. Also available for examination are samples of the Gazetteer of Canada series, and of the associated semi-annual supplements.

8. Canada has maintained its interest in the objectives established at the first world conference. We hope that this second conference may make significant progress toward their attainment. They can be realized only by the full and free exchange of information, by mutual helpfulness and by goodwill. To these ideals Canada pledges her full support.

-----