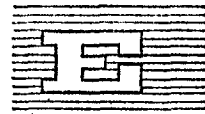


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THE STANDARDIZATION OF GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES

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Item 5 (d) of the provisional agenda \*/

NATIONAL STANDARDIZATION

ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE OF NATIONAL NAMES AUTHORITIES

The mandate of the Quebec Toponymy Commission \*\*/

Abstract

In August 1977, the Toponymy Commission replaced the earlier Geography Commission established in 1912 and was given expanded responsibilities and powers. It became the agency responsible for the geographical nomenclature of Quebec, which entailed listing, standardizing, making official, regulating and disseminating all the place names of the territory. These multiple functions are deemed necessary because "toponymy is an important element of the cultural record". Toponymy not only reflects the geography of the country but bears witness to its political and social history and its cultural situation.

Pursuant to chapter III of the Charter of the French Language (Charte de la langue française) (1977), the Toponymy Commission has an extremely broad mandate and exercises final jurisdiction. It has already formulated a linguistic policy on the toponymy of Quebec, which has been set forth in the Quebec Toponymic Guide and the Municipal Toponymic Guide, both published in 1979. Furthermore, odonymic regulations governing the selection of place names and rules of orthography in the field of toponymy were adopted in the spring of 1982. The Commission has also formulated another linguistic policy on Amerindian and Inuit toponymy which explains the rules of orthography for indigenous toponyms.

The activities of the Commission include making official designations of place names; approximately 24,000 place names were made official from 1978 to 1981, in addition to the 75,000 contained in the Quebec Toponymic Directory (Répertoire toponymique du Québec) (1978). The Commission is also responsible for making field

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\*\*/ Prepared by Mr. François Beaudin, Chairman of the Quebec Toponymy Commission.

lists of toponyms, setting up a data bank, providing the analysis and supervision needed to prepare files with a view to the official designation of toponyms and to verify the toponymic content of official maps and teaching material, conducting research and keeping the public informed.

Research done during the past three years has been historical, as in the study on the Origin and Development of the Toponymy of the Mingan Archipelago; geographical, as in the Toponymic Itinerary along the Chemin du Roy, Quebec-Montreal and in about 10 regional toponymic compilations; and terminological, in studies on the names of thoroughfares, regions and the like.

The Toponymy Commission has a sizable task before it, since it estimates that it has made official designations for barely 40 per cent of the toponyms in use in Quebec. It will also have to give names to more than 1.5 million currently nameless places, especially lakes and streams, which provide enormous opportunities for introducing French names while respecting the indigenous toponymy. Furthermore, the Commission will have to devote attention to the standardization of geographical terms used in the formation of place names. It is quite an impressive undertaking.