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**United Nations Group of Experts on
Geographical Names
2023 session**

New York, 1–5 May 2023

Item 7 of the provisional agenda*

**Social and economic benefits, supporting sustainable
development, measures taken and proposed for the
implementation of resolutions**

Adoption of a policy on changes of place names

Summary**

The Commission de toponymie du Québec is the body responsible for the management of place names in Québec. It has a mandate to formalize and disseminate Québec place names. Since its founding, the Commission has adopted various policies on place names, which provide the basis for its decisions and which are disseminated on its website.

The Commission attaches great importance to the stability of place names, in line with the principle of name usage: names that are in use are more effective geographical reference points than those that are not. Respect for current usage is one of the cornerstones of the Commission's policies and is a prerequisite for place names.

However, many proposed name changes are submitted to the Commission or reported in the media without any solid justification.

Therefore, on 3 March 2022, the Commission adopted a new place-name policy: the policy on changes of place names. The new policy is aimed at meeting the need to clarify the principles that guide the Commission in the effective and uniform handling of proposed name changes.

The report covers the details of the new policy, the basic principles of which are as follows:

- Place names with the most well-established use must have priority.
- The stability of the official gazetteer is prioritized so as to ensure the maintenance and reliability of geographical reference points.

* GEGN.2/2023/1.

** The full report was prepared by Marie-Ève Bisson, Commission de toponymie du Québec, Canada. It will be available under document symbol GEGN.2/2023/23/CRP.23, in the language of submission only, at https://unstats.un.org/unsd/ungegn/sessions/3rd_session_2023/.



- The Commission has no desire to provoke or encourage controversy; its preference is to seek broad consensus and compromise.
 - The Commission may refuse to approve any proposed change to a place name if it deems it to be contrary to the public interest, based on personal motives or of a promotional nature.
 - Consideration is given to the fact that the addition of a name may enhance the official gazetteer and also the fact that the replacement of an old name may represent a loss for place-name heritage.
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